



THE SAFAVID EMPIRE

EMILY HU

BACKGROUND

- ▶ 1501 to 1722
- ▶ Began when the Safavid Family conquered the area now known as Iran with the help of other Turkish tribes.
- ▶ They brought back:
 - ▶ Ancient titles (Shah-in-Shah, Shadow of God on Earth, etc.)
 - ▶ **Shi'ism** (forced Sunnis to convert). The reason for this was because they wanted to identify themselves apart from the Sunni powers around them (Ottomans, Uzbeks and Afghans).



The Safavid Empire



BY THE MID-SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

- ▶ Safavids had converted most of the people in the Safavid Empire to Shi'ism.
 - ▶ Only few remained Sunnis: Kirids, Turkmans, and the Baluchis.
- ▶ They also failed to capture Karbala and Najaf (Iraq), the two most holy Shi'i places. This meant that the Rulers of Iran would not be able to control the most profound Shi'i scholars (located in Iraq).



Najaf, Iraq, became a theological center for Shi'ism.



MINORITIES IN THE SAFAVID EMPIRE

- ▶ These minorities included:
 - ▶ Sunnis, Jews, Zoroastrians, and Christians (Armenians and Assyrians)
 - ▶ Lived in Isafahan,, Shiraz, Kerman, Yazd, and Azerbaijan.
- ▶ Safavids allowed them to stay as long as they paid a special tax and respected the king's authority.
- ▶ They were considered **People of the Book**:
 - ▶ The **Holy Qur'an** mentions them
 - ▶ They have their own sacred text (the Bible, the Torah, and the Avesta)



The Holy Qur'an: the sacred text of Muslims.



THE SAFAVID EMPIRE: CHARACTERISTICS

- ▶ Capital established in Isfahan
- ▶ Governed through:
 - ▶ Persian scribes
 - ▶ Shi'i clerics
 - ▶ Nobles (ie. Tribal chiefs, large landowners, merchants, ward elders, etc.)
 - ▶ Religious leaders
- ▶ Safavid army: cavalry led by tribe chiefs.
- ▶ Financial trouble kept them from creating a stronger state and government. In fact, they didn't have a central state.
- ▶ Received revenue from taxes (on peasants)
- ▶ Geographical boundaries kept them safe from clerics who opposed their rule in Iraq and kept their society safe from other tribes and ethnicities.

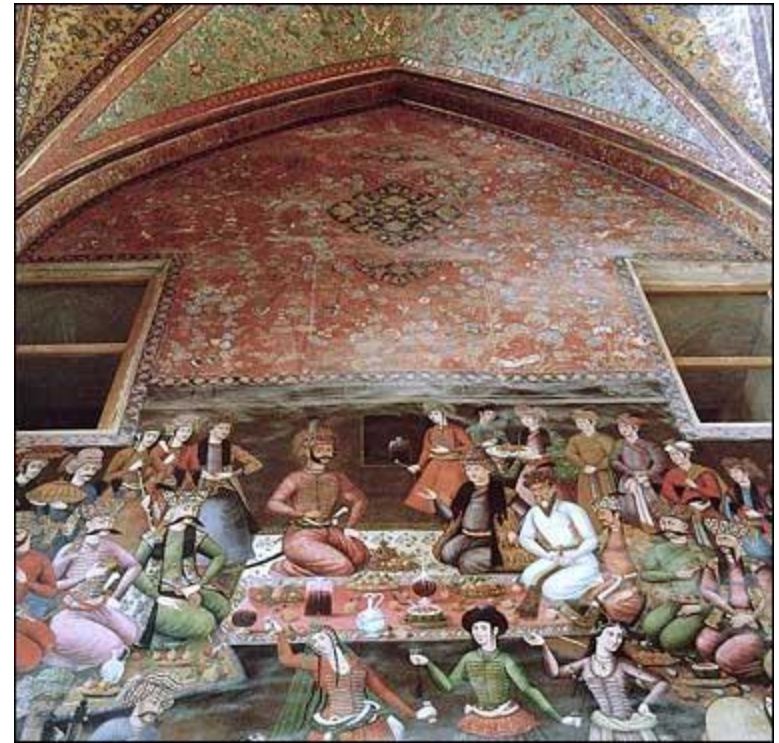


Present day Isfahan, Iran.



