

# **The Conqueror and His Empire: A Definitive Analysis of Sultan Mehmed II and the Ottoman Transformation**

## **Introduction**

This report presents a comprehensive analysis of Sultan Mehmed II and the Ottoman state during his transformative thirty-one-year reign. It will argue that Mehmed II was a figure of profound paradoxes—a ruthless conqueror and a Renaissance patron, a devout Muslim and an inheritor of Roman imperial ambition—whose personal vision was the primary catalyst in converting the Ottoman state from a decentralized frontier principality into a centralized, bureaucratic world empire. The conquest of Constantinople in 1453 was not the culmination of his ambition but the foundational act that enabled a radical restructuring of the Ottoman military, administration, and imperial identity. His reign represents a pivotal moment in world history, marking the definitive end of the millennium-old Byzantine Empire and heralding the rise of a new, formidable power that would dominate the Eastern Mediterranean for centuries. Through an examination of his personal character, military campaigns, and state-building reforms, this report will demonstrate how Mehmed II, more than any other single figure, was the true architect of the classical Ottoman Empire.

---

## **Part I: The Sultan – A Portrait of the Conqueror**

### **Chapter 1: The Forging of a Prince (1432-1451)**

The character and ambition of Sultan Mehmed II were not born in a vacuum; they were forged in the crucible of a tumultuous youth defined by immense privilege, rigorous education, and profound political humiliation. His formative years, particularly his brief and disastrous first reign, were instrumental in cultivating the steely resolve, strategic foresight, and calculated ruthlessness that would later define his historic second reign. To understand the conqueror who remade the world in 1453, one must first understand the boy-sultan who was unceremoniously deposed in 1446.

## Early Life, Education, and Influences

Mehmed was born on March 30, 1432, in the Ottoman capital of Edirne, the third son of Sultan Murad II.<sup>1</sup> His mother was Hüma Hatun, a harem concubine whose origins are uncertain but were likely non-Turkish, possibly of Greek or Serbian slave descent.<sup>1</sup> This mixed heritage was common in the Ottoman dynasty and may have contributed to the cosmopolitan and multilingual court culture he would later champion.

In accordance with Ottoman tradition for grooming princes for rule, at the age of eleven, Mehmed was sent to the province of Amasya (some sources say Manisa) to serve as governor.<sup>2</sup> This was not a symbolic post but a practical apprenticeship in administration, conducted under the watchful eyes of his designated advisors, or *lalas*. During this time, he received a formidable education. His father, Murad II, dispatched a number of esteemed teachers to instruct him.<sup>2</sup> His Islamic education, under tutors like the renowned scholar Molla Gürani, was rigorous, deeply molding his Muslim faith and reinforcing the Islamic worldview that would animate his sense of destiny.<sup>2</sup> This religious instruction was complemented by a remarkably broad, humanistic curriculum. Mehmed developed into a polymath and a gifted linguist, reportedly achieving fluency in Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, with some knowledge of Serbian and Italian.<sup>1</sup> This was not merely an intellectual affectation; it was a practical toolset for a future emperor whose ambitions would span diverse cultures and require engagement with both Eastern and Western historical and political traditions.

## The Boy Sultan: A Trial by Fire (1444-1446)

In a highly unusual move, Sultan Murad II, weary from years of campaigning and seeking a life of retirement, abdicated the throne in August 1444 in favor of his 12-year-old son.<sup>1</sup> The accession of a child immediately destabilized the empire. The Christian powers of Europe—led by Hungary, Venice, and the Papacy—saw an opportunity to strike. Urged on by the papal representative, Cardinal Julian Cesarini, the King of Hungary broke the recently signed Peace of Szeged and launched a new crusade against the Ottomans.<sup>2</sup>

Simultaneously, the Ottoman court at Edirne descended into a vicious power struggle. The young Mehmed became a pawn between two factions. On one side was the immensely powerful Grand Vizier, Çandarlı Halil Pasha, a scion of the established Turkish aristocracy who favored cautious diplomacy and opposed radical military ventures.<sup>6</sup> On the other were Mehmed's

*lalas*, Zaganos Pasha and Şihabeddin Pasha, who encouraged the boy's ambitious and aggressive instincts, particularly his nascent obsession with conquering Constantinople.<sup>6</sup> Faced with the advancing crusader army, the inexperienced Mehmed and his divided court were unable to mount an effective response. In a moment of crisis, Mehmed was compelled to

ask his father to return from retirement and lead the army.<sup>2</sup> Murad II reluctantly agreed, returning to command the Ottoman forces and crushing the crusaders at the decisive Battle of Varna on November 10, 1444.<sup>1</sup> Although Murad subsequently retired again to Manisa, the political situation remained untenable. Çandarlı Halil Pasha, viewing the young sultan as a dangerous and easily manipulated liability, engineered a revolt of the Janissaries in May 1446. The elite troops, loyal to the old grand vizier, forced Mehmed's deposition and the formal restoration of Murad II to the throne.<sup>3</sup> The humiliated teenager was sent back to his provincial governorship, his first taste of power ending in a public and stinging failure. This experience of being outmaneuvered and deposed by a powerful vizier representing the entrenched Turkish nobility was not merely a political setback; it was a formative trauma. It instilled in Mehmed a profound and lasting distrust of any power center that could rival the sultan's own authority. The lesson was clear: to realize his grand vision, he would need to break the influence of the independent aristocracy and forge a new ruling class whose loyalty was absolute and personal. His later autocratic policies were not the abstract designs of a political theorist but the calculated, visceral reactions of a ruler who had learned firsthand the perils of a decentralized state and a powerful, independent nobility.

## **Second Accession and Consolidation of Power (1451)**

When Murad II died in February 1451, Mehmed, now 19 years old, was far better prepared. Hearing the news via a messenger, he rode with haste to Edirne, securing the throne before his father's death was widely announced, thereby preempting any potential challenges to his succession.<sup>1</sup> His first acts as sultan were swift, decisive, and brutal. To prevent the kind of debilitating civil wars over succession that had plagued his grandfather, Mehmed I, he ordered the execution of his infant half-brother, Ahmed, who was drowned in his bath.<sup>1</sup> This chilling act of fratricide was a stark demonstration of his new resolve and a grim foreshadowing of the law he would later codify.

With his domestic position secured, he immediately turned his focus to his life's great ambition: Constantinople. He skillfully played the diplomat, renewing peace treaties with Venice and Hungary to neutralize any immediate threats from the West while he concentrated his resources on the Byzantine capital.<sup>7</sup> The precocious boy who had been dismissed just five years earlier had matured into a resolute and formidable young man, ready to leave his indelible mark on history.

