whole lacks unity of design in comparison with Bayezid's complex at Edirne or Mehmed's in Istanbul, the cascade of domes from the mosque to its courtyard shows a far greater sense of integration than does the Fatih Mosque. The expanded role of semidomes evidently derives from the examples of Hagia Sophia and the Mosque of Mehmed II, and Ottoman architects of the early sixteenth century were clearly grappling with the creative interpretation of earlier buildings. Two lateral wings, with minarets at their ends, are usually assumed to have served as hospices for traveling dervishes, although their function is still undetermined and their present condition, which shows no signs of alteration, is scarcely appropriate for that purpose. The beautifully finished stone construction exemplifies the fine materials and workmanship available to royal patrons and is characteristic of all later imperial mosques in the capital.

The Age of Sinan

Selim I seems to have had little time or inclination for building; his mosque in Istanbul, which was completed in 1522 and closely modeled on the Mosque of Bayezid in Edirne, may actually have been built under his son Süleyman (r. 1520–66).65 Selim's greatest contribution to the history of Ottoman architecture may have been quite inadvertent, for it was during his reign that the young Sinan (d. 1588), the greatest of Ottoman architects and one of the great architects of all times, was recruited to the dynasty, the Ottoman system of collecting subject Christian boys. The figure of Sinan and his role as director of the palace department of buildings (bakshaş imârât-i渗) dominate Ottoman architecture in the Middle East and later years of the sixteenth century. In 1525 the department had thirteen architects, all Muslim; by 1604 it had tripled in size, employing twenty-three Muslims and sixteen Christians, testifying to its increased involvement in the architectural affairs of the entire empire.66 Sinan's life and career have long been the stuff of legend, and his name has attracted buildings with the same power that George Washington's name has attracted beds.67 He seems to have been born in Anatolia to a Christian family, recruited for Ottoman service as a boy, and trained in the science and art of building while serving in the campaigns of Selim I and Süleyman. By 1525 he had become a full-fledged Janissary, and his career as an architect became intricately tied to the reign of Süleyman, arguably the greatest of Ottoman sultans.

In 1538 Sinan was appointed chief court architect (minârî-bâşı) and given the commission to design and build a mosque for Süleyman's wife Haseki Hürrem Sultan (Roselane) at Aksaray in Istanbul. The complex of mosque, madrasa, hospital, hospice, and school was supported by a khan, bath, wood-store, slaughterhouse, shops, and warehouses which produced a combined annual revenue of half a million liras. The single-domed mosque and U-shaped madrasa follow plans established in the early decades of the century and give little evidence of the architect's later genius. Sinan's first major commission was the Şehzade Mosque in Istanbul [275, 276]. It was built between 1545 and 1548 at the sultan's behest in memory of Mehmed, his son and heir-apparent (şehzade), who had died of smallpox at the age of twenty-two. Occupying a site on the city's third hill, the complex includes a mosque and its courtyard, as well as a madrasa, hospice, school, tomb, and caravanserai. The plan of the mosque is based on two adjoining squares (each approximately 38 meters to a side internally), which have been "riveted" together with two minarets.68 One square, comprising the arcaded court, is open to the sky, while the other, comprising the prayer hall, is covered with a 19-meter dome, four semidomes, and four small domes in the corners. The plan is a logical development not only from such earlier buildings as the Mosque of Bayezid II but also from Sinan's mosque for Süleyman's daughter Mihrimah Sultan in Üsküdar, which the architect had planned a year earlier.

