### GUIDED READING  
The Ottomans Build a Vast Empire

**Section 1**

A. **Perceiving Relationships**  As you read this section, fill out the chart below by writing answers in the appropriate boxes.

| What role did each ruler play in the building and expansion of the Ottoman Empire? |
|---|---|
| 1. Osman |  |
| 2. Murad II |  |
| 3. Mehmed II |  |
| 4. Selim the Grim |  |
| 5. Suleyman |  |

B. **Identifying Supporting Details** List the achievements of Suleyman in the boxes below.

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<th>Social Achievements</th>
<th>Cultural Achievements</th>
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C. **Perceiving Relationships**  On the back of this paper, explain how **ghazis** and **Timur the Lame** relate to the Ottoman Empire.
The Europeans knew Suleyman as the Magnificent. However, to his own people, he was known as the Lawgiver. His place in Muslim history and in world history is closely connected to his legacy of laws.

In the Muslim tradition, the laws that originally came from the Qur’an are called the Shari’ah. They apply in any society that practices Islam. No ruler has the right to change or overrule those laws.

Sometimes situations arise for which the Shari’ah lacks clear guidance as to what should be done. Then a body of law called *kanun* is used to clarify the correct response. By the end of the 16th century, Ottomans had expanded the kanun so that it was a complete set of rulings. It was considered an imperial law code.

Suleyman reviewed and revised the kanun laws and coordinated them with the Shari’ah. He divided the kanun into two parts. One part dealt with rules for the government and the military. The second part was about treatment of the peasants and taxation. His laws included a system of taxation that was more difficult to abuse.

Suleyman’s criminal code was to be applied to all people living in the empire. Crimes were divided into severe crimes where execution or mutilation could be ordered, or smaller crimes where the punishment was usually a fine. Punishment could not be made without a written judgement. The laws remained in the form set by Suleyman and were known as the Ottoman laws.

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Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq was the Austrian ambassador in Constantinople from 1554 to 1562. In the following excerpts from his letters, Busbecq describes his impressions of Suleyman I, the Turkish sultan who ruled the Ottoman Empire at its peak. What do you learn about Suleyman's appearance and behavior? What do you learn about the organization of the Turkish army?

On his arrival we were admitted to an audience; but the manner and spirit in which he listened to our address, our arguments, and our message, was by no means favourable.

The Sultan [Suleyman] was seated on a very low ottoman, not more than a foot from the ground, which was covered with a quantity of costly rugs and cushions of exquisite workmanship; near him lay his bow and arrows. His air, as I said, was by no means gracious, and his face wore a stern, though dignified, expression.

On entering we were separately conducted into the royal presence by the chamberlains, who grasped our arms. This has been the Turkish fashion of admitting people to the Sovereign ever since a Croat, in order to avenge the death of his master, Marcus, Despot of Servia, asked Amurath for an audience, and took advantage of it to slay him. After having gone through a pretence of kissing his hand, we were conducted backwards to the wall opposite his seat, care being taken that we should never turn our backs on him. The Sultan then listened to what I had to say; but the language I held was not at all to his taste, for the demands of his Majesty breathed a spirit of independence and dignity, which was by no means acceptable to one who deemed that his wish was law; and so he made no answer beyond saying in a tetchy way, 'Giusel, giusel,' i.e. well, well. After this we were dismissed to our quarters.

The Sultan's hall was crowded with people, among whom were several officers of high rank. Besides these there were all the troopers of the Imperial guard, Spahis, Ghourebas, Ouloufedgis, and a large force of Janissaries; but there was not in all that great assembly a single man who owed his position to aught save his valour and his merit. No distinction is attached to birth among the Turks; the deference to be paid to a man is measured by the position he holds in the public service. There is no fighting for precedence; a man's place is marked out by the duties he discharges. In making his appointments the Sultan pays no regard to any pretensions on the score of wealth or rank, nor does he take into consideration recommendations or popularity; he considers each case on its own merits, and examines carefully into the character, ability, and disposition of the man whose promotion is in question. It is by merit that men rise in the service, a system which ensures that posts should only be assigned to the competent. Each man in Turkey carries in his own hand his ancestry and his position in life, which he may make or mar as he will. Those who receive the highest offices from the Sultan are for the most part the sons of shepherds or herdsmen, and so far from being ashamed of their parentage, they actually glory in it, and consider it a matter of boasting that they owe nothing to the accident of birth; for they do not believe that high qualities are either natural or hereditary, nor do they think that they can be handed down from father to son, but that they are partly the gift of God, and partly the result of good training, great industry, and unwearied zeal; arguing that high qualities do not descend from a father to his son or heir, any more than a talent for music, mathematics, or the like; and that the mind does not derive its origin from the father, but that the son should necessarily be like the father in character, but emanates from heaven, and is thence infused into the human body. Among the Turks, therefore, honours, high posts, and judgeships are the rewards of great ability and good service. If a man be dishonest, or lazy, or careless, he remains at the bottom of the ladder, an object of contempt; for such qualities there are no honours in Turkey!
This is the reason that they are successful in their undertakings, that they lord it over others, and are daily extending the bounds of their empire. These are not our ideas, with us there is no opening left for merit; birth is the standard for everything; the prestige of birth is the sole key to advancement in the public service. But on this head I shall perhaps have more to say to you in another place, and you must consider what I have said as strictly private.

