Suleiman I: ‘The Magnificent’ & His Legacies
(part 1)
Suleiman I: the “Magnificent”

(1520-1566)
... the “Magnificent”

[From Tughra of Suleiman the Magnificent]

(additional readings)
- Tughra reflective of Suleiman’s wealth, power

- “Suleiman shah ibn Selim shah khan al-muzzafar al-Daiman”: “Suleiman Shah son of Khan Selim, ever (the) victorious”

- History reflected in use of ‘Khan’ for his father (‘khan’ from Mongol ‘leader’)

- And ‘Shah’ for himself (Persian title ‘ruler’)

… “the Magnificent”
Like all Sultans, Suleiman struck his own coins. These are dated 1520; they carry the date of his inauguration.

[from ‘Suleiman I http://members.aol.com/dkaplan888/sule.htm]
... “the Magnificent”

Suleimaniye Mosque:
Testimony to “Magnificence”
Suleimaniye epitomized essence of Islam’s role in 16th century state:
- Centre of education
- medical training
- religious scholarship
- attached kitchen fed community, poor

Recognized power of the Sultan (number of minarets), no subsequent buildings could obscure view of Mosque

… “the Magnificent”
... “the Magnificent”

Contemporary View of Mosque (from perspective of Golden Horn)
… “the Magnificent”

The Suleimaniye (looking down to Golden Horn): school with classrooms, ‘dormitory’ and courtyard to left
Architect Mimar Sinan:
- born to simple stoneworker’s family
- ‘enlisted’ into Janissary corps [*note change in how one ‘became’ janissary*]
- trained as carpenter, became royal engineer
- traveled throughout empire, brought together architectural styles

Work epitomizes glory Suleiman gave to architecture, building during his reign
... “the Magnificent”

• Architect was Mimar Sinan (1490-1588):

[see Minar Sinan in ‘Resources’]

Photo from:
http://www.allaboutturkey.com/sinan.htm
Suleiman also known as the ‘Magnificent’ because the empire reached its geographical apex during his reign -- strong territorial advances in North Africa, central Europe (to walls of Vienna), Bessarabia and Iraq.
Successful seige of Island of Rhodes – major ‘message’ to west:
- followed earlier unsuccessful attempt by Mehmet II
- Island home to Knights of St John: battle was for control of Mediterranean
- 1522 Suleiman attacked with a fleet of 400 ships, army of 140,000 men
Siege of six months:
- land exhausted from lack of supplies, surrendered and negotiated peace
- Suleiman took Island
- permitted defenders to leave to Malta
- later attempt to conquer Malta (1565) failed
… “the Magnificent”

Expansion in North Africa:

- Result of reorganization Ottoman Navy by Admiral Hayreddin [“Barbarosa”; named Kapudan Pasha by Suleiman]

- Responsible for victories in Aegean Sea, and against European fleets
Suleyman receives his Grand Admiral, Hayreddin Barbarossa (1558)
Continued campaigns to the east:

- 1549 contested region around Van Lake (Ottoman-Safavid border)
- finally came under Ottoman control, absorbed into administration
- 1554 last campaign launched, leading to…
- 1555 formal peace with Safavids
Expansion into Europe focused on Hungary:
- 1521 conquered Danube city of Belgrade (siege undertaken from river by navy)
- 1526 devastated Hungarian forces at Mohacs
- 1529 Ottomans penetrated to Vienna
- failed siege ended the Ottoman’s westward expansion
The king of Hungary, Lajos II, in council before the Battle of Mohacs (1588)
The Ottoman army besieging Vienna 1529 (1588)
Hungary annexed in 1540:
- brought Ottomans deep into Europe, inviting enmity of western powers
- Increased numbers non-Muslims in empire
- Conversion rate high but...
- non-Muslims flourished under ‘millet’ system
- special taxes: Christians and Jews important in developing commercial relations

... the “Magnificent”
Expansion allowed further trade development
Suleiman the “Magnificent” in Procession
(note presence Devshirme, Janissaries)
“Kanuni” – the Lawgiver

- Suleiman widely known for clarifying legal codes and customary practice - called ‘kanun’.
“Kanuni” – the Lawgiver

- criminal punishment less severe
- More regulations: markets, prices, trade, taxes
- bodily punishment replaced with forced servitude, fines
- price controls bread, other necessities
- reforms strengthened links between Ottoman, Islamic \((sharia)\) law
- centralization public education hands of \(ulema\)
- creation of religious bureaucracy
“Kanuni”