## **Chapter 2: The Mind of an Emperor: Personality, Intellect, and Ambition**

Mehmed II was a man of profound and compelling contradictions. His personality was a complex fusion of ruthless pragmatism and refined intellectualism, of devout Islamic faith and a universalist imperial vision that drew heavily on Roman and Renaissance traditions. This

unique synthesis was not a source of internal conflict but rather the ideological engine of his entire imperial project. He was at once a *ghazi*, a holy warrior for Islam, and a new Caesar, the inheritor of Rome. It was this ability to embody and manipulate multiple cultural and political identities that allowed him to construct the foundations for a truly global empire.

## **The Scholar-Warrior Paradox**

Contemporaries and historians alike have struggled to reconcile the disparate facets of Mehmed's character. He was an utterly autocratic ruler who punished any resistance to his decrees with the utmost severity, a trait that even his Ottoman contemporaries considered excessively harsh.<sup>6</sup> He institutionalized the grim practice of fratricide within his own dynasty to secure political stability.<sup>1</sup> Yet this same ruler was also capable of magnanimity and was noted for his religious tolerance, particularly in his treatment of the Christian and Jewish communities after the conquest of Constantinople.<sup>1</sup>

This paradox extended to his personal life. He was a great military leader who personally directed assaults on fortified walls, but he was also an accomplished poet and a skilled gardener who took pleasure in the design of his palace grounds.<sup>1</sup> The famous portrait by Gentile Bellini is one of two archetypal images of the sultan; the other, a miniature from his own workshop, depicts him delicately smelling a rose, the very image of a refined aesthete.<sup>3</sup> This duality of the fierce conqueror and the sensitive patron of the arts made him an enigmatic and formidable figure, earning him both the fear and the respect of his subjects and enemies alike.<sup>3</sup>

## **The Renaissance Prince of the East**

Mehmed's intellectual curiosity was boundless and his court reflected his cosmopolitan tastes. After the conquest, he began construction of the Topkapi Palace, which became not just an administrative center but also a vibrant hub of cultural and intellectual exchange. He actively gathered Italian humanists, Greek scholars, and leading Islamic scientists at his court, fostering an environment of learning that bridged the Islamic and Western worlds.<sup>4</sup>

His personal library was a testament to his wide-ranging intellect, containing a vast collection of works in Greek, Latin, Arabic, and Persian. He studied the works of Greek philosophers like Aristotle and Plato, read histories of classical figures such as Alexander the Great, whose campaigns he sought to emulate, and kept abreast of the latest scientific advancements.<sup>4</sup>

His most famous act of cultural patronage was his engagement with the Italian Renaissance. In 1479, as part of a peace settlement with Venice, he requested that the republic send him a skilled portrait painter.<sup>23</sup> The artist sent was Gentile Bellini, one of Venice's leading painters. Bellini spent over a year in Istanbul, and his 1480 oil-on-canvas portrait of the sultan is a landmark of cross-cultural art.<sup>2</sup> It depicts the Ottoman ruler in a style and medium characteristic of the Italian Renaissance, a powerful visual statement of Mehmed's

engagement with the cultural language of the West. In addition to painting, Mehmed commissioned Italian medallists, like Costanzo da Ferrara, to cast bronze medallions of his likeness in the style of Roman imperial portraiture, a medium he particularly admired.<sup>26</sup>

## Imperial Vision and Ideology

Mehmed's ambition was fueled by a powerful and multifaceted imperial ideology. First and foremost, the conquest of Constantinople was the fulfillment of a long-held Islamic aspiration, reportedly based on a hadith (a saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad) prophesying the city's fall to a blessed Muslim commander.<sup>9</sup> This victory instantly elevated Mehmed to the status of a legendary hero throughout the Muslim world, a great *ghazi* who had succeeded where generations of caliphs and sultans had failed.<sup>8</sup>

However, his vision extended far beyond the traditional role of an Islamic conqueror. Upon taking Constantinople, he adopted the title "**Kayser-i Rum**" (**Caesar of Rome**).<sup>2</sup> This was a calculated and profound political statement. He did not see himself as the destroyer of the Roman Empire but as its legitimate inheritor and successor.<sup>12</sup> By claiming the title of Caesar, he was asserting his right to rule over the former empire's lands and, crucially, its diverse Christian populations, framing his reign as a continuation of imperial authority rather than a foreign usurpation.

This Roman ambition was coupled with a clear geopolitical strategy, encapsulated in his other favored title: "**the lord of the two lands and the two seas**".<sup>6</sup> This referred to his dominion over Anatolia ("the two lands" of Asia Minor and the Balkans) and the Aegean and Black Seas ("the two seas"). It articulated a vision of a new world empire, centered on his capital, Istanbul, that would dominate the nexus of Europe and Asia.

Mehmed's intellectual and artistic pursuits were thus not the private diversions of a cultured monarch; they were integral components of his statecraft. By engaging with Renaissance humanism and adopting the iconography of Roman emperors, he was crafting a new, universalist imperial identity. This syncretic ideology was a sophisticated tool of political legitimation. To his Muslim subjects, he was the great *Fatih*, the fulfiller of prophecy. To his new Christian subjects, particularly the Greek Orthodox population, he presented himself as the new Roman Caesar, a legitimate successor to Constantine. To the powerful maritime states of Italy like Venice, he projected the image of a sophisticated Renaissance prince, a ruler with whom one could engage in diplomacy and trade. This masterful blending of identities allowed him to construct the ideological foundations for a new world empire that was simultaneously Islamic, Roman, and modern.

---

## Part II: The Empire – The Forging of a New World Power

## Chapter 3: The Conquest of Constantinople: The World Remade (1453)

The siege and fall of Constantinople in 1453 was the defining event of Mehmed II's reign and a watershed moment in world history. It was far more than a simple military victory; it was a masterclass in logistics, technological innovation, and combined-arms strategy that brought a 1,500-year-old empire to its knees. The conquest was the culmination of meticulous planning and the execution of a singular, obsessive vision. It not only provided the Ottoman state with a new capital but also irrevocably altered the geopolitical, religious, and psychological landscape of Europe and the Mediterranean.

### Strategic and Technological Preparations

From the moment he ascended the throne for the second time in 1451, Mehmed's actions were singularly focused on the conquest of Constantinople.<sup>6</sup> He began with astute diplomacy, neutralizing the most significant external threats by renewing peace treaties with the Kingdom of Hungary and the Republic of Venice, ensuring they would not intervene on Byzantium's behalf.<sup>7</sup>

His most critical strategic move came in the spring of 1452 with the construction of the fortress of **Rumelihisarı** ("Fortress of Europe" or "Throat-Cutter") on the European shore of the Bosphorus.<sup>15</sup> Situated at the strait's narrowest point, directly opposite the older Anadoluhisarı on the Asian side, this new fortress gave the Ottomans complete control over all maritime traffic. It effectively sealed Constantinople off from any potential relief forces or supplies coming from the Genoese colonies on the Black Sea, placing the city in a strategic stranglehold.<sup>2</sup>

Technologically, Mehmed sought a decisive advantage to overcome Constantinople's legendary defenses—the Theodosian Walls, a triple-layered system of fortifications that had repelled dozens of sieges for over a millennium.<sup>31</sup> He found this advantage in gunpowder. He commissioned a Hungarian cannon-founder named Urban, a Christian engineer, to construct a series of massive bronze cannons, the likes of which had never been seen before.<sup>15</sup> The largest of these "super-guns" was nearly 27 feet long and could fire enormous stone balls weighing between 500 and 800 pounds over a mile.<sup>30</sup> These cannons were the key to his strategy, designed not merely to harass the defenders but to physically pulverize the ancient walls.