For the nonce, take your stand by my side, and look at the sea of turbaned heads, each wrapped in twisted folds of the whitest silk; look at those marvelously handsome dresses of every kind and every colour; time would fail me to tell how all around is glittering with gold, with silver, with purple, with silk, and with velvet; words cannot convey an adequate idea of that strange and wondrous sight: it was the most beautiful spectacle I ever saw. . . .

The table at which the Pashas and the Ambassador were seated was protected by an awning. A hundred pages all dressed alike acted as waiters; their method of bringing the dishes to table was as follows.

First they advanced toward the table where the guests were seated, following each other at equal distances. Their hands were empty, as otherwise they would not have been able to make their obeisance, which was performed by their putting them on their thighs, and bending their heads to the earth. Their bows being made, the page who stood nearest the kitchen began taking the dishes and handing them on to the next, who delivered them to the page next to him, and so down the row until they reached the page who stood nearest the table, from whose hands the chief butler received them and placed them on the board. After this fashion a hundred dishes or more streamed . . . on to the table without the slightest confusion. When the dinner was served the pages again did reverence to the guests, and then returned in the same order as they had come, the only difference being that those who had been last as they came were the first as they retired, and that those who were nearest the table now brought up the rear. All the other courses were brought on to the table after the same fashion, a circumstance showing how much regard the Turks pay to order even in trifles, while we neglect it in matters of extreme importance.

Not far from the Ambassador's table his retinue was feasting with some Turks. . . .

You will probably wish me to give you my impressions of Solyman [Suleyman].

His years are just beginning to tell on him, but his majestic bearing and indeed his whole demeanour are such as befit the lord of so vast an empire. He has always had the character of being a careful and temperate man; even in his early days, when, according to the Turkish rule, sin would have been venial, his life was blameless; for not even in youth did he either indulge in wine . . . nor could those who were disposed to put the most unfavourable construction on his acts bring anything worse against him than his excessive devotion to his wife, and the precipitate way in which, by her influence, he was induced to put Mustapha to death; for it is commonly believed that it was by her philtres [love potions] and witchcraft that he was led to commit this act.

As regards herself, it is a well-known fact that from the time he made her his lawful wife he has been perfectly faithful to her, although there was nothing in the laws to prevent his having mistresses as well. As an upholder of his religion and its rites he is most strict, being quite as anxious to extend his faith as to extend his empire. Considering his years (for he is now getting on for sixty) he enjoys good health, though it may be that his bad complexion arises from some lurking malady. There is a notion current that he has an incurable ulcer or cancer on his thigh. When he is anxious to impress an ambassador, who is leaving, with a favourable idea of the state of his health, he conceals the bad complexion of his face under a coat of rouge, his notion being that foreign powers will fear him more if they think that he is strong and well. I detected unmistakable signs of this practice of his; for I observed his face when he gave me a farewell audience, and found it was much altered from what it was when he received me on my arrival.

Discussion Questions

Recognizing Facts and Details
1. According to Busbecq, what did Suleyman look like?
2. How did Busbecq describe the army personnel that were present?
3. Drawing Conclusions From reading Busbecq’s letters, what conclusions can you draw about the Ottoman Empire under Suleyman?
From its earliest days the city of Istanbul was accustomed to seeing preparations for war, and since it had become the capital city of the Turks such manifestations had become more frequent, more urgent and certainly more aggressive. The spring of most years saw the armies come together and set out against the enemy of the day. Certainly the first spring of a new reign was watched by the citizens with eager interest. It was not so much a question of ‘whether’ as of ‘when’. Suleyman in common with his great ancestors did not disappoint them. In the February of 1521 he set out on his first campaign.

This was to be a war with a difference, serious as all wars are, but carried forward with youthful lightheartedness and panache, a demonstration of the power of the Ottoman, warning his enemies that they had a new Sultan as watchful and warlike as any they had had in the past.

