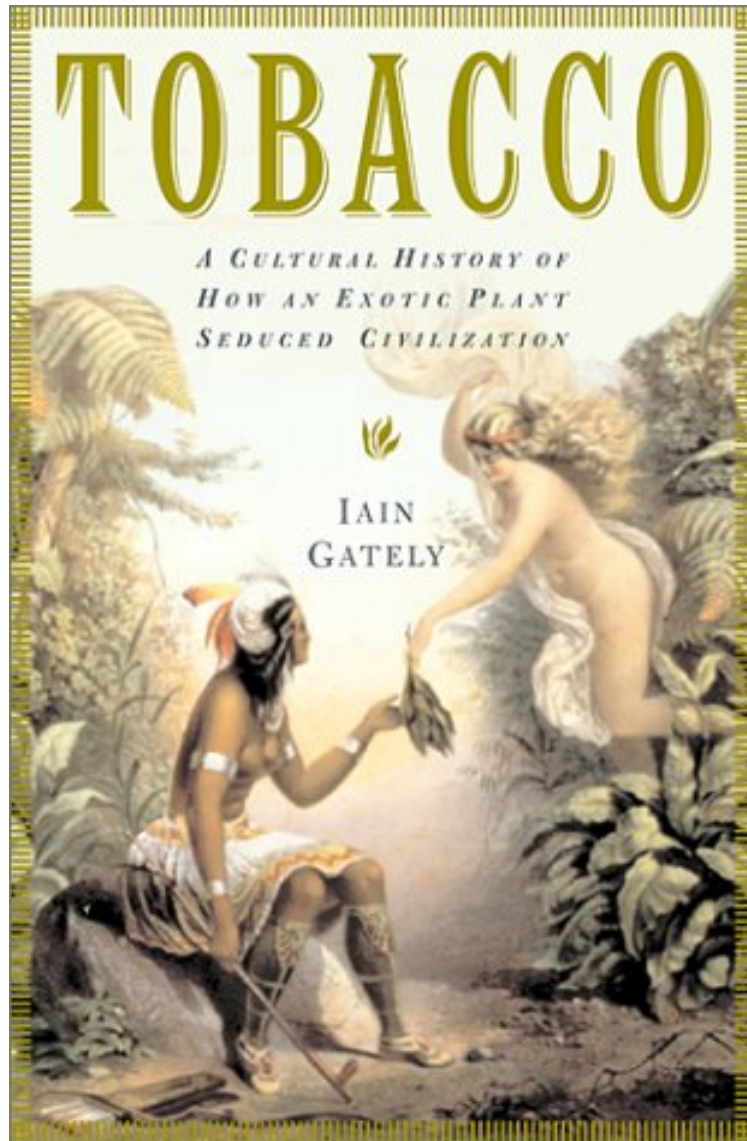


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Tobacco: A Cultural History of How an Exotic Plant Seduced Civilization

Iain Gately

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#107111 in Books Grove Press 2002-01-09Ingredients: Example IngredientsOriginal language:EnglishPDF
1 1.34 x 5.80 x 8.56l, #File Name: 0802117058320 pages | File size: 50.Mb

Iain Gately : Tobacco: A Cultural History of How an Exotic Plant Seduced Civilization before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Tobacco: A Cultural History of How an Exotic Plant Seduced Civilization:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Deeply AppreciatedBy Serious ReviewerThe content of the book is very informative and intriguing, but I refuse to elaborate because I might spoil it for others. I highly recommend this

book to tobaccoists. 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Very informative
By GA Russell I enjoyed Tobacco very much, and read it over the course of three evenings. I learned a great deal from it. The first 200 pages deal with tobacco's history prior to the 20th century - its use for religious and medical purposes, and the two most common methods of use, pipes and snuff. The remaining 150 pages concern 20th century cigarette use, including the final two chapters which deal with lung cancer and government anti-smoking policies. I highly recommend this book, but find two faults: 1) There is very little discussion of cigars. 2) This is an American printing of a British book. I would have liked to have read much more about the American tobacco industry of the 20th century. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A good read
By Ricardo I work at the largest cigar lounge in Texas and I read this book to become more familiar with tobacco in general and cigars in particular. The author is decidedly opinionated, well versed on the subject, mildly cynical, amusing and always interesting. I read several chapters at the lounge while relaxing and enjoying bourbon and cigars on my day off. As for tobacco's dangers; well, I ride motorcycles, enjoy well made firearms and smoke cigars. All of which are individual activities and not for everyone. It comes down to a personal choice as to how you wish to live and enjoy life. Just remember, moderation in all things is a good guide to life. If you have an interest in the history of tobacco and its use, I believe you would find the book a fine intro and overview of a fascinating and controversial subject.