By the spring of 1453, Mehmed had assembled a colossal force outside the city. His army numbered between 80,000 and 200,000 soldiers, including the elite Janissary infantry corps, supported by an artillery train of over seventy large cannons.<sup>2</sup> To complete the blockade, he amassed a navy of over 300 vessels, which surrounded the city from the Sea of Marmara.<sup>2</sup>

## **The 53-Day Siege (April 6 – May 29, 1453)**

The siege officially began on April 6, 1453, with a relentless artillery bombardment of the land walls.<sup>15</sup> The great cannons, including Urban's monster, were concentrated on the weakest section of the walls, the Mesoteichon, in the Lycus River valley.<sup>15</sup> The psychological impact of the bombardment was as significant as its physical destruction; the thunderous noise and the sight of massive stone balls smashing into the ramparts were terrifying for the city's inhabitants.

The defenders, led by the last Byzantine Emperor, Constantine XI Palaiologos, and the skilled Genoese condottiero Giovanni Giustiniani Longo, were vastly outnumbered. They commanded a force of only around 7,000 trained soldiers and perhaps 30,000 armed civilians.<sup>15</sup> Despite the odds, they fought with extraordinary courage and skill, working tirelessly each night to repair the breaches made in the walls during the day.<sup>15</sup>

A critical element of the city's defense was a massive iron chain stretched across the mouth of the Golden Horn, the city's natural harbor. This chain, supported by wooden logs, successfully blocked the Ottoman fleet from entering the harbor and attacking the city's weaker sea walls.<sup>15</sup> After several direct naval assaults on the chain were repulsed, Mehmed conceived and executed one of the most audacious and brilliant tactical maneuvers in the history of warfare. On the night of April 22, he ordered his troops to construct a slipway of greased logs across the peninsula of Galata. Over this improvised road, his men dragged approximately 70 of his smaller warships overland, from the Bosphorus into the waters of the Golden Horn, completely bypassing the defensive chain.<sup>15</sup> This feat of military engineering outflanked the defenders, forcing them to divert precious manpower to the sea walls and stretching their already thin lines to the breaking point.

After weeks of continuous bombardment, failed assaults, and mining attempts, Mehmed planned a final, all-out attack for May 29. The assault began before dawn, with waves of irregular troops followed by disciplined Anatolian regiments. The defenders repelled the first two attacks, but the relentless pressure began to take its toll. The turning point came when Giustiniani, the commander of the land defense, was mortally wounded and had to be carried from the walls, causing a panic among the Genoese troops.<sup>15</sup> At this critical moment, a small group of Janissaries discovered that a small postern gate, the Kerkopoporta, had been left unlocked. They stormed through, raised the Ottoman banner on the walls, and initiated the collapse of the city's defense. Simultaneously, other Janissary regiments exploited the chaos at the main breach to pour into the city.<sup>15</sup> Emperor Constantine XI was last seen fighting valiantly near the breach before being killed, dying with his empire.

## **Aftermath and Geopolitical Impact**

The fall of Constantinople was an event of world-historical significance. It marked the definitive end of the Roman Empire, an institution that had endured in one form or another for

nearly 1,500 years.<sup>1</sup> For the Christian world, particularly in Europe, the news was met with shock and horror. The city had long been seen as Christendom's eastern bastion, a powerful buffer against the expansion of Islam into Europe. Its fall opened the way for uninterrupted Ottoman advances into the Balkans and beyond.<sup>15</sup> The event is widely regarded by historians as a key marker for the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Early Modern era, as it disrupted traditional trade routes and spurred European powers to seek new maritime paths to the East, contributing to the Age of Exploration.<sup>1</sup>

For the Islamic world, the conquest was a triumph of immense proportions. It fulfilled a centuries-old dream and cemented Mehmed's status as a legendary hero, earning him the honorific by which he would be known to history: *Fatih*, the Conqueror.<sup>8</sup> He immediately moved the Ottoman capital from Edirne to the captured city, renaming it Istanbul, and began the process of transforming it into the magnificent center of his new empire.<sup>6</sup>

## Chapter 4: Securing the Empire: Campaigns in Europe and Anatolia

The conquest of Constantinople was not an end but a beginning. For the next quarter-century, Mehmed II waged a series of relentless military campaigns designed to consolidate Ottoman power in the Balkans, unify Anatolia under his rule, and establish Ottoman supremacy over the Aegean and Black Seas. These campaigns created the vast and secure heartland that would sustain the empire for the next four centuries. While his modernized army proved nearly invincible in conventional warfare, his expansion was not without significant challenges, particularly when faced with resilient guerrilla resistance and unconventional tactics on the frontiers of his empire.

### Consolidating the Balkans

With Constantinople as his new base of operations, Mehmed turned his attention to subduing the remaining independent Christian states of Southeastern Europe. He personally led numerous expeditions into the Balkans, systematically annexing territories and crushing resistance. The Kingdom of Serbia, which had long been a rebellious vassal, was fully annexed in 1459 after a series of campaigns.<sup>35</sup> The Despotate of Morea, the last Byzantine holdout in southern Greece, was conquered in 1460, and the Kingdom of Bosnia was absorbed into the empire in 1463.<sup>16</sup>

However, Mehmed's northward advance met a significant obstacle. In 1456, he laid siege to the strategic fortress of Belgrade, the gateway to Hungary and Central Europe. In a major setback, his massive army was decisively repulsed by a Hungarian relief force led by the brilliant general John Hunyadi. The failed **Siege of Belgrade** was one of Mehmed's few major defeats and effectively halted Ottoman expansion up the Danube for several decades.<sup>35</sup>

Mehmed also faced two of his most tenacious and difficult adversaries in the Balkans: George Kastrioti (Skanderbeg) in Albania and Vlad III (the Impaler) in Wallachia.



