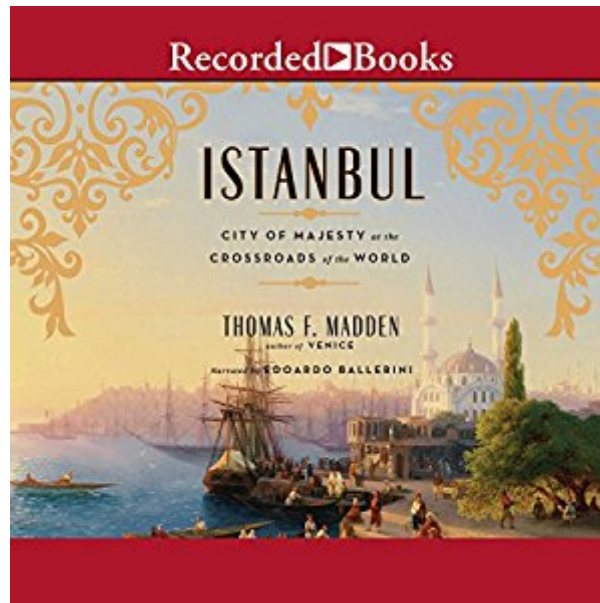




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Istanbul: City Of Majesty At The Crossroads Of The World



Synopsis

The first single-volume history of Istanbul in decades: a biography of the city at the center of civilizations past and present. For more than two millennia, Istanbul has stood at the crossroads of the world, perched at the very tip of Europe, gazing across the shores of Asia. The history of this city - known as Byzantium, then Constantinople, now Istanbul - is at once glorious, outsized, and astounding. Founded by the Greeks, its location blessed it as a center for trade but also made it a target of every empire in history, from Alexander the Great and his Macedonian Empire, to the Romans and later the Ottomans. At its most spectacular, Emperor Constantine I re-founded the city as New Rome, the capital of the eastern Roman Empire, and dramatically expanded the city, filling it with artistic treasures, and adorning the streets with opulent palaces. Around it all, Constantine built new walls, truly impregnable, that preserved power, wealth, and withstood any aggressor - walls that still stand for tourists to visit. From its ancient past to the present, we meet the city through its ordinary citizens - the Jews, Muslims, Italians, Greeks, and Russians who used the famous baths and walked the bazaars - and the rulers who built it up and then destroyed it, including Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the man who christened the city "Istanbul" in 1930. Thomas Madden's entertaining narrative brings to life the city we see today, including the rich splendor of the churches and monasteries that spread throughout the city. Istanbul draws on a lifetime of study and the latest scholarship, transporting listeners to a city of unparalleled importance and majesty that holds the key to understanding modern civilization. In the words of Napoleon Bonaparte, "If the Earth were a single state, Istanbul would be its capital."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book paints such a good visual in my head of what it must have been like back being a merchant of the sea. I love this Book.

Excellent. Informative and the capacity of the author to put things in chronological order is well done and you don't get lost on time

A very easy read and most thought provoking. I plan on ordering a number of them for our Parish Book Store.

great read

I have a hard time deciding between 4 and 5 stars. I would guess most readers would give it 5 stars. My quibble with the book is that it gives little sense of what life was actually like, What did people eat? How long did they live? What work did they do? Where did fishermen fish? How was the city at dealing with sewage, garbage, noise and such? The book does address major themes such as the Nika riots, major disease outbreaks, the decay of the Janissaries, but I didn't find much sense of what living in the city was like. It also takes 250 pages to get to the Ottoman city--the chapters on Suleiman's city and "The Sultanate of Women" are quite good. The book does focus on the city, with the empires as background. The "majesty" in the title isn't brought out particularly well, and more photos and illustrations would help a lot. The ones actually in the book are rather good. The maps in the book are useful, but more maps of the region or the whole empire would be very helpful. So would an appendix listing the few dozen main characters (the book is not an endless parade of figures, like many histories are). Madden is particularly good on several aspects. I found several aspects of the book to be very informative and particularly interesting. His discussion of the re-directed Crusade that stormed the city in 1204 is the best I've ever read on the subject. His account of the Turkish conquest of the city in 1453 is nearly as good, and the last two chapters are very good, with one chapter centered on Mustafa Kemal, and the last on the current premier Erdogan once mayor of the city and born in the greater Istanbul area). This is a popular history, despite the author's impressive academic background. It's highly readable, overall.

Because Istanbul really was at a crossroads of the world, many threads make up its history: Greece, Alexander, Rome, Europe, Venice and of course the Ottomans. So anyone with a general interest in history might find this interesting, given the variety of topics and the engaging way they are

discussed. Istanbul also provides a somewhat different perspective on Greece, Rome and Europe - in effect, a view from outside. Curiously, there isn't as much as I might have expected about what it was like to live in Byzantium/Constantinople/Istanbul. That's understandable, as that could be another volume (or double the length of this one), and the sources are likely uneven.

I have a great interest in Greek, Roman and Byzantine history, as well an interest in the history of cities. I have read many histories on Byzantium/Constantinople/Istanbul. This book carefully describes the changes to this city and its people over the centuries in a way that you can visualize the real life of the great city of Istanbul (from the time of the Greeks to the Ottomans). Each chapter captures the major changes to the city life and its environs. Great read!

I bought this for my husband for Xmas. He loved it.

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