

# Suleiman the Magnificent

“Suleiman I” redirects here. For the shah of Persia, see [Suleiman I of Persia](#).

**Suleiman I** (Ottoman Turkish: اول سلیمان سلطان; Turkish: *I. Süleyman* , almost always *Kanunî Sultan Süleyman*; 6 November 1494 – 7 September 1566), commonly known as **Suleiman the Magnificent** in the West and “**Kanuni**” (the Lawgiver) in the East, was the tenth and longest-reigning **Sultan** of the **Ottoman Empire**, from 1520 to his death in 1566.<sup>[3]</sup> Under his administration, the Ottoman State ruled over 20 to 30 million people.

Suleiman became a prominent monarch of 16th-century Europe, presiding over the apex of the Ottoman Empire’s military, political, and economic power. Suleiman personally led Ottoman armies in conquering the Christian strongholds of **Belgrade**, **Rhodes**, as well as most of **Hungary** before his conquests were checked at the **Siege of Vienna** in 1529. He annexed much of the **Middle East** in his conflict with the **Safavids** and large areas of **North Africa** as far west as **Algeria**. Under his rule, the **Ottoman fleet** dominated the seas from the **Mediterranean** to the **Red Sea** and through the **Persian Gulf**.<sup>[4]</sup>

At the helm of an expanding empire, Suleiman personally instituted major legislative changes relating to society, education, taxation, and criminal law. His canonical law (or the *Kanuns*) fixed the form of the empire for centuries after his death. He was a distinguished poet and goldsmith; he also became a great patron of culture, overseeing the “Golden” age of the Ottoman Empire in its artistic, literary, and architectural development.<sup>[5]</sup>

Breaking with Ottoman tradition, Suleiman married **Roxelana**, a former Christian girl converted to **Islam** from his **harem**, who became subsequently known and influential as **Hürrem Sultan**. Their son **Selim II** succeeded Suleiman following his death in 1566 after 46 years of rule, thus beginning a long state of stagnation and decline during **Selim II**’s reign. Suleiman’s previous heir apparent **Mustafa** had been strangled to death 13 years previously at the sultan’s order. His other son **Bayezid** had been killed by his support and **Selim**’s order in 1561 with four of his sons.

## 1 Alternative names and titles

Suleiman the Magnificent (سلیمان محبتشیم *Muhteşem Süleymân*), as he was known in the **West**, was also called Suleiman the First (اول سلیمان سلطان *Sultân*

*Süleymân-ı Evvel*), and Suleiman the Lawgiver (قانونی سلیمان سلطان *Ḳānūnī Sultân Süleymân*) for his complete reconstruction of the Ottoman legal system.

## 2 Early life

Suleiman was born in **Trabzon** along the east coast of the **Black Sea**, probably on 6 November 1494.<sup>[6]</sup> His mother was **Ayşe Hafsa Sultan** (she was the possibly daughter of **Meñli I Giray**, a descendant of **Genghis Khan**, through **Jochi**); little is known of her other than that she died in 1534.<sup>[7][8][9][10][11][12][13][14][15][16]</sup>

### 2.1 Education

At the age of seven, Suleiman was sent to study science, history, literature, theology, and military tactics in the schools of the **Topkapı Palace** in **Constantinople** (modern **Istanbul**). As a young man, he befriended **Pargalı Ibrahim**, a slave who later became one of his most trusted advisers.<sup>[17]</sup>

### 2.2 Viceroy in Anatolia

From the age of seventeen, he was appointed as the governor of first **Kaffa** (Theodosia), then **Sarukhan** (**Manisa**) with a brief tenure at **Adrianople** (now **Edirne**).<sup>[18]</sup> Upon the death of his father, **Selim I** (1465–1520), Suleiman entered Constantinople and ascended to the throne as the tenth Ottoman Sultan. An early description of Suleiman, a few weeks following his accession, was provided by the **Venetian** envoy **Bartolomeo Contarini**: “He is twenty-six years of age, tall, but wiry, and of a delicate complexion. His neck is a little too long, his face thin, and his nose aquiline. He has a shade of a mustache and a small beard; nevertheless he has a pleasant mien, though his skin tends to be a light pallor. He is said to be a wise Lord, fond of study, and all men hope for good from his rule.”<sup>[19]</sup> Some historians claim that in his youth Suleiman had an admiration for **Alexander the Great**.<sup>[20][21]</sup> He was influenced by Alexander’s vision of building a world empire that would encompass the east and the west, and this created a drive for his subsequent military campaigns in Asia and in Africa, as well as in Europe.

### 3 Military campaigns

See also: List of campaigns of Suleiman the Magnificent

#### 3.1 Conquests in Europe

See also: Ottoman wars in Europe and Islam and Protestantism

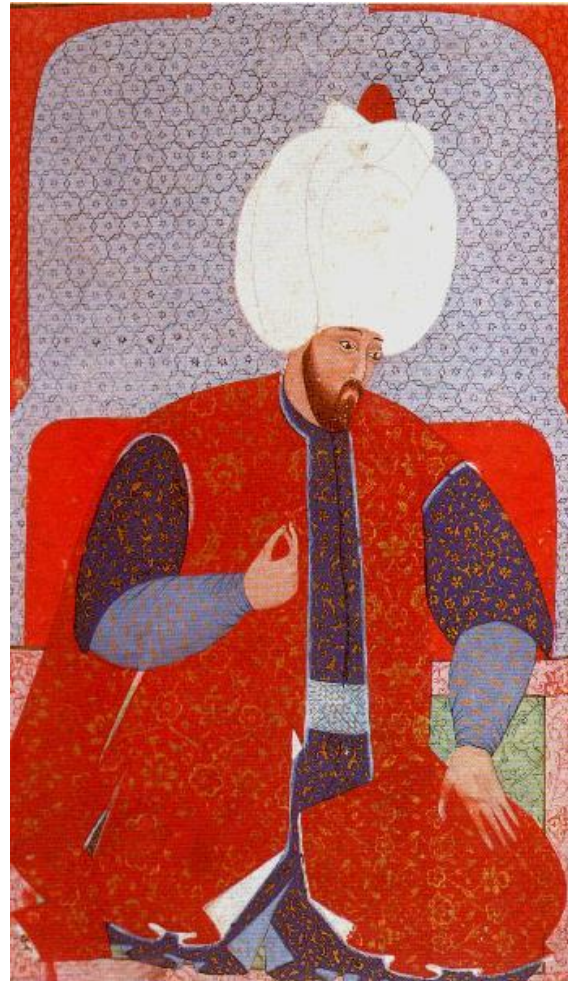
Upon succeeding his father, Suleiman began a series



