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Sultan Mehmed II Fatih and the Theodosian Walls: The Conquest of Constantinople, 1453: His Strategies and Successes

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Western scholarship in recent centuries has been uncomplimentary in their assessments of the military skills and overall achievements of Sultan Mehmed II. Scholars, also, have been predisposed to view him as a youthful ruler, lacking all of the essential skills required for rulership and even his contemporaneous European political leaders did not consider him a serious threat to western hegemony in the eastern Mediterranean. The scholarly predisposition is grounded on the fact that Mehmed was rethroned early in 1451, on February 28 (16 Muḥarrem 855) at the age of nineteen.¹ Hence, he was viewed as a young man who totally lacked any skills and was even assumed to be incompetent.² But if Mehmed were to erase these negative portrayals, his clearest objective and accomplishments were to fulfill a youthful dream—the conquest of the imperial city of Constantinople,³ a feat that

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¹ On the early life and rise to power of Mehmed II, cf. H. İnalçık, "Mehmed II," *İslâm Ansiklopedisi* 7 (1957): 506-510; *idem*, *Fatih Devri üzerinde tetkikler ve vesikalar*, 1 (Ankara, 1954): *passim*.

² For a good summary of western perceptions of Mehmed II, cf. D. M. Nicol. *The Last Centuries of Byzantium 1261-1453* (New York, 1972), p. 393 f. In contrast is the favorable and more judicious view of Leonardo, the archbishop of Mytilene, who in a letter to Pope Nicholas V describes Mehmed II as "a young man bold, ambitious and full of wild enthusiasm." Cf. J. R. Melville Jones, trans., *The Siege of Constantinople 1453: Seven Contemporary Accounts* (Amsterdam, 1972), p. 15. For the full text of the letter, cf. "Leonardi Chiensis Historia C[onstantino]politanae Urbis a Mahumete II Captæ per Modum Epistolæ die 15 Augusti Anno 1453 ad Nicolaum V Rom. Pont.," *Patrologia graeca* 159 (Paris, 1866): 924-944.

³ At the close of the fifteenth century, a close associate of Mehmed II, Giovanni Maria degli Angiolelli, in his *Historia Turchesca*, ed. I. Ursu (Bucharest, 1909), p. 15, relates that the youthful sultan upon his first accession to the throne had as early as 1445-1446 planned an assault upon Constantinople. There is no doubt to accept the veracity of this statement.

would erase this negative image.⁴ His was indeed a formidable task, one fraught with successes and failures, as events over a span of nearly two months were to demonstrate.

In the early spring of 1453, Mehmed II made his final preparations for an assault upon the imperial city of Constantinople, both by land and sea. His precipitous efforts have been favorably described by Kritoboulos, who relates⁵: "He [Mehmed] ...prepared armor for the protection of those in the front line of battle: shields, helmets, breastplates, and great oblong shields lined on the outside with iron; arrows, javelins, swords, and whatever else was thought suitable for fighting against a walled city." But other preparations have come to be shrouded in myth. The German scholar, Franz Babinger,⁶ in his notable study of Mehmed II relates how the sultan strolled through Constantinople at night in the company of several trusted intimates. We can only suspect that the accuracy of these nocturnal and surreptitious visits that Babinger attributes to Doukas must have taken place in a very brief interval, between Mehmed's arrival from Edirne (Adrianople) and encampment on April 5 near the Gate of Saint Romanos (now *Top Kapi*) and the onset of hostilities on the following day. However, this rumor may have some substance, for the sultan's artillery batteries were not positioned until April 11 according to Barbaro.⁷ Yet, based on his personal observations, the sultan was able to make through his agents and other intelligence sources an assessment of the actual disposition of Byzantine forces, perhaps even their number, and the mental state of the urban population. There also persists the modern historical perception that Mehmed, within full view of the Theodosian Walls, rode on horseback the full length of the walls to study their layout and conditions, including weak points. These two observations are important for they demonstrate that Mehmed was aware of the overall problem of how to assault the walls, in spite of the mythological nature of the evidence.

⁴ The young sultan had first to put down a rebellion in Anatolia. He successfully campaigned against the defiant Karaman-oglu Ibrahim. Cf. Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, trans. C. T. Riggs (Princeton, 1954), pp. 32-33. For other renditions of Kritoboulos, cf. *Critobul din Imbros Din Domnia lui Mahomed Al II-Lea anii 1451-1467*, ed. V. Grecu (Bucharest, 1963); and *Critobuli Imbriotae Historiae*, ed. D. R. Reinsch, *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* (Berlin and New York, 1993).

