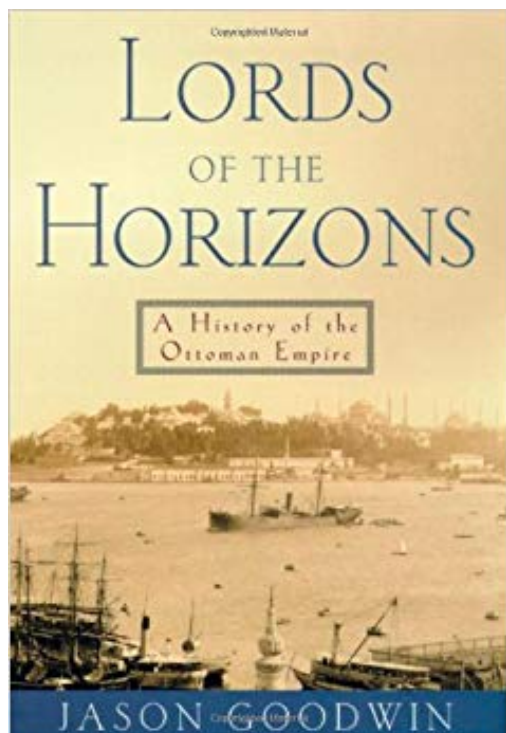


# Lords of the Horizons: A History of the Ottoman Empire *by* Jason Goodwin



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Since the Turks first shattered the glory of the French crusaders in 1396, the Ottoman Empire has exerted a long, strong pull on Western minds. For six hundred years, the Empire swelled and declined. Islamic, martial, civilized, and tolerant, in three centuries it advanced from the dusty foothills of Anatolia to rule on the Danube and the Nile; at the Empire's height, Indian rajahs and the kings of France beseeched its aid. For the next three hundred years the Empire seemed ready to collapse, a prodigy of survival and decay. Early in the twentieth century it fell. In this dazzling evocation of its power, Jason Goodwin explores how the Ottomans rose and how, against all odds, they lingered on. In the process he unfolds a sequence of mysteries, triumphs, treasures, and terrors unknown to most American readers. This was a place where pillows spoke and birds were fed in the snow; where time itself unfolded at a different rate and clocks were banned; where sounds were different, and even the hyacinths too strong to sniff. Dramatic and passionate, comic and gruesome, *Lords of the Horizons* is a history, a travel book, and a vision of a lost world all in one.



## Reviews of the **Lords of the Horizons: A History of the Ottoman Empire** by Jason Goodwin

Ndlaitha

I recently started to re-read this book, as I had grabbed it at the last minute from my book shelf as I was heading out for a week's vacation. My earlier "review" was far too kind and I will reduce my number of stars from 2 to 1. After attempting to re-read this book, I'd like to start my review with: This book stinks. It's a waste of time to read this fable, written by an author who's specialty is Travel Brochures. It reads just like that, or more accurately, like a bedtime story to eager children. For example, on page 4, Goodwin writes, "They could fire arrows backwards from the saddle at a moving target, at a rate of three a second, ....." Really, Jason? Is that a fact?? I'll leave my earlier review, below, untouched, but after reading several other books on the history of the Ottomans and Islam, I realize this book is worse than I originally thought.

Therefore..... here's my original review: This book is a fairly easy read and not too long, about 325 pages with a fairly easy to read font size. But I don't recommend it unless it's to a person who wants to read it as their first introduction into the history of the Ottoman Empire. I think it would be a good "skeleton" on which to build more details in further readings, but even so, this skeleton is missing a lot of bones.

To me this composition lacked authenticity, as not a single footnote for reference was used throughout the book. I kept asking myself questions such as, "Who said that?" "Where did that statistic come from?" "How can I be sure if that statement is accurate?"

One example of many, many statements needing foot notes or reference points throughout the book is seen on page 227. Goodwin writes, "There were 56 assaults and 96 sorties; both sides exploded exactly 1,364 mine each." Really? Where did he get that data? Did he make it up? Did he read it somewhere? If so, he needs a footnote for reference.

Also, the final chapter, "Epilogue," appeared to me to be merely conjecture. It read like the end of a fairy tale. The entire chapter was a story about the dogs in Salonica and Istanbul near the end of the Empire. He describes how they became problematic to the citizens and therefore, were rounded up and shipped over to an island in the Sea of Marmara, but later swam back. Is that a fact? Where did that detail of history come from? He could have omitted the entire "Epilogue." It was hogwash.

I've read several books on the Turks and the Ottoman Empire and most were difficult to read because of the names of individuals, places, time periods, etc. But that's to be expected because I speak only English. I got through them because the subject interested me. If you've already read several books on the Ottoman Empire, you can skip this one. There are others far better than this one.

Mautaxe

Many know the author best through his "Inspector Yashim" detective stories ( and now his cookbook ), but Goodwin is a PhD in Ottoman studies and this book exemplifies the best of written history. It is a "popular" history, but written as a true scholar showing the author's depth of reading and familiarity with innumerable sources. It is not a boring timeline chronology of Sultans and battles, but an immersion into the Ottoman world ( much like his novels) in which you meet these characters and join them in the events.

I read the book years ago, then traveled to Istanbul, Greece, Bosnia, and even to Eger, Hungary to see the northern most minaret of the Ottoman conquest. Reading the book now for the second time was even more enjoyable.

Tyler Is Not Here

The Ottomans were a fascinating culture, having a highly ceremonial culture and governance structure worthy of being called "Byzantine" although of course as a society, they succeeded the Byzantines.

Goodwin takes us on a remarkable journey through the history, places and people of this long-lasting period and explains many of the reasons for the later ethnic wars and weaknesses of subsequent Balkanised states. The long history gets complicated and yet Goodwin takes the time and energy to really explain the circumstances under which each of the new sovereign states is created, sometimes then devastated by other newly-emerging states and the ultimate failures of many in this troubled part of Europe and Asia Minor. Contemporary wars and religious schisms are easily explained by the animosity shown by each of the protagonist states and political figures of modern history.

In spite of all the "to-ing" and "fro-ing" of peoples, languages and ethnic hostilities, Goodwin's story-telling is clear and easily followed...and exactingly, historically correct and free of any bias.

LivingCross

1299-1922 and they didn't mention in High School? Well, not that you remember. If you have not read a single book of the history of the Ottoman Empire, do start here. You will not have a chance of understanding why it is difficult to understand the Middle East unless you avail yourself of this volume. The Economist Magazine is still using this work as a seminal reference, 2015. This work is not chronological and is all the more juicy for it. It is a relief to feel smug at the end of it, because now, you know something and the difference is very great.

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