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A Proper Cup of Tea: The Making of a British Beverage

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A Proper Cup of Tea:
The Making of a British Beverage

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by

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ABSTRACT

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Tea is a drink the Western world associates with Britain. Yet at one time tea was new and exotic. After tea was introduced to Britain, tea went through a series of social transformations. The British gradually accepted tea consumption as a sign of gentility and all social classes enjoyed the drink. After 1834, when the East India Company lost their monopoly on the trade with China, a new tea industry began in India and control passed to British entrepreneurs. Faced with difficulty in their efforts to make their industry into a facsimile of Chinese methods, the British reconstituted their tea industry from the ground up. British ingenuity flourished under the guidance of innovators with machines reshaping the industry. As tea became part of British society and industry, an image of tea formed. Advertising brought that image to the public, who accepted the concept of a proper cup of tea.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"If you are cold tea will warm you –
if you are heated, it will cool you –
if you are depressed, it will cheer you –
if you are excited, it will calm you."
– William Gladstone

In 1773 British colonists in North America threw an entire ship's cargo of tea into Boston harbor to protest the Tea Act, which instituted a new tax on tea in the American colonies.[1] In England, British subjects were not impressed by this *grande geste*, as they had been obliged to pay 119% in taxes and duties on tea until 1784.[2] The reduced 12.5% was almost triple what the American colonists paid after the Tea Act. The desire for tea in Britain was so strong that high taxes only lowered the number of legal purchases; Britons cheerfully smuggled tea into the country when taxes restricted consumption. The willingness to skirt the law illustrates the unusually high popularity of tea in Britain that began with its arrival in 1660s and continues in the present day.

Profit, power, and the acquisition of exotic goods formed the core reasons for Europe's trade with the East Indies from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. European consumers desired comestibles such as coffee, spices, and tea as interesting additions to their culinary experience. Tea in particular is noteworthy in that its acceptance differed from country to country. Taking Britain as an example shows this best. Britain, more than any other country in

[1] James W. Davidson et. al., *Nation of Nations : A Concise Narrative of the American Republic, vol. I: To 1877*, 4th Ed. (New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 2006), 138.

[2] Moxham, *Tea: Addiction, Exploitation and Empire* (New York, NY: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2003), 27.

Europe, included and adapted tea as a part of their culture almost as soon as it arrived in British ports. Tea's popularity in the mainland countries faded over time, but in Britain it only grew.[3]

Asiatic in origin, tea is nonetheless indisputably British in the West today. The question of how tea came to represent British culture has a twofold answer. The first proof deals with the social aspects of tea in British culture over the course of one hundred and fifty years from its arrival in 1668. In that time, tea migrated through the social classes; first available to the aristocracy, it eventually reached the middle and lower classes in Britain. The fact that each strata of British society drank tea by 1780 is one of the strongest arguments that tea ceased to be a luxury and became a necessity of British life. That Britain's imports from China reached 32,000,000 lbs of tea in 1834 only reinforces this notion. The social process would make tea British over time.

William H. Ukers' *All About Tea* is the most thorough extant secondary material to date on the subject, although it lacks an argument. For the most part, sources specific to the topic of tea as an industry still lack an historical argument. C. A. Bruce's *Report on the Manufacture of Tea* and Robert Fortune's *Two Visits to the Tea Countries of China* both give excellent first-hand accounts of the fledgling tea industry. However, they are intended to be informative rather than argumentative, and their audiences were intended to be the Tea Committee overseeing the first stages of tea cultivation in India. The book functions as an encyclopedia whose extensive data serves as an even-handed source of general knowledge about tea. The information is invaluable when reading more specific books such as *Albion's Fatal Tree*, which notes the importance of tea to British smuggling operations. Even so, there are few books that deal specifically with tea

[3] Moxham, 24.

that are not similar in style to Ukers' work or as reference material. Those that study tea often do so as a subset of a larger topic such as exotic goods in the home, as in Berg's *Luxury and Pleasure,* or as a type of consumer purchase in *Sugar and Spice*. Scholarship on tea's place in the British mindset has been somewhat limited, although it is gaining some popularity within the topic of the British Empire's trade in exotic goods.

The second proof applies to the new British tea industry that began in Assam in 1834 after the ending of the East India Company's monopoly. New companies, British in origin, began investing in the industry. The redistribution of power from one large British company to many British companies expanded competition and inspired innovation. Innovations, especially in machinery, made the British tea industry wholly separate from the Chinese tea industry. Soon, cultivation, machinery, and even the variety of tea plant differed dramatically from China's established methods of processing tea for export. With the arrival of British techniques in cultivation and mechanization, and the adoption of tea plants native to India, the British effectively converted an industry that had started as an imitation of the Chinese into one that was completely British.

Tea's history in Britain is short compared with the other countries in Europe, and this makes it all the more fascinating that they should have adopted tea so completely into their culture. I argue that the links between luxury goods and gentility allowed a symbiotic relationship to grow between exotic and foreign goods and the rising middle class. Tea was one of these goods, and the respectability it came to represent eventually passed in part to everyone who drank it. Drinking tea became respectable, and respectability in the Victorian period was synonymous with Britain. Furthermore, my argument is that tea could not have been British

without its social integration anymore than it could have been British without its new industry, which was established by Britons, run by Britons, and located within British colonial possessions.

This thesis explains the increasing social and cultural importance of tea to the Britons. Tea's adaptation to various social settings caused the British to accept tea into their daily lives. As the drink became more popular, manners and customs evolved to set standards of propriety for tea. This foundation in British society allowed tea to gain popularity and to become a national drink.

The following chapters three, four, and five will focus more heavily on the British tea trade with China. Chapter three will examine how the East India Company fostered the tea trade with China, and how the vacuum left by the loss of its monopoly on trade in the East opened the mercantile arena to any British businessman. Chapter four will explain how the new tea industry began as a response to both the lack of a monopoly and the desire for a source of tea other than China. Chapter five will highlight the growth of the industry in India, paying particular attention to mechanization in an otherwise manual system.

Chapter six will tie back into the social aspects of tea in Britain, namely advertising and the importance of publicity. The link between the new, recognizably British tea industry and the previous acceptance of tea as a British national beverage comes in the form of advertising. During the late nineteenth century the average British citizen knew the origins of his tea from the marketing campaigns, and he knew the difference between a Chinese tea and a British tea. He might not be familiar with the workings of the industry, but he knew that the industry was British.

The coincidence in the nineteenth century of social and industrial means of integrating tea into a British beverage can best be described as the final stage of a much longer process. Tea had been becoming British since its introduction to Britain. Without their new industry however, tea could not have truly belonged to the British. And the new industry could not have made tea a British drink without the foundation of social acceptance that had been built in previous years.

CHAPTER 2

TEA'S CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE TO THE BRITISH

For many, at least in the West, tea is most readily associated with Britain, genteel culture, and longstanding tradition. How did we acquire this idea of tea as synonymous with Britain when, in fact, tea was not British at all until the 1830s? One explanation, despite its Asiatic roots, is that the British adapted tea to their daily lives and culture so thoroughly that it became their national beverage long before it became British. Tea in Britain held a dual nature for a very long time. On one hand, it was popular in all areas of society and the nature of its consumption was certainly British. On the other hand, tea itself was exotic. Although it became familiar to the British who drank it, tea was a foreign product: alluringly new, different, and oriental. It is the British style of drinking tea that creates the image of British tea. Yet, how this style came about is more often overlooked. Beginning in 1834 with the end of the East India Company's monopoly on the China trade,[4] a new tea industry arose with Britain at the helm. By 1890, barely sixty years later, tea was wholly British in a way that it had not been before. Tea's transition from a favorite national beverage to a British one can be attributed to two complementary occurrences. First, the new tea industry that began in the 1830s was completely British and relied on no Chinese labor, equipment, or knowledge. Previously the tea plant, processing methods, and trade were all exclusively Chinese since no one but the Chinese had any knowledge of how to cultivate the plants. The British devised their own methods of cultivation based on horticultural observation, and introduced manufacturing to the processing. Second, the

[4] In this paper the phrase 'China trade' is used as a less cumbersome way to refer to the international European tea trade with China, in which China occupied the position of power due to their production of goods that Europeans deemed exotic.

importance of the British middle class cannot be overstated. Without a pre-existing consumer base to support the new industry it could not have flourished. Not only did the British accept and actively seek to acquire tea to the exclusion of other recreational drinks, they created a niche for tea in their society and filled it with distinctly British customs. Drinking tea came to coincide more and more with the idea of social gentility, whose symbols the rising middle class eagerly adopted.

Tracing tea's acceptance as a national beverage is an important part of understanding how tea came to be integrated into British society. The depth to which the British assimilated the drink into their culture explains how easily they took to the idea of a new tea industry in the nineteenth century. Although it was firmly established as a national drink by the mid-eighteenth century, tea imports to Britain were small and exclusive.[5] As with most exotic imports, tea was first available to the upper class. By 1770, tea was readily available across the social spectrum and could be classified as a national drink, or one consumed by the people in ways unique to their culture and social influences.

Tea arrived relatively late to England. It probably appeared a little sooner than the first dated reference in 23 September 1658 found in London's *Mercurius Politicus*.[6] Even so, this date is still more than fifty years after the Dutch first brought tea to the Netherlands. The remainder of the seventeenth century met with low demand for tea, as its novelty status and high price ensured that the only people partaking of the beverage were the wealthy or the nobility. The lords Ossory and Arlington were among the first to purchase tea in a respectable bulk to

[5] Moxham, 21.
[6] *Ibid*., 17.

present to their friends.[7] Here is a telling example of tea's early influence. Although trading was not a respectable occupation for a nobleman in the seventeenth century, at that time tea was so exotic – so new and rare – that it could not be considered a trade good to the aristocracy.[8] Nothing as crass as *trade* happened; instead, tea merely changed hands between members of the nobility interested in the acquisition of more worldly tastes.[9] Often, there would be no exchange of goods that might signal a transaction. A hostess might offer some tea to her guests as a novelty, or give it to a friend as a gift.

Tea had limited popularity in the first fifty years after it arrived in England. This was due to its novelty and regulation within the upper class. While the nobility would eventually play a crucial role in popularizing tea, during the seventeenth century the drink was mainly consumed by the upper class. In particular, Catherine of Braganza made tea a regular drink at court. She brought several chests of tea as part of her dowry from Portugal when she came to England to marry Charles II.[10] The approval of royalty has always carried its own validation, and Catherine's fondness for tea spread to the rest of the court. By the late 1600s tea was firmly entrenched in court life and indicative of high social status.[11]

The manners associated with taking tea evolved as teatime did. As with teatime itself, the code of manners began with the aristocracy. Catherine of Braganza, who introduced tea to the court of Charles II in 1662, imported delicate manners for drinking tea. Before, tea existed

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[7] J. M. Scott, *The Great Tea Venture* (New York, NY: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1965), 90.
[8] *Ibid*.
[9] William H. Ukers, *All About Tea vol. 1* (New York, NY: The Tea and Coffee Trade Journal Company, 1935), 44.
[10] William H. Ukers, *All About Tea vol. 2* (New York, NY: The Tea and Coffee Trade Journal Company, 1935), 402.
[11] Edward Bramah, *Tea & Coffee: A Modern View of Three Hundred Years of Tradition* (London: Hutchinson of London, 1972), 77.

only in coffee houses – a masculine venue.[12] The British public soon adapted the Portuguese customs of Queen Catherine. Manners dictated everything from how much tea could be politely consumed; the amount varied over the years as tea became less expensive, but a general rule was that a lady should drink no more than any of her companions.[13] The hostess followed rules as well, the most important of which was when she should refill a guest's cup. In many instances, the guest provided the cue with a cup turned bottom-up on its saucer. But in Edinburgh a hostess would have a set of numbered spoons so that each cup returned to the correct guest, as it was most impolite to give anyone more tea before everyone had finished the first cup.[14] Manners like this became more intricate in almost the same time frame as the tea services. Intricacy conveyed propriety and gentility.

A brief look at wages as opposed to the cost of tea during the early eighteenth century indicates that tea was beginning to enter an affordable price range. In the early eighteenth century the average laborer earned between 16d. and 18d. per day.[15] An entire crate of cheap Bohea tea sold at .02 pounds sterling; approximately five shillings or five days work.[16] The middle and lower classes, despite a desire for tea, simply could not afford the expense necessary to enjoy tea on a daily basis. Not until the end of the eighteenth century would tea be relatively inexpensive and readily available to anyone who wanted it.

Consumption of tea increased dramatically during the eighteenth century when it began circulating through the middle and lower classes. The increase in tea's popularity was only

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[12] Bramah, 402.
[13] Ukers, vol. 2, 403.
[14] *Ibid*.
[15] Douglas Hay et al., *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth Century England* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1975), 151-2.
[16] Maxine Berg et al., *Goods from the East , 1600-1800 : Trading Eurasia* (New York, NY : Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 267.

partially due to increasing availability. The decline in tea's exclusivity to the upper class is reflected in the sharp spike in tea imports from the early 1700s to the middle of the century. The number, over one million lbs, represents far more tea than the aristocracy could drink by themselves.[17] The preference for tea over other beverages also rose slowly at first. Coffee had already established a tentative hold as a recreational drink, and tea joined it shortly after its introduction.[18] Tea was not instantly accepted by any means; several essays are dedicated to the detrimental effects of tea on society, the British people, and general health. Jonas Hanway, a British traveler and philanthropist, goes so far as to insist that tea is similar to gin as a perfidious drink in promoting sloth, carelessness, and other vices![19]

In addition, there is little early evidence that either beverage was actually enjoyed. Much was made of trying the new drink, which was advertised as a powerful curative, but not for a few years does anyone ever mention liking it.[20] This is probably due in part to the fact that drinking tea was still *avant garde* at this time, and anyone of the upper class who wished to be fashionable would drink it regardless of its taste. The other factor was most likely the quality of the tea that arrived in the late seventeenth century. Stale and usually adulterated with inferior leaves, tea did not receive the preparatory treatment that might ameliorate those deficiencies.

