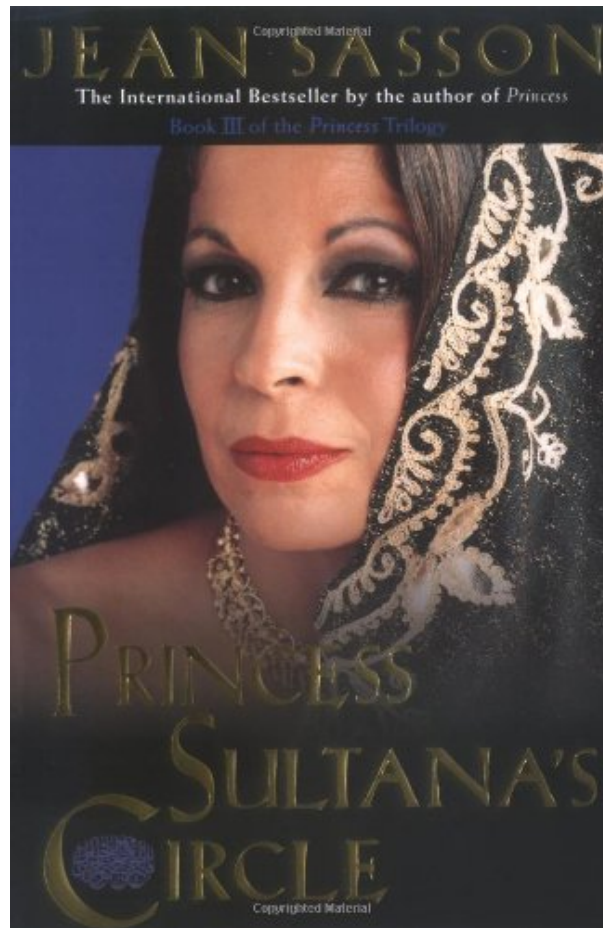
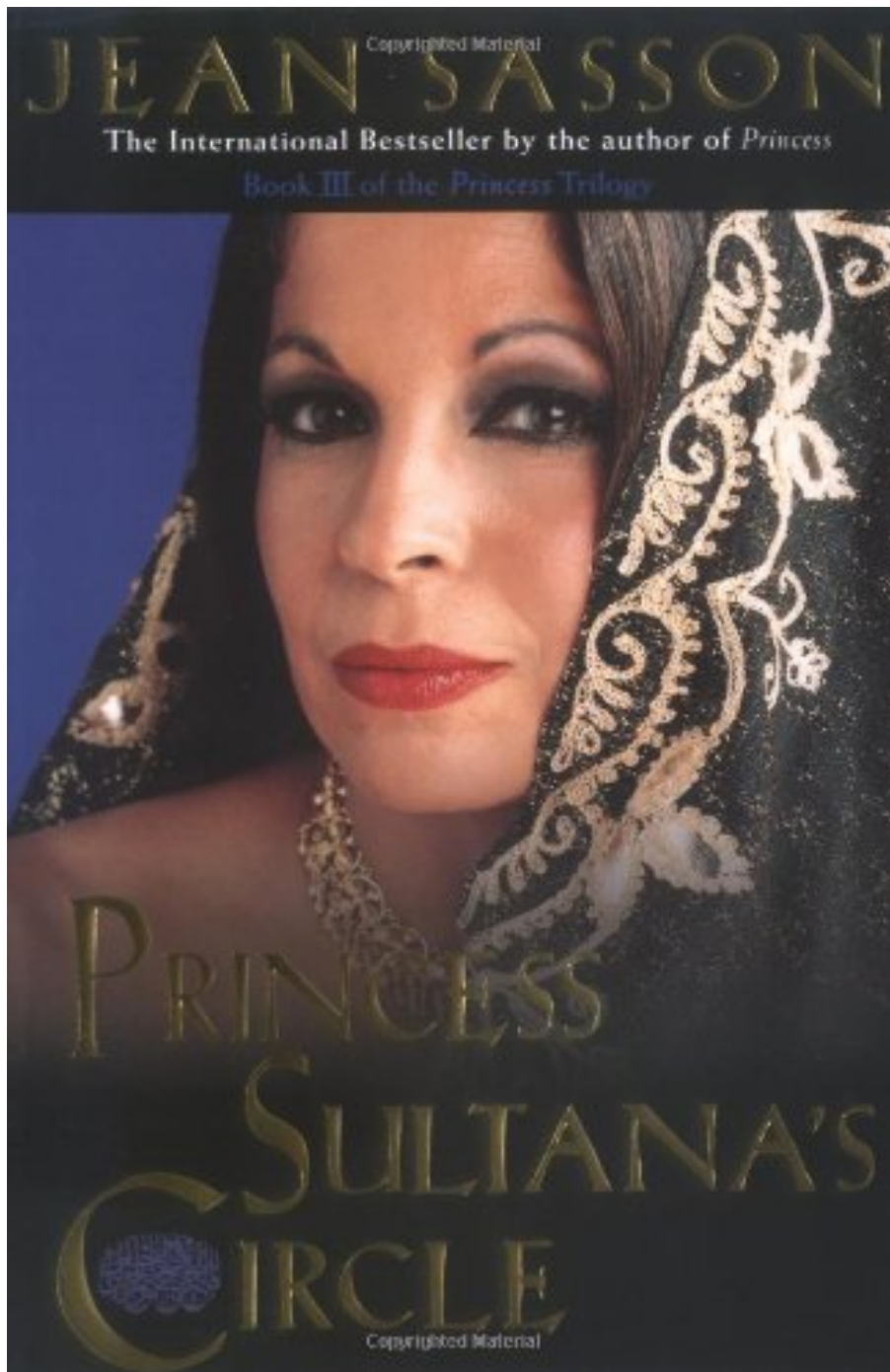


