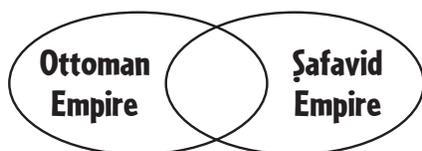


The Rule of the Şafavids

Big Idea

The Şafavids used their faith as a unifying force. As you read this section, use a Venn diagram like the one below to compare and contrast the Ottoman and Şafavid Empires.



Read to Learn

The Şafavid Empire (page 492)

Synthesizing Information

What was the religious reason that the Ottoman Turks fought the Şafavids?

After the empire of Timur Lenk (Tamerlane) collapsed, the area extending from Persia into central Asia fell into **anarchy** (lawlessness and disorder). At the beginning of the sixteenth century, a new dynasty—the Şafavids—took control. This dynasty was founded by Shāh Esmā’īl. A **shah** was a king.

In 1501 Esmā’īl seized much of Iran and Iraq. He was a Shia Muslim, and sent Shia preachers to try to convert the Sunni Turkish tribes. The Ottomans and the Şafavids fought several times. As the Şafavids tried to consolidate their rule, they required conversion to the Shia faith from the largely Sunni population. Many Sunnis were either killed or exiled.

From 1588 to 1629, the Şafavids reached their heights. Shāh ‘Abbās strengthened the army, which he armed with the latest weapons. He fought with the Ottomans and regained Azerbaijan. However, after his death, the Şafavid dynasty began to decline. Shia religious elements gained power at court and in society. Intellectual freedom declined as people were forced to conform to traditional religious beliefs, called religious **orthodoxy**.

During the early empire, Persian women had considerable freedom. Now they were forced to wear veils and live in seclusion.

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Life under the Şafavids (page 495)

Determining Cause and Effect

Why did the shahs need to keep the roads fairly clear of thieves and bandits?

Under the Şafavids, Persia was a mixed society with a combination of Persian and Turkish elements. The Shia eagerly supported the Şafavid rulers. The shahs declared Shia Islam to be the state religion. Shahs were more available to their people than rulers elsewhere. They firmly controlled the power of the landed aristocracy. Appointment to senior positions in the bureaucracy was based on merit rather than birth. The shahs supported trade and manufacturing. They kept the roads fairly clear of thieves and bandits. This was important because most goods moved by horse or camel caravans.

Şafavid Persia was probably not as prosperous as its neighbors, the Moguls and the Ottomans. Hemmed in by European sea power to the south and the land power of the Ottomans to the west, Şafavids found trade with Europe difficult.

Knowledge of science, medicine, and mathematics under the Şafavids was equal to that of other societies in the region. Silk weaving and carpet weaving flourished. There was a great demand for Persian carpets in the West. Persian painting showed soft colors and flowing movement. Persian painter Riza-i-Abbasi created exquisite works.

