

Ottoman vs. mughals



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Ottoman Empire Vs. Mughal Empire The Ottoman and Mughal empires were two of the most successful empires to ever come together. However, in their dominance there was many similarities as well as differences. Both went through their share of struggle. Whether through political, religious, or cultural struggle the two empires had to rely on their emperors for guidance and rule. The Ottomans were amid the Turkic-speaking nomadic people who had spread westward from Central Asia through out the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries. The first to appear were the Seljuk Turks.

In the late thirteenth century, a new group of Turks began to emerge in the northwestern corner of Anatolian peninsula, under the leadership of the tribal leader Osman. These Turks were peaceful and engaged in pastoral pursuits. However, with the decline of the Seljuk Empire in the early fourteenth century, the Osman Turks began to expand and founded the Osmanli dynasty. The Osmanlis later became known as the Ottomans. Later expanding westward the Ottoman Empire set up their first European base at Gallipoli. They expanded gradually into the Balkans and allied with Serbia and Bulgar forces against the Byzantines.

Okhar gradually established permanent settlements in the area. Throughout the area Turkish provincial governors, called beys, collected taxes from the local Slavic peasants after driving out the previous landlords. This later became known as the Bey system. Which would be the foundation of the Ottoman administration for centuries. In this system the Ottoman leader began to claim the title of Sultan or supreme power over his domain. “ The Ottoman political system was the result of the evolution of tribal institutions into a sedentary empire” (Duiker, Spielvogel. 455).

At the apex of this system was the Sultan, who was the authority in both a political and military sense. Though, both administrative and military power was centralized under the bey. Okhar's son Murad succeeded him in 1389. Murad began to build of a strong military administration based on the recruitment of Christians into an elite guard. These warriors were called Janissaries. Some of these Janissaries were even able to become senior members of the bureaucracy. They were then assigned land in fief by the sultan and were responsible for collecting taxes and supplying armies to the empire.

The land was farmed out to the local cavalry elite called the Sipahis. Who were equivalent to the beys, this system later became known as the Devshirme system. Janissaries were also a big advantage because they were directly subordinated to the sultanate; because of this they owed loyalty to the person of the sultan. Both Okhar's and Murad's system were vital aspects of the Ottoman's expansion. The most prevalent was in 1451 when Mehmet II ordered the construction of a major fortress on the Bosphorus. This move put the Turks in a position to strangle the Byzantine Empire. With the Byzantines hand-cuffed, Mehmet II made his move.

He attacked Constantinople in 1453 where he defeated the empire and ignited the expansion of what would be known as one of the most dominant empires of all time. Constantinople later was renamed to Istanbul, as it became the center of the art, education, and religion for the Ottoman Empire. Mehmet II did not only tear down the Byzantine Empire, but he also built the Topkapi Palace, which was the heart of administration and religion. The Ottoman Empire continued their expansion with Mehmet's successor

Selim I in 1517. Selim I defeated the Mamluks of Egypt after they failed to support the Ottomans in their battle against the Safavids.

Which gave him control of several holy cities of Islam, including Jerusalem, Mecca, and Medina, Selim declared himself the new Caliph, or the successor of Muhammad in the Muslim religion. The Caliph is the highest religious authority and the defender of the religion. Also, the Caliph interprets laws of the Shari'a. However, in practice the Head Priest does the interpreting. These Ottoman elites were Sunni Muslims, although, Islamic law and customs were applied to all Muslims in the empire. Some communities were attracted to Sufism or other heterodox doctrines.

The government accepted such activities as long as the communities remained loyal to the empire. Non-Muslims formed a significant minority within the empire. The minority was treated with relative tolerance, but they were compelled to pay a head tax and were permitted to practice their religion or convert to Islam. Each of these religious groups within the empire was organized as an administrative unit known as millet. Each group, including Muslims had its own patriarch priest, who dealt as an intermediary with the government and administered the community according to its own laws. Nomadic people were placed in separate millets.

