Suleyman I
1494–1566

WHY HE MADE HISTORY During Suleyman’s reign, the Ottoman Empire became the most powerful empire in the world. He was the force behind the great military, cultural, and civic advances of the time.

As you read the biography below, think about how Suleyman’s leadership was instrumental in transforming the Ottoman Empire into the most powerful empire of the time.

Suleyman I (soo-lay-MAHN) was the sultan of the Ottoman Empire from 1520 to 1566. He was named after King Solomon. Because of his fairness, Suleyman became known as the second Solomon. Europeans called him “the Magnificent,” while the Ottomans called him Kanuni or “the Lawgiver.” In his time, he was considered the most important ruler in the world. How did Suleyman earn such titles?

Among Suleyman’s most notable contributions are his military achievements. As soon as he became sultan, he began military campaigns against the European Christians. He developed a strong and powerful army and navy. He conquered such places as Serbia, Greece, Hungary, Iran, and Iraq. Before long, Suleyman seized control of most of the eastern Mediterranean.

Suleyman was known to be a clever politician. He believed that European expansion was a major threat to Islam. To combat this, he constantly invaded European countries. He gave financial support to the growing Protestant countries in an attempt to weaken the Holy Roman Empire. He also helped and protected Muslim countries threatened by European expansion.

VOCABULARY

- **mosque** structure used by Muslims for public worship
- **aqueduct** structure for carrying flowing water from a distance
- **amended** revised, modified, or changed
Suleyman I, continued

Suleyman made important contributions to public works and the arts. He built many fortresses to defend his captured cities. He had mosques, bridges, aqueducts, and other public works built in the main Islamic cities. One of his most important achievements was the transformation of Constantinople into the Muslim city of Istanbul. Istanbul became the center of the Islamic Empire under Suleyman’s rule.

The most creative period in Ottoman history was during Suleyman’s time as ruler. He sponsored many artists, philosophers, and religious thinkers of the time. Suleyman was a writer himself and is considered one of the greatest Islamic poets.

Suleyman’s contributions to Ottoman social policy earned him the nickname “the Lawgiver.” Suleyman passed more laws than any of the previous sultans. He amended many existing laws to adapt the Islamic code of law to everyday life. Most importantly his amendments became the final form of the “Ottoman Laws,” many of which are still in effect today.

Under Suleyman, the Ottoman Empire reached its highest point in history. The time of his reign can be considered the golden age of the Ottoman Empire.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. What were Suleyman’s main military and political achievements?

2. Interpret Of all of Suleyman’s many achievements, which do you consider the most important? Why?

ACTIVITY

3. Imagine that upon Suleyman’s death, you are asked to give a short eulogy or tribute at his funeral. Write down what you would say about him.