

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



The Muslim Empires, 1450–1800

Lesson 3 The Mogul Empire

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

intelligent having a high degree of understanding and mental capacity

authority power; person in command

principle a fundamental law or idea; when said of people someone is highly principled), it means a devotion to high codes or rules of conduct

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

Content Vocabulary

zamindar a local official in Mogul India who received a plot of farmland

suttee the Hindu custom of cremating a widow on her husband’s funeral pyre

monotheistic believing in one God

TAKING NOTES: *Identifying*

ACTIVITY Use a chart like this one to identify Akbar’s accomplishments.

	Akbar’s Accomplishments
Political	
Military	
Cultural	

Reading Essentials and Study Guide

The logo for 'networks' features the word 'networks' in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized graphic consisting of several thin, intersecting lines that form a starburst or network-like pattern.

The Muslim Empires, 1450–1800

Lesson 3 The Mogul Empire, *continued*

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

The Moguls were not natives of India, but they established a dynasty there. They united the country under a single government with a common culture. This culture combined Persian and Indian influences. The Mogul Empire reached its high point under Shāh Akbar in the 1600s.

The Mogul Dynasty

Guiding Question *How were the Moguls able to bring almost all of India under one rule?*

In 1500 the Indian subcontinent (a major part of a continent) was still divided into a number of Hindu and Muslim kingdoms. The Moguls were not natives of India. The Moguls established a new dynasty. They brought a new era of unity to the region. They came from the mountainous region north of the Indus River valley. The founder of the Mogul dynasty was Bābur. He was descended from both the great Asian conqueror Timur Lenk and the Mongol conqueror Genghis Khan. Bābur had inherited a part of Timur Lenk's empire in an upland river valley of the Syr Dar'ya. As a youth, he led a group of warriors who seized Kabul in 1504. Thirteen years later, Bābur's forces crossed the Khyber Pass into India.

Bābur's forces were much smaller than the forces of his enemies were. However, Bābur's forces had advanced weapons, including artillery. They used these better weapons to defeat their enemies. Bābur captured Delhi and established his power in the plains of northern India. He continued his conquests until his death in 1530 at the age of 47.

Bābur's grandson Akbar was only 14 years old when he took the throne. Akbar was **intelligent** and hardworking. He began to make his empire larger. By 1605, he had brought Mogul rule to most of India.

How was Akbar able to bring almost all of India under his rule? Akbar's armies were able to break down the stone fortresses of their rivals by the use of heavy artillery. The Moguls were also good at making agreements and deals. Akbar's conquests created the greatest Indian empire since the Mauryan dynasty (321–185 B.C.). The empire appeared highly centralized, but it was actually a collection of partly independent states. These states were held together by the power of the emperor.

Akbar was probably the greatest of the conquering Mogul emperors. He is best known for the humane nature of his rule.

Like all Mogul rulers, Akbar was born a Muslim. He followed a policy of religious tolerance. As emperor, he showed a strong interest in other religions, and he tolerated Hindu practices. Akbar put his policy of religious tolerance into practice in his own life by taking a Hindu princess as one of his wives.

Akbar was also tolerant in the way he ran the government. The upper levels of the government were filled with nonnative Muslims, but many of the lower-ranking officials were Hindus. Some local lower-ranking officials were known as **zamindars**. It became the common practice to give zamindars a plot of farmland for their temporary use. The zamindars did not receive a salary. Instead, they kept some of the taxes that they collected from the peasants who worked on the land. The zamindars were then expected to send the rest of the taxes from the lands under their control to the central government. Zamindars soon had considerable power and **authority** in their local districts.

Overall, the Akbar era was a time of progress, at least by the standards of the time. All Indian peasants were required to pay about one-third of their annual harvest to the state. This system was applied fairly. For example, taxes were reduced or suspended altogether when bad weather struck in the 1590s and harvests were smaller than usual. Trade and manufacturing grew as the result of a long period of peace and political stability.

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



The Muslim Empires, 1450–1800

Lesson 3 The Mogul Empire, *continued*

The era was especially prosperous in the area of foreign trade. Indian goods, such as textiles, tropical food products and spices, and precious stones, were exported in exchange for gold and silver. Muslim traders handled much of the foreign trade because the Indians, like their Mogul rulers, did not like travel by sea.