*Suleiman during the Siege of Rhodes in 1522.*

of military conquests, eventually suppressing a revolt led by the Ottoman-appointed governor of Damascus in 1521. Suleiman soon made preparations for the conquest of Belgrade from the Kingdom of Hungary—something his great-grandfather Mehmed II had failed to achieve because of John Hunyadi's strong defense in the region. Its capture was vital in removing the Hungarians and Croats who, following the defeats of the Serbs, Bulgarians, Albanians and the Byzantines, remained the only formidable force who could block further Ottoman gains in Europe. Suleiman encircled Belgrade and began a series of heavy bombardments from an island in the Danube. Belgrade, with a garrison of only 700 men, and receiving no aid from Hungary, fell in August 1521.<sup>[22]</sup>

The fall of Christendom's major strongholds spread fear across Europe. As the ambassador of the Holy Roman Empire to Constantinople was to note, "The capture of Belgrade was at the origin of the dramatic events which engulfed Hungary. It led to the death of King Louis, the capture of Buda, the occupation of Transylvania, the ruin of a flourishing kingdom and the fear of neighboring nations that they would suffer the same fate..."<sup>[23]</sup>



*Suleiman as a young man*

The road to Hungary and Austria lay open, but Suleiman turned his attention instead to the Eastern Mediterranean island of Rhodes, the home base of the Knights Hospitaller. In the summer of 1522, taking advantage of the large navy he inherited from his father, Suleiman dispatched an armada of some 400 ships towards Rhodes, while personally leading an army of 100,000 across Asia Minor to a point opposite the island itself.<sup>[24]</sup> Here Suleiman built a large fortification, Marmaris Castle, that served as a base for the Ottoman Navy. Following the brutal five-month Siege of Rhodes (1522), Rhodes capitulated and Suleiman allowed the Knights of Rhodes to depart. (The Knights of Rhodes eventually formed a new base in Malta.)

As relations between Hungary and the Ottoman Empire deteriorated, Suleiman resumed his campaign in Eastern Europe and on 29 August 1526, he defeated Louis II of Hungary (1506–26) at the Battle of Mohács. In its wake, Hungarian resistance collapsed and the Ottoman Empire became the preeminent power in Eastern Europe.<sup>[25]</sup> Upon encountering the lifeless body of King Louis, Suleiman is said to have lamented: "I came indeed in arms against him; but it was not my wish that he should



be thus cut off before he scarcely tasted the sweets of life and royalty.”<sup>[26][27]</sup> While Suleiman was campaigning in Hungary, **Turkmen** tribes in central Anatolia revolted under the leadership of **Kalender Çelebi**.

Some Hungarian nobles proposed that **Ferdinand**, who was ruler of neighboring **Austria** and tied to Louis II's family by marriage, be King of Hungary, citing previous agreements that the **Habsburgs** would take the Hungarian throne if Louis died without heirs.<sup>[28]</sup> However, other nobles turned to the nobleman **John Zápolya**, who was being supported by Suleiman. Under **Charles V** and his brother Ferdinand I, the **Habsburgs** reoccupied Buda and took possession of Hungary. As a result, in 1529, Suleiman marched through the valley of the Danube and regained control of Buda; in the following autumn his forces laid **siege to Vienna**. This was to be the Ottoman Empire's most ambitious expedition and the apogee of its drive to the West. With a reinforced garrison of 16,000 men,<sup>[29]</sup> the Austrians inflicted the first defeat on Suleiman, sowing the seeds of a bitter Ottoman-Habsburg rivalry which lasted until the 20th century.<sup>[30]</sup> His second attempt to conquer Vienna failed in 1532, with Ottoman forces delayed by the **siege of Güns**, failing to reach Vienna. In both cases, the Ottoman army was plagued by bad weather (forcing them to leave behind essential siege equipment) and was hobbled by overstretched supply lines.<sup>[31]</sup>



*King John Sigismund of Hungary with Suleiman in 1556.*

By the 1540s a renewal of the conflict in Hungary presented Suleiman with the opportunity to avenge the defeat suffered at Vienna.

In 1541 the Habsburgs once again engaged in conflict with the Ottomans, by attempting to lay siege to Buda. With their efforts repulsed, and more Habsburg fortresses captured by the Ottomans in two consecutive campaigns in 1541 and in 1544 as a result,<sup>[32]</sup> Ferdinand and his brother



*Ottoman Siege of Esztergom (1543).*

Charles V were forced to conclude a humiliating five-year treaty with Suleiman. Ferdinand renounced his claim to the Kingdom of Hungary and was forced to pay a fixed yearly sum to the Sultan for the Hungarian lands he continued to control. Of more symbolic importance, the treaty referred to Charles V not as 'Emperor', but as the 'King of Spain', leading Suleiman to identify as the true 'Caesar'.<sup>[33]</sup>

With his main European rivals subdued, Suleiman ensured that the Ottoman Empire had a powerful role in the political landscape of Europe for some years to come.

