

## **Winner of the 2018 PCCBS Book Prize**

**Erika Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017)**

In a sprawling global study that begins with Samuel Pepys and ends with Frank Sinatra, Erika Rappaport savors the bittersweet relationship between the British Empire and the production, marketing and consumption of tea.

After the elite acquired a taste for the beverage, the British developed the cultivation of tea first in Assam and then in Ceylon, Nyasaland, Kenya and Tanganyika. Next the goal was to expand the number of people drinking tea. Consumption steadily grew, tripling in Britain between 1871 and 1931. By the 1920s, J. Lyons was marketing no less than seventy brands of tea. Much of the increase, as Rappaport makes clear, was due to repeated advertising campaigns by, among others, the Ceylon Tea Propaganda Board and the International Tea Market Expansion Board, which featured such characters like Mazawattee's Granny, Mr. and Mrs. Tea-Drinker and Mr. T. Pott and the Cuplets. This inexorable logic, for example, convinced Lord Curzon that the labor problems of Indian tea producers would disappear once more Indians drank tea.

Problems nonetheless dogged these efforts. Mahatma Gandhi campaigned against the evils of "strong tea," and rising tariffs threatened to curtail the practice and led to the formation of the Anti-Tea-Duty League. More importantly, consumers proved fickle, first in the United States and then in Britain itself, as Victorian tea rooms gave way to modern coffee bars, a transition fostered by the "Juke-Box Boys" of the early 1960s – Cliff Richards, the Beatles and (improbably) Screaming Lord Sutch.

Rappaport deserves high praise for exploiting the hitherto little-used archives of producers and retailers and for writing such wide ranging cultural study outlining "how tea shaped the modern world" – or at least the British part of it.

## **Honorable Mention**

**Susan D. Amussen & David E. Underdown, *Gender, Culture and Politics in England, 1560-1640: Turning the World Upside Down* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017)**

For well over thirty years, David Underdown and Susan Amussen have on their own conducted pioneering studies of the social and gender history of early modern England. Here for the first time, they have co-written *Gender, Culture and Politics in England 1560-1640: Turning the World Upside Down*. Their lively book seeks to bridge the gap between "structural models of social change, and the cultural history prevalent today" by analyzing various inversions associated with unruly women and failed patriarchs in both society and politics.

The result is a scholarly triumph. They have presented their case with characteristic ease by weaving together wide-ranging materials involving, for example, everything from episodes from the London stage and actual scandals at Court to tumultuous incidents like the 1607 Well May

Games and the 1612 Lancashire witch trials. In the process, they make a persuasive, and well written, case for the closer integration of political, social and cultural history.