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Plant of Empire: The Beginning of Tea Cultivation in India

Ceylon. Darjeeling. Assam. The names of these famous tea-producing districts, all located on or near the Indian subcontinent, are redolent of quintessential Britain. In 1992, India was the world's largest producer of tea by nearly 150,000 lbs.: 703,93 lbs. were produced that year, versus 559,827 lbs. for China, and figures far less for other regions such as Kenya or Japan.[1] However, India's close association with tea only dates from the mid-nineteenth century. Tea cultivation on the subcontinent came about initially because of a desire on the part of the British East India Company to better control their chief traded commodity in a rapidly-changing imperial world. Much of Britain's imperial history is in some way associated with this same desire for control.

The Company faced troubled finances in the second half of the eighteenth century and on into the nineteenth, which were compounded by the elimination of their monopoly on the Indian trade in 1813, then the China trade in 1833. Soon after, the First Opium War (1839-42) demonstrated rather violently how delicately the China trade had to be handled. When Robert Bruce found in 1823 that tea could be grown in the parts of India where Company control was longstanding and strong, the British administration in India (largely made up of the Company-cum-Indian civil service) jumped at the opportunity. The burgeoning production of tea in Assam from the 1830s through the 1860s changed the "face" of the area quite literally by bringing "coolies" to the tea plantations in the northeast, leaving a tangled heritage in race relations that affects the area into the twenty-first century.

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[1] United States Food and Drug Administration, "Hot Spots in the Pot," available from <http://www.fda.gov/fdac/graphics/1996graphics/teamap.jpeg>, accessed 12 October 2005.

I.

Tea from China and Financial Problems of the 1760s-80s

Tea first came to England from China via East India Company ships in the middle of the seventeenth century. Samuel Pepys drank his first cup of tea ("a China drink") in September of 1660.[2] By 1757, 3,000,000 lbs. of tea per year were being imported from China, "making it the Company's dominant trade product. The ubiquitous tea chests in which the Company packed the leaves in China, evolved into the symbol of wealth and expanding trade influence for the whole enterprise in the East."[3] Tea was attractive to the Company for several reasons: unlike textiles from India or silk garments from China, tea had no domestic competitors. It was easy to transport and made a large profit in relation to its weight. Tea also stimulated other areas of economic activity in the isles, such as the manufacturing of pottery in which to take tea (Josiah Wedgwood's company, founded in 1759, being the most famous example) and the consumption of sugar from British possessions in the West Indies. "Sugar was added to tea in Britain from the beginning," writes Moxham, who goes on to state that the practice may have come about because the earliest shipments of tea from China came via Surat in Western India, where local custom was to sweeten the drink.[4] Chaudhuri writes that, "The relationship between the two products [tea and sugar] was so close that a pamphlet printed in 1744...attempted to estimate the total English consumption of tea from the known consumption of sugar."[5] While the Company did not derive any immediate, direct profit from the increase in sugar or pottery sales, protection of these industries was a concern that in part motivated Parliament to grant aid to the Company during the troubled financial times it faced during the second half of the eighteenth century.

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[2] qtd. in Jane Pettigrew, *A Social History of Tea* (London: National Trust, 2001), 8.

[3] Philip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History* (London, New York: Longman, 1993), 97.

[4] Roy Moxham, *Tea: Addition, Exploitation, and Empire* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2003), 31.

[5] K. N. Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978), 385.

