Islamic Empires

Ottoman, Safavid (Persia) and Mughal Empires - all have similarities which we’ll examine each day

1. Ottoman Empire
   1. Founded in 1289 by a group of seminomadic Turkish people, who migrated into Antolia.
   2. Leader was Osman Bey, where Ottoman comes from
      1. Wanted to be *ghazi*, Islamic religious warriors
         1. “An instrument of the religion of Allah, a servant of God who purifies the earth from the filth of polytheism;the Ghazi is the sword of God, he is the protector and the refuge of the believers. If he becomes a martyr, in the ways of God, do not believe that he has died - the lives with Allah, he has eternal life.”
         2. Center of Islamic life - home of the caliphate
      2. Being on the fringes of larger society gave them ample opportunity to be warriors and expand - conquered Byzantine Empire took over Constantinople as their capital in 1453
      3. The Ottoman military was very advanced and organized their warriors into a cavalry and a volunteer infantry force
         1. Once they expanded into SE Europe, they organized another force of very fearsome slave troops
            1. Arose out of an institution called *devshirme*, the Ottomans required Christians to contribute young boys to become slaves of the Sultan
            2. These boys converted to Islam, learned Turkish and were specially trained
            3. Depending on their skills, they either became government officials or soldiers
            4. Soldiers were called Janissaries (new troops) and were known for their loyalty to the Sultan and a willingness to use new technology, especially gunpowder weapons
   3. Mehmet the Conquerer (1451-1481)
      1. Responsible for conquering Constantinople and expanded into SE Europe (Greece, Serbia, Albania) with plans to invade Italy and capture the Pope
      2. Highly centralized, absolute monarchy
   4. Suleyman the Magnificent (1520-1566)
      1. Height of Ottoman expansion - expanded upon gains in Syria and Egypt by taking Baghdad and push further into Europe, fighting the Habsburg (and laying siege to their capital)
      2. Became a major naval power in the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean
2. The Nature of the Islamic State
   1. The rulers of these states regarded their empires as their personal property and ruled as absolute monarchs - their will was law
      1. Part of steppe tradition was that the Emperors ruled as they saw fit, issuing legal edicts called kanun - Suleyman Kanuni - the lawgiver
         1. Other empires were even more assertive in their religious authority
      2. Succession problems were common, as they were on the steppe - often Emperors kept their family members locked up in order to keep them from trying to kill him
         1. Mehmet issued a law that said that once a Sultan came to power, they were legally allowed to kill his brothers - strangulation, so as not to spill royal blood
            1. Changed in 1595, when a sultan killed infants and expectant mothers, so then they were held in special homes and unable to leave unless to take the throne
   2. Their legitimacy was connected to their religious piety (how faithful they were) and their skill as a military leader - without either, their rule would be in question
      1. This is something connected to the Turkish tradition - those that were the best fighters became nobles
   3. The Ottoman tradition of ghazi encouraged them to spread their faith to new lands (as evidenced by the devshirme institution)
   4. Women were important, but unofficial members of governments
      1. This was usually on a case by case basis - some wives were important, others probably forgotten by history
3. Agriculture and Trade
   1. Columbian Exchange did not have the same impact here as in other places, but did appear in local cuisine
   2. Population growth occurred, but not because of the new crops, but better agricultural techniques along older lines
   3. Cash crops were very important, however, coffee and tobacco especially
      1. Coffeehouses were places where one could have both, but were seen by the faithful as immoral - distractions from religious duties and excuses to be lazy
      2. Some leaders tried to outlaw them and even go so far as to execute those visiting those establishments, but these things were too popular and eventually were accepted
   4. Trade was important for the Safavids and Ottomans, not so much for the Mughals
      1. Actively traded with the British and Dutch, who set up emporia (warehouses) in these countries
      2. To curry favor with these governments, Europeans sent military advisors who brought along advanced gunpowder weapons for their militaries
4. Safavid Empire
   1. Founded was the youngest son of the leader of a Sufi order, named Ismail
      1. His father was assassinated and he went into hiding (the book makes it seem like he was living in a swamp by himself and somehow put an army together - he was hiding with his father’s forces)
      2. When he was old enough,15, he took the army and marched back to his homeland and took it back
         1. Called his new state Safavid, after the name of their religious order - Safaviyya Sufism
      3. Very cognizant of their public image and kept a close watch over how people viewed them and how they projected themselves to the public
         1. It took a while for this group to find an image that appealed best to the subjects of their new empire, but they decided upon Twelver Shiism
            1. Mongols and other nomadic groups moved in and this appeal to their concepts of military strength being associated with leadership or divinity
         2. Twelver Shiism is a sect of Shia Islam that speaks of 12 perfect imams (religious leaders)
            1. The first was Ali, the next 10 were persecuted
            2. the 12 imam went into hiding in the 860s and is prophesied to return and spread his religion

Safavids spread the idea that Ismail was the 12th imam

Other Muslims would think this was sacrilegious, but to the Safavids, this was accepted - called qizilbash, after the red hats they wore with 12 pleats, to recognize the 12 imams

