

Islamic Gunpowder Empires

The conditions, customs and beliefs of peoples and nations do not indefinitely follow the same pattern and adhere to a constant course. There is, rather, change with days and epochs, as well as passing from one state to another. . . .

—Ibn Khaldun, *Muquaddimah* (1377)

New patterns and change arise from many sources. One of these was technology: gunpowder. The term *Gunpowder Empires* refers to large multiethnic states in Southwest, Central, and South Asia that relied on firearms to conquer and control their territories. In addition to Russia, the Gunpowder Empires in the period from 1450 to 1750 included three in which Islam was strong: the Ottoman, the Safavid, and the Mughal Empires. Although their societies tended to be militaristic, all three left splendid artistic and architectural legacies.

The Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Empires would decline as Western Europe grew in strength economically and militarily—particularly in terms of sea power. Unlike these three Islamic empires, Russia modernized and reorganized its army, modeling it after the armies of England, France, and the Netherlands. The Islamic empires did not modernize, and, as a result, Russia remained powerful enough to survive as an independent nation-state, while the other Gunpowder Empires fell. The last to fall, the Ottoman Empire, came to an end following World War I with the formation of modern Turkey. The Safavid and Mughal Empires each had fallen long before. (For more on Russia's use of gunpowder and its military reforms, see page 337.)

Rise of the Islamic Gunpowder Empires

The warrior leaders of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Empires shared many traits. Besides being Muslims, they all

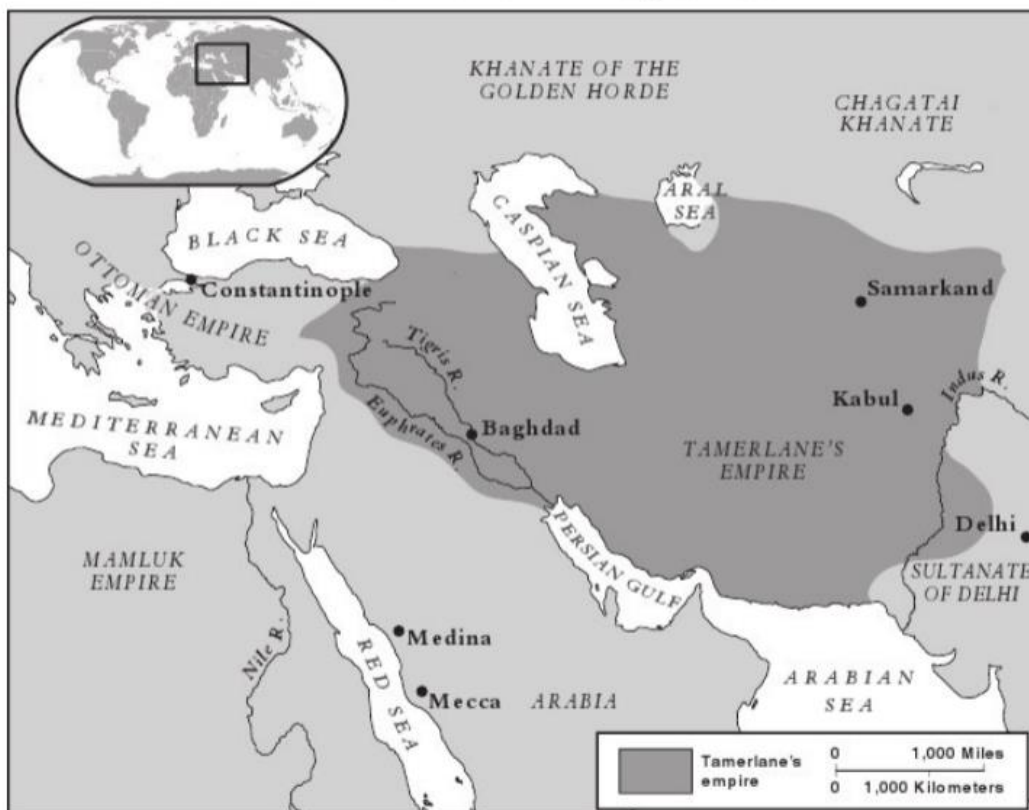
- were from nomadic Turkic backgrounds
- spoke forms of the Turkic family of languages
- took advantage of power vacuums left by the breakup of Mongol khanates
- relied on armies with artillery and cannons—and thus on gunpowder

The initial success of the Gunpowder Empires was a result of their own military might along with the weakness and corruption of the regimes that they replaced. Equally important to the history of these empires was the loose alliance of European nations that fought among themselves rather than uniting to topple the new powers growing in the east.

