

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



The Muslim Empires, 1450–1800

Lesson 2 The Ottomans and the Şafavids

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What factors help unify an empire? How can the creation of a new empire impact the people and culture of a region?

Reading HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

administrator one who manages the affairs of a government or a business

successor one who follows, especially one who succeeds to a throne or an office

conform to adhere to rules or standards; to fit in

Content Vocabulary

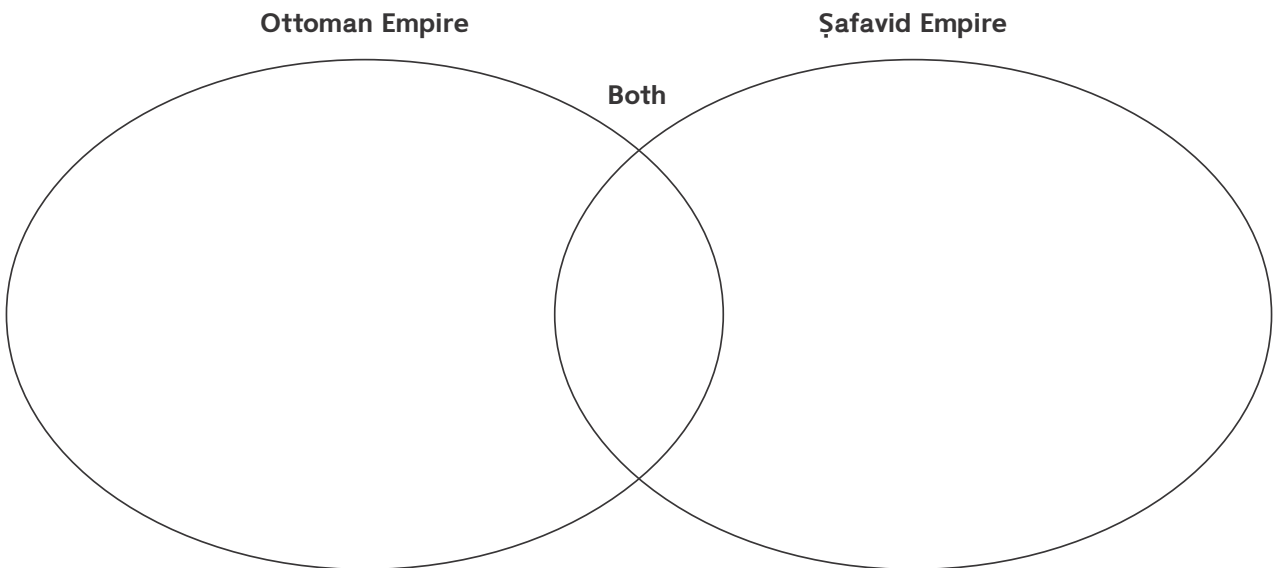
shah the ruler of Iran or Persia

orthodoxy traditional beliefs, especially in religion

anarchy political disorder; lawlessness

TAKING NOTES: *Comparing and Contrasting*

ACTIVITY Use the Venn diagram to compare and contrast the Ottoman and Şafavid empires.



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The logo for 'networks' features the word 'networks' in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. A stylized graphic of intersecting lines forms a starburst or network pattern behind the letter 'o'.

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Lesson 2 The Ottomans and the Şafavids, *continued*

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

The Şafavid Empire was the shortest-lived of the three Muslim empires, but it was important. The Shia faith was declared the state religion. This both unified the empire and brought the empire into conflict with the Ottomans, who were Sunni Muslims.

Problems in the Ottoman Empire

Guiding Question *What led to the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire?*

The Ottoman Empire reached its high point under Süleyman I, known as the empire's greatest ruler. Süleyman (1520–1566) was a great military leader. He led his army on 13 major military campaigns, and he doubled the size of the Ottoman Empire by his conquests. Europeans called him the "Grand Turk" and the "Magnificent."

