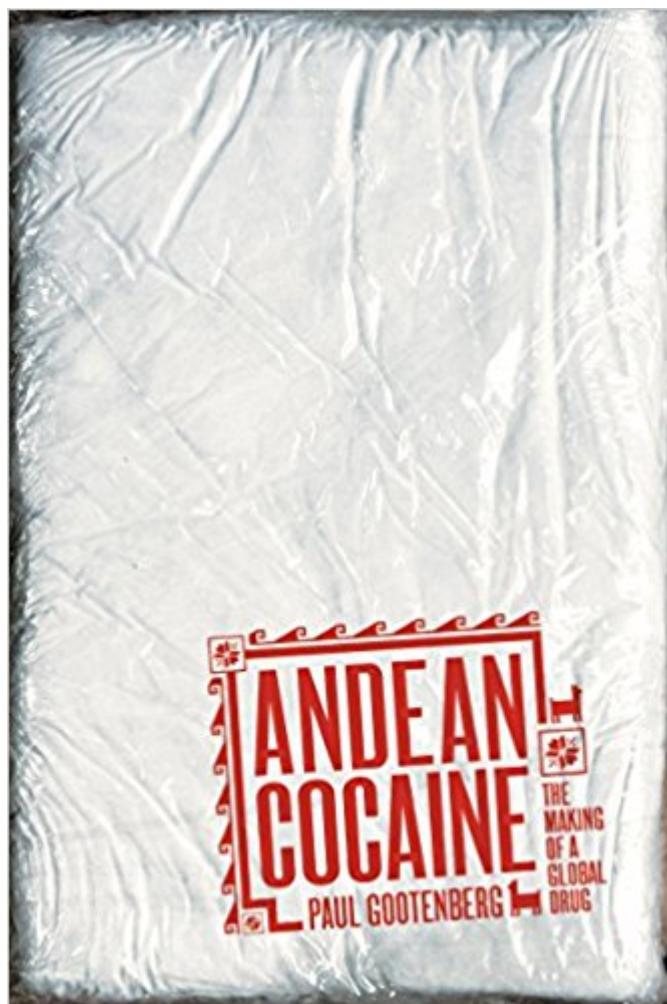


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Andean Cocaine: The Making Of A Global Drug



Synopsis

Illuminating a hidden and fascinating chapter in the history of globalization, Paul Gootenberg chronicles the rise of one of the most spectacular and now illegal Latin American exports: cocaine. Gootenberg traces cocaine's history from its origins as a medical commodity in the nineteenth century to its repression during the early twentieth century and its dramatic reemergence as an illicit good after World War II. Connecting the story of the drug's transformations is a host of people, products, and processes: Sigmund Freud, Coca-Cola, and Pablo Escobar all make appearances, exemplifying the global influences that have shaped the history of cocaine. But Gootenberg decenters the familiar story to uncover the roles played by hitherto obscure but vital Andean actors as well—for example, the Peruvian pharmacist who developed the techniques for refining cocaine on an industrial scale and the creators of the original drug-smuggling networks that decades later would be taken over by Colombian traffickers. Andean Cocaine proves indispensable to understanding one of the most vexing social dilemmas of the late twentieth-century Americas: the American cocaine epidemic of the 1980s and, in its wake, the seemingly endless U.S. drug war in the Andes.

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Customer Reviews

An interesting account of the development of the modern cocaine trade. The author is a specialist on South American economic history, focuses on events in Peru, and this is very much the story of the up and downs of cocaine as an international commodity. As Gootenberg points out, use of coca leaves was deeply and widely embedded in Andean culture. As he also points out, widespread, commercial cultivation of coca occurred under the Spanish Empire to supply the needs of indigenous miners in the great Peruvian silver mines. In the early 19th century, these traditional uses became enmeshed in the expanding and increasingly scientific European economy. Increasingly sophisticated chemistry allowed the isolation of the key constituents of several natural products, quinine from cinchona bark, morphine from opium, and cocaine from coca. A combination of international interest in coca, exemplified by Vin Mariani in France and Coca Cola in the USA, and the ability to isolate cocaine for medicinal and recreational uses, led to interest in Peru in developing a major, indigenous coca-cocaine industry projected eventually to be the equivalent of coffee or tea. This led to expansion and increased commercialization of coca production in Peru, and the discovery of a simple way to make semi-purified cocaine by the Franco-Peruvian pharmacist Alfredo Bignon. By about 1905, coca and semi-pure cocaine were major Peruvian exports. The nascent Peruvian dream of coca/cocaine production as a major Peruvian industry eroded as the USA became hostile to coca and cocaine, major competing plantation operations were developed in Java and Taiwan, and the native Peruvian industry remained fixed at a low technological level.

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