In the seventeenth century, methods of preparing tea had not developed into the refined processes of later years. The British did not yet know how hot to boil water to make tea, or how long to steep the leaves. Even in the unlikely event that a crate of tea arrived to British merchants unadulterated, boiling the tea in hard water as opposed to soft water changes the

[17] Moxham, 24.
[18] Ukers, vol. 1, 41.
[19] Jonas Hanway, *Essay on Tea vol. 2* (London: H. Woodfall, 1756), 145-147.
[20] Ukers, vol. 1, 39.

taste.[21] Later, grocers and packing houses would blend tea to suit regional types of water, but in the seventeenth century the quality of the water was not considered in tea-making.[22] Not only that, but the tea was also adulterated and this affected the taste. Instead either individual cups were boiled for the nobility or a crate was boiled all at once and put into a keg in a coffee house.[23]

The coffee houses of England took the first step in bringing tea to those not of the nobility. As the name suggests, coffee houses originally served coffee. Soon after, the establishments added other exotic drinks such as chocolate and tea. The options available to coffee house customers increased quickly. Just five years after the first coffee house opened in 1652, the proprietors of Garraway's Coffee house in London offered tea in their selection of drinks.[24] This was the first instance of tea becoming available to a wider public. Coffee houses acted in conjunction with smuggling to bring tea to the public at large. Together, these initiated a change in the consumption and British view of tea. According to Scott:

> "Coffee houses helped to establish tea as a national beverage. Smuggling, the other helper, brought it to the home…Tea without a lady to pour it is mere self-indulgence. So men took tea at home...Housewife and maiden wanted to be taken out – to tea in tea-gardens…"[25]

When women, who took their tea in the home, entered the public sphere to enjoy tea as an increasingly social beverage, tea entered another phase of its adaptation to British life.

Tea-gardens completed the shift in tea's availability. Their attraction was due to their charm, affordability, and entertainment. As tea gained popularity among the middle and lower

[21] C. R. Harler, *The Culture and Marketing of Tea*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 244.
[22] *Ibid*., 244.
[23] Ukers, vol. 2, 402.
[24] Bramah, 77.
[25] Scott, 153.

classes in the mid-eighteenth century, new avenues had to be found to accommodate the demand. The first tea-garden opened in 1732, and met these requirements.[26] They were adapted from the public gardens of the seventeenth century, and offered a fashionable location where men and women could relax and enjoy refreshments and company.[27] Although some tea-gardens such as Vauxhall catered to an elite crowd in later years, at their opening most other gardens were free or their admission was inexpensive.[28] The refreshments and entertainment could either be included in the initial admission or cost extra, but the prices were not prohibitive. Most of the gardens were not exclusive. A lady and a maid could both enjoy the same *al fresco* tea, sweets, and concerts in the tea-gardens.[29] Tea-gardens and coffee houses were well frequented and affordable. In this way they contributed greatly to the easy access to and popularity of tea in the last half of the eighteenth century.

Tea time is another unique feature of tea consumption in Britain. It has a long history, and evolved with the shift in tea's availability. Tea time contributes to tea's status as a national beverage as well, because of how widely Britons observe the tradition. Tea time began where tea was first introduced: within the ranks of the nobility. Anna Maria Russell, wife of the 7th Duke of Bedford, often complained of hunger pains in the lengthy gap between breakfast and dinner during the nineteenth century.[30] She introduced the idea of taking tea in the afternoon with cakes and other snacks, and it was soon a fashionable repast for upper class ladies.[31]

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[26] Ukers, vol. 2, 389.
[27] Warwick Wroth, *The London Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1896), 1.
[28] *Ibid*.
[29] Ukers, vol. 2, 389.
[30] *Ibid*., 405.
[31] Bramah, 133.

Tea time passed through a greater number of incarnations. In the earliest days of tea in England the phrase 'teatime' could be indicative of any occasion when a host served tea, such as a reception.[32] Along the same lines, teatime was often referred to as simply having 'a dish of tea,' in which tea was taken in a saucer. This Elizabethan phraseology lasted until the nineteenth century but during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was often quite literal.[33] Teatime as a light meal with tea came about during the eighteenth century, when tea's popularity rose so quickly. By 1780 it had become a recognized and thoroughly integrated aspect of tea's presence in British society.[34] The Duchess of Bedford finalized the proper time of day for teatime – five o'clock – in the early nineteenth century, but teatime as its own institution had been in practice for decades by most of British society.[35] The middle class adopted teatime at five o'clock in the evening almost immediately after that. Teatime as it is known today has been a presence in British life ever since the first decades of the 1800s. By the nineteenth century, teatime as a part of daily life had spread to all social circles and classes.

Unsurprisingly, demand for tea rose as the availability increased the consumer base. The East India Company's monopoly ensured that they could charge an exorbitantly high tax on tea imports. The average tax on tea until 1784 was 119%.[36] The average price on the domestic market was correspondingly high. Even after the tax was lowered after 1784, merchants paid insurance taxes on their shipments corresponding to the value of the cargo; since tea was so valuable, the costs were high and needed to be recovered at auction to meet the overhead.[37]

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[32] Ukers, vol. 2, 405.
[33] *Ibid*., 404.
[34] *Ibid*., 405.
[35] *Ibid*.
[36] Moxham, 27.
[37] Stephen Dowell, *A History of Taxation and Taxes in England from the Earliest Times to the Year 1885 vol. 3* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1888), 150.

Despite these restrictive costs, tea enjoyed an immense increase in popularity from the seventeenth century to the eighteenth century. In 1664, Britain imported 100 lbs of tea. In 1685, the figure was 12,070 lbs.[38] In 1721, less than forty years later, tea imports passed one million lbs.[39] The nineteenth century saw even larger shipments. In 1834, the year that the East India Company lost its monopoly on the trade with China, imports rose to 32,000,000 lbs of tea.[40] The magnitude of the tea imports eventually led to a shortage of silver necessary to pay the Chinese in full.[41]

Shipments of tea originally contained mostly green tea. Because that was what was available, that was what the consumers drank. However, it did not keep nearly as well on the voyage to Britain as black tea did. Green and black teas come from the same plant, the difference is a result of processing the tea. Green tea is unfermented, oolong tea is partially fermented, and black tea is fully fermented.[42] Because the fermentation process allows the tea leaves to retain better flavor longer, they gained preference with merchants for their shelf life and sustainability during travel. Black teas steadily replaced green teas as the favorite. By the nineteenth century, nearly all tea consumed in Britain was the black variety.[43] This distinguished British tea drinkers from their Asian counterparts, who preferred green tea.

Tea was received well in Britain from the beginning. The taste of tea may initially have left something to be desired, but its popularity implies that initial taste was not the only deciding factor in its reception. After lords Ossory and Arlington introduced the drink to their circle of

[38] Moxham, 21.
[39] *Ibid*.
[40] Ukers, vol. 1, 77.
[41] Scott, 52.
[42] Bramah, 20.
[43] Moxham, 31.

friends, tea established a popular consumer base in the nobility. It should be noted that shortly after the lords bought and delivered the leaves, tea appeared in the coffee houses. Tea's availability to those outside the noble families lessened its immediate appeal; aristocrats no longer handled it because after that it became a trade good.[44] From that point on, nobles enjoyed their tea as much as the next Briton but would have no part in buying or selling it. By the end of the seventeenth century nobles had left the transfer of tea to the merchant middle class.

The middle class had the greatest impact on tea, in no small part because tea had a great influence on them. When the middle class began to drink tea, it received an immediate positive response. As mentioned previously, the coffee houses were extremely popular. Although coffee houses allowed the British public to partake of tea, coffee, and chocolate, the British public in question was limited to middle-class men.[45] Men's consumption of tea differed from women's. Until the advent of the tea-garden, women took tea in the home. They also drank tea at tea time with female friends.[46] Tea-gardens, social by nature, had a 'season' wherein they were open from approximately April until September.[47] This may have made the gardens more popular with women because the season for the tea gardens echoed the season for ladies to be formally presented into society. The inclusive nature of the tea-gardens continued what coffee houses had begun. As the popularity of tea-gardens grew, men and women of all classes could enjoy tea in a respectable, fashionable atmosphere.

The respectability of tea is also linked to the rising middle class. The relationship was symbiotic. Men and women of the middle class adopted established, acceptable norms from the

[44] Scott, 90.
[45] Moxham, 40.
[46] *Ibid*.
[47] Wroth, 7.

upper class, and the respectability retained therein passed to them. Activities such as tea time and social tea drinking provided a more genteel veneer to an already genteel drink. When many of the wealthier members of the middle class, who sought to gain social acceptance by mimicking the aristocracy, began drinking tea they loaned the beverage some of their prestige, much in the same way that the nobility had. Thus, the lines between tea, respectability, and the middle class have always been somewhat blurry because one contributed equally to the others. By the early nineteenth century, it might be said that the middle class began to drink tea in part because it was respectable, and also that the middle class made tea respectable by drinking it.

Gradually tea began to make its way down to the lower classes. The poor did not drink tea in coffee houses and seldom at home. The leaves were expensive in the seventeenth century, and this impeded its consumption. By the eighteenth century tea was much more available and affordable, and in the nineteenth it was common. Still, the lower class drank mainly adulterated tea up until the 1875 Food and Drug Act prohibiting adulteration. Adulterated tea, or tea mixed with inferior leaves or containing the dried dregs of previously brewed tea, cost much less and could be found almost anywhere.[48]

The poor might not have had easy access to tea as a beverage in the seventeenth century, but it is quite possible that many more of them drank it than is projected. After all, tea was not just a popular beverage; the British held it in high esteem as a panacea until almost the twentieth century.[49] Tea functioned as a medicinal plant, and was treated as such. The leaves sold by apothecaries were just as costly as the tea sold in coffee houses. The poor probably drank tea more as a medicine than as a popular drink until the mid-eighteenth century. Tea leaves that

[48] Ukers vol. 2, 121.
[49] Moxham, 22.

were too expensive to buy as a luxury might not be too expensive to buy when someone in the family fell ill. During the eighteenth century, of course, tea became affordable enough and available enough that the lower class had little trouble obtaining it.[50]

At the turn of the nineteenth century, tea had been an important component of British culture for one hundred and fifty years. Its social standing had been secured by the British nobility, passing subsequently to the middle class and finally to the working classes. Its associated rituals and functions were distinctly British. By 1800, the British had very thoroughly made tea into a national beverage with unique accoutrements and customs, available to all Britons.

The tea service, or the equipage, is perhaps the most visible mark of British influence on tea. The Chinese sent some of their tea pots with the first shipments of tea in the 1600s. These pots were made of heavy, unglazed ceramic.[51] Almost immediately the British began to adapt the designs, although they were limited by the purpose the pots needed to serve. A tea pot needed to be large enough to hold several cups of tea but not too heavy to lift; it needed to balance well to avoid tipping over; it needed to be easy to clean.[52] The result is that the basic design remained the same while the amount of decoration indicated what social class the owner occupied.[53]

Teapots were not the only aspect of the equipage to undergo change. The equipage as a whole conveyed the image of British social gentility, and all pieces of the tea set received equally respectful treatment by their craftsmen and their owners. Basic pieces in the set included

[50] Ukers vol. 1, 46.
[51] Bramah, 131.
[52] *Ibid*.
[53] *Ibid*.

the teapot, teacups, saucers, and sugar and cream bowls; sugar tongs, spoons, and kettles frequently made appearances in complete matched sets.[54] One particular instance of British changes to the basic tea service emerged to become an icon of the eighteenth century: the tea urn. A tea urn was little more than a kettle, but at the same time the two can hardly be compared at all. Often made from ornately crafted silver plate and functioning as the centerpiece of the equipage, the tea urn featured a tap at its base instead of a spout.[55] The essential elegance of its design separated the tea urn from its lower class counterpart.

The more complicated tea services became, the more opportunity presented itself for refinement of both the sets and those who bought them. Although the lower classes were quite likely to own crude tea sets, it was the use of silver and fine ceramic by the upper and middle classes that contributed most to the genteel British image of the equipage. These materials, already "…made of an established prestige material…connected the drinking of an exotic beverage with an elite market and the cultural practices of gentility."[56] Not only that, but the equipage was not identified with regular tableware. The British bought it separately, allowing tea and its accoutrements their own unique niche in the world of luxury goods. This disparity also allowed the British to indulge themselves in expensive materials; an equipage often occupied a higher price range than ordinary tableware.[57]

The British tea industry began in the 1830s, but British silversmiths and potters started their tea-based industries much earlier, in 1670 and 1693 respectively.[58] What is important is

[54] Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 163.
[55] *Ibid*., 164.
[56] *Ibid*., 163.
[57] *Ibid*., 309.
[58] Bramah, 131.

that the results of these industries were distinctly British. The Chinese only sent basic pots, the form of which did not survive two decades in Britain. The other particulars such as the cream jug, sugar bowl and tongs, and saucers had no Chinese equivalent.[59] They are specifically of British origin, making another instance of unique British influence that contributed to tea's national status. Not only did the creation of a British equipage factor heavily into tea's acceptance into British society, these early crafting industries gave a precedent for founding the tea industry of the nineteenth century.

