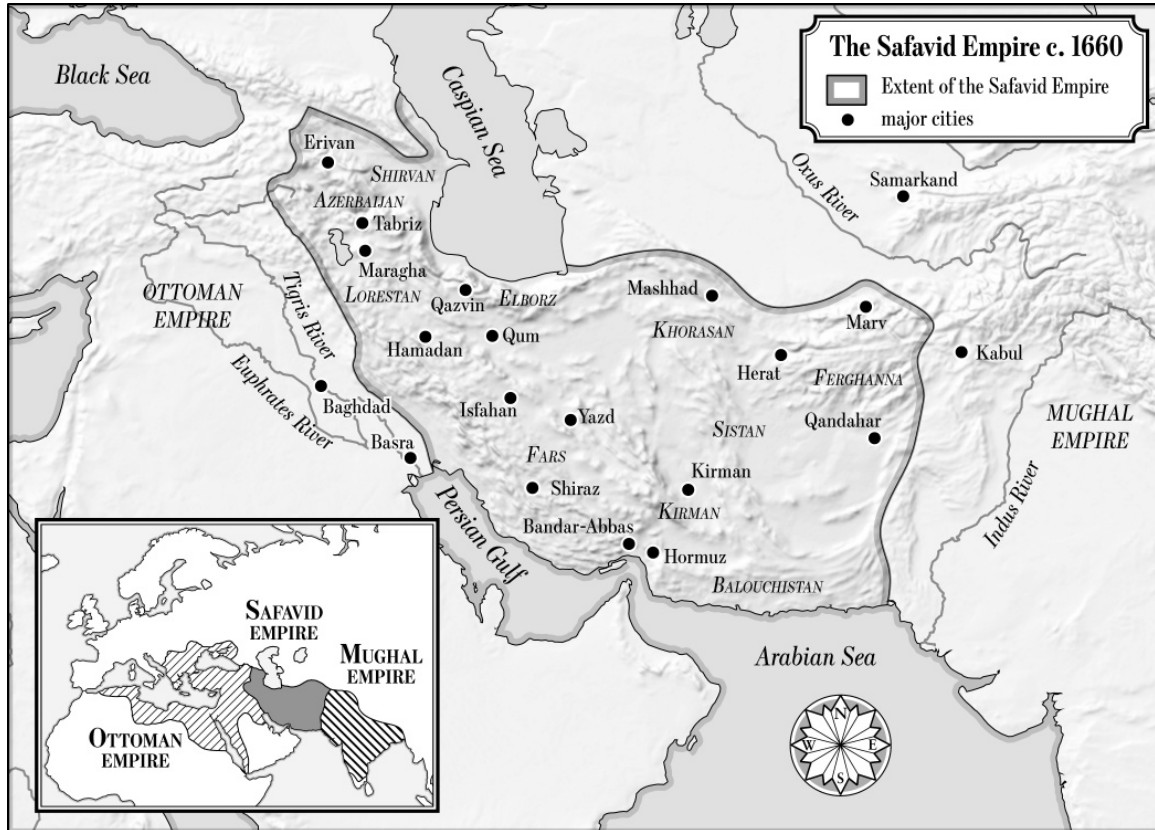


## Safavid, Mughal, and Ottoman Empires

The three Islamic empires of the early modern period – the Mughal, the Safavid, and the Ottoman – shared a common Turko-Mongolian heritage. In all three the ruling dynasty was Islamic, the economic system was agrarian, and the military forces were paid in grants of land revenue. Despite these similarities, however, significant differences remained. And, to fully appreciate the individual temporal systems, a brief description of the political, economic, religious, and cultural conditions in each state is necessary. Within the confines of a single chapter, however, it is not possible to review all of the literature and settle all of the controversies. As a result, the brief overview that follows depends, for the most part, on the most recent general histories and surveys.

### SAFAVID EMPIRE (1501–1722)

Safavid Iran was shaped like a bowl, a flat bottom encircled by two mountain ranges. The Elburz Mountains ran along the southern shore of the Caspian Sea and met the smaller ranges of Khurasan in the east. The Zagros Mountains stretched from Azerbaijan in the northwest to the Persian Gulf and then east toward Baluchistan. The Eastern Highlands bordered the country on the southeast. A high arid plateau, with an average elevation of 3,000 feet, formed the base of the bowl. Two deserts – the Kavir and the Lut – sprawled across this expanse. Only three rivers interrupted the dry plateau: The Karun River (the only navigable one) originated in the Zagros Mountains and flowed to the Shatt al-Arab and the Persian Gulf; the Safid River rose in the Elburz Mountains and emptied into the Caspian Sea; and the Zayanda River, the only one of the three that



MAP 1. The Safavid Empire, c. 1660

watered the plateau, began in the Zagros Mountains and flowed through Isfahan, dying in a salty swamp nearby.

No reliable estimates are available for the population of Safavid Iran. However, given the scarcity of arable land, the total was considerably below that for either the Mughals or the Ottomans. Because of the large area taken up by mountains and deserts, only about one-eighth of the country was tillable.<sup>1</sup> As a result, an estimate for 1650 of eight to ten million seems reasonable.<sup>2</sup>

In 1501 Shah Ismail I (1501–1524), the founder of the dynasty, defeated the Turkish Aq Quyunlu forces that had, along with the Qara Quyunlu, ruled northwestern Iran since 1396.<sup>3</sup> Like his father and grandfather, Ismail headed the Safaviyya Sufi order. As Twelver or Imami Shiites, this mystical order rejected the first three caliphs and honored the Twelve Imams as the direct descendants of Muhammad. An invented genealogy claimed that Sheikh Safi (the founder of the order and Ismail's ancestor) was a lineal descendant of the Seventh Imam, Musa al-Kasim. Ismail also proclaimed himself the Mahdi (Guided One) and a reincarnation of Ali (the first Imam).

The Safavid founder united in his person the two ethnic components of the state – the Turkish Qizilbash “men of the sword” and the Persian Tajik “men of the pen.” Except for their loyalty to Ismail and their membership in the Safaviyya order, the Qizilbash warriors were indistinguishable from their Sunni brethren in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman empire. Their common heritage gave the Safavid-Ottoman rivalry a special intensity. By contrast, as a descendant of landowners from the province of Gilan, Ismail also had a Persian side. Under him, as under the earlier Turkish rulers, Iranian scribes filled judicial, religious, and administrative positions. The hereditary notables, peasants, merchants, and artisans were Persian also. During Ismail's reign tension and competition marked the relationship between these two groups.

Shah Tahmasp I (1524–1576), eldest son of Ismail, ascended the throne at age ten. His first twelve years in power (1524–1536) witnessed a civil

<sup>1</sup> W. B. Fisher, ed., *Cambridge History of Iran, vol. 1: The Land of Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 611.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen P. Blake, *Half the World: The Social Architecture of Safavid Isfahan, 1590–1722* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1999), 5.

<sup>3</sup> For a general overview, see Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart, eds., *The Cambridge History of Iran, vol. 6: The Timurid and Safavid Periods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) and Andrew Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008).

war between the Shamlu and Ustajlu Qizilbash tribes, and he had no real independence as a ruler. To impose order, Tahmasp introduced a program aimed at reestablishing imperial authority, a program extended and brought to conclusion by Abbas I. He created a new tribe, the Shahvand, and gave it a position equal to that of the other tribes. He increased the number of Qizilbash in his personal bodyguard and assembled a household troop of Christian slaves. He also divided each Qizilbash tribe internally and shifted tribal leaders from post to post. Some chieftains were kept at court in administrative positions while others were given military commands or provincial governorships. These measures weakened the powers of the tribes and laid the groundwork for the more thoroughgoing reforms of Abbas I.<sup>4</sup>

Like Ismail, Tahmasp was considered by his Qizilbash followers to be divinely favored. They gave him the messianic title Lord of the Age (*Sahib-i Zaman*). In 1557 he shifted his capital from Tabriz to Qazvin. The need to escape Ottoman threats in the Northwest and to more easily defend his borders in the Northeast probably prompted the move. Because Qazvin had long been a stronghold of Sunni orthodoxy, Tahmasp made a major effort to spread Shiism in his new capital. He decorated the mosques and madrasas with Shiite slogans, repaired the shrines of Shiite saints, commissioned religious poetry and funeral elegies, and expanded the ceremonies of religious mourning.<sup>5</sup>

On his accession at age sixteen, Shah Abbas (1587–1629) appointed his tutor, Murshid Quli Khan, viceroy.<sup>6</sup> To counter the threat of Qizilbash insurgency the young emperor executed a group of tribal chieftains, and, when he was strong enough, ordered the elimination of his tutor. Free at last, Abbas undertook a radical reorganization of the state. He greatly increased the number of cavalymen in his personal bodyguard. These men, although they were Qizilbash tribesmen, differed from their kinsmen in their absolute loyalty to the shah: they left their tribal homelands, came to court, and became members of the imperial household. Under Abbas they expanded to between ten thousand and fifteen thousand men, and, by

<sup>4</sup> H. Roemer, "The Safavid Period," in Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart, eds., *The Cambridge History of Iran, vol. 6: The Timurid and Safavid Periods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 233–49; Masashi Haneda, *Le chah and les Qizilbas: Le Systeme militaire safavide* (Berlin: Klaus SchwarzVerlag, 1987), 133–42; Richard Tapper, *The Frontier Nomads of Iran: A Political and Social History of the Shahsevan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 48–9.

