



## HFM 008 – The Fall of the Ottoman Empire

**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 Fall of the Ottoman Empire. So what is the Ottoman Empire? Well, it was a Turkish-controlled dynasty that controlled all the Middle East and a third of Europe for 400 years and connected East and West. In a lot of ways, the Turks produced the political events that created the modern Middle East today and the history of the Ottoman Empire and its fall still affects current events all over the Middle East.

The first thing first, when you hear the word 'ottoman' the thing that comes to mind is probably a huge overstuffed foot rest that comes along with a sofa that you were able to buy for layaway from Ethan Allen. So why would an empire take its name from an article of furniture? No, the name didn't come from the foot stool. In fact, the foot stool got its name from the empire because in the 1800's, overstuffed furniture designed with an oriental motif was all the rage in Europe and known as Alaturka or ottoman style.

Foot stools aside, the Ottoman empire was the dominant Muslim power in the world following the Mongol and Seljuq eras in the middle ages and it controlled the Middle East and much of Southeast Europe for centuries. This is the reason why Southeastern European populations like Albania or Bosnia are Muslim today.

Here's the beginning of the history of the Ottoman Empire and the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

In 1300, a Turkish chieftain named Osman formed a principality in Northwestern Anatolia which is today's Turkey. He conquered only a few towns in his lifetime, but his sons would go on to conquer fortresses, then cities, then major armies. The snowball effect of this conquest continued for seven generations until 1453 when his descendant, Mehmed, conquered Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire for over 1100 years. Mehmed's grandson, Selim I, would expand his victories and conquer the Middle East in 1516 to 1517, taking control of Egypt, Jerusalem and the cities of Mecca and Medina. His son, Suleiman The Magnificent, the 10<sup>th</sup> Ottoman sultan turned his sights toward Europe and he pushed far into the west and conquered Hungary which the Ottomans would control for 150 years. Suleiman even reached the gates of Vienna in 1526 and boasted he would soon capture it before moving to Rome.

For hundreds of years afterwards in Austria and Germany, parents would try to get their kids to behave by saying, 'If you don't quiet down, the Turks will come and get you in your sleep.' The siege failed but the father of Turkish conquest of Europe haunted many European monarchs for the next two centuries. Martin Luther even worried that God was using the Turks to punish Europe for sins committed by the papacy. His anxiety continued until Europe began to push back the Turks in 1699. The Ottoman Empire shrank throughout the 1700 and 1800's in the face of European military gains, the rise of Russia, and the spread of Western technology such as the steamship, telegraph, and modern manufacturing.



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In response, the Ottoman saw their share of international trade plummet as merchants bypass the Middle East land routes like the Silk Road and the Spice Road in favor of using shipping routes that went around the horn of Africa and reached the New World. The Ottoman Empire attempted to reform its loss by introducing equal rights for all subjects regardless of religion. There were a lot of Jews and Christians that lived in the empire, even a lot of times more Christians than Muslims. But these attempts came too late.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it had been clear that the Ottoman Empire would not be long for this world. The European aristocratic and intellectual class referred to it as the 'Sick man of Europe' and thought the Ottoman Empire would soon be split up among European nations for colonizing. These competing Ottoman and European visions would finally clash in the First World War where the Ottoman Empire basically lost all of its holdings in the Middle East and the Balkans either independence movements or European colonies. There are movies about this event like Lawrence Arabia in which Arabs states got independence.

Kind of all these chaos that happened with all these new nations formed in the Middle East is a lot of the reason why the fall of the Ottoman Empire still affects events today.

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