

CHAPTER 21

The Muslim Empires

Chapter Outline Summary

I. The Ottomans: From Frontier Warriors to Empire Builders

Mid-1200s, Mongols defeated Seljuks

Ottomans emerged dominant

Into Balkans, 14th, 15th centuries

1453, Ottomans took Constantinople

Expansion

Middle East, north Africa, Europe

Ottomans dominated Mediterranean

A. A State Geared to Warfare

Military dominant

Turkic horsemen transformed to warrior nobility

Janissary infantry

conscripted youth from conquered peoples

B. The Sultans and their Court

Used factions against each other

Vizier

oversaw large bureaucracy

Succession

no clear rules

C. Constantinople Restored: Link Between Asia and Europe, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea

St. Sophia transformed

Suleyman the Magnificent

Suleymaniye mosque, 16th century

Commercial center

government control of trade, crafts

artisan guilds

Turks prevail

D. The Problem of Ottoman Decline

Strong until late 1600s

Decline

extended

infrastructure insufficient

dependent on conquest

end of conquest brought deficiencies

regional leaders diverted revenue

sultans less dynamic

E. Military Reverses, Iberian Expansionism and the Ottoman Retreat

Janissaries

conservative

stopped military, technological reform

Lepanto, 1571

defeated by Spain, Venice

Turks lost control of eastern Mediterranean

Portuguese outflanked Middle East trade

sailed around Africa into Indian Ocean
victories over Muslim navies

Inflation

caused by New World bullion
came at same time as loss of revenue from control of trade

II. The Shi'a Challenge of the Safavids

Safavid family

Sufi preachers, mystics

Sail al-Din

led revival

1501, Ismâ'il took Tabriz

named shah

Chaldiran, 1514

Safavids defeated by Ottomans

A. Politics and War under the Safavid Shahs

Tahmasp I

became shah

Abbas I (1587–1629)

height of Ottoman Empire

Persians as bureaucrats

B. State and Religion

Adopted Persian after Chaldiran

also Persian court traditions

Shi'ism modified

spread to entire empire

C. Commercial Revival, Elite Affluence, and the Art of the Mosque

Abbas I supports international trade, Islamic culture

building projects

mosques in Isfahan

D. Society and Gender Roles: Ottoman and Safavid Comparisons

Commonalities

warrior aristocracies

moved to rural estates after conquest

threat to central power

imperial workshops

artisans patronized

international trade encouraged

women lost freedom

subordinate to fathers, husbands

E. The Rapid Demise of the Safavid Empire

Abbas I

removed heirs

weak grandson inherited

decline began

Internecine conflict, outside threats

1772, Isfahan conquered by Afghans

Nadir Khan Afshar

shah, 1736

III. The Mughals and the Apex of Muslim Civilization in India

Babur

driven from Afghanistan

- invaded India, 1526
- Turkic
- Panipat, 1526
 - defeated Muslim Lodi dynasty
- Khanua, 1527
 - defeated Hindu confederation
- 1530, death
 - succeeded by Humayn
 - fled to Persia
- Mughal rule restored by Humayn by 1556
- A. Akbar's Religious Syncretism, Hindu Allies, and a Multi-Cultural Empire
 - Akbar
 - Humayn's 13-year-old son
 - reconciliation with Hindus
 - new religion, Din-i-Ilahi
 - blend of Islam and Hinduism
 - toleration
- B. Social Reform and Attempts to Recast Gender Relations
 - Women
 - position improved
 - widows encouraged to remarry
 - child marriages discouraged
 - sati* prohibited
 - seclusion undermined by women's market days
- C. Mughal Splendor and Early European Contacts
 - Death of Akbar
 - reforms didn't survive
 - empire strong
 - Cotton textiles to Europe
 - especially among laboring and middle classes
- D. Wonders of the Early Modern World: Artistic Achievement in the Mughal Era
 - Jahangir and Shah Jahan, 17th century
 - continued toleration
 - less energetic
 - supported arts
 - Taj Mahal
- E. Court Politics and the Position of Elite and Ordinary Women
 - Nur Jahan
 - wife of Jahangir
 - head of powerful faction
 - Mumtaz Mahal
 - wife of Shah Jahan
 - also powerful
 - Ordinary women
 - positions declined
 - Sati* spread among upper classes
 - other of Akbar's reforms died out
- F. The Beginnings of Imperial Decline
 - Aurangzeb
 - succeeded Shah Jahan
 - programs

