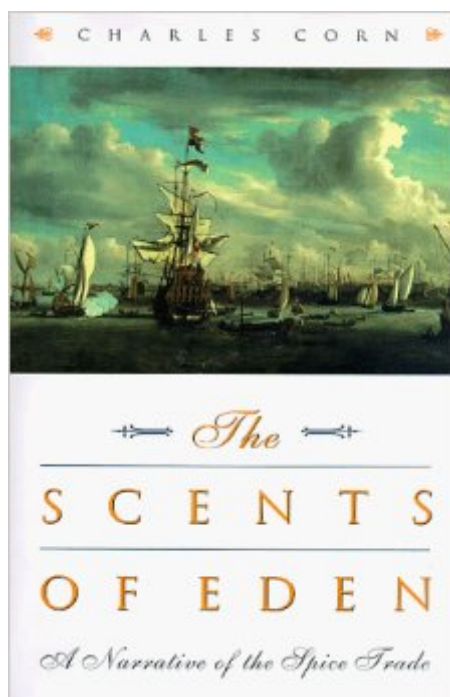


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The Scents Of Eden: A Narrative Of The Spice Trade



Synopsis

"The Scents of Eden" regales us with memorable tales of corrupt European adventurers and enigmatic island rulers; with explosive battles fought between islanders, explorers, and pirates; with deadly sea voyages; and with some of the most colorful characters in history. It brings to life men like Ferdinand Magellan, who in 1519 embarked on a voyage seeking a shorter sea route that would shrink the world; Jan Pieterzoon Coen, the ruthless, cruel governor-general of the Dutch East Indies, who ordered a wholesale slaughter of islanders to maintain Holland's spice monopoly; Pierre Plovre, the French smuggler of clove and nutmeg seedlings whose acts altered the balance of power of European nations; and erect, bluejacketed Jonathan Carnes, the Yankee trader who in 1797 brought the first great wealth to a modest New England port. Drawn from first-person accounts and contemporary books and journals "The Scents of Eden" spans four centuries, weaving an intricate story set on a global stage. Arrayed with famous and obscure, noble and venal players alike, the narrative is a fascinating story and a magnificent epic.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Great history. Too many errors. On page xxi, Corn writes "rose in value one hundred percent each time they changed hands-----they changed hands hundreds of times". Impossible! He probably means, 'increased in value hundreds of times'. Even if you start with one penny per pound and increased it 100% just 30 times, you would have ONE BILLION PENNIES! Also 3 different dates relating to same incident. Page 134, line 11, states 1608 Page 135, line 1, states 1609 Page 137, 4th line from bottom, states 1509. This should not be multiple choice. Corn writes about building a fort "on the other side of the river", what river? These and other shortcomings interrupted the normal flow

of reading. Otherwise, quite informative and exciting story.

I didn't like this book. In fact, it was so annoying that I didn't finish it. The writing is at times ridiculously fancy - e.g., "as exotic as the plumage of a bird of paradise." YUK! The documentation is worthless. For example, in the preface the author claims that Europeans didn't know how to transplant trees and plants until the late 18th Century. I found this claim hard to believe and tried to look up the reference in the bibliography. When I got to the bibliography it was just a couple of pages of notes for the entire book. None of the references corresponded to pages in the text, not even to chapters, but rather only to Parts I, II & III. In the bibliography the author says things like, "So and so's book is very informative on 17th Century English commerce." That just won't do - even for popular history. The sloppy documentation just made the many distracting bursts of baroque verbiage unbearable. I made it through the first 100 pages, then couldn't stand it any longer. In sum, I feel for this author. A good editor could have corrected many of these problems before the book went into print.

In "The Scents of Eden: A Narrative of the Spice Trade," Charles Corn weaves a compelling story of adventure, betrayal and greed which shaped global economies, and drove the discovery of nations. He breathes life into historical figures, describing how they overcame tremendous odds but also succumbed to common human failings. All the while, the reader inhales deeply of the heady descriptions of clove, mace and nutmeg. In this book, spice, once relegated to infrequent and uninspired use in American cooking, is imbued with the passion and intrigue that propelled the early explorers. As Americans take interest in the Far East, they have been re-discovering the flavors indigenous to that area of the world. Restaurants that serve Thai, Vietnamese, Japanese and Malaysian cuisine have been proliferating. With Indonesia so often in the news these days, Corn's book gives the current state of affairs and interest in the Far East a tumultuous historic backdrop. This is the story behind the intriguing aromas that drove the development of the global economy. I agree with other reviewers here, it could have used one more edit. But overall, a fascinating read. I was transported.

After years of living in Indonesia, this book remains our favorite on the history of this archipelago. Disappointing that it was not reprinted.

A fascinating subject made even more so by the author's skillful writing. I was totally drawn into the

book and recommend it to anyone interested in the history of this area ... or man's early obsession with spices.

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