Overall:
- even with geographical expansion, rule characterized by consolidation
- attention to assuring sustainability of empire: law reform supported attention to economy (price controls suggest significant problems)
- also spoke to creating more ‘modern’ society in which Europeans felt more comfortable
- reforms addressing social problems
- central role of Islam in state entrenched
Suleiman I: ‘The Magnificent’ & His Legacies (Part 2)
Suleiman: “Master” of the harem

15th century harem:
- slave women obtained through war, purchase
- gradually replaced strategic marriages
- provided wives to royal clan, administrators, provincial governors
Suleiman: “master” of the harem

Under Mehmet II:
- moved to new Topkapi Palace, harem housed in ‘old palace’, with ‘Queen Mother (valid sultan)

Under Suleiman:
- significant part of harem moved with attendants and services into Topkapi Palace (probably by 1534)
Suleiman: “master” of the harem
Suleiman: “master” of the harem

Marked significant changes: in power, authority of harem vis-à-vis Sultan
- once in Topkapi, grew in size
- in Suleiman’s reign, numbered 49
- under Selim II (c.1575) more than 70 (some moved back to Old Palace)
- by 1600/1, increased to 275 (in Topkapi), 298 (in Old Palace)
Suleiman: “master” of the harem
- extended Royal Family (‘active’ concubines, mothers of royal children, *valides sultans*) in Topkapi
- ‘Old Palace’ home to ‘retired’ harem
- upon death of sultan, harem left Topkapi
- many married to janissaries, ‘suitable men of state’ – manumitted, given dowery
- *Valides sultans* seldom married, became centres of their own courts with influence
Entertainment in a palace courtyard (1530)
Social Upheaval

[from Leslie Peirce: *Imperial Harem*]

Story of peasant father and daughter:

- father forced to sell his daughter to a village notable to pay his debts
- notable, in turn, took her to nearby city and sold her in the slave market
- Sultan’s Grand vizier, the Janissary agha, imperial troops all present
“Things had come to such a pass that even with so many great men in the city supposedly keeping order, not a one prevented this or was capable even of speaking out against it.”

[Imperial Harem, pp. 272-3]
Social Upheaval

Story of ‘subverted hierarchy’, undermining social order:

- father betrayed paternal duty
- village notable exploited rather than protected peasants
Social Upheaval

- Muslim law violated by enslavement of free Muslim
- Sultan’s representatives vizier, agha, imperial troops – all failed to preserve justice
Social Instability: the Harem

Kohi Bey (1630) degeneration of the empire was because:

- Sultan made himself "invisible", preoccupied with his harem (because of which) "the sultan no longer governs himself and neither is the grand vezir allowed to do so; power is actually in the hands of negro eunuchs and purchased slave girls".
Social Instability: the Harem

- princes no longer did duty in provinces
- remained in palace, under influence of women (concubines, valide sultan)
- Seen as ‘pawns’ of new factions, new powers
- hence true source of “weakness”: the harem
Harem:
- came to both represent new Palace order
- and be lightning rod for criticism new regimes

Princes and Eunichs in the Palace Garden
Chapter entitled ‘The Sedenatry Sultan’
- Reference initially to Selim II, followed by Murad III, Mehmet III
- Degree to which bound to Istanbul, Topkapi
- Preference for withdrawal from direct governance, warfare
- Concomitant rise in power of other court players: Harem, Pashas, vizirs, sheikh, army
Different ‘visions’ of Selim II
Legacies: The Changing Sultan

Suleiman’s Hurem Sultan began tradition of more visible, more public ‘royal’ women
- Selim’s concubine: long believed to be captured noble Venetian; in fact Greek
- Took active role in foreign affairs, public works
- Paid highest salary in empire
Legacies: The Changing Sultan

- Her son, Murad III, became Selim’s successor (brothers executed)
- She took official title of ‘*valide sultan*’ (Queen Mother)
- With Murad’s favourite concubine dominated court/family affairs
- During economic crisis (under Mehmet), lady-in-waiting of *valide sultan* (who represented Queen Mother) was blamed
Legacies: The Changing Sultan

- Growing importance Harem, valide Sultan enhanced position Chief Black Eunuch
- Gained control endowments for Holy Places, also those of previous four sultans
- Huge amounts of money involved: translated into huge amount power
- Achieved at cost of others in Palace: viziers, ministers, other Eunuchs
Chief White Eunuch (above)
Chief Black Eunuch and
Others with Princes (right)
Legacies: The Changing Sultan

- noted by contemporary intellectual, Mustafa Ali:

- ‘deleterious effects of the practices that were developing... because of the proximity to the Sultan, the eunuchs and concubines of the Harem were now in a position to influence appointments... even to sell them’
Legacies: The Changing Sultan

