

## *Westerners and Tea in the 19th and early 20th Centuries: Charting New Commercial and Cultural Perspectives*

Rebecca Corbett

### *Thick like Pea-soup, Fragrant, and Not Very Palatable: Western Women's Interactions with Chanoyu Tea Culture in Meiji Japan*

Today, *chanoyu* (Japanese tea ceremony or tea culture) is practiced by non-Japanese in Japan and globally, and *matcha* has become a popular beverage with a global reach far beyond the circles of *chanoyu* practice. What did non-Japanese think of the practice of *chanoyu*, and the beverage consumed within it, when interactions between Japan and the West began in earnest during the Meiji period (1868-1912)? Starting with this question, I will focus on stories and anecdotes about and by Western women who spent time traveling or living in Japan during the Meiji period (women more than men participated in and commented on cultural activities). Diaries and travel writings tend to describe *chanoyu* as a “quaint and esoteric” activity involving drinking an “unpalatable” beverage that is far removed and even unapproachable or difficult for non-Japanese to grasp. At the same time, there are accounts of foreign women who took up the study of *chanoyu* in earnest. Eliza Scidmore, for example, describes taking “lessons in cha no yu of Matsuda” in her 1891 book *Jinriksha Days in Japan*. The *Yomiuri Shinbun*, one of Japan’s major daily newspapers, ran a number of articles in 1889 and 1890 detailing *chanoyu* tea gatherings held by the wives of the French Envoy, Joseph Adam Sienkiewicz, and the German Envoy, Theodor von Hellben, which were attended by the wives of Japanese government ministers. I will situate these stories and anecdotes within the context of *chanoyu* history, playing close attention to the changes occurring at the time.

Dan Du

### *Behind the Teacup: American Tea Consumption in the Nineteenth Century*

Placing American tea consumption in a global context, this paper will portray the changing consumption patterns of tea in the nineteenth-century United States as a consequence of not only consumer choice but also the power dynamics in global supply chains of tea. From 1784, when the ship, *Empress of China*, initiated the Chinese-American tea trade, the United States grew to be the second largest tea importer from China during the nineteenth century, second only to Britain. However, unlike their English cousins who loved black tea, American consumers preferred green tea, particularly young hyson and hyson skin, up until the late nineteenth century when Taiwan oolong, Japanese green, Indian and Ceylon black, and English breakfast teas became fashionable. With China being the only supplier of tea before the Opium War (1839-1842), a Chinese merchant guild, the Cohong, orchestrated the global flow of tea. Relying on their abundant capital and commercial network with Chinese merchants, the English East India Company and private merchants contracted most black and green teas before their American counterparts could make purchases on the open market, thus determining the varieties of tea available to US consumers. While the American taste for green tea contributed to the popularity of oolong during, and due to, the Opium War, British companies promoted black tea production in their South Asian colonies and Japan opened its green tea market to the world soon after the war. These changes in global supply chain eventually reshaped the landscape of American tea consumption in the late nineteenth century.

Robert Hellyer

*Marketing Chinese and Japanese Tea to Americans, 1890 to 1930*

Scholarship on tea often concludes that beginning in 1890, large British companies, such as Lipton, quickly conquered the US market, selling their India and Ceylon grown teas through more advanced marketing techniques. In reality until the early 1920s, Americans consumed more Chinese and Japanese teas than those from South Asia.

By focusing on Chinese and Japanese tea exports to the United States, this paper will offer several new perspectives, the first being an examination of the marketing strategies used by Chinese and Japanese tea companies. Around the turn of the century, Chinese firms in particular made advances in packaging and formed merchant guilds to keep pace with other tea-producing states in an increasingly competitive global tea market. Second, it will explore the efforts of the Japanese and Chinese central governments to assist domestic tea exporters competing with better-financed, Western firms. Specifically, it will focus on the promotion of Chinese and Japanese teas at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition (in California), analyzing the structure of the exhibits and the goals of some of the representatives. Third, it will consider how and why in contrast to their Japanese rivals, after 1915 the Chinese central government and major Chinese tea firms failed to maintain a unified effort to promote Chinese teas in the United States, leading to an erosion of market share that accelerated as more Indian and Ceylon teas flowed into the United States during the second half of the 1920s.