AMSCO Chapter 19

Islamic Gunpowder Empires

1. Gunpowder Empires – large multiethnic states in Southwest, Central and South Asia that conquered and controlled using firearms: Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal; none modernized technologically
2. Rise of Islamic Gunpowder Empires
3. Similarities among Ottoman, Safavid an Mughal empires
4. Nomadic Turkish backgrounds
5. Spoke a form of Turkish language
6. Took advantage of breakup of Mongol khanates
7. Relied on armies with artillery and cannons
8. Military might weakness and corruption of conquered regimes, infighting amongst European nations all contributed to their successes
9. Rule of Tamerlane
10. Tamerlane invaded Central Asia and the Middle East with nomadic fighters to conquer Persia and India
11. Ghazi ideal – model of warrior life as a nomadic warrior for Islam
12. Historians think Tamerlane massacred 100,000 Hindus in Delhi
13. Tamerlane also brought learning and the arts to the conquered areas, including literature and architecture
14. He built his empire with gunpowder but did not leave a lasting political structure
15. Example of traditional conflict between Mongols of northeast and Muslims of Arabia
16. Ottoman Empire – largest and longest Islamic empire of the time, founded by Osman in 1300s, lasted until 1918
17. Mehmed II
18. AKA “the Conqueror” (1451-1481) established capital at Constantinople, changing name to Istanbul, very prosperous due to its strategic location; built Topkapi Palace, the royal residence
19. Moved to the Balkans and strengthened Ottoman navy, attacking parts of Italy and forcing Venice to pay him a yearly tax; eventually came to control parts of Syria, Israel, Egypt and Algeria
20. Devshirme – system where Christian boys were recruited by force to serve the Ottoman government, forced to convert to Islam, and taught politics, arts and military skills; most famous group was janissaries, who formed elite Ottoman army; others became administrators, scribes, tax collectors and diplomats
21. Becoming an janissary was prestigious, even though it was forced
22. Suleiman I (1520-1566)
23. Gained control of Hungary and parts of Austria and Greece, Tripoli in North Africa
24. Suleimani Mosque built in Istanbul, and reformed legal system, earning him nickname “the Lawgiver”
25. Ottoman Economy
26. Grew early on due to expansion of territory, as new people had to pay tribute and send goods to capital
27. Ottomans also served as middle men along trade routes, charging a service fee in both directions
28. Sultan controlled all gold and slave trade, but luxury items like silk, spices, tiles, pottery, and rugs were also traded
29. Peasants were taxed to finance the military, but local tax collectors skimmed, so peasants were paying a lot but central government was always needing more
30. Sultan was tolerant of Christian and Jewish merchants as well, as long as they paid taxes
31. Sultan signed trade agreements with European powers
32. Coffeehouses served as places of business, where agreements were reached
33. New crops from the Americas like cotton and tobacco replaced indigenous plants, but profits eventually dropped
34. Social classes
35. Warrior aristocracy competed with Islamic scholars for power; Janissaries grew in power; tension increased between military elite and absolutist rulers
36. Strong advisors, called viziers, became stronger as rulers became weaker
37. Women at court tried to promote their own children to power through harem politics
38. Middle class of merchants and artisans, then peasants, finally slaves (usually prisoners of war); some people were impressed, forced into service in the navy
39. Religious tolerance enabled Jews to become court physicians and diplomats, scholars and writers, but had to live in special areas; both Christians and Jews tolerated as long as they paid the tax, but government was Muslim
40. Decline of the Ottoman Empire – Suleiman died in 1571and Spaniards and Venetians defeated the Ottomans at Battle of Lepanto; Ottomans became known as “sick man of Europe” as women and eunuchs held power over weak sultans and religious tolerance decreased
41. Continuity and Change under the Ottomans
42. Ottomans changed many things about Constantinople: name, government, religion, Justinian Code changed to shariah, emperor replaced by sultan
43. Region still center of trade at west end of Silk Road, similar goods traded, still center of arts and learning, revival of the classics, artisans in guilds produced high quality works
44. Safavids-between Ottomans and Mughals, but with no navy or natural defenses
45. Ismail – conquered most of Persia and named himself shah in 1501
46. United area under Shia Islam which denied all Sunnis, causing great conflict with the Ottomans (present day conflict between Iran and Iraq)
47. Also in conflict with Ottomans over control of overland trade routes
48. Shah Abbas I (Abbas the Great, 1587-1629) was leader at height of empire
49. Soldiers forcibly recruited like Janissaries, weapons from Europe
50. Shahs gradually created a state religion and theocracy
51. Capital city of Isfahan developed by Abbas I, trade with Portuguese,
52. After Abbas I, new leaders were weak, and overspending weakened economy
53. Afghan rebels revolted and Mahmud declared himself Shah; in the chaos the Ottomans and Russians took territory
54. Isfahan – famous gardens, fountains, pools
55. Women – veiled, but right to inheritance and even divorce in certain cases
56. Mughal India
57. Babur, descendant of Tamerlane, established empire in 1520s; conquered northern India and formed central government
58. Akbar, Babur’s grandson (1556-1605) defeated Hindu armies, made capital at Delhi, and expanded south and west.
59. Strong central government with effective civil service system; paid government officials were called zamindars; after Akbar, zamindars began to skim money, build private armies, weakening empire
60. Religious tolerance for all was the policy; even gave land to new religion Sikhism and Sufism; even Catholics were invited
61. Encouraged learning and art, architecture and literature; tried to end child marriage and sati (widows burning themselves on husband’s funeral pyres)
62. Tried to develop a new religion, Din-i-llahi, which combined Islam and Hindu
63. Overseas trade and peace led to accumulation of wealth, trading textiles, tropical foods, spices, precious stones
64. Castes in effect, merchants were allowed to participate in banking
65. Shah Jahan (1627-1658) built Taj Mahal as tomb for his wife; artisans of Mughal India combined Islamic calligraphy and illumination of manuscripts and ceramics with local arts
66. Aurangzeb – Jahan’s son (1658-1707) inherited an already weakened empire, due to corruption and lack of military advances; goal to rid India of Hinduism drained treasury, and he could not crush peasant revolts over strict rules like no music; British and French moved into India in the 1800s
67. Decline of the Gunpowder Empires
68. Pressure from European trading companies
69. Competition among heirs
70. Weak or corrupt leadership
71. Lack of military and naval technological advances
72. Financial burden of maintaining expensive armies
73. Religious divisions in Mughal between Islam and Hindu, and in Ottomans between Shia and Sunni