Although Sinan later considered the Şehzade Mosque a work of his apprenticeship, several of its features show evidence of his sophisticated ability to innovate within the canons of the evolving Ottoman style. The loads of the superstructure have been concentrated on four massive piers beneath the central dome and the buttresses along the exterior walls. The bulk of the piers has been minimized in modulating their shape; the massiveness of the buttresses has been concealed by moving the exterior walls, except on the side of the mosque facing the court, towards the inner face of the buttresses. In that way most of their bulk lies outside the mosque. The concentration of loads allowed for thinner walls and more and larger windows. The exterior has been articulated to maximize its visual impact: the cascades of domes and semidomes eddy around the four corners which stabilize the piers. Loggias conceal the buttresses on the lateral sides of the mosque, superposed windows lighten the façades of the court, and delicate tracery enlivens the shafts of the minarets. The dramatic spaciousness and airiness of the Şehzade Mosque are apparent in comparison with the other imperial mosques standing in the city at that time.69 The ostensible justification for this building, the tomb of Şehzade Mehmed, stands behind the mosque, slightly below the axis. Modeled on the tomb of Selim I, it is a domed octagonal prism (diameter 9.20 meters) with a fluted dome and a tetrasystyle portico of pink porphyry and verde-antique columns. Colorful cuerda seca tile panels flank the entrance; those on the interior cover the entire wall from the floor to the springing of the dome and depict an illusionistic arcade, with serrated leaves and blossoms, motifs popular in contemporary textiles and ceramics [501, 502]. In some of the tiles around the upper windows, the designers attempted to circumvent the inherent limitations of the cuerda seca technique, which required lines at the edge of colored areas, by introducing an unusual white ground. These tiles are believed to be among the last works of a group of itinerant Italian tile masters brought by Selim I from Tabriz nearly thirty years earlier.70

As a Janissary, as well as an architect and engineer who could assist in the design and construction of bridges and fortresses, Sinan accompanied Süleyman on campaigns in Europe and the Middle East and undoubtedly became familiar with the great architectural monuments of the Islamic and pre-Islamic past. He is credited with designing buildings from Buda in Hungary to Mecca in Arabia, and these structures, whether or not by the hand of the master, were instruments in a concerted Ottoman policy of establishing sovereignty through the erection of buildings in a distinctively Ottoman style with monumental domes and tall thin minarets. The design and supervision of these works in the provinces by court architects in the capital were made possible not only by the Ottoman system of central administration but also by the development of imperial standards and a system of architectural representation. Thus it could be expected that plans drawn up in the capital would be reanuated to be executed in the provinces by local talent or that materials could be ordered in one part of the empire for use elsewhere.
Many of these features can be seen in the work ordered by Suleyman at Jerusalem. Not surprisingly, the sultan considered himself the second Solomon, and it was only appropriate for him to order the refurbishment of the Dome of the Rock, the earliest example of Islamic architecture and the structure that stood on the site of the first Solomon’s temple.12 The refurbishment in the Ottoman style was further appropriate as the Dome of the Rock stands opposite the splendid Ashrafiyya madrasa [120], built some sixty years earlier in the finest Mamluk style. Sinan is said to have stopped in Jerusalem during his pilgrimage to Mecca and organized the restoration of the Dome of the Rock. The major impact of this work, whether or not Sinan was responsible, was the replacement of the Umayyad mosaics on the exterior of the drum and octagon with tiles executed in cuerda seca and polychrome underglaze, along with tile mosaic and blue-and-white tiles [277].13 An inscription in tile mosaic bears the date 952/1545–6, while a tile on the north porch painted in blue, turquoise, and black on a white ground is signed ‘Abdallah of Tabriz and dated 959/1552; work continued at least until the end of Suleyman’s reign.14 Unlike the lamps made at Iznik that Suleyman presented to the Dome of the Rock [303], the tiles appear to have been made locally, although there is no evidence for an indigenous and sophisticated pottery industry in Syria at that time. During the course of their work, the tile-makers seem to have developed a technique in which the glaze overlows the cuerda seca outlines. Although the total effect of the tile renovation (restored in the mid-twentieth century) remains one of the most striking images in Islamic art, tiled exteriors were not repeated in Ottoman architecture, either because the technique was site-specific or because it was not considered particularly successful as design. The restoration of the Dome of the Rock, however, seems to have been instrumental in the development of a contemporary taste for large expanses of underglaze-painted tiles on the interior of buildings. This new style of tile, the main product of an expanded ceramic industry in Iznik, was characterized by large-scale compositions easily readable from a distance. The earlier soft palette of blues and greens was replaced with a brilliant one dominated by a distinctive tomato red, which seems to have been deemed more effective for the visual organization of large mural surfaces.15

