



Siege

Jack Hight

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1453. For over a thousand years the walls of Constantinople have protected the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, the furthest outpost of Christianity. But now endless ranks of Turkish warriors cover the plains before them, their massive cannons trained on the ramparts. No European army will help. Constantinople is on its own, and treachery is in the air. Three people will fight to determine the fate of an empire: the young Sultan, returned from exile and desperate to prove his greatness; a Roman princess sworn to protect her city; and a mercenary captain with a personal score to settle.

Siege Details

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Author : Jack Hight

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From Reader Review *Siege* for online ebook

Robin Webster says

The *Siege* is a fictional tale loosely based around real characters that were involved in events leading up to, and the actual fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Empire in 1453. The first half of the book focuses on events leading up to the *Siege*. This is told through the life of Longo, a mercenary captain who ended up running the defence of the city and The Sultan Mehmed who besieged the city. There are various other characters that help to explore the power struggles within the Sultan's inner circle as well as within his harem. Not forgetting the conflict between The Catholic and Orthodox Church which according to the book affected the outcome of the siege. The second half of the book is all out action.

Overall, I felt that this was a very well-constructed book with a number of excellent counter plots running through it. I did at times find some of the action sequences involving Longo a little over the top. There is one action sequence in the Prologue where I nearly put the book down. However, I carried on reading and I'm glad I did, or I would have missed out on an entertaining read.

This novel will appeal to readers who like authors like Conn Iggulden and Bernard Cornwall.

High Wycombe Library says

I am struggling to recall many, if any, novels that cover the fall of Constantinople to the Turks, and essentially the death knell of the Roman Empire, and perhaps this is due to the myriad strands that need to be pulled together to tell the whole story, not lending itself to the novel.

Jack Hight's attempt, *Siege* is a worthy attempt, however it does have its drawbacks. It is readily apparent throughout the novel that Hight knows his subject, with the attention to detail regarding the history and intrigues is superb. The downside to this, unfortunately, is the tendency to get somewhat bogged down in the minutiae. In addition, the main character, Longo, was well developed and inspired a bond with the reader. However, the development of other characters was less successful, and many felt somewhat one dimensional. The most disappointing aspect of the story was the fight scenes. For what was such a momentous event in history, the 'action' sequences seemed somewhat lacklustre, which given the context is a significant letdown. Overall, this is a flawed but enjoyable novel that for me, gets an extra star for covering an event of which this reader had little previous knowledge. ^GE

If you liked *Siege* why not try:

Tribune Of Rome by Robert Fabbri

Sons Of Thunder by Giles Kristian

War Of The Celts by Jack Whyte

Jane says

As the title is bland, so was this book. I expected more from this novel, with such an exciting subject. Part I introduces us to the various players: Greeks, including the Genoese mercenary, Giovanni Giustiniani Longo, and the various Turks, including Mehmed, who becomes sultan, his family, court, and soldiers. We see the intrigue in both the Byzantine and Turkish courts. Part II is the two-month period of the siege of

Constantinople itself, including a plot of betrayal of the city to the Turks by a would-be Patriarch. Although the author calls himself a historian, I wonder how accurate his history was, since he got wrong so basic a fact as the 4th Crusade [Sack of Constantinople] being in 1203, not 1204.

Longo and the tomboyish and politically astute Princess Sofia, as well as Emperor Constantine XI were well-drawn. The others were one-dimensional; I disliked intensely the author's concept of Mehmed. The style was pedestrian; I feel the author didn't do the subject justice.

Steve says

Well written historical fiction. The author weaves his characters into the history of the Fall of the City. Long but in general holds your interest. While a general knowledge of the historical period is helpful, it is not necessary.

It seems I took forever to finish but that was more travel and enjoying the summer than the quality of the writing.

Beorn says

I randomly picked this up from the library on a whim and don't regret it one bit.

From what I gather this is Hight's first (or one of his first) books but it doesn't show. There are subtle nuances of Bernard Cornwell in the set-pieces, George RR Martin in the character development and even Conn Iggulden in the slow-burning way in which the story draws you in and keeps you going back for more. If this is a benchmark for Hight's future work, then the future is bright. Before I oversell it, it's not a perfect read at all, but it is a more than solid and promising start for an author to begin.

If he continues to build on work such as this, I can predict great things for Mr Hight.