THE REGIME

- ▶ Governed through both an aristocracy/monarchy/theocracy.
- ▶ They lacked a strong state and a central government
- ▶ The Safavid Empire was largely authoritarian.

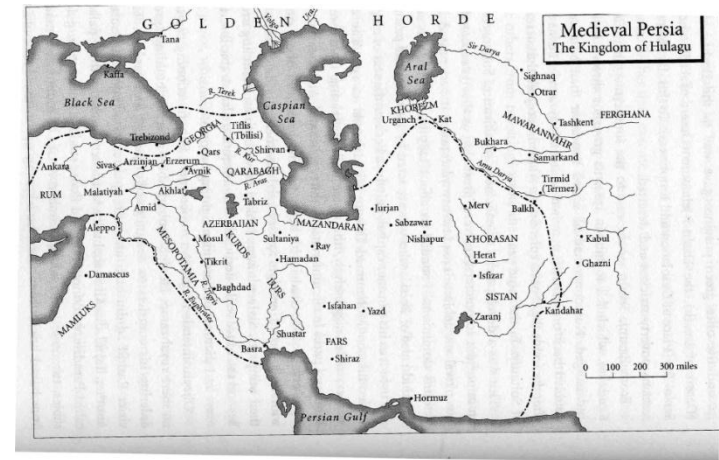


A Safavid Court



THE ECONOMY

- ▶ The Safavid Empire consisted mostly of a rentier state. Because the Safavid Shah Abbas I had rerouted the Silk Road to pass through the capital of the Safavid Empire, Isfahan, it also became the trading center.
- ▶ Traded silk, textiles, jewelry, carpets, ceramics and metals to the Europeans
- ▶ Used the profit to build bridges and roads to facilitate trade
- ▶ They also gained some revenue from taxes they placed on their people (especially the peasants).



Map of the numerous roads.

THE LEADER/POLITICAL IDEAOLOGY

- ▶ The Safavid Empire is a unitary state. They were also more devolutionary.
 - ▶ Each district had a "Qezelbash" chief who answered to the Shah.
- ▶ They also do not use coercive instructions to rule their empire, but still lacked consensus characteristics.



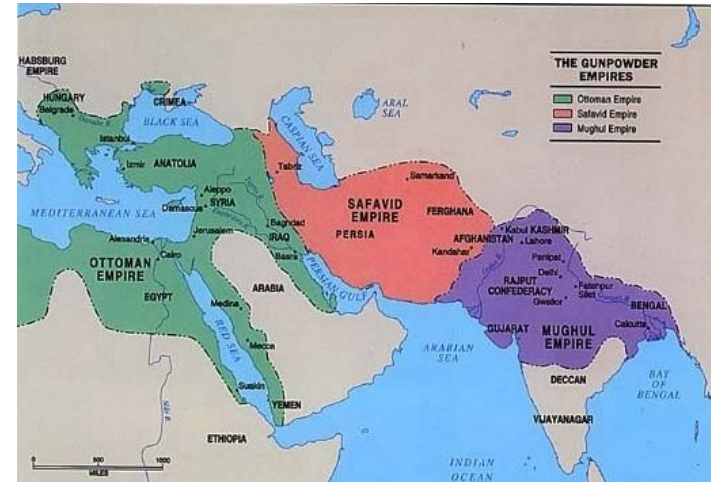
Safavid Shah Abbas I, who was responsible for rerouting the Silk Road to pass through Isfahan.

- ▶ Ismail I (1501-1524)
- ▶ Tahmasp I (1524-1576)
- ▶ Ismail II (1576-1578)
- ▶ Mohammed Khodabanda (1578-1587)
- ▶ Abbas I (1587-1629)
- ▶ Safi (1629-1642)
- ▶ Abbas II (1642-1666)
- ▶ Suleiman I (1666-1694)
- ▶ Soltan Hossein (1694-1722)



HOW IT CHANGED

- ▶ Because the Safavids lacked a strong state (military), they were left incredibly vulnerable to attack.
- ▶ In 1722, Afghans took Esfahan and killed Shah Sultan Hossein.
- ▶ This was extremely detrimental to and the Ottomans took this vulnerability and invaded the rest of the Safavid Empire. Meanwhile, the Russians took the land located around the Caspian Sea. In June 1724, the Ottomans and the Russians agreed to divide the northwestern provinces of Iran.
- ▶ This is an example of a both a government and a regime change.



The Safavid Empire with surrounding empires.

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