The rituals associated with taking tea at the beginning of the nineteenth century had also solidified into distinctly British forms. For instance, the practice of adding milk and sugar took on unparalleled significance in Britain as opposed to other countries. In China, tea is consumed without milk or sugar; in Britain, even the order that they mixed in the additives mattered.[60] Sugar evolved a less stringent application than milk. For a perfect cup of tea, one poured milk into the teacup first. The most sensible reason for this is that it adding milk first makes it simple to gauge the desired amount. It is also a means to check to see if the milk is spoiled; if it is, one has not wasted a cup of tea by adding the spoiled milk last. Tea enthusiasts insisted that adding the milk after the tea thickens the consistency, which is preferred thin.[61] Only those who adhered to British tea-taking practices followed rules such as this. Rituals such as the correct order of preparing a cup of tea permeated all areas of British life from the cozy home to the bustle of the public tea-gardens.

Likewise, none of the institutions such as tea time or tea-gardens were replicated either in China or in Europe. The more these British institutions evolved as time went on, the more

[59] *Ibid*.
[60] Ukers, vol. 2, 397.
[61] *Ibid*., 411.

ostensibly British they became. Inclusive and respectable, drinking tea made all Britons respectable. This sense of respectability, which was fostered in other areas of British life as well, had long range repercussions on how the British viewed themselves and other cultures. It showcases the extent to which British society integrated tea into their existing routines, and adjusted their lives to accommodate tea. These adjustments and the creation of new routines indicate the British acceptance of tea. The British adapted tea to suit them, not the other way around.

There is a strong comparison to be made between tea becoming China's national beverage and becoming Britain's national beverage. Tea was not always synonymous with China, either. Although tea had been consumed in China since at least 317 AD, it remained exclusive to their upper class until several centuries later.[62] Tea became China's national beverage during the Tang Dynasty, which ran from 618 AD to 906 AD.[63] The Tang Dynasty had many similarities to Victorian Britain. Both societies experienced an increase in prosperity and the consumption of luxury goods from the growth of foreign trade. Most importantly, both societies introduced tea to the upper class, where it became a court drink, and then it gradually moved to the other classes until everyone drank it frequently.[64] Carrying the comparison a bit further, Britain is following a pattern that China set. The difference is that while tea was Chinese before it was China's national drink, tea was Britain's national drink before it became British. The distinction came later, beginning in the 1830s.

The 1830s marked the beginning of the British tea industry with the end of the East India Company's monopoly and the rise of tea cultivation in India. It is also remarkable for the

[62] Ukers, vol. 1, 3.
[63] Moxham, 52.
[64] *Ibid*.

noticeable deviations from the Chinese methods of cultivation and processing. These deviations had to occur because only the Chinese knew how to grow and process tea, and they had no inclination to share their methods. China's control over the knowledge of cultivation allowed them control over the market. The British, disinclined to let that continue, began trying to seed Chinese tea plants in India. However, early efforts failed almost completely because the British had no way to gauge what tea plants needed in terms of nutrients in the soil, rainfall, and altitude. These horticultural challenges would be overcome in Assam, where the British also integrated machines into the stages of cultivating, processing, and packaging tea. These three things made the new tea industry distinctly British and separated it neatly from its Chinese predecessor. Advertising and the introduction of name-brand tea in Britain reinforced the established notion of the drink as Britain's national beverage. The changes made to tea starting in the 1830s, both in its new industry and in British society, completed the long process of making tea British.

Tea's lengthy process of becoming British included changes and adaptations to social, commercial, and industrial aspects of British life. For one hundred and fifty years, tea's popularity and accessibility increased until everyone in Britain wanted it and could easily obtain it. The requirements to be a national beverage had been met, and the British enjoyment of tea enabled them to create a new tea industry from the ground up after the end of the East India Company's monopoly in 1834. Even at that point, tea itself was a Chinese product; it could not be British until the completion of the tea industry that the British would begin in India. The creation of this new industry was the final step in removing the vestiges of exoticism from tea and making it completely British.

CHAPTER 3

THE EAST INDIA COMPANY AND ITS SUCCESSORS IN THE TEA MARKET

The gradual evolution of the tea trade away from China is no less important than the cultural aspect of the drink. The scale of the operation shifted over two centuries, growing exponentially after demand increased in the 1740s. Only one entity legally conducted the tea trade with China: the East India Company. The Company held the monopoly from 1661 until 1834. Although the monopoly was extremely profitable for both the Company and for Britain, the Company's monopoly limited competition and fixed prices. The presence of the Company gave the British a firm foothold in the tea trade with China, but did not constitute a separate British tea trade. Many companies from various countries traded with China for the same exotic goods as Britain. The Company established Britain as a primary participant in the trade with the East Indies. After the dissolution of their monopoly in 1834, that status transferred to the new companies that developed in its wake. The subsequent boom of competition after 1834 allowed the growth of the tea trade among independent British merchants, and through their numbers contributed to the burgeoning British tea trade. While the British docked their ships in Canton alongside other European countries buying exotic goods, it is the British who hold the closest association with buying tea. The foreign competition was limited, but the smugglers were a real and constant threat to profits for the Company. Although some smugglers were French and Dutch, most were certainly English.[65] Mr. Samuel Wilson, grocer and former runner of smuggled goods, testified at the Smuggling Committee of 1745 that "…the vessels employed in the running of goods do most of them belong to the subjects of this Kingdom, and are generally

[65] Hay et al., 123.

Folkstone cutters…that the smugglers buy their goods with money, or wool; and that the principal commodity is tea."[66]

Trade with China brought widespread familiarity with tea as well as other foreign goods. The East India Company controlled the trade with China and India, and by extension trade of Chinese and Indian goods within Britain. Therefore the Company was the sole importer of exotic goods from these areas into Britain. The East India Company, popularly called the John Company, originated in 1600.[67] The origins lie in growing opportunities for global trade marked the most noticeably by the decline of Spanish naval power after 1588.[68] The void left by the destruction of the Spanish Armada would soon be filled by other countries, England and the Netherlands first among them. Over the next few years these two surpassed the rest of their competition, and by 1600 England's fleet gained enough ships and navigational experience to figure prominently in the trade with the East Indies. The distance proved prohibitive to most overland trade, leaving ships the sole method of acquiring the goods. Queen Elizabeth I, who had a powerful navy and was fond of luxury, allowed the formation of the East India Company for the purpose of trade with India and the acquisition of foreign goods.[69]

Trade, at its basis, is the acquisition not only of goods but power.[70] A country's wealth manifests itself in trade. A wealthy country has the means to acquire rare items, and lavish displays of fine cloth and unusual comestibles are designed to impress citizens and foreign courts alike. Sometimes the display means more than the exigent wealth of a country; Elizabeth loved

[66] *Ibid*., 123.
[67] Moxham, 19.
[68] Laura Rocchio, "Winds of Change: Defeat of the Spanish Armada, 1588," NASA Landsat Science: Geographia, January 30, 2014, accessed December 5, 2015, landsat.gsfc.nasa.gov/?p=7542.
[69] Charter Granted by Queen Elizabeth to the East India Company, 31 December, 1600.
[70] Robert C. Thucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), 182-3.

and exploited finery and festivities like her father Henry VIII, who left the treasury depleted.[71] What is most important here is that Elizabeth understood the effect of a spectacle. An expensive show, given without regard to cost, is often better received by both subjects and foreign visitors than ascetic court life and a full treasury. A monarch was supposed to have the best of everything. Knowing how to manipulate this connection meant that Elizabeth could effectively shift the image of power, and by extension power itself, to her monarchy. The formation of the East India Company kept a steady flow of exotic goods coming to England allowing not only the monarchy but increasing numbers of Britons to harness the power garnered from the ownership of the exotic.

The Charter which established the East India Company provided it with substantial flexibility and power.[72] Not only could it trade on its own account without reporting its income to the Crown, it could also decide its own taxes on its trade goods.[73] Furthermore, the Company did not have to report this income to the crown. Queen Elizabeth I created the Company as a conduit for all foreign trade, and it had branches in the East Indies, the Americas, and continental Europe.[74] It functioned primarily as a large-scale trading company at first, importing large amounts of corn to feed Britain as well as smaller specialized cargoes of silk and spices. After being granted a monopoly on trade to the East Indies in 1661, the Company acquired many of the powers usually confined to the British government and the authority to use them. The East India Company governed India, and along with that power came all the secondary authority it entailed: tax collection, law implementation and enforcement, and negotiations with foreign countries all

[71] Clayton Roberts, David Roberts, and Douglas R. Bisson, eds., *A History of England, vol. 1: Prehistory to 1714*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc., 2009), 287.
[72] Charter Granted by Queen Elizabeth.
[73] *Ibid*.
[74] Roberts, Roberts, and Bisson, eds., 346.

fell under Company jurisdiction.[75] Within India the Company regulated their trade and conducted military sorties when border disputes arose. The Company governed much of India, but mostly it governed its own interests. Only the Company entered India; until 1834 its charter forbade British subjects from settling there.[76]

The ebb and flow of Britain's market cycles ultimately affected the Company despite its authority and autonomy, and it still took business risks. Having benefited greatly from the Navigation Acts put in place by Oliver Cromwell in 1651, the Company was in a somewhat precarious position when King Charles II claimed the throne in 1660. The East India Company needed to make a sufficient show of humility to ensure the king's favor. To this end the Company sent Charles gifts of fine silver plate and a polite request for the renewal of their charter in 1661.[77] The gifts pleased Charles enough that he not only renewed the Company's charter, but also granted them a second monopoly on all British trade in the East.

This point requires a brief explanation. The terms 'the East' or 'the East Indies' could refer to any number of disparate areas. India, China, the various islands in the Pacific Ocean including Ceylon and Java, Japan, and "…everything to the East of Persia, to the South of Great Tartary all the way to the South Sea" was at one point or another considered part of 'the East.'[78] The vague nature of what constitutes 'the East' in a distressing amount of source material can cause confusion about the East India Company's monopolies. The Company had more than one; the first, granted by Queen Elizabeth I, was a general monopoly on the trade in the East, but it

[75] John Bruce, *Annals of the East India Company: From Their Establishment by the Charter of Queen Elizabeth, 1600, to the Union of the London and English East India Companies 1707-8 vol. 3* (London: Black, Perry, and Kingsbury, 1810), 133.

[76] Charter Granted by Queen Elizabeth.

[77] Moxham, 20.

[78] Berg et al., *Goods from the East*, 234-236.

did not include China. The monopoly granted by King Charles II did. In both cases, the Company remained the only legitimate trader in the area. By 1693 this included trade with the Chinese.[79]

The Company had not expected such generosity, but they were happy to take advantage of it. By 1693, the trade with the Chinese was off to a slow but determined start, and attempts were made to establish permanent contacts.[80] For approximately the next one hundred and fifty years, the East India Company renewed both its charter and its monopoly, keeping control of one the most lucrative sources of trade in the British Empire.

The East India Company operated similarly to a sovereign and not a business. This is clearly demonstrated with the British acquisition of Ceylon from the Dutch. In 1637, the Dutch won all of Ceylon from the Portuguese.[81] Two of the major sea powers of the century, the Dutch and the Portuguese vied for power and territory in the East Indies, and Ceylon was a rich and strategic prize. The Dutch controlled Ceylon until 1782, the year in which the fierce competition between the Dutch and British East India Companies reached its peak. The British took control of Tricomanlee, one of the most important Dutch ports in Ceylon, which undermined the Dutch presence on the island, and caused conflict between both traders and administrators there. The Dutch entered into negotiations with the British East India Company, and ceded Ceylon to it in 1796, getting nothing in return.[82] The Dutch did not cede the island to the British government; they ceded it to the Company. This was the extent to which the Company had the power to act on the British government's behalf. Another example, and the one that had the biggest impact on

[79] Bruce, *Annals*, 139.
[80] *Ibid*.
[81] Moxham, 157-8.
[82] *Ibid*.

the future British tea trade, was the East India Company's annexation of Assam. Assam, a territory in the northern part of India, had been the center of a regional dispute in the first Burmese War (1824 to 1826). The Company brought in soldiers, pacified Assam, and annexed it in 1826, acting, once again, with the full powers of the British government.[83] The tea plants that grew wild in Assam would be the foundation of the new British tea industry.

For approximately the next one hundred and fifty years, the East India Company renewed both its charter and its monopoly, keeping control of one the most lucrative sources of trade in the British Empire. Although the monopolies allowed profits to rise other businesses disliked the exclusivity afforded to the East India Company. However, the biggest problem facing the Company's monopolies was not British criticism but uncertain Chinese support. China signed the monopoly agreement as well, and continued to do so for the subsequent renewals. Unfortunately, due to the growing hostility that resulted from the increased opium trade, China refused to sign the renewal of 1834.[84] It was partially the fear that China might eventually close her ports entirely to foreign trade that prompted the British to begin exploring the possibility of growing tea in Assam.[85]

The Company's charter came up for renewal in 1834.[86] Unfortunately although the charter successfully passed muster for renewal, the Company's monopoly on the trade in India did not. The Company's monopoly on India ended in 1813, although Parliament allowed the monopoly on trade with China to continue for another twenty years along with the ban on British

[83] Bramah, 82.
[84] Ukers, vol. 1, 137.
[85] *Ibid*.
[86] Moxham, 70-1.

settlement in India.[87] The monopoly's end in 1834 did not come as a surprise. Parliament stripped the Company of each of its monopolies; China was only the last. As of April 22, 1834 trade with India and China opened to all interested parties.[88] This had wide-spread consequences for the Company and for British trade as a whole. The ramifications to the trade with India and China are extensive enough to merit their own paper. For now the primary concern is simply that the Company's loss of their monopoly opened trade. In China, this meant that any British merchant who wished could legally visit Canton to engage in business. In India, there is a secondary aspect that bears mention. Not only was India open to any British trader, but also to British citizens for settlement. Prior to the end of the Company's monopoly, India was closed to British settlement; access was restricted unless one was part of the Company or a member of Her Majesty's army.[89] After these bans lifted, a steady flow of Britons came to live and trade in India.

