



The Grand Turk: Sultan Mehmet II-Conqueror of Constantinople and Master of an Empire

By John Freely

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A gripping biography of one of the most sensational figures in Turkish history

Sultan Mehmet II, known to his countrymen as 'the Conqueror' and to much of Europe as 'the Terror of the World,' was once Europe's most feared and powerful ruler. Now, Turkey's most beloved American scholar, John Freely, brings to life this charismatic hero of one of the richest histories in the world.

Mehmet was barely twenty-one when he conquered Byzantine Constantinople, which became Istanbul and the capital of his mighty empire. Mehmet reigned for thirty years, during which time his armies extended the borders of his empire halfway across Asia Minor and as far into Europe as Hungary and Italy. Three popes called for crusades against him as Christian Europe came face to face with a new Muslim empire.

Revered by the Turks and seen as a brutal tyrant by the West, Mehmet was a brilliant military leader as well as a renaissance prince. His court housed Persian and Turkish poets, Arab and Greek astronomers, and Italian scholars and artists. In the first biography of Mehmet in thirty years, John Freely vividly illuminates the man behind the myths.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Mehmet II (1432–1481) ascended to the throne of the Ottoman Empire when he was only 12. In spite of his youth, he had an energetic desire to rule the kingdom, physical prowess and a precocious intellect, which made him one of the most brilliant and most feared of all medieval Muslim rulers. In this alternately tedious and fast-paced chronicle, historian Freely, of Bosphorus University in Istanbul, shows Mehmet as cunning and politically and militarily astute. Mehmet turned his back on a peace treaty he had signed with emperor Constantine XI and attacked Byzantium's capital, Constantinople, capturing the city when he was barely 21. His troops looted much of the city and Mehmet, who reportedly shed tears at the destruction of such beauty, spent much of the rest of his reign rebuilding it. By 1463, Mehmet the Conqueror ruled the former dominions of the Byzantine Empire from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea. In one short chapter, Freely then rushes through roughly 450 years of history to the Ottoman Empire's end after WWI. Mehmet's colorful and dashing exploits deserve better than this colorless biography. B&w illus., 2 maps. (Oct.)
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Review

"In this biography, the first in English in decades, Prof. Freely (Bosporus University), author of some 40 books, mostly on Turkey and Turkish history, explores Mehmet's complex personality, fitting him into his times and culture, seeing him essentially as a Renaissance prince while throwing light on the nature of the Ottoman state and the Balkans in the fifteenth century, both neglected areas of European history." —
NYMAS Review

About the Author

John Freely was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1926. He teaches physics at Bosphorous University in Istanbul. He has written more than forty books, including *The Lost Messiah*, *The Grand Turk*, and *Aladdin's Lamp*.

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