⁵ Kritovoulos (Riggs), p. 37.

⁶ F. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, trans. R. Manheim (Princeton, 1978), p. 81

⁷ Nicolò Barbaro, *Giornale dell' assedio di Costantinopoli 1453 di Nicolò Barbaro P.V.*, ed. E. Cornet (Vienna, 1856): 21. Also, *Nicolò Barbaro. Diary of the Siege of Constantinople 1453* (New York, 1969).

Babinger even notes that Mehmed sketched the Theodosian Walls, the battle lines and outposts, the position of the siege-machines, batteries, and mines.⁸ Unless he was furnished accurate details through his numerous agents and sources within the imperial city, it would have been most difficult for the sultan to make a visual observation of the objects described by Babinger. They were concealed behind the outer and inner walls from his view and vantage point. And yet, even Nicholas Iorga seeks to cast Mehmed in a positive light, stressing that Mehmed had assimilated the “teachings of his day” and had attracted to his court the leading military thinkers and specialists in military strategy and warfare.⁹ Doubtless, whatever the accuracy of these historical preparations, Iorga alludes that Mehmed II had studied the problem well and had a good notion of how to launch an assault against the Theodosian Walls.

While Mehmed II placed his stone-casting batteries at strategic locations along the full length of the Theodosian Walls to wear down the imperial defenders, most scholarly attention has been devoted to Urban’s bombard, the *basilika*, and its positioning along the walls.¹⁰ Doubtless, this bronze cannon that hurled a twelve-hundred pound stone shot drew substantial attention in Byzantine and other sources. Doukas relates that ἐν τρισὶν οὖν μηνσὶ κατασκευάσθη καὶ ἐχωνεύθη τέρας τι φοβερὸν καὶ ἐξαισίον, “in three months a terrible, unprecedented monster was constructed and cast.”¹¹ Kritoboulos suggests that it inspired awe and πρᾶγμα φοβερῶτατον ἰδεῖν καὶ εἰς ἀκοὴν ὅλως ἄπιστόν τε καὶ δυσπαράδεκτον, “something that is frightful to see; one would not accept or admit its existence if one heard about it.”¹² Even the non-Greek scribes were fascinated with this extraordinary weapon. Archbishop Leonardo of Chios states that the largest bombard fired *lapidem cuius mensura circularis erat XI palmorum, pondus cantariorum XIV*, “a stone, whose circumference measured eleven palms; its weight came

⁸ Babinger, p. 81.

⁹ N. Iorga, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, 5 vols. (Gotha, 1908-1913): *passim*.

¹⁰ For a comprehensive treatment of the bombard, cf. M. Philippides, “Urban’s Bombard(s), Gunpowder, and the Siege of Constantinople (1453),” *Byzantine Studies/Etudes Byzantines*, 4, new series (1999): esp. 17-54.

¹¹ Doukas, *Historia byzantina*, ed. V. Grecu (Bucharest, 1963), 35; also *Duca Michaelis nepotis historia Byzantina*, ed. I Bekker (Bonn, 1834); and *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks, An Annotated Translation of “Historia Turco-Byzantina,”* by H. J. Magoulias (Detroit, 1975).

¹² Κριτόβουλος Βίος τοῦ Μωάμεθ Β υ, ed. P. A. Déthier, in *Monumenta Hungariae Historica Ser. Scriptores* 21.1 (Budapest, n.d.; publication withdrawn): I.29.1. A rare prepublication copy is to be found in the Gennadeios Library, Athens. Also, cf. *De rebus gestis Muhammetis II*, *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum* 5 (Paris, 1883).

to fourteen ‘cantaria’.”¹³ He was so fascinated with this object, that he personally measured the shot and notes the circumference at its widest point to be eleven spans.¹⁴ Nicolò Barbaro, the Venetian physician aboard one of their galleys, was as well impressed and includes the following information in regard to the two largest Ottoman bombards¹⁵:

Una de queste quatro bombarde che sun a la porta da san Romano, la piera de la bumbarda se pexa livre mille e duxento a la grossa, volze la piera quarte tredexe; considerate che colpo teribile che la fea dove la zonzeva. La segonda bombardarda, la piera se pexava livre otozento, volze la piera quarte nove.