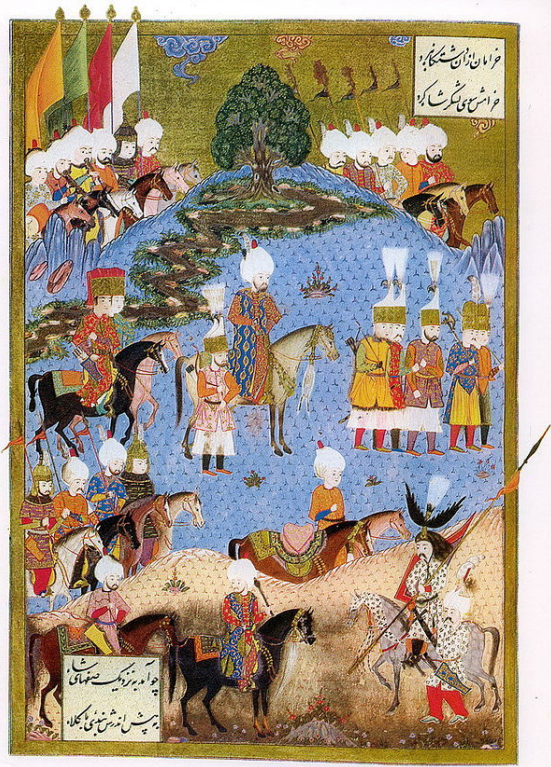
## 3.2 Ottoman–Safavid War

Main article: **Ottoman–Safavid War (1532–1555)**

As Suleiman stabilized his European frontiers, he now turned his attention to the ever present threat posed by the Shi'a Safavid dynasty of Persia. Two events in particular were to precipitate a recurrence of tensions. First, **Shah Tahmasp** had the **Baghdad** governor loyal to Suleiman killed and replaced with an adherent of the Shah, and second, the governor of **Bitlis** had defected and sworn allegiance to the Safavids.<sup>[34]</sup> As a result, in 1533, Suleiman ordered his Grand Vizier **Pargalı Ibrahim Pasha** to lead an army into eastern Asia Minor where he retook **Bitlis** and occupied **Tabriz** without resistance. Having joined Ibrahim in 1534, Suleiman made a push towards Persia, only to find the Shah sacrificing territory instead of facing a pitched battle, resorting to harassment of the Ottoman army as it proceeded along the harsh interior.<sup>[35]</sup> When in the following year Suleiman and Ibrahim made a grand entrance into **Baghdad**, its commander surrendered the city, thereby confirming Suleiman as the leader of the **Sunni** Islamic world and the legitimate successor to the **Sunni Abbasid Caliphs**.<sup>[36]</sup> Moreover, the fact Suleiman restored the grave of Sunni imam Abu Hanifa also strengthened his credentials and claim to the caliphate.

Attempting to defeat the Shah once and for all, Suleiman embarked upon a second campaign in 1548–1549. As in the previous attempt, Tahmasp avoided confrontation





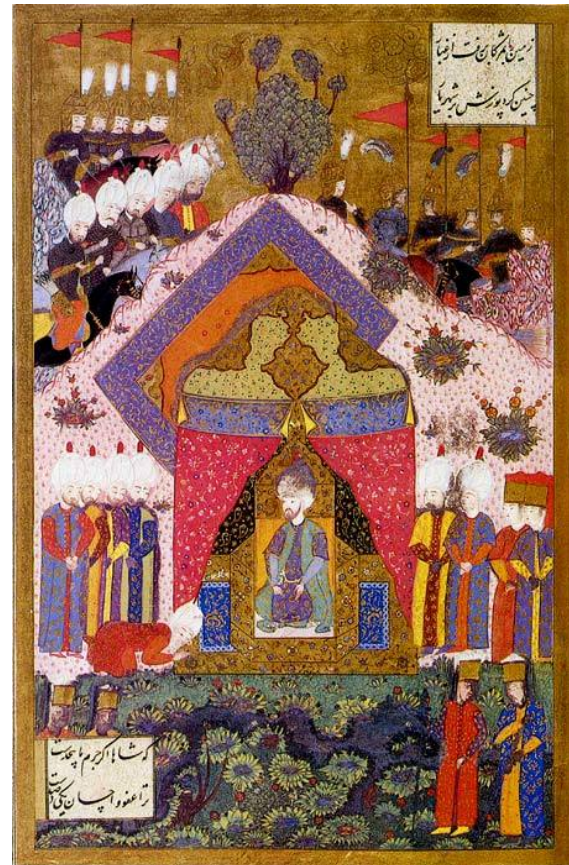
Miniature depicting Suleiman marching with an army in Nakhchivan, summer 1554

with the Ottoman army and instead chose to retreat, using scorched earth tactics in the process and exposing the Ottoman army to the harsh winter of the Caucasus.<sup>[35]</sup> Suleiman abandoned the campaign with temporary Ottoman gains in Tabriz and the Urmia region, a lasting presence in the province of Van, control of the western half of Azerbaijan and some forts in Georgia.<sup>[37]</sup> In 1553 Suleiman began his third and final campaign against the Shah. Having initially lost territories in Erzurum to the Shah's son, Suleiman retaliated by recapturing Erzurum, crossing the Upper Euphrates and laying waste to parts of Persia. The Shah's army continued its strategy of avoiding the Ottomans, leading to a stalemate from which neither army made any significant gain. In 1554, a settlement was signed which was to conclude Suleiman's Asian campaigns. Part of the treaty included and confirmed the return of Tabriz, but secured Baghdad, lower Mesopotamia, the mouths of the river Euphrates and Tigris, as well as part of the Persian Gulf.<sup>[38]</sup> The Shah also promised to cease all raids into Ottoman territory.

### 3.3 Campaigns in the Indian Ocean

Main articles: Ottoman–Portuguese conflicts, Capture of Aden (1548), Ottoman expedition to Aceh and Indian Ocean campaigns

Ottoman ships had been sailing in the Indian Ocean since the year 1518. Ottoman Admirals such as Hadim Suleiman Pasha, Seydi Ali Reis<sup>[39]</sup> and Kurtoğlu Hızır



Suleiman the Magnificent receives an ambassador (painting by Matrakçı Nasuh).

Reis are known to have voyaged to the Mughal imperial ports of Thatta, Surat and Janjira. The Mughal Emperor Akbar himself is known to have exchanged six documents with Suleiman the Magnificent.<sup>[39][40][41]</sup>

In the Indian Ocean, Suleiman led several naval campaigns against the Portuguese in an attempt to remove them and reestablish trade with India. Aden in Yemen was captured by the Ottomans in 1538, in order to provide an Ottoman base for raids against Portuguese possessions on the western coast of modern Pakistan and India.<sup>[42]</sup> Sailing on to India, the Ottomans failed against the Portuguese at the Siege of Diu in September 1538, but then returned to Aden where they fortified the city with 100 pieces of artillery.<sup>[42][43]</sup> From this base, Sulayman Pasha managed to take control of the whole country of Yemen, also taking Sanaa.<sup>[42]</sup> Aden rose against the Ottomans however and invited the Portuguese instead, so that the Portuguese were in control of the city until its seizure by Piri Reis in the Capture of Aden (1548).

