



# Tobacco: A Cultural History of How an Exotic Plant Seduced Civilization

*Iain Gately*

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Tobacco was first cultivated and enjoyed by the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas, who used it for medicinal, religious, and social purposes long before the arrival of Columbus. But when Europeans began to colonize the American continents, it became something else entirely -- a cultural touchstone of pleasure and success, and a coveted commodity that would transform the world economy forever. Iain Gately's *Tobacco* tells the epic story of an unusual plant and its unique relationship with the history of humanity, from its obscure ancient beginnings, through its rise to global prominence, to its current embattled state today. In a lively narrative, Gately makes the case for the tobacco trade being the driving force behind the growth of the American colonies, the foundation of Dutch trading empire, the underpinning cause of the African slave trade, and the financial basis for our victory in the American Revolution. Informed and erudite, *Tobacco* is a vivid and provocative look into the complex history of this precious plant. "A rich, complex history ... Deeply engaging and witty." -- Carmela Ciuraru, Los Angeles Times "Ambitious ... informative and perceptive ... Gately is an amusing writer, which is a blessing." -- Jonathan Yardley, The Washington Post "[Gately] documents the resourcefulness with which human beings of every class, religion, race, and continent have pursued the lethal leaf." -- John Leland, The New York Times Book Review



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