<sup>5</sup> Newman, *Safavid Iran*, ch. 2.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion see Newman, *Safavid Iran*, ch. 4.

the end of his reign, the highest-ranking held provincial governorships and state offices, and their leader had become the most important official in the state.<sup>7</sup> The emperor also created a corps of household slaves composed of Armenian, Georgian, and Circassian converts to Shiite Islam. Numbering ten thousand to fifteen thousand, these slave soldiers were even more dependent on Abbas than were the Qizilbash cavalry. Slaves rose to high ranks and by the end of Abbas's reign they, along with the leaders of the household cavalry, held most of the important imperial posts.

To pay for his military reorganization Abbas instituted a series of economic reforms. He redistributed agricultural land from the domain of the tribal chieftains to the domain of the imperial household, thereby giving him the money to pay his newly expanded bodyguard. At about the same time he began to make a greater use of the local Armenian merchants, primarily to market silk from the province of Gilan, which in 1592 had been incorporated into the imperial household. To further increase household revenues and to take advantage of the arrival of the European East India Companies (primarily the English and the Dutch), Abbas in 1619 established a monopoly over the sale and export of silk.<sup>8</sup>

The emperor's religious role, however, differed significantly from that of his predecessors. Because of the fourteen-year civil war (1576–1590) after the death of Tahmasp and the sheer passage of time, Abbas did not appear to receive the same veneration from his Qizilbash followers as had Ismail and Tahmasp. Also his personal beliefs were ambiguous – he flirted with the Nuqtavi heresy in his early years and showed an uncharacteristic interest in the teachings of the Christian missionaries. Like the Mughal emperor Akbar, however, who made several pilgrimages to the shrine of the Sufi saint Muin al-Din Chishti between 1562 and 1579 (one on foot), Abbas in 1601 burnished his reputation for piety by completing a forty-one-day pilgrimage on foot from Isfahan to the shrine of the Imam Riza in Mashhad. Like his predecessors, he promoted the spread of the Shiite mourning rituals, commemorating the martyrdom of the Imam Husain.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. "Army. Safavids"; Haneda, *Le chah and les Qizilbas*, 146–86.

<sup>8</sup> Edmund Herzig, "The Rise of the Julfa Merchants in the Late Sixteenth Century," in Charles Melville, ed., *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996), 305–22; Willem Floor, "The Dutch and the Persian Silk Trade," in *ibid.*, 323–68; Rudolph Matthee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600–1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Jean Calmard, "Shi'i Rituals and Power II: The Consolidation of Safavid Shi'ism: Folklore and Popular Religion," in Charles Melville, ed., *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996), 139–90; Charles Melville, "Shah Abbas and the Pilgrimage to Mashhad," in *Ibid.*, pp. 191–229.

At the beginning of his reign, Abbas made peace with the Ottomans on disadvantageous terms (ceding the province of Azerbaijan and Tabriz, its capital) in order to concentrate his forces against the Uzbeks in the Northeast. In 1590 he transferred his capital from Qazvin to Isfahan, and in 1598, his military reorganization underway, Abbas reconquered Herat and Mashhad. Having achieved peace in the east, the emperor turned his attention to the Ottomans and in 1603–1604 recaptured Azerbaijan. The treaty of 1612 reestablished the old boundaries between the two states and in 1622, with help from the English, he expelled the Portuguese from Hormuz.

Abbas died in Mazandaran in 1629 and was succeeded by his eighteen-year-old grandson, Shah Safi (1629–1642). The coronation ceremonies included rituals from the Safaviyya order, suggesting that even at that late date Ismail's role as Sufi master had not been forgotten. Under Shah Safi, Abbas's policy of strengthening the imperial household at the expense of the tribal chieftains continued. Generous to his supporters but suspicious of potential rivals, the new emperor executed many high-ranking officials during the early years of his reign. Imam Quli Khan, Abbas's rich and powerful governor of Fars, was put to death in 1632, and his province added to the imperial domain. Raised in the harem, Safi had little interest in ruling. In 1633 he turned over management of the empire to his grand wazir, Mirza Muhammad Taqi, known as Saru Taqi. A man of honesty, integrity, and ability, he held the post until 1645, when he was assassinated by jealous rivals.<sup>10</sup>

Shah Safi also followed Abbas's lead in economic reorganization. He added the lands of the defeated Qizilbash chieftains to the domain of the imperial household. He rescinded Abbas's silk monopoly and, as a result, trade with the European companies increased dramatically. He also encouraged the spread of Shiism, witnessing the massive processions from the upper gateway of the imperial palace.<sup>11</sup>

During Safi's reign military conflict with Iran's neighbors recommenced. In 1629 the Ottomans captured Hamadan, but in 1630 the Safavids resisted their attempt to regain Baghdad. Sultan Murad IV captured Erivan and overran Tabriz in 1635. In 1639 the Ottomans recaptured Baghdad for the last time, and a treaty in the next year established

<sup>10</sup> Willem Floor, "The Rise and Fall of Mirza Taqi, The Eunuch Grand Vizier (1043–55/1633–45): Makhdum al-Omara va Khadem Al-Foqara," *Studia Iranica* 26 (1997): 237–66; Jean Chardin, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin, en Perse . . .*, 10 vols. (Paris: Le Normant, 1811), 7, 303–17; Newman, *Safavid Iran*, ch. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Calmard, "Shi'i Rituals and Power II," 139–90.

peaceful boundaries between the two states. By contrast, the skirmishes in the Northeast with the Uzbeks continued throughout the seventeenth century. Except for a brief battle over Qandahar, the relationship with the Mughals remained peaceful. When Safi died in 1642, the country was at peace. He was buried in Qum.

Abbas II (1642–1666) succeeded his father to the throne at age ten.<sup>12</sup> At this point the Qizilbash chieftains had lost their preeminent position in the state, having to contend with the leaders of the imperial household troops and the ranking clerics. After Saru Taqi's murder, Abbas II began to play a more active role in state affairs and devoted several days a week to administration. Internationally, the truce with the Ottomans continued, and no full-scale battles with the Uzbeks erupted.<sup>13</sup>

Although he had no significant role in the Safaviyya Sufi order, Abbas II, like the other emperors after Ismail, retained a reputation for sanctity. He continued to promote the spread of Shiite ceremonies and festivals but the popular interest in messianic, esoteric sects persisted. The 1639 treaty with the Ottomans put an end to the skirmishes on the western borders, and the 1657 trade agreement spurred an upsurge in commercial activity. Economic problems, however, could not be eliminated: Abbas declared a tax amnesty and underwrote several large diplomatic receptions, he fought the Mughals over Qandahar, and he carried out an extensive building program in Isfahan. To deal with the revenue shortfall Muhammad Beg, the new wazir, raised taxes, devalued the currency, and reduced the size of the army. Although not uniformly successful, these reforms seemed to restore a measure of economic stability.<sup>14</sup>

On the death of his father, the twenty-year-old Safi Mirza (1666/68–1694) came to the throne. Crowned in 1666 as Safi II, the new emperor faced so many serious problems (bad harvests, an earthquake, and Cossack raids) that his ministers decided that his coronation had been ill-fated. The imperial astrologers chose a new date, and in the second ceremony two years later he took the name Suleiman. His reign was relatively peaceful – no battles with the Ottomans, Uzbeks, or Mughals.<sup>15</sup>

The new enthronement, however, didn't completely change Suleiman's luck. Natural disasters – harsh winters, swarms of locusts, drought, and

<sup>12</sup> Newman, *Safavid Iran*, ch. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Roemer, "Safavid Period," 288–304.