These troubles, which plagued the Company from roughly 1760 to 1784, can be attributed to several causes. Most important were the extremely high import taxes tea faced when entering Britain or anywhere within the Empire, and the rampant smuggling that developed in response to these taxes. Other causes were the expansion of non-trade-related Company activity in India, which took attention away from their original economic mission, as well as conflict with Spain during the American War of Independence, which cut off silver from the Americas used to buy tea in China. By the 1770s, the Company was desperate to cut a deal with Parliament that would bring them back into the black, but in doing so, they had to allow the government more input in how they ran their tea trade.[6]

During the first approximately 125 years of its sale in England (later, Britain), tea was considered a luxury good and taxed accordingly. Until 1784, the various taxes rarely added up to less than 80 per cent *ad valorem*, and were often over 100 per cent.[7] By 1776, "Company teas carried a 23.39 per cent import customs duty, as well as an excise duty levied at a rate of 25 per cent of the Company's auction purchase price and an 'inland' duty of one shilling a pound on tea destined for home consumption."[8] These duties and taxes crippled the sales of tea and provided golden opportunities for smuggling, whether of extra supply from the Continent or of Company tea itself that was either smuggled from the East Indiamen or relanded in Britain after exportation, which avoided the inland duty.[9] According to Lawson, in any one year of the mid-to-late eighteenth century, "Britain and its American colonies could have been handling tea of which 50 percent was landed illegally."[10] Moxham estimates that "out of American total imports of 1 million lbs. in 1760, three quarters of it was smuggled."[11] This percentage only grew in response to the Townshend duty on tea imposed on the American colonies in 1767. Within five years, the Company had warehouses full of tea in London that it could not sell, and its board of directors appealed to Parliament for help. Lord North's government struck a deal with the Company that culminated in the Tea Act (May, 1773), which allowed the Company to keep the import duty on tea if it was sent to America—the government would make up the difference in revenue from the pre-existing Townshend duties once more colonists began buying legal tea at the lower price that ensued.

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[6] Hoh-Cheung and Lorna H. Mui, "The Commutation Act and the Tea Trade in Britain 1784-1793," *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 16 (1963): 234.

[7] Hoh-Cheung and Lorna H. Mui, "Smuggling and the British Tea Trade Before 1784," *The American Historical Review* 74 (1968): 45.

[8] H. V. Bowen, "Tea, Tribute and the East India Company *c.*1750-*c.*1775," in *Hanoverian Britain and Empire*, ed. Stephen Taylor et. al. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), 168-69.

Of course, this did not work out as planned—the Boston Tea Party of December 1773 was the most visible part of a sustained boycott of Company tea. The American War of Independence that followed was even less kind to the Company. Spain's hostility during the war interfered with the supply of American silver, practically the only payment which the Chinese would take for tea, and the war itself depressed British national purchasing power. In 1784, the Company could not afford to pay both its shareholders and the duties to the government (duties on tea for domestic consumption still amounted to over 100 percent of the original price), and that year, it "suffered the humiliation of having its Leadenhall Street headquarters occupied by bailiffs"[12] The high taxes were also losing money for the government, as smuggling still continued apace in Britain, undercutting the amount of revenue they could expect to earn.

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[9] Mui, "Smuggling," 45.
[10] Lawson, 101.
[11] Moxham, 46.
[12] J. R. Ward, "The Industrial Revolution and British Imperialism, 1750-1850," *The Economic History Review* 47 (1994): 48.

In stepped Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger. In 1784, Parliament passed, largely through the energies of Pitt, the Commutation Act, which slashed the taxes on tea to 12.5 percent of the original price via commutation of the tax on tea (which brought in £600,00-900,00 per year) to one on the number of windows in buildings. Pitt himself admitted in the House of Commons during debate on the issue that "the preservation of the publick revenue was the first object of the bill."[13] While this did in fact allow the Company to move its stores of tea and did vastly reduce the smuggling going on, it came with its own set of problems. The Act also regulated the quantity of tea and price thereof that the Company should put up for auction at Leadenhall Street, as well as the amount of stock and number of sales it should hold in a year. The increased demand for legal tea, as well as the new stipulations on how many auctions should be held, meant that the Company had to purchase extra stock from the Continent, for which they secured an advance from the Bank of England of £300,000.[14] This financial dependence placed the Company in a vulnerable position, especially in regards to their current activity in India.

