



Oxford Cambridge and RSA

Wednesday 6 October 2021 – Morning

A Level History A

Y309/01 The Ascendancy of the Ottoman Empire 1453–1606

Time allowed: 2 hours 30 minutes



You must have:

- the OCR 12-page Answer Booklet

INSTRUCTIONS

- Use black ink.
- Write your answer to each question in the Answer Booklet. The question numbers must be clearly shown.
- Fill in the boxes on the front of the Answer Booklet.
- Answer the question in Section A and **any two** questions in Section B.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is **80**.
- The marks for each question are shown in brackets [].
- Quality of extended response will be assessed in questions marked with an asterisk (*).
- This document has **4** pages.

ADVICE

- Read each question carefully before you start your answer.

SECTION A

Read the two passages and then answer Question 1.

- 1 Evaluate the interpretations in **both** of the two passages and explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of the significance of the fall of Constantinople in 1453. [30]

Passage A

Mehmed's first great success was the capture of Constantinople. This is seen as an event of great significance as Constantinople was the capital of the Christian Church in the East and the centre of the former great Byzantine Empire. Tremors of fear were sent across Europe that an Islamic invader was coming. It also brought real prestige to its Ottoman captors. What is more, it also gave the Ottomans a superb base and a capital of strategic, commercial and political influence. From there they could dominate the whole of the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean, as well as Eastern Europe and North Africa. Under the last Byzantine emperors the city had decayed and had become largely depopulated. Under the dynamic leadership of the Ottomans, it became the largest and wealthiest and most densely populated of cities in the known world at the time. With Constantinople as his base Mehmed started to expand outwards in all directions from that base. He was to make Constantinople into the centre of a huge, constantly growing empire.

Adapted from: D. Murphy, M. Tilbrook and P. Walsh-Atkins, Europe 1450–1661, published in 2000.

Passage B

Sooner or later, the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople was inevitable; from Venice and other states' commercial point of view, it might even be desirable as well. Venice had always preferred trading with the Turks to fighting them; since they now controlled much of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea, this trade was of vital importance to its continued prosperity. Therefore, Venice had not hesitated to renew with Mehmet the treaty of trade and friendship concluded earlier with his father. On the other hand, Venice could scarcely ignore the interest of its own community of merchants and traders in the city, whose privileges had been confirmed the previous year, nor did it have any illusions about Mehmet's strategy in the longer term. Once he had destroyed Byzantium, there was nothing to prevent him from turning his attention against Venetian colonies. A Venetian relief fleet was sent to Constantinople. What happened to it? Why was the Venetian fleet so seriously delayed? We are left with the conclusion that the Venetians wished the world to believe that they were sending a great relief armada to save Eastern Christendom and they did their best, without much success; but their hearts were not in it. They were realists enough to know that the Byzantine Empire was doomed, and they had no wish needlessly to antagonise its Ottoman successor. In Mehmet's friendship they saw not just the best means of assuring the continuation of profitable trading with the East, but in all probability, the only chance of retaining their own colonies. If Venice did not come to the relief of Constantinople in time, it is because she had no real desire to.

Adapted from: J. J. Norwich, A History of Venice, published in 2003.

SECTION B

Answer **TWO** of the following three questions.

- 2*** How important were the Janissaries in the governance of the Ottoman Empire in the period from 1453 to 1606? **[25]**
- 3*** 'Religious toleration was the most important consequence of Ottoman rule for societies in vassal states during the period from 1453 to 1606.' How far do you agree? **[25]**
- 4*** 'The Ottoman threat to Christian rulers of Europe was greater in the period after the death of Suleiman the Magnificent in 1566 than before.' How far do you agree with this view of the period from 1453 to 1606? **[25]**

END OF QUESTION PAPER

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