

A background image of a tea plantation with lush green leaves and stems. A semi-transparent white rectangular box with a thin black border is centered on the page, containing the title and subtitle. The text is in a classic serif font.

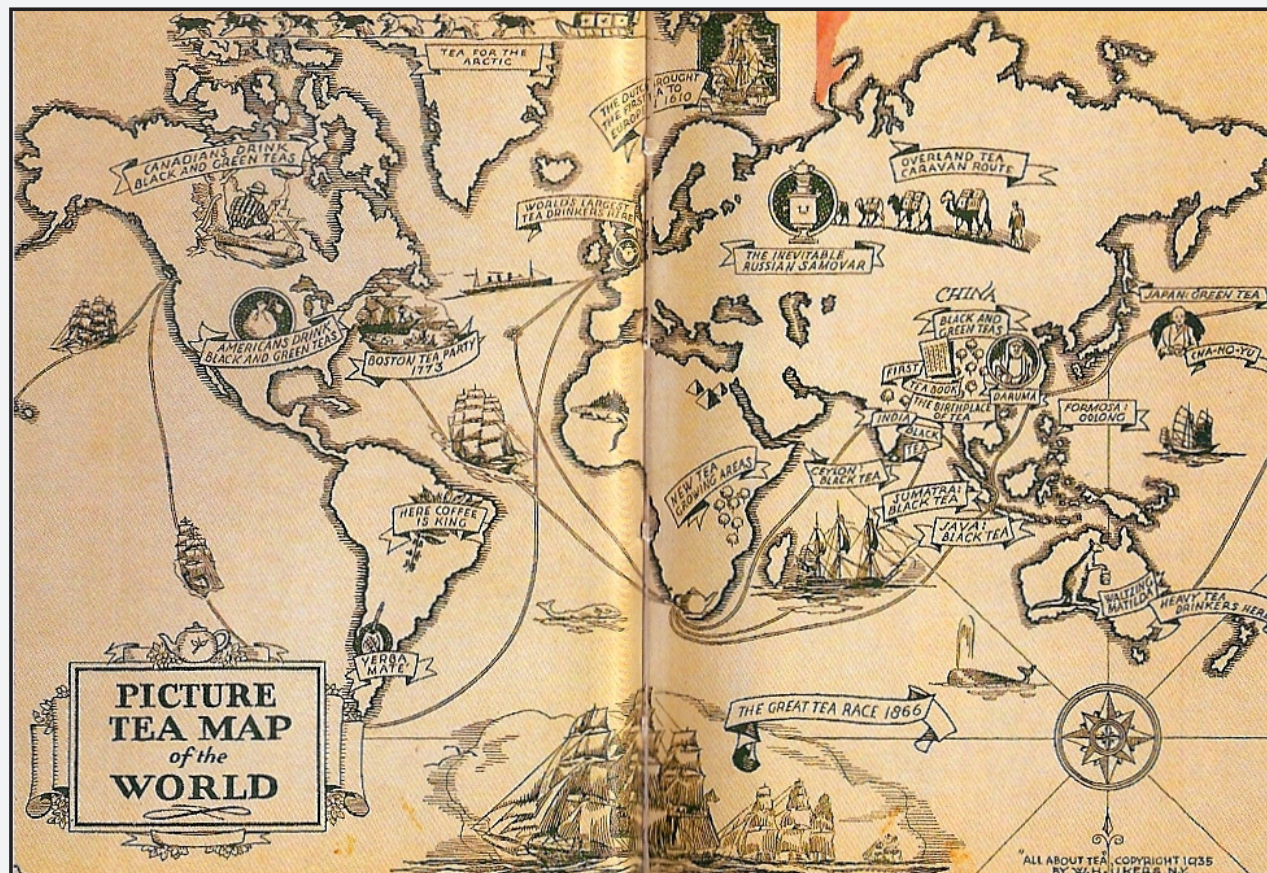
TEA

FROM MEDICINAL MAGIC
TO ECONOMIC POWERHOUSE

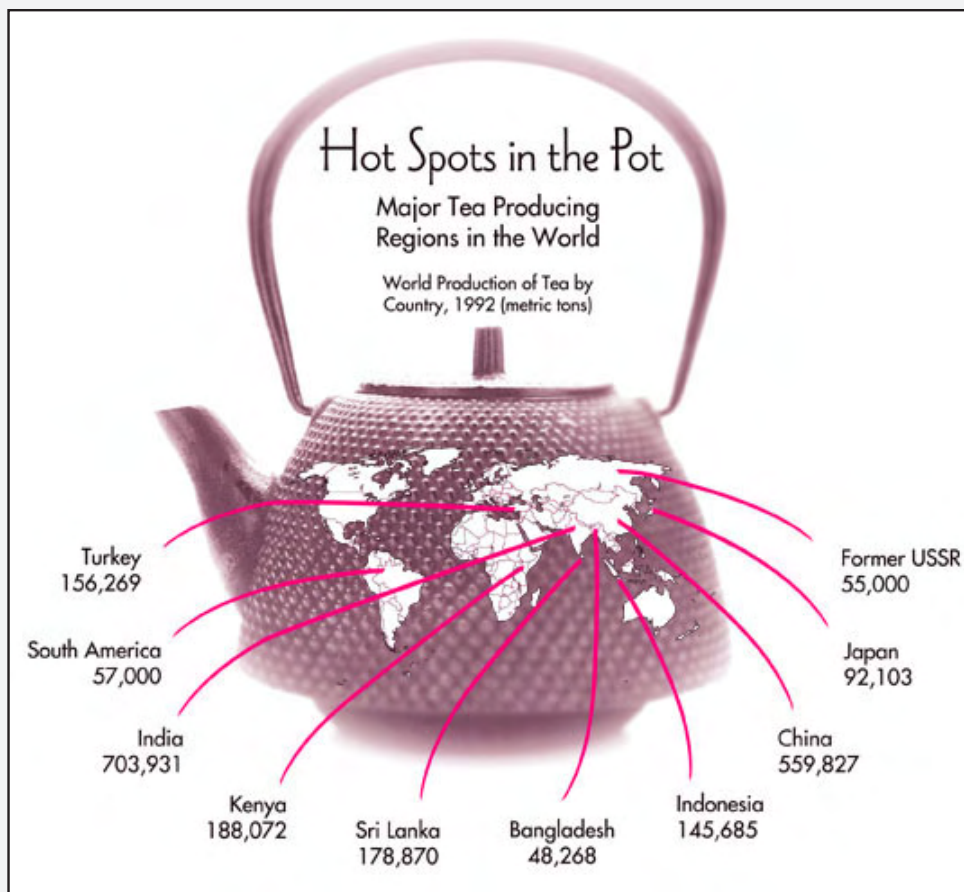
INTRODUCTION: TEA

Tea is a bush grown for a hot drink made from its leaves. Asia is by far the biggest producer supplying 80–90% of all tea, mainly from India, China, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia. India is the largest individual tea-producing country, growing nearly 30% of the world's tea. Tea was introduced to East Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century. It has become an important crop there, particularly in the highlands of Kenya. The U.S. population is drinking its fair share of the brew: in 1994, Americans drank 2.25 billion gallons of tea.

Source 1: “Tea Map of the World” from classic encyclopedia about tea, 1935



W.H. Ukers, *All about Tea* (1935), inside leaf.

Source 2: Map of tea production from *FDA Consumer*, 1992

Marian Segal, "A Story of Serendipity," *FDA Consumer*, March 1996, http://www.agapetea.com/store/images/common/serendipity_teamap.jpg.

Comprehension Exercises:

1. Compare the two maps. What kind of information is provided on each map? How do they differ?
2. What do the maps tell you about the importance of tea around the world? Which places grow tea? Which places drink it? Do the maps indicate any changes in where tea is produced between 1935 and 1992?
3. Where is tea not an important drink? Does the map provide a reason why tea is not popular in certain places? Identify historical events and cultural rituals associated with tea on the first map.

SECTION I: THE ORIGINS OF TEA

The origin of tea is not clear. One kind of tea plant is believed to be native to China, while another is believed to come from the warmer parts of Assam (in northeastern India) and Burma. ‘Wild’ tea plants can be found growing in forests, but these may be remnants from past farming. Burma and then China are thought to be the first places where tea was drunk. Later, its use spread to surrounding areas in Asia before European contact. Tea became popular with Europeans after traders and explorers arrived in China in the seventeenth century.