Despite the reduction in import duties. the Company still faced the problem of public perception: the price had gone down so dramatically, 15 to 20 percent by the end of 1784, that tea-drinkers became convinced that the quality had declined too.[15] The Commutation Act only kept duties low for a little over a decade; during the Napoleonic Wars, taxes crept back up to near pre-Act levels, and supplies from China were often interrupted by naval action. A solution could not come soon enough.

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[13] qtd. in Hoh-Cheung and Lorna H. Mui, "William Pitt and the Enforcement of the Commutation Act, 1784-1788," *The English Historical Review* 76 (1961): 447-448.

[14] Ibid., 459.

[15] Denys Forrest, *Tea for the British* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973), 99; Mui, "William Pitt," 459.

II.

From Trading to Bureaucracy

Concurrent with its financial woes, the Company was beginning its military conquest of India. The decline of the Muslim Mughal Empire, which had dominated most of central and southern Indian for several centuries, had led to the formation of multiple smaller, independent states. In 1757, Robert Clive's victory at the Battle of Plassey in Bengal allowed the Company to install their own candidate for Nawab, Mir Jaffar, who upon his ascension handsomely rewarded Clive and the others who had put him there.

The following decades were filled with political intrigue and economic rewards for Britain, the Company, and Company servants ambitious enough to participate in them. Tax and land revenues flowed into state and Company coffers. Also, in 1760s and 1770s, the Company "made some progress in substituting the produce [mostly cotton textiles] of its new Indian possessions for American bullion in the China trade."[16] By the end of the century, Britons controlled large portions of the Indian coast and were working their way into the interior. In the early nineteenth century, this land would become vastly important for two reasons: opium and tea.

Recall that in 1784, the Company had secured a loan of £300,000 from the Bank of England with which to purchase extra tea from the Continent upon the event of the import duties being lowered. This loan left them vulnerable to the passage of the India Act that same year, which saddled the Company with a Board of Control, the president of which sat in the Prime Minister's cabinet. Company servants were no longer to participate in Indian politics, and the Company moved from a policy-making position to merely implementing policy handed down from the government. In 1813, Parliament would go further to strip the Company of its monopoly on the Indian trade. In India, the Company effectively became a department of state, being obliged to follow mandates set down by the Governor-General in Calcutta. These governors ran

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[16] Ward, 56.

> [A]n eastern empire with an army of soldiers and bureaucrats whole and complete in itself. The flaw in this structure lay in the lack of a unified purpose by all those involved in its operations. Everyone wanted to make the eastern empire profitable but hardly any group in the civil and military administration possessed a unitary vision of how to achieve this goal.[17]

The answer came in the form of *Camellia assamica*, or Assamese tea.

III.
Steeped in Possibility

Fairly early on in the East India Company's administration of India, it was thought that tea might be cultivated in India. In 1778, Sir Joseph Banks, the botanist who had accompanied Captain Cook on his voyage to Australia, "suggested that black teas might be grown with success in parts of north India, and had even considered the possibility of recruiting Chinese growers and manufacturers."[18] What few realized at the time, and for at least three decades thereafter, was that a native variety of tea already grew in India. In Assam, a rural province northeast of Bengal, the natives had been making a sort of tea for many years. British Army Major Robert Bruce is generally credited with the discovery of *Camellia assamica* growing wild in the forested hills of the region in either 1823 or 1824. He was accompanied on his survey of Upper Assam by several Chinese "tea-makers who... found to their astonishment that the tea-plants in this region were 'precisely the same as in China.'"[19]

Little is known about why the Assamese variety was not immediately cultivated, or why seedlings from China, which had been gathered by Lord Macartney in 1793 and grown in the Botanical Gardens at Calcutta, were not planted. However, as in the past, it perhaps came down once more to a desire for control. Denys Forrest writes that "it would be understandable, especially after 1813, if the Directors had balked at introducing tea, and a trade in tea, into a country where they had just lost their commercial monopoly, at the possible expense of Canton, where they still retained it."[20] Similarly, a desire to keep supply somewhat restricted and thus keep prices high enough to cover the importation duties, which had increased during the Napoleonic Wars, may have played a part. As well, simple desire not to rock the boat of a good deal—a relatively small amount of opium for a large amount of tea—could also have been at the root—that is, until things began to heat up in China in regards to this very uneven trade.