- **The Albanian Resistance:** For over two decades, Mehmed's armies were frustrated by the brilliant guerrilla warfare of the Albanian leader Skanderbeg. Operating from the mountainous terrain of his homeland, Skanderbeg repeatedly defeated larger Ottoman forces, becoming a celebrated hero of Christendom. Mehmed led a massive campaign against him personally in 1466–67, laying siege to the fortress of Krujë, but was unable to break the Albanian resistance.<sup>36</sup> Skanderbeg remained an "immovable wall," and Albania was only fully brought under Ottoman control after his death in 1468.<sup>12</sup>
- **The Wallachian Challenge:** The conflict with Vlad the Impaler, who had spent part of his youth as a political hostage at the Ottoman court alongside Mehmed, was particularly brutal.<sup>12</sup> In 1462, after Vlad refused to pay tribute and launched a bloody raid into Ottoman territory, Mehmed invaded Wallachia with a massive army.<sup>36</sup> Vlad, heavily outnumbered, responded not with conventional battle but with a campaign of scorched-earth tactics, biological warfare (sending plague-infected men into the Ottoman camp), and psychological terror.<sup>41</sup> The campaign culminated in one of history's most gruesome acts of psychological warfare. As Mehmed's army approached the Wallachian capital of Târgoviște, they were met by the horrifying sight of the **"Forest of the Impaled"**—a vast field where Vlad had impaled some 20,000 captured Ottoman soldiers and Bulgarian sympathizers.<sup>40</sup> The sheer horror of the spectacle reportedly caused the battle-hardened sultan to turn his army back. Although Mehmed ultimately succeeded in his political objective by replacing Vlad with his more compliant brother, Radu, the campaign was a stark demonstration of how unconventional tactics could challenge Ottoman might.<sup>41</sup>

These campaigns against Skanderbeg and Vlad III reveal a crucial aspect of Mehmed's reign. While his military machine, with its Janissaries and heavy artillery, was designed for and excelled at large-scale sieges and set-piece battles, it was far less effective against determined asymmetrical warfare in difficult terrain. The guerrilla tactics of Skanderbeg and the psychological terror of Vlad the Impaler exposed the limits of conventional imperial power and highlighted the immense difficulty of pacifying resilient frontier populations, a challenge that would persist throughout Ottoman history.

## Unifying Anatolia and Dominating the Seas

In parallel with his European campaigns, Mehmed worked to complete the unification of Anatolia under Ottoman rule. He systematically absorbed the remaining independent Turkish principalities, or *beyliks*, such as the Jandarids and the Karamanids, often through a combination of diplomacy and military force.<sup>8</sup> In 1461, he conquered the Greek Empire of Trebizond on the Black Sea coast, extinguishing the final remnant of the Byzantine imperial tradition.<sup>21</sup>

His most important victory in the east came against the Akkoyunlu (White Sheep) Turkomans, a powerful tribal confederation that rivaled the Ottomans for supremacy in eastern Anatolia and Persia. At the decisive **Battle of Otlukbeli** (also known as the Battle of Bashkent) on

August 11, 1473, Mehmed's modernized, professional army, equipped with firearms and cannons, utterly crushed the traditional Turkoman cavalry of the Akkoyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan.<sup>4</sup> This victory was as significant as the conquest of Constantinople; it eliminated the most serious threat to Ottoman power in the east and permanently secured Ottoman domination over Anatolia.

Mehmed also transformed the Ottomans into a major naval power. The long and arduous **Ottoman-Venetian War (1463–1479)** was a struggle for maritime control of the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean. After sixteen years of conflict, the Ottomans emerged victorious, conquering key Venetian possessions in Greece (like the island of Euboea) and Albania.<sup>35</sup> The peace treaty of 1479 confirmed Ottoman naval supremacy in the region and forced Venice to pay tribute for trading rights.<sup>45</sup> Further consolidating his power, Mehmed made the Khanate of Crimea an Ottoman vassal state in 1475, effectively turning the Black Sea into what was often called an "Ottoman lake".<sup>37</sup>

His final, audacious campaign was the invasion of southern Italy in 1480. An Ottoman force captured the city of **Otranto**, establishing a beachhead on the Italian peninsula. This move sent a wave of panic across Europe and seemed to signal an impending march on Rome itself, an ambition Mehmed was known to harbor. The campaign was cut short, however, by the sultan's sudden death the following year.<sup>16</sup>

Table 1: Chronology of Major Military Campaigns and Conquests (1451-1481)	
Year(s)	Campaign/Conquest/Major Event
1453	Conquest of Constantinople
1454-1459	Campaigns in Serbia, leading to its final annexation
1456	Siege of Belgrade (Failure)
1458-1460	Conquest of the Despotate of Morea
1461	Conquest of the Empire of Trebizond; Annexation of Sinop and the Black Sea coast
1462	Wallachian Campaign against Vlad III "the Impaler"
1463	Conquest of the Kingdom of Bosnia
1463-1479	Ottoman-Venetian War for control of the Aegean
1466-1467	Albanian Campaign and Siege of Krujë against Skanderbeg
1468	Annexation of Karaman
1473	Battle of Otlukbeli (decisive victory over the Akkoyunlu)
1475	The Khanate of Crimea becomes an Ottoman vassal state
1476	Moldavian Campaign against Stephen the

	Great
1478	Conquest of Shkodra, ending Albanian resistance
1480-1481	Invasion of Italy and capture of Otranto

## Chapter 5: The Architect of the State: Centralization and Administrative Reform

While Mehmed II's military conquests were spectacular and reshaped the map of the known world, his most profound and enduring achievement was internal. He radically restructured the Ottoman state, transforming it from a decentralized frontier principality, or *beylik*, into a highly centralized, absolutist, and bureaucratic empire. This political revolution was arguably more significant than the conquest of Constantinople, as it created the enduring administrative framework that would govern a vast, multi-ethnic empire for centuries. He was not just a conqueror of lands but the architect of a new imperial state.

### From Beylik to Empire: The Centralization of Power

Prior to Mehmed's reign, the Ottoman state was fundamentally a frontier polity. The sultan was often considered *primus inter pares* ("first among equals"), his power circumscribed by and dependent upon alliances with powerful Turkish tribal leaders and noble families who led the *ghazi* warriors on the frontiers.<sup>46</sup> These aristocratic families held vast private lands and commanded personal loyalties, making them a potent and often unreliable political force. Mehmed systematically dismantled this old power structure. The conquest of Constantinople provided the ideal pretext. His most powerful rival, Grand Vizier Çandarlı Halil Pasha, who represented the interests of the old Turkish nobility, had vocally opposed the risky siege.<sup>13</sup> Shortly after the city fell, Mehmed had Çandarlı arrested and executed, and his family's vast properties were confiscated. This act sent a clear and brutal message across the empire: the era of the powerful, independent Turkish aristocracy was over, and a new order, centered exclusively on the absolute will of the sultan, had begun.<sup>13</sup> This marked the definitive transition from a shared power structure to a centralized system with the sultan at its undisputed apex.<sup>47</sup>