Source 1: Retelling of Chinese legend of the discovery of tea

According to Chinese legend, tea was first discovered by the Emperor Shen Nung—a scholar and herbalist who, for the sake of hygiene, drank only boiled water. It is said that one day, in the year 2737 B.C., when Shen Nung was resting under a wild tea tree, a slight breeze stirred the branches and caused a few leaves to drift gently down into the simmering water that he was preparing. He found the resulting brew deliciously refreshing and revitalizing, and so, tea was “discovered.”

It is impossible to know if Shen Nung really existed or whether he is simply a myth of ancient China. Certainly, China was not joined as an empire until the third century B.C. and it is therefore unlikely that an emperor existed as far back as 2737 B.C. But, whatever the origins of the beverage, it is an accepted fact among scholars that tea was indeed popular in China all those years ago. There is, however, no written reference to tea until the third century B.C., when a famous Chinese doctor recommended it for increasing concentration and alertness.

Jane Pettigrew, *The Tea Companion* (New York: Macmillan, 1997), 8.

Source 2: Engraving of Chinese Emperor Shen Nung, 1607–09

Shen Nung, engraving from San-ts'ai t'u-hui (1607–09), Collection of the University of Hong Kong, <http://original.britannica.com/eb/art-7374/Shen-Nung-engraving-from-San-tsai-tu-hui-in-the>.

Source 3: Retelling of another Chinese legend of the discovery of tea

According to another legend, tea was discovered by a poor woodcutter who was chopping trees in the hills when he saw several monkeys plucking leaves off a tree and chewing them. He tasted some of the leaves, liked it and brought some back to the village. He told others of his discovery and soon, everyone was adding leaves from the tree to their drinks.

From ancient times to today, tea has been an indispensable part of the life of a Chinese. A Chinese saying identifies the seven basic daily necessities as fuel, rice, oil, salt, soy sauce, vinegar, and tea. The custom of drinking tea is deeply ingrained in almost all Chinese and has been for over a thousand years. During the mid-Tang Dynasty (618–907 AD), a man named Lu Yu entered the Buddhist monkhood early in life but returned when older, to secular life. He was later best known for summarizing the knowledge and experience of his predecessors and contemporaries into the first compendium in the world on tea—the Tea Classic (Cha Jing). This work helped to popularize the art of tea drinking all across China, making avid tea drinkers of everyone from emperor and minister to street hawker and soldier. Even neighboring countries—Korea, Japan and Southeast Asia came to adopt the tea drinking custom.

Regent Tour China, “Chinese Tea,” <http://www.regenttour.com/china/tea/index2.htm>.

Source 4: Recounting of an Indian myth about the origin of tea

In India, it is believed that it was Daruma, an Indian monk who resided in China, who discovered tea in the sixth century CE. In order to prevent himself from falling asleep while meditating, the monk tore off his eyelids. The first tea plant grew in the place where his eyelids fell to the ground. When the monk tasted it, he was granted enlightenment. His followers were the first drinkers of tea and in India.

Ed S. Milton, *Tea: A Cultural History from Around the World* (Israel: Astrolog, 2003), 13.

Comprehension Exercises:

1. What are the differences in the stories about the origin of tea? What do they have in common? Explain your answer citing the documents.
2. Which account seems the most likely origin of tea? Explain your answer.
3. What do these stories tell you about the importance of tea in the cultures they come from? Explain your answer citing the documents.

SECTION 2: TEA IN TIBET AND THE HIMALAYAS

The drinking of tea in Tibet goes back to the 7th century. The first record of tea being imported into Tibet is found in the Chinese annals of the Tang dynasty. From the late eleventh to early fifteenth century, tea was bartered by the Chinese government for Tibetan warhorses. Five main grades of tea were historically available in Tibet. The nobility and prosperous merchants drank the two best grades, which were largely pure tea. Most people drank the third and fourth grades, which were mixtures of tea and chopped twigs of bushes and small trees. The lowest grade, called “wood tea” due to its being largely if not wholly chopped twigs, was drunk by the poor. The importance of tea in Tibet led to its use as a form of money. Tea could be bartered against practically anything, and workmen and servants were even paid with tea.

Source 1: Photograph of tea porters near Tibetan border, 1908



E.H. Wilson, (1908), reprinted, courtesy of the Royal Geographical Society, in John Clarke, “Tibet and The Himalayas” in *Tea East and West*, ed. Rupert Faulkner (London: V&A Publications, 2003), 61.