<sup>14</sup> Willem Floor, "The Dutch and the Persian Silk Trade," 323–68; Rudi Matthee, "The Career of Mohammad Beg, Grand Vizier of Shah `Abbas II (r. 1642–66)," *Iranian Studies* 24 (1991): 17–36.

<sup>15</sup> Newman, *Safavid Iran*, ch. 7.

bad harvests – plagued his entire reign. The promotion and elaboration of Imami Shiism continued: important works on the theology and philosophy of the creed appeared while the court underwrote an expansion of Ashura ceremonies and the devotions at the shrines of local saints.<sup>16</sup>

Because Suleiman had not arranged for a successor, a series of harem intrigues put Sultan Husain (1694–1726) rather than his younger brother, Abbas Mirza, on the throne.<sup>17</sup> By this point, however, the empire was at peace, not threatened by any of its traditional enemies. The imperial administration, refined and developed over the years, was able to handle the routine problems of governance. Economic problems persisted: crop failures brought on inflation and occasional famine, and the trade deficits with India and the European companies led to attempts to control the outflow of specie. Sultan Husain's building projects – the Chahar Bagh complex and the Farahabad garden palace – put a considerable strain on the imperial treasury.

Quiet, studious, and absorbed in religious matters, the Shah fell under the influence of several influential clerics, most notably the religious scholar Mir Muhammad Baqir Khatunabadi, the first Mulla Bashi. In 1695 the emperor promulgated an edict signed by the Sheikh al-Islam of Isfahan (Majlisi II) and six other prominent ulama banning all non-Islamic activities. In the central square of the capital, six thousand bottles of Georgian and Shirazi wine from the imperial cellars were smashed.<sup>18</sup>

Muhammad Beg's policy of neglecting the military, having been followed by Suleiman and then Sultan Husain, finally had its effect. Although the army was able to meet the usual challenges in the first decade of the eighteenth century, the Afghan attacks in the second and third decades seemed to catch the Safavid generals by surprise. In 1711 the Ghilzai Afghans captured Qandahar and in 1721 they arrived outside Kirman. In 1722, after a long and terrible siege, the Afghans crushed the larger Safavid army and sacked Isfahan. Shah Sultan Husain was beheaded in 1726, and the two figurehead shahs who prolonged the dynasty were replaced in 1736 by Nadir Shah, a Turkman of the Afshar tribe.

<sup>16</sup> Roemer, "Safavid Period," 304–10; Rudi Matthee, "Administrative Stability and Change in Late-17th-Century Iran: The Case of Shaykh Ali Khan Zanganah (1669–89)," *IJMES* 26 (1994): 77–98; Calmard, "Shi'i Rituals and Power II," 164.

<sup>17</sup> Newman, *Safavid Iran*, ch. 8.

<sup>18</sup> Kathryn Babayan, "Sufis, Dervishes and Mullas: The Controversy over Spiritual and Temporal Dominion in Seventeenth-Century Iran," in Charles Melville, ed., *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996), 117–38.



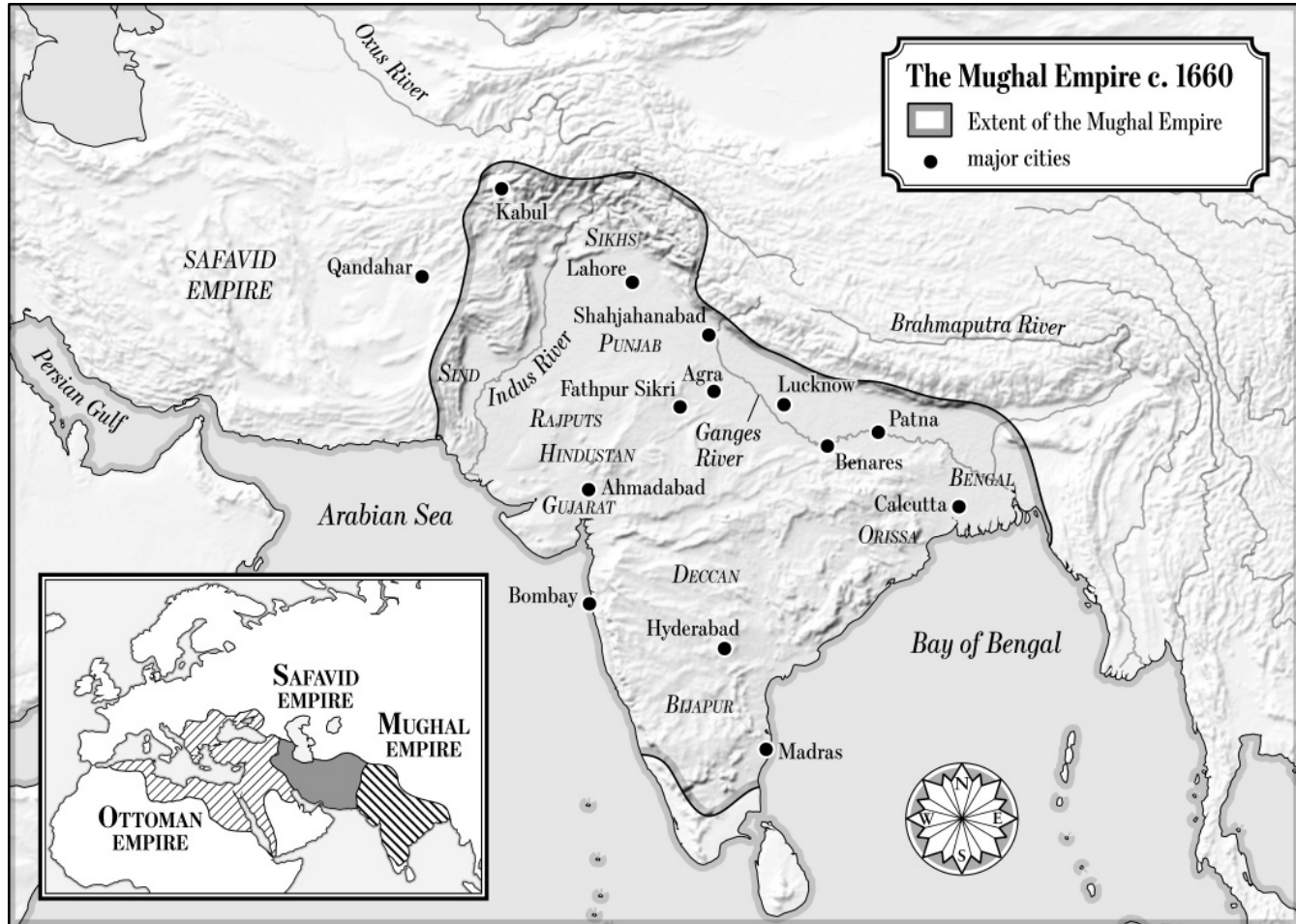
## MUGHAL EMPIRE (1526–1739)

In both area and population the Mughal empire was by far the largest of the three states.<sup>19</sup> In 1650 it boasted a population of about 150 million people and covered nearly the entire Indian subcontinent. From the beginning of the first millennium CE, India had been an Eldorado, famed throughout the Eurasian world for its spices, textiles, diamonds, and paper. As an agrarian empire its size and wealth were heavily dependent on its climate. Unlike the arid, sparsely populated Safavid and Ottoman empires, Mughal India was tropical. The two great river systems (the Indus and Ganges) and the annual monsoon sustained a remarkably rich growing season, yielding two bumper crops a year (primarily wheat and rice). In the north the subcontinent was sheltered from the polar winds of Central Asia by the Himalaya and Hindu Kush mountains. From these ranges flowed the two rivers that watered the north Indian plains. The Jamuna-Gangetic system flowed south and east emptying into the Bay of Bengal while the Indus system (comprising the five rivers of the Punjab) ran west and south into the Arabian Sea. The southern peninsula of the subcontinent was cut off from the North by the Vindhya Mountains. Although at ten thousand feet they were not as forbidding as the towering northern ranges, they constituted a significant natural barrier, dividing the peoples and cultures of India into two very different halves.

In addition to the river systems, the other major contributor to India's size and wealth was the monsoon, a season of torrential rains that inundated the subcontinent from two directions. The first blew in from the Arabian Sea in early June, watering the southwest coast and moving eastward across most of the country by the first week of July. The second, originating in the Bay of Bengal, spread over Assam and was deflected by the Himalayas into North India, arriving in early July also.

