



# The Ottomans Build a Vast Empire

## MAIN IDEA

**EMPIRE BUILDING** The Ottomans established a Muslim empire that combined many cultures and lasted for more than 600 years.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Many modern societies, from Algeria to Turkey, had their origins under Ottoman rule.

## TERMS & NAMES

- ghazi
- Ottoman
- sultan
- Timur the Lame
- Mehmed II
- Suleyman the Lawgiver
- *devshirme*
- janissary

**SETTING THE STAGE** By 1300, the Byzantine Empire was declining, and the Mongols had destroyed the Turkish Seljuk kingdom of Rum. Anatolia was inhabited mostly by the descendants of nomadic Turks. These militaristic people had a long history of invading other countries. Loyal to their own groups, they were not united by a strong central power. A small Turkish state occupied land between the Byzantine Empire and that of the Muslims. From this place, a strong leader would emerge to unite the Turks into what eventually would become an immense empire stretching across three continents.

## Turks Move into Byzantium

Many Anatolian Turks saw themselves as **ghazis** (GAH•zees), or warriors for Islam. They formed military societies under the leadership of an emir, a chief commander, and followed a strict Islamic code of conduct. They raided the territories of the “infidels,” or people who didn’t believe in Islam. These infidels lived on the frontiers of the Byzantine Empire.

**Osman Establishes a State** The most successful ghazi was Osman. People in the West called him Othman and named his followers **Ottomans**. Osman built a small Muslim state in Anatolia between 1300 and 1326. His successors expanded it by buying land, forming alliances with some emirs, and conquering others.

The Ottomans’ military success was largely based on the use of gunpowder. They replaced their archers on horseback with musket-carrying foot soldiers. They also were among the first people to use cannons as offensive weapons. Even heavily walled cities fell to an all-out attack by the Turks.

The second Ottoman leader, Orkhan I, was Osman’s son. He felt strong enough to declare himself **sultan**, meaning “overlord” or “one with power.” And in 1361, the Ottomans captured Adrianople (ay•dree•uh•NOH•puhl), the second most important city in the Byzantine Empire. A new Turkish empire was on the rise.

The Ottomans acted kindly toward the people they conquered. They ruled through local officials appointed by the sultan and often improved the lives of the peasants. Most Muslims were required to serve in Turkish armies but did not have to pay a personal tax to the state. Non-Muslims did not have to serve in the army but had to pay the tax.

## TAKING NOTES

**Comparing** List the main rulers of the Ottoman Empire and their successes.

Rulers	Successes



## > Analyzing Primary Sources

### The Conquest of Constantinople

Kritovoulos, a Greek who served in the Ottoman administration, recorded the following about the Ottoman takeover of Constantinople. The second source, the French miniature at the right, shows a view of the siege of Constantinople.

#### PRIMARY SOURCE

After this the Sultan entered the City and looked about to see its great size, its situation, its grandeur and beauty, its teeming population, its loveliness, and the costliness of its churches and public buildings and of the private houses and community houses and those of the officials. . . .

When he saw what a large number had been killed and the ruin of the buildings, and the wholesale ruin and destruction of the City, he was filled with compassion and repented not a little at the destruction and plundering. Tears fell from his eyes as he groaned deeply and passionately: "What a city we have given over to plunder and destruction."

**KRITOVOULOS**, *Life of Mehmed the Conqueror*

#### DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTIONS

- 1. Comparing and Contrasting** *In what details do the two sources agree? disagree?*
- 2. Making Inferences** *Why do you think the sultan wept over the destruction?*



Mehmed's Turkish forces began firing on the city walls with mighty cannons. One of these was a 26-foot gun that fired 1,200-pound boulders. A chain across the Golden Horn between the Bosphorus Strait and the Sea of Marmara kept the Turkish fleet out of the city's harbor. Finally, one night Mehmed's army tried a daring tactic. They dragged 70 ships over a hill on greased runners from the Bosphorus to the harbor. Now Mehmed's army was attacking Constantinople from two sides. The city held out for over seven weeks, but the Turks finally found a break in the wall and entered the city.

Mehmed the Conqueror, as he was now called, proved to be an able ruler as well as a magnificent warrior. He opened Constantinople to new citizens of many religions and backgrounds. Jews, Christians, and Muslims, Turks and non-Turks—all flowed in. They helped rebuild the city, which was now called Istanbul. **A**

**Ottomans Take Islam's Holy Cities** Mehmed's grandson, Selim the Grim, came to power in 1512. He was an effective sultan and a great general. In 1514, he defeated the Safavids (suh•FAH•vihdz) of Persia at the Battle of Chaldiran. Then he swept south through Syria and Palestine and into North Africa. At the same time that Cortez was toppling the Aztec Empire in the Americas, Selim captured Mecca and Medina, the holiest cities of Islam. Finally he took Cairo, the intellectual center of the Muslim world. The once-great civilization of Egypt had become just another province in the growing Ottoman Empire.

#### MAIN IDEA

#### Analyzing Motives

**A** Why was taking Constantinople so important to Mehmed II?

## History Makers



### Suleyman the Lawgiver 1494–1566

In the halls of the U.S. Congress are images of some of the greatest lawgivers of all time. Included in that group are such persons as Thomas Jefferson, Moses, and Suleyman.

Suleyman's law code prescribed penalties for various criminal acts and for bureaucratic and financial corruption. He also sought to reduce bribes, did not allow imprisonment without a trial, and rejected promotions that were not based on merit. He also introduced the idea of a balanced budget for governments.

#### INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY

**RESEARCH LINKS** For more on Suleyman, go to [classzone.com](http://classzone.com)

## Suleyman the Lawgiver

The Ottoman Empire didn't reach its peak size and grandeur until the reign of Selim's son, Suleyman I (SOO•lay•mahn). Suleyman came to the throne in 1520 and ruled for 46 years. His own people called him **Suleyman the Lawgiver**. He was known in the West, though, as Suleyman the Magnificent. This title was a tribute to the splendor of his court and to his cultural achievements.

**The Empire Reaches Its Limits** Suleyman was a superb military leader. He conquered the important European city of Belgrade in 1521. The next year, Turkish forces captured the island of Rhodes in the Mediterranean and now dominated the whole eastern Mediterranean.

Applying their immense naval power, the Ottomans captured Tripoli on the coast of North Africa. They continued conquering peoples along the North African coastline. Although the Ottomans occupied only the coastal cities of North Africa, they managed to control trade routes to the interior of the continent.

In 1526, Suleyman advanced into Hungary and Austria, throwing central Europe into a panic. Suleyman's armies then pushed to the outskirts of Vienna, Austria. Reigning from Istanbul, Suleyman had waged war with central Europeans, North Africans, and Central Asians. He had become the most powerful monarch on earth. Only Charles V, head of the Hapsburg Empire in Europe, came close to rivaling his power.

**Highly Structured Social Organization** Binding the Ottoman Empire together in a workable social structure was Suleyman's crowning achievement. The massive empire required an efficient government structure and social organization. Suleyman created a law code to handle both criminal and civil actions. He also simplified the system of taxation and reduced government bureaucracy. These changes bettered the daily life of almost every citizen and helped earn Suleyman the title of Lawgiver.

The sultan's 20,000 personal slaves staffed the palace bureaucracy. The slaves were acquired as part of a policy called *devshirme* (dehv•SHEER•meh). Under the **devshirme** system, the sultan's army drafted boys from the peoples of conquered Christian territories. The army educated them, converted them to Islam, and trained them as soldiers. An elite force of 30,000 soldiers known as **janissaries** was trained to be loyal to the sultan only. Their superb discipline made them the heart of the Ottoman war machine. In fact, Christian families sometimes bribed officials to take their children into the sultan's service, because the brightest ones could rise to high government posts or military positions. **B**

As a Muslim, Suleyman was required to follow Islamic law. In accordance with Islamic law, the Ottomans granted freedom of worship to other religious communities, particularly to Christians and Jews. They treated these communities as *millets*, or nations. They allowed each *millet* to follow its own religious laws and practices. The head of the *millets* reported to the sultan and his staff. This system kept conflict among people of the various religions to a minimum.

#### MAIN IDEA

#### Making Inferences

**B** What were the advantages of the *devshirme* system to the sultan?

**Cultural Flowering** Suleyman had broad interests, which contributed to the cultural achievements of the empire. He found time to study poetry, history, geography, astronomy, mathematics, and architecture. He employed one of the world's finest architects, Sinan, who was probably from Albania. Sinan's masterpiece, the Mosque of Suleyman, is an immense complex topped with domes and half domes. It includes four schools, a library, a bath, and a hospital.



▲ Sinan's Mosque of Suleyman in Istanbul is the largest mosque in the Ottoman Empire.

**MAIN IDEA**

**Comparing**

Which cultural achievements of Suleyman's reign were similar to the European Renaissance?

Art and literature also flourished under Suleyman's rule. This creative period was similar to the European Renaissance. Painters and poets looked to Persia and Arabia for models. The works that they produced used these foreign influences to express original Ottoman ideas in the Turkish style. They are excellent examples of cultural blending.

## The Empire Declines Slowly

Despite Suleyman's magnificent social and cultural achievements, the Ottoman Empire was losing ground. Suleyman killed his ablest son and drove another into exile. His third son, the incompetent Selim II, inherited the throne.

Suleyman set the pattern for later sultans to gain and hold power. It became customary for each new sultan to have his brothers strangled. The sultan would then keep his sons prisoner in the harem, cutting them off from education or contact with the world. This practice produced a long line of weak sultans who eventually brought ruin on the empire. However, the Ottoman Empire continued to influence the world into the early 20th century.

**SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT**

**TERMS & NAMES** 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- ghazi
- Ottoman
- sultan
- Timur the Lame
- Mehmed II
- Suleyman the Lawgiver
- *devshirme*
- janissary

**USING YOUR NOTES**

2. Which do you consider more significant to the Ottoman Empire, the accomplishments of Mehmed II or those of Selim the Grim? Explain.

Rulers	Successes

**MAIN IDEAS**

3. By what means did the early Ottomans expand their empire?
4. Why was Suleyman called the Lawgiver?
5. How powerful was the Ottoman Empire compared to other empires of the time?

**CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING**

6. **EVALUATING DECISIONS** Do you think that the Ottomans were wise in staffing their military and government with slaves? Explain.
7. **EVALUATING COURSES OF ACTION** How did Suleyman's selection of a successor eventually spell disaster for the Ottoman Empire?
8. **ANALYZING MOTIVES** Do you think that Suleyman's religious tolerance helped or hurt the Ottoman Empire?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **EMPIRE BUILDING** Using the description of Mehmed II's forces taking Constantinople, write a newspaper article describing the action.

**CONNECT TO TODAY** CREATING A TIME LINE

Create a **time line** showing events in the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the modern nation of Turkey.