PRINCESS SULTANA'S CIRCLE (PRINCESS TRILOGY) BY JEAN SASSON



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From Booklist

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Most helpful customer reviews

56 of 61 people found the following review helpful.

Jean Sasson is a genius

By JGC

I have read all 3 books about Princess Sultana and this one is my favorite. CIRCLE is not quite as sad as the first 2 books, it gives hope and encouragement. The Princess and her sisters form a circle against all the wicked men who take advantage of women. In the future I hope there will be more books about the Princess because her stories are truly amazing and encouraging. And I recommend this book to anyone who is interested in equality.

49 of 54 people found the following review helpful.

Women of the World, Unite!

By Jedidiah Carosaari

Having now finished the trilogy, I highly recommend all three, including the last installment. It's not the best writing always, but it is a valuable glimpse into the mysteries of female life on the peninsula. As a man, much of this world is forbidden to me. I enjoy studying Islamic culture, but I am naturally restricted in observation to the world of men, whereas Western women can at times be with women, and be "honorary men" in the world of men. So I am indebted to depictions such as this, getting into the mind, heart, and life of a woman.

Sultana isn't always the most likable character- but, at least in the version written by Sasson, she freely admits this. And there are times when it is difficult to believe that this actually comes from a true Saudi woman, because of the great awareness the protagonist has of Western points of view.

I appreciate the insights the book gives into one particular worldview- that of a wealthy, royal, Saudi woman. She effectively communicates the oppression she faces as a woman, and yet the extreme privilege she has obtained by being born into the House of Saud. But there are a number of times when Sultana's unquestioned assumptions are more revealing than her message. The quickness of husbands to buy something to soothe their wives only serves to placate the women and buy them off from truly grappling with reality- it dismisses their genuine concerns by encouraging them to find answer in wealth rather than God. Likewise, Sultana and Sasson do a very effective job of showing the great discrimination by women faced on the peninsula, but bend over backwards to praise the religion of Islam and separate it from what Sultana faces on a daily basis. Sadly, while the Wahhabi sect in Saudi Arabia has certainly gone much further than the Qur'an in its treatment of women, there are strong seeds of second-class status in the Qur'an and hadith themselves. This is seen in places where women are considered as less equal to a man in inheritance, the argument by Muslim theologians being that women need to be protected by men, and therefore men should have more money. Likewise in hadith (stories of Mohammed) that Sultana herself quotes about Mohammed having to redo prayer if a woman walked in front of him, and in the story that Sultana relates, again relying on Hadith, that a woman's silence means agreement to a marriage. This of course is based on a premise that women should be silent, not expressing themselves, and men should be doing the talking and thinking.

These books are valuable, I believe, primarily because they reveal a world that needs such healing. Not

simply a change in the actions of the Saudi government and religious police, but a change in the very nature and core of Islamic belief systems. Again and again Sultana shows us a world where the concept of gender reconciliation is completely foreign. Even when she has problems with a comparatively loving husband, she turns to scheming and gossip for answers; others turn to magic to control their husbands. These are the only answers they know. There is no call from either gender to try to understand the opposite, in order to fully love them. Understandably, for there is no call in Islam itself for this. Sultana's Circles shows us the fully surmountable obstacles to love.

36 of 41 people found the following review helpful.

A must read for women and men

By A Customer

I found this third book in the Princess Trilogy to be even more riveting than the first two. Again, Jean Sasson is able to tell not only the story of an incredibly wealthy yet enslaved royal princess, but to weave into her factual, historical account the atrocities committed against other women throughout Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan. Princess Sultana's Circle also nicely wraps up the three stages of life of this bold and courageous princess. We've already been introduced to her youth and young adulthood. This time we get a much more reflective look at her life as a mature adult and how she continues to cope with a lesser degree of conferred human dignity, but the resolve to fight on.

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