The East India Company continued its activities after its monopoly ended. It ceased to trade on its own behalf after 1834. The Company became an agent of the Crown, carrying on collecting taxes and administering India even though it lost a fair amount of its power. The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857-8 cast serious doubt on the Company and its ability to utilize its powers properly. The Mutiny occurred approximately twenty years after the first British forays into cultivating tea leaves in India. The conflicts did not reach Assam; it was too remote in the far north and lacked maintained roads to reach it.[90] The effects of the Mutiny reached Assam and the British tea industry by way of the total removal of the East India Company rather than interruptions of trade due to the conflict. In the wake of the war, Queen Victoria liquidated the

[87] Ukers, vol. 1, 71.
[88] Moxham, 70-1..
[89] Scott, 66.
[90] Moxham, 110.

Company's assets and absorbed them into the Crown.[91] The institutions that the Company had overseen carried on, but under new management. Instead of a Board of Governors from the East India Company and their officers, a Viceroy and his appointees would govern India and its people. Lord Canning was instituted as the first Viceroy, ousting the Company from any connection to the rule of India.[92] The loss of the East India Company meant a break from one conglomerate which, though British, controlled the whole of the tea trade to the British Isles. The resulting redistribution of trading power to all British merchants fomented the idea of a British tea trade, instead of a British company overseeing the tea trade.

New venues, new competition, and the weakening of the East India Company's authority all coalesced into an important new beginning for tea. Although China remained the major exporter of tea, Britain was looking for a new source as early as 1822. In that year the Royal Society of Arts offered fifty guineas as an incentive to begin growing China tea in the British colonies, although nothing came of the attempt.[93] This indicated a British desire not to rely solely upon China for their favorite drink. The attempt to grow China tea in the British colonies did not necessarily signal the conscious preference for a British tea industry, but it certainly conveyed a drive to participate in the cultivation of tea leaves and contribute British-grown leaves to the existing tea trade. Later, with India open to settlement, the British remembered Sir Joseph Banks' reports in 1788 of native tea leaves growing in Assam.[94] Lacking the Chinese plants, the British decided to try the colonial leaves instead. These are the first roots of an exclusively British tea trade, free from foreign influences and one omnipotent corporation.

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[91] *Ibid*., 70-71.
[92] *Ibid*., 109.
[93] Bramah, 81. The British tended to refer to Chinese tea almost exclusively as 'China tea.' I intend to keep the phrase that is so common in the source material.
[94] Ukers, vol. 1, 134.

Until 1830, the British had been making their mark on the tea trade by the sheer magnitude of their demand. As the sole purveyor of tea from China, the East India Company had to keep up with the demand of British consumers and also meet their overhead. Turning a profit was an easy task, since the acting powers allowed the Company to set their prices. Because tea became such a profitable import so quickly, the Company set the prices high during the seventeenth century, and for approximately the first fifty years of the eighteenth century.[95] This tendency toward high prices limited tea to coffee houses and the upper class until the mid-eighteenth century. However, buyers at auction were willing to pay substantially more than the price that the East India auction houses set.[96] Bohea tea, the cheapest black tea available, serves as an example here; the amount of tea is measured in pounds, and the put-up and bidding prices are measured in pence.[97] The put-up price, which is the price at which the auction sets the tea, remains constant for twenty years. The bidding price, which is what the tea actually sold for, is usually more than ten pence higher. Another benefit of the Company's monopoly was that, as a British company, all the imports that passed through East India Company's shipping did so duty free. The profits generated by the legal evasion of this cost were enormous, and kept the Company interested in trading tea before it became widely popular.[98]

The Company ran into two major problems with regards to the tea trade: adulteration and smuggling. Adulteration of tea leaves, or the mixing of quality leaves with used or lower grade leaves, happened both in China and in Britain. The Chinese, who knew perfectly well that the Company merchants had to buy what they were given because they certainly were not going to

[95] Scott, 101.
[96] Hoh-Heung and Lorna H. Mui, "Smuggling and the British Tea Trade Before 1784," *The American Historical Review* 74, no. 1(October 1968): 52-3.
[97] *Ibid*., 53.
[98] Bramah, 93.

get tea anywhere else, had as much of an eye for profit as the British. There were no large scale tea plantations in China, so tea passed from small growers through a myriad of bureaucratic hands before it ever reached Canton.[99] By the time British merchants bought crates of tea, there was a better than average chance that freshly processed leaves had been mixed with leaves of inferior quality.

The Company merchants could do nothing about adulteration until the tea left China, and after that the British contributed just as much to the problem. When the British learned about adulteration they picked up the practice and improved it. Drying out used leaves and sifting them throughout a new crate of tea let merchants increase their bulk without increasing their personal costs. Crumbling up leaves of different domestic plants such as the beech or hawthorn into a larger bundle also increased the merchant's profits.[100] Since no grocer or merchant would ever tell a customer that his leaves were adulterated, he could charge full price. Meanwhile, the British public had to buy tea and hope for the best. Even as late as the mid-nineteenth century, adulteration occurred regularly. The practice became so widespread and so prevalent that in 1875 Parliament passed the Food and Drug Act, which outlawed, among other things, the adulteration of tea leaves.[101]

Adulteration plagued tea for over two hundred years after it first arrived in Britain. Smuggling, the other major problem for the East India Company, was resolved quite quickly in comparison. Smuggling tea developed almost immediately after the Company began importing the product. Heavy duties were the root of the smuggling problem, which stemmed more from a

[99] *Ibid*.
[100] Ukers, vol. 1, 505.
[101] Bramah, 81.

desire to obtain tea at lower prices than a desire to make money.[102] It is difficult to track the depth of the smuggling in Britain. Because it was an illegal activity, no balance sheets or receipts exist. The best way to gauge the level of activity is to look at the increases in imports in relation to increases and decreases in taxation, as tea was one of the most likely commodities to be taxed by the British government.[103] Another way is to view the official numbers of tea sold at East India Company auctions prior to a key bit of Parliamentary legislation: the Commutation Act of 1784.[104]

The Commutation Act of 1784 is relevant because it targeted taxes. Until this point, the tax on tea remained steady at around 119%.[105] This astronomical figure did little to restrain the British demand for tea, because by 1784 the whole of Britain drank tea on a regular basis and the tea-gardens were at the height of their popularity. Although the tax had no bearing on how much tea the British consumed, it certainly had an impact on how they got it. Smuggling evolved as a way to obtain tea and to circumvent some of the worst of the taxes on legally obtained leaves. Parliament tried to restrain the smuggling before 1784, but was woefully unsuccessful. The most important attempt was the formation of the Smuggling Committee in 1745, when Parliament called in many witnesses to ascertain the extent and causes of smuggling, as well as discuss how they might stop it.[106] The general consensus gathered from the witnesses was that smuggling was profitable, avoided high taxes, brought in exotic commodities, and – most surprisingly – seen as a legitimate part of the local economy.[107]

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[102] Mui, 45.
[103] Ukers, vol. 2, 124.
[104] Mui, 68.
[105] Moxham, 27.
[106] Hay et al., 123.
[107] *Ibid*., 149.

Rather than abandon a primary source of England's income, Parliament chose to ignore the comments about high taxes and instead focused on administering harsher punishments. However, they were required to act upon the high taxes in some way, because the witnesses estimated before the committee that almost 3,000,000 lbs of tea were smuggled into Britain per year, almost triple the legal imports.[108] Parliament temporarily cut taxes in the Commutation Act of 1745 "…to give the East India Company sales a chance to recover."[109] It is important to note that at this time, the primary concern of Parliament was not that British subjects had to smuggle tea in order to avoid such high taxes, but that by doing so the Company's sales were being undermined. By 1784 the situation had not improved. Parliament was obliged to pass another Commutation Act that lowered the tax on tea to 12 ½ %, and neatly caused the smuggling operations to drop almost entirely out of recorded existence.[110] There was no longer any need to evade the Company's prices; tea became easily affordable to all.

In this way the Commutation Act benefited the small merchants as well. Now they could afford to buy more tea to sell. Grocers, usually small businessmen who sold food and sundries, were the primary sellers of tea outside coffee houses and tea-gardens. They sold tea to the widest range of people, as their customer base encompassed everyone except the aristocracy.[111] Lively competition ensued, especially among those grocers marketing in the same town to the same clientele. Predictably, this kept the prices within range for all economic brackets. Most of the domestic competition in Britain happened at this level because of the East India Company's method of distribution. First, the ships brought tea to Company warehouses, after which it was

[108] *Ibid*., 124-5.
[109] Berg et al., *Goods from the East*, 272.
[110] Moxham, 27.
[111] John Stobart, *Sugar and Spice: Grocers and Groceries in Provincial England, 1650-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 266.

sold at auction. Anyone wishing to buy tea had to attend these auctions unless an auction participant was willing to sell his crates after the fact.[112] Grocers were an important link in the process of getting tea from the Company to the public, and not just because they sold it. Grocers also mixed their own tea blends for the convenience of their customers.[113] Mixing was a completely different activity than adulteration, and will be explained in further detail in chapter five. What is important for now is that the British grocer was already beginning to accustom the British public to specialized blends of their favorite drink.

Little international competition for the acquisition of tea existed. Many other countries such as the United States and France had a hand in the tea trade with China. Only the Dutch imported tea in sufficient quantities to rank with Britain in terms of consumption, but their preference for tea declined along with the rest of Europe as the eighteenth century progressed. The Dutch had their own East India Company called the United East India Company, and the coffee plantations in their territories of Ceylon and Java were much more profitable.[114] The quality of the tea that the Dutch imported was significantly lower than that of the British. Their prices were much lower than those posted by the British Company, but the majority of British tea consumers knew that if they bought Dutch tea it was likely to be bad.[115]

China was the crux of the tea trade. The silk, tea, and luxury goods that China produced made trade with the country a high priority for most European countries. Yet traders of any nationality had very limited exposure to the Chinese while they conducted their business. The

[112] Bramah, 93.
[113] Stobart, 265.
[114] Ukers, vol. 1, 118-9.
[115] Mui, 48.

Chinese were reluctant to make contact and promoted a strict policy of isolation.[116] The East India Company succeeded in negotiating trading rights with the Chinese in 1637, but only through the *co-hong* system.[117] In this system an official, the *hoppo*, appointed by the Emperor as a personal representative brokered all the foreign trade in Canton. A panel of thirteen Chinese merchants, called the *hong* merchants, helped him in this arduous endeavor by "…conducting the actual trading operations with the foreign firms, and by becoming…guarantors of the government taxes, duties, and imposts on the incoming and outgoing cargoes."[118] Eventually the demand for their services became so great that they joined together as a guild called the *co-hong*.

The *co-hong* existed more to monitor exports than imports, because the Chinese had little interest in what Europeans had to offer. Quite simply, Europe could offer China nothing that China did not already have in abundance. Thus the British found themselves obliged to pay in silver for tea.[119] In the seventeenth century this was not a problem as imports were quite low. But by the eighteenth century consumption in Britain was so high that full payments of silver were difficult.[120] This led to the introduction of opium as a substitute for silver. It is unusual that the Chinese preferred imported opium rather than their own; opium grew fairly well in China, but not until the introduction of opium grown in India did the situation escalate. The opium trade with China started early and small in the eighteenth century. In 1727 the Chinese imported two hundred chests, or approximately 140 lbs, of opium strictly for medicinal purposes. By 1767 the number had risen to one thousand chests.[121]

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[116] Harler, 97.
[117] Ukers, vol. 1, 75.
[118] Ukers, vol. 2, 100.
[119] Scott, 52.
[120] Moxham, 50.
[121] *Ibid*., 66.

The Opium Wars of 1839 to 1842 best illustrate the depth of the conflict between the Chinese and the Europeans. By 1830 China imported 18,000 chests, or 2 ½ million lbs, of opium every year.[122] An import that started as a medicinal supplement became an addiction for many Chinese people, and their leaders were well aware of the problem. Commissioner Lin Tse-Hsu, appointed by the Chinese Emperor in 1838 to stop the gratuitous opium trade, threw 20,283 chests of opium into the harbor and prevented the departure of British ships.[123] Britain immediately sent a fleet, and after several brief and intermittent skirmishes the Chinese surrendered in 1842 and signed the Treaty of Nanking.[124] The Treaty opened new ports to foreign commerce, demanded an indemnity of six million pounds, and most importantly ended the *co-hong* system.[125] Foreign merchants now had more freedom to choose their Chinese business partners in the ports designated for foreign trade. This would be another boon to the rising British tea industry.

The Opium Wars had surprisingly little impact on the tea trade due to the impressive quantity of leaves already in Britain. The only signs of hostilities that could be seen in Britain were small price fluctuations and temporary holds on shipping.[126] Even these holds were not terribly noticeable, since the prevailing winds around China's coast required trade to be held seasonally. Ships entered port from June to August, and left from October to April.[127] The Opium Wars did not halt British trade with China; in fact, after the Treaty of Nanking trade increased. From 1839 to 1842 the new British tea industry in Assam was just beginning to flourish, and could not yet compete with China in terms of bulk. But in the 1850s the British

[122] *Ibid.*, 68.
[123] *Ibid.*, 73.
[124] *Ibid*., 78-9.
[125] Ukers, vol. 2, 103.
[126] Moxham, 81.
[127] *Ibid*., 45.

industry solidified into a dangerous competitor for China. By 1852 the British tea industry was on its way to success. Their exports only increased after they learned how to cultivate and process tea leaves efficiently. Until 1834, every country who wanted tea was required to trade with China. After that, Britain gave the world another option.