Another of Sinan’s projects for Suleyman outside the capital was a complex of buildings for pilgrims along the Barada river in Damascus. Although the pilgrimage route from Damascus had long been important, it gained prominence after the Ottomans took control of Syria in 1516, and facilities along the pilgrimage route there became increasingly a matter of imperial concern.16 The Sulaymaniya Complex, completed in 1533–5, was designed by Sinan, but executed by an assistant, to judge from the local materials and techniques used, particularly the alternating white and dark gray stone construction of its walls, a distinctly Syrian feature.17 The complex is a symmetrical composition organized around a longitudinal axis: the mosque and the soup kitchen (Arab. dār al-‘ilm) stand at the ends of a rectangular court, flanked by pairs of caravanserai and hospices,
the whole enclosed within a wall. The mosque is a single domed structure, flanked by minarets and preceded by a deep double porch [278]. The relatively small size of the complex (one hectare) seems to have assured the successful integration of parts. Tile lanterns over the mosque’s windows are executed in the underglaze technique currently fashionable in Iznik in Turkey, but repeated the traditional designs of ebru style tiles. They differ from those produced at Iznik in the absence of the brilliant white slip and bright red.65

The most ambitious of Suleyman’s many projects in the Balkans, Istanbul, Anatolia, Syria-Palestine, Arabia, and Iraq was Sinan’s complex for the sultan in the capital [279]. It is a conscious restatement of the complex of Mehmed Faith; none of Bayezid’s complexes nor that of Selim I approaches its grand scheme. A sloping site of over seven hectares overlooking the Golden Horn was made available when the Old Palace was damaged in a fire. Work was begun in July 1550 and continued at least until October 1557. The first task must have been terracing the site to provide foundations for the complex, which was to comprise a congregational mosque, two mausoleums, four general madrasas, two specialized madrasas (one for medicine and one for hadith), a Koran school for children, a hospital, a hostel, a public kitchen, a caravanserai, a hammam, and rows of small shops.

The presence of a solitary Sufi hostel contrasts sharply with the six madrasas, an anomaly explained by the declining power of the Sufi shaikhs, who had been instrumental in the Ottomans’ rise, in face of the increasing centralization of the Ottoman state. The caravanserai mosque, which had been charac-

teristic of early Ottoman imperial foundations, was gradually abandoned after the conquest of Constantinople. Suleyman, known in Turkish as Kanuni, or law-giver, entrusted Ebussuud Efendi, the leading religious figure of the day, with the task of harmonizing traditional Islamic law with the administrat-ive practices of the Ottoman state. The endowment deed to the complex specifies its function as the most prestigious center of religion and religious law in the empire, “to elevate matters of religion and religious sciences in order to strengthen the mechanisms of worldly sovereignty and to reach happiness in the afterworld.”

The account books from the construction of the Suley- maniye Complex provide invaluable evidence for the procedures followed in such a major enterprise.66 Materials and craftsmen were assembled from Istanbul and other parts of empire; indeed, most of the official correspondence and court orders concern the acquisition of marble, porphyry, and granite. The most expensive and time-consuming operation was the search for four red granite columns for the mosque and their transport to the building site. The court orders agree with textual reports that one column came from the Old Palace, in the gardens of which the complex was being built, one from Baalbek in Lebanon, one from Alexandria in Egypt, and one from the fifth hill of Istanbul (Kurtaş Mahalle), but it is impossible that the four matched columns in the mosque could have come from these four disparate sources. Rather, the four columns assembled were probably stored in the imperial warehouses for another use, and a matched set of four columns found elsewhere. The official record, no matter how attractive, does not always have to be the truth.

The account books also record wholesale purchases of Iznik tiles, lapis lazuli for blue pigment, assorted colors, foreign gold coin for gilding, gold foil, gold leaf, mercury, ostrich eggs, tin, timber, planks, sandarac resin, and petrole-um thinner. The wide spectrum of hues reported is paralleled in Ottoman architectural decoration or elsewhere in Islamic art, so the varnishes, sizes, and pigments must have been ordered for use on objects associated with the complex. Of the 3,525 workers assembled from throughout the empire, half were Christian and half Muslim; all were kept under strict discipline. When finished, the complex had a staff of 748, whose stipends accounted for nearly one million akçe. The endowment of the complex was consolidated into one deed, according to a rescript made during the reign of Murad III (1574–95), when the annual income was over five million akçe. Eighty-one percent of the income derived from taxes on villages in the European part of the empire.