Dimitri says

The Good:

A perfectly adequate page-turner with more historical accuracy than you'd accredit before reading the afterword: the Italian mercenary was real, even if he never became a Byzantine princess' star-crossed lover in the truly Shakespeare sense of the word.

The Bad:

-The admitted simplification of the siege, which operated as all sieges do on the principle of "if you fail, Troy again" makes me wonder how much swashbuckling we miss out on.

-The harem intrigues don't contribute much to the fictional narrative, since the outcome is determined by the real history of Mehmet II.

Also, stock characters. Two handsome people lock eyes ? Here drops the gown! Grizzled warrior protects wiry youth ? Here comes the fencing sidekick in a few years !

Jeremy Poole says

Great historical drama. Non stop action, the characters were real and they felt it.
A real could not put down book.
Now all I have to do is return to Istanbul to see the city in this new light.
Great read.

Joseph says

I wasn't impressed with the story or the dynamics between characters in this book. I didn't feel the suspense and felt the story line moved too quickly without proper character development. Not a very good description of the plight of the Greeks in Constantinople.

Ndf says

Jack Hight is a relatively new author to me and I recently finished reading this book but it was read over an extended period of time due to circumstances. I'd really enjoyed reading his Saladin Trilogy, books one and two and decided to read this one whilst I waited for the third in the Saladin Trilogy to come out.

I like the easy reading style to Jack Hights' books, they're not dumbed down but they're not too highbrow either. Whilst he knows his period and has obviously done a fair amount of research there are still a few fairly obvious historical errors. He also shows a lack of understanding of certain subjects which lends an unbelievability to some of the narrative which is a shame.

Those minor quibbles aside Hight skillfully weaves a fascinating fictional story with nicely fleshed out characters and plots into the historical context of the siege of Constantinople which was thoroughly enjoyable to read. It didn't quite achieve the 'rapid page turner' status that the first two Saladin books did but it wasn't far behind.

Anyone interested in this era of history and enjoys the historical fiction 'genre' I'm sure will enjoy this book.

Highly recommended.

Liviu says

Pretty disappointing though readable as long as you ignore what is supposed to be about and think of it as fantasy/alt-history rendering of the Siege of the Constantinople - there are so many inaccuracies as regards both historical events and their motivation - just as a simple example Murad II defeated and killed Ladislav at Varna in 1444 not at Kosovo after the young king broke the 10 year truce with the ottomans since Murad

has retired and left the 14 year old Mehmed in charge - so Ladislas hungry for glory thought the Ottomans easy prey under the boy Sultan and despite Hunyadi's advice and with the best of papal sophistry behind - the word given to infidels is worthless - reneged the recent truce and attacked.

In 1448 Murad also led the Ottomans against the alliance cobbled by Janos Hunyadi and indeed Mehmed now about 18 was in the battle at Kossovo, but Varna destroyed any chances the Balkans would remain free since Murad thought himself (with good reason) betrayed by the Christian leaders and never offered them another chance, while if the 10 year truce would have been in effect who knows, he may have lived more and he was inclined towards peace ; also Mehmet was notorious for his coterie of boyfriends who later were promoted to high positions both in the Ottoman state and in its provinces depending whether they were Muslim or Christian and the baby he killed on his accession in 1451 was his father's last son not his son... And I could continue

The book moves fast and the author has good descriptions of some of the battles but that's it; the complex politics and the essence of the siege - the will of the young Mehmet against the advice of most of his viziers - which incidentally led to his execution of Khalil after he won - plus siege guns that made Constantinople essentially indefensible by itself so the outcome was sealed once no relief army/fleet came and Mehmet could keep his ministers in check - are in little view here

Kerkaorta happened true, but the mid walls of the city were almost down and it was a matter of time until the fall which could have happened that day easily and there are several accounts that downplay its significance, but emphasize that once Longo was injured and retreated with his men to the ships despite the entreaties of the emperor, the defense crumbled and the Ottomans poured into the city; all in all, the fall was a matter of days at that point unless the army would have revolted against the Sultan which is unlikely to say the least

There are lots of better recollections of the siege including one similar with this one - with romantic elements but more accurate - but done way, way better by Mika Waltari 50 years ago

All in all if you want a historical romance that is only vaguely accurate, this book will do but there is so much better out there

Lukas Nisztuk says

Is it fantasy or historical fiction Mr Jack. Because I cannot guess. Such historical nonsense are rarely met in books which aspire to be historical or treat about history. And please do not mention in your biography that you a trained historian unless you add in American way

Bettie? says

OCTOBER 1448: THE PLAINS OF KOSSOVA

Longo lay still under the bodies of two dead soldiers and waited for the last of the Turkish Army to pass.