Source 2: Traditional Tibetan song sung while churning butter tea

Although not the only way tea is drunk in Tibet, butter tea is the most popular form. Butter and salt are added and the mixture is churned with a long plunger until it is blended. Repetitive work of this kind is usually accompanied by song in Tibet.

From the Chinese Country comes the tea flower beautiful.
 From the northern plain comes the small white salt.
 From the Tibetan country comes the yak butter like gold.
 The birthplace and dwelling place are not the same.
 But they all meet together in the little belted churn.

E. Olson, *Catalogue of the Tibetan Collection in the Newark Museum*, Vol. 5 (Newark: 1971), 3.

Source 3: Wooden Tibetan tea bowl



China Tibet Information Center, "Tibetan Tea Culture," <http://zt.tibet.cn/tibetzt-en/xzcwh/index.htm>.

Source 4: Silver-gilt Tibetan tea pot and drinking bowl



John Clarke, "Tibet and The Himalayas" in *Tea East and West*, ed. Rupert Faulkner (London: V&A Publications, 2003), 66.

Comprehension Exercises:

1. What role does tea play in the lives of Tibetans? Explain your answer citing the documents.
2. How can the drinking of tea indicate differences in classes of people or social relationships? Which grade of tea did the porters in the photograph in Source 1 most likely drink? Which kinds of people most likely used the wooden tea bowl in Source 3 and the tea pot and drinking bowl in Source 4? Explain your answer citing the documents.

Source 5: A Japanese traveler describes butter tea in Tibet, 1909

To make the best butter-tea, the tea is first boiled for half a day, till it gets dark brown. After being skimmed, it is shaken several times in the cylinder with some fresh yak butter and salt. This makes the best tea... Tea-pots, or jars, are made of clay in the shape of ordinary Japanese tea pots. I could not at first drink the tea, when I saw that it looked like thick oil. It is usually mixed with what is called tsu and baked flour. The tsu is a hardened mixture of cheese, butter and white sugar. The Tibetan puts this substance into his tea.

Ekai Kawaguchi, *Three Years in Tibet* (1909; reprint Delhi: Book Book Faith India), 325–326.

Source 6: A British traveler describes tea drinking in Tibet, 1940

We rushed around visiting and drinking Tibetan tea. Any good Tibetan drinks fifty or sixty cups of tea every day of his life. The leaves are boiled for several hours, then the tea is poured into a section of hollow bamboo, where it is churned up with a plunger, together with a handful of salt, a pinch of soda, and a good lump of butter. The result is a purplish liquid of unusual taste for tea, but as soup excellent. The moment you put the cup down, even if you have only taken a sip, it is filled up by a servant who stands ready with a silver or earthenware teapot. Custom demands that one drinks at least twice, but however much one has, the cup is always left full. To eat, we were offered dried apricots, sweets, and biscuits.

F. Spencer Chapman, *Lhasa the Holy City* (London: Readers Union Ltd., 1940), 52–53.

Source 7: Description of Tibetan tea bowls in a Chinese newspaper, 2004

Although jade and porcelain bowls are now common in Tibetan households, Tibetans still like to drink their buttered tea from wooden bowls. Wooden bowls are in fact an inseparable part of Tibetan life. When serving buttered tea, Tibetans always place two wooden bowls on the main tea table in the sitting room, a big one and a small one.

The big one is for the father and the small one for the mother. In well-to-do families, each wooden bowl has a silver lid, on which are carved patterns symbolizing good luck. In even wealthier families, every wooden bowl is inlaid with silver and carved with patterns, with only a spot the width of a finger left in the centre of the bowl to show its wooden base. Each bowl has a lid and a tray as well, both made of silver. The lid is shaped like a tower and inlaid with silver and gold, on the top of which is a red agate serving as a handle.

Zhang Zongxian and Jin Zhiguo, "Tibetan buttered tea best in wooden bowls," *China Daily*, June 19, 2004.

Comprehension Exercises:

3. According to these early twentieth century travel accounts, how well established was tea drinking in Tibet? Explain your answer citing the documents.
4. According to these foreign accounts, how important was tea in the lives of average Tibetans? Explain your answer citing the documents.