The Rule of Tamerlane The invasion of Central Asia and the Middle East by *Tamerlane* (Timur the Lame, a Mongol-Turkic ruler of the late fourteenth century) set the stage for the rise of the Turkic empires. Leading an army partly composed of nomadic invaders from the broad steppes of Eurasia, Tamerlane moved out from the trading city of *Samarkand* (in modern-day Uzbekistan) to make ruthless conquests in Persia (modern-day Iran) and India. The Eurasian steppes were also the birthplace of the *ghazi ideal*—a model for warrior life that blended the cooperative values of nomadic culture with the willingness to serve as a holy fighter for Islam. According to some historians, this ideal served for centuries as the model for warriors who participated in the rise of the Gunpowder Empires, and it was a model that fit Tamerlane well.

Some historians believe that Tamerlane’s violent takeover of areas of Central Asia included the massacre of some 100,000 Hindus before the gates of Delhi in India. Violence continued to mark the pattern of conquest that resulted in new dynasties: the Ottomans, the Safavids, and the Mughals. Nonetheless, Tamerlane’s rule in Samarkand also brought the encouragement of learning and the arts—a trend also typical of these later empires. For example, Tamerlane

TAMERLANE’S EMPIRE, C. 1400



championed literature, and he himself corresponded with European rulers and wrote his own memoirs. Buildings still standing in the city of Samarkand are testaments to his interest in architecture and decorative arts.

While the empire he created largely fell apart (except for the area that his descendant Babur would take over to create India's Mughal Dynasty), Tamerlane's invasions were a testament to the significance of gunpowder. He used it to build a government dependent upon his military and the use of heavy artillery. He also used it to protect land routes on the Silk Road. However, he failed to leave an effective political structure in many of the areas he conquered. Without effective government, the expenses of wars eventually ravaged the empire's economy.

Tamerlane's rule casts light on two major forces that had battled each other continually from the late tenth century to the fourteenth century—Mongols from the northeast versus Islamic forces from Arabia and the areas around the Mediterranean Sea. These forces would clash continuously with the rise and fall of the three Asian Gunpowder Empires that are the focus of this chapter.

The Ottoman Empire

Extending into modern-day Turkey as well as to the Balkan areas of Europe and parts of North Africa and Southeast Asia, the *Ottoman Empire* was the largest and most enduring of the great Islamic empires of this period. Founded by the Osman Dynasty in the 1300s, the empire lasted until its defeat in 1918 by the Allies in World War I. Thus, a single dynasty controlled the empire for over 600 years.

Mehmed II Called “the Conqueror,” *Mehmed II* (ruled 1451–1481) firmly established the empire's capital after his forces besieged Constantinople (once the center of the Byzantine Empire) in 1453. Despite its triple fortifications, the city fell as its walls crumbled under the bombardment of Ottoman cannon. Under Mehmed II's rule, the city—its name changed to Istanbul—prospered due to its location, which was a nexus for trade; the city controlled the *Bosporus Strait*, the only waterway linking the Aegean Sea with the Black Sea. Under Mehmed II, Istanbul grew even more beautiful and expanded across both sides of the strait. One famous landmark is the royal residence of the sultans, *Topkapi Palace*, which began construction during the reign of Mehmed II.

The armies of Mehmed II next seized lands around the western edge of the Black Sea. Then they moved into the Balkans in Southeast Europe. To counter the power of Venice, Mehmed strengthened the Ottoman navy and attacked various areas of Italy. Although he did not conquer Venice, he forced the city to pay him a yearly tax. In the early sixteenth century, the Ottomans added to their empire lands in present-day Syria, Israel, Egypt, and Algeria. When the Mamluk Dynasty declined, Istanbul became a center of Islam. (For more on the Mamluk Empire, see page 150.)

To staff their military and their government, the Ottoman sultans used a selection system called *devshirme*, begun in the late fourteenth century and expanded in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Through this system, Christian boys who were subjects of the empire were recruited by force to serve in the Ottoman government. Boys ages 8 to 20 were taken each year

