



# Empire of Tea: The Asian Leaf that Conquered the World

*Markman Ellis, Richard Coulton, Matthew Mauger*

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Although tea had been known and consumed in China and Japan for centuries, it was only in the seventeenth century that Londoners first began drinking it. Over the next two hundred years, its stimulating properties seduced all of British society, as tea found its way into cottages and castles alike. One of the first truly global commodities, tea has also, today, come to epitomize British culture and identity.

This impressively detailed book offers a rich cultural history of tea, from its ancient origins in China to its spread around the world. The authors recount tea's arrival in London and follow its increasing salability and import via the East India Company throughout the eighteenth century, inaugurating the first regular exchange—both commercial and cultural—between China and Britain. They look at European scientists' struggles to understand tea's history and medicinal properties, and they recount the ways its delicate flavor and exotic preparation have enchanted poets and artists. Exploring everything from its everyday use in social settings to the political and economic controversies it has stirred—such as the Boston Tea Party and the First Opium War—they offer a multilayered look at what was ultimately an imperial industry, a collusion—and often clash—between the world's greatest powers over control of a simple beverage that has become an enduring pastime.

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