With its strong control of the Red Sea, Suleiman successfully managed to dispute control of the Indian trade routes to the Portuguese and maintained a significant level of trade with the Mughal Empire of South Asia throughout the 16th century.<sup>[44]</sup> His admiral Piri Reis led an Ottoman fleet in the Indian Ocean, achieving the Capture of Muscat in 1552.





*Ottoman fleet in the Indian Ocean in the 16th century.*



*Barbarossa Hayreddin Pasha defeats the Holy League under the command of Andrea Doria at the Battle of Preveza in 1538*

From 1526 till 1543, Suleiman stationed over 900 Turkish soldiers to fight alongside the Somali Adal Sultanate led by Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi during the Conquest of Abyssinia. In 1559, after the first Ajuran-Portuguese war the Ottoman Empire would later absorb the weakened Adal Sultanate into its domain. This expansion fathered Ottoman rule in Somalia and the Horn of Africa. This also increased its influence in the Indian Ocean to compete with the Portuguese with its close ally the Ajuran Empire.<sup>[45]</sup>

In 1564, Suleiman received an embassy from Aceh (mod-



*Francis I (left) and Suleiman the Magnificent (right) initiated a Franco-Ottoman alliance from the 1530s.*

ern Indonesia), requesting Ottoman support against the Portuguese. As a result, an Ottoman expedition to Aceh was launched, which was able to provide extensive military support to the Acehnese.<sup>[46]</sup>

The discovery of new maritime trade routes by Western European states allowed them to avoid the Ottoman trade monopoly. The Portuguese discovery of the Cape of Good Hope in 1488 initiated a series of Ottoman-Portuguese naval wars in the Indian Ocean throughout the 16th century. The Ajuran Empire allied with the Ottomans defied the Portuguese economic monopoly in the Indian Ocean by employing a new coinage which followed the Ottoman pattern, thus proclaiming an attitude of economic independence in regard to the Portuguese.<sup>[47]</sup>

### 3.4 Mediterranean and North Africa

See also: Franco-Ottoman alliance, Barbarossa Hayreddin Pasha, Italian War of 1542–1546 and Siege of Malta (1565)

Having consolidated his conquests on land, Suleiman was greeted with the news that the fortress of Koroni in Morea (the modern Peloponnese) had been lost to Charles V's admiral, Andrea Doria. The presence of the Spanish in the Eastern Mediterranean concerned Suleiman, who saw it as an early indication of Charles V's intention to rival Ottoman dominance in the region. Recognizing the need to reassert the navy's preeminence in the Mediterranean, Suleiman appointed an exceptional naval commander in the form of Khair ad Din, known to Europeans as Barbarossa. Once appointed admiral-in-chief, Barbarossa was charged with rebuilding the Ottoman fleet, to such an extent that the Ottoman navy equaled in number those of all other Mediterranean countries put together.<sup>[48]</sup> In 1535, Charles V won an important victory against the Ottomans at Tunis, which together with the war against Venice the following year, led Suleiman to accept proposals from Francis I of France to form an alliance against Charles.<sup>[34]</sup> In 1538, the Spanish fleet was defeated by Barbarossa at the Battle of Preveza, securing

the eastern Mediterranean for the Turks for 33 years, until the defeat at the **Battle of Lepanto** in 1571.

East of **Morocco**, huge territories in **North Africa** were annexed. The **Barbary States of Tripolitania, Tunisia, and Algeria** became autonomous provinces of the Empire, serving as the leading edge of Suleiman's conflict with Charles V, whose attempt to drive out the Turks failed in 1541.<sup>[49]</sup> The piracy carried on thereafter by the **Barbary pirates** of North Africa can be seen in the context of the wars against Spain. For a short period Ottoman expansion secured naval dominance in the Mediterranean.



*The Siege of Malta in 1565: Arrival of the Turkish fleet, by Matteo Perez d'Aleccio*

In 1542, facing a common Habsburg enemy, Francis I sought to renew the **Franco-Ottoman alliance**. As a result, Suleiman dispatched 100 galleys<sup>[50]</sup> under Barbarossa to assist the French in the western Mediterranean. Barbarossa pillaged the coast of **Naples** and **Sicily** before reaching France, where Francis made **Toulon** the Ottoman admiral's naval headquarters. The same campaign saw Barbarossa attack and **capture Nice** in 1543. By 1544, a peace between Francis I and Charles V had put a temporary end to the alliance between France and the Ottoman Empire.

Elsewhere in the Mediterranean, when the Knights Hospitallers were re-established as the **Knights of Malta** in 1530, their actions against Muslim navies quickly drew the ire of the Ottomans, who assembled another massive army in order to dislodge the Knights from Malta. The Ottomans invaded Malta in 1565, undertaking the **Great Siege of Malta**, which began on 18 May and lasted until 8 September, and is portrayed vividly in the frescoes of **Matteo Perez d'Aleccio** in the Hall of St. Michael and St. George. At first it seemed that this would be a repeat of the battle on **Rhodes**, with most of Malta's cities destroyed and half the Knights killed in battle; but a relief force from **Spain** entered the battle, resulting in the loss of 10,000 Ottoman troops and the victory of the local Maltese citizenry.<sup>[51]</sup>