Under the Mughals this rich, culturally complex, and heavily populated region was slowly molded into a functioning state. Like other north Indian empire builders, the early Mughals established their headquarters near the conjunction of the Ganges and the Jamuna. Having consolidated themselves in the north, they extended their control to the eastern and western edges of the flood plain and then moved beyond the Vindhyas, gradually incorporating the lands of central and southern India into their evolving empire.

<sup>19</sup> For a general introduction, see John Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).



MAP 2. The Mughal Empire, c. 1660

Muhammad Zahir al-Din Babur, a Chagatai Turk from Fergana in Central Asia, was the founder of the Mughal Empire. Although Babur could trace a connection to Chagatai Khan, the second son of Chinghiz Khan (ca. 1162–1227), through his mother, it is by no means accurate to call him or his successors Mongol. Mughal, the name of the dynasty, is a variant of Mongol and was used in India to distinguish immigrants or the recently immigrated from local Muslims. Because Babur's father, Umar Sheikh Mirza, was directly descended from Timur (1336–1405), the great Central Asia empire builder, it is more accurate to call the dynasty Timurid, the name by which it was known to Indians of the period.

In 1526 Babur, at that time ruler of a city state centered on Kabul, defeated the Afghan rulers of North India and inaugurated Mughal rule in the subcontinent. He immediately captured Delhi (later Shahjahanabad), Agra, Gwalior, and Kanauj and in 1527 defeated the massed armies of the Rajput ruler, Rana Sangha. By 1529 he was master of the Indo-Gangetic Plains all the way to Patna but in 1530, at the height of his power, he died.

Humayun (1530–1556), Babur's son and successor, faced a difficult task. He had to mold territories in Afghanistan, Punjab, and the Gangetic Plains into a functioning state, and he had to do it against the opposition both of his own followers and of the recently defeated Afghans. It is no wonder that he failed and was forced to seek refuge with the Safavid ruler of Iran, Shah Tahmasp. From 1540 until Humayun's return to India in 1556 Afghans ruled North India.

Jalal al-Din Akbar (1556–1605), like the Safavid ruler Shah Abbas I, came to the throne as a callow, untested teenager (Akbar at thirteen, Abbas at sixteen) and, like Abbas, had to rid himself of an overbearing tutor and successive challenges to his authority. In 1571 having asserted his authority over his fractious followers and defeated his principal north Indian rivals, Akbar moved his headquarters from the old north Indian capital of Agra to a new imperial center named Fathpur Sikri, some twenty-four miles to the west. From there he launched a far-reaching campaign of radical reform.

Akbar's new imperial order was the result of three kinds of reform – military-administrative, economic, and cultural. The first problem facing Akbar was how to organize, pay, and ensure the loyalty of his martial followers? The young ruler had witnessed firsthand his father Humayun's difficulty maintaining a group of reliable commanders, men who could be counted on in both peace and in war. In 1575 he instituted a program of branding, requiring the horses of each cavalryman to carry two brands: his captain's and the emperor's. Soon after, Akbar began to

make the first appointments in what was to develop into the characteristic feature of Mughal rule – the *mansabdari* or officeholder system. This was a ranked military-administrative hierarchy, each member of which filled an administrative or military position and provided a certain number of armed and mounted followers. At about the same time, Akbar began to reorganize his administration. He established a daily routine for dealing with military and economic matters,<sup>20</sup> set up a record office,<sup>21</sup> divided the empire into provinces,<sup>22</sup> and ordered a village by village census (probably never completed).<sup>23</sup>

For the early modern Islamic world Akbar's new military-administrative system was unusually open to ethnic and religious differences. Unlike the Ottoman and Safavid states, where conversion was required, the Mughals decided not to restrict membership in the *mansabdari* system to the Central Asian Sunni warriors who had made up the bulk of Babur's followers and who had accompanied Humayun on his reconquest of India in 1555. Rather, Akbar's system included all of the local martial groups: Turanis (Turkish-speaking Sunni Muslims from Central Asia), Iranis (Persian-speaking Shiites from Safavid Iran), Afghans (Sunni Muslims from eastern India), Sheikhzadas (Indian-born Muslims), Rajputs (Hindu warriors from north India), and Marathas (Hindu warriors from western India).

In addition to military-administrative restructuring, Akbar devoted a good deal of time to economic reorganization. Because the Mughal empire, like the Ottoman and Safavid states, was agrarian-based (with, to be sure, dynamic commercial, manufacturing, and financial sectors), this involved, for the most part, a reordering of the land revenue system. Assessments were out-of-date and numerous disagreements had arisen between imperial recordkeepers and army officers. Thus, in early 1575 Akbar ordered a detailed survey of central north India – measuring the arable land (establishing standard measurements for length and area) and collecting information on prices and yields. With this information the imperial revenue administrators in 1580 published the Ten-Year Settlement (*Ain-i Dahsala*),

<sup>20</sup> Abu al-Fazl Allami, *The Ain-i Akbari*, ed. D. C. Phillott, trans. H. Blochmann, 3 vols. (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, 1927–1949; reprint ed., Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1989), 1: 162–5; Abu al-Fazl Allami, *Akbar Nama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 3 vols. (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, 1948), 3: 256–7.

<sup>21</sup> A. L. Srivastava, *Akbar the Great*, 2 vols. (Delhi: Shiva Lal Agarwal and Company, 1962–68), 1: 178; *Akbar Nama*, 3: 118.

<sup>22</sup> Srivastava, *Akbar*, 2: 113; *Akbar Nama*, 3: 282.

<sup>23</sup> Srivastava, *Akbar*, 1: 284–5; *Akbar Nama*, 3: 95, 165–81, 346–7.

establishing a revenue rate in cash for each piece of land in the central empire. Thereafter, the members of Akbar's *mansabdari* system, paid in land revenue grants (or *jagirs*), were called *jagirdars*.

At about the same time Akbar also began to fashion a multifaceted imperial ideology, one that would foster a deeper commitment to him and his dynasty and that would also be hospitable to the religious beliefs of all his subjects. In 1575 he erected the Ibadat Khana (House of Religious Assembly) in Fathpur Sikri.<sup>24</sup> At first the discussions in this hall were traditional – the representatives were Muslims and the topics were Islamic beliefs and practices.<sup>25</sup> These sessions (from ca. 1575–1579), however, proved ultimately disillusioning. As he had been exposed during the previous twenty years to the religious diversity of early modern India, Akbar could not defer to the unimaginative religious specialists of traditional Islam. Deeply dissatisfied with the insularity of these men and their wholesale condemnation of nontraditional and non-Islamic beliefs and practices, Akbar decided to promote a new policy. Called “*sulh-i kull*,” this new approach was developed during the period 1579–1582 with the help of Abu al-Fazl, Akbar's chief historian and ideologue, and his father, Sheikh Mubarak.<sup>26</sup> Usually translated “universal peace” or “absolute toleration,” the phrase, it seems to me, is better rendered “lasting reconciliation.” Akbar's intent was not to establish perfect harmony among the competing religious and cultural groups of the Indian subcontinent but, rather, to achieve a kind of *modus vivendi*.

“*Sulh-i kull*” was aimed at two quite different audiences: the one non-Muslim and the other Muslim. During the 1579–1582 period, Akbar became very interested in the non-Muslim religious traditions of the subcontinent – Hinduism, Jainism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism. Because India was an overwhelmingly Hindu country and because Akbar had already decided to draw the Rajputs into the *mansabdari* system, he had begun as early as 1562 to marry the daughters and nieces of the Rajput chieftains. After 1579 Hindu mystics and Brahmin priests began to

<sup>24</sup> For a discussion see Stephen P. Blake, “Religious Conflict in Early Modern India: Akbar and the House of Religious Assembly,” in Marguerite Ragnow and William D. Phillips Jr., eds., *Religious Conflict and Accommodation in the Early Modern World* (Minneapolis, MN: Center for Early Modern History, 2011), 69–82.

<sup>25</sup> Srivasta, *Akbar*, 2: 204–5; *Akbar Nama*, 3: 158–9.