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[17] Lawson, 144-45.

[18] Moxham. 90.

[19] H.K. Barapujari, *Assam in the Days of the Company* (Panzabar, Assam: Spectrum, 1980), 244.

IV.

War on Drugs

Dutch East India Company merchants had controlled the export of opium from India to China since the beginning of the eighteenth century, but along with victories in Bengal in the latter half of the century, the British East India Company won decisive control of the cultivation of the plant. The Company secured a monopoly of the trade in 1773. However, it was not until the 1820s, as exports of British manufactures to China fell steadily, that the export of opium increased significantly, making up 60-65 percent of the cargoes of East Indiamen headed to China.[21]

The opium trade was a convoluted process involving many groups, which was useful for the Company because the substance was also highly illegal in China. Company servants "kept their noses clean" by not actually engaging in the action of selling opium to users of the substance, but by merely making it available to be sold via auction in Calcutta.[22] The Chinese bought opium with silver, which the non-Company exporters used to pay for new opium stock at the Calcutta auctions, which the Company then used to buy tea in China. The cycle continued when the Chinese used this silver to buy more opium, to debilitating effect on the workforce and the national economy. The Chinese emperor had in 1796 banned all imports of opium and exports of silver bullion, but by 1830, China was importing more than 18,000 chests, or 2.5 million lbs., of contraband opium per year.[23]

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[20] Forrest, 107.
[21] Ward, 56

In 1833, with a suspicion of monopolies spurred by the reformatory air that led to the first Reform Bill in 1832, Parliament divested the Company of its monopoly on the China trade, and thus of its last commercial operation.[24] The lucrative opium trade—though not the Bengal cultivation—was opened to all, and other entities in India took immediate advantage of it. Parsee merchants based on the western coast of India, where the long arm of the Company did not quite reach, began shipping opium out of Bombay. The Company responded by raising production in Bengal and cutting prices. The Chinese market was quickly swamped with the drug.

By 1839, the level of opium imports into China was so high that members of the government, heretofore lax in its enforcement of the opium prohibition, felt that something must be done. Commissioner Lin Tse-hsu, appointed by the Qing Emperor to oversee the elimination of the trade at its source, blockaded the foreign trading community at Canton and ordered British Superintendent of Trade Captain Charles Elliott to turn over remaining inventory of opium. This amounted to approximately twenty thousand chests.[25] Two months later, rioting British sailors destroyed a temple near Kowloon, in the process murdering a Chinese man who attempted to stop them. Elliott insisted on the right to try the sailors at the British consul court despite Chinese protest, and the six sailors thus tried went free because of a technicality of jurisdiction. After the trial, Qing authorities demanded that the British promising to acknowledge Qing legal jurisdiction before trade could be resumed.

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[22] Forrest, 94

[23] Moxham, 69

[24] Peter Ward Fay, *The Opium War, 1840-1842*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina UP, 1975; reprint, New York: Norton, 1976), 58.

To co-opt a phrase from Frank Herbert, for the British, "the opium must flow." The British prepared to go to war in order to both continue the trade of opium for tea and "to efface an unjust and humiliating act, to recover the value of certain property plus expenses, and almost by the by to put England's relations with the Middle Kingdom on a new and proper footing."[26] The Royal Navy seized Hong Kong, then a minor military outpost, in 1839, and proceeded to fight a quick and dirty war with superior technology that outclassed anything the Chinese could throw at them. The treaty of Nanking in 1842 was clearly weighted towards Britain: they received "extraterritoriality," or the right to have all local British citizens subject to British, not Chinese, law; five more ports were opened for trade; and no restrictions were placed on British trade with China, including a tribute to the imperial administration that had originally been necessary to secure trading rights.[27] Once again, they had control of the situation.