## 4 Administrative reforms

While Sultan Suleiman was known as “the Magnificent” in the West, he was always *Kanuni* Suleiman or “The Law-giver” (قانونی) to his own Ottoman subjects. As the historian **Lord Kinross** notes, “Not only was he a great military campaigner, a man of the sword, as his father and great-grandfather had been before him. He differed from them in the extent to which he was also a man of the pen. He was a great legislator, standing out in the eyes of his people as a high-minded sovereign and a magnanimous exponent of justice”.<sup>[52]</sup> The overriding law of the empire was the **Shari'ah**, or Sacred Law, which as the divine law of **Islam** was outside of the Sultan's powers to change. Yet an area of distinct law known as the *Kanuns* (قانون, canonical legislation) was dependent on Suleiman's will alone, covering areas such as criminal law, land tenure and taxation.<sup>[53]</sup> He collected all the judgments that had been issued by the nine Ottoman Sultans who preceded him. After eliminating duplications and choosing between contradictory statements, he issued a single legal code, all the while being careful not to violate the basic laws of Islam.<sup>[54]</sup> It was within this framework that Suleiman, supported by his **Grand Mufti Ebussuud**, sought to reform the legislation to adapt to a rapidly changing empire. When the Kanun laws attained their final form, the code of laws became known as the *kanun-i Osmani* (عثمانی قانون), or the “Ottoman laws”. Suleiman's legal code was to last more than three hundred years.<sup>[55]</sup>

Suleiman gave particular attention to the plight of the **rayas**, Christian subjects who worked the land of the **Sipahis**. His *Kanune Raya*, or “Code of the Rayas”, reformed the law governing levies and taxes to be paid by the rayas, raising their status above serfdom to the extent that Christian **serfs** would migrate to Turkish territories to benefit from the reforms.<sup>[56]</sup> The Sultan also played a role in protecting the Jewish subjects of his empire for centuries to come. In late 1553 or 1554, on the suggestion of his favorite doctor and dentist, the Spanish Jew **Moses Hamon**, the Sultan issued a *firman* (فرمان) formally denouncing **blood libels** against the Jews.<sup>[57]</sup> Furthermore, Suleiman enacted new criminal and police legislation, prescribing a set of fines for specific offenses, as well as reducing the instances requiring death or mutilation. In the area of taxation, taxes were levied on various goods and produce, including animals, mines, profits of trade, and import-export duties. In addition to taxes, officials who had fallen into disrepute were likely to have their land and property confiscated by the Sultan.

Education was another important area for the Sultan. Schools attached to mosques and funded by religious foundations provided a largely free education to Muslim boys in advance of the Christian countries of the time.<sup>[58]</sup> In his capital, Suleiman increased the number of *mektebs* (مکتب, primary schools) to fourteen, teaching boys to read and write as well as the principles of Islam.



Young men wishing further education could proceed to one of eight *medreses* (مدرسه, colleges), whose studies included grammar, metaphysics, philosophy, astronomy, and astrology.<sup>[58]</sup> Higher *medreses* provided education of university status, whose graduates became *imams* (امام) or teachers. Educational centers were often one of many buildings surrounding the courtyards of mosques, others included libraries, refectories, fountains, soup kitchens and hospitals for the benefit of the public.



Ottoman miniature depicting the execution of Serbian rebels in Belgrade (from the: *Süleymanname*).<sup>[59]</sup>

Under Suleiman's patronage, the Ottoman Empire entered the golden age of its **cultural development**. Hundreds of imperial artistic societies (called the *حرف اهل* *Ehl-i Hiref*, "Community of the Talented") were administered at the Imperial seat, the **Topkapı Palace**. After an apprenticeship, artists and craftsmen could advance in rank within their field and were paid commensurate wages in quarterly annual installments. Payroll registers that survive testify to the breadth of Suleiman's patronage of the arts, the earliest of documents dating from 1526 list 40 societies with over 600 members. The *Ehl-i Hiref* attracted the empire's most talented artisans to the Sultan's court, both from the Islamic world and from the recently conquered territories in Europe, resulting in a blend of Arabic, Turkish and European cultures.<sup>[60]</sup> Artisans in service of the court included painters, book binders, furriers, jewellers and goldsmiths. Whereas previous rulers had been influenced by **Persian culture** (Suleiman's father, Selim I, wrote poetry in Persian), Suleiman's patronage of the arts saw the Ottoman Empire assert its own artistic legacy.<sup>[61]</sup>

Suleiman himself was an accomplished poet, writing in Persian and Turkish under the *takhallus* (nom de plume) *Muhibbi* (محبی, "Lover"). Some of Suleiman's verses have become Turkish proverbs, such as the well-known *Everyone aims at the same meaning, but many are the versions of the story*. When his young son Mehmed died in 1543, he composed a moving *chronogram* to commemorate the year: *Peerless among princes, my Sultan Mehmed*.<sup>[62][63]</sup> In addition to Suleiman's own work, many great talents enlivened the literary world during Suleiman's rule, including **Fuzuli** and **Baki**. The literary historian E. J. W. Gibb observed that "at no time, even in Turkey, was greater encouragement given to poetry than during the reign of this Sultan".<sup>[62]</sup> Suleiman's most famous verse is:

## 5 Cultural achievements



*Tughra of Suleiman the Magnificent.*



*Süleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul, built by Mimar Sinan, Suleiman's chief architect.*

The people think of wealth and power as  
the greatest fate,

But in this world a spell of health is the best state.

What men call sovereignty is a worldly strife and constant war;

Worship of God is the highest throne, the happiest of all estates.<sup>[64]</sup>

Suleiman also became renowned for sponsoring a series of monumental **architectural** developments within his empire. The Sultan sought to turn Constantinople into the center of Islamic civilization by a series of projects, including bridges, mosques, palaces and various charitable and social establishments. The greatest of these were built by the Sultan's chief architect, **Mimar Sinan**, under whom Ottoman architecture reached its zenith. Sinan became responsible for over three hundred monuments throughout the empire, including his two masterpieces, the **Süleymaniye** and **Selimiye** mosques—the latter built in **Adrianople** (now **Edirne**) in the reign of Suleiman's son **Selim II**. Suleiman also restored the **Dome of the Rock** in **Jerusalem** and the **Jerusalem** city walls (which are the current walls of the **Old City of Jerusalem**), renovated the **Kaaba** in **Mecca**, and constructed a complex in **Damascus**.<sup>[65]</sup>

## 6 Personal life

### 6.1 Consorts and progeny

Suleiman had three known consorts:

