WHY REVIVE A NIGHTMARE?

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By Jirair Tutunjian, Toronto, Ontario 4 January 2021

For years, Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been running around like a headless chicken clucking about the glories of Ottoman Empire and the benefits, to Islam, of its revival. While he doesn't say who would become the first Sultan 2.0, it's obvious the former Istanbul football player believes he would make a perfect sultan. But before he gets too excited about his fantasy, he and his deluded fascist followers should consider these thirty-three facts—picked at random from countless others--about the "glory" that was the Ottoman Empire.

--There were 27 sultans between 1520 and 1915. Twelve were deposed and two were killed.

---The harem of Suleiman the Magnificent (militarily the most successful sultan) had 300 concubines. Over the centuries, the monotonous life in the harem and the absence of male companionship led many to aberrant sexual indulgences.

---Sultan Mustapha III (1717-1774) was the father of 582 sons. Voltaire called him "That Great Pig Mustapha."

---Sultan Murad IV inherited 240 wives when he assumed the throne. To make room for his "fresh" concubines, he dispensed with the previous lodgers by putting each in a sack and tossing them one by one into the Bosporus.

---Sultan Abdul Hamid II had a "Yes Man" to nod in approval of everything the sultan said.

---"May you be vizier (prime minister) to Sultan Selim!" was a popular way of cursing someone in the Ottoman Empire because the sultan had seven of his viziers executed.

---Of the thousands of eunuchs who supervised the sultans' harems, the most famous was Kislar Agha (literally 'Master of the Girls'). He dressed in colorful robes of flowered silk and broad sash. Castrated in Africa, he was taken to Constantinople where he eventually became the head of the sultan's harem. The sultan trusted his household to the grotesque man who was crude, cruel, corrupt, and capricious.

---Fratricide was endemic in the palace. In "The Sultans," author Noel Barber says newly-enthroned sultans killed all their brothers—no matter how young--to prevent succession wars. To prevent the spilling of blood on the expensive carpets, the preferred method of killing was strangulation.

---Gentile Bellini, the Italian painter, was hired to paint Sultan Mehmet II's portrait. Bellini left the court after an episode that must have tested his nerves. One day, while Bellini was discussing the "Beheading of John the Baptist", the sultan said some of the anatomical details in the painting were incorrect. To prove it, he had a slave executed in the painter's presence. After Mehmet's death, his son sold the painting in the bazaar: he rejected all Western influence. A Venetian merchant bought the painting which showed the sultan smelling a red rose.

--The law required the sultan to remove his father's concubines from the Seraglio/castle to join the concubines of previous sultans in monastic seclusion for life. Sultan Murad was so prolific that when he died it took a whole day and all the carriages, coaches, mules and horses of the court to evacuate his concubines. However, seven pregnant widows were not among the evacuees. They were tied up in sacks and flung into the Bosporus.

---More than once, early sultans jailed enemy's ambassadors if they didn't like what the diplomat had said.

---Some 30,000 of the "Glorious" Ottoman Empire's soldiers were defeated by 6,000 of Napoleon's soldiers near Mt. Tabor in Acre, Palestine. Ottoman soldiers dead? 6,000; French dead? 2. Ottoman captives? 500. French captives? 0.

---Suleiman the "Magnificent" attacked the tiny island of Rhodes without provocation. He succeeded in capturing it after a siege of 145 days but he lost ten times more soldiers than the defending islanders.

---In the Battle of Mohacs (1526) against the Hungarians, the Turks took no prisoners, enabling Sultan Suleiman to note in his diary that he had massacred 2,000 prisoners. Eventually, 200,000 Hungarians were massacred and 100,000 were taken to Constantinople as slaves.

---Suleiman failed to take Vienna although he had nearly a quarter of a million troops and 300 guns while the city was defended by 16,000 troops and 72 guns. Although his troops kept attacking for three weeks, Suleiman withdrew because he couldn't feed his army: Ottoman troops had denuded the countryside of food. A bad loser, when he withdrew he burned an enormous amount of booty plundered from the countryside. The good-looking women his army had captured were taken to Constantinople as slaves. The rest—mostly peasant women who had nothing to do with the war—were hurled into the raging pyre in full view of the Viennese.

---Sultan Abdul Hamid II banned the word "Armenian" in all newspapers, even school text-books, which in many cases had to be reprinted. He also ordered "Armenia" to be removed from maps. This, too, resulted in reprinting new maps.

---For nearly three centuries—15th to 17th—Ottoman fleets and armies plundered and slaughtered their way through Southern Europe. For centuries after, Italian mothers would warn their children that if they didn't behave, the "Turks will get you."

---Sultan Suleiman drank wine—a taboo for a Muslim—from a goblet cut out of single piece of turquoise.

---Suleiman had his lifelong friend Ibrahim strangled because of a minor slight by his friend. He had his eldest son (Mustafa) strangled while he watched from behind a curtain. Mustafa had to be killed because Suleiman's new favorite wife (Roxelana) wanted her own son to succeed to the throne.

Following Mustafa's slaying by five people, Suleiman ordered three days of mourning.

---Suleiman had 300 odalisques (women of the harem). The odalisques were slave or abducted girls. Thus, most sultans had non-Turkish mothers.

