

ROBERT FORTUNE , THE ENGLISH TEA SPY

Shortly after the first Opium War and the restoration of trade with China, the British Empire is planning to develop its **first tea plantations** in India. But lacks the basics : good tea and technical knowledge of the manufacture of black tea and green tea.

In 1848, the East India Company entrusts the task to **Robert Fortune** (1812-1880), English botanist , to **go collect plants and seeds of tea and drill the tea trade secrets in various regions of China** . Mr Fortune had remarked in 1843 with the story of his first visit to China three years of trips to the northern provinces of China, where he describes his observations on the steps of making tea (according to him it was the first Westerner to explain that green tea and black tea come from the same plant).



An unknown foreign inland China

At that time , relations between China and the West are very conflicting . They have managed to impose on the country the presence of 5 counters to promote trade but Beijing forbids any Western travel inland.

Robert Fortune during his two trips account go unnoticed by dressing like a Chinese , with a long plait of hair , speaking Mandarin and leaving it to his guides to explain to people a little curious that *he is a lord of a far distant country beyond the Great Wall*.

His expeditions were a success, Robert Fortune contibuted to the improvement of the culture of tea and tea manufacturing in a rapidly expanding British Empire . In 1856 the first tea plantation in Darjeeling saw his appearance.

Résumé fait à partir du blog de Cyril C. Mis à jour le 19 février 2015 sur le site Terre des théés