### The Rise of the *Devşirme* Elite

To staff his new centralized state, Mehmed needed a new ruling class, one whose loyalty was not to family, tribe, or region, but to him alone. He found this in the ***devşirme*** system. This institution involved the systematic levy, or "gathering," of Christian boys from the empire's Balkan provinces. These boys were taken from their families, converted to Islam, and given a rigorous education in the palace schools, most notably the *Enderun* school within the Topkapı

Palace.<sup>1</sup>

The *devşirme* system was an act of revolutionary social and political engineering. By uprooting these individuals from their native cultures and families, the system created a class of administrators and soldiers who were, in a legal and social sense, "slaves of the Porte" (*kapıkulları*). Their status, wealth, power, and very identity were derived solely from their personal service and unwavering loyalty to the sultan.<sup>48</sup> They had no independent power base, no inherited lands, and no familial allegiances that could be used to challenge the monarch's authority. This slave-bureaucracy, which included the elite Janissary infantry corps, became the primary instrument of the sultan's absolute will.<sup>45</sup>

By the end of Mehmed's reign, the transformation was complete. Almost all of the highest officials of the state, including the grand vizier, were of *devşirme* origin.<sup>48</sup> He had effectively created a new ruling class from scratch, one defined by merit and loyalty within his system rather than by birthright. This allowed him to achieve a level of centralized, autocratic control that was unprecedented in the Islamic world and rivaled by few monarchs in Europe.

### The Law of the Conqueror: The *Kanunname*

To give this new state structure a permanent and legal foundation, Mehmed became the first sultan to compile the various imperial decrees and administrative regulations into a single, comprehensive legal code, the *Kanunname* ("Book of Law").<sup>6</sup> This was a monumental step in Ottoman state-building, moving from ad-hoc rule to codified law.

The *Kanunname* operated in parallel with Islamic religious law (*Shari'ah*). It was a body of secular, or customary, law (*kanun*) that dealt with matters of state administration, public order, and finance. It meticulously defined the hierarchy of the state, outlining the ranks, responsibilities, salaries, and protocols for all government officials, from the grand vizier down to provincial administrators.<sup>17</sup> It formalized the structure of the central government, particularly the Imperial Council (

*Divan-ı Hümayun*), and established new rules of court ceremony that emphasized the sultan's increasing seclusion and majestic distance from his subjects.<sup>45</sup>

The most notorious and controversial provision of the *Kanunname* was its formal legalization of the practice of **fratricide**. The code explicitly stated: "And to whichever of my sons the Sultanate shall be granted, it is proper for him to kill his brothers for the sake of the order of the world (*nizâm-ı âlem*). Most of the *ulema* (religious scholars) have approved this. Let them act on it".<sup>17</sup> This brutal but pragmatic law was designed to prevent the devastating civil wars over succession that had repeatedly weakened the state in the past. While it contradicted the spirit of Islamic law regarding murder, the state's jurists justified it on the grounds of public necessity, arguing that preventing the chaos and bloodshed of a civil war was a greater good.<sup>17</sup> This provision, more than any other, exemplifies Mehmed's belief in the supreme importance of a stable, centralized state, an ideal for which even the lives of princes could be sacrificed.

---

**Table 2: Key Provisions of the Kanunname of Mehmed II**

Area of Regulation	Key Provision/Reform
<b>State Hierarchy</b>	Codified the ranks, salaries, protocol, and duties of all state officials, creating a clear bureaucratic structure.
<b>Imperial Council (Divan)</b>	Formalized its composition (viziers, military judges, finance ministers) and procedures. Mandated that the Sultan would no longer preside in person but would observe from behind a screened window, enhancing his mystique and authority.
<b>Succession</b>	Legalized the practice of royal fratricide, permitting the reigning sultan to execute his brothers to prevent civil wars and ensure the stability of the state ( <i>nizâm-ı âlem</i> ).
<b>Criminal Law</b>	Established a code of secular criminal law that supplemented <i>Shari'ah</i> . It introduced the principle of <i>ta'zir</i> , allowing punishments to be adjusted based on the severity of the crime and the status of the offender, giving more discretion to judges.
<b>Land Tenure</b>	Initiated a major fiscal reform by converting thousands of privately held lands ( <i>mülk</i> ) and religious endowments ( <i>vakıf</i> ) into state-owned land ( <i>miri</i> ), strengthening the central treasury and breaking the economic power of the old aristocracy and dervish orders.
<b>Court Protocol</b>	Established a rigid and elaborate system of court ceremony that increased the sultan's seclusion and transformed him from an accessible frontier chief into a remote and absolute emperor.

---

## **Chapter 6: The New Capital: Rebuilding Istanbul and Structuring a Multi-Ethnic Society**

Mehmed II's vision for the Ottoman Empire was physically manifested in his most ambitious project: the transformation of the conquered, desolate city of Constantinople into the magnificent imperial capital of Istanbul. This was not merely an act of reconstruction but a deliberate and systematic effort of urban planning, social engineering, and architectural symbolism. He sought to create a new metropolis that would serve as the political, economic,

and cultural heart of his world empire, a city that would be a microcosm of his vision for a powerful, prosperous, and multicultural state.

## Urban Renewal and Imperial Architecture

When Mehmed entered Constantinople in 1453, he found a city that was a shadow of its former self, a "husk of its former glory" that had been ravaged by centuries of decline, sieges, and the plague.<sup>29</sup> Its population had dwindled to perhaps 50,000 people. Mehmed's immediate priority was to restore and repopulate it.<sup>6</sup> He launched a massive building program, repairing the ancient city walls and aqueducts, and he encouraged his viziers and commanders to establish charitable foundations (*vakıfs*) to build new urban centers, each comprising a mosque, a bath (*hamam*), a market, and a soup kitchen (*imaret*).<sup>6</sup>

Two architectural projects stand as the supreme symbols of his new capital:

- **Topkapi Palace:** Construction began in 1459 on the site of the ancient Byzantine acropolis, a commanding location overlooking the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn.<sup>57</sup> Unlike the monolithic, outward-facing palaces of European monarchs, Topkapi was designed as a sprawling, inward-facing complex of pavilions, gardens, and courtyards.<sup>57</sup> Its layout, organized into four successive courtyards of increasing privacy and restricted access, was a physical manifestation of Mehmed's new autocratic style of rule. The outermost court was public, while the innermost courts housed the palace school (*Enderun*), the Sultan's private chambers, and the Harem, creating a carefully constructed buffer that emphasized the ruler's seclusion, mystique, and absolute power.<sup>4</sup>
- **The Fatih Mosque Complex (*Külliye*):** Built between 1463 and 1470, this was the first monumental imperial project in the new capital.<sup>60</sup> Its location was profoundly symbolic: it was constructed on the site of the demolished Church of the Holy Apostles, the traditional burial place of Byzantine emperors, including Constantine the Great.<sup>60</sup> This was a deliberate act of superimposition, a statement that the new Islamic empire was the successor to and superseder of the Christian Roman Empire. The complex was a vast religious, social, and intellectual center. It included a grand mosque, a hospital, a library, a market, and, most importantly, eight large madrasas (the *Sahn-ı Seman*), which Mehmed endowed to become the highest institutions of Islamic learning in the entire empire.<sup>8</sup> By placing his own tomb (*türbe*) at the heart of this complex, Mehmed positioned himself as the new founder, the Constantine of his new imperial order.