- **Gülfem Hatun**;
- **Mahidevran Sultan**;
- **Haseki Hürrem Sultan** (m. 1531), Suleiman's legal wife, possibly a daughter of the **Ukrainian Orthodox** priest **Havrylo Lisowsky** and his wife **Aleksandra**.<sup>[66]</sup>

Suleiman had eight children with his three consorts:

- **Şehzade Murad** – son with **Gülfem** (died shortly after birth)
- **Şehzade Mustafa** – son with **Mahidevran**, born 1515 (killed in 1553 on the Sultan's orders)
- **Şehzade Mehmed** – son with **Hürrem**, born 1521 (died in 1543)
- **Mihrimah Sultan** – daughter with **Hürrem**, born 1522 (died in 1578)
- **Şehzade Abdullah** – son with **Hürrem**, born 1522 (died in 1525)<sup>[67]</sup>
- **Sultan Selim II** – son with **Hürrem**, born 1524 (died in 1574)

- **Şehzade Bayezid** – son with **Hürrem**, born 1525 (killed by his brother **Selim** with the support of his father in 1561)
- **Şehzade Cihangir** – son with **Hürrem**, born 1531 (died in 1553)

### 6.2 Relationship with Hürrem Sultan



*16th-century oil painting of Hürrem Sultan*

Suleiman was infatuated with **Hürrem Sultan**, a harem girl from **Ruthenia**, then part of **Poland**. In the West foreign diplomats, taking notice of the palace gossip about her, called her “**Russelazie**” or “**Roxelana**”, referring to her **Ruthenian (Ukrainian)** origins.<sup>[68]</sup> The daughter of an **Orthodox** priest,<sup>[38]</sup> she was captured by **Tatars** from **Crimea**, sold as a slave in **Constantinople**, and eventually rose through the ranks of the Harem to become Suleiman's favorite. Breaking with two centuries of Ottoman tradition,<sup>[38]</sup> a former concubine had thus become the legal wife of the Sultan, much to the astonishment of the observers in the palace and the city.<sup>[69]</sup> He also allowed **Hürrem Sultan** to remain with him at court for the rest of her life, breaking another tradition—that when imperial heirs came of age, they would be sent along with the imperial concubine who bore them to govern remote provinces of the Empire, never to return unless their progeny succeeded to the throne.<sup>[70]</sup>

Under his pen name, **Muhibbi**, Sultan Suleiman composed this poem for **Hürrem Sultan**:

“Throne of my lonely niche, my wealth,  
my love, my moonlight.



My most sincere friend, my confidant, my  
very existence, my Sultan, my one and only  
love.

The most beautiful among the beautiful...

My springtime, my merry faced love, my  
daytime, my sweetheart, laughing leaf...

My plants, my sweet, my rose, the one only  
who does not distress me in this room...

My Istanbul, my Caraman, the earth of my  
Anatolia

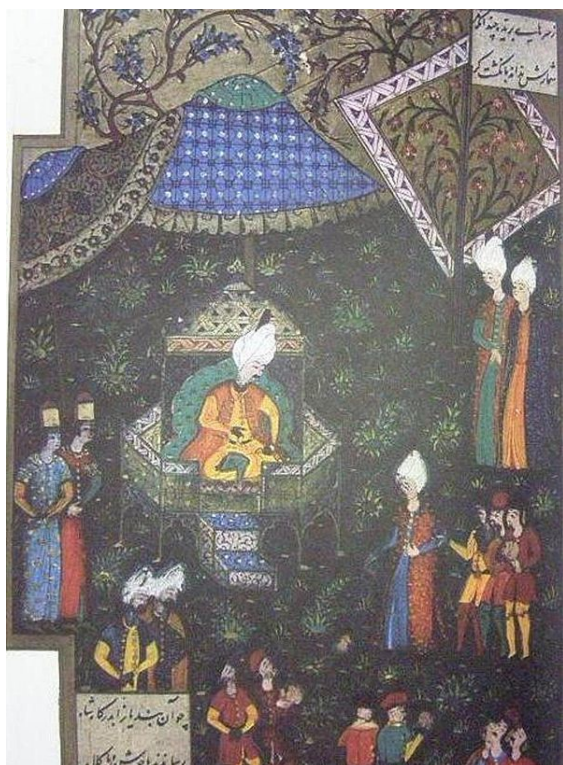
My Badakhshan, my Baghdad and Khorasan

My woman of the beautiful hair, my love  
of the slanted brow, my love of eyes full of  
misery...

I'll sing your praises always

I, lover of the tormented heart, Muhibbi of  
the eyes full of tears, I am happy.”<sup>[71]</sup>

### 6.3 Pargalı Ibrahim Pasha



*The Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, awaits the arrival of his Grand Vizier Pargalı Ibrahim Pasha at Buda, in the year 1529.*

Pargalı Ibrahim Pasha was the boyhood friend of Suleiman. Ibrahim was originally a Christian from Parga, (Epirus),<sup>[72][73]</sup> and when he was young was educated at the Palace School under the *devshirme* system. Suleiman made him the royal falconer, then promoted him to first officer of the Royal Bedchamber.<sup>[74]</sup> Ibrahim Pasha rose to Grand Vizier in 1523 and commander-in-chief of all the armies. Suleiman also conferred upon Ibrahim Pasha

the honor of *beylerbey* of **Rumelia**, granting Ibrahim authority over all Turkish territories in Europe, as well as command of troops residing within them in times of war. According to a 17th-century chronicler, Ibrahim had asked Suleiman not to promote him to such high positions, fearing for his safety; to which Suleiman replied that under his reign no matter what the circumstance, Ibrahim would never be put to death.<sup>[75]</sup>

Yet Ibrahim eventually fell from grace with the Sultan. During his thirteen years as Grand Vizier, his rapid rise to power and vast accumulation of wealth had made Ibrahim many enemies among the Sultan's court. Reports had reached the Sultan of Ibrahim's impudence during a campaign against the Persian Safavid empire: in particular his adoption of the title *serasker sultan* (سرطان سرعسكر) was seen as a grave affront to Suleiman.<sup>[76]</sup>

Suleiman's suspicion of Ibrahim was worsened by a quarrel between the latter and the finance secretary (*defterdar*) **Iskender Çelebi**. The dispute ended in the disgrace of Çelebi on charges of intrigue, with Ibrahim convincing Suleiman to sentence the *defterdar* to death. Before his death however, Çelebi's last words were to accuse Ibrahim of conspiracy against the Sultan.<sup>[76]</sup> These dying words convinced Suleiman of Ibrahim's disloyalty,<sup>[76]</sup> and on 15 March 1536 Ibrahim was executed.