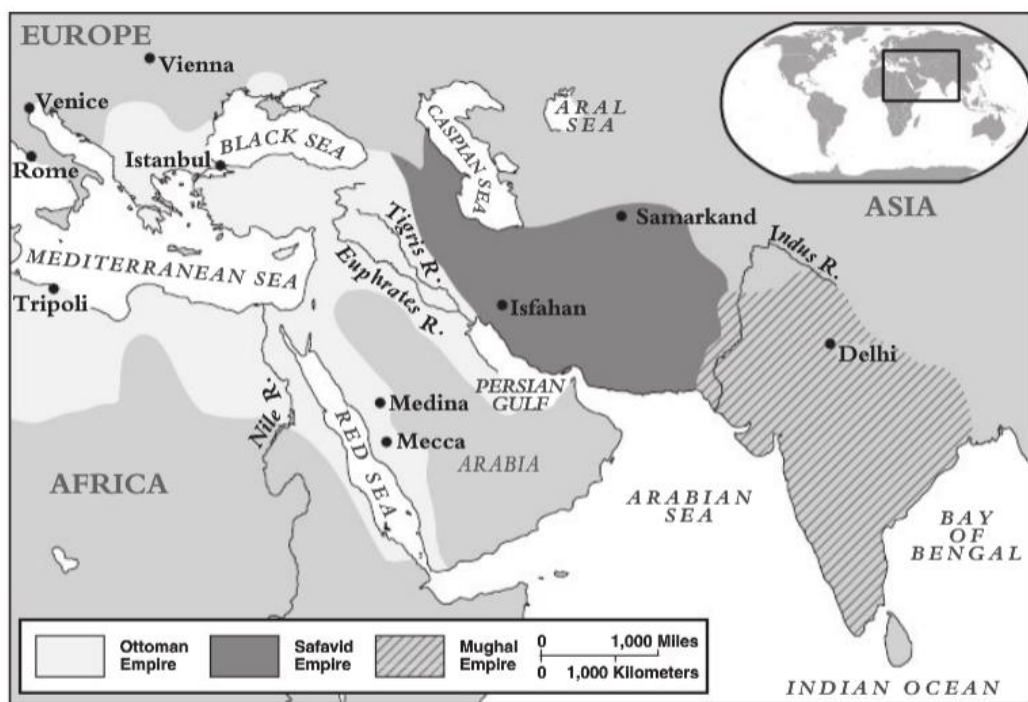
from conquered Christian lands in Europe. After converting to Islam, they were taught various skills in politics, the arts, and the military. The most famous group, called *Janissaries*, formed elite forces in the Ottoman army. Other boys were groomed to become administrators of the newly conquered territories; some were scribes, tax collectors, and even diplomats.

In some ways, becoming a Janissary provided a path of upward mobility in the Ottoman Empire, even though the Janissaries continued to be called “slaves of the state.” Some parents even wanted their sons to be recruited into the service.

Suleiman I The Ottoman Empire reached its peak under *Suleiman I* (ruled 1520–1566). His armies overran Hungary in 1526 and, by 1529, were hammering at the gates of *Vienna*, the main city in Austria. Their attempt to take Vienna failed twice, but the ability of the Ottomans to send troops so far into the Christian Europe caused great fear there.

In 1522, Suleiman’s navy captured the island of *Rhodes* (now part of Greece) in the eastern Mediterranean, which had long been a stronghold of Christian knights. In the 1550s, the Ottoman navy took control of Tripoli in North Africa.

THREE ISLAMIC EMPIRES IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY



Suleiman ordered many mosques, forts, and other great buildings constructed in the cities under his control. For example, he ordered the construction in Istanbul of the magnificent *Suleimani Mosque*, which can be seen from the Golden Horn promontory that juts into the Black Sea at its convergence with the Bosphorus. Suleiman also reformed the empire’s legal system and thus came to be called “the Lawgiver.”

Ottoman Economy Ottoman trade was energized in its early years by repeated expansion through conquest. Rulers forced people in occupied areas to send monetary tribute as well as goods to the central government in Istanbul. The Ottoman navy allowed traders to serve as *middlemen*, handling goods from both directions and receiving profit in exchange, in much the same way that the Dutch served as middlemen in Western Europe. In this way, some European styles and furnishings became popular in the empire.

Because of his control of the North African coast, the Ottoman sultan controlled the trade in gold and slaves. Eastern luxuries, particularly silk and spices, continued to be popular trade items, but the Ottomans also had a strong trade in creations of their own artisans: distinctive tiles, pottery, and rugs, for example.

To finance an economy backed by a powerful military, the Ottomans levied taxes on the peasants. Local officials and tax collectors, distant from the central government, grew wealthy and corrupt from skimming money from the taxes in their areas. Agricultural villages continued to be burdened with the upkeep of officers and troops. This burden of taxes and the military would eventually contribute to the economic decline of the empire.

An additional reason for the flourishing of trade in the early years of the empire was that the tolerant sultans allowed Christian and Jewish merchants to prosper as long as they paid taxes. Also, to increase commerce, the Ottomans signed *trade agreements* such as those with France that opened up commerce between the two powers. However, the terms of the agreements with France would ultimately diminish the Ottoman profits in the long term.

Many business agreements were signed in the empire's *coffeehouses*, settings not only of business transactions but also of cultural events such as poetry recitations and scholarly debates. They also hosted trade meetings with representatives of such areas as Yemen, the major exporter of coffee. Trade agreements made by the sultans allowed European importers to purchase coffee through the Ottoman Empire at rates cheaper than direct purchase from Yemen.

Interaction with the Americas led to the introduction of new crops on Ottoman lands that could be sold for cash. Near the city of Izmir, typical agricultural products such as dates, nuts, and olive oil were replaced by cotton and tobacco. Even though the use of the latter was officially prohibited throughout the Ottoman Empire, it quickly became popular among citizens.

