



Empires of the Sea: The Siege of Malta, the Battle of Lepanto, and the Contest for the Center of the World

Roger Crowley

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In 1521, Suleiman the Magnificent, Muslim ruler of the Ottoman Empire at the height of its power, dispatched an invasion fleet to the Christian island of Rhodes. This would prove to be the opening shot in an epic struggle 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 his most mesmerizing work to date—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 and features a cast of extraordinary characters: Barbarossa, “The King of Evil,” the pirate who terrified Europe; the risk-taking Emperor Charles V; the Knights of St. John, the last crusading order after the passing of the Templars; the messianic Pope Pius V; and the brilliant Christian admiral Don Juan of Austria.

This struggle’s brutal climax came between 1565 and 1571, seven years that witnessed a fight to the finish decided in a series of bloody set pieces: the epic siege of Malta, in which a tiny band of Christian defenders defied the might of the Ottoman army; the savage battle for Cyprus; and the apocalyptic last-ditch defense of southern Europe at Lepanto—one of the single most shocking days in world history. At the close of this cataclysmic naval encounter, the carnage was so great that the victors could barely sail away “because of the countless corpses floating in the sea.” Lepanto fixed the frontiers of the Mediterranean world that we know today.

Roger 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, technology and Inca gold. *Empires of the Sea* is page-turning narrative history at its best—a story of extraordinary color and incident, rich in detail, full of surprises, and backed by a wealth of eyewitness accounts. It provides a crucial context for our own clash of civilizations.

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