

UNIT THREE: LAND-BASED EMPIRES

c. 1450 to c. 1750

EMPIRES EXPAND

The period from 1450 to 1750 witnessed the expansion of land-based empires across the globe. These empires, often referred to as the **Gunpowder Empires**, conducted their expansion in large part through widespread use of gunpowder, cannons, and other technologically sophisticated weaponry. In East Asia, the **Manchu** ethnic group invaded Beijing, removing the ruling **Ming Dynasty** and establishing the **Qing Dynasty** in its place. Three of the dominant empires from this period were Islamic: the **Mughal Empire**, which controlled most of South Asia; the neighboring **Safavid Empire**, which dominated great stretches of land in the Middle East; and further to the west, the **Ottoman Empire**, which controlled territory spanning from Southern Europe to the Middle East and North Africa. Throughout this period, various religious and political conflicts arose, such as the rivalry between the Safavid and Mughal Empires and, in Africa, the **Songhai Empire's** conflict with Morocco.



Islamic Gunpowder Empires

EMPIRES: ADMINISTRATION

Rulers of land-based empires used a variety of methods to legitimize their power, maintain order, and exercise control over vast populations and resources. The Ottomans recruited soldiers and bureaucrats through the practice of **devshirme**, while the Japanese professionalized their military forces by creating a network of **salaried samurai**. Rulers around the world continued long-standing religious practices such as **human sacrifice** in Meso-America and built monumental structures such as the Incan **Temple of the Sun** in **Cuzco**, Peru.

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In Europe, rulers promoted a philosophy of the **divine right of kings** and built lavish palaces such as **Versailles** as symbols of their wealth and power. In the Islamic world, leaders of the Mughal Empire built **mausoleums** and **mosques** such as the **Taj Mahal** to remind the citizenry of the religious faithfulness of its leadership. As a way of generating revenue, many empires established new systems of collecting taxes or other revenue. The **zamindars** in South Asia were military leaders whose duties included collecting taxes on behalf of the Mughal Empire, and Ming rulers collected **hard currency** in addition to a percentage of farmers' agricultural product.

*Taj Mahal***EMPIRES: BELIEF SYSTEMS**

The predominant religions of earlier periods—Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and others—continued to dominate the large land-based empires between 1450 and 1750. During this time period, however, there were dramatic new changes that shaped subsequent belief systems and impacted both political and cultural aspects of global societies. In Europe,

*Martin Luther*

the **Protestant Reformation**—initiated in part through the actions of German monk **Martin Luther**—and subsequent **Catholic Counter-Reformation** reshaped Christianity and highlighted differences in worship practices and theological identities. In the Ottoman and Safavid empires, political and theological differences led to a further divide between **Sunni** and **Shi'a** Muslims. In South Asia, the intermingling of Hindu and Muslim cultures led to the emergence of a new syncretic religion, **Sikhism**.