By the seventeenth century, profits from imports dwindled. Problems in the neighboring Safavid Empire, for example, led to a reduction in silk production.

Social Classes The Ottoman social system was built around a warrior aristocracy that soon began to compete for positions in the bureaucracy with the *ulama* (scholars and experts in Islamic law). Within the military, more and more power and prestige was assumed by the Janissaries, who ultimately tried to mount coups against the sultans. The tension between the military elite and absolutist rulers became characteristic of all three Islamic Gunpowder Empires.

As sultans became less effective and less capable, strong advisors called *viziers* came to occupy influential positions in government, where they spoke

for the sultan. Women also played social and political roles at court. Many wives and concubines of the sultan tried to promote their own children as likely heirs to the throne, giving rise to “harem politics,” a reference to the *harem*, a residence where a man’s wives and concubines lived.

Merchants and artisans formed a small middle class; below the middle class were the peasants, who were usually poor—particularly because they had to pay tribute to the government to help support the Ottoman armies. Below the peasants were slaves. They came from many areas as the Ottoman armies penetrated into Central and Eastern Europe, capturing prisoners of war in the Ukraine and elsewhere. Other European slaves were those captured by the *Barbary pirates* in the Mediterranean and then sold to the sultan or other high-ranking officials. Some people were *impressed*, or forced into service, in the navy as galley slaves—estimates of the number of people impressed go as high as a million or more between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.

One reason for the success of the empire was its relative tolerance toward Jews and Christians. The empire accepted Jews who had been driven out of Spain in 1492; Mehmed II issued an invitation to them to settle in Istanbul. Some members of the Jewish community, which expanded rapidly after 1492, became court physicians and diplomats; others contributed to the literary community and (according to some accounts) were responsible for bringing the printing press to the Ottoman Empire. Often, however, Jews were only permitted to live in specified areas of the cities. Under Suleiman, Christians and Jews were allowed to worship and live with few restrictions as long as they paid a tax required of all non-Muslims in the empire. The elite of the empire, however, were always Muslim.

Decline of the Ottoman Empire In 1571, after Suleiman’s death, a European force made up mostly of Spaniards and Venetians defeated the Ottomans in a great naval conflict known as the *Battle of Lepanto*. After the reign of Suleiman, the Ottomans fell victim to weak sultans and strong European neighbors. In time, the empire became known as the “Sick Man of Europe.” Successors to Suleiman were often held hostage to harem politics conducted by women and eunuchs. Although neither group would have the opportunity to rule, women and eunuchs nevertheless became powerful behind the scenes. The Ottoman Empire as a whole grew less tolerant of non-Muslims and more insular. Slavery there continued into the twentieth century.

Continuity and Change Under the Ottomans While tremendous changes in government and religion took place in the area controlled by the Ottoman Empire, the arts, culture, and the economy showed continuities. Until 1453, much of the area had been controlled by the Byzantine Empire and followed the Eastern Orthodox religion. After the fall of Constantinople, the area became Ottoman and the dominant religion became Islam. The emperor was replaced by a sultan, and the Byzantine Empire’s Justinian Law was replaced by *shariah*. *Shariah* is a system of Islamic jurisprudence that deals with all aspects of life, such as criminal justice, marital laws, and issues of inheritance, to name but a few.

Despite the above differences, continuities existed. Constantinople, newly named Istanbul, remained the western end of the overland Silk Roads, and the *Grand Bazaar* there continued to be full of many foreign imports: amber and wood products from Russia, spices and silk from China, ivory and slaves from Africa, and carpets from Persia. Demand for goods that passed through Constantinople created an export market to other cities of the empire. Coffeehouses, although banned by Islamic law, continued to do a thriving business throughout the towns of the empire.

Istanbul remained a center of arts and learning. Poets and scholars from across Asia met in coffeehouses and gardens, creating a rich intellectual atmosphere as they discussed works by Aristotle and other Greek writers, as well as the works of many Arabic scholars, such as Ibn Khaldun, quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Cultural contributions of the Ottomans included the restoration of some of the glorious buildings of Constantinople, most notably the cathedral of Saint Sophia (which the Ottomans turned into a grand mosque) and the Topkapi Palace. From the time of Mehmed II, who established a workshop for their production, Ottoman *miniature paintings* and illuminated manuscripts became famous. As in Europe, artisans belonged to guilds that set high standards, particularly for artisans working in gold, silver, and silk.

The Safavids

Sandwiched between the other Islamic Gunpowder Empires, the *Safavids* had two problems: first, they were on the Arabian Sea but had no real navy; and second, they lacked natural defenses. Nevertheless, they rose to power in the 1500s due to their military might and strong leadership.