- ruled all India
- separated Hinduism from Islam, finding Hinduism corrupting
- 1707, controlled most of India
- expensive, distracting
- other developments disregarded
 - revolt
 - autonomy of local leaders
- Hindus excluded from high office
- non-Muslims taxed
- Marattas and Sikhs challenge rule

Chapter Summary

Babur, “The Tiger.” The first Mughal emperor of India, Babur claimed descent from Chinggis Khan and Timur. He had tried several times to win back his kingdom of Ferghana, but had been driven out of Samarkand. By the time of his arrival in India, he had made a small kingdom around Kabul. The rise of the Safavids had ended his hopes of conquering Persia. Babur entered India in 1526, confronted by the Lodi Empire stretching across his path. Near Delhi, Babur made use of his greater firepower to defeat the Lodi army, and subsequently captured Delhi. By 1530, Babur was in control of northern India, and had founded the Mughal Empire. Other Muslim dynasties of the same period shared characteristics with Babur’s. The Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires were all led by Turkic-speaking nomads, all benefiting from power vacuums. In addition, all three gained dominance with the help of superior weapons. Babur’s conquests differed from those that had earlier brought the Ottoman and Safavid empires into being, in not being motivated by religion. The history of the latter two, born out of religious fervor, was marked by Sunni-Shi’a rivalry, often leading to war. The Middle East in this era experienced great dynamism in art and architecture, spurred by a renewal of the Muslim tradition of cultural exchange and adaptation.

Chapter Summary. The Mongol invasions of the 13th and 14th centuries destroyed theoretical Muslim unity. The Abbasid and many regional dynasties were crushed. Three new Muslim dynasties arose to bring a new flowering to Islamic civilization. The greatest, the Ottoman Empire, reached its peak in the 17th century; to the east the Safavids ruled in Iran and Afghanistan, and the Mughals ruled much of India. Together the three empires possessed great military and political power; they also produced an artistic and cultural renaissance within Islam.

The Ottomans: From Frontier Warriors to Empire Builders. Turkic-speaking peoples held important positions in many Islamic regimes. When the Mongols defeated the Seljuks of eastern Anatolia in the mid-13th century, the Ottomans, after a period of turmoil, secured dominance. During the 14th and 15th centuries they moved into the Balkans. In 1453 they captured Constantinople and ended the Byzantine Empire. During the next two centuries they brought their rule to much of the Middle East, north Africa, and southeastern Europe. Their navy dominated the eastern Mediterranean. Even though the Ottomans failed to capture Vienna in 16th and 17th-century sieges, they continued as a serious threat to Christian Europe.

A State Geared to Warfare. Military leaders had a dominant role in the Ottoman state, a polity geared to war and expansion. The Turkic horsemen became a warrior aristocracy supported by control of conquered land and peasants. When their power shrank before that of an expanding central bureaucracy, they built up regional power bases. In the mid-15th century, imperial armies were dominated by Janissary infantry divisions composed of conscripted youths from conquered lands. Their control of artillery and firearms gave them great power; by the mid-16th century they intervened in dynastic succession disputes.

The Sultans and their Court. Ottoman rulers survived by playing off the competing factions within their state. The groups included Janissaries and religious and legal scholars, and Muslim, Christian, and

Jewish merchants. The latter two were “peoples of the book” who often were satisfied with the sound administration of their Muslim rulers. Early rulers participated in administration and warfare, but as the empire grew, the sultans lost contact with their subjects. A large bureaucracy headed by a vizier had great power in the state. Vague principles of imperial succession led to protracted strife and weakened the empire.

Constantinople Restored: Link Between Asia and Europe, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

The imperial capital at Constantinople combined the disparate cultures under Ottoman rule. The new rulers restored the city after 1453; the church of St. Sophia became one of Islam’s grandest mosques. Most sultans tried to add to the city’s splendor: Suleyman the Magnificent built the great Suleymaniye mosque in the 16th century. Constantinople became the commercial center dealing in products from Asia, Africa, and Europe. Many urban inhabitants belonged to merchant and artisan classes. The government closely regulated both activities. Artisan guilds were very important. By the 17th century, the Turkish language became the preferred vehicle for literature and the government. The Ottomans left a significant artistic legacy in poetry, ceramics, carpet manufacturing, and architecture.