One of these four bombards at the Gate of Saint Romanos fired a stone of almost twelve hundred pounds, more or less, and thirteen *quarte* in circumference; imagine the terrible damage where it struck! The second bombard fired a stone weighing eight hundred pounds and nine *quarte* in circumference.

Ubertino Pusculo, an Italian poet, comments upon Urban’s bombard, applying to it the qualifiers *maxima*, “greatest,” and *ingens*, “enormous.”¹⁶

Yet, the enchantment with this grand cannon did not bring about the desired results. Initially, Urban’s bombard was placed opposite the Kaligaria/*Eğri* Gate. Its effectiveness in this sector was diminished by the difficult topography of the region. The abrupt rise and descent of the terrain precluded efficient usage and proper positioning of the great cannon for the greatest results. If our sources are accurate, it was in this sector that the bombard exploded, cracked, or was damaged.¹⁷ Nestor-Iskander relates that it was repaired with bands, iron hoops.¹⁸ Nestor-Iskander, Kritoboulos, and

¹³ *Patrologia graeca* 159: 927.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Barbaro 21. This evidence is also to be found in Nestor-Iskander, *The Tale of Constantinople (Of Its Origin and Capture by the Turks in the Year 1453)*. (From the Early Sixteenth-Century Manuscript of the *Troitse-Sergieva Lavra*, No. 773), trans. and annotated by W. K. Hanak and M. Philippides, *Late Byzantine and Ottoman Studies* 5 (New Rochelle, Athens, and Moscow, 1998): 24 (40, 42-43), that reads: **ВНИЖЕ ПУШКЫ БЯХУ 2 ВЕЛИЦЕ, ИХЪ ТУ СОЛЪЯНЫ ЕДИНОЙ ЯДРО ВЪ КОЛЪНО, А ДРУГОЙ ВЪ ПОЯСЬ...**, “among them, there were two great cannons employing a shot that reached the knee and a shot that reached the girdle.”

¹⁶ Ubertino Puscolo, *Constantinopolis libri IV*, ed. G. Bregantini, *Miscellanea di varie operette* 1 (Venice, 1740): 4.247, 248.

¹⁷ On this cf., Nestor-Iskander 25 (42-43); Leonardo, *Patrologia graeca* 159: 927; also, Philippides, pp. 35-38.

¹⁸ Nestor-Iskander 25 (42-43), and 33 (48-49).

Leonardo note that the *basilika* was relocated on the north ridge of the seventh hill opposite the Saint Romanos Gate. In this sector, the *Mesoteikhion*,¹⁹ it performed more advantageously, causing serious damage to the walls from the Fourth Military Gate to the Fifth Military Gate, the *Pempton* (*Hücum Kapisi*, the Gate of the Assault). Kritoboulos specifies that the *Mesoteikhion* was the main target for the three largest Ottoman bombards and adds²⁰:

Μεχέμετις δὲ ὁ βασιλεύς, ...κελεύει τοὺς μηχανοποιούς, καὶ κατὰ μὲν τὸ Μεσοτείχιον, οὗ τὸ στρατόπεδον εἶχεν, ἵνα δὴ καὶ ἡ σκηνὴ αὐτῷ, τρεῖς ἀπολεξάμενος τὰς μεγίστας τε καὶ ἰσχυροτάτας ἐπιθεῖναι παίειν τὸ ταύτη τείχος καὶ κατασεῖν, τὰς δὲ ἄλλας ἄλλη τοῦ τείχους προσάγειν ἐκέλευσεν ἐπιλεξάμενους.

Mehmed the king [sultan]...ordered his engineers to target the area of the *Mesoteikhion*, where he had pitched his tent. He selected three [bombards], the greatest and most powerful, which he directed to strike and shake the wall; the rest he distributed, according to his plans, against the entire periphery of the walls.

And yet, even in this sector the overall effectiveness of this majestic and awe-inspiring weapon is doubtful. While it did considerable damage to the walls, it never succeeded in breaching them, in part because the sultan's military experts, who fired their cannons straight ahead, were unfamiliar with the angular method of aiming the cannons at the walls. Only, later did foreign experts introduce to the sultan and his advisors the proper methods for triangulating at the walls for the most desired results. But in conjunction with other artillery batteries at strategic locations, generally weak spots, the bombard proved effective in wearing down the defenders and in weakening the Theodosian Walls about the Saint Romanos-*Pempton* sector.