<sup>26</sup> The author of *Mujmal Mufasssal*, written during Shahjahan's reign, states that in 1579–1580 Akbar adopted the principle of “*sulh-i kull*”; S. A. A. Rizvi, *The Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1975), 409.

frequent the discussions in the Ibadat Khana, and he began to appoint high-ranking Rajputs to important state offices. Although Akbar had always allowed his Rajput wives to follow their own customs, in the 1580s in Fathpur Sikri he began to participate in their religious ceremonies and rituals, commemorating the Hindu festivals of Diwali, Dussehra, Vasant, and Holi. Of the other three non-Muslim religious traditions, Zoroastrianism had the greatest impact on the emperor.

The second part of Akbar's "lasting reconciliation" policy was directed toward Muslims. In June 1579 he read the *khutba* (Friday sermon) in the central mosque of Fathpur Sikri. Although the accounts of his performance differ, this reading marks the beginning of Akbar's efforts to bring order to the contentious religious environment of Muslim India. The second step followed closely: Two months later in August Abu al-Fazl and his father drafted a *mahzar* (a document attested to by others) that proclaimed Akbar the adjudicator of religious disputes – either those between Sunnis and Shiites or those among the representatives of the four Sunni law schools.

The third, last, and most controversial part of Akbar's effort to bring order to Indian Islam was the Sufi-like imperial order that he founded – the Tauhid-i Ilahi (Divine Monotheism).<sup>27</sup> Most of the early, high-ranking members of the new order were Muslim (eighteen of the nineteen named in the *Ain*), and its organization and ceremony were modeled after the Sufi mystical orders of north India. In the *Ain-i Akbari*, volume three of the *Akbar Nama*, Abul al-Fazl's monumental history of Akbar's reign, Akbar's new order is discussed under the rubric "rules for the disciples [*ain-i iradat-i guzinan*]." <sup>28</sup> "Iradat" was the Sufi term for discipleship, and in the contemporary sources the members of the order were referred to as "disciples" ("murids") and their relationship with Akbar as "discipleship" ("muridi").<sup>29</sup>

Akbar expected the members of the Tauhid-i Ilahi to be in the vanguard of the "lasting reconciliation" movement, reflecting in their words and deeds a tolerance of their fellow Muslims and an appreciation for the

<sup>27</sup> *Ain*, 1: 211.

<sup>28</sup> Abu al-Fazl, *The Ain-i Akbari*, ed. H. Blochman, 2 vols. (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1872–1877), 1: 7; *Ain*, trans. Blochman, 1: 175.

<sup>29</sup> In 1588, for example, a high-ranking *mansabdar* stamped his *farman* (order) with a seal reading "... the disciple [*murid*] of Akbar Shah ..." Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual*, 406. Abu al-Fazl described one of the nobles as donning the "chain of discipleship [*muridi*]." *Ibid.*, 399. Azam Khan and Mirza Aziz Koka joined the order and became *murids*. *Ibid.*, 427–8.

cultural complexity of Mughal India. For example, the emperor pointed with approval to a recently immigrated Iranian who acted as if there were no difference between Sunnis and Shiites, following the principle of “lasting reconciliation or *sulh-i kull*.”<sup>30</sup> Later, he admonished his son Prince Daniyal “be not offended by diversity of religion. Struggle hard to sit in the shade of *“sulh-i kull.”*”<sup>31</sup> Finally, in 1594 he sent a letter to Shah Abbas counseling tolerance and restraint. The Safavid ruler was at the end of a bloody campaign against the millenarian, extremist sect of the Nuqtavis. Akbar, however, had welcomed a leading member of the group to his court in 1577 and had sent a letter of support to another leader in 1584. Akbar wrote: “He [Shah Abbas] must . . . exercise supreme caution before putting any one to death and destroying what is an edifice of God. . . . It must be considered that the Divine mercy attaches itself to every form of creed, and supreme exertions must be made to bring oneself into the ever vernal flower garden of *“sulh-i kull.”*”<sup>32</sup>

Akbar’s son and successor, Jahangir, wrote of his father’s tolerance:

The Professors of various faiths had room in the broad expanse of his incomparable sway. This was different from the practice in other realms, for in Iran there is room for Shias only, and in Turkey, India, and Turan there is room for Sunnis only . . . in his dominions . . . there was room for the professors of opposite religions, and for beliefs good and bad, and the road to altercation was closed. Sunnis and Shias met in one mosque, and Franks and Jews in one church, and observed their own forms of worship. “*Sulh-i kull*” was his disposition. He associated with the good of every race and creed and was gracious to all in accordance with their condition and understanding.<sup>33</sup>

Jahangir (1605–1628), the least forceful of the four great emperors, has usually been seen as weak and uncertain, failing to build on Akbar’s successes and ceding much of his authority to his wife Nur Jahan. During his reign no serious attempt was made to extend Mughal dominion in the Deccan and South India, and Qandahar in central Afghanistan was lost to the Safavids. By contrast, Mughal rule in the province of Bengal was reorganized and put on a peaceful, stable footing. The number of

<sup>30</sup> *Akbar Nama*, 2: 35.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: 1079.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: 1012.

<sup>33</sup> Jahangir, *The Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, ed. Henry Beveridge and trans. Alexander Rogers, 2 vols. (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1968) 1: 37–8. In the translation, the sentence on *sulh-i kull* was omitted. See Ahsan Raza Khan, “Abu al-Fazl’s Account of Akbar’s Expansionism: Ambit of Reason and Tolerance?” (paper presented at the International Seminar “Reason and Tolerance in Indian History,” New Delhi, India, October 2006), 13.



*mansabdars* expanded from about eight hundred to nearly three thousand, proving to be a major burden on the treasury and causing the percentage of state revenues controlled by the imperial household to drop precipitously.

The Emperor Shahjahan (1628–1658) was a different man altogether. Energetic, bold, and a skilled general, he readopted Akbar's policy of vigorous expansion. His first move was to reestablish Mughal rule in the Deccan. He was also responsible for the last serious attempt by the Mughals to recover Qandahar – winning it briefly, losing it to the Persians, and then failing on three separate occasions to regain it. By the middle of his reign, he had consolidated Mughal rule in most of the subcontinent. All this meant that he was free to patronize the arts – poetry, painting, and especially architecture. Shahjahan is best known as the builder of the Taj Mahal, that beautiful memorial to his wife in Agra, but he also renovated the palace-fortresses in Agra and Lahore and planned and built a new capital city (Shahjahanabad) in the Delhi area.

Aurangzeb (1658–1707), the last of the four great emperors, is an enigma. Possessed of energy, talent, experience, and discipline, he should have been the perfect ruler, presiding over a reign of peace and prosperity. Yet there is almost universal agreement that Aurangzeb was a failure and that his reign marked the beginning of the end. Like other Mughal princes before him, Aurangzeb grew discontented and revolted against his father. Unlike the others, however, he was successful, and in 1658 he locked his father in the Agra fort and replaced himself on the throne. A skillful general and a careful administrator, the new emperor brought Assam and Eastern India into the empire, subdued the Sikhs (a militant religious movement centered in the Punjab), and moved against the Marathas. His Maratha campaign, initially successful, soon bogged down, and he left North India in 1679 to direct the military effort in person. For twenty-eight years, until his death in 1707, he pursued the wily Maratha horsemen from place to place, conquering and reconquering small forts, fighting innumerable skirmishes, but always failing to force the one major battle that would have decided the issue. By temperament Aurangzeb was traditional, conservative, and compulsive, trying to roll back Akbar's policy of "lasting reconciliation" and unwilling to delegate administrative and military details.

Aurangzeb's son, Bahadur Shah (1707–1712), was an old man when he finally came to the throne, and the empire he inherited had been bled of men and resources by the long unsuccessful Deccan campaign. The reign of Farrukhsiyar (1713–1719), Bahadur Shah's successor, was



undistinguished, and he was eventually replaced by Muhammad Shah (1719–1748). Like his immediate predecessors, Muhammad Shah had no interest in generalship or administration, devoting himself to hunting and palace amusements. In 1739 Nadir Shah, the newly crowned ruler of Iran, took Qandahar and Kabul from the Afghans and entered the sub-continent. Easily defeating the disorganized and badly led Mughal troops, he occupied Shahjahanabad. After a group of young toughs attacked and killed some nine hundred of his soldiers, Nadir ordered a general massacre. When the Iranian ruler finally left, the city lay devastated and the Mughal empire was, in any meaningful sense, at an end.