* + 1. While the Safavids were Shia, the Ottomans were Sunni and the OE hated the Safavids and feared the spread of Twelver Shiism to the Ottoman territory
       1. Ottoman Sultan Selim the Grim began persecuting Shia in the OE and planned an invasion of the Safavid Empire
       2. Defeated the Safavids at the Battle of Chaldiran (1514) and briefly took over the capital there.
       3. Ottomans unable to completely destroy the Safavids and they remained
    2. Shah Abbas the Great (1588-1629) revitalized the Safavid Empire
       1. Incorporated gunpowder weapons
       2. Made alliances with Europeans against the Ottomans and the Portuguese
       3. Many military victories against these forces and expanded into Uzbek territory to the north

1. Religious policy in Islamic Empires
   1. These were very religiously diverse territories that were governed by Muslims
   2. While some of these leaders were very devout (like the Ottomans or Safavids) others weren’t so much (Mughals)
      1. Mughal leaders, especially Akbar, tried to find a syncretic answer to all the different religions within his territory
   3. All of these empires also see Christian missionaries
   4. All these empires tolerated religious minorities using an old method
      1. Did not force conquered people to convert, but gave them a special status - *dhimmi*, protected people
      2. If they were loyal and paid their *jizya*, they were allowed to practice their faith however they chose and handled their own legal affairs
         1. In the Ottoman Empire, these religious groups were called millet - autonomous communities that handled their own legal and economic affairs
         2. Millet system wouldn’t work in Mughal empire, it’s too big - all communities had to work together for success
            1. No Jizya and open communication
            2. Eventually Jizya was replaced because some Muslims felt that they were losing their identity and didn’t agree with religious toleration
   5. These rulers also used their religious authority to build huge monuments to their religion and to their power
      1. Suleymaniye mosque in Istanbul, Isfahan
      2. the capital of the Safavid Empire, Isfahan, was built up in a similar manner
      3. The best example of Early Modern Islamic architecture is the Taj Mahal in India
         1. Built as a tomb for the wife of a Mughal Emperor
2. Mughal Empire
   1. Founded by Zahir al-Din Muhammad, aka Babur (the Tiger) (1526-1530)
      1. Claimed to be related to both Genghis Khan and Tamerlane
      2. Not a religious person, a soldier of fortune and adventurer
         1. Wanted to create a vast empire in Central Asia, but couldn’t find an opening among his many rivals
      3. Turned his attention to India and, using guns, conquered Delhi and most of Northern India
         1. Didn’t really care for the land or the people, but hoped to use the wealth of India to take over his homeland
         2. Unsuccessful, but managed to hold a loose empire in northern India and Afghanistan
   2. First major leader named Akbar, Babur’s grandson (1556-1605)
      1. Charismatic leader, who took control of his country by defenestrating a military leader, twice
      2. Created a centralized state and expanded his borders militarily
         1. Made inroads into southern India by conquering Vijayanagar
      3. Tried to create a syncretic religion that incorporated parts of other religions into a “divine faith”
         1. Recognized the Emperor as a commonality among all the different faiths within India
      4. Aurangzeb was perhaps the most successful Mughal leader (1659-1707)
         1. Pushed Mughal control to include almost all of India
         2. Broke with Akbar’s policy of religious tolerance
            1. Demolished Hindu temples
            2. Imposed the Jizya, which was not present in India under the Mughals
            3. Prompted rebellious thoughts among the other religious groups in India, especially the Hindu
3. Reasons for Imperial Decline
   1. Poor leadership - just like in China, these leaders stopped caring about being a good leader and used the money of the state for their own enjoyment
      1. Some examples of these leaders - Ottoman leaders Selim the Sot and Ibrahim the Crazy
   2. Religious tensions
      1. Conflicts between religious leaders and political leaders - religious leaders opposed any laws that contradicted Islamic law
      2. Conservative Muslims in the Ottoman Empire opposed their leadership - formed Wahhabi movement in Arabian peninsula
         1. Opposed any impious technology - observatory, printing press
      3. Others opposed leaders in Safavid and Mughal empires for being tolerant
   3. Economic Difficulties
      1. It was expensive to maintain large, innovative militaries and bureaucracies to match
      2. Wars cost money, too
      3. Attempted to pay soldiers with worthless currency - led to revolts
      4. Began bringing in money by whatever means necessary - including bribery and extortion - counterproductive
      5. Also gave the English and Dutch more extensive privileges in order to gain more business, but made no efforts to do their own trading abroad
   4. Military Decline
      1. Did not have their own armament industries, so they bought them from Europeans
      2. Europeans, however, innovated so fast that the Islamic Empires could not keep buying the new weapons
         1. Their militaries were based on increasingly outdated technology
      3. Stopped building their own ships and bought them from foreign powers
   5. A general unwillingness to innovate and a belief that their culture could not learn anything from other societies
      1. Printing presses and scientific instruments were not even legal until the 18th century