Sultan Mehmed's land operations deserve attention. Numerically, he had a distinct advantage, amassing a force of upwards to 150,000 men according to some sources, whereas the Byzantines including their allies could only muster slightly over 4,000 men for the defense of the Theodosian Walls. The Ottoman army was made up of three components: the expendable irregular *başıbozuk*, the Anatolian regiments, and the famed Janissaries.

¹⁹ W. K. Hanak, "The Constantinopolitan *Mesoteikhion* in 1453: Its Topography, Adjacent Structures and Gates," *Byzantine Studies/Études Byzantines*, 4, new series (1999): 69-98.

²⁰ Kritoboulos I.31.1.

It is notable that as the Ottoman artillery brought down sections of the Theodosian Walls especially in the *Mesoteikhion*, where the Byzantine and Genoese defenders quickly repaired the damage, either by replacing sections of the walls or by improvising with the construction of barricades and stockades. For the latter, they utilized wooden materials or whatever was available to them. The Ottoman foot soldiers were unable to storm these improvisations. Jacopo Tetaldi, a merchant from Florence, provides an account of the siege, offering particular observations and recounting a specific event²¹:

...sed locus versus portam S<ancti> Romani...faciliorem adversariis praebebat transitum. Illic quoque muri erant fortes, quorum non minima pars diebus praeteritis fuerat ab adversariis comminuta. Itaque specula quaedam illuc iactu fundae ad terram prostrata est; medie quoque pars murorum illius lateris per spatium fere ducentorum passuum deiecta. Erant quippe illic tot fundae atque colubri in aere volitantes, in tanta copia, ut sua densitate aerem viderentur obnubilare. Illi vero qui de civitate erant, prout poterant, muros suos reparando erigebant obstruentes eos terra et vasis ac lignis.

...but the place opposite the Gate of Saint Romanos... offered an easier passage for the adversaries [Ottoman forces]. There the walls were also less strong; a great section of them had been lowered by our adversaries in the past days. Also the middle of those walls, to a space of almost two hundred paces, had been brought down. There were also cannon and colubrines firing so many projectiles into the air that the atmosphere seemed obscured. There were some people from the city there, trying to repair and re-erect the wall with earth, barrels, and timber.

Hereafter, Mehmed II was in awe of the skill of the defenders in the Saint Romanos sector and the sultan especially admired the daring and martial adeptness of their commander, the Genoese *condottieri* Giovanni Longo Giustiniani, who was positioned at the *Pempton*. Hieronimo Giustiniani in his sixteenth-century work, *History of Chios*, states²²: *Per la qual cosa Mehmet solea dire, che ne faceva più di conto del Giustiniano solo, che del tutto il resto della città,*

²¹ *Veterum scriptorum et monumentorum historicorum, dogmaticorum, moralium amplissima collectio*, edd. E. Martène and U. Durand, 5 (Paris, 1729): *Caput XVI*.

²² *Istoria di Scio scritta nell' anno 1586* (Paris, 1585), pp. 412, 413; also Hieronimo Giustiniani's *History of Chios*, ed. P. P. Argenti (Cambridge, 1943), pp. 412, 413.

“because of this [marvelous deeds and stratagems], Mehmed used to say that he thought more of Giustiniani than all the rest of the city.” Archbishop Leonardo notes that Mehmed II even attempted to lure him and his men away, to his side, to join forces with him.²³ Giustiniani, however, remained loyal to Constantine XI and refused to abandon the emperor.

Having failed to bombard the Theodosian Walls into submission and to open up breaches within it for his ground troops to enter the city, the sultan turned to more traditional military methods. He first employed mining operations beneath the curtain walls and towers, hoping to collapse them. The city’s defenders countered his efforts by digging counter-mines beneath the surface, then engaging the opposing forces within the narrow confines of the mines’ tunnels. Cardinal Isidore, who had been dispatched to Constantinople as a legate of the pope, writes of these changes in Mehmed II’s tactics. The cardinal alludes that the failure of the sultan’s artillery to destroy the make-shift stockades forced Mehmed II to resort to these tactics. In a letter to Cardinal Bessarion, Isidore relates²⁴:

Alium et tertio modum aggressus contra urbem versus portam Caligatiorum a longe cuniculos quinque et subterraneos dolos effodit, per quos in urbem additus pateret. Cumque ad murorum usque ac turrium fundamenta applicuissent...nostri pariter intus ex amussim de directo correspondentes cuniculos effoderunt.

