



# The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse

*Brian Cowan*

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## **The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse** Brian Cowan

What induced the British to adopt foreign coffee-drinking customs in the seventeenth century? Why did an entirely new social institution, the coffeehouse, emerge as the primary place for consumption of this new drink? In this lively book, Brian Cowan locates the answers to these questions in the particularly British combination of curiosity, commerce, and civil society. Cowan provides the definitive account of the origins of coffee drinking and coffeehouse society, and in so doing he reshapes our understanding of the commercial and consumer revolutions in Britain during the long Stuart century.

Britain's virtuosi, gentlemanly patrons of the arts and sciences, were profoundly interested in things strange and exotic. Cowan explores how such virtuosi spurred initial consumer interest in coffee and invented the social template for the first coffeehouses. As the coffeehouse evolved, rising to take a central role in British commercial and civil society, the virtuosi were also transformed by their own invention.

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