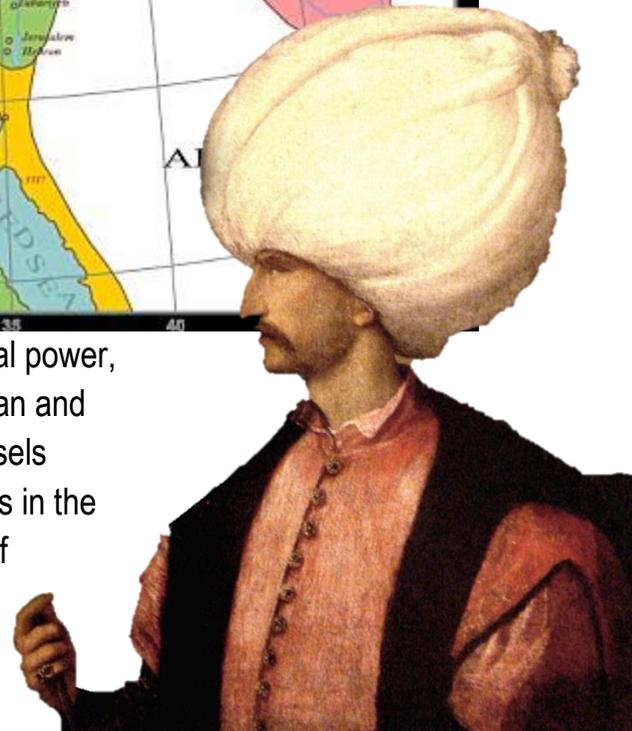


Suleiman the Lawgiver¹ and his empire

- ❖ Ottoman imperialism (expansion) climaxed during the reign of Suleiman I (Suleiman the Lawgiver), 1520-1566.
- ❖ Personally led armies that pushed the empire out in nearly every direction, including Europe (making it as far north as Vienna).



- ❖ Suleiman I also established the Ottoman Empire as a naval power, creating or fortifying pre-existing fleets in the Black, Caspian and Mediterranean Seas. Suleiman I challenged Christian vessels throughout the Mediterranean, as well as Portuguese ships in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. The Turks seized the island of Rhodes from the Knights of St. John, besieged Malta, acquired Yemen and Aden on the Arabian Peninsula.



¹ It is interesting to note that Suleiman is honoured in the West as “the Great,” while his own people use the epithet “the Law Giver”.

- ❖ The Empire of Suleiman I was a military creation, regarded by him as his personal possession. The Sultan exercised personal command of the army, appointed and dismissed officials at will, and adopted whatever policies he wished. In theory, the Sultan owned all land and granted it to their people on a hereditary basis in return for payment of fixed taxes.
- ❖ The sultan could issue legal edicts at will. The greatest of these were the many *kanun* (“laws”) issued by Suleiman I (hence the moniker “the Law Giver”).

Power

- ❖ Following Suleiman I, rulers continued the practice of enhancing their prestige through public works and the patronage of scholars. Resources were directed to construct mosques, government buildings, palaces, bridges, fountains, schools, hospitals and soup kitchens for the poor.
- ❖ The Ottomans took to beautifying their principle cities, especially Istanbul. Dilapidated and deserted after the conquest, it was transformed into a city of over 1 million inhabitants. At its heart was the great Topkapi Palace.
 - The Palace housed government offices, the mint, and meeting places for the Imperial Court. At its heart was the sultan’s residence with its harem, gardens, pleasure pavilions, and a repository for the most sacred possessions of the empire (including the mantle of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH).



Columbian Exchange

- ❖ The Columbian Exchange brought American crops to all the Islamic Empires (including the Ottoman Empire). European merchants introduced maize, potatoes, tomatoes, and other crops which soon found a place in regional cuisines.
- ❖ The Columbian Exchange strongly encouraged the consumption of coffee and tobacco, especially in the Ottoman Empire. Although native to Ethiopia and cultivated in southern Arabia, coffee did not become popular in Islamic lands until the 1500s. Like sugar, it traveled to Europe and from there to the Americas, where plantations specialized in the production of tropical crops for the world market. The Ottoman Empire took to coffee and sugar, and by the 1700s were being supplied solely by American producers and European merchants.
- ❖ English merchants introduced tobacco to the Ottomans around 1600, claiming it was useful for medicinal purposes. It spread rapidly.
- ❖ Coffeehouses (places to drink coffee and smoke tobacco) popped up all over the Ottoman Empire. Later sultans tried to curb the consumption of these items, but to no avail.
- ❖ Trade licenses were granted by the sultans to cement alliances against common enemies.

Population

- ❖ The Ottoman Empire grew from 5 million (1500) to 28 million (1600), but stagnated and declined to 24 million (1890s). The decline was largely due to territorial loss rather than a low birthrate.



Questions of Faith

- ❖ The Islamic Empires (Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal) relied on a long-established model to deal with subjects that were not Muslims. They did not require conquered peoples to convert to Islam, but extended to them the status of “protected people.” In return for their loyalty and payment of a special tax (called *jizya*) communities retained their personal freedom, kept their property, practiced their religion, and handled their own legal affairs.
- ❖ Within the Ottoman Empire autonomous communities, called *millet*, retained their own civil laws, traditions, and languages. *Millet* communities usually also assumed social and administrative functions in matters concerning birth, marriage, death, health and education.

Note taken from: Bentley, Jerry H. and Herb Ziegler. *Traditions and Encounters: A Global Perspective on the Past. Third Edition.* London: McGraw Hill, 2006.