While this outcome allowed the unrestricted flow of opium and tea to resume (the Chinese emperor reluctantly legalized the drug in 1858), at the same time it was a warning about the delicacy with which the Chinese trade had to be handled if another war were to be prevented. Indeed, the Second Opium War, lasting from 1858-1860, was right around the corner. The

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[25] Ibid., 188

[26] Ibid., 195

[27] Paul Chrastina, "Emperor of China Declares War on Drugs," available from <http://opioids.com/opium/opiumwar.html>, accessed 31 October 2005.

British public at home also did not want a repeat of the increase in tea prices that the war brought about for its duration.[28] It is certainly no coincidence that at the time of the war, companies currently growing Indian tea began to make a splash in London.

V.
A Full-Bodied Brew: Tea Makes It Big in India

Little attention had been paid to Indian tea before the 1830s. However, Lord William Bentinck, who was appointed to the Governor-Generalship of India in 1833, invigorated the tea movement. He wished to introduce "some kind of stabilising, productive element into...Bengal," a desire which was tickled by a memorandum he received from "a certain Mr. John Walker...[who] pointed to the immense growth and social importance of tea-drinking in Britain; to our dependence for supplies on the mere whim of the Chinese; to the suitability of the soil, climate and labour supply of Assam for growing the new crop."[29] In 1834, he established a Tea Committee, the purpose of which was to begin experimental plantings of *Camellia sinensis* seedlings, brought from China and germinated in Calcutta, in the foothills of the Himalayas, the Nilgris, and in the northeast frontier (i.e., Assam). Plants from an "original batch of 80,000 seeds were distributed between three trial areas, Assam being allotted 20,000 plants, Kumaon in the North West Prince 20,000, and Madras presidency 2,000."[30]

From these initial batches of seedlings, legitimate gardens were formed. The first harvest of Assam tea was "pronounced by the experts to be satisfactory, and every bit as good as the tea that was coming from China. The first auction of Indian teas...with its high prices, attracted the attention of certain merchants and businessmen," both European and Indian, who in 1839—the same year which began the First Opium War—formed the Assam Tea Company.[31] The British government in India handed over the bulk of the existing tea gardens to the company, which continued and expanded the cultivation of the plant.[32] Very important to the crop's increasing share in the global tea trade was Lord Dalhousie's Doctrine of Lapse, promulgated when he took office as Governor-General of India in 1847. Annexing states whose rulers had no natural heirs allowed to British to take over certain "waste lands" in Bengal, which "greatly stimulated the extension of tea cultivation in British India," to quote Charles Henry Fielder, Secretary of the Lower and Northern Assam Tea Companies, who addressed the Statistical Society of London in 1869.[33] Ten years later, though, this doctrine would cause serious trouble for the British in India.

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[28] Forrest, 115-16.
[29] Forrest, 107.
[30] John Weatherstone, *The Pioneers: The Early British Tea and Coffee Planters and Their Way Of Life* (London: Quiller Press, 1986), 36.

The government encouraged tea production through extremely generous land practices and by not granting monopolies. When the Assam Company, Jorehaut Company, or any other tea cultivator acquired a lease on a new patch of jungle to clear and make over into a tea estate, there was a grace period of ten or twenty years before any rent needed to be paid. By the end of 1840, 2,638 acres were being cultivated and 10,202 lbs. of tea had been exported, and by 1859, there were fifty tea estates besides the Assam and Jorehaut Companies in India.[34] In 1888, with a production of 86 million lbs. per year, India became the largest producer of tea in the world.

The new Indian teas had many advantages over the China teas which made them more attractive to the British buyer. They were grown in British territory by British companies, there was no monopoly on production, and there was less distance to travel between the estate and the English cup, all of which made them considerably cheaper than the Chinese leaf. In addition to this, the British preference for strong tea with a dark-colored liquor made the Indian variety much more appreciated, especially by the working classes.[35] As well, at the same time as the Indian teas made their debut in Britain, public health concerns about the older Chinese teas had begun to surface.