The Problem of Ottoman Decline. The empire continued vigorously until the late 17th century. By then, the empire was too extensive to be maintained from its available resource base and transport system. As a conquest state, the Ottomans began to decline once acquisition of new territory, vital for the support of the large military and bureaucracy, ceased. The bureaucracy became corrupt, and regional officials used revenues for their own purposes. Oppressed peasants and laborers fled the land or rebelled. Problems at the center of the state added to the decline. Sultans and their sons were confined to the palace; they became weak and indolent rulers managed by court factions. Civil strife increased and military efficiency deteriorated.

Military Reverses and the Ottoman Retreat. The weakening within the empire occurred when outside challenges increased. The conservative Janissaries blocked needed military reform and allowed their state to lose ground to European rivals. The weakness in technology included the imperial navy. A Spanish-Venetian victory at Lepanto in 1571 ended Turkish control of the eastern Mediterranean. By then Portuguese mariners had outflanked the Muslim world by sailing around Africa into the Indian Ocean. Portuguese naval victories there broke the Muslim dominance over Indian trade. The problems caused by loss of commercial revenues were exacerbated by inflation stimulated by the importation of New World bullion. A few able sultans attempted during the 17th century to counter the empire’s decline. The collapse of the Safavids removed an important rival. Still, the major changes occurring within the European world were not matched by the Ottomans. The intense conservatism of the Janissaries and religious leaders blocked Western-inspired innovation.

The Shi’a Challenge of the Safavids. The Safavids also profited from the struggles of rival Turkic groups following Mongol invasions. The Safavids were Shi’a Muslims from a family of Sufi preachers and mystics. In the early 14th century under Sail al-Din, they fought to purify Islam and convert the Turkic peoples. After long struggles, Ismâ’il seized Tabriz in 1501, and was proclaimed *shah*. His followers conquered most of Persia and fought against the Ottomans who defeated them at the important battle of Chaldiran in 1514, blocking the westward advance of Shi’ism.

Thinking Historically: The Gunpowder Empires and the Shifting Balance of Global History. Each of the three great Muslim dynasties gained power with the support of nomadic warriors, but past conditions had changed. The battle of Chaldiran demonstrated that firearms were a decisive factor in warfare. Global history had entered a new phase. States utilized technology to reorganize their land and naval forces, and the changes influenced both social and political development. Once-dominant warrior aristocracies crumbled before governments able to afford expensive weapons. The Chinese scholar-gentry and Japanese shoguns had some success in limiting their impact. Nomads no longer were able to dominate sedentary peoples; their dynasties similarly declined when confronted by smaller, technologically-superior rivals. The efficient utilization of firearms by European nations was a major factor in their rise to world power.

Politics and War under the Safavid Shahs. The defeat at Chaldiran and the succeeding weakening of the dynasty led Turkic chiefs to seek power. Tahmasp I, after a period of turmoil, became shah in 1534

and restored state power. Under Abbas I (1587–1629) the empire reached its zenith. The rulers brought the Turkic warriors under control, assigning them villages and peasant labor for support. Some leaders gained important posts in the state and posed a constant threat to the shahs. Persians were recruited into the imperial bureaucracy as a counterbalance. The Safavids, as the Ottomans, recruited captured slave youths into the army and bureaucracy. During the reign of Abbas I, they became the backbone of his army and held high civil posts. They monopolized firearm use and received training from European advisors.

State and Religion. The Safavids originally wrote in Turkish, but after Chaldiran, Persian became the language of the state. They also adopted elaborate Persian traditions of court etiquette. The initial militant Shi'a ideology was modified as the Safavids drew Persian religious scholars into the bureaucracy. Religious teachers received state support, and teaching in mosque schools was supervised by religious officials. The population of the empire gradually converted to Shi'a Islam, which developed into an integral part of Iranian identity.

Commercial Revival, Elite Affluence and the Art of the Mosque. Abbas I attempted to make his empire a major center of international trade and Islamic culture. Internal transport conditions were improved and workshops were created for silk textiles and carpets. Iranian merchants were encouraged to trade with other Muslims, Indians, Chinese, and Europeans. Abbas devoted special attention to building projects, especially mosques, in his capital of Isfahan.

