## **The Origin of Chinese Tea**

Tea plays a vital role in Chinese life since ancient times. Chinese Tea has existed more than 5000 thousand years. While, it was said that tea was discovered by accident.

The history of tea dates back to ancient China, almost 5,000 years ago. According to legend, in 2732 B.C. Emperor Shen Nung discovered tea when leaves from a wild tree blew into his pot of boiling water. He was immediately interested in the pleasant scent of the resulting brew, and drank some. Legend says the Emperor described a warm feeling as he drank the intriguing brew, as if the liquid was investigating every part of his body.

However, there was a record dating back to Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BC) about the usage of tea in a Chinese dictionary-The Erya. China was the first country to discover the tea in the world. Tea was used to as a medicine to make people stay awake at the beginning. Tea was still used as a medicine functional plant in Han Dynasty (206B.C.-220A.D.)

## **Sui and Tang Dynasties**

Tea was evolved into a beverage from a medicinal plant in Sui and Tang Dynasties. To drink tea spread into more people’s life in Sui Dynasty. It became one of the trade products to the neighboring Mongolian country.

Tang Dynasty (618-907A.D.) was a peak time for tea development. Tea became a wider drinking beverage in people’s daily life. A lot of tea trees were extensively planted and the tea culture developed fast.

According to Cha Jing (an early book about tea) written by Lu Yu (a writer lived in Tang Dynasty), the tea plant and the process of tea were recorded in details. It is said that tea had widely spread and it had become one of the irreplaceable drinks in people’s life. The book also recorded the history of tea before Tang Dynasty and described the types of tea.

Brick tea was the main style of the tea in Tang Dynasty. Tea leaves were made into cake forms. In order to make the hot drink, brick tea were put into the boiling water in kettles to cook for some time.

## **Song Dynasty**

Song Dynasty (690-1279 A.D.) is another important period for the development of tea. More tea species appeared in Song Dynasty. The requirement of tea was stricter and stricter at the time. Tea connoisseurs even held competitions to judge the quality of tea including the tea leaves, water and the mixture. Books, poets and paintings about tea were popular in the whole country which promoted the tea trade between Central Plains (the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River) and the outside of the great wall. The country benefited a lot from the tea taxes which started in Tang Dynasty

The number of social tea houses increased rapidly in Song Dynasty. Tea culture was formed day by day. Tea became people’s essential drink in the daily life. People still made the tea leaves into the brick tea. It is said that the Japanese tea ceremony was originated in the tea in Song Dynasty.

## **Ming and Qing Dynasties**

Tea had reached to the folk life and be widely loved by all levels of people. And the government allowed people plant tea trees freely. There were more categories of tea including green tea, flower tea, oolong tea and black tea in Ming and Qing Dynasties. The making process of tea had been improved and it also influenced the drinking styles of tea.

People also paid attention on the exquisite teapots. Yixing Purple Clay Teapots were the most popular teapots during this period which had formed a new art of the teapots. Tea houses were located everywhere in the street. The number of the tea works including books, poets, painting of tea was the biggest in all the dynasties.

A large abundance of tea trades carried on bringing benefits for the government. The government made tea business with a lot of foreign countries such as African and Asian countries and Europe countries including the Britain and Dutch.

## History of Tea: Chinese Symbol for Tea, Ch'a**Present**

**The Invention of Black Tea**
Up to the mid-17th century, all Chinese tea was [Green tea](http://www.coffeeteawarehouse.com/tea-types.html). As foreign trade increased, though, the Chinese growers discovered that they could preserve the tea leaves with a special fermentation process. The resulting [Black tea](http://www.coffeeteawarehouse.com/tea-types.html) kept its flavor and aroma longer than the more delicate Green teas and was better equipped for the export journeys to other countries.

**Tea in Modern Day China**
Today, students compete to attend the very selective and exceptional Shanghai Tea Institute. The highest level students are required to play the traditional Guzheng stringed instrument, perform a flawless tea-serving ceremony, speak a foreign language to entertain overseas guests, and distinguish between about 1,000 different types of Chinese tea...to date fewer than 75 students have been awarded a Tea Art certificate. There is also an entire amusement park called the Tenfu Tea Museum - China's equivalent of Disneyland - that honors the Chinese tea-drinking traditions.

Tea has become one of Chinese specific drinks in the world. A large number of teas are exported to the foreign countries. Tea shops and Tea houses in the street are easily found in China. Chinese tea culture and arts attracts a lot of people. It is irreplaceable in Chinese life.