SECTION 3: "BOSTON HARBOR A TEAPOT TONIGHT"

Victory in the French and Indian War was expensive for the British. At the end of the war in 1763, King George III and his government began to tax the American colonies to gain back their war costs. The Crown's attempt to tax tea spurred the colonists to action and laid the groundwork for the American Revolution. Tea was a staple of colonial life—it was assumed that the colonists would rather pay the tax than deny themselves the pleasure of a cup of tea. But the colonists were not fooled. When the East India Company sent shipments of tea to Philadelphia and New York the ships were not allowed to land. In Boston, the arrival of three tea ships ignited a furious reaction. The crisis came to a head on December 16, 1773 when a group of 200 men disguised as Indians assembled on the wharf, descended upon the three ships, and dumped their cargos of tea into the harbor waters. It took the men three hours to throw 340 chests of tea overboard.

Source 1: The Boston Tea Party, 1773

A hand-colored print showing the "Boston Boys" in Native American dress, throwing chests of tea into the Charles River.



Jane Pettigrew, *A Social History of Tea* (London: National Trust Enterprises London, 2001), 50.

Source 2: Song sung by members of the Boston Tea Party

James Warren and Paul Revere were prominent members of the opposition to British taxes.

Our Warrens here, and brave Revere,
with hands to do and words to cheer for liberty and laws;
our countries 'braves' and true defenders
shall ne'er be left by the North Enders
fighting freedom's cause!
Then rally, boys, and hasten on
to meet our chiefs at the Green Dragon!

Jane Pettigrew, *A Social History of Tea* (London: National Trust Enterprises London, 2001), 50.

Source 3: George Hewes's account of participation in the Boston Tea Party, 1834

It was now evening, and I immediately dressed myself in the costume of an Indian, equipped with a small hatchet, which I and my associates denominated the tomahawk, with which, and a club, after having painted my face and hands with coal dust in the shop of a blacksmith, I repaired to Griffin's wharf, where the ships lay that contained the tea. When I first appeared in the street after being thus disguised, I fell in with many who were dressed, equipped and painted as I was, and who fell in with me and marched in order to the place of our destination.

EyeWitness to History, "The Boston Tea Party, 1773," <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com>.

Source 4: Newspaper article from the *Boston Gazette*, December 20, 1773

A number of brave & resolute men, determined to do all in their power to save their country from the ruin which their enemies had plotted, in less than four hours, emptied every chest of tea on board the three ships commanded by the captains Hall, Bruce, and Coffin, amounting to 342 chests, into the sea!! without the least damage done to the ships or any other property. The matters and owners are well pleas'd that their ships are thus clear'd; and the people are almost universally congratulating each other on this happy event.

Boston Tea Party Historical Society, <http://www.boston-tea-party.org/>.

Comprehension Exercises:

1. How did colonists react to the British tax on tea? Explain your answer citing the documents.
2. How was the Boston Tea Party portrayed by participants and fellow colonists? Explain your answer citing the documents?

Source 5: Pledge made by women of Boston, 1773

We the daughters of those patriots who have, and do now appear for the public interest, and in that principally regard their posterity, as such do with pleasure engage with them in denying ourselves the drinking of foreign tea, in hopes to frustrate a plan that tends to deprive a whole community of all that is valuable to life.

Jane Pettigrew, *A Social History of Tea* (London: National Trust Enterprises London, 2001), 51.

Source 6: Encyclopedia entry on the women's protest, Edenton, North Carolina, 1774

In response to the Tea Act of 1773, North Carolina resolved to boycott all British tea and cloth. On October 25, 1774, Mrs. Penelope Barker organized, at the home of Mrs. Elizabeth King, fifty-one women in Edenton, North Carolina. Together they formed an alliance wholeheartedly supporting the American cause against "taxation without representation."

In response to the Tea Act of 1773, the Provincial Deputies of North Carolina resolved to boycott all British tea and cloth received after September 10, 1774. The women of Edenton signed an agreement saying they were "determined to give memorable proof of their patriotism" and could not be "indifferent on any occasion that appears nearly to affect the peace and happiness of our country ... it is a duty that we owe, not only to our near and dear connections ... but to ourselves."

The custom of drinking tea was a long-standing social English tradition. Social gatherings were defined by the amount and quality of tea provided. Boycotting a substance that was consumed on a daily basis, and that was so highly regarded in society, demonstrated the colonists strong disapproval of the 1773 Tea Act. The Boston Tea Party, in December 1773, resulted in Parliament passing the "Intolerable Acts." It was proof of the Crown's absolute authority. Following the example of their Boston patriots, the women of Edenton boldly protested Britain's what they considered unjust laws.

