

# CHAPTER 28

## THE ISLAMIC EMPIRES

### INTRODUCTION

Three powerful Islamic empires emerged in India and southwest Asia after the fifteenth century. Beginning with the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, Turkish warriors and charismatic leaders established first the Ottoman empire, then the Safavid dynasty in Persia (1502), and finally the Mughal dynasty in India (1526). Three distinct empires emerged with different cultures and traditions. Yet there are some striking similarities, including

- Autocratic rule. All three empires began as military states in which all power and prestige centered on the person of the ruler. All three were plagued by problems of succession from one ruler to the next.
- Islamic faith. All three empires embraced Islam. Sizable Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire and a large Hindu majority in India forced those rulers to craft policies of religious toleration. The Safavid dynasty followed the Shia sect of Islam, which brought them into conflict with their Sunni Ottoman neighbors.
- Inward-looking policies. Although all three Islamic states maintained power through the military, neither the Safavid nor the Mughal dynasties developed a navy or a merchant fleet. Military resources were concentrated on defending inland borders. The Ottoman did have a powerful navy at one time, but by the eighteenth century, Ottoman armaments were outmoded and usually of European manufacture.
- Agricultural economies. Agriculture was the basis of the Islamic empires, and the majority of the population was engaged in raising and processing food. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Ottoman and Safavid populations grew slowly; the population in India grew more dramatically.
- Ambivalence toward foreign trade. All three empires existed along important historic trade routes and derived benefit from their locations. The Safavids actively encouraged foreign trade. However, none of the three states sent merchants abroad or encouraged new industries.
- Cultural conservatism. The Islamic empires did not seek out new ideas or technologies and proved hostile to innovation by the eighteenth century. Like leaders in the Qing and Tokugawa dynasties (Chapter 27), Islamic conservatives feared that new ideas would lead to political instability.

### OUTLINE

#### **I. Formation of the Islamic empires**

##### **A. The Ottoman empire (1289–1923)**

1. Founded by Osman Bey in 1289, who led Muslim religious warriors (*ghazi*)
2. Ottoman expansion into Byzantine empire

- a) Seized city of Bursa, then into the Balkans
  - b) Organized *ghazi* into formidable military machine
  - c) Central role of the Janissaries (slave troops)
  - d) Effective use of gunpowder in battles and sieges
3. Mehmed the Conqueror (reigned 1451–1481)
- a) Captured Constantinople in 1453; it became Istanbul, the Ottoman capital
  - b) Absolute monarchy; centralized state
  - c) Expanded to Serbia, Greece, Albania; attacked Italy
4. Suleyman the Magnificent (reigned 1520–1566)
- a) Sultan Selim the Grim (reigned 1512–1520) occupied Syria and Egypt
  - b) Suleyman the Magnificent expanded into southwest Asia and central Europe
  - c) Suleyman also built a navy powerful enough to challenge European fleets
- B. The Safavid empire
1. The Safavids, Turkish conquerors of Persia and Mesopotamia
- a) Founder Shah Ismail (reigned 1501–1524) claimed ancient Persian title of shah
  - b) Proclaimed Twelver Shiism the official religion; imposed it on Sunni population
  - c) Followers known as *qizilbash* (or “Red Hats”)
2. Twelver Shiism
- a) Traced origins to twelve ancient Shiite imams
  - b) Ismail believed to be the twelfth, or “hidden,” imam, or even an incarnation of Allah
3. Battle of Chaldiran (1514)
- a) Sunni Ottomans persecuted Shiites within Ottoman empire
  - b) *Qizilbash* considered firearms unmanly; were crushed by Ottomans at Chaldiran
4. Shah Abbas the Great (1588–1629) revitalized the Safavid empire
- a) Modernized military; sought European alliances against Ottomans
  - b) New capital at Isfahan; centralized administration
- C. The Mughal empire
1. Babur (1523–1530), founder of Mughal (“Mongol”) dynasty in India
- a) Central Asian Turkish adventurer invaded India in 1523, seized Delhi in 1526
  - b) By his death in 1530, Mughal empire embraced most of India
2. Akbar (reigned 1556–1605), a brilliant charismatic ruler
- a) Created a centralized, absolutist government
  - b) Expanded to Gujrat, Bengal, and southern India