## 7 Succession

Sultan Suleiman's two wives (Hürrem and Mahidevran) had borne him six sons, four of whom survived past the 1550s. They were **Mustafa**, **Selim**, **Bayezid**, and **Cihangir**. Of these, only Mustafa, the eldest, was not Hürrem Sultan's son, but rather Mahidevran Sultan's, and therefore preceded Hürrem's children in the order of succession. Hürrem was aware that should Mustafa become Sultan her own children would be strangled. Yet Mustafa was recognized as the most talented of all the brothers and was supported by Pargalı Ibrahim Pasha, who was by this time Suleiman's Grand Vizier. The Austrian ambassador **Busbecq** would note "Suleiman has among his children a son called Mustafa, marvelously well educated and prudent and of an age to rule, since he is 24 or 25 years old; may God never allow a Barbary of such strength to come near us", going on to talk of Mustafa's "remarkable natural gifts".<sup>[77]</sup> Hürrem is usually held at least partly responsible for the intrigues in nominating a successor. Although she was Suleiman's wife, she exercised no official public role. This did not, however, prevent Hürrem from wielding powerful political influence. Since the Empire lacked, until the reign of **Ahmed I**, any formal means of nominating a successor, successions usually involved the death of competing princes in order to avert civil unrest and rebellions. In attempting to avoid the execution of her sons, Hürrem used her influence to eliminate those who supported Mustafa's accession to the throne.<sup>[64]</sup>



*Ottoman sequin manufactured during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent.*

Thus in power struggles apparently instigated by Hürrem,<sup>[74]</sup> Suleiman had Ibrahim murdered and replaced with her sympathetic son-in-law, Rüstem Pasha. By 1552, when the campaign against Persia had begun with Rüstem appointed commander-in-chief of the expedition, intrigues against Mustafa began. Rüstem sent one of Suleiman's most trusted men to report that since Suleiman was not at the head of the army, the soldiers thought the time had come to put a younger prince on the throne; at the same time he spread rumors that Mustafa had proved receptive to the idea. Angered by what he came to believe were Mustafa's plans to claim the throne, the following summer upon return from his campaign in Persia, Suleiman summoned him to his tent in the Ereğli valley,<sup>[78]</sup> stating he would "be able to clear himself of the crimes he was accused of and would have nothing to fear if he came".<sup>[79]</sup>

Mustafa was confronted with a choice: either he appeared before his father at the risk of being killed; or, if he refused to attend, he would be accused of betrayal. In the end, Mustafa chose to enter his father's tent, confident that the support of the army would protect him. Busbecq, who claims to have received an account from an eyewitness, describes Mustafa's final moments. As Mustafa entered his father's tent, Suleiman's eunuchs attacked Mustafa, with the young prince putting up a brave defence. Suleiman, separated from the struggle only by the linen hangings of the tent, peered through the chamber of his tent and "directed fierce and threatening glances upon the mutes, and by menacing gestures sternly rebuked their hesitation. Thereupon, the mutes in their alarm, redoubling their efforts, hurled Mustafa to the ground and, throwing the bowstring round his neck, strangled him."<sup>[80]</sup>

Cihangir is said to have died of grief a few months after the news of his half-brother's murder.<sup>[81]</sup> The two surviving brothers, Selim and Bayezid, were given command in different parts of the empire. Within a few years, however, civil war broke out between the brothers, each supported by his loyal forces.<sup>[82]</sup> With the aid of his father's army, Selim defeated Bayezid in Konya in 1559, leading the latter to seek refuge with the Safavids along with his four sons. Following diplomatic exchanges, the Sultan demanded from the Safavid Shah that Bayezid be either



*Distribution of rewards after the siege of Szigetvár*

extradited or executed. In return for large amounts of gold, the Shah allowed a Turkish executioner to strangle Bayezid and his four sons in 1561,<sup>[81]</sup> clearing the path for Selim's succession to the throne seven years later. On 5 September 1566,<sup>[83]</sup> Suleiman, who had set out from Constantinople to command an expedition to Hungary, died before an Ottoman victory at the Battle of Szigetvár in Hungary.<sup>[84]</sup>

## 8 Legacy

At the time of Suleiman's death, the Ottoman Empire was one of the world's foremost powers.<sup>[85]</sup> Suleiman's conquests had brought under the control of the Empire the major Muslim cities (Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, Damascus, Cairo, and Baghdad), many Balkan provinces (reaching present day Croatia and Austria), and most of North Africa. His expansion into Europe had given the Ottoman Turks a powerful presence in the European balance of power. Indeed, such was the perceived threat of





*Suleiman I's conquests were followed by continuous territorial expansion until the Empire's peak.*

the Ottoman Empire under the reign of Suleiman that Austria's ambassador **Busbecq** warned of Europe's imminent conquest: "On [the Turks'] side are the resources of a mighty empire, strength unimpaired, habituation to victory, endurance of toil, unity, discipline, frugality and watchfulness... Can we doubt what the result will be?...When the Turks have settled with Persia, they will fly at our throats supported by the might of the whole East; how unprepared we are I dare not say."<sup>[86]</sup>



*Türe (tomb) of Sultan Suleiman at Süleymaniye Mosque*

Even thirty years after his death "Sultan Solyman" was quoted by the English playwright **William Shakespeare** as a military prodigy in *The Merchant of Venice* (Act 2,

Scene 1).