The evolution of tea as Britain's national beverage necessarily follows the evolution of the tea trade. The East India Company was the single most important entity to the tea trade before 1834. The obvious reason is certainly that they were the only link to China. The less obvious reasons are the effects the Company had on domestic trade. Without the Company's fixed prices and high taxes, the Commutation and Food and Drug Acts would not have needed to be passed. The Acts refined the domestic tea trade and widened the already impressive consumer based. There was also a certain reliance on the power of the Company to regulate its own trade in the absence of competition. Although some long-term benefits came from the Company's use of its powers, such as the acquisition of Ceylon, there were also long-term abuses of the sort that many associate with large corporation. By the time the extortion and oppression escalated into the Sepoy Mutiny, the Company had already lost its monopoly and part of its standing.

The years following 1834 saw the British eagerly exploring the unknown territory of tea cultivation without the shadow of the Company covering them. Progress was slow at first, impeded by the lack of working knowledge of tea cultivation. With the East Indies open for trade and habitation and the East India Company's decline and liquidation, there was little to stand in the way of the burgeoning British tea industry. The Opium Wars proved to be both a stumbling block and a clear indication of a desire to break away from China's tea trade. The

competition generated by the end of the Company's monopoly aggravated the opium situation; the resulting conflicts only increased the British drive to succeed in Assam.

CHAPTER 4

THE NEW TEA INDUSTRY BEGINS

The end of the East India Company's monopoly in 1834 introduced legal competition to a previously closed market, but the changes to the tea trade with China had prepared the British to expect alterations to both their relationship and trade with China. Attempts to transplant tea trees into the British colonies began in 1822, and subsequent failures led to the cultivation of tea plants growing wild in Assam. The British did not know how to grow tea plants, and therefore proceeded by trial and error. By the time the British established a horticultural method that suited Assam's climate and soil, the East India Company's last monopoly had been dissolved. Instead of contributing British tea leaves to a larger tea trade, the British took the opportunity to begin a tea trade of their own that would compete in earnest with China.

The British did not immediately launch a full-scale industry the moment the East India Company's monopoly ended. Instead, the industry began more gradually as the result of attempts to transplant Chinese tea plants. Sir Joseph Banks first sent a report on the existence of tea plants growing native in Assam in 1788. He intended it to be informative, and suggested that tea might be well cultivated in Assam. But at the time the East India Company was at the height of its power and it had no interest in cultivating crops when a profitable monopoly was in place.[128] His report was subsequently forgotten about until thirty-five years later in 1822, when the Royal Society of Arts offered 50 guineas as impetus to grow China tea in the colonies. One year later in 1823, Robert Bruce rediscovered the leaves on a military expedition into northern

[128] Bramah, 81.

India.[129] In 1826, after rediscovering the leaves and Banks' report, Britain acquired Assam from the Burmese in the First Burmese War.[130] Now that Britain controlled the new source of tea there was little reason to delay attempts at cultivation. However, at this time the East India Company's monopoly was still in effect. The Company had no interest in growing tea in the colonies since through their trade they could supply all the tea that Britain wanted. More importantly, the Company's monopoly on trade with China, and consequently tea, was its last: Parliament had dissolved all its others. The Company refused to grow tea for fear of aiding domestic competition; they controlled the tea trade with China, but if Britain successfully began to grow tea in its colonies new rivals for the market would arise.[131] The end of the monopoly coincided most fortuitously with the progress that the British made in tea cultivation, and allowed the new tea industry to step into the vacuum left by the Company.

The preliminary period of the new tea industry lasted from about 1834 to 1845. These were the years following the end of the East India Company's monopoly when British citizens gained the right to settle and trade in India. This decade saw the first formal British attempts to introduce tea into India. In 1834, almost immediately after the end of the Company's monopoly, Lord William Bentinck, the Governor-General of India, established the Tea Committee. Its purpose was to submit "…a plan for the accomplishment of the introduction of tea cultivation into India, and for the superintendence of its execution."[132] The British, eager to contribute to the tea trade as producers instead of only consumers, tried to introduce Chinese tea plants first.

[129] *Ibid*., 81.
[130] *Ibid*., 82.
[131] Ukers, vol. 1, 71.
[132] Bramah, 82.

The new boom of competitors in 1834 targeted both the tea trade with China and the tea trade with other Britons who could now negotiate legally as independent merchants. Interest in tea cultivation in India was underway in earnest. The early years from 1834 to 1840 were experimental years in cultivation. Major Robert Bruce, a talented botanical researcher, was one of the first people to study the plants in those years.[133] He had an easier time getting into Assam than others might, since he was a member of the army and thus exempt from the ban on the British presence in India. Robert died before he completed his findings, but he passed his information to his younger brother Charles (C. A.) in 1825.[134] C. A. Bruce continued to collect samples and give the Tea Committee information vital to beginning the new industry, and later he proceeded to acquire almost 120 tracts of local land on which to grow tea.[135] The genius of the Bruce brothers exhibited itself most keenly in their intrapersonal interactions. They negotiated with local chiefs in Assam for their land, offering development and employment as incentives.[136] With the support of the local chiefs the British faced less opposition when they established their tea plantations in Assam.

Robert Fortune was another of the earliest participants in the fledgling industry. He entered when the British were still trying to grow tea from Chinese plants instead of the ones native to Assam. The Chinese, however, were not willing to give their plants, knowledge, or skilled workers to Westerners. Lacking any sort of direction, the London Horticultural Society decided to send expeditions into China to recover specimens for study in the hopes of understanding how to grow the plants.[137] Fortune was the most intrepid of these, and made his

[133] Ukers, vol. 1, 135.
[134] *Ibid*.
[135] Moxham, 99.
[136] Ukers, vol. 1, 145.
[137] Scott, 77.

first expedition into China in 1843, only a year after the conclusion of the Opium Wars. His second trip, in 1848, lasted three years and required a disguise. Fortune states that "…I dressed myself in the costume of the country, and the result was pronounced by my servants…satisfactory."[138] He surreptitiously acquired adolescent tea plants, seeds, and leaves on both expeditions. Fortune, in his disguise, pretended to admire the inland plants as if he was a Chinaman from the coast: "'What a fine tree this is of yours! we have never seen it in the countries near the sea where we come from; pray give us some of its seeds.' 'It is a fine tree,' said the man, who was evidently much pleased with our admiration of it, and readily complied with our request."[139]

He even attempted to find Chinese workers to help with the cultivation.[140] The introduction of Chinese labor ultimately proved futile, as the workers did not stay; soon the British relied solely on Indian laborers, called coolies, in their tea plantations.[141] Presumably the British considered any Chinese labor better than none, for it was only later that Indian laborers were introduced. However, Fortune had little success, because acquiring unskilled labor was not his only aim. He knew that finding tea manufacturers would be difficult, but says that "…I wanted men from districts far inland, who were well acquainted with the process of preparing teas."[142] Fortune's second expedition was more successful than the first in terms of the bulk of samples acquired. He harvested an enormous amount of specimens.[143]

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[138] Robert Fortune, *Two Visits to the Tea Countries of China and the British Tea Plantations in the Himalaya; with a Narrative of Adventures, and a Full Description of the Culture of the Tea Plant, the Agriculture, Horticulture, and Botany of China, vol. 2* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1853), 8.

[139] Fortune, 45.

[140] Scott, 80.

[141] *Ibid*., 159-60.

[142] Fortune, 276.

[143] Ukers, vol. 1, 142.

The problem was not so much in Fortune's samples or the quality thereof, but in the great difficulty raised by transplantation that had not occurred to the British. Previous transplants had been singular affairs, kept in well-maintained greenhouses such as the Calcutta Botanical Gardens.[144] Transplanting numerous plants outside of such careful conditions without extensive knowledge of how to cultivate tea meant that the Chinese plants had a very short life expectancy in India; sometimes they never survived the transplanting at all.[145] Cross-pollination was held to produce undesirable results, so even though the Chinese plants produced offspring with the Assam variety, these progeny were rejected.

The British gave preferential treatment at first to the acquisition and maintenance of Chinese tea plants. Primarily this fascination with the Chinese plants was because the British had been drinking that tea for one hundred and fifty years, and could vouch for its quality. The Assam plants were an unknown factor. It was generally held by the British that since it had been cultivated for centuries by the Chinese, the leaves must be superior to those of the wild plants growing in Assam.[146] It should be noted that the British had no concrete evidence to support this idea, since the Chinese had never disclosed their methods. Nevertheless, the Tea Committee ordered C. A. Bruce to make "…every effort…to replace the indigenous tea of Assam with that of China. Meanwhile, as there would be a delay of two or three years before any Chinese plants grew sufficiently large to harvest…experiment with the indigenous tea."[147] The investment proved untenable, and the Tea Committee finally conceded defeat in their efforts at

[144] Moxham, 90.
[145] Scott, 71.
[146] Ukers, vol. 1, 133.
[147] Moxham, 98.

transplantation. They turned to Banks' report from 1788, intending to focus their attention on cultivating tea plants already within their grasp around 1836.[148]

Camellia assamica, the Assam plant, proved to be superior to its cousin *camellia sinesis*, the Chinese plant, in terms of both hardiness and convenience. The Assam plants already grew well in large tracts of India without human intervention.[149] This removed the necessity of making illegal expeditions into China, and gave British cultivators the advantage of having a reliable, healthy plant with which to work. Assam plants and Chinese plants have almost identical growth and maturation rates. A newly transplanted adolescent matures in two to five years, and has an average lifespan of fifty years.[150] Thus, the British tea industry that started tentatively in 1834 had some idea of the time it would take to grow tea crops. They had no idea, however, of how badly *camellia sinesis* would grow in India. The Tea Committee oversaw the beginning of this new industry, but would soon be replaced by the new companies that emerged to fill the void left by the East India Company.

C. A., Bruce, Superintendent of Tea Culture, would become one of the most vital people to the new tea industry. Bruce's experimentation with the Assam plants was only supposed to be a stop-gap measure at first until the Chinese plants matured; Bruce's careful collection of data became all the more important after the Chinese plants failed to take root.[151] It was Bruce who found that tea plants required delicate handling when being transplanted. He discovered the importance of abundant rainfall and minimal exposure to sunlight for young tea plants.[152] Bruce

[148] Ukers, vol. 1, 142.
[149] C. A. Bruce, *Report on the Manufacture of Tea, and on the Extend and Produce of the Tea Plantations in Assam*, (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1839), 3-5.
[150] Bramah, 24.
[151] Moxham, 98.
[152] Bruce, *Report*, 15.

believed that as long as a young tea plant was transplanted into the shade with plenty of water, "…the tea plant...would live in any soil."[153] The bushes needed to be grown from seeds in a nursery until they grew strong and healthy enough to be transplanted. After transplantation the bushes required careful pruning every two to four years after reaching maturity.[154] Despite the presence of the Tea Committee and the willingness of the British to research tea plants: "To [Bruce], almost alone, is due the bringing of the cultivation and manufacture to such a point that a commercial company was willing to take it up." Before Bruce's efforts the new tea industry was seen as an opportunity, but a risky one.

In 1838 Bruce sent twelve chests of Assam leaf tea to the East India Company auctions in London. All the chests sold successfully, and in 1839 the Assam Tea Company (ATC) was formed.[155] The ATC was only the first of many companies that would spring up to replace the East India Company's presence in the tea trade. The speed with which the new company formed indicates a belief on the part of the owners that the new British tea would be profitable, or at least that they would be able to recoup any losses in pursuit of the new venture. Bruce , who managed the ATC from 1839 until 1845, found this mentality advantageous. He produced 5000 lbs of tea during his first year running the company and reasonably expected double that in 1840.[156]

The speed at which the growth commenced and the amount of tea generated seemed impressive, but one must remember that Britain consumed upwards of thirty-two million pounds of tea per annum. His work had been invaluable for understanding the horticultural needs of the tea plants, but the Tea Committee fired Bruce in 1846 because he was a convenient scapegoat for

[153] *Ibid.*
[154] Bramah, 23.
[155] Ukers, vol. 1, 149.
[156] Moxham, 100.

the apparent lack of business success.[157] The fledgling Assam Company had yet to turn profits, which was not entirely unexpected given how long tea plants needed to mature before they became capable of flowering routinely and bountifully. If a full crop of tea bushes had been transplanted perfectly in 1834, they still would be just a few years into their maturity.

George Williamson replaced C. A. Bruce. He was just as important as his predecessor to the tea industry, because his contribution refined what Bruce pioneered. Under Williamson the first dividends of the new industry appeared in 1852, an underwhelming 2 ½ %.[158] Ten years later tea production was up from 10,000 lbs to 250,000 lbs. Figures continued to rise, and five years after that the plantations produced 583,000 lbs of tea.[159] Williamson's success was due to his willingness to make changes. At this time he replaced all Chinese workers with local Indian laborers. Williamson developed his own theories of cultivation "…based on sound horticulture and India tea became a tea in its own right, and not inferior China tea."[160] With cultivation practices different from those of the Chinese, the tea industry in Assam was one step closer to being British.

Britons greeted tea from Assam with anticipation, especially after the Great Exhibition of 1851. The Exhibition was an international event showcasing the products of foreign powers and the British Empire. Among the colonial exhibits was one from Assam that presented samples of the tea that the Empire grew in India; it won the Prize Exhibition Medal.[161] Over six million visitors toured the Great Exhibition; if it had not already had attention before, Assam tea now had the publicity it needed to become familiar to the British people.