- c) Encouraged religious tolerance between Muslims and Hindus
  - d) Developed a syncretic religion called “divine faith”
3. Aurangzeb (1659–1707)
- a) Expanded the empire to almost the entire Indian subcontinent
  - b) Revoked policies of toleration: Hindus taxed, temples destroyed
  - c) His rule troubled by religious tensions and hostility

## II. Imperial Islamic society

### A. The dynastic state

- 1. The emperors and Islam
  - a) All three Islamic empires were military creations
  - b) Authority of dynasty derived from personal piety and military prowess of rulers
  - c) Devotion to Islam encouraged rulers to extend their faith to new lands
- 2. Steppe traditions
  - a) Autocratic: emperors imposed their will on the state
  - b) Ongoing problems with royal succession
  - c) Ottoman rulers could legally kill their brothers after taking the throne
- 3. Royal women often wielded great influence on politics

### B. Agriculture and trade

- 1. Food crops the basis of all three empires
  - a) Major crops: wheat and rice
  - b) Little impacted by new American crops
  - c) Imports of coffee and tobacco very popular
- 2. Population growth in the three empires less dramatic than in China or Europe
  - a) Significant population growth in India from more intense agriculture
  - b) Less dramatic growth in Safavid and Ottoman realms
- 3. Long-distance trade important to all three empires
  - a) Ottoman and Safavid empires shared segments of the east-west trade routes
  - b) Safavids offered silk, carpets, and ceramics to European trading companies
  - c) The Mughal empire less attentive to foreign or maritime trading
  - d) Mughals permitted stations for English, French, and Dutch trading companies

### C. Religious affairs in the Islamic empires

- 1. Religious diversity created challenges to the rule of the empires
- 2. Religious diversity in India under the rule of Akbar
  - a) Portuguese Goa was the center of Christian missions

- b) Jesuits welcomed at court of Akbar, but he was not interested in an exclusive faith
  - c) Akbar tolerated Sikhism, a new faith combining elements of Hinduism and Islam
  - d) Advocated syncretic “divine faith,” emphasizing loyalty to emperor
3. Religious minorities generally tolerated in Islamic states
- a) In Ottoman empire, conquered peoples protected, granted religious and civil autonomy in their own communities
  - b) In India, the Muslim rulers closely cooperated with Hindu majority
  - c) Under Aurangzeb: Islam proclaimed official state religion, nonbelievers taxed

**D. Cultural patronage of the Islamic emperors**

- 1. All three sponsored arts and public works: mosques, palaces, schools, hospitals, etc.
- 2. Istanbul, the Ottoman capital, a bustling city of a million people
  - a) Topkapi palace housed government offices and sultan’s residence
  - b) The Suleymaniye blended Islamic and Byzantine architectural elements
- 3. Isfahan, Safavid capital, the “queen of Persian cities”
- 4. Fatehpur Sikri, Mughal capital, created by Akbar
  - a) Combined Islamic style with Indian elements
  - b) Site abandoned because of bad water supply
  - c) The Taj Mahal, exquisite example of Mughal architecture

**III. The empires in transition**

**A. The deterioration of imperial leadership, from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries**

- 1. Dynastic decline caused by negligent rulers, factions, and government corruption
- 2. Tensions increased when religious conservatives abandoned policies of tolerance
  - a) Ottoman conservatives resisted innovations like the telescope and printing press
  - b) In Safavid empire: Shiite leaders urged the shahs to persecute Sunnis, non-Muslims, and even the Sufis
  - c) In Mughal India, Aurangzeb’s policies provoked deep animosity of Hindus

**B. Economic and military decline**

- 1. Strong economies in sixteenth century; stagnated by eighteenth century
  - a) End of territorial expansion; difficult to support armies and bureaucrats
  - b) Series of long and costly wars
  - c) Officials resorted to raising taxes or corruption to deal with financial problems
  - d) Failure to develop trade and industry; lost initiative to European merchants
- 2. Military decline