Society and Gender Roles: Ottoman and Safavid Comparisons. Both dynasties had much in common. They initially were dominated by warrior aristocracies who shared power with the monarch. The warriors gradually left the rulers' courts for residence on rural estates where they exploited the peasantry. When central power weakened, the result was flight from the land and rebellion. Both empires encouraged the growth of handicraft production and trade. Imperial workshops produced numerous products, and public works employed many artisans. Policies encouraging international trade developed, although the Safavids were less market-oriented than the Ottomans. Women endured the social disadvantages common to Islamic regimes. Although many struggled against the restrictions, their earlier independence within nomadic society was lost. Women were subordinate to fathers and husbands and—especially among the elite—had few outlets for expression outside of the household.

The Rapid Demise of the Safavid Empire. Abbas I, fearing plots, had removed all suitable heirs. The succession of a weak grandson began a process of dynastic decline. Internal strife and foreign invasions shook the state. In 1722 Isfahan fell to Afghani invaders. An adventurer, Nadir Khan Afshar, emerged from the following turmoil as shah in 1736, but his dynasty and its successors were unable to restore imperial authority.

The Mughals and the Apex of Muslim Civilization in India. Turkic invaders, led by Babur, invaded India in 1526 after being driven from Afghanistan. They sought booty, not conquest, and remained only when prevented from returning northward. Babur's forces, using military tactics and technology similar to the Ottomans, crushed the Muslim Lodi dynasty at Panipat in 1526 and in 1527 defeated a Hindu confederation at Khanua. Within two years Babur held much of the Indus and Ganges plains. The first Mughal ruler, he was a talented warrior also possessing a taste for art and music, but a poor administrator. His sudden death in 1530 brought invasion from surrounding enemies. Babur's successor, Humayn, fled to Persia. He led successful return invasions into India that restored control in the North by 1556, but died soon after.

Akbar's Religious Syncretism, Hindu Allies, and a Multi-Cultural Empire. Humayn's 13-year-old son Akbar succeeded to the throne and immediately had to face pressure from Mughal enemies. The young monarch's forces were victorious, and he became a ruler of outstanding military and administrative talent. Akbar's armies consolidated Mughal conquests in north and central India. He advanced a policy of reconciliation with his Hindu subjects; he encouraged intermarriage, abolished head taxes, and respected Hindu religious customs. Hindus rose to high ranks in the administration. Akbar invented a new faith, Din-i-Ilahi, incorporating Muslim and Hindu beliefs to unify his subjects. The Hindu and Muslim warrior aristocracy were granted land and labor for their loyalty. Local Hindu notables were left in place if taxes were paid.

Social Reform and Social Change. Akbar attempted to introduce social changes that would benefit his subjects. Among them were reforms to regulate the consumption of alcohol. He strove to improve the position of women. Akbar encouraged widow remarriage and discouraged child marriages. He prohibited *sati* and attempted to break seclusion through creating special market days for women.

Mughal Splendor and Early European Contacts. Even though most of his reforms, including the new religion, were not successful, Akbar left a powerful empire at his death in 1605. Not much new territory was added by successors, but the regime reached the peak of its splendor. Most of the population, however, lived in poverty, and India fell behind Europe in invention and the sciences. Still, by the late 17th century the Mughals ruled over a major commercial and manufacturing empire. Indian cotton textiles were world-famous and gained a large market in Europe.

Artistic Achievement in the Mughal Era. The 17th-century rulers Jahangir and Shah Jahan continued the policy of tolerance toward Hindus along with most other elements of Akbar's administration. Both preferred the good life over military adventures. They were important patrons of the arts; they expanded painting workshops for miniatures and built great architectural works, including Shah Jahan's Taj Mahal, often blending the best in Persian and Hindu traditions.

Court Politics and the Position of Elite and Ordinary Women. Jahangir and Shah Jahan left the details of daily administration to subordinates, thus allowing their wives to win influence. Nur Jahan, Jahangir's wife, dominated the empire for a time through her faction. Mumtaz Mahal, wife of Shah Jahan, also amassed power. While the life of court women improved, the position of women elsewhere in society declined. Child marriage grew more popular, widow remarriage died out, and seclusion for both Muslim and Hindus increased. *Sati* spread among the upper classes. The lack of opportunity for a productive role and the burden of a dowry meant that the birth of a girl became an inauspicious event.