Ismail An early Safavid military hero named *Ismail*, whose ethnic background is much disputed, conquered most of Persia and pushed into Iraq. Although only 14 or 15 years old, he soon conquered all of Iran and was proclaimed *shah* (equivalent to king or emperor) in 1501. Using Shia Islam as a unifying force, Shah Ismail built a power base that supported his rule and denied legitimacy to any Sunni. This strict adherence to Shia Islam caused frequent hostilities with the Ottoman Empire, stronghold of Sunni Islam. In 1541, Safavid forces were stopped by the Ottomans at Tabriz, a city in Persia that became part of the border between Sunni and Shia societies. The hostility between the two groups lives on in present-day Iraq and Iran.

Conflicts between Ottomans and Safavids were not entirely religious in nature, however. An additional conflict arose over control of overland trade routes. The fighting between these two Gunpowder Empires kept both from becoming as much of a threat to Europe as they might otherwise have been.

Shah Abbas I Called “Abbas the Great,” *Shah Abbas I* (ruled 1587–1629) presided over the Safavid Empire at its height. His troops, which were conscripted in ways similar to the recruitment of the Janissaries in the Ottoman Empire, included soldiers—often Christian boys pressed into service—from as far northwest as Georgia in Russia. Abbas imported weaponry from Europe and

also relied on Europeans to advise his troops about this newly acquired military technology. Slowly, the shahs came to control religion as well as politics. Using Shia practices to back up their legitimacy, Safavid rulers created a theocracy, one that provides a precedent for the Shia-dominated Iranian state of today.

Abbas beautified the capital city of *Isfahan* (which is south of the modern Iranian capital of Tehran), adding broad avenues, parks, and numerous mosques and schools. He also encouraged craft production, although exports of crafts were not a large part of the Safavid economy as they were for their stronger neighbors to the east and west. The Safavids carried on some trade with the Portuguese fleet, which for a time held the *Strait of Hormuz*, a vital waterway between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. Then, in 1622, Abbas took control of the strait with the help of English ships. This aid to the Safavid Empire began the long history of British interest in Iran.

Decline The ineffectual leaders who followed Shah Abbas combined lavish lifestyles and military spending with falling revenues, resulting in a weakened economy. In 1722, Safavid forces were not able to quell a rebellion by the heavily oppressed Sunni Pashtuns in present-day Afghanistan. The Afghan forces went on to sack Isfahan and their leader, Mahmud, declared himself “Shah of Persia.” While the Safavid Dynasty remained nominally in control, the resulting chaos was an impediment to centralization and tax collection. Taking advantage of the weakened Safavids, the Ottomans and the Russians were able to seize territories. The Safavid Dynasty declined rapidly until it was replaced by the Zand Dynasty in 1760.

Isfahan Despite the decline of Safavids, the city of Isfahan retained its beauty. The renowned gardens with fountains and pools made an inviting contrast to the harsh countryside outside of the towns and cities. The gardens were acclaimed by Englishman Thomas Herbert and Frenchman Jean Chardin in their travelogues of the period.

Women While Safavid women were still veiled and restricted in their movements, as was traditional in the region, they had access to rights provided by Islamic law for inheritance and, in extreme cases, divorce. Women, however, are barely mentioned in local Safavid histories, an indication of their lack of political influence.

Mughal India

Babur, a descendant of Tamerlane, founded a 300-year dynasty in the 1520s, during a time when India was in disarray. He completed conquests in northern India and, under the new Mughal name, formed a central government similar to those of Suleiman in Turkey and Ivan the Terrible in Russia. It would be Babur’s grandson Akbar, however, who would achieve grand religious and political goals.

Akbar Ruling from 1556 to 1605, *Akbar* proved to be the most capable of the Mughal rulers. For the first 40 years of his rule, he defeated Hindu armies and extended his empire southward and westward. From his capital in *Delhi*, Akbar established an efficient government and a system of fairly

administered laws. For example, all his people had the right to appeal to him for final judgment in any lawsuit. As Akbar's fame spread, capable men from many parts of Central Asia came to serve him. They helped Akbar create a strong, centralized government and an effective civil service. Paid government officials in charge of specific duties, such as taxation, construction, and water supply, were called *zamindars*. Later, they were given grants of land rather than salaries but were permitted to keep a portion of the taxes paid by local peasants, who contributed one-third of their produce to the government. The system worked well under Akbar. Under the rulers who came after him, though, the *zamindars* began to keep more of the taxes that they collected. With this money, they built personal armies of soldiers and civilians loyal to them.

Toleration and Prosperity Akbar was tolerant of all religions. He allocated grants of money or land to Hindus and Muslims. He gave money for a Catholic church in Goa, on the southwest coast of India. He provided land grants for the relatively new religion of *Sikhism*, which developed from Hinduism and, some believe, may have been influenced by the Islamic mysticism known as Sufism. He tried to mediate the conflict between Hindus and Muslims. He gave Hindus positions in his government—*zamindars* of both high and low positions could be Hindu—and he married Hindu wives. He exempted Hindus from the poll taxes paid by all non-Muslims in the empire. Because he enjoyed religious discussions, Akbar invited Roman Catholic priests to Delhi to explain Christianity to him.