- a) Importing European weapons only promoted European weapon industries
  - b) Imported arsenals outdated
  - c) Ottomans even purchased military vessels from abroad
- C. Cultural conservatism
1. Neglect of cultural developments in the larger world
    - a) Ottoman cartographer, Piri Reis, gathered together European maps
    - b) Muslims seldom traveled to the West, confident of their superiority
    - c) Ignorant of European technological developments—hostile to telescope, 1703
  2. Resistance to printing press
    - a) Introduced by Jewish refugees to Anatolia, late fifteenth century
    - b) At first, Ottoman authorities banned printing in Turkish and Arabic
    - c) Ban lifted in 1729, but conservatives forced closure of a Turkish press in 1742
    - d) In India, Mughal rulers showed little interest in printing technology
    - e) Aesthetic considerations: elegant, handwritten books favored over cheaply produced printed ones
    - f) Printed matter could introduce and spread subversive ideas
  3. Foreign cultural innovations seen as a threat to political stability

#### IDENTIFICATION: PEOPLE

What is the contribution of each of the following individuals to world history? Identification should include answers to the questions *who, what, where, when, how, and why is this person important?*

Osman

Mehmed the Conqueror

Suleyman the Magnificent

Shah Ismail

Shah Abbas

Babur

Akbar

Aurangzeb

## IDENTIFICATION: TERMS/CONCEPTS

State in your own words what each of the following terms means and why it is significant to a study of world history. (Terms with an asterisk are defined in the glossary.)

Ottoman empire\*

Safavids\*

Mughals\*

*Ghazi*\*

Janissaries

Twelver Shiism\*

*Qizilbash*\*

Sikhs\*

Taj Mahal

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How did the Ottoman Turks defeat the Byzantine empire? What was the basis of their military strength?
2. Discuss the religious and political issues that separated the Ottoman Turks and the Safavid Turks, two neighboring Islamic states, in the sixteenth century.
3. By what steps did Shah Abbas achieve a strong and unified Safavid state?
4. What was Babur's assessment of India? Why did he decide to remain?
5. Compare Akbar's policies with those of Aurangzeb.
6. What aspects of these Islamic empires made political succession so uncertain? What often happened when the ruler died?
7. What were some of the principal commodities traded in and out of the Islamic states? Which state had the most to offer Western merchants?
8. Identify and compare the status of religious minorities within the three Islamic empires. Which empire faced the greatest challenges in this regard?
9. What factors led to the economic and military decline of the Islamic empires?

## INQUIRY QUESTIONS

1. How were Turkish and Mongol steppe traditions translated into political structures and ideologies? Which of these practices were most effective, and which seem to have been least effective?
2. What factors contributed to the increasing cultural conservatism in the Islamic states during the seventeenth century? What were the future implications of such resistance to science and technological change?

## STUDENT QUIZ

1. In their rise of power the Ottomans were aided by the *ghazi*, who were
  - a. Mongol mercenaries.
  - b. Christian captives raised to fight for them.
  - c. Muslim religious warriors.
  - d. Anatolian peasants, eager to escape heavy taxes of the Byzantine empire.
  - e. all of the above.
2. The Ottoman military made use of
  - a. gunpowder weapons.
  - b. siege warfare.
  - c. specially trained Janissary forces.
  - d. armored cavalry.
  - e. all of the above.
3. Which of the following places did *not* come under the control of the Muslim Ottomans?
  - a. Albania
  - b. Anatolia
  - c. Egypt
  - d. the Iranian plateau
  - e. Tunisia
4. The Janissaries were
  - a. slave women who lived in the sultan's harem.
  - b. Christian boys taken from conquered territories and raised as special forces.
  - c. regional administrators, who were granted autonomy in exchange for loyalty and support.
  - d. armored, light cavalry.
  - e. eunuchs in service to the sultan.
5. Suleyman the Magnificent
  - a. captured Belgrade and laid siege to the city of Vienna.
  - b. conquered Russia.
  - c. brought the entire Arabian peninsula under Ottoman rule.
  - d. invaded the island of Sicily.
  - e. all of the above.

6. In his "Turkish Letters," the Hungarian diplomat Ghislain de Busbecq expresses concerns that
  - a. the Ottoman Turks are technologically superior to Europeans.
  - b. Ottoman troops are numerically superior to European forces.
  - c. Ottoman forces are hardier and more disciplined than European forces.
  - d. Ottoman forces are better fed than European forces.
  - e. all of the above.
  
7. The Safavid empire began with the reign of Shah Ismail, who claimed legitimacy to the throne by
  - a. killing off competitors from the Mughal royal families.
  - b. seizing the Peacock Throne.
  - c. tracing his ancestry back to a Sufi religious leader.
  - d. marrying the daughter of Suleyman the Magnificent.
  - e. tracing his ancestry back to Tamerlane.
  