News of the Edenton Tea Party quickly reached Britain. During the 1770s, political resistance was common. But an organized women's movement was not. So, the Edenton Tea Party shocked the Western world. From England, in January 1775, Arthur Iredell wrote his brother, James Iredell, describing England's reaction to the Edenton Tea Party. According to Arthur Iredell, the incident was not taken seriously because it was led by women. He sarcastically remarked, "The only security on our side ... is the probability that there are but few places in America which possess so much female artillery as Edenton."

North Carolina History Project, "Edenton Tea Party," <http://www.northcarolinahistory.org/encyclopedia/50/entry>.

Source 7: British Cartoon making fun of the Edenton ladies' Tea Party," 1775



Sara Day, "With Peace and Freedom Blest!" Woman As Symbol In America, 1590–1800" in *American Women* (Library of Congress, 2001), <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhhtml/aw05e/aw05e.html> (accessed September 18, 2008).

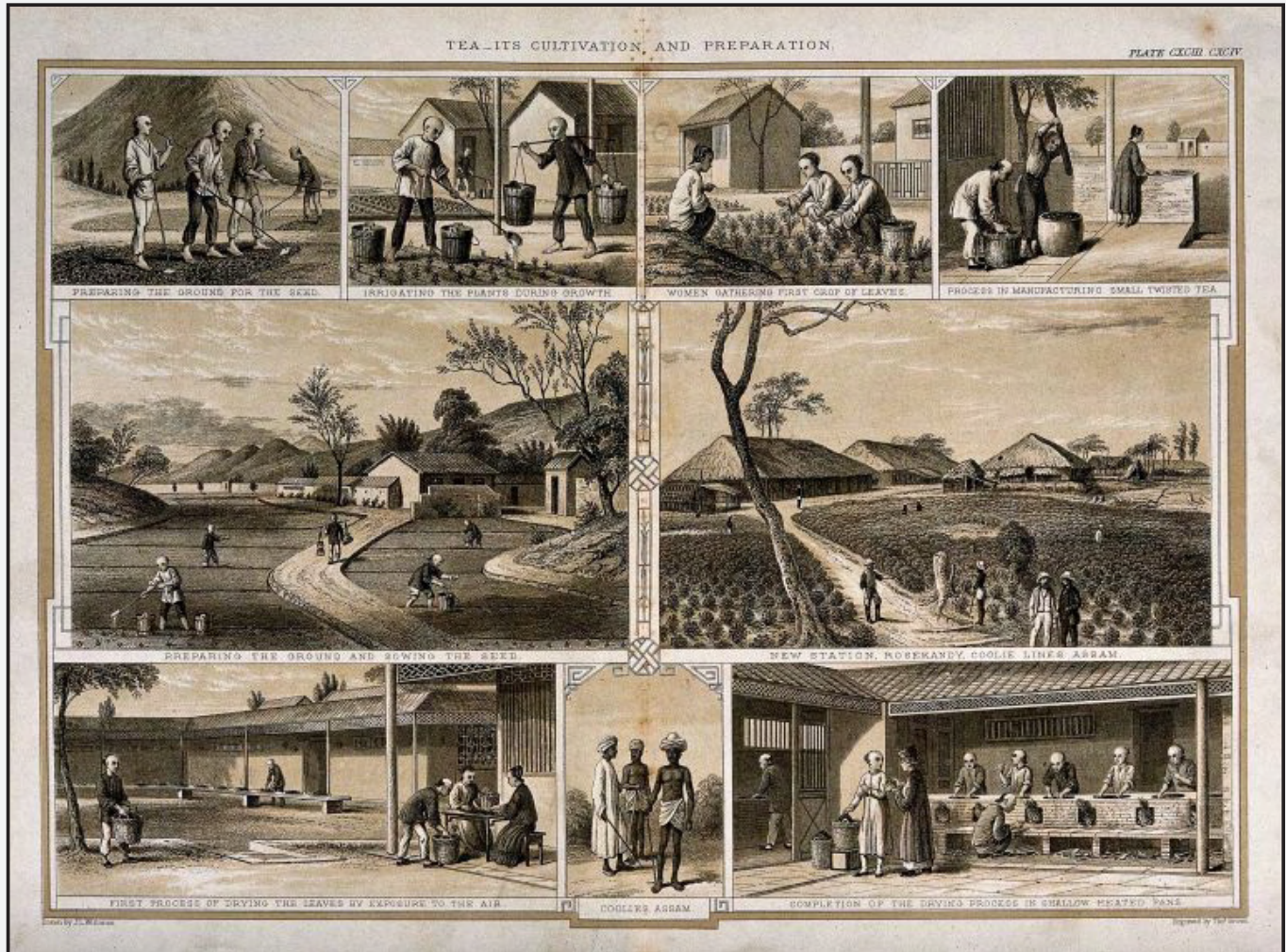
Comprehension Exercises:

3. Compare roles of men and women. How are women portrayed in the different sources? How are men portrayed? What are the differences? What are the similarities? Explain your answer citing the documents.

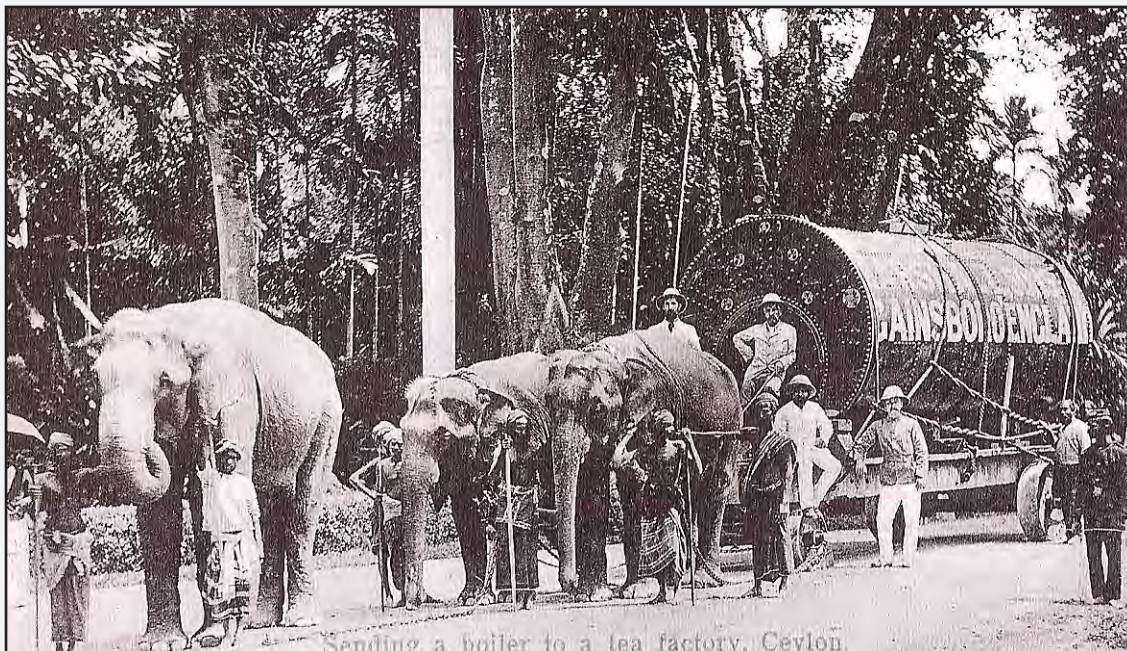
SECTION 4: TEA PRODUCTION AND TRADE

Tea grows best on hillsides. The bushes are carefully trimmed back and plucked to keep them at the correct density, and to encourage the growth of new leaf-bearing shoots which are produced every 7–21 days. These shoots are ‘plucked’ by hand and put into baskets carried on pickers’ backs. Experienced pickers can gather up to 35 kg (approximately 75 pounds) of leaves each day. The harvested leaves then go through two drying stages to stop the fermentation process and remove moisture so that the tea will not spoil during transit.

Source 1: Engraving showing the production of tea in Assam, India, 1850



Joseph Lionel Williams after Thomas Brown (London: Wellcome Library, 1850), http://www.plantcultures.org/plants/tea_landing.html.

Source 2: Elephant train on its way to tea estate in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), 1890s

Jane Pettigrew, *A Social History of Tea* (London: National Trust Enterprises London, 2001), 88.

