THE GUNPOWDER EMPIRES
From 1300 to 1700, three “Gunpowder Empires” dominated parts of Europe, Africa, and Asia.

- The Ottoman Empire (Turkey)
- The Safavid Empire (Iran)
- The Mughal Empire (India)
These three empires were unique but shared some similarities:
All three empires were able to conquer neighboring people by forming strong armies that used **rifles** and **artillery**; this gave them the nickname “Gunpowder Empires”
All three empires blended their cultures with neighboring societies to create a high point of Islamic culture (cultural diffusion).

AN EXAMPLE OF SAFAVID ARCHITECTURE
All three empires were *Islamic* and ruled by Muslim leaders, with well-organized governments made up of loyal bureaucrats.
THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE
Around 1300, the Muslim Turks of Anatolia were unified and formed the Ottoman Empire (the name came from an early leader named Osman).
The Ottomans used **muskets** and **cannons** to form a powerful army and expand their territory.
By the late 1600s, the Ottomans expanded a great deal, taking over much of the **Middle East**, some of **Northern Africa**, and a large part of **Eastern Europe**
Ottoman kings/emperors were called sultans and they governed with absolute power.
The greatest Ottoman sultan was **Suleyman the Magnificent**, who came to power in 1520.

By the mid-1500s, Suleyman was the most powerful king in the world.
Under Suleyman, the Ottoman Empire reached its **height**, expanding deep into Eastern Europe. Suleyman’s fleet ruled the **Mediterranean Sea** and controlled the **Silk Road** trade routes that connected Europe and Asia.
Suleyman was *stopped* by the Holy Roman Empire (various German kingdoms) from taking over ALL of Europe. This would be the *limit* of *Ottoman power* in Europe.
Suleyman’s greatest accomplishment was creating a **stable** government for the Ottoman Empire.

He was known as "**Suleyman the Lawgiver**" because he created a **law code** that governed criminal and civil issues within his empire.
He created a simplified and fair **tax** system to raise money for his empire.

He granted **freedom of worship** to Christians and Jews living in the empire, wisely showing tolerance of his subjects’ ways.
Art, poetry, and architecture flourished under Suleyman as the Ottomans experienced a cultural “golden age”
To maintain their power against *rivals* within their own families, Suleyman and other Ottoman sultans *executed* and/or jailed their sons and brothers, which led to progressively *weaker* leaders as the most capable sons were eliminated.
By the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the Ottoman Empire was so weak it was known as the “Sick Man of Europe” and would end in 1922.
THE
SAFAVID
EMPIRE
The Safavids were Turks living in Persia who built a powerful gunpowder army and created an empire in modern-day Iran.
Unlike the Ottomans (who were Sunni Muslims), the rulers of the Safavid Empire believed in Shi’a Islam and strictly *converted* the people they conquered.
Safavid rulers were called *shahs*, which is the Persian title for *king*.
The greatest ruler of the Safavid Empire was *Shah Abbas*, who came to power in 1587. Abbas *borrowed* ideas from outside groups to improve the Safavid Empire.
He used the Ottoman idea of janissaries, used **merit** to employ government workers, and introduced religious **toleration** (which helped Safavids **trade** with European Christians)
Art flourished, especially *carpets* that blended *Persian* and European designs; these became luxury items highly desired by Europeans.
The Decline of the Safavid Empire

Like the Ottomans, Shah Abbas *blinded* or *killed* his most capable sons in order to keep power.

As a result, *weak leaders* led to a *rapid decline* of the Safavid Empire.
While the Ottoman Empire lasted until 1922, the Safavid Empire fell in **1747**
THE MUGHAL EMPIRE
The Mughals were **Muslims** who descended from Turks, Afghans, and **Mongols** living in Central Asia.
Like the Ottomans and Safavids, the Mughals built a powerful *army* with guns and cannons.
In 1494, Babur became king of the Mughals; he expanded the army and began invasions into India to create his empire.
In 1556, Babur’s grandson Akbar became king of the Mughal Empire and expanded the empire into almost all of India.
Akbar was the greatest of all the Mughal rulers. He held religious discussions with Hindu and Muslim scholars. Akbar’s greatest achievement was cultural blending and religious toleration he instilled in his empire. He held religious discussions with Hindu and Muslim scholars.
Akbar ended the **tax** that **non-Muslims** were required to pay, creating a fair and affordable tax system.

Because he was Muslim ruling in a largely Hindu region, Akbar allowed non-Muslims to **worship freely**.

Akbar had many wives, including **Muslims, Hindus, and Christians**.
The best example of Akbar’s tolerance was his creation of a new religion called the **Divine Faith**.

The Divine Faith was an example of **syncretism** because it **blended** ideas from Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism.
Akbar hoped the Divine Faith would end *conflicts* between Muslims and Hindus.

The Divine Faith *never attracted* many Muslim or Hindu converts... when Akbar *died*, so did the Divine Faith.
During Akbar’s reign, art flourished.
Mughal artists were known for their colorful paintings called *miniatures*.
Mughal *architecture* was known for blending of Hindu and Islamic designs.
The greatest example of Mughal architecture is the **Taj Mahal**, which was built in 1631 by Jahan
The Mughal Empire grew weak by 1700, as rulers spent too much money on **palaces** and **war** while **famine** brought **starvation** to millions.
Also, the large population of Hindus in India began to revolt against their Muslim rulers.
Great Britain took advantage of this weakness, conquered India, and removed the last Mughal emperor from power in 1858.
CONCLUSIONS

The Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals built large *Islamic* empires using *gunpowder* militaries.

Their decline by the 1800s allowed newly *industrialized* European nations to *dominate* Asia.

These empires provided new contributions in *law, art, and religion*.
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