Regarded as one of the world's outstanding rulers, Akbar encouraged learning and the growth of art, architecture, and literature. He is also noteworthy for trying (in vain) to prohibit child marriages and *sati*, the ritual in which widows killed themselves by jumping on the funeral pyres of their husbands. He died in 1605 without successfully converting his Hindu and Islamic subjects to the religion called *Din-i-llahi*, or "divine faith," which he had created for the purpose of reconciling Hinduism and Islam.

The Mughal Empire under Akbar was one of the richest and best-governed states in the world. Overseas trade flourished during the relatively peaceful period; commerce was carried out mostly by Arab traders, since Indian traders did not care for travel on the Indian Ocean. Traded goods included textiles, tropical foods, spices, and precious stones, all of which were often exchanged for gold and silver. Trade within the borders of the empire was carried on by merchant castes. *Castes* are social groupings in India, usually associated with specific occupations. Members of the merchant castes were allowed to participate in banking and the production of handicrafts.

Shah Jahan Mughal India flourished from Babur's time through the early eighteenth century. Magnificent architectural accomplishments included the *Taj Mahal*, built by *Shah Jahan* (ruled 1627–1658) as a tomb for his wife. Mughal rulers beautified Delhi and had forts built. The craftsmen and builders of Mughal India combined the arts of Islam (calligraphy, illumination of manuscripts, and ceramics) with local arts to create magnificent airy structures distinguished by their decorative geometric designs.

Aurangzeb Shah Jahan's son and successor, *Aurangzeb* (ruled 1658–1707), inherited an empire weakened by corruption and the failure to keep up with the military innovations of external enemies. Nevertheless, Aurangzeb hoped to increase the size of the empire and bring all of India under Muslim rule. Additionally, he wanted to rid the empire of its Hindu influences. In expanding the empire to the south, he drained the empire's treasury and was unable to put down peasant uprisings. Some of these uprisings were sparked by Aurangzeb's insistence on an austere and pious Islamic lifestyle. Under his rule, for example, music was banned. There were revolts as well among the Hindu and Islamic princes. The empire grew increasingly unstable after his death, which allowed the British and French to gain more and more economic power in India. The British would take political power away from the Mughals in the nineteenth century.



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The Islamic Gunpowder Empires constructed monumental architecture with spiritual significance. The Ottomans built the Suleimani Mosque in Istanbul (upper). The Safavids built the Mosque of Ifshahan (lower left). The Mughals built the Taj Mahal, a mausoleum, in Agra (lower right).

Decline of the Gunpowder Empires

The decline of the Gunpowder Empires resulted from pressure from European trading companies, especially the British, and from competition among heirs motivated by harem politics. Aurangzeb, for example, seized the throne by killing his brothers. Other factors in the decline included weak or corrupt leadership and failure to keep in step with developments in military and naval technology. The expensive armies that each empire needed to keep under control placed harsh financial burdens on the peasants and villages forced to support them. Religious differences also created problems. In Mughal India, there was a deep religious division between Islam and Hinduism, and there were deep religious divisions between the Sunni Ottomans and Shia Safavids, setting the stage for conflict between the present-day countries of Iraq and Iran. (Test Prep: Write a paragraph comparing the decline of Mughal India with the decline of the Roman Empire. See pages 83–85.)

Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Empires, 1450–1750			
	Ottoman Empire	Safavid Empire	Mughal Empire
Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly Sunni with some measure of tolerance under Suleiman • Less tolerance under later rulers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly Shia • No tolerance; Ismail I made conversion mandatory for Sunni population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerance under Akbar, but his blend of Islam and Hinduism did not prove popular • Less tolerance under later rulers
Taxes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxes on non-Muslims • Taxes on peasants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxation policies used to encourage adherence to Shia Islam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxes on unbelievers was abolished by Akbar but reinstated later • Taxes on peasants
Military	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warriors (often trained Janissaries) were granted villages to provide their upkeep • Leaders made the military independent of central government • Strong navy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warriors were the Qizilbash, Turcoman militants who helped establish the empire • Leaders made the military independent of central government • No significant navy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warriors were granted villages to provide their upkeep • Officials known as zamindars made the military independent of central government • Small navy

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: WHY DID THE ISLAMIC GUNPOWDER EMPIRES RISE AND DECLINE?

The term “Gunpowder Empires” was coined by Marshall G.S. Hodgson in the 1970s to refer to the large land empires of Southwestern and South Asia that flourished during the period from 1450 to 1750 (*The Venture of Islam: The Gunpowder Empires and Modern Time*). Since Hodgson’s massive work was published, the term has come into modern use in many books dealing with the rise and decline of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals.