Akbar's son Jahāngīr (juh·HAHN·gihr) came to the throne after the death of Akbar in 1605. During the early years of his reign, Jahāngīr continued to strengthen the central government's control over the vast Mogul empire. Over time, however, his control began to weaken. He was influenced more and more by one of his wives, Persian-born Nūr Jahān. As Jahāngīr slowly lost interest in governing, he gave more authority to Nūr Jahān. The empress used her position to make her own family rich. She arranged the marriage of her niece to her husband's third son and successor, Shāh Jahān.

Shāh Jahān ruled from 1628 to 1658. During his reign, Shāh Jahān maintained the political system established by earlier Mogul rulers. He also made his empire larger through successful military action in the Deccan Plateau. However, Shāh Jahān failed to deal with growing internal problems. He had inherited a nearly empty treasury. His military campaigns and expensive building projects cost a great deal of money. The imperial finances were in trouble. This forced him to raise taxes. The peasants became even poorer because of these taxes. Most of Jahān's subjects lived in poverty.

Shāh Jahān's troubles got worse after he became ill in the mid-1650s. It was widely reported that he had died. This news led to a struggle for power among his sons. The victorious son, Aurangzeb, had his brother put to death and imprisoned his father. Aurangzeb then had himself crowned emperor in 1658.

Aurangzeb is one of the most controversial rulers in the history of India. During his reign, the Mogul empire reached its greatest size in area. However, constant warfare and religious intolerance made his subjects angry.

Aurangzeb was a man of high **principle**. He showed this when he tried to stop many of the practices that he saw as social evils in India. For example, Aurangzeb took steps to end the Hindu custom of **suttee**. Suttee was a custom in which a widow was cremated on her husband's funeral pyre. It was practiced by many Hindus. Aurangzeb also stopped levying, or collecting, illegal taxes, and he tried to forbid gambling and drinking.

Aurangzeb reversed the Mogul policies of religious tolerance. He did not allow new Hindu temples to be built. He also forced Hindus to convert to Islam. Aurangzeb's policies led to protests, and a number of revolts against imperial authority occurred.

In the years after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, many people competed for the throne. Their reigns were short. India became more and more divided and vulnerable to attackers from outside the country. In 1739, Delhi was sacked by the Persians, who left it in ashes.



Reading Progress Check

Contrasting What were some differences between the rules of Shāh Jahān and Aurangzeb?

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



The Muslim Empires, 1450–1800

Lesson 3 The Mogul Empire, *continued*

The Development of Sikhism

Guiding Question *What is the significance of Gurus to the Sikh religious tradition?*

According to Sikh (pronounced “Sik-kh”, with a short “i” sound) tradition, during the rule of Bābur a man named Nanak (1469–1539) had a religious vision at the age of twenty-nine or thirty. Nanak (NA • nahk) lived in the Punjab (puhn – JAB). The Punjab is a region of South Asia that was ruled by the Moguls. The Punjab was a very diverse place. There were Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains all living in the Punjab. Guru Nanak had a vision in which God revealed that everyone is a child of God. God also revealed that all faiths are different ways towards the same Creator.

Nanak then travelled widely. He preached a **monotheistic** message. This message focused on devotion to a formless, infinite One (or single God). God can be found in everyone and in all of nature. Guru Nanak taught that God is formless, all-powerful, all-loving, and without fear or hate towards anyone. People can have unity with God through service to humanity, meditation, and honest labor. Nanak did not allow discrimination on the basis of caste, race, religion, or gender. His direct teaching style and focus on equality drew many followers. These followers became known as *Sikhs*, from a Punjabi word meaning “disciple.”

Nanak is thought of as the first Guru (gur • oo), or spiritual leader in the Sikh tradition. His teachings and those of his successors were put together by the fifth Guru, Guru Arjan (1563–1606), into a holy book called the *Adi Granth*. Guru Arjan also built *Darbar Sahib* which later became known as the Golden Temple. The Golden Temple was an important Sikh house of worship in the city of Amritsar, Punjab.

Nine Gurus followed Nanak. The Tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh (1666–1708), made the Sikh holy text and the community his **successors**. Along with passing his authority to the holy book, now known as the *Guru Granth Sahib*, Singh also established the *Khalsa*. The *Khalsa* is a community of initiated Sikhs. All initiated Sikhs display the signs of the *Khalsa* (KAL • suh), popularly called the “five Ks.” These are: 1) *Kesh*, uncut hair covered by a special turban; 2) *Kanga*, comb for the hair; 3) *Kirpan*, a short ceremonial sword; 4) *Kara*, a metal bracelet; and 5) *Kachera*, traditional underwear.