Suleiman's legacy was not, however, merely in the military field. The French traveler **Jean de Thévenot** a century later bears witness to the "strong agricultural base of the country, the well being of the peasantry, the abundance of staple foods, and the pre-eminence of organization in Suleiman's government".<sup>[87]</sup> The administrative and legal reforms which earned him the name Law Giver ensured the Empire's survival long after his death, an achievement which "took many generations of decadent heirs to undo".<sup>[88]</sup>



*Funeral of the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent*

Through his personal patronage, Suleiman also presided over the Golden Age of the Ottoman Empire, representing the pinnacle of the Ottoman Turks' cultural achievement in the realm of architecture, literature, art, theology and philosophy.<sup>[5][89]</sup> Today the skyline of the **Bosphorus**, and of many cities in modern Turkey and the former Ottoman provinces, are still adorned with the architectural works of **Mimar Sinan**. One of these, the **Süleymaniye Mosque**, is the final resting place of Suleiman and **Hürrem Sultan**: they are buried in separate domed mausoleums attached to the mosque.

However, after his death, the Ottoman Empire entered into a state of decline and stagnation during the reign of Sultan **Selim II** and later sultans. The Ottoman conquests of Europe were ended permanently by major defeats such as the **Battle of Lepanto** and the **Battle of Vienna**. As the years passed, the Ottoman Empire slowly turned into a shadow of its former glory. Meanwhile, the Christian powers in Europe gradually regained their might, gaining new technologies and weapons for their armies until the Empire's dissolution during the reign of **Mehmed VI**, the last Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, who was removed after **World War I**.

## 9 Notes

- [1] *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol.7, Edited by Hugh Chisholm, (1911), 3; *Constantinople, the capital of the Turkish Empire...*

- [2] Britannica, Istanbul: When the Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923, the capital was moved to Ankara, and Constantinople was officially renamed Istanbul in 1930.
- [3] Merriman.
- [4] Mansel, 61.
- [5] Atıl, 24.
- [6] Clot, 25.
- [7] Wander Stories (30 Dec 2013). *Istanbul Tour Guide Top 10: a travel guide and tour as with the best local guide*. WanderStories. ISBN 978-9-949-51624-7. Hafsa Sultan was most likely the daughter of Mengli Giray
- [8] Reşat Kasaba (1 Dec 2009). *A moveable empire: Ottoman nomads, migrants, and refugees*. University of Washington Press. p. 44. ISBN 978-0-295-80149-0. Hafsa Sultan, the daughter of the Crimean ruler Mengli Giray Khan.
- [9] Peter G. Bietenholz, Thomas Brian Deutscher (2003). *Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation, Volumes 1-3*. University of Toronto Press. p. 298. ISBN 978-0-802-08577-1. Suleiman i (Solymannus), known in the West as Suleiman the Magnificent, was the son of \*Selim i and Hafsa Sultan, the daughter of Mengli Giray
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- [13] André Clot, Matthew Reisz (2005). *Suleiman the Magnificent*. Saqi. p. 26. ISBN 978-0-863-56510-6. His mother, Hafsa Hatun, is believed to have been the daughter of Mengli Giray, the khan of the Crimean Tartars.
- [14] John Freely (1 Jul 2001). *Inside the Seraglio: private lives of the sultans in Istanbul*. Penguin. Suleyman's mother, Hafsa Hatun, who was seventeen at the time of his birth, may have been a daughter of Mengli Giray, khan of the Crimean Tartars.
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- [18] Clot, 28.
- [19] Kinross, 175.
- [20] Lamb, 14.
- [21] Barber, 23.
- [22] Imber, 49.
- [23] Clot, 39.
- [24] Kinross, 176.
- [25] Kinross, 187.
- [26] Severy, 580
- [27] Embree, Suleiman The Magnificent.
- [28] Imber, 52.
- [29] Turnbull, Stephen (2003). *The Ottoman Empire 1326 – 1699*. New York: Osprey Publishing. p. 50.
- [30] Imber, 50.
- [31] Labib, 444.
- [32] Imber, 53.
- [33] Imber, 54.
- [34] Imber, 51.
- [35] Sicker, 206.
- [36] Clot, 93.
- [37] 1548–49
- [38] Kinross, 236.
- [39] Azmi Özcan (1997). *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain, 1877–1924*. BRILL. pp. 11–. ISBN 978-90-04-10632-1. Retrieved 30 September 2012.
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- [48] Clot, 87.
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- [61] Mansel, 70.
- [62] Halman, *Suleyman the Magnificent Poet*
- [63] Muhibbî (Kanunî Sultan Süleyman)(Turkish) In Turkish the chronogram reads محمد سلطان گزیده سی شهزاده ل (Şehzadeler güzidesi Sultan Muhammed'üm), in which the Arabic Abjad numerals total 955, the equivalent in the Islamic calendar of 1543 AD.
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- [70] Imber, 90.
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- [83] Sakaoglu, Necdet; p. 13
- [84] Imber, 60.
- [85] Clot, 298.
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Downwards, Makemi, DoubleAW, Fkehar, Johnor, RossF18, Kukini, Ged UK, Andrew Dalby, Ceoil, DSmidgy, Enter sandman, SashatoBot, Esrever, Nishkid64, Serein (renamed because of SUL), Harryboyles, Microchip08, Bjankuloski06en-enwiki, IronGargoyle, Dfass, Absar, Bless sins, Noah Salzman, Mallaccaos, Don Alessandro, Dammit, Neddyseagoon, Funnybunny, Ryulong, Houshyar, Armon, Thatcher, Alessandro57, OttomanReference, IvanLanin, Belgium EO, Courcelles, GunslingerV, Jordy540, G turgut, Ale jrb, The ed17, Johnstevens5, Denizz, JohnCD, Zeus1234, Itaallah, Richard Keatinge, MrFish, Hemlock Martinis, Funnyfarmofdoom, Cydebot, Ntsimp, Future Perfect at Sunrise, Enden, Travelbird, Kilhan, Plerdsus, Deligioul, ThatPeskyCommoner, Studerby, Sa.vakilian, Odie5533, Hispalois, DumbBOT, Jay32183, DBaba, Kozuch, Inquisitor S., Woland37, Lysandros, Erjeque, Epr123, DoomBW, Greatersam, Sry85, Andyjsmith, Oerjan, Mojo Hand, Marek69, Woody, Folantin, Dücanem, JCam, SusanLesch, Qp10qp, Mmortal03, Escarbot, Hajji 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