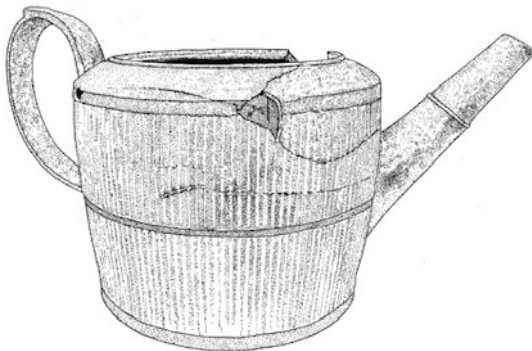


Tea at the Museum of Archaeology and Archaeology

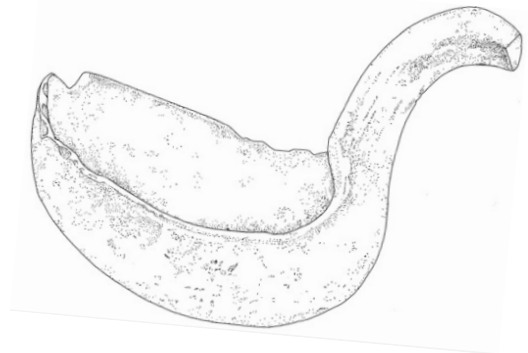
The British drink 100 million cups of tea each day, but where does tea come from and how did it spread around the world? Its growth can be boiled down to three main factors: Buddhism, trade and colonialism.



Black Basalt Teapot, Cambridge (MN0221.11) Ground Floor
This teapot, excavated in Cambridge, is a type of ware known as black basalt, invented in the 18th century by Josiah Wedgwood. Tea was first sold in England in the 17th century and became popular in the 18th, drunk traditionally with milk and sugar.

Han Dynasty Spoon, China (1922.1098) First Floor

Tea plants are indigenous to China and northeast India. The oldest evidence of tea comes from the 2150-year-old tomb of the Han Dynasty Emperor Jing Di. This ceramic spoon also comes from a Han Dynasty tomb.

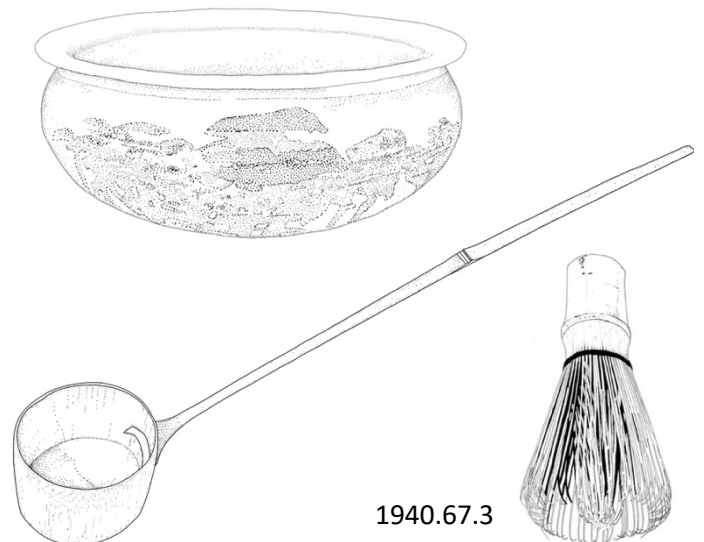


Zisha Teapots, China (2005.33 A-B) First Floor
During the Tang Dynasty (618—907AD), tea had a large impact on society and the arts. Buddhism played a role in this as tea was considered helpful for meditation, and a good alternative to alcohol. Teapots like this are made from a special clay and considered luxury items. Traditional Chinese ceremonial tea-making is called Gong Fu Cha.

Ceremonial Tea Set, Japan (1940.67.3; 5 & 9)

First Floor [*1940.67.5 & 9 not on display]

Chinese missionaries brought Buddhism and tea to Japan by the 8th century. Japan also has a famous tea ceremony influenced by Zen Buddhism and considered a classical art. This tea set was used for matcha, or powdered green tea, and the number of tools and pieces shows how specialised and complicated the process is. Green tea and black tea come from the same plant, but are processed differently.



1940.67.3



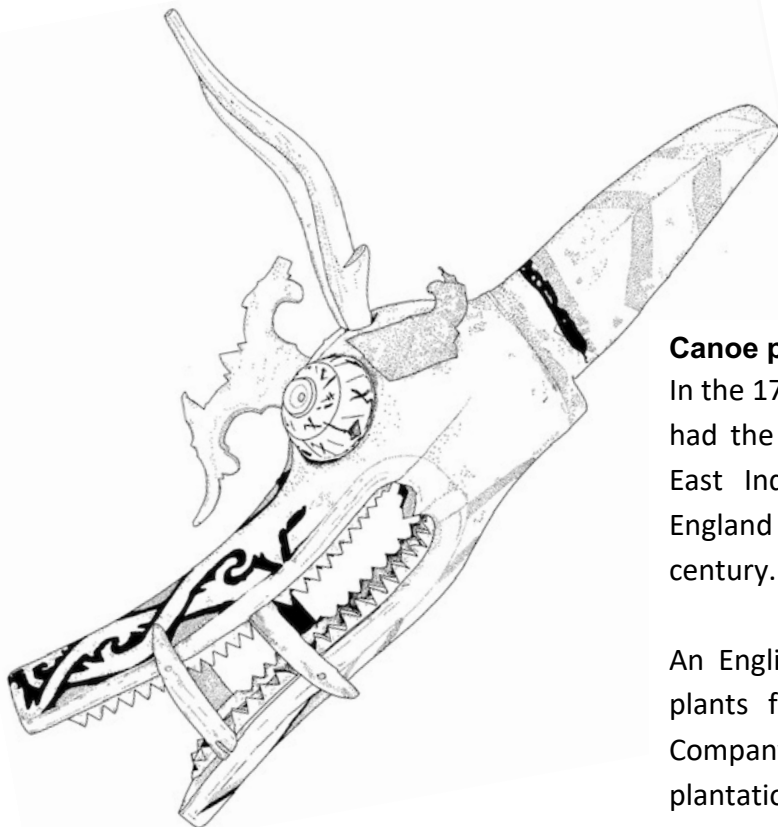
Tea Cups, Tibet (1942.20.1) First Floor

People adapted tea to their needs and customs. These Tibetan tea cups were used for 'butter tea', a combination of very strong tea with yak butter and salt. This provides the calories needed for high-altitude living. Tibetan butter tea was the inspiration for 'bulletproof coffee' with butter.



Tea Jug, Mongolia (1987.1562) First Floor

From the 5th century, tea was traded with Mongolian merchants. Today Mongolian tea is known as 'suutei tsai' or milky tea. Like Tibetan tea, it is salty. It is made from brick tea, and traditionally served in jugs like this. Butter, rice, roasted or fried millet, dried meat and dumplings can also be added.



Canoe prow, Borneo (Z 2698) First Floor

In the 17th century, the Dutch East India Company had the monopoly on tea in Europe. The British East India Company started importing tea to England which became wildly popular in the 18th century.

An Englishman named Robert Fortune stole tea plants from China to plant in India, and the Company eventually engineered enormous tea plantations in India where indentured labourers had to work.

Borneo, in Indonesia, was part of the 'Dutch East Indies', and tea is still grown there today. This carved wooden canoe prow has two Chinese porcelain tea bowls for eyes, showing the influence this plant has had, and how tea drinking has been adopted around the world.