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[157] Scott, 76.
[158] Bramah, 84.
[159] Moxham, 103-4.
[160] Bramah, 84-5.
[161] Scott, 76.

Other new companies sprang up frequently as offshoots of the Assam Company as they looked to Assam to support tea cultivation. British employees of the ATC broke from their parent company and started their own subsidiary branches. This is the reason that by 1857 the ATC was the sole exporter of tea from Assam.[162] New competition continued to rise in this manner until the Jorehaut Tea Company became the second independent public tea company in 1859.[163] The arrival of the Jorehaut Company encouraged other independent businesses to form, eager for the opportunity to share in the profits generated by the new tea industry.

As the tea industry expanded in scope, established and upstart owners looked for new geographical locations to grow the crop. The initial expansion was slow, and private plantations only began to be established in 1856. Another reason for the slow pace was that the locale of new plantations needed to be carefully chosen, because China tea only grew well at high altitudes.[164] Keeping that in mind, two of the most important new locations were Darjeeling and Ceylon. Darjeeling, an area in the southern foothills, was an ideal location for growing tea. The altitude, soil composition, and rainfall were all in proportion for growing good crops.[165] The leaves that came from Darjeeling quickly gained a reputation for excellence, and soon it was the standard for all British black tea.

Ceylon, acquired in 1796, had not had much impact on the tea trade with China; Ceylon and Java were renowned for their coffee crops. Yet, by the late nineteenth century Ceylon, not China, rivaled India for supremacy in the tea trade.[166] Scottish planters dominated Ceylon, beginning in 1867 with James Taylor and his Loolecondera Estate. Taylor had a large tract of

[162] Moxham, 103-4.
[163] *Ibid*., 104.
[164] *Ibid*., 110.
[165] Ukers, vol. 1, 382.
[166] Moxham, 156.

land, which he bought during a failure in Ceylon's coffee crops earlier in the decade. The land was good for tea plants, but Taylor's success in Ceylon is also due to his ingenuity regarding tea processing. To speed rolling, one part of the processing, Taylor built a rolling machine powered by water wheels.[167] This was a typical example of British assimilation of machinery, and is another instance of how processing in the British tea industry was becoming less and less Chinese.

Another important Scottish planter, and one whose name is probably familiar to the reader, was Thomas Lipton. Lipton was a speculator in Ceylon's tea trade, but unlike Taylor Lipton's success was linked to his advertising.[168] He entered into the British tea trade after it had been thriving for decades in 1889, buying and distributing 20,000 chests of tea from Ceylon with enviable pomp – pipers and brass bands accompanied his tea through the streets of Glasgow.[169] As the nineteenth century continued, advertising and spectacle of this sort would become more and more important to tea sales in Britain. Lipton's name would become synonymous with Ceylon tea in Europe and America, although later his popularity in Europe waned with the rise of other brand names. Lipton sold tea that derived from the *camellia assamica* – the Assam leaf. This means that by the late 1800s British tea was competing with other British tea, ousting China as the West's most important supplier.

In the middle of the tea industry's rising success, the Sepoy Mutiny occurred. From 1857-8, the rebellion raged in India. The violence never reached Assam, mostly because it was so remote in the north and the roads were too poor and muddy to be easily navigable.[170]

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[167] *Ibid*., 164.
[168] Ukers, vol. 2, 179.
[169] *Ibid*.
[170] Harler, 130.

Plantations relied heavily upon river transport because of this. Other than nervousness, life continued as usual, but future relations with the natives would be strained. Relations never recovered; the British considered themselves betrayed by those they had considered friends, and the Indian contingent considered themselves offended and abused by the Empire.[171] The strain did not adversely affect the rising production of tea on the plantations, but the easy working relationship between the plantation owners and their laborers would never be the same.

Other effects included the increased presence of the British military to prevent future uprisings and, most importantly, the total liquidation of the East India Company.[172] The Company's monopoly had not been renewed in 1834, but they had retained much of their power in India, governing as they had for years. Because the Mutiny happened under the watch of the Company, it cast doubt on their competence and leadership. Queen Victoria absorbed the Company and all its assets into the Crown. Previously the combination of the Indian Mughal Empire and the East India Company ruled India; now Britain ruled India directly.[173]

The absence of the Company from trade, where it had so long occupied an unparalleled advantage, left a void in commerce. What is significant is that many independent companies emerged to fill this void. The ATC had control of the new tea industry until the Jorehaut Company was established in 1859. It would have been easy to control the market just as the East India Company did if competition had not developed. However, the monopolies had drawn considerable criticism in the early nineteenth century, and had been gradually giving way to free

[171] George P. Landlow, "The 1857 Indian Mutiny (also known as the Sepoy Rebellion, the Great Mutiny, and the Revolt of 1857)," The Victorian Web, August 7, 2007, accessed January 6, 2015, www.victorianweb.org/history/empire/1857/1857.html.

[172] *Ibid.*

[173] *Ibid.*

trade.[174] The East India Company saw which way the wind was blowing, and almost certainly did not expect it monopoly to be renewed in 1834.

The new tea industry was still developing into a British enterprise. Its metamorphosis would be completed by the introduction of mechanization and new inventions unique to tea processing. Advertising, too, would become an important part of the British tea industry later when individual brands sponsored tea shops began to absorb smaller companies. But, with many independent British companies competing over shares in British products, the tea industry's trade was unquestionably British.

[174] Ukers, vol. 1, 76.

CHAPTER 5

MAKING THE INDUSTRY BRITISH THROUGH MECHANIZATION

The tea industry in India began with the goal of creating a viable industry with Chinese methods. By extension this meant using Chinese cultivation models, labor, and plants. The failure to grow Chinese tea and import Chinese labor encouraged innovation in India, fostering an industrialization of production. This transition ensured tea production in India would reflect British ideas of industry and economy. All of these machines were invented by Britons, and the results meant that tea manufacturing shifted away from the Chinese traditions to methods that closely resembled other forms of manufacturing in England. The inventions were not only for the manufacture of tea leaves, as British innovation extended to the equipage, packaging, and blending of tea. By 1860 every pound of tea produced by the new industry originated within the British Empire. This completed Britain's progression from a dependent purchaser of the exotic, in this case tea, to a producer and competitor in the market which they dominated at the end of the century. No residual Chinese influences remained. China only competed against this new and thoroughly British business.

British adoption and adaptation began almost immediately after the importation of tea and the first crude tea pots from China. Eager for a new medium in which to display their skills, silversmiths and potters made alterations to the basic design of the pots. Tea pots tended to stay about the same size throughout the years, although the level of decoration varied. Ornate decoration and style changed over the centuries but they all had something in common. They reflected the British tendency to take tea with a group of acquaintances and the need for the tea

pot to hold a fairly large amount of the drink.[175] Past the more visible design changes, inventors began trying to improve tea pots with various mechanisms quite early.

John Wadham, the most successful of these innovators, invented the 'tea fountain.'[176] In 1774 he fashioned a metal rod which ran through the length of the tea pot. The rod conducted heat through the center of the contraption, keeping the tea inside warm during prolonged events.[177] This heating mechanism facilitated large events where tea was taken such as in a tea-garden, but it also allowed smaller groups to enjoy lengthy parties without worrying about when the tea would get cold. Wadham invented the tea fountain as a continuation of methods of taking tea that were already distinctly British. With the tea fountain, Wadham added another layer to already British customs surrounding tea.

In 1826, prior to 1834 and the beginning of the British tea industry, an Isle of Wight trader named John Horniman patented a crude packing machine.[178] Although it was only a preliminary model, the packing machine improved upon the established and laborious practice of wrapping each packet of tea by hand. Another important aspect of Horniman's invention was that each packet was sealed from the time it was packed until the customer opened it. This allowed Horniman to boast that each of his packets of tea was a standard weight and contained unadulterated tea.[179] This attention to quality was crucial, because adulteration still occurred regularly at this time. His invention had a lasting impression on the industry as a whole by coupling tea production with industry. The success of Horniman's mechanical packing machine encouraged others to use industrial means to improve tea processing and consumption.

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[175] Bramah, 131.
[176] *Ibid*., 111.
[177] *Ibid*.
[178] *Ibid*., 80.
[179] *Ibid*.

Producers, with a vested interest in lowering costs and improving yields, were largely willing to experiment by installing the latest technologies and trying new techniques to increase profits. The more quickly and efficiently new companies like the Assam Tea Company could increase the output of tea leaves for sale, the better chance they stood to compete in the increasingly international tea trade. It was in the new industry's best interest to improve their methods as soon as possible. To do this it incorporated industrialization, which had proven effective in Britain's other commercial enterprises.[180]

The competitiveness of the international tea trade combined with a desire to reduce reliance upon labor inspired innovation and moved British tea production away from Chinese methods of processing. The stages of processing tea leaves are withering, rolling, sifting, fermenting, firing, and grading; the basic steps were the same in both China and India. The fundamental steps have not changed up to the present day.[181] Industry, and especially mechanization, changed the execution of each step. The Chinese preferred their traditional methods of preparing tea leaves completing all of the steps either by hand or with the aid of rolling racks and furnaces. This was a cultural preference rather than a lack of means or ability. China had already practiced and refined the use of engineering, manufacturing, and steam power by the time the West's Industrial Revolution began in the seventeenth century.[182] However, due to an abundance of cheap labor, industry never reached Chinese tea production, and even in the early years of the nineteenth century China had little need for industry.[183] The Chinese process remained traditional and relatively small in scale, performed by individual growers.

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[180] Maxine Berg, *Age of Manufactures 1700-1820: Industry, Innovation and Work in Britain*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 1994), 281.

[181] Moxham, 173.

[182] Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China, volume 4: Physics and Physical Technology, Part II: Mechanical Engineering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 226.

[183] Ukers, vol. 1, 302-3.

Mechanization in the tea industry was the provenance of the British. Its addition is one of the most compelling arguments that the new tea industry in India was becoming distinctly British.

The British faced a labor shortage that encouraged innovation in the industry.[184] Inventors tinkered with machines that would substitute for labor, but these early inventions lacked refinement. Manual labor would be the most important method of running the industry until the 1870s. Unfortunately there were problems assembling a cohesive, permanent labor force. Chinese labor recruited to pass on their knowledge soon disappeared. Some left to return to China without alerting their supervisors. In one later instance in 1840, two hundred and forty-seven Chinese laborers brought into India engaged in street brawls from Calcutta all the way up to Assam until every one of them was either dismissed or exiled.[185] Finally, as it was mentioned in chapter three, George Williamson dismissed all of the Chinese laborers in favor of native help from India. In theory this would have a stabilizing effect on the labor source, but it was not necessarily the case. The climate in Assam proved to be unhealthy and sickness commonly infected the ranks of the tea plantations.[186] The poor pay likewise made it difficult to recruit.[187] Nor could the British conscript their labor, because they abolished slavery in British India in 1833.[188] This left the British with a labor shortage that they could ill-afford so early in the naissance of their industry.

[184] Bramah, 92.
[185] Moxham, 128-9.
[186] Bramah, 92.
[187] Ukers, vol. 1, 404.
[188] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 330.

Tea, if it is to be converted into a viable high-yield commercial crop, requires a vast labor pool that can be paid cheaply.[189] This is especially true because of the harvesting process, a delicate undertaking in which an ideal picking has two leaves and one bud.[190] During processing leaves must be handled carefully to ensure even distribution over the rolling racks and the furnaces. The British did not apply their efforts at mechanization toward harvesting, where they insisted on a gentle touch.[191] Instead they focused their attention on processing. With machinery, labor at this stage could be reduced to a token force loading and unloading the machines and supervising the process itself to prevent malfunctions. Mechanization remedied the labor shortage and was an important step in making the tea industry in India British.

The first person to apply himself to machinery in earnest was Samuel Davidson. His extensive research into the avenues of mechanization came to characterize the British tea industry. Davidson's ingenuity refashioned every step of tea processing and manufacturing. He started his experimentation in the 1870s. This decade was the first to see significant changes to traditional methods of manufacturing tea. Up until the 1870s inventors had tried to make improvements, but most of their machines remained crude and did not greatly improve the speed or efficiency of the processes.[192] Davidson's designs of the 1870s influenced other inventors, who used his creations to make their own machines. In this way Davidson did for tea manufacturing what George Williamson did for tea cultivation.[193] He examined an entire section of the tea industry in which the British knew little and had made slow progress at improvement, observed it, experimented with it, and reshaped it to suit British needs and strengths.

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[189] Moxham, 127-8.
[190] Harler, 56.
[191] Scott, 161.
[192] Ukers, vol. 1, 159.
[193] Bramah, 92.

Davidson's first invention was an improved tea drier in 1872, whose design he continued to adapt throughout the decade.[194] His drying rack allowed even distribution of tea leaves, which is very important at all of the stages of tea processing. Spreading leaves evenly on the drying rack avoided large clumps that would prevent moisture from evaporating in the center. Having a machine that could ensure a steady supply of smoothly distributed leaves saved time and cut down on the number of workers needed. It also utilized a fan at the end of a long shaft that blew hot air steadily over the leaves, thereby negating the need for a cumbersome and less effective kiln.[195] Davidson's other inventions followed in much the same vein as his drying machine. His prolific creations included not only his drying rack, but also fermentation, rolling, and blending machines.[196] With each new machine that streamlined tea processing, the tea industry in India moved farther away from Chinese methods and became more British.