Trade and the Rise of Empires As described by Kenneth Pomeranz and Steven Topik in their 2005 book *The World That Trade Created*, the empires became part of the growing global economy of the period. These authors, taking economic and social perspectives, used coffee as one example of the international character of consumer goods: “Coffee’s role in sociability and prestige in Europe was enhanced by the arrival of emissaries of the Ottoman sultan in France and Austria in 1665–1666, who poured the exotic liquor for their aristocratic European guests during extravagant soirees.”

Reasons for Decline However, the prosperity achieved by the Gunpowder Empires was not enough to sustain their independence indefinitely. Historians have given various reasons for their declines, but most fall into three categories: (1) ineffectiveness; (2) intolerance of minorities; and (3) failure to modernize. One reviewer summarized historian Vladimir Minorsky’s reasons for the decline of the Safavid Empire:

- (a) decline of theocratic ideology
- (b) opposition between old and new elements in the military class
- (c) disturbance in equilibrium among the service classes, which lost interest in the cause they were supporting
- (d) the “shadow government” represented by the harem
- (e) degeneration of the dynasty as a result of its insular nature

The reviewer’s analysis illustrated the ways in which poor leadership affected the empires.

Military Weakness William McNeill pointed out that rulers and military administrators did not try to keep up with “subsequent European innovations in military and naval matters, leaving them woefully exposed to attack.” McNeill reminded his readers that the Ottomans’ guns were able to defeat their Islamic rivals, the Safavids, because “until about 1600, the Ottoman army remained technically and

in every way in the very forefront of military proficiency.” Nevertheless, after the time of Suleiman, leaders did not themselves lead their men in battle, and military discipline declined at the same time that efficiency and technology began to lag behind Western Europe.

Tolerance and Intolerance A recent work by Amy Chua, *Day of Empire: How Hyperpowers Rise to Global Dominance—and Why They Fall*, suggested a somewhat different reason for the eventual failure of the Gunpowder Empires. Her thesis was that intolerance ultimately became an obstacle to retaining great power. She suggested that the empires were successful in holding their power when they were at their most religiously and ethnically tolerant. This thesis can be used to explain why the Ottoman Empire, with its relative tolerance, outlived the more conservative Safavid and Mughal Empires.

KEY TERMS BY THEME

<p>ENVIRONMENT Bosporus Strait Strait of Hormuz</p> <p>CULTURE <i>ghazi ideal</i> Suleimani Mosque coffeehouses ulama Shariah Law harem miniature paintings Sikhism sati <i>Din-i-Ilahi</i> Taj Mahal</p>	<p>STATE-BUILDING Gunpowder Empires Tamerlane Samarkand Ottoman Empire Mehmed II (“the Conqueror”) Topkapi Palace Suleiman I Vienna Rhodes viziers Battle of Lepanto Safavids Ismail shah Shah Abbas I (“Abbas the Great”) Isfahan Akbar Babur Delhi Shah Jahan Aurangzeb</p>	<p>ECONOMICS middlemen trade agreements Barbary pirates Grand Bazaar</p> <p>SOCIAL STRUCTURE <i>devshirme</i> Janissaries impressed <i>zamindars</i> castes</p>
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Questions 1.1 to 1.3 refer to the passage below.

“Throughout the sixteenth century, the Safavi [Safavid] Empire remained a profoundly disturbing force in the Moslem [Muslim] world, dedicated to the defense and propagation of Shi’a doctrines at home and abroad. This policy implied a normal state of hostility with the Ottoman Empire, punctuated only briefly by periods of peace. By the seventeenth century, however, when the Safavi Empire reached its apogee [peak] under Shah Abbas the Great (1587–1629), the fanaticism of the Shi’a revolution had faded, at least in court circles; and a lasting peace with the Ottomans was concluded in 1639.”

William H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West*, 1963

- 1.1** Which would be the most useful source of evidence to support McNeill’s contention that “the Safavi [Safavid] Empire remained a profoundly disturbing force in the Moslem [Muslim] world”?
- (A) writings by Safavids about Shi’a beliefs
 - (B) writings by modern-day Muslim historians
 - (C) writings by Ottoman religious leaders of that time about the Safavids
 - (D) writings by archaeologists about discoveries of Safavid and Ottoman religious relics
- 1.2** Today, Iran and Turkey are often political rivals. This passage suggests that this rivalry is based on historical conflicts over
- (A) how to practice Islam correctly
 - (B) control of land and natural resources
 - (C) the role of leaders, such as the shah and emperor
 - (D) democracy and political fanaticism
- 1.3** What brought an end to the “normal state of hostility” between the Safavids and Ottomans mentioned in the passage?
- (A) Safavid fervor for its brand of Islam slowly declined until the two empires stopped fighting.
 - (B) The constant fighting increased the respect of the empires for each other, which eventually led to peace between them.
 - (C) Both sides united to fight against European Christian forces that threatened them.
 - (D) The Ottomans slowly gained greater power and were able to stop the agitation by the Safavids.

