

A historical novel that depicts political intrigue and the cultural richness of Istanbul in the 1730s.

A multi-layered story that is part murder mystery, part romance, part political thriller and transports the reader back to an earlier time.

Depicts the Ottoman Empire at its height, revealing the secrets of palace life and dervish lodges during the Tulip Age.



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FICTION

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Tulip of Istanbul

Iskender Pala

Translated By Ruth Whitehouse

A Turkish Bestseller

Tulip of Istanbul is a historical novel depicting the Ottoman Empire's most glorious times. Known as the Tulip Age, this period saw a great public revolt in 1730, which changed the course of Turkey's destiny.

The novel begins with the story of a young man who finds his beautiful wife murdered on their wedding night. He is charged with her murder and thrown into prison. In order to prove his innocence, his only clue is a tulip bulb. The story is interwoven with historical and cultural details of the time.

Iskender Pala creates a bewitching tapestry of the splendours and vices of Istanbul, when the world was still in thrall to its military, political, and artistic achievements.

Iskender Pala (b. 1958) has a Doctorate in Ottoman Divan Literature and teaches at Kültür University. He was given the title 'The People's Poet' by popular vote and was granted the 2013 Presidential Culture and Arts Grand Award in literature.

Ruth Whitehouse has a PhD in Modern Turkish Literature at SOAS, London. Her published translations include several books and a number of short stories in different anthologies.

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Extract from the book

As I dip my pen into the inkwell – two weeks after the October revolution which was marked by Sultan Ahmet III being deposed and his son-in-law Grand Vizier İbrahim Pasha of Nevşehir being slain – I am undecided as to whether or not I should write about the events to which I have been witness. I feel an obligation to write about certain matters, but the idea of possibly committing the treason of disclosing state secrets weighs heavily on my conscience. I might also be accused of interfering with perceived views on the tulip, that sacred flower of the East, and cause offence to the horticultural community. However, it would be an injustice to history and to the city of Istanbul if nobody were ever to tell the story of Prince Ahmet and the dastardly deeds of the insurrectionists, or describe the supreme elegance of this heavenly city and the tulips of Sadabat. I therefore find myself compelled to undertake this challenging task.

I shall attempt to contain everything that happened within sixty-six chapters. As I am sure you know, the word lale, meaning tulip, represents the number sixty-six in the ancient abjad writing system. I have no doubt that I will be risking not only my reputation but also my personal safety by revealing the tragic events that took place in Istanbul, our beautiful city, which rests so gracefully on two continents in the embrace of two seas. However, the truth must not remain concealed. It is one of God's mysteries that everything is revealed in time, as a poet once said. What is the point of writing the truth if it is never read?

But I might yet tear this up and throw it away!

Who am I?

That is of no consequence.