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A History of Suleiman the Magnificent

You wake up in your bed to the sound of people talking and yelling in the bustling marketplace below your window. Standing up, you look outside to see the sun shining down on the beautiful city of Istanbul. Over in the west, looming on the horizon is the massive Mosque of Süleyman, one of the largest buildings in Istanbul. You smile at the sight of it, and think about the great man the building represents. In all of your family's history, there has never been a ruler of the Ottoman people so fair and strong. The Ottoman Empire is at its peak of prosperity, thanks to Suleiman the Magnificent.

Suleiman the Magnificent is arguably one of the best leaders that ever ruled the Ottoman Empire. Suleiman is credited with leading the Ottoman Empire into a 'Golden Age' during the years he ruled. He successfully conquered many territories, doubling the Ottoman territory during his rule. The Ottoman Empire covered from the city of Istanbul westward to what is now Baghdad, and covered Egypt and the entire Mediterranean coast in Africa. Suleiman took the throne at age 26, and ruled from 1520-1566 for 46 years. Suleiman was the longest ruling commander of the Ottoman Empire. During this time period, coffeehouses began to appear in Istanbul. According to "The World's Most Historic Coffee Houses" written by Peter Baskerville, "the world's first recorded historic coffee house, Kiva Han, was reputedly opened in Constantinople (Istanbul)" during Suleiman's rule¹.

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1. Baskerville, Peter. "The World's Most Historic Coffee Houses". *Quora*. 25 Oct. 2016. <https://espressocoffee.quora.com/The-worlds-most-historic-coffee-houses>

Istanbul was the main center of trade and commerce for the Ottoman Empire, and during Suleiman's reign Istanbul's population reached half a million people, its largest ever. During the 'Golden Age' the great architect Mimar Sinan, chief of the Royal Corps of Engineers, built many important mosques and other buildings that are still standing today. As the *Encyclopedia Britannica* states, "the Mosque of Süleyman in Istanbul was constructed in the years 1550–57 and is considered by many scholars to be his finest work"². Sinan improved Istanbul's infrastructure by also constructing dams, schools, Turkish baths, aqueducts, botanical gardens, and bridges in Istanbul.

Suleiman was considered a very gracious and fair ruler, and he never tyrannized his people. One example of his kindness is presented in the webpage "The Sultans" by *TheOttomans.org*. In Suleiman's biography, they state that he found the tax coming from Egypt was so much that "he had made a research there and found that the people were overcharged, and discovered the governor was tyrannizing them, so he immediately changed the governor"³. Most rulers throughout history have never had a great reputation such as Suleiman. As ruler of the Ottomans, Suleiman was also called 'Kanuni' (Law giver) because he made written laws and applied them strictly³.

To expand the Ottoman Empire, Suleiman launched many invasions into neighboring territories. Suleiman participated in many of the invasions himself, to take charge and send his troops into battle. On August 9, 1521, he captured Belgrade, a Hungarian fortress which

2. "Mimar Koca Sinan". *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 25 Oct. 2016.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sinan>

3. "The Sultans". *TheOttomans.org*. 25 Oct. 2016.

<http://www.theottomans.org/english/family/suleyman1.asp>

succumbed to the Ottomans awesome firepower. The Ottomans were well known for their use of gunpowder and large cannons. Another significant territory that Suleiman conquered was the island of Rhodes. The article “The Ottoman Empire Expands to Egypt and in Europe, 1516-71” by *www.fsmitha.com* states that “the conquest over Rhodes was to eliminate all threats to Ottoman naval power in the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean seas”⁴. Indeed, the knights that inhabited the island were attacking Ottoman ships carrying goods traveling to Egypt before Rhodes was captured.

The article “The Ottoman Empire Expands to Egypt and in Europe, 1516-71” also describes that “during the course of his substantial extension of the Ottoman Empire he [Suleiman]... defeated and killed King Lewis of Hungary at Mohacs in 1526, taking Buda (Budin) in 1529 and unsuccessfully besieging Vienna in September and October of that year”⁴. Suleiman’s forces also overran Pest in 1526, and successfully defeated Transylvania in 1562. Furthermore, The Ottomans dominated the Mediterranean and Red Sea with their powerful naval fleet. Suleiman the Magnificent saw his last battle and died on the 7th September 1566 at the age of 71, while he was commanding the siege of Sziget, Hungary³. He was buried back home in Istanbul.

4. “The Ottoman Empire Expands to Egypt and in Europe, 1516-71”. *www.fsmitha.com*. 26 Oct 2016. <http://www.fsmitha.com/h3/h17isl-2.htm>

3. “The Sultans”. *TheOttomans.org*. 25 Oct. 2016. <http://www.theottomans.org/english/family/suleyman1.asp>

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