Questions 2.1 to 2.3 refer to the passage below.

“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, and a large force of Janissaries, but there was not in all that great assembly a single man who owed his position to anything save his valor and his merit. No distinction is attached to birth among the Turks; the respect 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 It is by merit that men rise in the service, a system which ensures that posts should only be assigned to the competent Those who receive the highest offices from the Sultan are for the most part the sons of shepherds or herdsmen, and so far as being ashamed of their parentage, they actually glory in it, and [boast] that they owe nothing to the accident of birth.”

Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq (1522–1590), Flemish diplomat at the court of Suleiman, *Turkish Letters*, 1555

- 2.1** This passage is best understood in the context of the Ottoman practice of
- (A) allowing traders in occupied areas to serve as middlemen, profiting from the exchange of goods
 - (B) inviting sons of Islamic peasants to become Janissaries and government officials
 - (C) allowing local public servants to grow wealthy by collecting taxes from the peasants
 - (D) converting Christian boys to Islam and training them in the skills of politics and the military
- 2.2** Which development in the Ottoman Empire contradicted the opinion of government bureaucracy expressed in the passage?
- (A) European slaves were purchased from the Barbary pirates and forced into naval service as galley slaves as well as officers.
 - (B) Christians and Jews who lived in the empire rose to high positions and undermined the power of the sultan.
 - (C) Public servants grew wealthy and corrupt by collecting taxes from the peasants and skimming money for themselves.
 - (D) Many parents wanted their sons to be recruited as Janissaries as a path to upward mobility.
- 2.3** The passage most directly describes the Ottoman practice of
- (A) allowing religious tolerance
 - (B) maintaining a governmental system
 - (C) training skilled military leaders
 - (D) maintaining an aristocratic system

Question 1 refers to the passage below.

"[H]aving on one occasion asked my father [Akbar] the reason why he had forbidden any one to prevent or interfere with the building of these haunts of idolatry [Hindu temples], his reply was. . . : 'I find myself a powerful monarch, the shadow of God upon earth. I have seen that he bestows the blessings of his gracious providence upon all his creatures without distinction. Ill should I discharge the duties of my exalted station, were I to withhold my compassion and indulgence from any of those entrusted to my charge. With all of the human race, with all of God's creatures, I am at peace: why then should I permit myself, under any consideration, to be the cause of molestation or aggression to any one? Besides, are not five parts in six of mankind either Hindus or aliens to the faith; and were I to be governed by motives of the kind suggested in your inquiry, what alternative do I have but to put them all to death! I have thought it therefore my wisest plan to let these men alone.'"

Jahangir, Mughal emperor from 1605 to 1627, *Memoirs*

1. Answer parts A and B.
 - A. The passage shows Akbar's tolerance toward people of other faiths. Provide TWO specific examples of how Akbar displayed such tolerance.
 - B. Briefly explain ONE example of tolerance and its results in the early days of the Ottoman Empire.
2. Answer parts A and B.
 - A. Briefly explain TWO common characteristics that led to the rise and stability of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires.
 - B. Briefly explain ONE common cause for the decline of these empires.

Questions 3.1 and 3.2 refer to the passage below.

Question 1: There is a poor man who married a virgin in her legal majority, but he did not pay her stipulated dower [dowry] expeditiously, nor did he provide support, nor did he clothe her. This caused her great harm. Must he follow one of God's two commands: 'Either you maintain her well or you release her with kindness?' And if the judge annuls [rules invalid] the marriage, is it on account of the severe harm being done to her?

Answer: Yes, the husband should do one of the two things, according to God's command: 'maintain her well or release her with kindness.' . . . You cannot sustain [indefinitely] such needs through borrowing, and it appears that she does not have anyone to lend her money, and the husband has no actual wealth. . . .

Question 2: There is an evil man who harms his wife, hits her without right and rebukes her without cause. He swore many times to divorce her until she proved that a thrice divorce [a final and irrevocable divorce] had taken effect.

Answer: He is forbidden to do that, and he is rebuked and enjoined from her. If she has proved that a thrice divorce has taken place, it is permissible for her to kill him, according to many of the 'ulama' [jurists] if he is not prevented [from approaching her] except by killing."

Khayr al-Din Ramli, legal scholar in the Ottoman empire,
Legal Opinions, 1650

- 3.1** According to the passage, one right women had under Islamic law was the right
- (A) to inherit money and property
 - (B) to divorce
 - (C) to represent oneself in court
 - (D) to have legal council
- 3.2** Which was an important source of political power for women in the Ottoman Empire?
- (A) local politics
 - (B) harem politics
 - (C) the devshirme system
 - (D) the Janissary system