Mechanization began in earnest in the 1870s after other inventors started to apply Davidson's ideas. Other inventors did not always rely on Davidson for their inspiration, though. William Jackson, a Scot who owned a tea estate in India, invented a rolling machine in 1872 with only minor aide from previous, crude models that had no connection with Davidson's designs.[197] The improved rollers on the machine distributed pressure more evenly over the leaves being rolled. The crushed leaves released tannins which, when fermented by their chemical reaction in the presence of oxygen, give tea its color and taste.[198] Evenly distributed pressure meant that the leaves had a more uniform coating of the tannins. Jackson set up his machine at the Heeleakah garden, which was under the control of the Scottish branch of the

[194] *Ibid*.
[195] Ukers, vol. 1, 472.
[196] *Ibid*., 159.
[197] *Ibid*., 157.
[198] *Ibid*., 532.

Assam Tea Company.[199] This example illustrates several things. The tea companies in India had expanded significantly since 1839 when the only company in India was the initial branch of the ATC. The various subsidiaries of the ATC, the Jorehaut Company, and many smaller independent operations vied for profits and recognition. An improvement in processing could set a plantation owner ahead of his competition, and many owners tried to make the investment. Not many people could invent their own machines, and the ones who succeeded, like Jackson, had a distinct edge over other companies.

Jackson improved his rolling machine over the years, introducing new variations to the market. Inventors generally did not keep their creations to themselves, and Jackson is no exception. His improved models dominated the market. In 1889, he sold 250 of his newest rolling machine, which had lighter castings and less complicated interlocking parts.[200] Jackson also developed improvements to drying and sifting machines in the 1880s, building on the foundations that Davidson introduced to the industry at the same time. Inventors took inspiration from each other, and Jackson especially admired Davidson.[201] Jackson's willingness to experiment with every aspect of tea processing galvanized the industry. He and Davidson, working as contemporaries, were two of the most important and influential men in the tea industry with regards to developing new machinery. These ongoing adjustments by Britons to machinery invented by Britons made the new tea industry in India a truly British enterprise. After mechanical development flourished and expanded in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, all aspects of Chinese influence on processing had been erased.

[199] Bramah, 92.
[200] Ukers, vol. 1, 158.
[201] *Ibid*., 157.

Another important transition for the tea industry in India was the acceptance in the latter decades of the nineteenth century of *camellia assamica,* or tea leaves from Assam. Until the mid nineteenth century, as explained in the previous chapter, the British planters gave preferential treatment to *camellia sinensis*, or tea leaves from China. Assam leaves suited the British tea industry better, as they were hardier and easier to grow in India than the Chinese leaves. Assam tea leaves grew more readily than their Chinese counterparts, and the sustainability of the crop meant that the industry could grow more quickly. In addition to these important points, tea grown by the British industry enjoyed a privilege that it had not had when the East India Company transported it. Tea grown in the colonies entered Britain duty-free.[202] This simple fact made a strong argument for a British tea industry, because only goods originating from British imperial possessions could pass through customs without paying duties. Although the same principle would have applied to *camellia sinensis* grown in India, eventually *camellia assamica* dominated the market there due to its durability. This made another striking divide between the Chinese industry and the British one: the Chinese grew Chinese tea. The British grew Indian tea which was, by virtue of being grown in a British colony, British.

Tea grown in Ceylon, and later Java, benefited from their origins as British territories in the same way as tea grown in India. Large planters in Ceylon and Java tended to ship pre-packaged tea directly to British companies like Ty-phoo for sale.[203] Shipments convened at warehouses in Britain, where they awaited their sale at auction. This process had not changed since the days when the East India Company handled all the tea coming into Britain. But, since so many new independent merchants and companies entered into the British tea trade, tea's

[202] Bramah, 93.
[203] Moxham, 197.

journey after it left the auction houses acquired a new element. By the 1880s, advertisements permeated most British markets, including the tea industry.

Effective advertising boosted sales, and companies quickly found that one of the best ways to promote tea was to emphasize its point of origin and supply the buyer with the element of choice.[204] A tea could be marketed as having been grown in Darjeeling, Ceylon, or Java, but anyone willing to expend the effort could trace that same tea back to its origins. The same could not be said of tea from China, even as late as the 1880s when exports of tea from China to Britain reached their peak.[205]

The British took pride in how well they could trace the origins of tea grown in their colonies. When the East India Company shipped tea to Britain from China, the only part of the journey available on record occurred after the crates of tea passed into the Company's possession leaving Canton. There was no way to ascertain the actual origins of the tea outside of simply 'China.' Companies would place special emphasis on where a particular tea had been grown to market their product. For instance, tea grown in Darjeeling had exceptional flavor and quickly set a standard for other British black teas to match.

British methods of manufacturing and processing tea leaves finally set apart the tea industry in Assam as a British enterprise. The departure from Chinese methods was so thorough and complete that only the most basic aspects of the procedures remained the same.[206] Advances to the steps of rolling, fermenting, firing, and blending inundated the British companies. Utilizing machinery in lieu of manual labor was another departure from the Chinese methods,

[204] Scott, 177-8.
[205] Bramah, 85.
[206] Moxham, 173.

and allowed the industry in Assam to grow rapidly enough to overtake Chinese tea exports by the end of the nineteenth century. The new inventions that facilitated the industry's growth were unprecedented in China.[207] The resulting industry, fully mechanized, was distinctly British. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century the mechanization of the tea industry coincided with the rise in advertising. Specialty advertising was the more visible of these last two components, and reached the British public in a way that adding inventions to tea processing could not.

[207] *Ibid*., 60.

CHAPTER 6

BUYING BRITISH AND DRINKING TEA THE PROPER WAY

At the same time mechanization reformed the tea industry in India, advertising reformed the way people bought and sold tea in the British Isles. While there was a difference in how large and small businesses advertised the availability of tea, local merchants were just as likely to have notices in the newspapers or signs around town. Brands such as Lipton and Twinings advertised all over Britain, while small local businesses relied more on their existing reputation to ensure that their regulars continued to buy from them. Advertising was not only about convincing people to buy certain kinds of tea from certain people, although that certainly is a large part of it. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, tea drinking went through a change similar to that of the mid-eighteenth century, when tea-gardens became so popular. The tea-gardens had declined sharply in popularity in the middle of the nineteenth century, and no other public venues had replaced them.[208] Advertisements enabled tea shops, the genteel counterparts to the seventeenth century coffee houses, to enter British life. Together tea shops, advertisements, and brand loyalty cemented tea's status as a British drink made for the British public. The new industry in India made tea British, and advertising let people know it.

To the British, a British tea needed a distinct flavor. British preference for black tea separated them from the Chinese consumers, who liked green tea better. Green, or unfermented, tea spoiled quickly on the long sea voyages from China to Britain; black, fully fermented tea had a much longer shelf life. The East India Company imported more green tea than black tea in the

[208] Scott, 154.

seventeenth century; soon that changed as it became apparent that the black tea traveled better.[209] In the eighteenth century focus shifted to black tea. Green tea still comprised a sizeable amount of the imports, though – enough that it had as many quality gradations as the black tea.[210] The main reason that imports of black tea increased during the 1700s was due to established Chinese tastes in tea. They preferred green, and so they lowered the price of most black teas in Canton.[211] It became expedient for merchants to purchase more black tea. While the British still enjoyed green tea, they grew to appreciate black tea more frequently.

The practice of mixing additives such as sugar, milk, and honey highlighted the distinction between green and black tea, and also differences between British and Chinese taste. The Chinese took their tea in many places without additives of any kind.[212] The practice of mixing sugar and milk with tea was not exclusive to the British, but they refined it to a much greater degree than other nations. Coffee houses in the seventeenth century served tea plain and reheated from kegs.[213] During the eighteenth century the practice of adding milk and sugar became prevalent. Tea services added specific bowls for milk and sugar by the end of the seventeenth century, and these were considered integral parts of the equipage by the eighteenth century.[214] Taste could vary by region but milk and sugar held heavy preference over other additives. Because milk and sugar were so widely added to tea and continue to be added to the general exclusion of other choices today, they may be considered the first indications of British taste.[215] It should also be noted that sugar was a luxury from the seventeenth century until

[209] Moxham, 31.
[210] Berg et al., *Goods from the East*, 266.
[211] *Ibid*.
[212] Fortune, 30.
[213] Scott, 89.
[214] Ukers, vol. 2, 478.
[215] *Ibid*., 452.

almost the mid nineteenth century regardless of its increasing availability. Adding sugar to tea was another way that the drink became synonymous with the idea of gentility and substance.[216]

With black tea's decreasing prices in China, the green teas like souchong and congou gradually lost popularity to the black teas such as orange pekoe and bohea around 1745.[217] By the nineteenth century, black tea was the primary type consumed by the British public. It dominated the market when the British tea industry began in India. Already familiar with Chinese black tea, the British chose to continue fully fermenting their Assam plants.[218] The connection between the Chinese black tea and British black tea helped to ease the new tea industry's transition into the open market. By retaining black tea as their main product, they allowed the domestic market to continue selling its distinctive blends of tea without upsetting the established role of the local grocer. Grocers used mainly black teas ever since the British failed to corner the green tea market in 1745. Thus, the switch from Chinese black tea to Assam black tea would have been much less difficult to accommodate than a shift toward green teas, with which grocers worked less frequently.

Lastly, although adulteration of tea leaves plagued the market until the last half of the nineteenth century, mixing specialty blends was neither uncommon nor frowned upon. Adulteration meant that tea leaves were sifted with either inferior tea or other leaves such as hawthorn or beech to extend profits.[219] Mixing, on the other hand, improved taste or achieved a specific taste that unmixed tea did not have, and used only quality tea leaves.[220] Mixing tea was a delicate process, done almost exclusively by hand until the advent of blending machines. The

[216] Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, 21.
[217] Berg et al., *Goods from the East*, 268.
[218] Bramah, 84.
[219] Ukers, vol. 1, 505.
[220] Stobart, 67.

larger the company, the more tea it had to produce to keep turning profits. As a result, large companies could not afford to continue blending their tea by hand and relied on factories instead.[221] One of the enduring strengths of local grocers competing with larger businesses was that they created specialty blends.[222] Grocers blended teas to achieve "a balance of all the desirable properties," such as flavor and strength.[223] Those who mixed blends unique to their locales could generate loyal consumer bases that were unwilling to give up a favored taste for a widely available brand name.

Tea shops became a new and important venue to consume tea. They were as much confectionery shops as anything else.[224] The addition of sweets functioned much as it had done for the tea-gardens. By introducing light snacks and sweets to their inventories, tea shop owners created an atmosphere of indulgence. Indulgence, more often than not, is one of the key values addressed by advertisements. With this in mind, tea shops found an easy customer base. Victorian society, even as late as the 1890s, still contained an element of rigid mannerisms and conduct in public settings. This was a reaction to the extravagance of the eighteenth century. Unsurprisingly, one result was that institutions found to be frivolous or indulgent lost popularity by the 1830s. One of these institutions was the tea-garden, because despite its affordability it represented decadence. People, especially women, of all ages were anxious for another public venue in which to socialize in the absence of tea-gardens.[225] Since tea had long been a social beverage by the late nineteenth century, it took very little adjustment for tea shops to take the place of the defunct tea-gardens in the late nineteenth century.

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[221] Scott, 183-4.
[222] Stobart, 148.
[223] Harler, 244.
[224] Bramah, 134.
[225] Moxham, 192.

The first tea shop opened in 1717 under the ownership of Thomas Twining, selling confectionery alongside tea.[226] Few others opened, and remained a venue for the upper class. Due to their social exclusivity and competition from the coffee houses, little came of the early tea shops.[227] This changed during their revival in the late nineteenth century, because the tea shops of the late Victorian period were as accessible as the tea-gardens had been. For tea shops to truly flourish and become an important facet of British life, they needed to emulate the tea-gardens and cater to all Britons. Women frequented tea shops as well as men, which distinguishes them from the earlier male-dominated coffee houses. The primary draw of the tea shops was that a customer who previously paid three pence for a cup of tea could now pay two pence for a full pot.[228] This guaranteed the lasting popularity of the shops.

Other businesses quickly capitalized on the popularity of Victorian tea shops. Lyons & Co. was one of the most important of these, known for its link to tea shops. The founders, Sir Joseph Lyons and his three compatriots, noticed the public's desire for an acceptable social setting in which to drink tea. They capitalized on the opportunity by obtaining a catering service in the late 1880s.[229] Lyons & Co. set the standards for what a tea shop should be. The establishments served quality food and tea for low prices, and the servers and environment were both clean.[230] Lyons & Co. projected a healthy atmosphere that all other tea shops would come to emulate. Although large companies like Lyons had numerous tea shops, the industry resisted monopolies.[231]

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[226] Bramah, 134.
[227] Ukers, vol. 1, 46.
[228] Ukers, vol. 2, 190.
[229] *Ibid*..
[230] Moxham, 192-3.
[231] Ukers, vol. 2, 414.

Another type of tea shop simply sold the tea leaves. These businesses, usually local, were similar to grocers in that they sold unique blends of tea.[232] Many large businesses originated from tea retailers of this kind. Because of their local prevalence, tea retailers gained a particular immunity to the absorption tactics of large businesses.[233] However, successful chains of tea retailers did not necessarily have to restrict themselves to selling tea, nor did some of them even begin by selling it. Several companies, such as the Aerated Bread Co., invested in tea shops and tea retailers as a means of showcasing some of their products and capitalizing on the growing popularity of public tea consumption. Aerated had over fifty successful tea shops in Britain by the end of the 1880s.[234] Tea retailers, like grocers, developed mostly independent of companies and as such avoided being absorbed into larger businesses.[235]

While small retailers continued to thrive, four big corporations controlled much of the market in Britain during the 1890s; only very small or very specialized tea businesses, like Twinings, survived the expansion of these four.[236] The Co-op, Brooke Bond, and Ty-phoo all evolved from smaller tea retail businesses that had been established for quite some time. Founded in the late nineteenth century, Lyons & Co. was the youngest of the large companies. With the exclusion of Lyons & Co., the names of the companies listed above made reference to their marketing strategies. Brooke Bond and the Co-op preferred to offer customer incentives in the form of credit.[237] Ty-phoo played upon the exoticism still linked to tea's origins by making

[232] Stobart, 148.