Sikhs experienced hostility and persecution from Mogul officials at first. Slowly, however, Sikhs built a strong religious and economic community. In the middle of the eighteenth century they created an independent kingdom in the Punjab.

Today, Sikhism is the world’s fifth-largest religion. Sikhism has more than 20 million followers in India and Pakistan. Worldwide, there are an additional 2 million Sikhs, including more than 200,000 living the United States. Sikhism favors moral living, careful study and intellectual achievement, hard work, charity, and equality of all humans regardless of class or beliefs.



Reading Progress Check

Describing How did the Sikh religion spread?

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



The Muslim Empires, 1450–1800

Lesson 3 The Mogul Empire, *continued*

Life in Mogul India

Guiding Question *What was life like in Mogul society?*

The Moguls were foreigners in India. In addition, Moguls were Muslims who were ruling a mostly Hindu population. This sometimes made life difficult for ordinary people.

For example, women had long played an active role in Mogul tribal society. Mogul rulers often asked female relatives to give them advice. Some of these Mogul attitudes toward women affected Indian society. Women from aristocratic families often got salaries and were allowed to own land.

At the same time, the Moguls also placed some restrictions on women. These limits were based on their understanding of Islamic law. Hindus generally accepted these practices as well. For example, many upper-class Hindus isolated women.

Other Hindu practices, however, did not change under Mogul rule. The custom of suttee continued even though the Moguls tried to stop it. Child marriage also remained common.

During the Mogul era, a wealthy nobility and a prosperous merchant class emerged. Later, during the late eighteenth century, the decline of the Moguls and the coming of the British damaged this economic prosperity. However, many prominent Indians established trading ties with foreigners.

The Moguls brought together Persian and Indian influences in a new and beautiful architectural style. The Taj Mahal is the best example of this style of architecture. Shāh Jahān had the Taj Mahal built in Agra in the mid-seventeenth century. The project lasted more than twenty years. The government raised taxes on land to pay for it. This forced many Indian peasants into complete poverty.

The Taj Mahal is widely considered to be the most beautiful building in India, if not in the entire world. The building is monumental in size, and it looks very brilliant but still has a delicate lightness.

Painting was another major artistic achievement of the Mogul period. Persian and Indian cultures were blended in painting styles just as they were in architecture styles. Akbar established a state workshop for artists, who were mostly Hindus. The artists worked under the guidance of Persian masters to create the Mogul school of painting. The “Akbar style” combined Persian and Indian motifs. This style showed humans in action—something Persian art usually did not show.



Reading Progress Check

Explaining What rights were enjoyed and what restrictions were imposed on upper-class women during the Mogul Empire?

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



The Muslim Empires, 1450–1800

Lesson 3 The Mogul Empire, *continued*

Europeans Come to India

Guiding Question *What led to the decline of the Mogul Empire?*

The arrival of the British resulted in the more rapid decline of the Mogul Empire. By 1650, there were British trading forts at Surat, Fort William (which was renamed Calcutta and is now the city of Kolkata), and Madras (Chennai). British ships carried Indian-made cotton goods to the East Indies, where the goods were traded for spices.

British success in India attracted rivals, most of all the French. The French established their own forts in India and fought the British. The French even captured the British fort at Madras.

The military genius of Sir Robert Clive saved the British. Clive was aggressive in helping to build British empire. The East India Company was a private company that acted on behalf of the British government. Clive was the chief representative of the company in India. Clive’s forces ultimately limited the French to a few small territories in India.

While he was fighting the French, Clive also consolidated British control in Bengal. The Indian ruler of Bengal had attacked Fort William in 1756. He imprisoned a group of British soldiers in the “Black Hole of Calcutta,” a small underground prison. As a result of the high heat in the crowded space, only 23 people (out of 146) survived.

In 1757, Clive led a small British force of about three thousand. It defeated a Mogul-led army more than ten times its size in the Battle of Plassey in Bengal. As a result of this victory, the failing Mogul court gave the East India Company the power to collect taxes from lands around Calcutta.

Britain’s rise to power in India also had its problems. Many East India Company officials were arrogant and not very good at their jobs. They offended, or angered, both their Indian allies and the local population. They heavily taxed Indians to pay for the growing expenses of the East India Company.

In the late eighteenth century, the East India Company moved inland from the busy, crowded coastal cities. British expansion brought great riches to individual British merchants and to British officials. The British found that they could make money from local rulers by selling trade privileges. The British were in India to stay.



Reading Progress Check

Summarizing How did Sir Robert Clive increase the power of the British in India?
