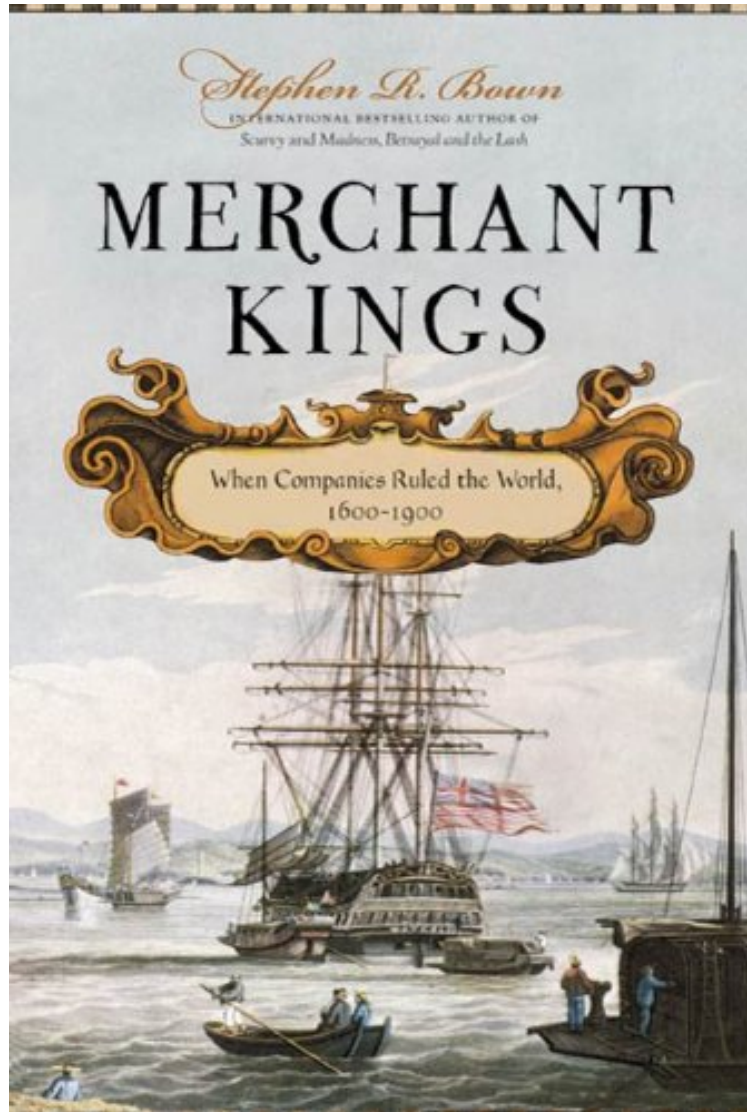


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## Merchant Kings: When Companies Ruled the World, 1600--1900

*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 insight to six giants of historyBy Peter GregoireA very lively, well-balanced treatment of six men who spanned an age where commerce and conquest intersected in the guise of chartered monopoly companies. Jan Peterszoon Coen of the Dutch East India Company, Pieter Stuyvesant of the Dutch West India Company, Robert Clive of the East India Company Alexandr Baranov of the Russian American Company, George Simpson of the Hudson Bay Company and Cecil Rhodes of the British South Africa Company were

giants of history. In the search for profit, they founded empires and governed (both officially and unofficially) territories more vast than the monarchs and governments of their age. I had read about and studied Robert Clive before and, of course, knew a fair amount Cecil Rhodes. But of the other men, I knew very little and this was an excellent introduction to their deeds and personalities. It is hard to pick a favourite because of the way the author neither venerates nor denigrates any of these men, but rather recognizes them as product of their age. Their energy and sheer opportunistic drive and passion for what they did, is certainly to be admired. But their shortcomings; some are racists, others ruthless and power-hungry - make it difficult to fully sympathize. All in all this is a great read. One that makes you want to delve more deeply into each of the men at the centre of this study. An interesting epilogue too, which suggests that these companies are not too far removed from the multinationals of today!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent historical novel - Thought it was about time I ...By Sam  
Excellent 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 Kings  
By arv  
This 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!

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; Alexandr 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.