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Stephen R. Bown

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Stephen R. Bown : 1494: How a Family Feud in Medieval Spain Divided the World in Half before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised 1494: How a Family Feud in Medieval Spain Divided the World in Half:

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Interesting and highly readable By bekeenee Isabella, Ferdinand, the Borgias, Columbus, Magellan and Sir Francis Drake are just a few of the characters you will recognize; and there are many more that we all should know. As a frequent traveler to Spain and Portugal, I found the book very interesting. Mr

Brown knit together the numerous threads of this story very well. This highly readable historical book gives enough to inform, without weighing it down with too much detail. While I was familiar with parts of the story, Mr Brown placed it in a different context and filled in the necessary details and included the "flesh and blood" motives. A previous reviewer, a self-described "student of the epoch", missed the point when he criticized the book for presenting "nothing new." Mr Brown states that his book presents a different way to look at the topic and not an in-depth history of one facet of the story. For those who want more he provides a bibliography and reading list for further research. I highly recommend this book to anyone wanting to understand a bit more about how Spain and Portugal developed such wealthy empires, how they lost them, and what their legacy is in the world today. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great history lesson By Scott This book is great for anyone who loves history and wants to read about this time period. It covers everything from the intertwined royal families of the Iberian peninsula to famous mariners like Columbus and Magellan to the Protestant Reformation. The Kindle version apparently wasn't edited and contains numerous typos and strange word breaks. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I am so happy I purchased my own copy to have. By laprofe I After borrowing repeatedly from my library, I am so happy I purchased my own copy to have. A little known chapter in our history that continues to impact us to this day.

"This is a starry love story, a tale of seething jealousies and subterfuge, a political imbroglio, and religious cruelties. It sounds like Shakespeare and it could have very well been the plot of one of his plays." --Toronto Star In 1494, award-winning author Stephen R. Bown tells the untold story of the explosive feud between monarchs, clergy, and explorers that split the globe between Spain and Portugal and made the world's oceans a battleground. When Columbus triumphantly returned from America to Spain in 1493, his discoveries inflamed an already-smouldering conflict between Spain's renowned monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, and Portugal's Joao II. Which nation was to control the world's oceans? To quell the argument, Pope Alexander VI the notorious Rodrigo Borgia issued a proclamation laying the foundation for the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494, an edict that created an imaginary line in the Atlantic Ocean dividing the entire known (and unknown) world between Spain and Portugal. Just as the world's oceans were about to be opened by Columbus's epochal voyage, the treaty sought to limit the seas to these two favored Catholic nations. The edict was to have a profound influence on world history: it propelled Spain and Portugal to superpower status, steered many other European nations on a collision course, and became the central grievance in two centuries of international espionage, piracy, and warfare. The treaty also began the fight for "the freedom of the seas" the epic struggle to determine whether the world's oceans, and thus global commerce, would be controlled by the decree of an autocrat or be open to the ships of any nation distinctly modern notion, championed in the early seventeenth century by the Dutch legal theorist Hugo Grotius, whose arguments became the foundation of international law. At the heart of one of the greatest international diplomatic and political agreements of the last five centuries were the strained relationships and passions of a handful of powerful individuals. They were linked by a shared history, mutual animosity, and personal obligations squarrels, rivalries, and hatreds that dated back decades. Yet the struggle ultimately stemmed from a young woman's determination to defy tradition and the king, and to choose her own husband.

From Booklist Ever wonder how the inhabitants of Brazil came to speak Portuguese? The answer to that question can be found in the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas, where in an effort to stave off a war for global hegemony, Pope Alexander VI divided the New World between the Spanish and the Portuguese. With the advent of the Protestant Reformation, however, France, England, and the Dutch Republic employed a combination of legal argument and piracy to end the Iberian mercantile monopoly. In this popular account spanning the Age of Exploration, Brown (Merchant Kings, 2009) argues that Alexander's line of demarcation, sanctioned by God and backed by the threat of excommunication, was part politics, part sound decision, and part disaster waiting to happen. Brown incorporates a sprawling cast of characters, including Ferdinand and Isabella, Columbus, Magellan, Sir Francis Drake, and members of the ostentatious Borgia clan, into what is both a judicious synthesis of the surrounding scholarship and an entertaining look at the evolution of international law on the high seas. In lieu of earth-shattering revelations, Brown provides general readers and fans of the period with a work meant for pure enjoyment. --Brian Odom Anyone who wishes to thoroughly understand the development of today's geopolitical world must read Mr. Bown's 1494. New York Journal of Books Bown's captivating study presents a fresh glimpse into the origins of the age of exploration and conquest as other nations challenged the primacy of Spain and Portugal. Publishers Weekly Both a judicious synthesis of the surrounding scholarship and an entertaining look at the evolution of international law on the high seas. Booklist This is a starry love story, a tale of seething jealousies and subterfuge, a political imbroglio, and religious cruelties. It sounds like Shakespeare and it could have very well been the plot of one of his plays. . . . In the 15th century, the world began to take shape in the ways we understand it today. Toronto Star One more Ripley's Believe It Or Not exhibit from our strange and wonderful past. . . . 1494 is certainly a good read. National Post An entertaining and elegantly written voyage into the treacherous seas of religious fanatics, greedy slavers, depraved autocrats, doomed indigenous peoples and desperately brave adventurers in search of fortune. The Globe Mail A masterful read. The Washington Times on Merchant Kings Engagingly written and refreshingly conversational, Merchant Kings brings a cohesion to such a large

and unwieldy historical period, a period that both led directly to, and remains an integral part of, so many contemporary economic and political struggles. The Post and Courier on Merchant KingsA chronicle perfectly relevant to our own time--and ultimately shows us that a market is free only when those who live and consume within it are protected from the powerful. New York Journal of Books on Merchant KingsStephen Bown has ingeniously whittled this multinational history down to vignettes of six of its more notorious figures. . . . These characters are as familiar to us as evil storybook characters, yet as foreign to contemporary business standards as Genghis Khan. Timothy Brook, author of Vermeers Hat, on Merchant KingsStephen Bown tells a fascinating story, one that provides a very different perspective on the colonial period than that which is to be gleaned from the usual grocery list of significant events. The Right Honourable Paul Martin, former Prime Minister of Canada on Merchant KingsA fascinating adventure story with vivid descriptions of eighteenth-century geopolitics and native and British societies . . . Stephen Bown is emerging as Canada's Simon Winchester. The Globe and Mail on Madness, Betrayal and the Lash[Bown]'s particularly good at penning provocative theories that link seemingly modest events to monumental changes in the course of history. . . . Bown also has a good eye for the unintended consequences, ironies, and contradictions that are the product of social and technological forces of great magnitude. Publishers Weekly on A Most Damnable InventionAbout the AuthorSTEPHEN R. BOWN has been writing about adventurers, travelers, and explorers for many years. He is the author of Madness, Betrayal and the Lash; Scurvy; A Most Damnable Invention; and Merchant Kings. He lives in the Canadian Rockies with his wife and two children.