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[31] Ibid, 40.

[32] Charles Henry Fielder, "On the Rise, Progress, and Future Prospects of Tea Cultivation in British India," *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 32:1 (1869): 30.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Moxham, 102-104.

Thirty years into the nineteenth century, consumption of black tea began to rapidly outpace consumption of green. (The difference between the two is not in the variety of plant, but rather in how long it is allowed to oxidize before being packed and shipped.) To make the appearance of green tea an "acceptable nice bright green instead of its natural greyish hue...it had to be 'faced' or adulterated with various substances, of which Prussian Blue and Verdigris were perhaps the most lethal."[36] There was also large market in "reusing" tea leaves: men would buy spent tea leaves from London coffee houses and tea shops and dye them, repackage them, and sell them as new. In 1830, a book called *Deadly Adulteration and Slow Poisoning: Disease and Death in the Pot and Bottle* appeared, a large section of which consisted of an exposé on the dying and reusing of tea leaves. The anonymous author of the volume wrote that the "facing" of leaves often was often done by the "Brothers of the Sun and Moon" (i.e., the Chinese).[37] Is it any wonder that "by the end of the nineteenth century, Britain had become a nation of almost exclusively black tea drinkers"?[38]

VI.
Reading the Leaves: Changes to India After Tea Cultivation Began

To produce so many pounds per year, tea required a considerable amount of labor. Charles Henry Fielder wrote,

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[35] Pettigrew, 97, 150.
[36] Forrest, 103.
[37] Ibid, 130.
[38] Pettigrew, 89.

> It may be fairly stated, that no crop is more dependent on an adequate supply of labour than tea. Until the trees have become fit to pick leaf from, it requires at least *one man to each two acres* for clearing, hoeing, and planting; afterwards one man to the acre as a minimum; for in addition to keeping the ground clear of jungle, the leaf picking, when a flush is out, employs every hand, and the leaf, if neglected for even forty-eight hours, becomes unfit for the manufacture of the higher qualities of tea.[39]

The local Assamese, the majority of whom owned some land, were more interested in working their own farms than in employment at one of the new plantations. Even a 100 per cent increase in land taxes of the surrounding areas was not enough incentive to get many to work at the estates.[40] Considering the locals too intractable to work with, the estate managers turned to other sources of labor. Chinese workers were most desirable, as those men whom the managers wished to import were trained in tea-processing. However, "if a qualified man was rash enough to take a job in India he could be sure that those left behind would be flogged or otherwise tortured."[41] About the best potential tea moguls in India could hope for was to use some of the Chinese tea seed or seedlings brought back by British adventurers such as Macao Gordon or Robert Fortune, and even these were largely unnecessary given that the Assamese variety grew better in the area. The labor would have to be Indian, and it would have to be cheap in order to compete with China.

Workers, mostly male, from poverty- and famine-stricken areas of Bengal and lands further south were enticed—and sometimes coerced—to the plantations by promises of lighter work and more food. Once they had signed a contract, they were indentured to the plantation for better or for worse, and indeed it often was for the worst. Groups of recruits making the trip up to Assam were plagued with cholera and dysentery, which was worsened by the crowded conditions on the steamer ships which made erratic journeys up the Brahmaputra River or by the forced march through jungle terrain.[42] Many times, "half of a consignment died before reaching the estates."[43] Once they got to Assam, the "coolies" found that many of their employers could not feed or house them adequately, resulting in a malnourished workforce that easily succumbed to disease and death.

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[39] Fielder, 31.

[40] Piya Chatterjee, *A Time for Tea: Women, Labor, and Post-Colonial Politics on an Indian Plantation* (Durham: Duke UP, 2001), 69.

[41] Forrest, 108.