The Beginnings of Imperial Decline. Aurangzeb, Shah Jahan's successor, inherited a declining empire and was not able to reverse the process. He pushed two disastrous ambitions: to control all India and to rid Islam of Hindu influences. By 1707 Aurangzeb had conquered most of India, but the warfare had drained the treasury and weakened the bureaucracy and military. The time spent on warfare diverted the rulers' energies from other vital tasks. They did not deal with an internal revolt and the growing autonomy of local leaders. Aurangzeb's religious policies increased internal weaknesses. Hindus in imperial service were kept from the highest posts, and measures against Hinduism began. The head tax on non-Muslims was restored. By the end of Aurangzeb's regime, his large empire was plagued by internal disruption. The Marattas of western India and the Sikhs in the northwest strained imperial resources. Islamic enemies were ready to strike.

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS: Gunpowder Empires and the Restoration of the Islamic Bridge between Civilizations. Comparison of the three Muslim empires with the Ming and Russian realms highlights similarities and distinctions. Military technology was critical to all. On the other hand, the Ming emperors and Russian tsars were threatened by nomadic peoples, but the Muslim empires were in fact created by nomads. Relations between the latter and other world powers changed slowly. The Muslim empires changed from within, as well as in relation to their competitors. Little effort was made to incorporate European technological advances. The failure to meet the European challenge weakened the economic base of their empires as revenues and profits were drained off by foreigners. The Islamic empires continued to be active in international commerce, but Europeans steadily improved their positions. Military decline opened a path for European intervention.

KEY TERMS

Ottomans: Turkic-speaking people who advanced into Asia Minor during the 14th century; established an empire in the Middle East, north Africa, and eastern Europe that lasted until after World War I.

Mehmed II: "the Conqueror"; Ottoman sultan; captured Constantinople, 1453, and destroyed the Byzantine Empire.

Janissaries: conscripted youths from conquered regions who were trained as Ottoman infantry divisions; became an important political influence after the 15th century.

Vizier: head of the Ottoman bureaucracy; after the 15th century often more powerful than the sultan.

Suleymaniye mosque: great mosque built in Constantinople during the reign of the 16th-century Ottoman ruler Suleyman the Magnificent.

Safavid dynasty: founded by a Turkic nomad family with Shi'a Islamic beliefs; established a kingdom in Iran and ruled until 1722.

Sail al-Din: Eponymous founder of the Safavids, Sufi mystic; leader of the Red Heads.

Ismâ'il: Safavid leader; conquered the city of Tabriz in 1501 and was proclaimed shah.

Chaldiran: an important battle between the Safavids and Ottomans in 1514; Ottoman victory demonstrated the importance of firearms and checked the western advance of the Safavid Shi'a state.

Abbas I, the Great: Safavid shah (1587–1629); extended the empire to its greatest extent; used Western military technology.

Imams: Shi'a religious leaders who traced their descent to Ali's successors.

Mullahs: religious leaders under the Safavids; worked to convert all subjects to Shi'ism.

Isfahan: Safavid capital under Abbas the Great; planned city exemplifying Safavid architecture.

Nadir Khan Afshar: emerged following fall of Safavids; proclaims himself shah, 1736.

Mughal dynasty: established by Turkic invaders in 1526; endured until the mid-19th century.

Babur: Turkic leader who founded the Mughal dynasty; died in 1530.

Humayn: son and successor of Babur; expelled from India in 1540 but returned to restore the dynasty in 1556.

Akbar: son and successor of Humayn; built up the military and administrative structure of the dynasty; followed policies of cooperation and toleration with the Hindu majority.

Din-i-Ilahi: religion initiated by Akbar that blended elements of Islam and Hinduism; did not survive his death.

Sati: ritual burning of high-caste Hindu women on their husbands' funeral pyres.

Taj Mahal: mausoleum for Mumtaz Mahal, built by her husband Shah Jahan; most famous architectural achievement of Mughal India.

Nur Jahan: wife of ruler Jahangir who amassed power at the Mughal court and created a faction ruling the empire during the later years of his reign.

Aurangzeb: son and successor of Shah Jahan; pushed extent of Mughal control in India; reversed previous policies to purify Islam of Hindu influences; incessant warfare depleted the empire's resources; died in 1707.

Marattas: people of western India; challenged Mughal rule under Aurangzeb.

Sikhs: Indian sect, beginning as a synthesis of Hindu and Muslim faiths; pushed to opposition to Muslim and Mughul rule.