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*

.com Iain Gately's *Tobacco* is a sweeping cultural history of the world's most prevalent addiction, and it's probably the best book ever written on its subject. Gately begins in pre-Columbian America, where the natives made tobacco "their most popular gift to the rest of humanity," and continues through all the cantankerous smoking litigation of the 1990s. The story touches on just about every subject imaginable: tobacco in literature, the movies, and society. It would be wrong to call Gately an advocate of smoking, but he clearly takes pleasure, for example, in noting that Hitler's Nazis launched one of history's most vigorous anti-smoking initiatives. The book is full of delicious trivia: Many of Shakespeare's contemporaries smoked, but there's no evidence that the Bard himself did, and none of his plays make any mention of smoking; he "kept his writing a smoke-free zone." Nevertheless, reports Gately with a smirk, there is "archaeological evidence proving that smoking was going on around the Shakespeare household in Stratford-upon-Avon during his life." Smoking aficionados won't want to miss *Tobacco*, and it's a much healthier gift for them than a box of cigars. --John Miller
From *Publishers Weekly* Here it is everything you ever wanted to know about tobacco, from Amerindian prehistory right up to the Clinton/Lewinsky cigar tryst. As Gately traces the role of tobacco in history's major military conflicts and cultural movements, he treats readers to a variety of brief lessons regarding Galenic vs. Chinese medicine, the colonization of the West Indies, the cultivation of tobacco by Australian aboriginals and African tribesmen, Scottish business expansion in the 17th century, the aesthetics of the "narghile" (water pipe) in Asia and much more. He examines both the familiar (peace pipes, chewing tobacco, cigars, cigarettes) and the arcane (techniques for snuffing, tobacco enemas) with appropriate thoroughness. Anyone interested in the origins of the smoking jacket, snuff horns, strike-anywhere matches, meerschaum and briar pipes, or curious about why most signers of the Declaration of Independence were tobacco farmers will not only enjoy this work, but come away with a larger understanding of why tobacco has been so important in human history. While Gately is explicit about the medical risks of tobacco, this global approach stressing the ubiquity of its use suggests it will remain part of our culture for generations to come. With irreverent wit and uncommon grace, Gately shares his enthusiasms with any reader brave enough to buy a book with the demon weed on its cover. A bonus appendix gives readers simple instructions on the cultivation of tobacco at home. Illus. (Jan.)
Forecast: Handselling recommended especially to cultural history buffs (and those who reek of you-know-what) since this is a book that might otherwise not get the recognition it deserves. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.
From *Library Journal* Novelist Gately (*The Assessor*) presents an ambitious historical survey of humanity's love/hate relationship with tobacco. He traces the path the "Devil's weed" took after Native Americans offered Europeans their first nicotine hit. Gately pays particular attention

to the evolving methods of ingesting tobacco, pays respect to the pleasurable ambience of the smoking experience, and even offers a final chapter on how to grow tobacco in your backyard. His tributes to tobacco are counterbalanced by evidence that smoking has sent many users to early graves. Yet he is very critical of many claims made by the antismoking industry, particularly the claim that secondary smoke is as harmful as direct inhalation. The book was originally published in London as *Diva Nicotina*, and the title change is indicative of the contents: Gately downplays the addictive power of nicotine and in the final analysis contends that 1.2 billion smokers could not be wrong. This volume is sparsely documented, and the reader is inclined to question many of Gately's statements, such as his contention that tobacco can "guard against cancer of the womb." Jordan Goodman's *Tobacco in History* (Routledge, 1994, reprint) offers a more balanced history. An optional purchase for academic and public libraries. Jim Doyle, Sara Hightower Regional Lib., Rome, GA Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.