Despite the difficulties the workers faced, the population of Assam soared from 1,201,151 in 1854 to 1,750,000 in 1866.[44] The 1891 census estimated that a quarter of the residents of the area were of migrant origin.[45] Immigration into the area and export of tea from it brought the formerly-isolated province—sometimes unwillingly—into a closer relationship with the rest of British India. The implementation of a regular steamer service up and down the Brahmaputra River in the early 1860s is one example of this. This dragging of Assam into India culminated in 1874 when the British government reorganized boundaries in northeastern India, resulting in the incorporation of numerous Bengali-speaking areas with "Assam proper," giving these non-Assamese a voting majority.[46] Since that time, immigration and ethnic relations have been troublesome in Assam, as the native Assamese attempt to assert their linguistic, political, and cultural identity against reorganization of their boundaries in relation to Bengali states and continuing immigration, especially from neighboring Bangladesh. The latter part of the twentieth century has been a time of particular stress: the local government made attempts to deport all recent immigrants from East Pakistan in the 1960s, and a violent explosion in 1983 by native Assamese against those who had immigrated to the state in the previous fifty years left four thousand dead and a quarter of a million homeless.[47] Newspapers today still carry stories of violence resulting from ethnic conflict in the region. Much of this conflict can be traced in part to the original British actions to further integrate Assam with the rest of the country.

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[42] Moxham, 132-33; Fielder, 32.
[43] Moxham, 133.
[44] Fielder, 32.
[45] Myron Weiner, "The Political Demography of Assam's Anti-Immigrant Movement," *Population and Development Review* 9 (1983): 283.
[46] Jyotirindra Dasgupta, "Community, Authenticity, and Autonomy: Insurgence and Institutional Development in India's Northeast," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 56 (1997): 351.

Something must be said about the demise of the East India Company, which enabled the Indian tea gardens to exist in the first place. In 1857, ten years after Dalhousie first promulgated the Doctrine of Lapse, sepoys in the Company's Bengal Army mutinied over being required to bite open bullet casings which contained animal fat that potentially violated both Hindu and Muslim dietary restrictions. The mutiny quickly transformed into a bloody civil rebellion, although it was mainly confined to those states which had been affected by the Doctrine. It took several months and many men for the British army to subdue the rebellious natives, and it marked a great rift in the history of British India. Afterwards, "few people doubted that the revolt in India would mean the end of the East India Company."[48] Indeed it did; despite an argument from John Stuart Mill that Company administration in India was the best way to keep partisan politics out of the rule of India, and the long tradition of rule in the subcontinent that it had, politicians and members of the public both felt that the Company was "inefficient...inert...and an anachronism in a new age" which had to be rescued by the British army when its own soldiers had mutinied.[49] In 1858, the government of India was officially ceded entirely to the crown, and the institution which had brought tea to Indian lands was no more. In the wake of the Rebellion, the British government believed there was a need for more hands-on, accountable administration in India to protect the many investments they had made there, both under the aegis of the Company and through other individuals, such as those associated with the independent tea companies.

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[47] Weiner, 279.

[48] Brian Gardener, *The East India Company* (1971; reprint, new york: Dorset Press, 1990), 288.

[49] Ibid.

Even today, some Britons hanker after more control over their de facto national drink. An article published in the *Washington Post* on October 23, 2005, quotes Jonathan Jones, the man behind the first crop of tea ever grown commercially in the British Isles, as saying, "English tea should be grown on English soil."[50] The estate at Tregothnan, Cornwall, produced its first yield this year, a small batch harvested from 20,000 plants, 25 individual-serving bags of which sell for $18. Though realizing that the Tregothnan tea will never fill more than a niche market, Jones also noted that "Winston Churchill was deeply worried during World War II that rationing caused by disrupted tea supplies would hurt morale."[51] The British cultivation of tea in India was driven by this continuing desire to insulate their precious commodity from global forces that might seek to disrupt it on its way into teapots at home.

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[50] Mary Jordan, "Just Their Cup of Tea: British Cultivate Their Own," *The Washington Post*, 23 October 2005, sec. A, p. 16.

[51] Ibid.

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