---When Sultan Abdul Hamid II was deposed, he was replaced by his brother Mohammed V. He had at least one qualification: he had not read a newspaper for twenty years.

---"Tractacus"—a book published in Europe in the 15th century—said: "Ottoman Turks come together for war as though they had been invited to a wedding."

---The twenty-five sultans who followed Suleiman were, without exception, totally lacking in any of the qualities needed to rule. Enervated and enfeebled by seclusion and idleness filled with ennui, they sought pleasure and diversion in eerie and traditional forms of extravagance, self-indulgence, and vice," wrote Prof. Barnette Miller in "Beyond the Sublime Porte".

---The fleet of Sultan Selim attacked Cyprus because he liked Cypriot wine. In Nicosia they massacred 30,000 people. In Famagusta they flayed alive the leader of the defenders. They also massacred the survivors although they had promised to set them free. Selim got his wine. After ruling for only eight years, Selim died in a manner not unfitting to his life. After drinking a bottle of Cyprus wine, he decided to take a bath. While teetering on the marble floor, he slipped and cracked his skull.

---When Sultan Abdul Hamid II was deposed, the revolutionaries found in the Yildiz Palace cellars eleven sacks of gold coins, and boxes crammed with precious gems, plus a book which listed the sultan's foreign holdings and money secretly deposited in the Deutsche Bank and with American oil companies. An immense cupboard contained thousands of shirts. One drawer contained two hundred medals mixed up with rubies and railway shares and bookcases filled with five-pound notes.

---The biggest sea battle the Ottomans engaged in was the Battle of Lepanto (1571) against European states. The Europeans had 200 galleys and the Ottomans 300. Some 260 of the Ottoman ships were either captured or sunk. Five-thousand Ottomans died and 15,000 Christian galley-slaves were freed.

---Life for Christians living in 16th century Constantinople was subject to many humiliating restrictions. Armenians had to wear deep crimson shoes, Greeks black, Jews pale blue. They had to paint their houses black and wear black clothes. They had to dismount whenever they met a Muslim.

---The 700-year misrule of the Ottomans was characterized by corruption, violence, usurious taxation, authoritarianism, racism, a violent brand of Islam; plunder, slavery, sloth, unqualified rulers and the oppression of minorities. Other than the work of Armenian architect Moamer Sinan, in 700 years the Ottomans made no significant contribution to the arts or sciences.

---Sultan Ibrahim was probably the most detestable and debauched of the sultans. When his mother complained that the harem was too cold because there wasn't sufficient firewood, the sultan executed the Grand Vizier. When he was told one of the concubines was caught in a compromising situation with a man, Ibrahim murdered all 280 concubines in batches, tied up in sacks weighted with stones and dropped in the Bosporus.

---Sultan Abdul Mejid commissioned the famous Balian family to build a palace which "must surpass any other palace of any potentiate anywhere in the world." The result was the Palace of Dolmabahche. Its marble terrace stretched half a mile. More than fourteen tons of gold leaf was used in decoration. The throne room was 150 feet long. The palace had the world's largest ballroom and mirrors. The central chandelier weighed three tons. Mejid's bed was of solid silver. The 300 rooms included twenty-five ornate salons. Sultan Abdul Aziz' insane extravagance (he spent 40 million francs for his daughter's trousseau when she married), raised the Ottoman debt to foreign bankers to 200 million British sterling.

---Putting aside the frequent pre-1820 massacres, the Ottomans launched seventeen documented massacres between 1820 and 1923. The victims were Arabs, Armenians, Assyrians, Bulgarians, Greeks, and Kurds. The total count of the massacred was over 3 million, more than half of them Armenian.

---The idea of his assassination haunted Sultan Abdul Hamid II so much that the newspapers attributed the assassinations of King Aleksandr and Queen Draga of Serbia, Empress Elizabeth of Austria, President Sadi Carnot of France, and President William McKinley respectively to indigestion, pneumonia, apoplexy, and anthrax.

Sultan also exhibited his paranoia by deleting the formula for water—H20--from high school and university text books. He believed the formula was a code indicating Hamid the Second is Zero.

Turkey has a big airline (THY) now, thanks to the tutorials of Lufthansa German Airlines and the support of Germany. But even then, the 50 percent government-owned airline loses money. Thanks to NATO support for nearly 70 years and billions of dollars in U.S. and European economic and military aid, it has a huge army which has invaded four countries in the past few years. Thanks to a dozen European and North American companies, it makes deadly drones which killed young Armenians defending their land. A murderous government--with no pride or dignity—went on a genocidal spree against a country which has a population 26 times smaller than Turkey, not to mention Turkey's war criminal allies...barbarian mercenaries, hate-filled Azeri troops, and religion-crazed Pakistani volunteers.

Things haven't changed much in Erdogan's Turkey more than a century after Abdul Hamid's H20 farce. Several years ago Turkey's education minister banned the equation P=2K because he said it was a secret symbol of PKK, the Kurdish freedom fighters.

Comments



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A tour de force by Jirair Tutunjian. Turkish state-sponsored whitewashing means the Average Joe would never learn about these statistics presented unless he were a specialist and voracious reader, as Jirair is. Cannot resist adding that the self-conscious Sultan Abdul Hamid II —famed for his big hook snout — also banned his subjects from using the word “nose” — either verbally or in print.