Source 3: Description of tea pluckers from colonial newspaper, India, 1887

To pluck, the nail of the thumb must be applied to the top of the forefinger, and the stalk or leaf cut through. However, in practice, it will be found that pluckers, if not properly looked after, will nip the stalk or leaf between the thumb and slightly curved forefinger, and with a sharp pinching twist take off the stalk clean through by hooking the forefinger round the stalk and with an upward motion tearing off leaves and axis. It will be obvious to the reader that if such a vile lazy practice be allowed, the loss of new growth on the tea plant would simply be enormous.

Tea Cyclopaedia. Collated from the Indian Tea Gazette (Calcutta, 1887), 116.

Source 4: Description of plantation overseer from tea plantation owner's journal, Assam, India, 1884

He parades up and down between the rows of tea bushes armed with a small stick...in and out amongst the pluckers, yelling at the top of his voice...deriding or swearing at them...always inciting them to make has and move faster.

George Barker, *A Tea Planter's Life in Assam* (Calcutta, 1884), 106.

Comprehension Exercises:

1. Describe the work of picking tea? Does it seem like hard work or easy work? Explain your answer citing the documents.
2. Describe the relationships between the people that own and manage tea plantations and those who work on the plantations. Explain your answer citing the documents.

Source 5: Contemporary photograph of women working on a tea plantation



Jane Pettigrew, *The Tea Companion* (New York: Macmillan, 1997), 29.

Source 6: Song sung by women laborers on tea plantation, North Bengal, India, 1990s

Here are the new workers, give them the pruning knife,
Cut, cut the bush exactly to measure.
Here are the new workers, give them the pruning knife
Cut, cut the bush exactly to measure.

Here is the waist stick, here is the finger stick,
Cut, cut the bush exactly to measure.
Cut up or cut down, the [boss] will take your pay,
Cut, cut the bush, exactly to measure

Piya Chatterjee, *A Time for Tea: Women Labor, and Post/Colonial Politics on an Indian Plantation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 201.

Source 7: Article from environmental news Web site on fair trade tea, 2006

Colonial authorities and entrepreneurs established the first tea estates in India in the nineteenth century. The estates were worlds unto themselves, remote colonies-within-a-colony with no nearby settlements. Plantation owners provided housing and provisions, and managers lived on-site, in picturesque bungalows overlooking impossibly rolling vistas covered with the profitable crop. They took tea from silver trays offered by white-uniformed Indian butlers.

After independence, in 1947, new labor laws required estates to provide schools, housing, and medical clinics. Though this improved the prospects for workers' children, it didn't make a life of plucking tea much easier: even today, the hours are endless, the slopes steep, the sun blinding. Workers spend at least nine hours a day, six days a week traversing these hills. For this they earn a base pay of less than two dollars a day, which puts them at the top end of agricultural laborers in India. A class of Indian managers has moved seamlessly into the bungalows vacated by the British, giving these estates the feel of a land out of time—a forgotten eddy of history.

Nina Luttinger and Gregory Dicum, "Tea Here Now: In India, fair trade is changing a centuries-old industry," *Grist: Environmental News and Commentary*, January 5, 2006, <http://www.grist.org/news/maindish/2006/01/05/luttinger-dicum/>.

Comprehension Exercises:

3. Has the work on plantations that grow and process tea changed from colonial times to the present day? If yes, how so? Explain your answer citing the documents.

GRAPHIC ORGANIZER I

Fill in the following chart for each stop along tea's route from its origins to the world's cup. How did tea move from one stop to the next?

	<i>Where is tea found?</i>	<i>With whom did it arrive?</i>	<i>When did it arrive?</i>	<i>How was it used?</i>
(1) The Origins of Tea				
(2) Tea in Tibet and the Himalayas				
(3) "Boston Harbor a Teapot Tonight"				
(4) Tea Production and Trade				

GRAPHIC ORGANIZER 2

Fill in the following chart for each stop along tea's route from its origins to the world's cup.

<p><i>To what extent has tea been harmful or beneficial to society?</i></p>	<p><i>How were people's lives affected by tea?</i></p>	<p><i>What role did tea play in people's lives?</i></p>	
			<p>(1) The Origins of Tea</p>
			<p>(2) Tea in Tibet and the Himalayas</p>
			<p>(3) "Boston Harbor a Teapot Tonight"</p>
			<p>(4) Tea Production and Trade</p>