8. Twelver Shiism was a Muslim sect that claimed that
  - a. Ismail was the "hidden" imam or even a reincarnation of Allah.
  - b. Shah Ismail was a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad.
  - c. all *ghazi* are true spokesmen of Allah.
  - d. the Safavid were the lost tribe of Israel.
  - e. the *qizilbash*, or "red heads," should be purged from the country.
  
9. At the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514,
  - a. the Safavid *qizilbash* defeated the Ottoman Janissary forces.
  - b. the Sunni Ottomans defeated the Shiite Safavids.
  - c. an alliance of Safavids and Ottomans defeated European crusaders.
  - d. European forces turned back the Ottoman advance into central Europe.
  - e. none of the above.
  
10. Shah Abbas revitalized the Safavid regime by all of the following means *except*
  - a. increasing the use of gunpowder weapons.
  - b. making land grants to *qizilbash* officers.
  - c. expelling the Portuguese from Hormuz.
  - d. forging alliances with the Ottomans against Europeans.
  - e. promoting trade with other lands.
  
11. The Mughal leader Babur originally invaded northern India in order to
  - a. create a Shiite Muslim state.
  - b. finance his military campaigns in central Asia.
  - c. control the trade routes into southeast Asia.
  - d. defeat his long-standing enemy, the sultan of Delhi.
  - e. all of the above.
  
12. The reforms of Akbar included all the following *except*
  - a. religious toleration for Hindus and Sikhs.
  - b. a syncretic religion, called "divine faith," which stressed loyalty to the emperor.
  - c. a centralized administrative structure with ministers appointed to regional provinces.
  - d. education and basic rights for Indian women.
  - e. conquest of Gujarat and Bengal.



13. The Mughal emperor Aurangzeb
  - a. replaced many Hindu temples with mosques.
  - b. required all nonbelievers to pay a special tax.
  - c. extended Mughal authority into southern India.
  - d. faced many rebellions and religious conflicts.
  - e. all of the above.
  
14. Politically, all three of the Islamic states began as
  - a. oligarchies, dominated by the merchant class.
  - b. constitutional monarchies.
  - c. military states.
  - d. feudal aristocracies.
  - e. tribal councils.
  
15. Foreign trade took hold primarily in
  - a. the Ottoman and the Mughal empires.
  - b. the Mughal and the Safavid empires.
  - c. the Safavid and the Ottoman empires.
  - d. all three empires.
  - e. none of the empires.
  
16. One persistent problem within all three empires was
  - a. maintaining the loyalty of the military.
  - b. maintaining control over a vast slave population.
  - c. communication between the central and provincial administrations.
  - d. achieving a peaceful succession after the death of the emperor.
  - e. all of the above.
  
17. Major trade commodities sought by European merchants from the Islamic empires included
  - a. coffee and tobacco.
  - b. sugar and rum.
  - c. silks, carpets, and other crafts.
  - d. wheat, rice, and other food staples.
  - e. slaves.
  
18. Which of the following would *not* be an example of religious toleration under Muslim rule?
  - a. the *millet* communities in the Ottoman empire.
  - b. the *jizya* tax imposed by Aurangzeb
  - c. the Jesuit mission at the court of Goa
  - d. the syncretic “divine faith” of Akbar
  - e. Christian monasteries permitted at Isfahan
  
19. A major reason for the decline in the Islamic empires was
  - a. the refusal to accept new ideas and technologies from the West.
  - b. an abandonment of religious toleration as a state policy.
  - c. the decline in military leadership.
  - d. the rigidity of the religious leaders.
  - e. all of the above.

20. The Muslim resistance to new ideas and technologies by the eighteenth century is illustrated by
- the Ottoman ban on the printing press.
  - the purchase of outmoded weapons from Europe.
  - the banning of “impious” telescopes.
  - reluctance of Muslims to travel abroad.
  - all of the above.

### MATCHING

Match these figures with the statements that follow.