For this immense project, Sinan exploited the sloping site, terracing the shops, inkeepers’ rooms, and caravanserais into the hillside, relaxing the absolute symmetry that characterizes such earlier complexes as the Faith in Istanbul or the Suleymaniye in Damascus, and more skillfully integrating the complex into the urban fabric. The overall impression of the complex is of an imposing pyramidal mass of domed units punctuated by the four slender minarets of the mosque [380]. The mosque itself stands in the middle of a high walled enclosure (216 by 144 meters) and is preceded by a rectangular court (144 by 57 meters) with minarets at each of its four corners. Although this arrangement had been intro-
danced a century earlier at the Üç Şerefeli Mosque in Edirne [183], the relationships among the minarets and between the minarets and the mosque are more carefully controlled in the Sileymaniyah Mosque, for the two minarets at the juncture of mosque and court are taller and have three balconies, while those at the north end of the court have only two. The overall concept of the building is based closely on Hagia Sophia: it consists of a central domed space (diameter 25.20 meters) expanded along the qibla axis with semi-domes, themselves expanded with semicircular exedrae, the whole flanked by subsidiary spaces covered with a series of smaller domes. The somber interior [181] is spatially different from Hagia Sophia, however, for the nave and screened aisles of the church have been opened to form a single open space for prayer, interrupted only by the four massive piers supporting the central dome and the two great columns on either side. The exterior composition of gray, lead-covered domes and white stone walls is carefully orchestrated, lightened only by the arched openings of windows and arcades arranged in three fives. The mosque is a logical refinement of Sinan's earlier spatial experiments, in the Schahzade Mosque, for example, and exemplifies the classical Ottoman style, in which traditional forms are repeatedly honed to perfection.

The ornament on the interior of the mosque was also kept deliberately to a minimum, although it was the first of many mosques in Istanbul to receive extensive but discreet decoration in underglaze-painted tiles, particularly along the qibla wall.33 The tiles flanking the mihrab are a single design painted on many tiles; when repeated they form a continuous pattern. The calligraphic roundels set in the large square panels above the mihrab are each composed of sixty-four square tiles surrounded by a border of narrower tiles. Stencils for them were designed by Ahmed Karahisari, the foremost calligrapher of the day, or one of his students.34 The tiles in the techniques of cuerda seca and monochrome glazing, which were used for areas of secondary importance and minarets, continued to be produced in Istanbul, but underglaze-painted tiles were largely made in commercial establishments at Iznik, probably because they had the capacity to produce the large expanses of tile revetment that were becoming popular. This development brought about several changes: the use of underglaze painting allowed for a greater sense of draftsmanship; the new designs and large expanses to be covered seem to have encouraged the change from a hexagonal format, characteristic of the Persian tradition dominant in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, to a square format. The inscriptions in the mosque were prepared by Ebussud Efendi; they are all Koranic except for the foundation inscription, which emphasizes the sultan's Ottoman lineage, his divine right to rule, and his role as the protector of orthodox Islam and the Sharia against heterodoxy.

Suleyman died on 7 September 1566, during the siege of Szegvár in Hungary; his embalmed body was brought to Istanbul later that year and buried in the cemetery behind the mosque. Suleyman's octagonal tomb, which was modeled after that of the Dome of the Rock, was completed a year later. The walls and pendentives are sheathed with magnificent tiles below stained glass windows and a dome with designs painted over carved plaster. Curiously, any intended reference to the Dome of the Rock was not visible from the exterior.

The service of the chief court architect were also available to members of the upper echelons of the Ottoman court, represented by such figures as Rüstem Pasha (ca. 1530–1562). Born in Isonia, he rose to be a general in the Ottoman army and married Suleyman's daughter Mihran in 1539. He was noted for his financial acumen and became increasingly involved in court intrigue. Appointed grand vizier in 1544, he was dismissed in 1552 for plotting on behalf of his mother-in-law, Hürem Sultan, the execution of Şehzade Mustafa, Suleyman's son and heir-apparent. After two years of voluntary retirement with his wife, Rüstem was reinstated as grand vizier and survived in the post until his death. He accumulated vast wealth during his career and at his death left a fortune in estates, cash, and luxuries; his will is said to have received two thousand ducats a day from the tax-farms of the Bursa silk looms and the salt-pan at Cilla. His library contained thousands of calligraphed volumes, as well as innumerable chests of miscellaneous papers and books.35

The most famous of Rüstem Pasha's many pious foundations is the mosque built for him by Sinan near Emniyet, below the Suleymaniye Complex.36 The building is located on one of the most valuable sites in a bustling market area of Istanbul, and even such a powerful patron had to go to great lengths to acquire it. The Byzantine church on the site had been converted into a mosque in the thirteenth century, and Rüstem had to obtain a legal opinion (Arab, fatwa) condemning the mosque as no longer adequate to meet the needs of the congregation. To appease the supervisors of the endowment of the earlier mosque, he was forced to use the materials salvaged from it to build a replacement elsewhere.