Where they were subject to their own laws, and were governed by their hereditary chiefs, the beys. The Mughals came about in quite a different way. In the late fourteenth century, the Indian subcontinent known as Calicut was divided into a number of Hindu and Muslim kingdoms. However, it was on the verge of a new era of unity that was brought upon by a foreign dynasty known as the Mughals. The Founder of the Mughal Empire known as Babur

had a prominent family history, not only was his father a descendent from the great Asian conqueror Tamerlane, but his mother was also a descendent from the Mongol Conqueror Genghis Khan.

Unlike the Ottomans who earned their first land as a reward from the Seljuk Turks for their role in the drive out of the Mongols in the late thirteenth century. Babur inherited a portion of Tamerlane's empire in an upland valley of the Syr Darya River. Though, the Uzbeks and then the Safavid dynasty in Persia drove him south. Babur and his warriors later seized Kabul in 1504 and thirteen years later crossed Khyber Pass into India. Moreover, the conqueror of the Mughal Empire that made the greatest impact was Babur's grandson Akbar.

Although he was illiterate, and only assumed the throne at the age of fourteen. He was also remembered as one of the most intelligent conquerors of the empire. So intelligent, instead of taking the title of the Caliph as the Ottoman's did. He proclaimed himself as the spiritual and temporal head of state. Akbar did this to insure that everyone would follow his policies, not because he was Divine, but because of his wisdom. Akbar took toleration to an entirely different level. Making the Ottoman's look intolerable, as emperor Akbar displayed a keen interest in other religions.

Tolerating Hindu practices in his own domains but also welcoming the expression of Christian views by his Jesuit advisers. With these beliefs, Akbar decided to formulate his own religion he called Din-I-Ilahi. This religion was based off toleration, taking away many regulations that the Muslim court had in place. For example, he allowed worship in public; he allowed construction of Christian churches and Hindu Temple. As well as establishing a translation

department, translating Hindu religious books into Persian. Yet in 1519, maybe the most important regulation was eliminated, when Akbar abolished the Jizya.

This was the head tax put in place by the ottomans to all of the Non-Muslims had to pay in order to stay out of the military. Doing this created a brotherhood of man within the Muslimculture, unlike the Ottomans who looked down on the minorities in the area. Akbar also extends his changes to the imperial administration. The empire was divided into provinces, a lot like the Ottoman's, and the administration of each province was modeled after the central government, with separate departments for military, financial, commercial, and legal affairs. Senior officials were then appointed for each department.

These officials were known as Zamindars. The officials were first paid salaries, but later they were ordinarily assigned sections of agricultural land. Where peasants worked the land, tilled the land, but were forced to pay a tax to the Zamindar. Which was partly kept by the Zamindar, and the rest was forwarded to the central government. The Zamindar also recruited a number of military and civilian retainers and accumulated considerable power in their areas. A great deal of the Mughals success was the harmony that Akbar imposed on their society.

Unfortunately, when Akbar passed, so did most of his ideas. Akbar's successors tried to turn the Mughal Empire back into a Sunni Muslim state, and the toleration of Non-Muslims was gone. Thisdiscriminationas well as economic crisis led to decline of the Mughal Empire. Despite the fact that both the Ottoman's and the Mughals had outstanding leadership

and motivation, this was not the lone factor that allowed them to be so successful. Some scholars have labeled them “ Gun Powder Empire” because of their superior military techniques of modern warfare, especially the use of firearms.

Firearms played a central role in expansion for both the empires. In conclusion, these two Sunni Muslim empires could seem quite diverse on one hand, but in the big picture they have a considerable amount in common. Both were trying to achieve their goal of expansion, and both had to innovate their own regulations within a Sunni Muslim state. Nevertheless, the two went about these two goals in a diverse way. Bibliography - William J. Duiker, Jackson J. Spielvogel, World History Seventh Edition, The Pennsylvania State University, Vol. II, Since 1500.