[233] Tea shops referred to social settings with tea and sweets and also to tea retailers who sold specialty blends of tea as well as more ordinary teas such as Twinings, whose identically blended packets of tea were sent to retailers by the crate. This paragraph describes tea retailers and their impact on businesses.

[234] Moxham, 192.

[235] Stobart, 104.

[236] Moxham, 197.

[237] *Ibid*.

its name vaguely oriental.[238] To the British public, it was less important how the tea was manufactured or processed than how it was presented to them. The four companies listed above delivered style and presentation – in the form of advertising.

Lyons & Company, the youngest of the four, has already been briefly mentioned for its connection with tea rooms. Lyons & Co. opened their first tea shop in 1894, but their importance as a standard for other tea rooms overshadowed their relatively late arrival to the scene.[239] Lyons & Co. based their business on the principle of quantity and quality at a low price. This was a typical example of nineteenth century British consumerism, and quite different from the atmosphere of ceremony that still surrounded taking tea in the East. Ukers claims that Lyons & Co. best represented English tea traditions not only through their services and atmosphere, but for the quintessentially British idea ingrained since the 1880s of "a good pot of tea for two pence."[240] For Lyons & Co., establishing a reputation for quality service and tea was enough of an advertisement, and one they chose to emphasize after their initial lures in 1894: orchestras to play outside the shops and period-piece costumes worn by their waitresses demonstrated the sense of gentility that the company wished to convey.[241]

Founded in 1869 by Arthur Brooke, Brooke Bond employed the themes of good health to market its product.[242] Focusing on a wide range of health benefits, particularly as a digestive aid, Brooke Bond encapsulated the same positive qualities that were associated with tea when it was introduced to Britain in 1658.[243] Britons obviously continued to drink tea on a medicinal basis as

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[238] *Ibid*.
[239] *Ibid*., 192-3.
[240] Ukers, vol. 2, 414.
[241] *Ibid*., 191.
[242] Moxham, 194.
[243] *Ibid*., 196.

well as a social one, since advertisements promoting the healthfulness of tea appeared just as often as advertisements promoting unique tastes.

The Co-op, as its name suggests, was a co-operative type business. Five hundred tea merchants across Britain joined together to form the Co-operative Wholesale Society in 1863 in hopes of securing stock while lowering prices.[244] Co-operative businesses were common in Britain; it was a co-operative of London merchants who petitioned Queen Elizabeth I to form the East India Company in 1600.[245] The continuing inclusion of this type of business reinforces the British aspects of the tea industry in the commercial sector. Rather than rely heavily on visual advertising, the Co-op introduced a marketing strategy that was emulated by many other businesses including Brooke Bond. Dividends, or stamps on each packet of tea, paid out to customers who bought more goods at certain retailers.[246] These could be refunded for prizes of cash or gifts, and was one of the most popular enduring advertising campaigns. This form of marketing, called "loyalty card," is common in Europe and North America today.

Ty-phoo, the oldest company of the three discussed here, began as a family business. Family businesses were fairly common, especially for local grocers. John Sumner, the head of the family, spent several years becoming knowledgeable about tea before setting himself up as a specialist in 1820.[247] He developed his reputation by promoting his research and expertise, particularly in the form of pamphlets and articles. The best selling of these was *A Popular Treatise on Tea*, which Sumner published in 1863.[248] Assuring his customers of his extensive knowledge allowed the Sumner family to sell their tea as so many other companies did – as a

[244] *Ibid*.
[245] Ukers, vol. 1, 69.
[246] Moxham, 196.
[247] *Ibid*.
[248] *Ibid*., 196-7.

digestive aid – with a unique trick. Ty-phoo sold their tea unblended straight from Ceylon, and they sold the fannings, or broken leaves, in separate packets. They advertised these as a more effective aid to digestion because of their small size: they argued that it stood to reason that delicate fragments would create a more delicate tea.[249] Because the Sumners were already established as a family of tea experts, this was a convincing form of marketing.

Apart from their individual marketing strategies, each of these four businesses relied heavily on traditional forms of advertising. Idealized images of pretty young ladies and the more exotic depictions of India helped to sell tea in abundance.[250] These were two of the most enduringly successful visual aids in selling tea because they appealed to both the Victorian sense of propriety and to the Victorian pride in their foreign possessions, the jewel of which was India. The advertisements of the late nineteenth century showed the British what they already knew. There was nothing so British as to drink tea, and nothing better than to drink British tea.

The last advertising strategy brings the story of tea in Britain full circle, back to the aristocracy. Images of Queen Victoria permeated the advertisements of the tea industry. One of the most famous of these is a picture of the Queen offering a cup of tea to the President of the United States. There is a turbaned Indian manservant in the background. The caption reads: "A Royal Beverage. Mr. President, may I offer you a cup of pure tea from Ceylon and India?"[251] Although obviously entirely anecdotal, this example combines nearly all of the common aspects of advertising tea. The Indian manservant indicates the exotic association with the East even

[249] *Ibid*., 197.

[250] Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 5.

[251] Scott, 179.

within British possessions. Queen Victoria, while not precisely the idealization of youth at this juncture, places the full force of British propriety into the genteel atmosphere.

In addition to these things, the importance and manner of the inclusion of royalty to advertisements needs to be emphasized. Nobles and royalty introduced tea to British society in the late seventeenth century. They furthered the initial sales of tea. They introduced the beginnings of quintessential British pastimes such as tea time. But by the end of the nineteenth century the power of the royal family and nobles had been slowly but steadily declining for two hundred years. When tea businesses large and small placed the images of royalty and nobles in their advertisements, it was done without permission or consequences. This may indicate a simple lack of interest; Queen Victoria never gave the least indication that she minded the liberal use of her image and reputation in the pursuit of higher sales.[252]

The fact that the middle class used the prestige associated with the upper class was notable. It was another instance of using prestige from established sources – comparable to when tea borrowed respectability from the known luxury materials in which it was served, such as porcelain and silver.[253] Advertising formed a link between the industry in India and the social means by which tea became a British product. It became something visible that supplemented the tangible, and reached the whole British public; not even the Great Exhibition that had six million visitors achieved such a scale.

Tea became British at two different times in two different ways over the course of two hundred years. The acceptance of tea as a national beverage came first through degrees of social

[252] Richards, 75-6.
[253] Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, 163.

acceptance from the upper class, the use of luxury materials in its equipage, and the dispersion throughout British society. Tea's status as a national beverage meant that the British saw the act of drinking tea to be British in and of itself, especially when combined with the unique institutions such as the tea-gardens and tea time. However, tea itself could not be British until a new industry formed in 1834. Over the first fifty years of its existence the tea industry in British India took deliberate steps to separate itself from the industry in China. By 1885 only the most basic processes of rolling, drying, fermenting, and firing were still constant. Cultivation, manufacturing, and advertising all evolved to suit the British methods of industry, and nothing of the Chinese industry remained after the transformation. Because the social image of tea as a British drink preceded the tea industry, it is easy to overlook the importance of India's new market so far around the world and out of sight. Yet that industry produced British style tea for a British market. With consumers, producers, and advertisers in sync their product, tea, became wholly British.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Tea's history in Britain may be short, but its cultural and economic impact has been enormous. Few other foodstuffs have had such a significant role in changing the British lifestyle. In working its way into the lives of the whole of British society, tea became a symbol of gentility. Britons accomplished this through a variety of methods, most of which incorporated some sort of existing luxury material. This was particularly evident in the equipage, which frequently sported intricate designs cast in silver or painted on fine porcelain. The rising middle class bought tea and its lovely accoutrements in order to increase their own prestige through the consumption of luxury goods. When it became so widely obtainable in the eighteenth century, tea lost the exclusiveness that made it initially a luxury but gained something more important: the permanent aura of gentility afforded by its early rarity. Everyone who drank tea in Britain borrowed some of this gentility, but the middle class truly benefited the most from its prestige.

Tea also changed recreational habits of the Britons, who invented elaborate settings in which to enjoy tea and its sister luxury, sugar. These settings, tea-gardens and later tea shops, offered confectionery and tea to large swaths of the British population. In the meantime, tea developed its own intricate systems of manners unique to the British Isles. Tea time is even today considered a quintessential British activity. Tea was singularly British by 1834 when the East India Company, previously the sole supplier of tea to Britain, lost its monopoly on trade in the East and opened the market to all British competitors.

Competition in the market contributed a great deal to making tea British. Without the multiple private companies that formed after the East India Company's monopoly ended, the

new tea industry in Assam would have had a difficult time finding capital in its early years. New companies meant that there were new investors and businessmen, usually from the middle class, who took an interest in an area of trade which had proven lucrative over and over in the previous one hundred and fifty years. Investing in tea was not a business risk given the popularity it enjoyed in Britain. The existing popularity boosted the new tea industry as much as subsequent improvements to machinery, cultivation, and processing. The Assam tea industry underwent a full transition from existing Chinese methods until each step was run by Britons, from the plantations to the packing houses. By 1890, the Assam tea industry that began in 1834 had made its contribution to making tea, as a drink and an industry, completely British and quite separate from anything that had come before. Tea became a British product in production and consumption; even so, it was not necessarily a product of the Empire. So after the end of the British Empire, the image and consumption of tea continues to be British.

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APPENDIX

Tea Prices and Imports

Figure 1: British Tea Imports

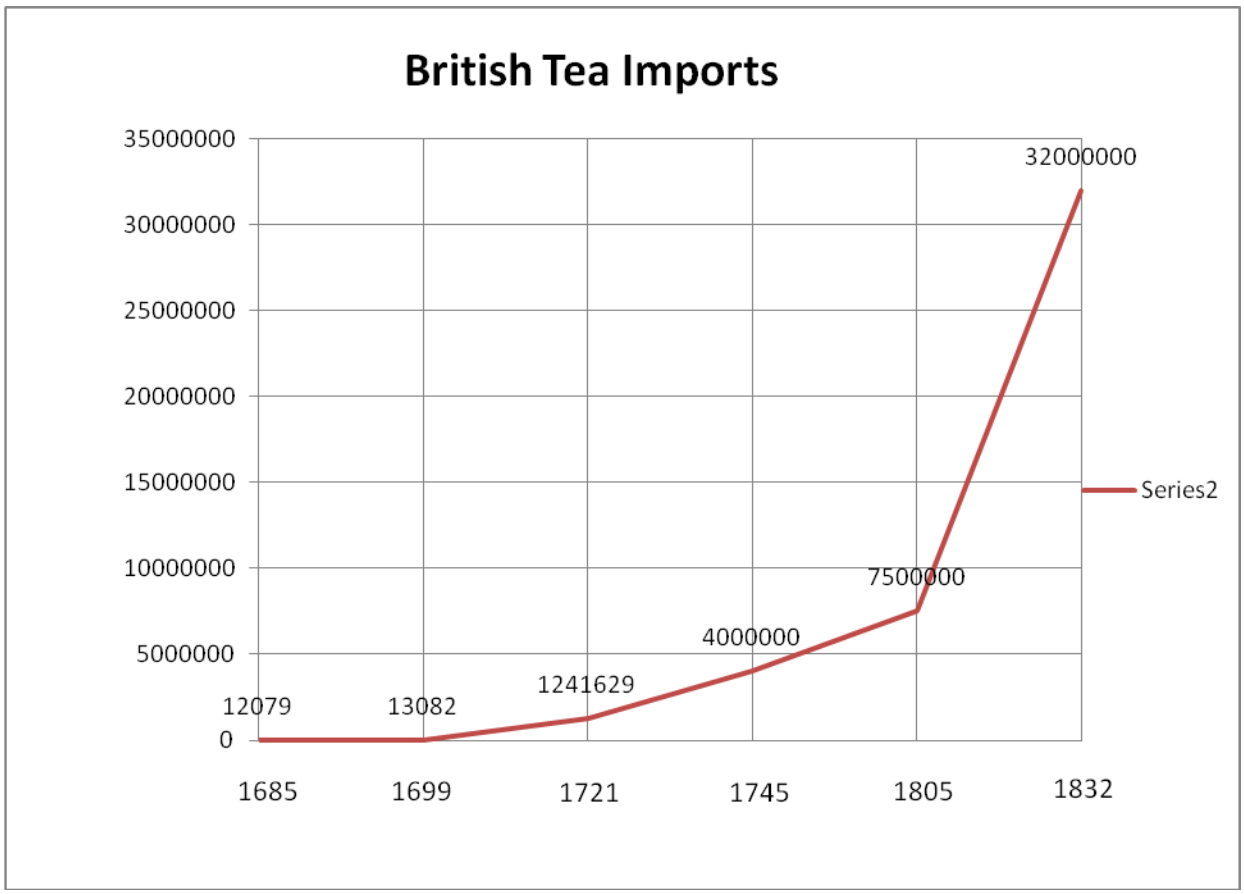

Figure 2: Bohea Tea

Quantity and Price of Bohea, 1745-64			
Date	Amount	Put-up	Bid
1745	1298800	24	43.46
1754	1644800	24	34.36
1759	2204300	24	36.64
1764	3095900	24	37.74

Figure 3: East India Company Imports

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