Alternative interpretation [Peirce]
- evolution royal women from wives (political alliances) to mothers (slave reproducers of heirs) reflective of evolution state
- male family members’ roles circumscribed with growth slavery, focus on unitary dynastic state
- led to inevitable rise power of valide sultan
Valid Sultan (centre) with others of Harem
[note Chief Black Eunuch at far left]
"The reason that religion and government [has] fallen into ruin and that the Muslims [are] mired in misery was that the Holy Law had been abandoned"… and the Queen Mother and her followers were ruining the government. As long as they continued, "disorder and depravity" would continue"

[Peirce – referencing Sheikh from eastern Anatolia, early 17th c]
Peirce goes on to argue that debate about women early 17th C. was really about order - need to ‘re-establish’ order in time of transformation

‘women’, especially royal women, became metaphors for larger societal concerns
Suleiman I: ‘The Magnificent’ & His Legacies (Part 3)
Other Changes also under way:
- Creation of Royal ‘Sheikh’
- Fostered Murad’s interest in Mysticism, interpreted dreams, forecast future
- Part of growing role Halveti dervish in sunni Ottoman regime
- Sokullu Mehmed Pasha (famous Pasha Suleiman, Murad, Mehmet) built lodge for personal sheikh attached to mosque he also built
Halveti Order of Dervishes

[contemporary website at
http://www.jerrahi.org/writings_english/invitation.htm]
Legacies: The Changing Sultan

Pashas/Viziers:
- Solullu Mehmed Pasha most famous: face of Selim and Murad’s government
- Serbian aristocrat by birth, ‘recruited’ into devshirme [note change in process recruitment]
- Succeeded ‘Barbarossa’ under Suleiman
- Also took on governorships, military commands
- Married Selim’s daughter
- Hierarchy of ‘pashas’ developed
Legacies: The Changing Sultan

Janissaries & military elite:
- Chapter [Finkel] begins with threatened mutiny of janissaries on accession of Selim
- Forced to ‘pay’ them to assure support
- Clear statement that sultan now depended on janissaries, other elite army units to rule: must be paid salaries
- In part, function of changing nature war: trained infantry more valuable than provincial cavalry – latter declined
Selim noted for Naval Activity:
- Critical Battles: Cyprus and Lepanto
- Cyprus controlled by Venice; paid tribute to Mamluks (Egypt) and Ottomans for ‘peaceful trade’
- Accused of backing attacks on Ottoman vessels
- Generated breaking of treaty: Ottomans attacked, laid siege to island 1571
Contemporary painting: conquering Limossal Castle

Ottoman Galley at Cyprus and Lepanto
A ‘Saviour of Christendom’ Image of Lepanto
A similar perspective of Lepanto
[note figure of Christ (upper left)
Legacies: Military Challenges

- ‘colonization’ of Cyprus reveals something of late 16th C empire
- Difficulty attracting settlers (climate, resources)
- Forced settlement: women as brides for soldiers, peasants promised land and tax relief
- Also became useful ‘place of exile’ for those threatening state (eg Kizilbash)

[see Additional Reading ‘Firman of Selim II – Conquest of Cyprus’]
Selim II
Firman (copy of original)
following Conquest of Cyprus
Legacies: Military Challenges

Revolts/resistance: Tatars, Cossacks

- In Caucasus, Tatar Khanates offered 3rd choice for loyalties: Muscovy
- Showed vulnerability of Ottomans in region, dependent on Tatars who played one ally off against the others
- Of ‘strategic’ interest to Safavids, Moscovy and Ottomans
Revolts/resistance: Tatars, Cossacks
- Cossacks attacking in Steppe region, north of Black sea
- Raids, taking captives, arms, livestock
- Undermined Ottoman’s claim to ‘control and protect’ local population
- last quarter century, took to boats: raided shoreline, reaching Bosporus Straights
Legacies: Military Challenges

Revolts/resistance: ‘Celali Rebellions’
- named after Sheikh Celal who led eastern religious revolt early 16th C.
- Wide range rebellions against state: ‘like brigands, pillaging poor villages, taking young boys and virgin girls, stealing livestock, food stores, capturing and torturing men’
- Rose in inverse proportion to conflict with Safavids
Legacies: Military Challenges

- Religious rhetoric of initial rebellions lost
- Became secular revolts of religious students, governors, demobilized soldiers, deserters, landless peasants
- Localized to Anatolia
- Government adopted policy of co-opting most effective leaders: dangerous for future
Legacies: Military Challenges

