

Comparative Political and Religious Development of the Ottoman Safavid and Mughal Empires

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Ottoman Safavid and Mughal Empires in Eurasia

The multinational Ottoman Empire was one of the largest non-colonial empires with a predominantly sedentary population, which created one of the greatest cultures of the II millennium AD. Like the Habsburg Empire, it was ruled by a dynasty for a long time: the family of the Osmanians kept the throne for 644 years – from 1280 to 1924. During this period, the empire was the middle state on the Eurasian continent, while the Habsburgs dominated the west (1273- 1918) and in the East – the Manchu dynasty of Qing (1644-1911). The conquerors took the boys from the age of 7 to 14 years from the Christian nations and converted them to Islam. These children were well fed, taught the laws of Allah and military affairs and made infantry (Janissaries). These soldiers were the best infantrymen in all of Europe. Neither the knightly cavalry nor the Persian kizilbashi could break the janissary system. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.)

Formation and Rivalry of Muslim Powers

The history of the formation of the Muslim peoples of Eurasia is a rather subtle question for specialists. The most interesting thing is that this formation often occurred in the rigid confrontation and confrontation of even the Muslim peoples and powers themselves. A vivid example is the confrontation between the two most powerful Turkic powers of the Middle Ages – the Ottoman and Safavid empires – and the impact of this confrontation on the formation of the consciousness of several Muslim peoples. As for the Ottoman state, it was created in 1299 by the Turkic tribes of Osman I in northwestern Anatolia. After the capture of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottoman state began to be called an empire. The empire reached its highest elevation in 1590. Approximately this year, on the eastern outskirts of the Ottoman Empire, on the northern lands of modern Iraq, began to form another Turkic state – Safavid. The main support of the Safavids was the unification of the Turkic nomadic tribes, known as the Kyzylbashi. The contradiction and even confrontation between the two Turkic empires arose from the fact that these two states became the mainstay of two different directions of Islam. Thus, the Ottoman rulers were not only Sunni but even intercepted the title of the Sunni supreme rulers of the Arab caliphs.

Mughal Origins Language and Imperial Titles

Great Moguls can be called Timurids, and Baburids are named after the founder of the dynasty and the state of Babur. Members of the dynasty were bilingual and spoke Turkic and Persian. The rulers of the empire from the dynasty of the Baburids had a complex titulature, the basis of which was the title "padishah", borrowed from the Persians and adopted by Babur in 1506.

Safavid State Formation and Shiite Identity

As for the Safavids, then, in 1501, the Safavid Sheikh Ismail I declared himself a Shah of Persia; he declared Shiite Islam a state religion in the state created by him. The unique moment here was when the Turkic ruler declared himself the ruler of Iran. By the way, the name of the Turkic tribes, which became the support of the Safavid empire – Kyzylbashi – is translated as "redheads". This name is due to the fact that they wore a turban with twelve purple stripes in honour of the twelve Shiite imams, according to the version of the Shiites tragically killed by the Sunni rulers. Since, in those years, religious consciousness played a key role, the two Turkic empires came together in a deadly battle despite the almost absolute linguistic kinship. Relations between the Kyzylbashs and the Ottomans were initially tense – especially after, in 1501, on behalf of Ismail, a decree was issued containing, according to Shiite customs, the curse of the first three caliphs.

Ottoman-Safavid Wars and Sectarian Competition

After the first skirmishes between the Ottomans and the Safavids, several major wars followed, in which the Osmanni Sunnis prevailed over the Shafites of the Safavids. The confrontation between the two powers also unfolded in today's theatre of confrontation between Shiites and Sunnis – in the lands of Iraq. Thus, the Ottoman Sultan Murad IV repulsed the Safavids from Baghdad in 1638. This battle for Baghdad was the last military battle between the Ottoman Empire and the State of Safavi and led to the loss of Safavids' control over all of Mesopotamia. The Ottomans knew how to learn from others. In addition, the region of Anatolia and the Balkans, which they possessed, did not always give the chances of a nomadic dynasty for a complete deployment of cavalry and the development of the nomadic economy. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.)

Centralization and Control of Nomadic Traditions

The Ottomans, before the Safavids, realized the weakness of nomadic societies with their military democracy. They took up the construction of a centralized and strong statehood in their possessions before others. They began eradicating nomadic traditions, attaching tribes and clans to certain land allotments. In addition, the Ottoman sultans learned not to depend on their feudal lords, who had former nomadic freedom in their memory. For these purposes, the Ottomans developed an entirely

new concept of the army, personally dedicated only to the Sultan. This includes, among others, the janissaries, who were part of the Sultan's personal guard and consisted of professional soldiers. The Safavids understand the same thing as the Ottoman sultans understood, it took several major defeats from the Osmanians and the years of the Kyzylbash anarchy in the compartment with the capture of the Ottomans of Transcaucasia, Azerbaijan, Mesopotamia. Therefore, for many years, the Safavi army was a tribal military that fought not for salaries but primarily for prey and religious motivation. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, n.d.)

Decline of the Safavid Dynasty and Historical Legacy

Nevertheless, the Safavids outnumbered the enemy in speed – the sources were full of information about their attacks, which the Ottomans had little to counter, except for their cumbersome campaigns. But after a while, the Safavid Dynasty, after its defeat in the Eastern Caucasus, ceased to exist, and the Shiite Turkmen dynasty of the Afsharids led by the famous Nadir Shah came to power. An employee of the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan, Shahin Farzali, believes that Safavid Shah Ismail pitted Christian Europe with the Ottoman Sultan Selim to achieve mutual destruction of the two great Turkic states – Shiite and Sunni. "Shah Ismail Safavi marked the beginning of the tragedy for all Islam and the Turkic world of the Sunni-Shiite confrontation, from which Europe won, and Muslims suffered," he said. "If there were no war between the Safavid and Ottoman states, the world map would be different".

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