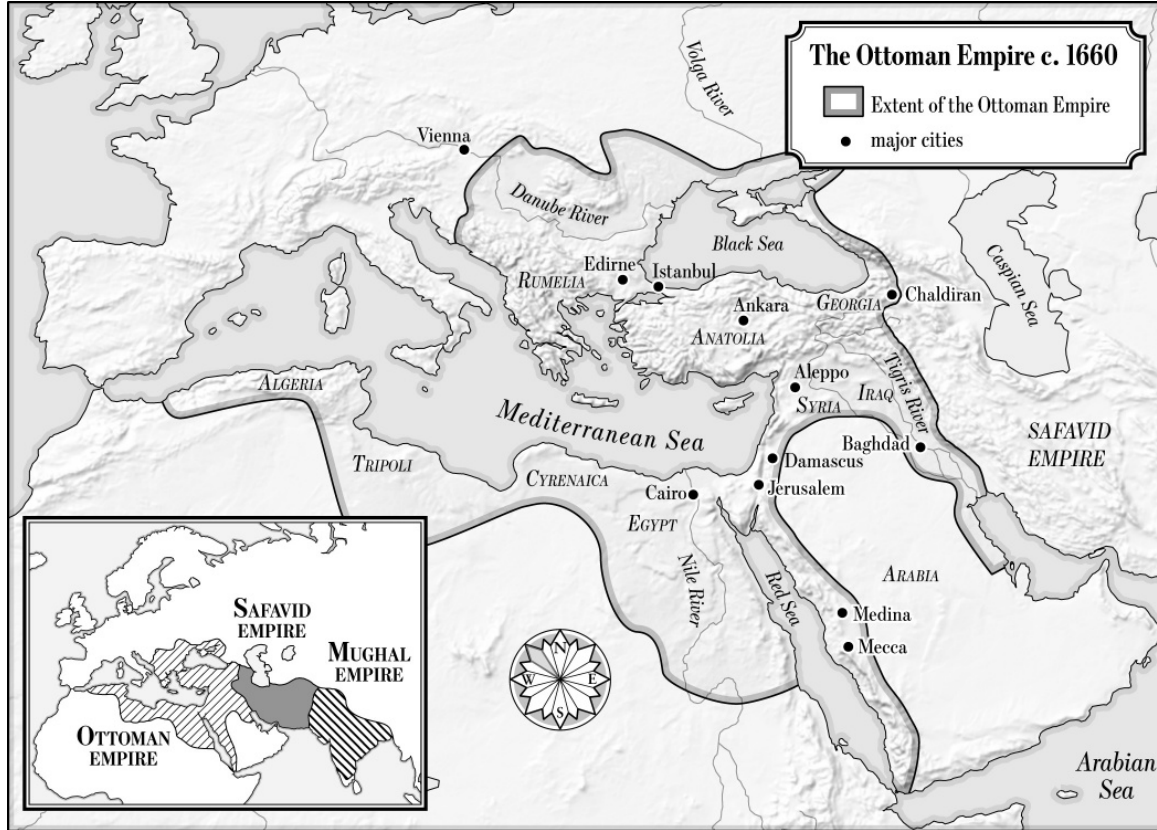
#### OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The Ottoman empire (ca. 1300–1923) was the first and longest-lived of the three early modern Islamic empires. Unlike the other two, it had no natural boundaries and controlled no coherent geographical entity. It was simply the “the domains of the House of Osman.” Nevertheless, by the late sixteenth century the Ottomans controlled an enormous swath of territory: Anatolia, Iraq, the Balkans, Hungary, Syria, Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, and North Africa. Unlike the heavily watered plains of north India or the arid highlands of Iran, the Ottoman empire encompassed a wide variety of climates – the lush Tigris-Euphrates and Nile deltas, the deserts of Arabia, and the more temperate climates of Anatolia, Syria, and North Africa. In 1600 the population of the empire was about twenty million.<sup>34</sup>

Osman (1281–1326), the eponymous founder of the dynasty, began as the ruler of a small Seljuq successor state in western Anatolia.<sup>35</sup> He and his early followers were Muslim Turks, descendants of the Central Asian Turkish tribes who migrated south, defeated the Abbasids at Baghdad

<sup>34</sup> Charles Issawi, “The Ottoman Empire in the European Economy,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 1 (1957): 109–17.

<sup>35</sup> For the most recent overviews, see Suraiya N. Faroqhi, ed., *The Cambridge History of Turkey, vol. 3: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Suraiya N. Faroqhi and Kate Fleet, eds., *The Cambridge History of Turkey, vol. 2: The Ottoman Empire as a World Power, 1453–1603* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); and Halal Inalcik and Donald Quataert, eds., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1500–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). The older surveys by Stanford Shaw and Halil Inalcik are still valuable. Stanford Shaw, *History of Ottoman Empire*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967–77); Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: Classical Age: 1300–1600* (London: Weidenfeld, 1973).



MAP 3. The Ottoman Empire, c. 1660

(1055), and established the Seljuq dynasty that ruled large parts of Anatolia, Iraq, and Iran from the mid-eleventh to the mid-fourteenth centuries. The descendants of these Central Asian tribesmen comprised the majority of Osman's followers in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries and the bulk of Shah Ismail's warriors in the early sixteenth century. In the fourteenth century Osman and his successors slowly expanded their fledgling state – east across Anatolia and west into the Balkans. Under Bayezid I (1389–1402), however, the push eastward brought the Ottoman warriors up against the powerful forces of Timur. At the battle of Ankara in 1402 Bayezid's army was crushed. He was taken captive and died soon after. A major cause of the Ottoman defeat, foreshadowing a problem with the Safavids a century later, was the divided loyalties of Bayezid's men. His tribesmen, recognizing many of their old comrades among Timur's forces, soon defected to the enemy. A hundred years later the descendants of these men were again torn – this time between their loyalty to their Ottoman commanders, on the one hand, and the charismatic leadership of Shah Ismail, on the other.<sup>36</sup>

In the Ottoman army and imperial household slaves or servitors (*kul*) filled many positions. Although earlier Islamic regimes (the Abbasids, Seljuqs, and Mamluks, for example) had employed slaves, the Ottomans relied on them to a much greater extent than did the rulers of either the Mughal or Safavid empires. Because, according to Islamic law, Muslims could not be enslaved, most slaves were prisoners of war, employed primarily as soldiers. However, as the demand for slaves increased in the late fifteenth century, the Ottomans instituted a levy (*devsirme*). Considered an extraordinary tax on the non-Muslim cultivating families of the realm, it was ordered every three to seven years. In the sixteenth century the annual totals ranged from about one to three thousand boys. The young men were circumcised, converted to Islam, and taught Ottoman Turkish, but they were not mistreated – physically abused, restricted to menial occupations, or passed from owner to owner. Most of them came from the Balkans and were destined for the Janissaries, the sultan's personal infantry. A small percentage of the talented were sent to the palace school – entering imperial service and becoming eligible for the highest military and administrative offices. Among the Ottomans the slave system permeated the entire society, from top to bottom, and the imperial palace provided a model for the ranking military and administrative households. Slave women populated the royal harem and sultans were the sons of slaves, their daughters

<sup>36</sup> Shaw, *History*, 1: ch. 2; Inalcik, *Ottoman Empire*, ch. 4.

marrying high-ranking slave officers and officials. Anyone who was part of the Ottoman state, from gardener to grand wazir, bore the title of “*kul*,” all entered the system as slaves.<sup>37</sup>

The first half of the fifteenth century, between the death of Bayezid (1402) and the accession of Mehmed II (1444–1446, 1451–1488) was a period of disruption and dissension. Timur had overthrown Ottoman rule in Anatolia, and it was only slowly reestablished. Mehmed II’s conquest of Constantinople in 1453 not only signified Ottoman recovery but also underlined the dynasty’s ambition – to build an empire rivaling the Roman. Mehmed took two titles: Sovereign of the Two Lands (Rumelia or Southeastern Europe and Anatolia) and of the Two Seas (the Mediterranean and the Black). Although he expanded the new state’s territories in both Anatolia and Eastern Europe, it was under Selim I (1512–1520) that the Ottomans became the most important Sunni state in the Islamic world. In 1514 Selim defeated Shah Ismail and his Turkish tribesmen at Chaldiran in eastern Anatolia. Although Selim couldn’t hold Tabriz, he did expel the Safavids from Baghdad and Basra. In 1516 he defeated the Mamluk forces near Aleppo, adding Syria, Egypt, and the Arabian Peninsula to his fledgling empire. Gaining control of the two holy cities, Selim added, “Servant of Mecca and Medina,” to Mehmed’s titles.<sup>38</sup>

The Ottoman empire, like the Mughal and Safavid states, was agrarian-based. The bulk of imperial revenues came from rural taxes on crops, animals, and other produce. Whereas the Mughals and Ottomans measured the agricultural land of the central empire and drew up registers setting forth the average yield of each subdivision, neither had the fiscal structure or the administrative framework to centrally collect rural taxes and pay a corps of cavalry from the imperial treasury. As a result, the Ottomans, like the Mughals, paid their mounted men in grants of land revenue (called *timars*) – the *timar* system in the Ottoman empire was the rough equivalent of the *jagirdari* system in the Mughal.<sup>39</sup>

The *timar* was the smallest piece of assignable land. It consisted of a village or a group of villages and the surrounding fields. The sultan’s share of the land tax was assigned to a cavalryman who lived in the village, maintained order, and joined the imperial forces whenever called upon. From the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries, these men comprised the bulk of

<sup>37</sup> Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650: The Structure of Power* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 119ff; Inalcik, *Ottoman Empire*, ch. 11.

