



Date : 01/03/2024

Pages : 380

Format cm : 16 x 24

Prix : 24.5

EAN : 9782021545319

Great Disappointments

The Enlightenment, Sumatra, and the Parmentier Brothers

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Publisher : Le Seuil

Category : Humanities and Non-Fiction

Genres : History - Ethnology/Anthropology

Keywords : Investigation - Epic - Origin

Romain Bertrand plunges us into a fascinating world of merchants, poets, and pirates. And ruins any ideas of "Great Discoveries" for a long time.

The notion of "Great Discoveries" is not only a 19th century literary invention. It has often been said that in the 16th century, France missed its meeting with Asia. Yet, as early as the 1830s, French scholars and polemicists found a champion in the person of Jean Parmentier, who, in 1529, rallied Sumatra's shores. The diplomatic, financial, and human outcome was, however, catastrophic. An investigation that reveals unexpected intellectual and social worlds.
