

CHAPTER
18

Section 1

HISTORYMAKERS **Suleyman**
Warrior, Man of Justice

"I who am the sultan of sultans, the sovereign of sovereigns, the dispenser of crowns to the monarchs on the face of the earth . . . to thee who are Francis, king of the land of France."—Suleyman, in the opening of a letter to Francis I of France

Suleyman the Magnificent greatly expanded the Ottoman Empire from its base in modern Turkey, and the same ruler—also known as Suleyman the Lawgiver—brought tight imperial control and fair laws to his realm. Furthermore, this sultan sponsored a growth in the arts that rivaled the European Renaissance. He ruled for 46 years and was perhaps the most accomplished leader of the 1500s.

Suleyman was the son of Selim I, who ruled the Ottoman Empire from 1512 to 1520. Suleyman was an only son, which may have benefited him greatly. Under later sultans—including himself—the contest for power between the heirs often resulted in one or more of their deaths.

Spared this infighting, Suleyman was prepared for the crown. As a boy, he was given the task of governing two provinces. When his father died, the 26-year-old Suleyman already had 16 years of experience in government.

Suleyman quickly set out to increase the size of his kingdom. Ottoman military strength lay with the elite corps of soldiers called janissaries. These soldiers were recruited as young boys from conquered Christian territories and trained expressly for combat. Suleyman had to give the janissaries an outlet, so he turned these fierce troops on others.

Suleyman's conquests were many. He made Hungary a puppet state by defeating it and putting his own ruler on the throne. In 1522, he captured the Greek island of Rhodes, taking the strong castle of the Knights Hospitalers—the last Christian remnant of the Crusades in the eastern Mediterranean. Europeans were amazed by his treatment of the captives. The knights themselves were allowed to leave the island with their weapons, and the common citizens were spared any violence.

However, in 1529 the Ottomans failed to capture Vienna, Austria, despite a long siege. Nevertheless, Suleyman later conquered lands from the Persian shahs to the east and won Egypt to the south. His navies took almost complete control of the Mediterranean Sea. These victories made the Ottoman Empire huge and wealthy.

Suleyman received about \$80 million a year in income. In contrast, the king of France had a yearly income of only about \$1 million. With this wealth, Suleyman lived a life of luxury that helped earn for him his reputation as the Magnificent.

However, Suleyman was most renowned as the Lawgiver. He gave an educated slave named Lutfi Pasa the task of compiling a new code of laws. It established standard penalties throughout the empire for such crimes as robbery and murder. It also sought to remove corruption from government and to ensure that local political officials rose on the basis of merit and not bribery. The sultan was a fair ruler. A Venetian once wrote that "provided he were well-informed, [Suleyman] did wrong to no one."

Suleyman took other steps to improve his peoples' lives as well. He rebuilt the water systems at Mecca and Jerusalem, the two holy sites visited each year by large numbers of pilgrims. He enhanced the beauty of Istanbul by building palaces and mosques. His chief architect was Pasha Sinan, a Christian slave who was so skilled that he designed over 300 structures, including mosques, schools, hospitals, palaces, and other buildings. Many of the minarets, the slender towers attached to mosques, and domes seen in Istanbul today date from Suleyman's time.

In poetry, history, and science, Ottoman culture flourished as well. The geographer Piri Reis published books that contained maps with a current understanding of the known world. One of these showed the third voyage of Christopher Columbus, undertaken just two decades earlier.

Questions

1. **Recognizing Facts and Details** What kind of experience for becoming sultan did Suleyman have?
2. **Drawing Conclusions** Why did Suleyman embark on new conquests?
3. **Making Judgments** Is "the Magnificent" or "the Lawgiver" a more appropriate name for Suleyman?