## Economic Revival and Social Engineering

To breathe economic life back into the city, Mehmed ordered the construction of the

Bedesten, the secure central market that would grow into the Grand Bazaar, which remains one of the world's largest covered markets.<sup>45</sup> He understood that a great capital needed a large and diverse population. To achieve this, he implemented a systematic, and often forcible, repopulation policy known as

**sürgün** (deportation or exile).<sup>51</sup>

He compelled thousands of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish families from across his conquered territories in Anatolia and the Balkans to relocate and settle in Istanbul.<sup>16</sup> These groups were often settled in specific neighborhoods, bringing their skills as artisans, merchants, and craftsmen to the city. To further encourage voluntary settlement, he offered new inhabitants homes, land, and tax concessions.<sup>13</sup> This policy of social engineering was remarkably successful. A census conducted in 1478 recorded over 16,000 households in Istanbul and the neighboring district of Galata, suggesting a population approaching 80,000 to 100,000 people. Within fifty years of the conquest, Istanbul had become the largest and most vibrant city in Europe.<sup>16</sup>

## **The Millet System: A Framework for a Multi-Ethnic Empire**

To govern the vast and diverse non-Muslim populations of his new capital and expanding empire, Mehmed formalized the **Millet System**. While the practice of granting autonomy to non-Muslim communities had precedents in earlier Islamic states, Mehmed institutionalized it as a cornerstone of Ottoman governance.<sup>66</sup>

The system organized the empire's non-Muslim subjects into autonomous communities, or "nations" (*millets*), based on religious affiliation rather than ethnicity.<sup>1</sup> Immediately after the conquest, he re-established the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate (1454), appointing the anti-unionist scholar Gennadios Scholarius as the new Patriarch.<sup>6</sup> He also established an Armenian Patriarchate (1461) and a Jewish Grand Rabbinate in the capital.<sup>6</sup>

These religious leaders (the Patriarch or Chief Rabbi) were granted significant civil authority over their communities. The millets were allowed to use their own languages, operate their own schools and charitable institutions, and, most importantly, adjudicate matters of personal law—such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance—according to their own religious legal traditions.<sup>1</sup> In return for this extensive autonomy, the millet leaders were responsible to the sultan for the good behavior of their communities and for the collection and remittance of taxes, including the

*jizya* (poll tax) paid by non-Muslims.<sup>67</sup> This pragmatic system was a highly effective method for governing a vast, heterogeneous empire, allowing for a degree of religious tolerance and cultural pluralism that was rare in contemporary Europe, while ensuring the loyalty and administrative control of diverse populations.<sup>3</sup>

## **Conclusion: The Enduring Legacy of Fatih Sultan Mehmed**

Sultan Mehmed II's reign marks a definitive turning point in Ottoman and world history. He inherited a powerful but still developing regional state and, over the course of thirty years of relentless ambition, bequeathed to his successors a bona fide world empire. His legacy is etched not only in the territories he conquered but, more profoundly, in the very structure of the state he fundamentally redesigned.

His military achievements were staggering. The conquest of Constantinople in 1453 was an act that ended a 1,500-year-old empire and sent shockwaves through Christendom, reshaping the geopolitical and psychological map of the world. Following this seminal victory, he systematically unified Anatolia, subdued most of the Balkans, and established Ottoman naval supremacy in the Black and Aegean Seas, expanding his domain to over 2.2 million square kilometers.<sup>21</sup>

Yet, his most lasting impact was as an architect of the state. Mehmed II was the true founder of the classical Ottoman Empire. He shattered the power of the old Turkish aristocracy and replaced it with a fiercely loyal *devşirme* slave-bureaucracy, creating a centralized, absolutist monarchy. His codification of secular law in the *Kanunname* provided this new state with a durable administrative and legal framework, establishing the model of the autocratic Ottoman *padishah* that would endure for centuries.<sup>6</sup> He transformed the desolate ruins of Constantinople into the thriving, multicultural metropolis of Istanbul, a testament to his vision of a universal empire.

His legacy remains complex and contested. In Western historiography, he is often cast as the fearsome conqueror, the destroyer of Byzantium and the great antagonist of Christendom.<sup>27</sup> In Turkish and Islamic history, he is revered as

*Fatih*—the Conqueror—a national hero and a pious ruler who fulfilled a sacred destiny.<sup>8</sup>

Ultimately, Mehmed II was a pivotal figure who stood at the crossroads of the medieval and modern worlds. He was a man of paradox: a ruthless warrior who appreciated Renaissance art, a devout Muslim who saw himself as a Roman Caesar. By fusing military genius with a singular imperial vision that masterfully blended Islamic, Roman, and Renaissance elements, he not only conquered an empire but meticulously designed its political, social, and ideological foundations. His sudden death on May 3, 1481, while on the march for a new campaign, left his grandest ambitions, such as the conquest of Rome, unfulfilled.<sup>1</sup> But his life's work was already complete. He had laid the unshakeable foundations upon which the Ottoman "Golden Age" would be built, forever altering the course of history in Europe and the Middle East.

## Works cited

1. Mehmed the Conqueror | Research Starters | EBSCO Research, accessed September 18, 2025, <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/mehmed-conqueror>
2. Mehmed II - Wikipedia, accessed September 18, 2025, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mehmed\\_II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mehmed_II)
3. Mehmed II Biography, Legacy & Conquests | Who was Mehmed II? - Study.com,



- accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://study.com/academy/lesson/mehmed-ii-biography-legacy-conquests.html>
4. Mehmed the Conqueror, the Sultan Who Took Constantinople | TheCollector, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://www.thecollector.com/mehmed-the-conqueror-constantinople/>
  5. Mehmed II: From Boy Sultan to Conqueror of Constantinople - Medieval History, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://historymedieval.com/mehmed-ii-from-boy-sultan-to-conqueror-of-constantinople/>
  6. Fatih Sultan Mehmet | Mehmed the Conqueror - Travel Atelier, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://travelatelier.com/blog/fatih-sultan-mehmet-conqueror-mehmed/>
  7. Mehmed II, The Ottoman Sultan Who Conquered Constantinople, accessed September 18, 2025, <https://allthatsinteresting.com/mehmed-ii>
  8. About Sultan Mehmed II. - FSMVÜ | Directorate of International Relations, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://int.fsm.edu.tr/Uluslararasi-Ofis-About-Us--About-Sultan-Mehmed-II>
  9. Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror | History - Vocal Media, accessed September 18, 2025, <https://vocal.media/history/sultan-mehmed-the-conqueror>
  10. Mehmet II: The Renaissance Sultan Who Took Constantinople - The Other Tour, accessed September 18, 2025, <https://theothertour.com/mehmet/>
  11. theothertour.com, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://theothertour.com/mehmet/#:~:text=Mehmet%20II's%20intellect%20was%20unparalleled,scholars%20from%20the%20Golden%20Age.>
  12. Mehmed II - Simple English Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, accessed September 18, 2025, [https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mehmed\\_II](https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mehmed_II)
  13. Ottoman Empire - Mehmed II, Expansion, Legacy - Britannica, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://www.britannica.com/place/Ottoman-Empire/Mehmed-II>
  14. Mighty sovereigns of Ottoman throne: Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror - Daily Sabah, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://www.dailysabah.com/arts/portrait/mighty-sovereigns-of-ottoman-throne-sultan-mehmedthe-conqueror>
  15. Fall of Constantinople | Facts, Summary, & Significance - Britannica, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://www.britannica.com/event/Fall-of-Constantinople-1453>
  16. Mehmed II | Biography, The Conqueror, Accomplishments, Cannon, & History | Britannica, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mehmed-II-Ottoman-sultan>
  17. The Code | Discover The Ottomans | TheOttomans.org, accessed September 18, 2025,  
[http://www.theottomans.org/english/campaigns\\_army/Mehmed-the-Conqueror-5.asp](http://www.theottomans.org/english/campaigns_army/Mehmed-the-Conqueror-5.asp)
  18. Mehmed the Conqueror: A Story That Began Not with Conquest, but with the Future, accessed September 18, 2025,

- <https://www.adristanbul.com/en/mehmed-the-conqueror-a-story-that-began-not-with-conquest-but-with-the-future/>
19. library.fiveable.me, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://library.fiveable.me/key-terms/world-history-since-1400/mehmed-ii#:~:text=He%20was%20known%20for%20fostering.and%20cultures%20within%20its%20territory.>
  20. Mehmed II - Ottoman Empire, Conqueror, Sultan | Britannica, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mehmed-II-Ottoman-sultan/Mehmeds-empire>
  21. The Conquest of Istanbul and the shining legacy of Sultan Mehmed II - TRT Global, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://trt.global/afrika-english/article/b8ea4c322b76>
  22. Mehmed II and the Death of the Roman World - Medieval History, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://historymedieval.com/mehmed-ii-and-the-death-of-the-roman-world/>
  23. Gentile Bellini, Portrait of Sultan Mehmed II (article) | Khan Academy, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/renaissance-reformation/early-renaissance1/venice-early-ren/a/gentile-bellini-portrait-of-sultan-mehmed-ii>
  24. Gentile Bellini | The Sultan Mehmet II | NG3099 | National Gallery, London, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/gentile-bellini-the-sultan-mehmet-ii>
  25. Portrait of Mehmet II - Wikipedia, accessed September 18, 2025,  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait\\_of\\_Mehmet\\_II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_Mehmet_II)
  26. A Sultan of Paradox: Mehmed the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts - Medievalists.net, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://www.medievalists.net/2012/04/a-sultan-of-paradox-mehmed-the-conqueror-as-a-patron-of-the-arts/>
  27. Mehmet The Conqueror And Constantinople: A Portrait Of Youth And Ambition, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://ouhistory.org.uk/mehmet-the-conqueror-and-constantinople-a-portrait-of-youth-and-ambition/>
  28. THE FINAL SIEGE AND FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE (1453) | History of Istanbul, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://istanbultarihi.ist/424-the-final-siege-and-fall-of-constantinople-1453>
  29. Mehmed II - World History Encyclopedia, accessed September 18, 2025,  
[https://www.worldhistory.org/Mehmed\\_II/](https://www.worldhistory.org/Mehmed_II/)
  30. Fall of Constantinople - Wikipedia, accessed September 18, 2025,  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fall\\_of\\_Constantinople](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fall_of_Constantinople)
  31. What are some excellent battle strategies used by the Ottomans other than the Siege of Constantinople? - Quora, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://www.quora.com/What-are-some-excellent-battle-strategies-used-by-the-Ottomans-other-than-the-Siege-of-Constantinople>
  32. Challenge: Defend the 1453 Siege of Constantinople : r/HistoryWhatIf - Reddit,

- accessed September 18, 2025,  
[https://www.reddit.com/r/HistoryWhatIf/comments/106t0tg/challenge\\_defend\\_the\\_1453\\_siege\\_of\\_constantinople/](https://www.reddit.com/r/HistoryWhatIf/comments/106t0tg/challenge_defend_the_1453_siege_of_constantinople/)
33. Fall of Constantinople (1453): The Siege That Changed the World | TheCollector, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://www.thecollector.com/fall-constantinople-1453-changed-world/>
  34. Siege of Constantinople, 1453 : r/history - Reddit, accessed September 18, 2025,  
[https://www.reddit.com/r/history/comments/43vhqt/siege\\_of\\_constantinople\\_1453/](https://www.reddit.com/r/history/comments/43vhqt/siege_of_constantinople_1453/)
  35. Mehmed II's military significance | Research Starters - EBSCO, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/mehmed-iis-military-significance>
  36. Mehmed II's campaigns - Wikipedia, accessed September 18, 2025,  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mehmed\\_II%27s\\_campaigns](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mehmed_II%27s_campaigns)
  37. Campaigns | Discover The Ottomans | TheOttomans.org, accessed September 18, 2025,  
[http://www.theottomans.org/english/campaigns\\_army/Mehmed-the-Conqueror-4.asp](http://www.theottomans.org/english/campaigns_army/Mehmed-the-Conqueror-4.asp)
  38. Vote your favourite anti-Ottoman Balkan leader: Vlad the Impaler or Skanderbeg? - Reddit, accessed September 18, 2025,  
[https://www.reddit.com/r/AskBalkans/comments/vxid1c/vote\\_your\\_favourite\\_antio\\_toman\\_balkan\\_leader/](https://www.reddit.com/r/AskBalkans/comments/vxid1c/vote_your_favourite_antio_toman_balkan_leader/)
  39. Vlad the Impaler: Dracula's Real History and His Clash with the Ottoman Empire, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://vocal.media/history/vlad-the-impaler-dracula-s-real-history-and-his-clash-with-the-ottoman-empire>
  40. Night attack at Târgoviște - Wikipedia, accessed September 18, 2025,  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Night\\_attack\\_at\\_T%C3%A2rgovi%C8%99te](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Night_attack_at_T%C3%A2rgovi%C8%99te)
  41. The Insane Way Vlad the Impaler Turned Back an Enemy Army | Military.com, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://www.military.com/off-duty/2020/02/26/insane-way-vlad-impaler-turned-back-enemy-army.html>
  42. Mehmet II after invading Wallachia to fight Vlad with the biggest army of the Ottoman Empire but then seeing a forest of 20000 impaled people on his way there - Reddit, accessed September 18, 2025,  
[https://www.reddit.com/r/HistoryMemes/comments/nz9jdo/mehmet\\_ii\\_after\\_inva\\_ding\\_wallachia\\_to\\_fight\\_vlad/](https://www.reddit.com/r/HistoryMemes/comments/nz9jdo/mehmet_ii_after_inva_ding_wallachia_to_fight_vlad/)
  43. Vlad the Impaler Once Launched a Night Attack Against the Ottoman Sultan, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://www.warhistoryonline.com/medieval/night-attack-vlad-impaler-ottoman.html>
  44. Ottoman–Venetian War (1463–1479) - Wikipedia, accessed September 18, 2025,  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman%E2%80%93Venetian\\_War\\_\(1463%E2%80%931479\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman%E2%80%93Venetian_War_(1463%E2%80%931479))

