



# Osman's Dream: The History of the Ottoman Empire

*By Caroline Finkel*

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**Osman's Dream: The History of the Ottoman Empire** By Caroline Finkel

The Ottoman Empire was one of the largest and most influential empires in world history. Its reach extended to three continents and it survived for more than six centuries, but its history is too often colored by the memory of its bloody final throes on the battlefields of World War I. In this magisterial work-the first definitive account written for the general reader-renowned scholar and journalist Caroline Finkel lucidly recounts the epic story of the Ottoman Empire from its origins in the thirteenth century through its destruction in the twentieth.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

What Finkel calls the "old" narrative of the Ottoman Empire is simple to relate: "it rose, declined, and fell." An exotic parade of salacious sultans, grand viziers and duplicitous eunuchs inhabit the sultry harems and domed palaces of Istanbul—at least in our imaginations. Finkel, a long-time resident of Turkey and Ottoman scholar, relates a "new" narrative of empire that properly accounts for the richness and complexity of the Ottoman state over nearly seven centuries. By presiding over their multiethnic empire for so long, and ushering it from medievalism to modernity, the Ottomans should be ranked alongside the Hapsburgs and the Romanovs, she argues. That they are overlooked is the fault of Western historians who have peered at their subjects through the lens of their own prejudices. Finkel's striking innovation is to turn a mirror on the Ottomans and examine how they saw themselves and their empire. While this approach yields a refreshingly original perspective, Finkel's quest to improve Westerners' understanding occasionally leads her into some questionable stretches (an implication, for instance, that Westerners think all Muslims are terrorists). Happily, these remain unintrusive and this history makes a riveting and enjoyable read for all audiences. 16 pages of photos; maps. (*Mar.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

**\*Starred Review\*** To be blunt, historians have neglected the Ottoman Empire. Stifled by language barriers, problematic sources, and cultural blinders (and no doubt somewhat bewildered by the task of narrating an empire that lasted from 1299 to 1922 and extended from Sarajevo to San'a), American and European academics have been content to chew on small pieces of Ottoman history, limiting public conception of the empire to narrow notions of sultans, military maneuvers, and elaborate bathing facilities. With this superb book, Finkel boldly covers new ground in striving to show the Ottoman Empire from within, as the Ottomans themselves saw it—a perspective that, thanks to centuries of politically motivated selective perception, even modern Turks have had great difficulty ascertaining. Having spent 15 years living in Turkey, Finkel is uniquely positioned to overcome the practical hurdles to Ottoman research, but her real strength is in historiography: she has a keen ability to extract salient observations from her sources even as she renders their political motives transparent. The result is a panorama of the Ottoman Empire to rival the best portraits of the Romanovs and Habsburgs, and a must-have for history collections. *Brendan Driscoll*  
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Review

"Caroline Finkel effortlessly conveys the high drama of Ottoman history." -- Orhan Pamuk

"Splendidly written...the most authoritative narrative history of the empire yet published." -- Jason Goodwin

"Finkel's mastery of the historical literature is obvious: The sheer amount of information packed between these two covers makes it a landmark achievement."

"A scholarly, lucid, judicious and enjoyable account of over 600 years of history...*Osman's Dream* will surely be the standard work of its kind for many years to come."

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