Work on Rüstem's own mosque was incomplete at the patron's death, and his widow had to petition her father for funds to complete it. The mosque is built above a row of shops and a cross-vaulted warehouse which provided revenues for upkeep. The substructure also served to raise the mosque so that it would offer a more monumental profile than might be expected from its size. The small mosque comprises a rectangular prayer hall with central dome (17.20 meters in diameter), preceded by five domes and flanked by two-storied aisles. The dome (22.8 meters high) rests on a high octagonal zone of transition supported by the exterior walls and four massive piers. Four semidomes fill the corner spaces.

The most notable feature of the Mosque of Rüstem Pasha, however, is the extensive revetment of Iznik tiles on the interior [382]. They cover the walls, piers, mihrab, and mihrab in a web of stylized floral and foliate designs executed on a white slip in black, purple, dark blue, turquoise blue, and red under a transparent glaze. In this comparatively intimate setting, Sinan seems to have been experimenting with the lavish use of tiles, which he had used sparingly and to little effect in the grand Suleymaniye Mosque. The tiles, which show great diversity of design, include both large compositions spread over many tiles and designed to fit a specific surface and mass-produced modular tiles cut to fit the wall on which they were installed.37 The designs combine elongated leaves with jagged edges with flowers and leaves depicted on the contemporary textiles whose production had been encouraged by the vizier's fiscal policies (see Chapter 16). The Mosque of Rüstem Pasha and the contemporary Mosque of the Kızılay in Adana set a precedent for lavish tile revetments which continued to be popular for the remainder of the century.38

Sinan's masterpiece is the complex at Edirne designed and built for Suleyman's son and successor, Selim II (r. 1566–74) [383, 384]. Although the city was no longer the capital, it remained important as the gateway to the extensive Ottoman domains in Europe and staging-point for campaigns to the west. As crown prince Selim had already commissioned buildings, and funds for the new building were supplied by the spoils from his campaign in Cyprus, which amounted to 27,000 purses, according to the contemporary chronicler Evliya Celebi. The Silemiye Complex was begun in 1568 on a prominent site (190 by 130 meters) in the center of the city which had once been occupied by a palace constructed by Yıldırım Bayezid. The mosque is set in the center of the site; a madrasa and a school for hadith occupy the rear corners, and a covered market (Turk. arast), built somewhat later, runs along one flank.

According to Sinan's biography, the Fatih-i 'Rüyası, written by Sai Mustafa Celebi near the end of the architect's life: 
Sultan Selim Khan ordered the erection of a mosque in Edirne... His humble servant prepared for him a drawing depicting, on a dominating site in the city, four minarets on the four corners of a dome. All four had three balconies, two of them with separate staircases leading to each balcony. The Üç Şerefeli minaret is like a thick tower, but the Selimiye minarets are slender. The difficulty of putting three staircases in shafts as slender as these should be obvious to all. Those who consider themselves architects among Christians say that in the realm of Islam no dome can equal that of the Hagia Sophia; they claim that no Muslim architect would be able to build such a large dome. In this mosque, with the help of God and the support of Sultan Selim Khan, I erected a dome six cubits higher and four cubits wider than the dome of the Hagia Sophia.17

Sinan's boast was carefully crafted: the dome is approximately the same diameter as the slightly elliptical one of Hagia Sophia and is indeed higher, although the entire building is twelve meters shorter from pavement to crown. Contemporary eyes accepted the validity of the claim and believed that the architecture of the Ottomans had finally and demonstrably surpassed that of the Ancients. Seen from afar, the Selimiye presents an unforgettable profile: the four pencil-shaped minarets, each grooved to accentuate its verticality, are some of the tallest ever built (20.89 meters from ground to finial). They frame the central mass and delimit it from its surroundings. Sinan's concern with building so high, however, makes the exterior less integrated than that of the Süleymaniye. There the minarets are set around the court and provide a counterpoint to the high central mass of the dome, and the domes and half-domes cascade to the ground without the interruption of the high drum of the Selimiye. Nevertheless, the careful articulation of the exterior of the Selimiye is exquisite. The system of support is delicately suggested by the slightly projecting buttresses; the detail of the window grilles and balustrades contrasts with the otherwise smooth walls; the discreet use of red sandstone and the dark gray of the lead roofs add a note of color to the otherwise-colored walls, and the carefully arranged voids and projections invite light to play across the surface of the building.