In the third place he [Mehmed II] employed another tactic against the city, targeting the Kaligaria Gate: from far away he dug five tunnels and subterranean passages, to open, through them, an avenue into the city. When they reached the foundations of the walls and of the towers...our side from within dug counter-mines directly upon them.

Even Archbishop Leonardo links this change in the sultan’s tactics to the failure of the Ottoman artillery to destroy the replacement stockades. The archbishop writes²⁵:

Nam quanto hostis mole ingentis lapidis muros conterebat, tanto hic animosius sarmentis, humo vasisque vinariis intercompositis reparabat. Qua de re Theucrus delusus cogitavit non cessandum

²³ Leonardo, *Patrologia graeca* 159: 936.

²⁴ La Caduta di Costantinopoli, 1: *Le Testimonianze dei Contemporanei*, ed. A. Pertusi (Verona, 1976): 72.

²⁵ Leonardo, *Patrologia graeca* 159: 929.

ab ictibus machinarum, sed fortiore cura subterraneis cavis furari urbem.

As the enemy destroyed the walls with the bulk of his enormous stones, with greater determination, he [Giovanni Giustiniani] made repairs and filled in the gaps with crates, and wine barrels. In disappointment the Turk [Mehmed II] kept up the bombardment but decided to enter the city in secret by digging with greater care subterranean tunnels.

Leonardo attributes the Byzantine successes to thwart the mining operations to the resourcefulness of John Grant, Giustiniani's military engineer.²⁶

More uncertain was the sultan's tactical attempt to seize the Selybria/Pege/Silivri Gate. Here Mehmed II employed a wooden tower on wheels, a "city-taker," or ἐλέπολις.²⁷ Doubtless, this was an archaic device that had outlived its usefulness. Yet this siege engine impressed the Byzantine defenders at the gate, who saw the device as a major threat to that sector. Tetaldi furnishes us some information on the majesty of the device, relating²⁸:

Sangambassa fieri constituit fortalitiū castri lignei, magni, ampli, firmi et alti, adeo ut' murorum civitatis celsitudinem excedere videretur.

Sangan Pasha [Zaganos Pasha?] decided to put together a strong, big, wide, firm, and tall wooden castle that seemed to surpass the height of the city walls.

Barbaro²⁹ as well furnishes specific details and records in his account for May 18 that this mobile castle was placed in operation. He refers to the device as a *mirabel*, or a "miracle," and relates that even the imperial forces of Constantine XI at that site had lost hope. Leonardo³⁰ also describes the mobile tower, informing us that it was protected by hides, apparently layered that served as armor plating against arrows, spears, and other armament. He adds that³¹

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 928.

²⁷ Tetaldi, *Caput VII*. On this siege engine and its employment in the Middle Ages, cf. G. T. Dennis, "Byzantine Heavy Artillery: The Helopolis," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 39 (1998): 99-115.

²⁸ Tetaldi, *Caput VIII*.

²⁹ Barbaro 41.

³⁰ Leonardo, *Patrologia graeca* 159: 936.

³¹ *Ibid.* Cf. Puscolo 4.710-723.

Mauritius inde Cataneus, vir nobilis Genuensis, praefectus inter portam Pighi, id est Fontis, usque ad Auream cum ducentis balistariis commixtis etiam Graecis contra ligneum castrum, pellibus boum coniectum, oppositum accurate decertat.

Maurizio Cataneo, a Genoese nobleman in charge of the Gate of Pege (that is 'Fountain'), fought skillfully with two hundred crossbowmen (with some Greeks among them) against the wooden castle, as far as the Aurea Gate [Golden Gate].

The defenders at the gate engaged the Turkish forces in hand-to-hand combat, burned the mobile tower, and thus resisted this assault. For the moment, the Ottoman forces were routed.

The final Ottoman onslaught took place in the early hours of May 29. Several weeks prior to this attack, Mehmed II had serious reservations about continuing the siege. He may have seriously contemplated a withdrawal and an abandonment of the campaign. But the beleaguered city was by mid-May in dire straits. It lacked sufficient supplies and reinforcements. The sultan was aware that at that stage his artillery, Urban's bombard, mining, and the mobile tower, none of these strategies had brought on the desired conquest of the imperial city. However, he listened to the prevailing advice of his council and decided to continue the assault.