<sup>38</sup> Inalcik, *Ottoman Empire*, ch. 4; Shaw, *History*, 1: ch. 3.

<sup>39</sup> Imber, *Ottoman Empire*, 181–92, 234–61.

the imperial armies. The *timar* lands were mostly found in the older parts of the empire – Anatolia and the European provinces. After Selim’s victory over the Mamluks in the early sixteenth century, Egypt and the North African provinces were not assigned to cavalymen. They remitted a fixed annual sum in cash to the central treasury, most which went to pay the Janissaries.<sup>40</sup>

Unlike the Mughals or the Safavids, the Ottomans were a formidable naval power. After the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the new capital was provisioned primarily by sea. With Selim’s defeat of the Mamluks in the early sixteenth century control of the sea became even more important: ships full of Egyptian grain and cotton had to be protected and the pilgrimage routes from Africa and India had to be safeguarded. The Ottoman fleet was composed primarily of oared galleys, cannons being added in the late fifteenth century. Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Ottomans were the major naval power in the Mediterranean and Black Seas, occasionally even sending a fleet to the Indian Ocean – seventy-two ships were deployed against the Portuguese in 1538. Ottoman superiority at sea, however, ended in 1571 when Phillip II of Spain and the Venetians destroyed most of the Ottoman navy at the battle of Lepanto.<sup>41</sup>

In the older historiography the Ottoman empire was said to have reached the peak of its military, political, and economic power under Selim’s son, Suleiman I (1520–66). Suleiman extended Ottoman rule in Eastern Europe by conquering Hungary (just failing to take Vienna in 1529). He defeated the Safavids and reconquered Baghdad and annexed most of North Africa. During Suleiman’s reign also the Ottoman navy dominated the seas – the Mediterranean, the Black, the Red, and the Persian Gulf. Although in Europe Suleiman was known as the Magnificent (in honor of his military prowess and the splendor of his court), in his own dominions he was the Lawgiver. Although Quranic law regulated certain aspects of religious, family, and social life, many other matters were left to the decisions of individual sultans. Suleiman had all of these orders and opinions collected, collated, and, if necessary, revised. They were published in a single code, the Ottoman Laws. In Istanbul he increased the number of mosque schools, making a basic education available to all Muslim boys. For the talented, higher education could be pursued in one of the eight madrasas (colleges) of the capital. Suleiman also patronized the arts. Whereas painters, poets,

<sup>40</sup> Inalcik, *Ottoman Empire*, ch. 13.

<sup>41</sup> Imber, *Ottoman Empire*, ch. 9; Salih Ozbaran, “Ottoman Naval Policy in the South,” in Metin Kunt and Christine Woodhead, eds., *Suleyman the Magnificent and His Age: The Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World* (New York: Longman, 1995), 55–70.

jewelers, and goldsmiths produced important works, the greatest artistic achievements of his reign were probably architectural. Sinan, the chief imperial architect, was responsible for over three hundred monuments. His two masterpieces were the Suleimaniye Mosque Complex in Istanbul and the Selimiye Complex in Edirne (constructed during the reign of Suleiman's son Selim II).<sup>42</sup>

The Ottoman empire, like the Mughal, was a complex agglomeration of peoples and cultures, filled with different languages, religions, and ethnicities. Whereas the ruling elite was Muslim, it was not Turkish – as the sultans and many of the ranking officials were Christian converts or the descendants of Christian converts. In Anatolia, the ancient heartland of the dynasty, the people were Turks but in the former Mamluk territories Muslim Arabs predominated. And, of course, the European provinces held Greeks, Slavs, and Serbs – all Christian. In Istanbul there were a significant number of Jews. Within the overall framework of the Ottoman social order, the various religious and ethnic groups had a great deal of autonomy. Under the *millet* (community) system, a separate legal framework was established for each group. A leader resolved legal and social issues and served as the intermediary between the government and the community. As long as the various groups paid their taxes and were peaceful, the Ottoman authorities left them alone. The Muslim population itself was divided into two classes: the *askeri* (military) and the *reaya* (tax-paying). The *askeri* were mostly soldiers – either infantry or cavalry – but they also included other members of the Ottoman governing apparatus – administrators, courtiers, religious officials, teachers, and judges. All were paid by the state. The *reaya*, by contrast, were mostly peasant cultivators and, as the empire was agrarian-based, provided the bulk of imperial revenues.<sup>43</sup>

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, after Suleiman and his immediate successors, the Ottomans faced a period of political unrest and military defeat. Two ruinous and ultimately unsuccessful wars tore at the military, economic, and political foundations of the state. In the east the war with the Safavids (1578–1590) added important territories but strained the capacities of the Janissaries and the provincial cavalry. And in the west the long and debilitating war with the Habsburgs (1593–1608), while ending inconclusively, revealed that the Austrians had become the military equals of the Ottomans. Meanwhile, Shah Abbas, after defeating the

<sup>42</sup> Shaw, *History*, 1: ch. 4; Inalcik, *Ottoman Empire*, ch. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Imber, *Ottoman Empire*, 230–38; Shaw, *History*, 1: ch. 6; Inalcik, *Ottoman Empire*, ch. 4.

Uzbeks, turned toward Anatolia. In the campaign (1603–1608) that followed he regained all of the territory that he had lost in the earlier war. At the same time, the slave system began to break down. The thirty-year period of almost continuous warfare bred an immediate need for more infantry and, as a result, many native born Muslims were enrolled in the ranks of the Janissaries. At the end of the sixteenth century, as the wars in the east and west wound down, the central administration demobilized a great many men. Banding together in groups of twenty-five to thirty, these unemployed soldiers (called *celali* in the sources) rocked Anatolia, Syria, and Iraq from circa 1580–1612. Hungry and experienced, they fought the imperial Janissaries to a standstill and forced many peasants to flee the countryside for the cities, causing a precipitous drop in agricultural production.<sup>44</sup>

In the older historiography the military defeats of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, along with the “*celali*” rebellions, were evidence of a precipitous decline from the glories of Suleiman’s reign. The newer scholarship, however, has tended to reject this stark dichotomy and has begun to argue that the seventeenth century was more a period of change and transition than a time of decline and fall. The various crises brought about a profound transformation of the Ottoman state. Military defeats revealed that the *timar* calvary had become antiquated, increasingly ineffective in the new world of gunpowder technology. In order to recruit and train more infantry the imperial officials decided to increase the percentage of government revenues collected in cash, switching the tax collection status of more and more provinces from *timar* to tax-farming. At the same time under Ahmed I (1603–1617) the administrative system was reformed: a new law code was promulgated; the law of succession was changed, eliminating fratricide and opening the throne to collateral descendants; and the slave levy was slowly abandoned as more and more military and administrative recruits came from the free-born Muslim population. All of this led to a more professional organization that depended less and less on the energy and abilities of individual sultans, finally culminating in the rise to prominence of the Koprulu family of grand wazirs (1656–1703).<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Imber, *Ottoman Empire*, 119–35; Shaw, *History*, 1: ch. 6; William J. Griswold, *The Great Anatolian Rebellion 1000–1020/1591–1611* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1983).

<sup>45</sup> Abou El Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, 16th to 18th Centuries* (Albany: State University of New York, 1991); Inalcik, *Ottoman Empire*, ch. 6; Suraiya Faroqhi, “Crisis and Change, 1590–1699,” in Halal Inalcik and Donald Quataert, eds., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1500–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).