Süleyman's subjects knew him as the "Lawgiver." He wanted to provide justice for his subjects. As a result, he reorganized the government. He put the justice system in good working order and made sure that laws were enforced. Yet it may have been during his rule that problems began to occur in the empire. He had two of his sons killed on suspicion of treason. His only surviving son, Selim II (the Sot, or "the drunken sultan"), ruled after him.

The problems of the Ottoman Empire did not become clear until 1699. At this time, the empire began to lose some of its territory. However, signs of internal disintegration had already appeared in the early 1600s.

After the death of Süleyman, sultans became less involved in government. They let their ministers have more power and make more decisions. The training of officials declined. More and more senior positions were given to the sons or daughters of the elite, or upper class. Members of the elite soon formed a privileged group. They sought wealth and power. Once, the sultans had viewed members of the ruling class as the "sultan's slaves." Now the members of the ruling class were gaining more and more power. The sultan, in reality, was becoming the "servant" of the ruling class. In addition, the central bureaucracy was losing its links with rural areas. Local officials grew corrupt, taxes rose, and palace intrigue increased. Constant wars depleted, or emptied, the imperial treasury.

One sign of change within the empire was increasing wealth. Another one was the growing influence of Western ideas and customs. Officials and merchants began to copy the lifestyles of Europeans. They wore European clothes, and they bought Western furniture and art. During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, both coffee and tobacco became part of polite society in the Ottoman Empire. Cafes, where coffee and tobacco were consumed, began to appear in major cities.

Some sultans attempted to stop this trend. They outlawed such goods as coffee and tobacco. One sultan patrolled the streets of Istanbul at night. He ordered the immediate execution of subjects he caught in illegal acts. The bodies of the victims were left on the street as an example to others.

The Ottoman Empire had economic problems. Some of these began when trade routes through its territories closed. The economy was also troubled by inflation, or the ongoing rise in the price of goods and services. The trade imbalance between the empire and Europe also hurt the economy. The Ottomans did not invest in manufacturing. As a result, many of its goods were handmade, not made by machine. The guilds set strict rules for prices for the goods they made. As a result, Ottoman goods could not compete with inexpensive manufactured goods from Europe. This declining economy left little money for military expansion.

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Reading Progress Check

Determining Cause and Effect How did some sultans respond to the influence of Western goods in the Ottoman Empire?

The Şafavid Empire

Guiding Question *What was the source of conflict between the Ottomans and the Şafavids?*

After the empire of Timur Lenk (Tamerlane) collapsed in the early fifteenth century, the area from Persia to central Asia experienced a period of anarchy. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, a new dynasty known as the Safavids (sah-FAH-weedz) took control. They were different in religion from many of their neighbors, who were Sunni Muslims. The Safavids became ardent Shia.

The Safavid dynasty was founded by Shāh Esmā ‘īl (ihs-MAH-eel). In 1501, he used his forces to seize much of Iran and Iraq. He then called himself the **shah**, or king, of a new Persian state. Esmā ‘īl sent Shia preachers into the Anatolian Peninsula to convert members of Turkish tribes in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman sultan tried to halt this work, but Esmā ‘īl refused to stop. Esmā ‘īl also ordered the massacre of Sunni Muslims when he conquered Baghdad in 1508.

The Ottoman sultan, Selim I, was alarmed by these activities. As a result, Selim I led the Ottomans in battle against the Safavids in Persia. With their muskets and artillery, the Ottomans won a major battle near Tabriz. However, a few years later, Esmā ‘īl regained Tabriz.

During the following decades, the Safavids tried to consolidate their rule throughout Persia and in areas to the west. The Safavids were faced with the problem of bringing together into one empire various Turkish peoples and the Persian-speaking population of the urban areas. The Shia faith was used as a force to unify these different people. Esmā ‘īl made conversion to the Shia faith mandatory, or officially required, for the largely Sunni population. Many Sunnis were either killed or exiled. Like the Ottoman sultan, the shāh also claimed to be the spiritual leader of all Islam.