Like the Şehzade Mosque in Istanbul, the Selimiye Mosque comprises two equal parts, one open and one covered, but the squares of the Istanbul building have been replaced at Edirne by laterally set rectangles (60 by 44 meters). The spacious court, with an ablution fountain in the center, is surrounded by arcades on granite and marble columns supporting muqarnas capitals and arches with alternating vouchsafes of red and white. The regularity apparent in plan is less apparent in elevation, where the domes of the arcade along the mosque are raised significantly higher than those of the other three sides to reflect its derivation from the domed porch in early Ottoman mosques [e.g. 181]. The dome in front of the central portal is higher still and distinguished by its fluted shape. The windows around the court are surmounted by lunettes of Iznik tiles, with inscriptions reserved in white against blue, green, and a bit of red, undoubtedly in acknowledgement of the tiled lunette panels in the nearby Üç Şerefeli Mosque [183].

The superb quality of the exterior does not adequately prepare one for the breathtaking spaciousness and sheer poesy of space and light within [285]. The octagonal system of supports is a much enlarged and more sophisticated version of the system used at the Mosque of Kösem Pasha. The vertical loads are concentrated on eight massive piers of dodecahedral shape; the two on either side of the mihrab are incorporated into the exterior wall, the other six are freestanding. The outward thrust of the dome is absorbed by additional buttresses concealed within the wall. This ingenious system creates an extraordinary sense of space by allowing the corners of the building to be opened, and the architect was able to pierce the walls to an unprecedented degree and flood the interior with light from every level. The effect, however, may have been somewhat diminished if the windows were originally glazed with colored glass. The dome rests on a crown of windows and the semidomes on tarsus; the tympana are pierced with double tiers of arched windows.

Under the center of the great dome stands a tribune supported by twelve marble columns two meters high; a small fountain stands beside it. Although the major illumination areas were in the court and on either side of the building, the mihrab recess projects beyond the exterior; the mihrab itself and adjacent minbar are of finely worked Marmara marble. This area of the mosque is decorated with superb Iznik tiles, as is the royal gallery (Turk. hünkâr mahfûl), to the left of the mihrab. These tiles, with their delicate floral patterns, were made specifically for the project, and their superb quality was appreciated by the Russians, who removed some of them in 1878 during the Turco-Russian War. The mosque library stands in the corner to the right of the mihrab.

Sinan was probably in his late seventies when the Selimiye Mosque was completed in 1574. He continued as chief court architect until his death fourteen years later, but the commissions offered were more modest than in earlier times and the projects were increasingly executed by assistants. The relatively smaller works ascribed to Sinan in this period combine some themes seen in his classical works, but are more experimental and mannered.49 A building such as the complex built for Sultan Murad III (r. 1574–95) at Manisa [286], where he had been governor, exemplifies Sinan's last works. Built to Sinan's plans by the architects Mahμmed and Mehmed Aga between 1583 and 1585, the building has a five-domed porch preceding a T-shaped prayer hall. The interior is covered with a large central dome and three cloister vaults. The T-plan seems to have been inspired by the zaviye mosques of early Ottoman times, with the ribbed vaults and the verticality of the façades, which are further enriched by polychrome arches and variations in texture, accentuate a distinctly anti-classical approach to mosque design.

Sinan died on 17 July 1588 and was buried in a small tomb he had designed for himself at the bottom of his garden near the Süleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul. He was described in the introduction to his endowment deed as "the eye of the illustrious engineers, the ornament of the great founders, the master of the learned men of his time, the Euclid of his century and of all times, the architect of the Sultan and the teacher to the empire," and his reputation remains justifiably great to this day.46

THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

The age of Süleyman marked the apogee of Ottoman military strength, and apart from the battle of Cyprus in 1570–1 the Ottomans incurred no great victories after his reign. Rather, they fought exhausting wars against the Persians in the east and the Hapsburgs in the west. The empire became too great to maintain, particularly in face of a Europe increasingly unified against them. The battle of Lepanto in October 1571 was the greatest combat ever fought on