There be maps at the front and we like maps

bazibozouk definition - peasant soldiers who were recruited to the defence of Islam whenever the Ottoman Empire went to war.

janissary definition - a soldier (orig. a slave) in the Turkish sultan's guard, established in the 14th cent. and abolished in 1826.

vizier definition - a high executive officer of various Muslim countries and especially of the Ottoman Empire.

Some slight historical distortions but nothing to take away from reading enjoyment. A solid three star that I thoroughly enjoyed.

Bookboy says

Set during the last years of the Eastern Roman Empire, *Siege* traces the build up to the Siege of Constantinople by the Turks, as well as the titular siege itself. Opening in the aftermath of the last crusade and following a group of historical and non-historical characters, the novel weaves together the stories of both sides in this epic, monumental battle. From the young Turkish Sultan who wants to prove himself to his father and his people, to a princess of Constantinople determined to protect her city even at the expense of her own happiness, and a mercenary captain whose desires for vengeance are enhanced by a personal vendetta. Intrigue, love, seduction, savage fights, assassinations... All of this and more takes place in this historical adventure novel.

I love history in all its forms – from straight-up history books to historical mysteries.

Byzantium/Constantinople, with its intrigue and bloody past, is a particular favourite so this novel about the siege that saw it tumble was a no-brainer. Again, a change of pace after the more cerebral historical fiction of *The Technologists*. I read the book in about a day and a half, dipping in and out of it at work when I could and enjoying the atmosphere that Jack Hight created.

A quick look through the Wikipedia page was enough to confirm that Mr Hight has taken quite a few liberties with the historical record, though none of them detracted from the enjoyment of the novel. In the Afterword, the author notes himself that many of the characters are archetypes and combinations of historical people.

Quick pacing, short chapters and enough intrigue and action to fill an episode of *Game of Thrones* made the book one of those hard to put down. Forgettable in the long term, I doubt that this is one that will stay with me going into next year, but I enjoyed it sufficiently for what it was and I would probably read more by Jack Hight if he was to venture into more historical adventures in the future. Overall, I gave this 3 harem slap downs out of 5.

Kerry Hennigan says

Siege is the story of the fall of Constantinople to the Muslim forces of Sultan Mehmed. Caught up in the events that bring an end to the Byzantine Empire is sixteen years old Englishman, William Whyte, who joins a ship sailing to the East in the hope of making his fortune.

Captured by Turkish slavers, he is eventually rescued by a Genoese mercenary named Longo. Lord Longo is destined to lead the defense of Constantinople at the behest of the beleaguered Emperor Constantine XI.

Longo comes to the battle with a quest for personal vengeance against the Turks; but he finds much more, including the love of his life.

Siege reads as a thoroughly researched account of the events leading up to and during the historic events it covers. Its weakness is the length of time it takes to get to the siege itself, and the distraction of the intrigues and conspiracies of both palace and harem which dominate half the book.

Kerry Hennigan © August 2011

Jack Lascom says

This book provides a some what accurate story of the events leading up to, and during the fall of Constantinople. From the backstabber Gennadius and the ruthless sultan Mehmed to the brave and valiant Longo and the fair and just emperor Constantine, the book brings the characters alive and allows the reader to really see the details and dynamic characters of this epic battle and actually educates the reader too. Jack Hight successfully captures most of the events in its true form while slightly embellishing others such as the the dramatic and action scenes. The big events were historically accurate as were the dates (I checked them) however the story line is a little too centered around Longo and his love with the princess of Constantinople and how they will never be able to be together because the city is going to fall and everyone killed, however aside from that the book was great; because the book is "Historical Fiction" that sort of embellishment is to be expected. The action was amazing and was very vivid and you really "get to know" the characters very well. Overall this is a really exciting story for anybody who enjoys reading about great battles in history and who doesn't mind that the book is 495 pages long, it takes a while to read but it is definitely worth it.