In the 1580s, the Ottomans went on the attack. They placed Azerbaijan under Ottoman rule and controlled the Caspian Sea with their fleet. This forced the new Safavid shah, ‘Abbās, to sign a peace treaty in which he lost a large amount of territory in the northwest. The capital of the Safavids was moved from the northwestern city of Kazvin to the more centrally located city of Esfahan. Esfahan became one of the world’s largest cities, with a population of 1 million.

Under Shāh ‘Abbās, who ruled from 1588 to 1629, the Safavid Empire reached its high point. As in the Ottoman Empire, **administrators** were trained to run the kingdom. Shāh ‘Abbās also strengthened his army and gave his army the latest weapons. In the early seventeenth century, Shāh ‘Abbās went to war against the Ottomans and returned Azerbaijan to the Safavids.

After the death of Shāh ‘Abbās in 1629, the Safavid dynasty gradually lost its strength. Many of ‘Abbās’s **successors** lacked his talent and political skills. Eventually, however, the power of Shia religious elements began to increase at court and in Safavid society.

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Intellectual freedom had existed at the height of the empire. Now the pressure to **conform** to traditional religious beliefs, called religious **orthodoxy**, increased. For example, Persian women had considerable freedom during the early empire. That changed as they were now forced into seclusion, or isolation, and required to wear a veil. Treatment of non-Muslims deteriorated as well.

In the early eighteenth century, the Safavid dynasty collapsed. The Turks took advantage of the situation to seize territories along the western border. Persia sank into a long period of political and social **anarchy**.



Reading Progress Check

Analyzing What was the role of religion during the rule of Shāh Esmā ‘īl?

Life under the Şafavids

Guiding Question *What was life like under the Şafavids?*

Persia under the Safavids was a mixed society. Turkish and Persian elements came together to affect almost all aspects of Safavid society.

Shia Islam was the state religion. As result, the Shias in the empire eagerly supported the Safavid rulers. Shāhs were more available to their subjects than were rulers elsewhere. One visitor noted how the shāhs not only spent time with people from other lands but sometimes also ate and drank with their own subjects.

Strong-minded shāhs firmly controlled the power of the landed aristocracy. Appointment to senior government positions was based on merit, or ability, rather than on birth.

The Safavid shāhs played an active role in trade and manufacturing activity. Across the empire, bazaars in local capitals allowed citizens to buy a variety of goods. Merchants came from across Central Asia to trade in the Safavid region.

The bazaar was the heart of commerce under the Safavids. Many bazaars were enclosed and had high vaulted ceilings that covered narrow rows of stalls. Different parts of the bazaars sold different types of goods to make shopping easier. Spaces for manufacturing, storage, and merchants’ offices stood alongside shops. Caravansaries were markets attached to the bazaars. They received caravans, or trains, of camels or mules loaded with goods. Caravansaries were places where merchants from caravans sold newly arrived trade goods wholesale. Wholesale goods are those sold in large quantities at lower prices than when sold one at a time, or retail. In the bazaar, customers bought smaller quantities at retail prices.

Despite its trading activity, Safavid Persia was probably not as prosperous as its neighbors to the east and west—the Moguls and the Ottomans. Persia was limited by the sea power of the Europeans to the south and the land power of the Ottomans to the west. Therefore, the Safavids found trade with Europe difficult.

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In the field of culture, knowledge of science, medicine, and mathematics under the Safavids was equal to that of other societies in the region. Persia also experienced a great flowering of the arts during the reign of Shāh 'Abbās. Silk weaving and carpet weaving flourished. The growth in industry came in large part from the great demand for Persian carpets in the West. Persian painting enjoyed a long tradition. Riza-i-Abbasi, the most famous artist of this period, created great works. Soft colors and flowing movement were the dominating features in Safavid painting.



Reading Progress Check

Differentiating What is the difference between a bazaar and a caravansary?
