



HFM 004 – The Three Most Insane Rulers in History

Michael Rank: This is the History in Five Minutes Podcast, the #1 podcast for learning about anything in history in no time at all! I'm your host, Michael Rank.

Today's topic is The Three Most Insane Rulers in History. So I should probably define what I'm talking about when I mean insane because there's a lot of different ways you can look at it. There is the clinical variety of insanity where maybe your mental faculties are weak and you're completely incoherent to the people around you. This really wasn't that uncommon for a lot of rulers in history. Because you have to remember that in the time of antiquity, it was really common for dynasties such as the Egyptians and others in the Near East to marry their brothers and sisters because they have this idea of royal blood. So obviously with enough inbreeding going on throughout the generations, you'll have a lot of genetic abnormalities that will pop up that will lead to severe mental disability.

Also, this wasn't just in the Ancient Era. But in the Medieval and early modern period in Europe, a lot of the aristocracy was interrelated to each other. So if you're a part of royalty in England for example and you needed to find a husband or wife, it was almost impossible that this person you would marry even if they were from France, Germany, or Italy would somehow not be your cousin. With all that intermarrying going on, you're probably going to lead to a lot of genetic problems and insanity.

However, there's a second kind of insanity I want to talk about that we'll mention in this podcast and that is megalomania where you have delusions of grandeur. There will be definitely one person on our list. So let's just hop right to it and talk about our top three craziest rulers.

Number three is a very recent one in history. His name is Saparmurat Niyazov. He was known as Turkmenbashi. He was the president of Turkmenistan. He died in 2006. He is definitely a megalomaniac. He seized power right after the Soviet Union fell and was president of the country for 20 years and he made sure to let people know that he was to be revered by everyone. Some of the things he did were rename one of the days of the week after himself. He renamed constellations after himself. He also wrote this really badly written work of religious ideas that he forced mosques in the countries to place right next to the Quran and all levels of civil servants had to read and take a test on this thing. Even if you're a truck driver, you would have to know his ideas.

I think what really tops him in his legacy of craziness is he had an 80-foot tall statue in golden color put in front of the presidential palace that rotated on a schedule so that it was always facing the sun. So that's a special strand of megalomania you see there.

Number two on our list of craziest leaders is Ottoman Sultan Ibrahim I. In the Ottoman Empire for the first couple of centuries, the process of rule was that when a sultan died, one of his sons would get all of the power and be the next in line of the dynasty. However, in order to prevent the other brothers from trying to challenge him and launch a civil war, the policy from the 1300 until the 1500 is that they would kill all of their other brothers and even their sons so that no one would challenge them. Well, the public didn't like this very much. They had to change the policy. Rather than the Sultan killing all of his brothers and their sons, he would just imprison them. If you were imprisoned from a very early age for



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decades, there was a good chance you would probably head up insane and this was the case of Ibrahim I. He was sultan from 1640 until 1648.

He is known in Turkish as Deli Ibrahim which means Ibrahim The Crazy due to his mental condition. Some of his more notorious acts was he was quite obsessed with obese women and charged his officials to find the fattest woman he could in the empire. They eventually happened upon an Armenian woman who weighed 330 pounds and she was known as Sheker Pare which means 'piece of sugar.'

Other things that he did included drowning. He drowned all 280 members of his harem. This wasn't just concubines. It would have been maybe a couple of dozen concubines, wives, many of his children, and a lot of the officials that administered the harem because he thought they were trying to overrule him. He was also quite obsessed with fur and he desired to line the entire Topkapi Palace with fur and he even wanted to administer a special tax so he could have the finest fox for his outlining the entire thing. This idea was shut down by his administrators due to the crippling cost this would have been. Unfortunately, we did not see this come to fruition.

Number one on our list of craziest leaders in history, although there are dozens of other people I could have chosen, we're going to go with Emperor Caligula of the Roman Empire. He ruled from 37 to 41 AD. Many people still desired for the republic to return and this is why Caligula was assassinated which is why he was very paranoid and led to his very unstable mental condition. One of the notorious things that he's known for are tales of incest with his sisters and ordering that an entire section of the crowd be thrown into the arena in the coliseum because there weren't any prisoners at the time to be executed.

Also, in order to consolidate his rule, he wanted the temple of Jerusalem to have a giant statue of him erected there so people would worship him. He engaged in a lot of debauched acts which is depicted in the film, Caligula, which I haven't seen before but IMDb tells me it's not a very wholesome film so I can't give my personal recommendation there.

That concludes our list of the three craziest rulers in history. You think American politics is bad right now. Hopefully, these three case studies have heartened you up a little bit about our current political condition.

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