



# Lords of the Horizons: A History of the Ottoman Empire

By Jason Goodwin

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For six hundred years, the Ottoman Empire swelled and declined. Islamic, martial, civilized, and tolerant, it advanced in three centuries from the dusty foothills of Anatolia to rule on the Danube and the Nile; at its height, Indian rajahs and the kings of France beseeched the empire's aid. In its last three hundred years the empire seemed ready to collapse, a prodigy of survival and decay. In this striking evocation of the empire's power, Jason Goodwin explores how the Ottomans rose and how, against all odds, they lingered on. In doing so, he also offers a long look back to the origins of problems that plague present-day Kosovars and Serbs.

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*By Jason Goodwin*

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Jason Goodwin, a young English journalist, writes history as if it were today's breaking news, and with *Lords of the Horizon*, he delivers an anecdote-filled and breezy account of the long, troubled career of the Ottoman Empire. That empire endured for nearly 600 years and embraced not only a large territory--stretching, at one point, from the border of Iran to the gates of Vienna--but also hundreds of ethnic groups and three dozen nations. United under the banner of a tolerant form of Islam, the Ottoman Turks forged a culture that, Goodwin writes, "was such a prodigy of pep, such a miracle of human ingenuity, that contemporaries felt it was helped into being by powers not quite human--diabolical or divine, depending on their point of view."

Drawing on memoirs by European visitors as well as standard histories of the era, Goodwin traces the Ottoman Empire from its origins in the 14th-century collapse of the Byzantine state to its centuries-long decline and final collapse at the end of World War I. Along the way, he writes of the Ottomans' addiction to wealth (and to hiding their gold in fabulous hoards), the pleasure they took in holding picnics in their lush cemeteries, and the prowess of their elite military both in battle and in organized crime. ("The janissaries were magnificent extortionists," Goodwin notes. "People paid them not to burn their homes and business, then they paid them to come and put the fires out.") Full of vivid detail, Goodwin's narrative makes for an enjoyable introduction to this historically influential, but little understood, culture. --Gregory McNamee

#### From Publishers Weekly

In this elegant work, British author Goodwin (*On Foot to the Golden Horn*) combines deft historical summary with the buoyant prose and idiosyncratic focus of the best travel writing. The combination enables him to take the full measure of a realm riddled with paradox. The Ottoman Empire was a Turkish empire most of whose shock troops were Balkan Slavs; a bellicose state that expanded by war, it often governed its conquests with a light hand. A necessary approach given the many cultures and nationalities that fell under Ottoman rule. Ottoman society at its best was civilized and tolerant, observes Goodwin. The Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 were warmly received in Salonika, Constantinople, Belgrade and Sofia. While war and superstition ruled Christian Europe, the Islamic Ottoman Empire thrived and glittered with mathematical, architectural and artistic accomplishment. Goodwin is marvelous at describing how, for three hundred years before its final collapse after WWI, the empire survived even though it was perpetually on the verge of collapse. He attributes the calcified empire's decline not only to corruption and the rise of France and Russia but to the Turks' prideful ignorance of the West, a vanity that eventually deprived the empire of the fruits of modernity. As good as Goodwin is at blending political, cultural and military affairs, his work is distinguished by stylish writing and a sharp eye for just the right anecdote. His epilogue, which is built around the fate of the empire's famous stray dogs, is at once amusing and strangely, beautifully moving. Illustrations.

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#### From Library Journal

British travel writer Goodwin, whose previous books include *A Time for Tea* (1991. o.p.) and *On Foot to the Golden Horn* (1995. o.p.), explores the long and tumultuous history of the Ottoman Empire, examining the political upheavals and military actions that continually engaged the empire. Goodwin also reveals many fascinating details of daily life: e.g., common people would insert waste paper into the cracks of walls, believing the paper would protect their feet on the fiery path to heaven. The most absorbing chapter concerns the defeat of the Ottomans in Vienna in 1683, presenting in lively style the events leading up to that crucial

battle. This volume is comparable to Andrew Wheatcroft's *The Ottomans* (LJ 4/15/94) and belongs in academic and larger public libraries. A Norman Malwitz, Queens Borough P.L., NY  
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## **Users Review**

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