So the war drums had sounded and the horse-tail standards had been brought out. These were the ancient and visible signs that ‘God Almighty’s army’ was on the move, but more to the point hard and devoted work on the part of the whole state made sure that seven days from the first sounding of the drum at the gate of the New Palace, the army was ready. The whole machinery of the state was involved, for the army incorporated the state, and wherever the army went so too went the courts, the chancery and the seat of government. Not to mention the Church, for there was no war at this time that was not holy, and expedition against the forces of the infidel Christians.

Suleyman, sitting a magnificent Cappadocian horse, watched a sea of men flood through the great Hippodrome Square, his face beneath the huge turban, grave, expressionless, certainly showing none of the exultation that flowed through him at the sight of such warlike splendour. Behind him, on a platform erected for the occasion, stood Hafise [Suleyman’s mother], unveiled, white-robed and bejewelled as befitted her state, and flanked on each side by the ladies Gulbehar and Khurrem, both veiled, both staring straight ahead. And around and about, wherever they could insert themselves without danger of being trampled underfoot by the cavalry or crushed to death by the thundering wagons and siege engines, were the ordinary people of Istanbul, come to see, to point and shout and generally approve.

Not that all those fighting men who would converge on the White City were present, or even represented; some, such as the dreaded Tartar horsemen would only link up with the main army when they were well on their way towards the Danube. But there were assuredly enough and more than enough to strike dismay into the hearts of such Western observers as might have been courteously and no doubt sardonically invited to witness the spectacle.

First the light horse, the Akinji, irregular troops of disorderly ruffians who could never stand up to the attack of the disciplined Christian cavalry, but who attached themselves to the army for the sake of the plunder they might take if they were lucky. Also their effect could be devastating enough when they swept around the flanks of an enemy already disorganized by the attacks of the more formidable regular cavalry, murdering, pillaging, and swooping away again.

There were in all perhaps 40,000 of their infantry counterparts, the Azabs. Many of these were in peacetime criminals and ruffians who got their living as best they could. In time of siege such as the present war promised to be, they were particularly valuable, for they would be sent forward to break the enemy’s charge, or fill the ditches and moats with their bodies. They were expendable in the fullest sense of the word. Nor did they care. Their philosophy was simple: if they lived there
would be booty; if they died, martyrdom, and immediate translation to paradise.

After them rode the Delis or Madcaps, the 'crazy' company of scouts, their horses oddly festooned with fur and feathers, themselves equally outlandishly clad in capes of bear or lion skin, the whole crowned with leopardskin caps beneath which long hair flowed over their shoulders. These were religious fanatics who had mastered the art of the forlorn hope and carried out raids no one else would have attempted. Behind them came steadily on the cavalry themselves, following their red banner. Each man was heavily armed with knife and pistol, scimitar and mace, and each bore at his back his buckler and his bow and arrows, those short, long-flighted Turkish bows which could sometimes hit their target at over 600 feet. All were splendidly mounted, some on Arabs, some on Turkmans or Persians. These were perhaps the most colourful corps of the whole army, with their lofty white turbans, and the chain mail glinting beneath their purple, blue and scarlet robes. Precious stones studded their weapons and the trappings of their splendid horses.

Suleyman gave special attention to the auxiliary corps who followed the cavalry, for with his grasp of essentials he had already learned the importance of supply. He watched with a sharp eye as the commissariat wagons, laden with grain, trundled by, and cast an appreciative glance over the hundreds of swaying camels laden with powder and lead. No one, however, had eyes for anything or anyone else once the guns had rumbled by, for they were followed by the janissaries, the corps d'élite of Suleyman's army, then at the height of their efficiency as a war machine and, perhaps, of their loyalty to their Sultan. They marched on inexorably, rank upon rank of them, following their white banner, embroidered in gold with a text from the Koran and a two-edged flaming sword, and the three-horsetail standard of their Aga, who ranked as the third greatest man in the empire and was as much a minister of war for them as a general.

As jealously guarded as their banner and the standard were the great copper cauldrons which they carried into war with them, symbols of the food which came to them by right from the Sultan, and which, scanty as it might be, together with love of fighting and lust for booty, made up the only pleasure and ambition of their harsh lives. Indeed, the importance that food represented in their simple régime was pointed by the fact that the very officers took their titles from the kitchens: a colonel was the Chief Maker of Soup, a captain a Chief Supplier of Water. Their cooks marched in stations of honour, wearing black leather aprons. The horses of the water-carriers were wreathed with flowers. Plumes and dark blue cloaks swinging with their stride, their appearance was exotic indeed in the midst of that Asiatic horde, for young, beardless, as most of them were, they were also unmistakably European, recruited as they were from the sons of conquered Christians. Forcibly circumcised, taught the arts of war, forbidden to marry, they knew no home but a barracks and no pleasures but those of war. No wonder that their periodic outbursts of rage against authority were feared and dreaded by everyone from the Sultan down.

