Tea (Camellia sinensis (L.) O. Kuntze) Typology in Kenya: A Review

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Abstract : Tea typology is the science of classifying tea. This study was carried out between November 2023 and July 2024, whose main objective was to investigate the typological classification nomenclature of processed tea in the world, narrowing down to Kenya. Centres of origin, historical background, tea growing region, scientific naming system, market, fermentation levels, processing/ oxidation levels and cultural reasons are used to classify tea at present. Of these, the most common typology is by oxidation, and more specifically, by the production methods within the oxidation categories. While the Asian tea producing countries categorises tea products based on the decreasing oxidation levels during the manufacturing process: black tea, green tea, oolong tea and instant tea, Kenya's tea typology system is based on the degree of fermentation process, i.e. black tea, purple tea, green tea and white tea. Tea is also classified into five categories: black tea, green tea, white tea, oolong tea, and dark tea. Black tea is the main tea processed and exported in Kenya, manufactured mainly by withering, rolling, or by use of cutting-tearing-curling (CTC) method that ensures efficient conversion of leaf herbage to made tea, oxidizing, and drying before being sorted into different grades. It is from these varied typological methods that this review paper concludes that different regions of the world use different classification nomenclature. Therefore, since tea typology is not standardized, it is recommended that a global tea regulator dealing in tea classification be created to standardize tea typology, with domestic in-country regulatory bodies in tea growing countries accredited to implement the global-wide typological agreements and resolutions.