45. Iznik: History: Mehmed II 'Fatih' (1451-1481) - Islamic Ceramics Online, accessed September 18, 2025, <https://islamicceramics.ashmolean.org/Iznik/fatih.htm>
46. Rise of the Ottoman Empire - Wikipedia, accessed September 18, 2025, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rise\\_of\\_the\\_Ottoman\\_Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rise_of_the_Ottoman_Empire)
47. How did Mehmed II's rule change the Ottoman state structure? - TutorChase, accessed September 18, 2025, <https://www.tutorchase.com/answers/ib/history/how-did-mehmed-ii-s-rule-change-the-ottoman-state-structure>
48. Ottoman Centralism and Exclusivity - UC Press E-Books Collection - California Digital Library, accessed September 18, 2025, <https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft0v19n7b6&chunk.id=d0e2853&toc.depth=1&toc.id=d0e2835&brand=ucpress>
49. A Sublime Empire: Ottoman Rule on Land and Sea (article) - Khan Academy, accessed September 18, 2025, <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/world-history-project-ap/xb41992e0ff5e0f09:unit-3-land-based-empires/xb41992e0ff5e0f09:3-1empires-expand/a/article-a-sublime-empire-ottoman-rule-on-land-and-sea>
50. Bureaucracy in the Ottoman-Turkish Polity, accessed September 18, 2025, <https://repository.bilkent.edu.tr/bitstreams/ebdf2b15-808e-4dc8-8afd-5b71377f423f/download>
51. Ottoman Renaissance: The Conqueror's Dream - Cornucopia Magazine, accessed September 18, 2025, <https://www.cornucopia.net/magazine/articles/the-conquerors-dream/>
52. LAW IN ISTANBUL | History of Istanbul, accessed September 18, 2025, <https://istanbultarihi.ist/433-law-in-istanbul>
53. Imperial Council (Ottoman Empire) - Wikipedia, accessed September 18, 2025, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial\\_Council\\_\(Ottoman\\_Empire\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_Council_(Ottoman_Empire))
54. Law of the Ottoman Empire - Wikipedia, accessed September 18, 2025, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law\\_of\\_the\\_Ottoman\\_Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_of_the_Ottoman_Empire)
55. Constantinople as an Imperial Capital: Mehmed II and the Making of the Ottoman Empire, accessed September 18, 2025, <https://measure-ojs-shsu.tdl.org/measure/article/view/19/16>
56. SULTAN MEHMED THE CONQUEROR'S ISTANBUL | History of ..., accessed September 18, 2025, <https://istanbultarihi.ist/376-sultan-mehmed-the-conquerors-istanbul>
57. Topkapi Palace - Wikipedia, accessed September 18, 2025, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Topkap%C4%B1\\_Palace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Topkap%C4%B1_Palace)
58. Topkapi Palace - Madain Project (en), accessed September 18, 2025, [https://madainproject.com/topkapi\\_palace](https://madainproject.com/topkapi_palace)
59. Topkapi Palace Architecture • Construction and Design, accessed September 18, 2025, <https://topkapipalacetickets.tours/topkapi-palace-architecture/>
60. Fatih Mosque, Istanbul - Wikipedia, accessed September 18, 2025, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatih\\_Mosque,\\_Istanbul](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatih_Mosque,_Istanbul)
61. Archnet > Site > Fatih Camii, accessed September 18, 2025, <https://www.archnet.org/sites/1982>

62. Fatih Mosque - Istanbul Tour Studio, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://istanbultourstudio.com/things-to-do/fatih-mosque>
63. www.fatih.bel.tr, accessed September 18, 2025,  
[https://www.fatih.bel.tr/en/main/pages/selatin-mosques-in-fatih/579#:~:text=Fatih%20Mosque%20and%20Complex&text=There%20are%2016%20Muslim%20madrasahs,Abdullah%20\(Sinan%20the%20Agile\).](https://www.fatih.bel.tr/en/main/pages/selatin-mosques-in-fatih/579#:~:text=Fatih%20Mosque%20and%20Complex&text=There%20are%2016%20Muslim%20madrasahs,Abdullah%20(Sinan%20the%20Agile).)
64. Fatih Complex - Visiting İstanbul |, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<http://www.visitingistanbul.com/fatih-complex.html>
65. What was the fate of the residents of Constantinople after it was conquered by Mehmed II?, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://www.quora.com/What-was-the-fate-of-the-residents-of-Constantinople-after-it-was-conquered-by-Mehmed-II>
66. The Ottoman Millet System and Its Relationship with Nationalism (Osmanlı Millet Sistemi ve Milliyetçilik ile ilişkisi) - Ahmet Yusuf YILMAZ -Tevfik ERDEM | Turkish Studies-Economics,Finance,Politics, accessed September 18, 2025,  
[https://turkishstudies.net/economy?mod=makale\\_ing\\_ozet&makale\\_id=46455](https://turkishstudies.net/economy?mod=makale_ing_ozet&makale_id=46455)
67. Millet System Definition, Functions & Examples | Study.com, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://study.com/academy/lesson/millet-system-ottoman-empire-system-history-concept-facts.html>
68. (PDF) Ottoman Institutions, Millet System: 1250 to 1920: Middle East, accessed September 18, 2025,  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311680222\\_Ottoman\\_Institutions\\_Millet\\_System\\_1250\\_to\\_1920\\_Middle\\_East](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311680222_Ottoman_Institutions_Millet_System_1250_to_1920_Middle_East)
69. Mehmed II - (World History – 1400 to Present) - Vocab, Definition, Explanations | Fiveable, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://library.fiveable.me/key-terms/world-history-since-1400/mehmed-ii>
70. The Portrait Prints of Mehmed II - VCU Scholars Compass, accessed September 18, 2025,  
<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1355&context=etd>