Although the Mughal and Safavid empires were early modern entities entirely (born in the early sixteenth century and destroyed or substantially weakened by the early eighteenth century), the Ottoman empire was not. Founded in the late thirteenth century, it lasted until the early twentieth. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, were a time of military and economic weakness. Ottoman provinces in the Balkans were recaptured by Austria, and Egypt and Algeria became independent in all but name, eventually falling under the influence of Britain and France, respectively. Control of the core empire devolved from the Ottoman central government in Istanbul to local notables in the provinces. After a series of not very successful wars with the Russians, Selim III (1789–1807) began the process of military modernization. Reform and rejuvenation, spurred on by challenges from the European powers, continued through the Tanzimat (Reorganization) Period (1837–1876). In the late nineteenth century, nationalist movements erupted throughout the empire, and the Ottoman decision to enter World War I on the side of the Central Powers was catastrophic. At the Versailles Peace Treaty in 1919 the empire was dismembered, only Anatolia and a small slice of Europe remaining. When the Kemalist movement declared a republic in 1923, the career of the most successful Islamic state in history had come to an end.<sup>46</sup>

The political relationships among the three early modern empires were determined, to a significant degree, by the difficulties of distance. Whereas the empires differed dramatically in population, each controlled a substantial territory. Their capitals, however, were widely separated. It was 2,239 kilometers (1,391 miles) from Istanbul to Isfahan (as the crow flies), 2,466 kilometers (1,532 miles) from Isfahan to Shahjahanabad, and 4,556 kilometers (2,831 miles) from the Ottoman to the Mughal capital. As a result, for one state to mount a military campaign against another was a complex and extremely expensive proposition. In addition, because the Safavid empire, with its mountains and deserts, separated the other two, the primary political rivalries were, for the most part, between the Ottomans and Safavids, on the one hand, and the Safavids and Mughals, on the other.

From the early sixteenth century to the mid-seventeenth, the Ottomans and Safavids were locked into a contentious and intermittently bloody rivalry. Because both dynasties drew their early followers from the same ethnic group, the stakes were high. Turkish tribesmen constituted the bulk both of the Iranian Qizilbash (the Shiite members of the Safaviyya Sufi order) and the Ottoman *timar* cavalry. The Ottoman efforts to pacify and

<sup>46</sup> Shah, *Ottoman Empire*, vol. 2.



control the eastern Anatolian–northern Iran area (centered on the cities of Baghdad and Tabriz) were sporadic. Because the campaigning season was ordinarily limited to the three months following the fall harvest and as both sides often employed a scorched earth policy, the usual result of these battles was engagement followed by withdrawal – either the Ottomans from Tabriz or the Safavids from Baghdad. The issues, however, were real and the struggles, although short-lived, were often destructive.

By contrast, the political relationship between the Mughals and Safavids was much more peaceful. As with the Ottomans and Safavids, distance was an important factor. Isfahan and Shahjahanabad were separated not only by thousands of kilometers but also by the Hindu Kush and Safid mountains and by the winds and waves of the Arabian Sea. A brief look at the quarrels over Qandahar illustrates the point. Whereas the city, some three hundred kilometers south of Kabul, changed hands several times during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the transfers of control were rarely bloody. Often, in fact, they were peaceful: a commander was bribed and defected or, faced with a superior force, offered a prudent surrender. For the Safavids Mughal India was a land of opportunity rather than a battlefield. Poets, painters, soldiers, administrators, and religious dissidents entered the sub-continent, finding refuge and fortune there. In the eyes of the seventeenth-century poet Saib Tabrizi, the principal enemies of the Safavids were the Uzbeks and Ottomans, not the Mughals.<sup>47</sup>

In the case of the Mughals and the Ottomans, no long-term, meaningful political relationship was possible. The enormous distance between the two capitals and the intervening presence of the Safavids meant that diplomatic missions, not to mention military confrontations, were extremely rare.<sup>48</sup> In fact, the only hint of an armed engagement was the appearance of the Ottoman navy in the Indian Ocean in the 1530s. Although a sporadic exchange of ambassadors between the two courts can be traced in the sources, the concrete results were negligible, and the intent seems to have been primarily symbolic, oriented toward impressing an internal audience rather than reaching any tangible political or economic agreements.

The only sustained interaction between the two was religious not political. Because the Ottomans controlled the Arabian Peninsula and the Mughals were Sunnis, the Indian pilgrims and the Meccan authorities

<sup>47</sup> Newman, *Safavid Iran*, 117.

<sup>48</sup> For a discussion, see Naimur Rahman Farooqi, *Mughal-Ottoman Relations: A Study of Political and Diplomatic Relations between Mughal India and the Ottoman Empire, 1556–1748* (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1989).

had a complicated relationship that extended beyond the thirty days of the pilgrimage month. The issues were practical – gifts to Hajj officials and Indian overcrowding of the sacred sites – and the individuals involved were middle-ranking – Meccan governors and caravan ship captains. As a result, the disagreements never reached an intensity that would have provoked a military response.

Whereas the Ottomans were the superior military power, with access to the advanced gunpowder technology of early modern Europe, the Safavids played the leading role in the cultural sphere. In the early modern Islamic world, Arabic was the language of religion but Persian was the language of literature (poetry, history, geography) and, increasingly, of philosophy and science. It was also the *lingua franca* of the time, much like French in eighteenth-century Europe, and in Mughal India it was the language of court and state – records, documents, and orders. Although the Mughal emperors spoke Turkish or Urdu (Hindawi) within their extended households, Persian was the medium of communication among the members of the multicultural *mansabdari* system. Persian was also the language of history, theology, philosophy, and science, virtually all of the written material of the Mughal state was in Persian.

In the early modern Ottoman empire Persian did not play as central a role. At court the language was Ottoman Turkish and the Christian servitors who manned the higher reaches of the administrative and military hierarchies learned it as young boys. Although Ottoman Turkish was heavily influenced by Persian and, to a lesser extent, by Arabic, it quickly became the language of state – records, orders, and everyday conversation. Nevertheless, the ability to read and write Persian was highly prized. A knowledge of the Persian literary classics – the poetry of Saadi and Hafiz, the mystic verses of Rumi, and the histories of the Persian masters (especially the *Shahname* of Firdausi) was absolutely essential. Without mastery of this material, an educated man would be lost at the Topkapi court or in the upper reaches of the legal, religious, and administrative hierarchies. For example, in the last half of the sixteenth century the official Ottoman historian, even though he ordinarily wrote in Ottoman Turkish, bore the title “*Shehnameci*,” that is, the *Shahname* writer.

If, in the early modern Islamic world, the Ottomans were dominant militarily and the Safavids culturally, then the Mughals were the preeminent economic power. Economic relationships among the three empires, although complex in detail, were in outline fairly simple. The basic movement was goods and commodities from east to west and precious metals (gold and silver) from west to east. Cloth and spices were sent from India to

the Iranian markets, and Safavid silk was transported to the Ottoman ports of Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul. Ottoman silver (much of it from the new world) paid for the Safavid silk and passed directly into the hands of the Indian merchants who supplied the Iranians with textiles and spices. In addition, Mughal India also exported financial expertise: Indian bankers and moneychangers dominated the bazaars of Isfahan, Bandar Abbas, Tabriz, and Qazvin.

Although the three dynasties shared a common religion, ethnicity, and political and economy structure, their sources of legitimacy differed. Each based its authority, or right to rule, on a different set of beliefs and claims. After Selim's defeat of the Mamluks, the Ottomans asserted their claim to the caliphate. They were the protectors of the two sacred cities, Mecca and Medina, and the successors to the Rightly-Guided Deputies of the prophet.<sup>49</sup> The Mughals, like the Ottomans, were Sunnis, but their claim to legitimacy was based on their ancestry. Babur, the founder of the dynasty, was a direct descendant of Timur. The Safavids, by contrast, were Shiite and their authority, like the Ottomans, had a spiritual basis. Ismail claimed to be a descendant of the Seventh Imam, an incarnation of the Mahdi, and the Murshid (Master) of the Safaviyya Sufi order. The Safavids also claimed a share of the divine right accorded kings in the ancient, Iranian imperial tradition.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> H. T. Karateke, "Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanant," in H. T. Karateke, ed., *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 13–52.

<sup>50</sup> Roger Savory, "The Safavid State and Policy," *Iranian Studies* 7 (1974): 16.