Suleyman watched them swing past him with a smile which might well have held a touch of irony. Today they were happy at the prospect of action and loot. He would have no trouble with them while the war went well and there were plenty of pickings. But there had been times in Egypt and Persia when they had refused to follow even Selim. This had better be a short and glorious war, he thought, until I get to know them better, or they get to know me.

He turned his attention to the hordes of dervishes who ran beside the ranks in their tall Persian hats of brown camel's hair, naked except for green aprons fringed with ebony beads. As they ran they yelled martial texts from the Koran or blew raucous blasts on horns. The din they made was supposed to inflame the troops to greater warlike activity, but as he very well knew, would also inflame the janissaries, if not his feudal troops and cavalry, to disorder and unrest if things did not go their way.

Nevertheless, he was happy and approving of practically everything he saw. The noise, enthusiasm, the steady movement of colourful uniform and steel chainlink armour delighted him. It would be a splendid adventure from which he promised himself he would learn much and return home triumphant.

Behind him, the ladies closest to him reacted each in her own way. Hafise, the daughter of a soldier, and the wife of another, with all that that implied, had seen it all before, but still could not resist its spell. Gulbehar, insecure and miserable
behind her veil, was conscious only that the noise was making her head ache and the dust drying her throat.

Khurrem alone was in her element. She had never seen anything like it. If it came to that, she had seen very little during the past few months, except the faces of women and the tops of turbans glimpsed from high up through lattices. . . . She stood motionless, eyes wide, unconscious of the passage of time. Now and again, she glanced down at the erect figure on the splendid horse at whose command this whole magnificent display had been set in motion, and wished that he might just once turn his head and look at her. She understood that this was a foolish whim that could not be gratified, but supposed there was no harm in wishing. She had another reason for pleasure, and was very well aware of it. For the first time she was one of the chosen few; she was no longer excluded and quite frankly gloried in the fact. She intended to remain in that élite, accepting all the advantages and the responsibilities and drawbacks as well.

Now passing by were the judges of Istanbul and the army, impassive and dignified in their huge white turbans and fur-edged robes. Khurrem watched them carefully, wondering who they were and which was which. The army's procession had been a spectacle which frankly delighted her as a spectacle. These distinguished men were a different matter. They were Suleyman's men and as such she felt they must be of interest to her. She wanted to be able to distinguish them, one from the other, to be able to form, however inadequately, an assessment of each man's character, at least to know what he looked like. That it was not her business, a mere woman, to stare frankly at men, particularly men of such outstanding importance and dare to weigh them up, never began to occur to her. . . .

Activity Options
1. **Analyzing Information** Create a chart to describe each group of soldiers in the procession. Name each group, such as the Azabs or the Delis, and describe its military role.

2. **Recognizing Point of View** Write a diary entry about the military procession from the point of view of a soldier, an ordinary citizen of Istanbul, or one of the women who watch the parade with the sultan.
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 spon-
sored a growth in the arts that rivaled the European
Renaissance. He ruled for 46 years and was per-
haps 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 con-
test 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 expe-
rience 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 sol-
diers were recruited as young boys from conquered
Christian territories and trained expressly for com-
bat. 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 rem-
nant 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 com-
mon citizens were spared any violence.

However, in 1529 the Ottomans failed to cap-
ture 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 con-
tral 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 peo-
ple’s 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 pub-
ished 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?
RETEACHING ACTIVITY  The Ottomans Build a Vast Empire

Section 1

Reading Comprehension  Find the name or term in the second column that best matches the description in the first column. Then write the letter of your answer in the blank.

1. Another word for an Ottoman leader that means “overlord” or “one with power”
   a. Timur the Lame
   b. Mehmed II
   c. devshirme
   d. Osman
   e. ghazis
   f. janissaries
   g. Suleyman the Lawgiver
   h. sultan

2. Murad II’s son who opened the walls of Constantinople to people of many religions
3. Under this Ottoman ruler, the Ottomans conquered and controlled the eastern Mediterranean territory
4. A system that drafted boys from conquered Christian territories, converted them to Islam, and trained them as soldiers or slaves
5. A term that means warriors for Islam
6. A leader whose forces defeated the Ottomans at the Battle of Ankara and temporarily stopped the expansion of the Ottoman Empire
7. A group of 30,000 soldiers who were loyal only to the Ottoman sultan and constituted the driving force behind the Ottoman military forces
8. A man known as the most successful ghazi whose followers became known as Ottomans