

CHAPTER
18

TELESCOPING THE TIMES

The Muslim World Expands, 1300–1700

Summary

CHAPTER OVERVIEW A group of Turks called Ottomans set up a new empire in what is now modern Turkey. Farther to the east, the Safavid Empire arose in modern Iran, where rulers embraced a special type of Islam that made them different from their neighbors. Meanwhile, India saw the rise of yet another empire as Muslims created a powerful state there.

1 The Ottomans Build a Vast Empire

KEY IDEA The Ottomans established a Muslim Empire that combined many cultures and lasted for more than 600 years.

In 1300, the world of the eastern Mediterranean was seeing changes. The Byzantine Empire was fading. The Seljuk Turk state had been destroyed by the Mongols. Anatolia, the area of modern Turkey, was now inhabited by groups of nomadic Turks. They saw themselves as ghazis, or warriors for Islam. They formed military groups and raided the lands where non-Muslims lived.

The most successful ghazi was Osman. Western Europeans took his name to be Othman and called his followers Ottomans. Between 1300 and 1326, Osman built a strong but small kingdom in Anatolia. Leaders who came after Osman called themselves sultans, or “ones with power.” They extended the kingdom by buying land, forming alliances with other chieftains, and conquering everyone they could. The military success of the Ottomans was aided by gunpowder—especially as used in cannons.

The Ottomans ruled kindly through local officials appointed by the sultan. Muslims had to serve in the army but paid no taxes. Non-Muslims paid the tax but did not have to serve in the army. Many joined Islam simply to avoid the tax. Most people in their empire adjusted quickly to their easy rule.

One warrior did not. Timur the Lame, called Tamerlane in the west, arose in central Asia. He claimed to be descended from Genghis Khan. The claim probably is not true—but he was as fierce as the Mongol conqueror. He conquered Russia and Persia, where he burned the city of Baghdad to the ground. In 1402, he defeated the Ottomans in battle and captured the sultan. Timur died three years later on his way to conquer China.

Back in Anatolia, the four sons of the last sultan fought for control of the empire. Mehmet I won

control, and his son and the four following sultans brought the Ottoman Empire to its greatest power. One of them—Mehmet II—took power in 1451 and captured Constantinople. At first, his ships were unable to sail near the city because barriers blocked the way. So he had his soldiers drag the ships over hills so they could be launched on another side of Constantinople. After several weeks of fighting, the Ottoman force was simply too strong for the tiny army left in the city. In 1453, Constantinople finally fell to the Ottomans. Mehmet made the city his capital, which was renamed Istanbul. The famous and beautiful church of the Hagia Sophia became a mosque. The rebuilt city became home to people from all over the Ottoman Empire.

Other emperors used conquest to make the empire grow. After 1514, Selim the Grim took Persia, Syria, and Palestine. He then captured Arabia, took the Muslim holy cities of Medina and Mecca, and gained control of Egypt.

His son, Suleiman I, brought the Ottoman Empire to its greatest size and most impressive achievements. He conquered parts of southeastern Europe by 1525. He won control of the entire eastern Mediterranean Sea and took North Africa as far west as Tripoli. Although he was defeated in a battle for Vienna in 1529, his Ottoman Empire remained huge.

Suleiman ruled his empire with a highly structured government. Serving the royal family and the government were thousands of slaves. Among them was an elite group of soldiers called janissaries. They were Christians taken as children and made slaves with personal loyalty to the sultan. They were trained as soldiers and fought fiercely for the sultan. Other slaves held important government jobs. The empire allowed people to follow their own religion. Jews and Christians were not mistreated by the Ottomans. Suleiman revised the laws of the empire, which won him the name Suleiman the Lawgiver. Suleiman also oversaw an empire that was full of

accomplished works of art. Using an excellent architect, he built many fine buildings in his capital.

The empire lasted long after Suleiman but spent the next few hundred years in decline. None of the sultans were as accomplished as he had been, and the Ottoman Empire's power slipped.

② Patterns of Change: The Safavid Empire

KEY IDEA Many world cultures incorporate influences from various peoples and traditions.

Throughout history, different peoples have lived together, and their cultures have influenced one another. Often these people have blended one culture with another. This can be due to trade, conquest, movement of people from one area to another, or conversion to a new religion.

This kind of blending took place in the Safavid Empire of Persia. The Safavids began as members of an Islamic group that claimed to be related to the prophet Muhammad. In the 1400s, they became allied with the Shi'a, a branch of Islam. The major group of Muslims, the Sunnis, persecuted the Shi'a for their views. The Safavids, fearing their strong neighbors who were Sunni Muslims, decided to build a strong army to protect themselves.

In 1499, a 14-year-old leader named Isma'il led this army to conquer Iran. He took the traditional Persian title of shah, or king, and made the new empire a state of Shi'a. He destroyed Baghdad's Sunni population. Ottoman Turk rulers—who were Sunni Muslims—in turn killed all the Shi'a that they met. This conflict between the two groups of Muslims continues today.

The Safavids reached their height in the late 1500s under Shah Abbas. He reformed the military, making two armies that were loyal to him and him alone. He also gave new weapons to the army to make them better fighters. He reformed the government, getting rid of corrupt officials. He also brought gifted artists to his empire, who helped make his capital and other cities very beautiful. In taking these steps, Shah Abbas drew on good ideas from other cultures. He used Chinese artists and enjoyed good relations with nations of Europe. Through this contact, the demand for Persian rugs increased greatly in Europe. In this period, rug-making, which had simply been a local craft in Persia, was changed into a major industry for the country.

