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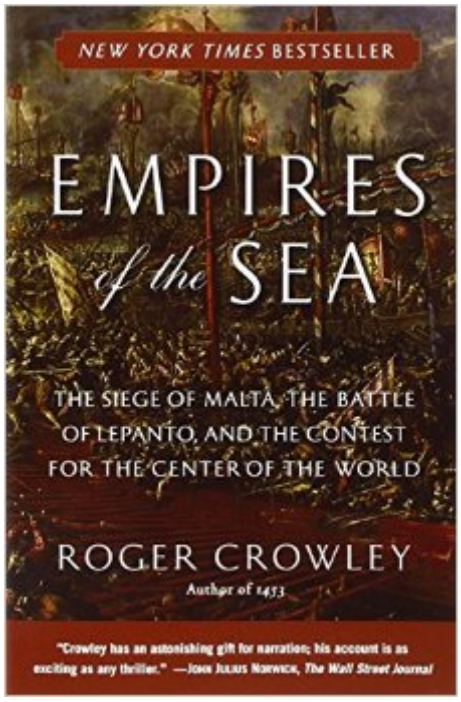
Empires Of The Sea: The Siege Of Malta, The Battle Of Lepanto, And The Contest For The Center Of The World



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Synopsis

In 1521, Suleiman the Magnificent, Muslim ruler of the Ottoman Empire, dispatched an invasion fleet to the Christian island of Rhodes. This would prove to be the opening shot in an epic clash between rival empires and faiths for control of the Mediterranean and the center of the world. In Empires of the Sea, acclaimed historian Roger Crowley has written a thrilling account of this brutal decades-long battle between Christendom and Islam for the soul of Europe, a fast-paced tale of spiraling intensity that ranges from Istanbul to the Gates of Gibraltar. Crowley conjures up a wild cast of pirates, crusaders, and religious warriors struggling for supremacy and survival in a tale of slavery and galley warfare, desperate bravery and utter brutality. Empires of the Sea is a story of extraordinary color and incident, and provides a crucial context for our own clash of civilizations.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In the 16th century, the Mediterranean was considered the center of world, and this book is about the great battles and sieges that took place when the armies of Islam and Christendom tried to dominate that world. In 2005, Roger Crowley published a book called 1453: The Holy War for Constantinople and the Clash of Islam and the West in which he recounted the events of the siege of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks. In the present volume the saga continues, he chronicles the expansion of the Ottoman empire under the leadership of Suleiman the Magnificent and his son Selim.Crowley’s first book was not only brilliant, it was also a commercial success; this volume should do as well or even better, for it is narrative history at its best. Crowley, who reads Turkish, was able to consult Ottoman diaries and modern works in Turkish. His accounts of the many land

and sea battles are vivid, dramatic and multilayered, as they tell the story from different points of view.The story begins in 1521 when the Knights of St John (a Christian military order) were routed from the island of Rhodes by the Ottomans and forced to retreat to Malta. The Ottomans were making gains everywhere around the Mediterranean with the help of their allies the Barbary pirates. It was a time of Islamic ascendency as the European powers were in disarray from internal squabbling.The bulk of the book deals with the siege of Malta (1565). This was arguably one of the most heroic and odds-defying battles in history. About 600 Knights of St John were up against 30,000 Ottoman Turks.

Empires of the Sea: The Siege of Malta, the Battle of Lepanto, and the Contest for the Center of the World by Roger Crowley provides the reader with a clear picture into the world of the 16th century Mediterranean and more importantly into warfare for the time.Crowley wastes no time with preliminaries but gets quickly to work in the first chapter with Suleiman's attack on Rhodes. There's no beating around the bush here. Crowley does a terrific job looking at the art of war and how the two sides differed in their respective approaches to battle. On the one hand, the Knights of Saint John, who, like the Templar's, was an international organization with members pulled from the major European countries and provinces of the time. On the other was the Turkish army of Suleiman, large, mobile, well equipped and quick to mount an offensive; apparently lacking nothing needed for conquest. That the Christians were out-numbered is made clear. To the defenders of Malta the loss of any knight was a loss that was difficult if not impossible to replace. Suleiman had numbers on his side and spent freely suffering huge casualties for the time of both his soldiers and slaves. It was all out warfare. Rhodes was strategically important, in part, due to the loss of Constantinople in 1453. However, the loss of Rhodes could not compare to the loss of Malta fifty years later. Without Malta, Italy would become the "front lines" in the battle between Christendom and the door to Europe would be open.Crowley also does a masterful job by incorporating primary sources where possible. Descriptions by eyewitnesses are scattered throughout the text and add an important element to the book.

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