A general Ottoman attack was launched in the early hours of May 29.³² Mehmed II arranged his naval and maritime forces in such a way as to attack the city on all sides, the land and the sea. The imperial defenders were too few to adequately defend all sectors. They were overwhelmed by sheer Ottoman numbers. Cardinal Isidore, however, elaborates on the condition of the Saint Romanos sector, the most vulnerable sector, noting³³: *facilis autem erat in ea parte ad meonia ascensus*, "in that part the assault against the walls was easy." The only professional soldiers to hinder the sultan's charge were the contingent of Giustiniani. At the *Pempton*, the first wave of Ottoman forces were the expendable irregulars, the *başıbozuk*. The sole motive of these poorly trained and equipped irregulars was the prospect of booty. They were slaughtered by the defenders and few survived the attack. The second wave consisted of the Anatolian regiments and even they were repelled with heavy losses. The third wave comprised the dreaded Janissaries. This was an

³² Our main source for this attack on May 29 is Lauro Quirini. Cf. his letter to Pope Nicholas V in *Testi Inediti e Poco Noti sulla Caduta di Costantinopoli*, edd. A. Pertusi and A. Carile (Bologna, 1983), pp. 63-93.

³³ *La Caduta*, 1: 74.

elite corps that accomplished the task of conquest. Their victory, the turning point in the battle for the city, was facilitated by the multiple injuries suffered by Giustiniani,³⁴ forcing his withdrawal and his men from the stockade at the *Pempton*. Their withdrawal marked the doom of Constantinople and a victory for Mehmed II.

A few years later, Languschi-Dolfin writes of the sultan³⁵:

El signor Maumetho gran Turco, e zouene d anni 26, ben complexionato, et de corpo piu presto grande, che mediocre de statura, nobile in le arme, de aspetto piu presto horrendo, che verendo, de poco riso, solerte de prudentia, et predito de de magnanima liberalita, obstinato nel proposito, audacissimo in ogni cosa, aspirante a gloria quanto Alexandro Macedonico....

Lord Mehmed, the Grand Turk, is a young man (twenty-six years old), of nice complexion, with a rather large body, and of average stature. He is well-trained in weapons; his appearance causes more terror than respect; he seldom laughs, is quite prudent, is endowed with magnificent generosity, is stubborn in his undertakings, is most audacious in his projects, and aspires to equal the glory of Alexander of Macedon.

Clearly, Mehmed II was no longer seen as a youthful ruler who lacked martial skills and was incompetent.

Shepherd College

Abstrack

Modern scholarship has devoted little attention to an in-depth analysis of the military strategies that Mehmed II had employed in his capture of the imperial city. Fulfilling a youthful dream, the sultan called upon his leading officers to advise him in devising a viable strategy for the seizure of the city. Mehmed himself was a competent strategist, despite his young age and lack of experience. This strategy was not to be monolithic in purpose, but rather it called for a number of approaches.

³⁴ Nestor-Iskander 60 (64-75) and 64, 65 (76-79).

³⁵ In *Testi Inediti*, pp. 169-187.

First and foremost, the size of his army, although the number has been disputed by modern scholars, was more than sufficient to overwhelm the meager forces of Constantine XI. More significant for this brief analysis is an understanding of the flexibility of the sultan's use of the land forces and infantry tactics, the role of his artillery, the mining operations to weaken the Theodosian Walls, and the employment of "elastic offense," a phrase that aptly describes Mehmed's strategies and a concept we shall develop within the paper.

His land assault can be defined in three stages, each demonstrating the flexibility of his war plans. The first stage called for the employment of bombards and the destruction of the inner and outer walls. The next stage witnesses an adjustment in his overall strategy when he and his generals realized that direct firing upon the Theodosian Walls had failed to damage them significantly and to breach the inner and outer walls. Mehmed had his cannons redirected to fire at an angle and this proved more effective. The final stage of Mehmed's assault resorted to more traditional assault methods. The sultan employed mining methods beneath the walls and siege towers. And yet, in this final stage, the main factor proved to be the overwhelming land force at hand. The numerical superiority of the Ottoman forces proved too much for the defenders of the city.

In essence, Mehmed II's strategies demonstrate the flexibility of his approaches to the matter at hand, adjusting these during the course of battle to meet changing circumstances.

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