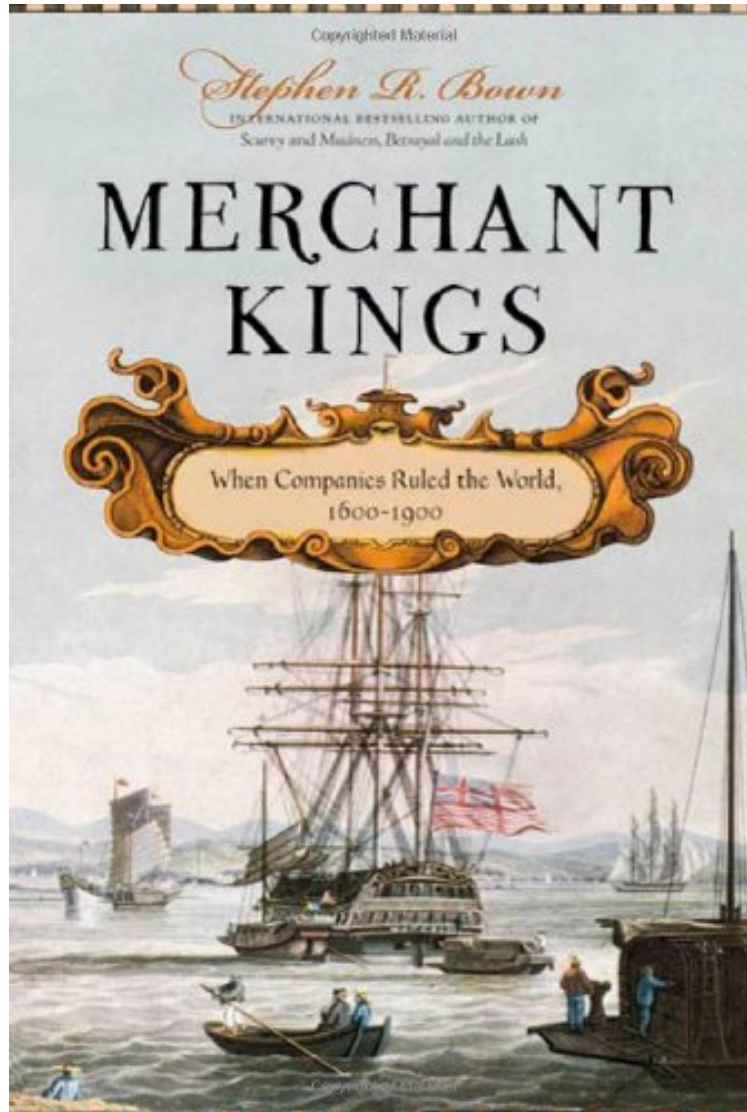


(Download pdf) Merchant Kings: When Companies Ruled the World, 1600--1900

Merchant Kings: When Companies Ruled the World, 1600--1900

Stephen R. Bown

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Stephen R. Bown : Merchant Kings: When Companies Ruled the World, 1600--1900 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Merchant Kings: When Companies Ruled the World, 1600--1900:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent historical novel - Thought it was about time I ...By SamExcellent historical novel - Thought it was about time I learned about the east indian company because always wove in and out of so many historic novels/books.it is fascinating to find out the origins of so many things we take for granted.4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A good intro into Colonial Merchant KingsBy arvThis

book gave a wonderful and brief account on six Merchant Kings. At times I wish that I could have had more detail on the merchant kings, but I appreciate how concise the book is. At the end of the book the author recommends other books for those who want to learn about these "kings" and the companies that they helped create. Obviously each of these men's or corporations lives can and have filled volumes. This is a great start to your study of these men!³ of 3 people found the following review helpful. An interesting and engaging accountBy keith wallaceI was fascinated by this engaging account of these Portuguese, Dutch and English mercantile adventurers. I suffered from a British education at a time when Britannia had not quite realised that she no longer ruled the waves. Clive and Rhodes were great men. It was a real bonus to read such an interesting and informative sequential account of these great colonial trading companies.

Commerce meets conquest in this swashbuckling story of the six merchant-adventurers who built the modern world. It was an era when monopoly trading companies were the unofficial agents of European expansion, controlling vast numbers of people and huge tracts of land, and taking on governmental and military functions. They managed their territories as business interests, treating their subjects as employees, customers, or competitors. The leaders of these trading enterprises exercised virtually unaccountable, dictatorial political power over millions of people. The merchant kings of the Age of Heroic Commerce were a rogue's gallery of larger-than-life men who, for a couple hundred years, expanded their far-flung commercial enterprises over a sizable portion of the world. They include Jan Pieterszoon Coen, the violent and autocratic pioneer of the Dutch East India Company; Peter Stuyvesant, the one-legged governor of the Dutch West India Company, whose narrow-minded approach lost Manhattan to the British; Robert Clive, who rose from company clerk to become head of the British East India Company and one of the wealthiest men in Britain; Aleksandr Baranov of the Russian American Company; Cecil Rhodes, founder of De Beers and Rhodesia; and George Simpson, the "Little Emperor" of the Hudson's Bay Company, who was chauffeured about his vast fur domain in a giant canoe, exhorting his voyageurs to paddle harder so he could set speed records. *Merchant Kings* looks at the rise and fall of company rule in the centuries before colonialism, when nations belatedly assumed responsibility for their commercial enterprises. A blend of biography, corporate history, and colonial history, this book offers a panoramic, new perspective on the enormous cultural, political, and social legacies, good and bad, of this first period of unfettered globalization.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . Bown (*A Most Damnable Invention*) has produced a magnificent description of the six great companies, and their leaders, that dominated the "Heroic Age of Commerce." Bown demonstrates how the corporations served as stalking horses for kings and parliaments while enriching shareholders and the powerful managers themselves. Jan Pieterszoon Coen of the Dutch East India Company was particularly noteworthy for cruel tyranny in what is now Indonesia. The English East India Company's Robert Clive, through genius and perseverance, rose to a position of near-absolute power in India. Aleksander Baranov of the Russian American Company, known as the "Lord of Alaska," was bound by ties of decency and responsibility to the company's men, but also had a deep strain of brutality. Cecil Rhodes of the British South Africa Company and of De Beers, the South African diamond monopoly, was dedicated both to the British Empire and to the success of his various enterprises. Bown presents a fascinating look at the men who exploited resources and native peoples while laying the foundations of empires. "Neither heroes nor angels," Bown says, their global impact was as great as that of any king. Illus.; maps. (Dec.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. From Booklist Monopolies, such as England's storied East India Company, have inspired many popular histories and biographies. Bown synthesizes this material into a lively gallery of six men who built up their firms and enriched themselves. Motivations and character are in the forefront of Bown's portraits, whose subjects viewed their employment as their main chance for ascending to status and wealth, manifesting traits of determination and ruthlessness along the way that posterity looked upon askance, to put it mildly. Take Cecil Rhodes, the racial-supremacist empire builder who organized a company to dispossess Africans from what is today Zimbabwe and Zambia. Bown compares Rhodes to Jan Coen, who in the early 1600s pitilessly monopolized the East Indies spice trade on behalf of the Netherlands and his company, the VOC, and counts Robert Clive in 1700s India as a comparable buccaneer of self-interest and imperial expansion. Additionally profiling Pieter Stuyvesant in New York, Aleksandr Baranov in Alaska, and George Simpson of the Hudson's Bay Company, Bown ably deploys biography to present the successes, costs, and legacies of an era's commingling of private money and state sovereignty. --Gilbert Taylor Bown has fashioned a 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