

Extract 3

- 1 In China there is a legend that the Emperor Chen-nung invented tea in the year 2374 BC by accident. One summer's day he stopped in the shade of a shrub and put water to boil to refresh himself (hot water is more refreshing than iced water). A slight breeze plucked several leaves from the tree.
- 5 They fell into the boiling water. Chen-nung did not notice until he breathed in the subtle aroma of the miraculous brew as he raised it to his mouth to drink.

In India, however, a legend goes as follows:

- Long, long ago there lived a prince called Darma. After a wild youth, he embraced the way of asceticism, became a begging monk called Bodhi Dharma and went to China as a Buddhist missionary, vowing never to sleep again in penance for his wild nights of debauchery. For years his faith helped him to keep his vow, but one day, when he was meditating on the slopes of the Himalayas, the sleep so long postponed overcame him.
- 15 On waking, overwhelmed by remorse for breaking his word, he cut off his eyelids, buried them and set off again, tears mingling with the blood on his face. Years later, passing the place of his sacrifice once more, he saw an unknown bush on the spot. He picked the leaves and steeped them in the hot water which was his only nourishment. After the first mouthful, his weariness was gone and his spirit, suddenly stimulated, attained the greatest heights of knowledge and beauty.

Continuing on his way, he distributed seeds of the miraculous tree as he passed. Ever since, monks have drunk tea to aid their meditation.

(From Toussaint-Samat, Maguelonne. *History of Food*.
(Anthea Bell *trans.*) Blackwell: Cambridge, Mass., 1992.)