- |                         |                             |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| A. Shah Abbas           | G. Osman                    |
| B. <i>Ghazs</i>         | H. Babur                    |
| C. Janissaries          | I. Akbar                    |
| D. <i>Qizilbash</i>     | J. Suleyman the Magnificent |
| E. Shah Ismael          | K. Aurangzeb                |
| F. Mehmed the Conqueror | L. Shah Jahan               |

- \_\_\_ Thirteenth-century founder of the Ottoman dynasty.
- \_\_\_ Sixteenth-century founder of the Safavid dynasty.
- \_\_\_ Sixteenth-century founder of the Mughal dynasty.
- \_\_\_ Religious warriors in service of the Ottoman empire.
- \_\_\_ Followers of Twelver Shiism.
- \_\_\_ Ottoman sultan who conquered Constantinople and created a unified Ottoman empire.
- \_\_\_ Ottoman troops comprised of captive Christian boys, raised in Islam and devoted to the sultan.
- \_\_\_ Seventeenth-century ruler who sponsored the creation of the Peacock Throne and the construction of the Taj Mahal, two symbols of the wealth of the Mughal empire.
- \_\_\_ Ottoman sultan, known to his subjects as “the Lawgiver,” who expanded his empire into central Europe.
- \_\_\_ Ruler who extended Mughal rule into southern India but faced many challenges from his Hindu subjects.
- \_\_\_ Effective Safavid ruler who modernized the army and retook Hormuz from the Portuguese.
- \_\_\_ Mughal ruler who created a centralized administrative structure that included both Hindus and Muslims in positions of power.

## SEQUENCING

Place the following clusters of events in chronological order. Consider carefully how one event leads to another, and try to determine the internal logic of each sequence.

A.

- \_\_\_\_\_ With powerful forces and gunpowder weapons, Mehmed the Conqueror encircles and finally captures Constantinople.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Moving into the Balkans, the Ottomans create a special military force comprised of captive Christian slaves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Osman Bey founds the Turkish dynasty in northwest Anatolia.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Renamed Istanbul, the city is the capital of a vast and wealthy empire.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Turkish *ghazi* seize territory in Anatolia from the Byzantine empire.

B.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Safavid empire
- \_\_\_\_\_ Abbasid empire
- \_\_\_\_\_ Iran
- \_\_\_\_\_ the Ilkhanate of Persia

## QUOTATIONS

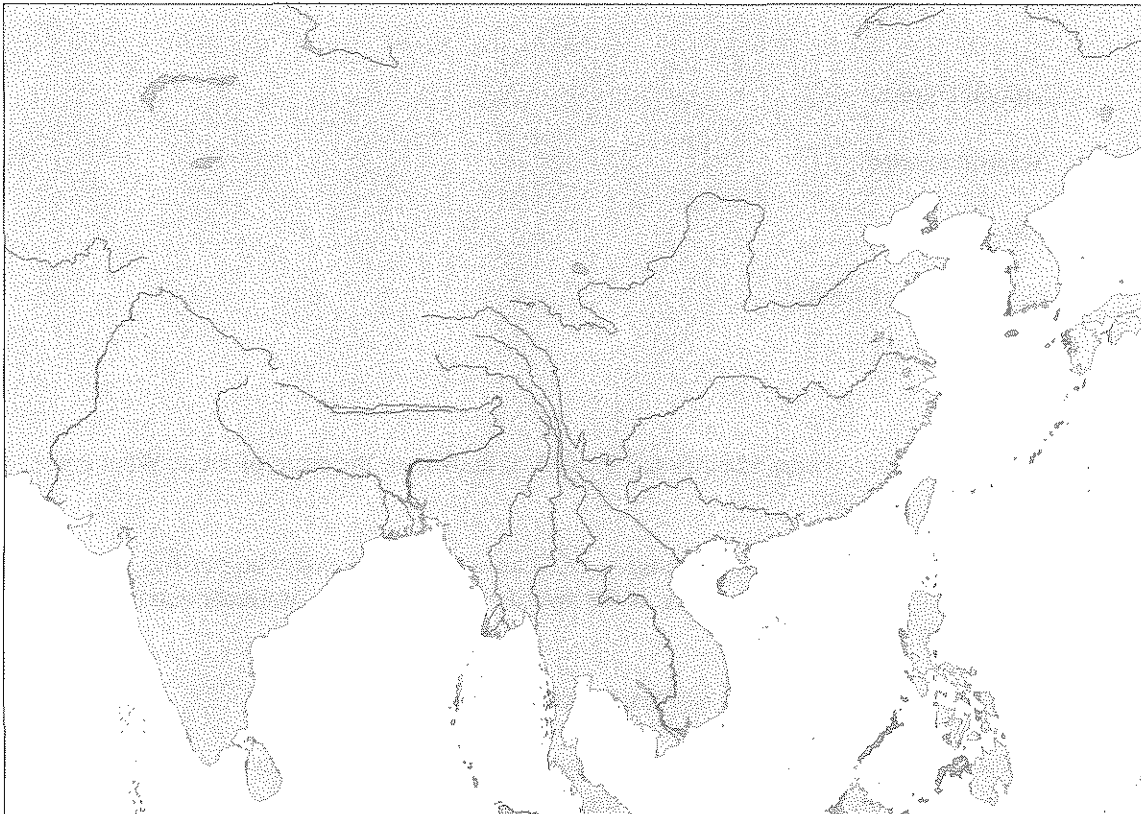
For each of the following quotes, identify the speaker, if known, or the point of view. What is the significance of each passage?