- Revolts/resistance: Safavids (again)
- Death of Shah 1576: re-ignited war with Ottomans
- Factional in-fighting over succession drew on latent frustrations Kizilbash
- Story of how Murad drawn into war revealing of functioning hierarchy of pashas & palace intrigue [Finkel chapter]
- Aim to oust Mehmed Pasha in favour of another (who had been successful in Cyprus)
Legacies: Military Challenges

- Also underscored problems of holding inhospitable parts of empire: here dependent on local troops (Tatars) who were not necessarily loyal

- War lasted on-off until 1639; weakened eastern regions, contributed to economic crisis
Legacies: Economic Challenges

Spain and the New World:
- Portuguese and explorations/commercial development Africa Asia only part of problem
- Spain active in New World: 16th sending flotillas loaded with silver back to Europe
- Impact on Europe: inflation
- Ottomans increasingly tied into European commercial networks in 16th century: impact transferred into Ottoman economy
Legacies: Economic Challenges

- Since early 16th C. coins minted from New World silver driving coins with lower silver content from market
- 1585-6: Ottomans in midst of war with Safavids, receiving much diminished revenue from new conquests, needing ‘cash’ to pay janissaries and other military
- Cut silver content of currency in half: debasement of silver asper caused major financial instability
Legacies: Economic Challenges

- Those on fixed salaries suffered most: military and bureaucracy (including volatile janissaries)
- Many refused payment in coin
- Taxes paid in ‘cash’: total value of taxes paid to treasury cut in half
- Government in turn raised taxes: some paid more; others paid new taxes (eg provincial cavalry; peasants)
- Introduction of ‘tax-farming’
- Borrowing from wealthy (notables, merchants)
Legacies: ‘Time of Troubles’

- last years of 16\textsuperscript{th} c. ‘unraveling’: Mustafa Ali questions basis of Ottoman legitimacy (in light of Safavides, Mughals, Ozbek)
- Ottoman’s only legitimacy rooted in: ‘dynastic order, committed to universal justice dispersed by strong central authority’
- Accuses Suleiman of undermining legitimacy by giving ‘favourites’ hand in affairs of state
Legacies: ‘Time of Troubles’

- In wake of Suleiman: sultan withdrew from active governance, raised profile of Harem, pashas, vizirs – created conditions for increased competition
- Nature of war shifted ‘vision’ of Sultan from warrior-hero to throne-ensconced power
- Pashas initially took control military initiatives
- Defeat in battle brought defeat in court: increasingly, ‘leadership’ devolved to lesser pashas, military leaders
Legacies: ‘Time of Troubles’

Internal criticism of ‘evolution’:
- ‘mirrors for princes’:
  - advocated strong ruler
  - balance between salaried army & provincial cavalry;
- peace and security to ensure production and ability to pay taxes;
- adherence to sultanate law (Suleiman ‘Kanuni’)
- protection of ‘elite’ tax-exempt classes against intrusion of ‘foreigners’
Legacies: ‘Time of Troubles’

- Move towards favourites, supporting competing factions was move away from ‘strong’ and ‘just’
- Build up of janissaries (1527 – 8000; 1574 – 13,500; 1601 – 40,000) at expense of cavalry (in turn reduced in real terms, substituted by taxes) destroyed critical ‘balance’
- Peasants also being taken up into army; upon being de-mobilized, kept arms turned countryside into bandit-ridden territory
- ‘peace’, ‘security’ no longer assured
Legacies: ‘Time of Troubles’

- Royal ‘Sheikh’s’ power rising at cost of Royal Vizier: as religious hierarchy lost distance from secular affairs, also lost ‘moral authority’
- Began to be source of law
- Sense that state religion becoming puritanical, inflexible
- Reflected in ‘laws’ restricting apparel of Christians, Jews; banning alcohol and so on
- Earlier ‘tolerance’ challenged in later part 16th C
Legacies: ‘Time of Troubles’

- Jews: prominent in commerce, court (physicians, diplomats, advisors), tax-farmers
- Latter part century, privileged positions challenged: imposition extraordinary taxes contravening traditional exemptions
- Thought that murder of valide sultan’s lady-in-waiting connected to her Jewish background
- Greek Orthodox and Byzantine heritage also under attack
Legacies: ‘Time of Troubles’

- Murad III ‘avid patron of the art of the book’
- Major Ottoman manuscripts produced, illustrated in ‘traditional’ miniature style
- First to commission portraits of sultans to illustrate historical texts
- Commissioned by Grand Vizier in Venice
- Marked representation of ‘Sultan on his Throne’ rather than on his horse: reflected changed contemporary reality as well as controversy