As with the Ottoman Empire, the Safavid Empire began to decline soon after it had reached its greatest height. Shah Abbas had killed or injured his most talented sons—just as Suleiman had done—fearing that they would seize power from him. As a result, a weak and ineffective grandson became shah after him. Under his poor leadership, the empire lost power.

While the empire fell, the blended culture that the Safavid Empire had created continued. The main elements of that culture were the joining together of the Persian tradition of learning and sophistication and the devout faith of the Shi'a. These elements are found in Iran even today.

③ The Mughals Establish an Empire in India

KEY IDEA The Mughal Empire brought Turks, Persians, and Indians together in a vast empire.

Starting in the 600s, India went through a long period of unsettled life and trouble. After the Gupta Empire fell, nomads from central Asia invaded the area and created many small kingdoms. In the 700s, Muslims arrived on the scene. Their arrival launched a long history of fighting between them and the Hindus who had lived in India for centuries.

The Hindus were able to prevent the Muslims from taking their land for about 300 years. Then a group of Muslim Turks conquered a region around the city of Delhi and set up a new empire there. They treated the Hindus in their area harshly. Their rule ended in 1398, when Timur the Lame totally destroyed Delhi.

A little over a hundred years later, a new power arose. Babur had a small kingdom north of India. He raised an army and began to win large parts of India. Babur had many talents. He was a lover of poetry and gardens and a sensitive man who used his feelings for others to become a superb leader. He was also an excellent general. He once led a force of only 12,000 soldiers to victory over an enemy army of 100,000. His empire was called the Mughal Empire because he and his families were related to the Mongols.

Babur's grandson, Akbar, was equally talented. His name means "Great One," and the name seems suitable to the man. He ruled with great wisdom and fairness for almost 40 years.

Akbar was a Muslim, but he believed strongly

that people should be allowed to follow the religion they chose. He set an example by letting his wives practice whatever religion they chose. In his government, too, Akbar hired people based on their ability and not their religion. Both Hindus and Muslims gained jobs as government workers.

Akbar ruled fairly. He ended the tax that Hindu pilgrims had to pay. He also ended the tax that all non-Muslims had to pay. To raise money, he imposed a tax based on a percentage of the food grown. This made it easier for peasants to pay the tax. His land policy was less wise. He generously gave land to government officials. However, when they died he took it back and handed it to someone else. As a result, workers did not see any point in caring for the land because they were not preserving it for their children.

He had a strong, well-equipped army that helped him win and maintain control of more lands. His empire held about 100 million people—more than lived in all of Europe at the time.

During Akbar's reign, many changes in culture took place. His policy of blending different cultures produced two new languages. Hindi blended Persian and local languages. It is still widely spoken in India today. Urdu grew out of a mixture of Arabic, Persian, and Hindi and was spoken by the soldiers in Akbar's camp. Today it is the official language of Pakistan. The empire became famous for its book illustrations, which were adapted from the art of Persia. Akbar—who could not read—had a huge library of books and served as a patron to many writers. He also sponsored the building of a new capital city and many buildings.

After Akbar's death in 1605, the empire began to decline. During the reign of Jahangir, the real power was his wife, Nur Jahan. She was an able ruler but had a bitter political battle with one of Jahangir's sons. Since that son found help from the Sikhs—members of a separate religion—that group became the target of attacks by the government.

Jahangir's successor was Shah Jahan, and he too chose not to follow Akbar's policy of religious toleration. Shah Jahan was a great patron of the arts and built many beautiful buildings, including the famous Taj Mahal. It was a tomb for his beloved wife. However, his ambitious building plans required high taxes, and the people suffered under his rule.

His son Aurangzeb ruled for almost 50 years and made the empire grow once again with new conquests. However, his rule brought about new

problems. A serious Muslim, the new ruler put harsh new laws in place. He punished Hindus and destroyed their temples, which produced a rebellion that managed to take control of part of his empire. At the same time, the Sikhs had become skilled fighters, and they won control of another part of the empire. To fight these battles, Aurangzeb had to increase taxes. Since he only taxed Hindus, not Muslims, this move only made large numbers of people more and more angry.

After his death, the empire fell apart, and local leaders took control of small areas. There continued to be a Mughal emperor, but he was only a figurehead, not a ruler with any real power.

Review

1. **Recognizing Facts and Details** How did the Ottomans treat non-Muslims?
2. **Making Judgments** What was significant about the capture of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453?
3. **Recognizing Main Idea** Despite their brilliant rule, what critical mistake did Suleiman and Shah Abbas make?
4. **Recognizing Facts and Details** What evidence of cultural blending can you find in Akbar's rule?
5. **Perceiving Cause and Effect** How did Akbar's successors contribute to the end of the Mughal Empire?

Answer Key

Chapter 18

SUMMARY

The Muslim World Expands, 1300–1700

Responses will vary but should include points similar to the following:

1. The Ottomans treated non-Muslims well, allowing them to practice their own religion, although they did put a tax on them. They also placed some Christians into slavery, to serve as soldiers or government officials.
2. It marked the end of the Byzantine Empire, which traced its origins back to ancient Rome.
3. Both Suleiman and Shah Abbas weakened their empires by killing or hurting their sons who were able, leaving only weak rulers to follow them.
4. Akbar's policy of blending produced two new languages, Hindi and Urdu. The art of illustrating books, which became refined under his rule, was adapted from Persian art. He also gave government jobs to either Muslims or Hindus based on ability, not religion.
5. Akbar's successors did not continue his policy of religious toleration, which led to conflict between Hindus and Muslims. Ambitious building programs and military campaigns produced high taxes, which were unfairly paid only by Hindus. This added to the conflict between groups.