



Inside the Seraglio: Private Lives of the Sultans in Istanbul

John Freely

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This volume takes us behind the doors of Topkapi Sarayi and the other palaces of the Ottoman sultans who for more than six centuries ruled one of the world's most powerful empires. The heart of the palace was the Harem, the women's quarters, ruled by the Valide, or Queen Mother. Here the Sultan took his ease surrounded by his wives and concubines with their guardian black eunuchs, amused by his favourite pages, dwarfs and mutes, his younger brothers either slaughtered upon his accession or confined to the prison of the Cage. Earlier sultans like Mehmet the Conqueror and Suleyman the Magnificent lived in Topkapi Sarayi only between their campaigns of conquest, but their weak and dissolute successors such as Selim the Sot and Ibrahim the Mad spent their reigns entirely in the Harem, where some of them died of over-indulgence or were brutally murdered. Such were the private lives of the Ottoman sultans in the pleasure dome known as the House of Felicity. Described here with attention to every extraordinary detail and wit, and illustrated throughout with images of this sequestered court, is the history and life of this remarkable palace in all its colour and opulence, and the story of its influence on a great empire.



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