

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

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

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

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

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

## Mughal India

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

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

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

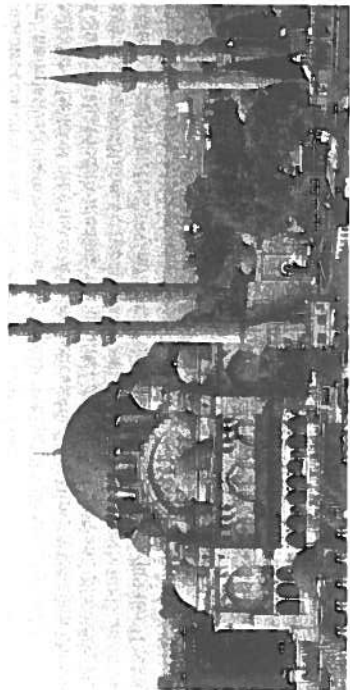
**Tolerance and Prosperity** Akbar was tolerant of all religions. He allocated grants of money or land to Hindus and Muslims. He gave money for a Catholic church in Goa, on the southwest coast of India. He provided land grants for the relatively new religion of *Sikhism*, which developed from Hinduism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

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

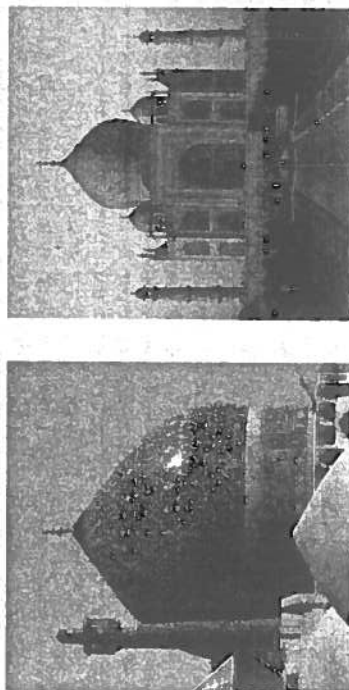
The Mughal Empire under Akbar was one of the richest and best-governed states in the world. Overseas trade flourished during the relatively peaceful period; commerce was carried out mostly by Arab traders, since Indian traders did not care for travel on the Indian Ocean. Traded goods included textiles,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

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

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



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

## Decline of the Gunpowder Empires

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

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