1. “The *Ghazi* is the instrument of the religion of Allah, a servant of God who purifies the earth from the filth of polytheism; the *Ghazi* is the sword of God, he is the protector and the refuge of the believers.”
2. “I am the Sovereign of two lands and two seas.”
3. “I tremble when I think of what the future must bring when I compare the Turkish system with our own; one army must prevail and the other be destroyed. . . . On their side are the resources of a mighty empire, strength unimpaired, experience in fighting, a veteran soldiery. . . . On our side is public poverty, private luxury, impaired strength, lack of endurance and training.”
4. “For all these reasons, most of the best warriors were unwilling to stay in India; in fact, they determined to leave. . . . I summoned all the leaders and took counsel. I said, ‘Without means and resources there is no empire and conquest, and without land and followers there is no sovereignty and rule. . . . Should we abandon a country taken at such risk of life?’ ”

5. "I perceive that there are varying customs and beliefs of varying religious paths. . . . But the followers of each religion regard the institution of their own religion as better than those of any other. . . . Wherefore I desire that on appointed days the books of all the religious laws be brought forward, and the doctors meet and hold discussion, so that I may hear them, and that each one may determine which is the truest and mightiest religion."

#### MAP EXERCISES

1. On a map of India and southwest Asia, draw the boundaries of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires at their height (see Map 28.1, page 755 in the textbook). Add the following features:
- Bodies of water: Arabian Sea, Black Sea, Caspian Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Persian Gulf, Red Sea, Euphrates River, Indus River, Ganges River, Nile River, Tigris River
  - Regions: Albania, Anatolia, Arabia, Armenia, Egypt, Greece, Gujarat, Iran, Lebanon, Punjab, Serbia
  - Cities: Alexandria, Cairo, Delhi, Goa, Hormuz, Isfahan, Istanbul, Kabul, Mecca



2. Graph the population growth of India, Persia, and Ottoman Anatolia between 1500 and 1800. Compare to China (Chapter 27) and Europe (Chapter 24). In what country and in what century was growth most dramatic? Where and when was there the least population growth? Explain the differences.

## CONNECTIONS

In fifty words or less, explain the relationship between each of the following pairs. How does one lead to or foster the other? Be specific in your response.

- Janissaries and Topkapi palace
- Trading concessions and European weapons
- Muslim clerics and English muskets
- Treaty of Tordesillas and Mehmed the Conqueror

## FILMS

*Gabbeh* (1997). A romantic fable set among a nomadic tribe in Iran. Gabbeh is both the name of a traditional handwoven carpet and the name of the heroine, who is forbidden by her father to marry the man she loves. In Farsi with subtitles.

*Prince Ehtejab* (1974). Dying of tuberculosis, the Safavid Prince Ehtejab shuts himself up in his palace, where he is assailed by the memories and guilt of his family's cruel deeds. Based on the classic Iranian novel about the Quajar dynasty, which ruled Persia from 1795 to 1925. In Farsi with subtitles.

*Mughal-e-Azam*, or *The Great Mughal* (1960). The conflict between love and duty is presented in this largely fictional tale of the doomed romance between the son of the Emperor Akbar and a common dancer. An uncritical view of Akbar as empire builder. In Hindi/Urdu with subtitles.

