17 Afroeurasia and Its Powerful States

1500–1600

Camel caravan merchants who crossed the western Sahara Desert in the sixteenth century may have thought that Ahmad al-Mansur, the sultan of Morocco, had taken leave of his senses. He proclaimed that he planned to send a large military expedition equipped with muskets, mortars, and cannons across a thousand miles of arid waste to launch a surprise attack on the West African empire of Songhay. A monarch of the Sa'adian dynasty, al-Mansur (reigned 1578–1603) commanded the northern terminals of the trans-Saharan camel routes, but the southern entrepôts were under the authority of Songhay. The sultan calculated that if he invaded Songhay and seized its desert ports, especially Timbuktu, he would control the entire western Saharan network and its immensely valuable trade in gold, salt, and slaves. Intelligence reports had informed him that factional struggles had weakened the Songhay state and that, despite its large cavalry, it had no guns. He scolded his advisors who opposed his scheme as too risky: "Our predecessors would have found great difficulty if they had tried to do what I now propose; . . . gunpowder was unknown to them, and so were firearms and their terrifying effect. Today, the Sudanese [people of Songhay] have only spears and swords, weapons which will be useless against modern arms."[1]

Al-Mansur won over his counselors, and in October 1590 a force of about five thousand infantry, horse cavalry, and support personnel departed from Marrakech, crossed the High Atlas Mountains, and advanced into the wilderness. The commanding officer

The Ottoman army, like Al-Mansur's Moroccan forces, used artillery to capture new territory in the sixteenth century.

was Judar Pasha, a Christian convert to Islam who had made a name for himself in the Moroccan army. He had never led such an ambitious expedition, however, and about half of his soldiers died along the route from exhaustion, sunstroke, or illness. In February 1591 the column reached the banks of the Niger River, where it skirts the southern edge of the desert.

Askiya Ishaq II, the emperor of Songhay, either did not know or failed to believe that a hostile army was about to materialize from the desert. Nevertheless, he managed to assemble a large force of cavalry and foot soldiers. Somewhere near the Niger the adversaries met. Though the emperor's army was by far the larger, Judar Pasha's disciplined gunners killed many defending troops and probably terrified many more. The emperor left the field of battle, and his remaining troops fled. Disorder and rebellion then spread through the Songhay realm, and within a few years it collapsed. Al-Mansur, however, did not get the trans-Saharan empire he wanted. The distances were simply too great. Rather, his officers settled in as lords of a small West African state and within a few decades lost political contact with Morocco.

Al-Mansur's desert adventure, as anticlimactic as it turned out to be, illustrates a major world-scale development in the sixteenth century. Morocco was just one of several Afroeurasian states that amassed formidable political power based on firearms technology. The rulers of these states created large, disciplined armies, which they deployed to conquer weaker neighbors and to tighten their authority within their own domain. On the whole, sixteenth-century rulers, in contrast to their predecessors, relied less on the cooperation of local chiefs and estate-owning aristocrats to maintain their power and more on loyal, centrally appointed civil and military bureaucrats. The first section of this chapter surveys the changing political map of Afroeurasia, focusing on regions where rulers consolidated authority over their subjects and pushed their borders outward.

The second section examines the significance of firearms technology and its spread across Afroeurasia. As this happened, armies became more lethal than they had ever been. Rulers, however, had to finance expensive armies and administrations, and this raised the stakes for control of agrarian resources, commercial routes, and subject populations that could be made to pay taxes. The immense cost of equipping land and naval forces with the new weaponry produced a revolution in political organization and finance, and it strictly limited the number of states that could compete for power on a large scale.

Chapter Outline

AFROEURASIA'S POLITICAL PANORAMA
The Ottoman Empire's Dramatic Expansion
WEIGHING THE EVIDENCE A European Ambassador Compares Armies
The Safavid Empire of Persia
Mughal Power in South Asia
Russia: From Principality to Empire
Japan and the Tokugawa
Strong Monarchies in Southeast Asia
The European States
The Songhay Empire

THE NEW ERA OF GUNS
New and Deadly Armies
The Military Revolution
The Limits of Central Power

TRENDS IN RELIGION, LANGUAGE, AND CULTURE
Intellectual and Moral Ferment in China
Tension between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims
Religious Crisis in Europe
INDIVIDUALS MATTER Gracia Luna Mendes Nasi: A Sixteenth-Century Businesswoman
Vernacular Languages and the State
Languages of Cultural Prestige

• • •

The third section investigates some of Afroeurasia's key sixteenth-century cultural developments, changes closely related to the rise of more powerful states and the expanding global economy. In the sphere of religious and moral systems, intense controversies took place over matters of belief and practice, notably in neo-Confucian China, the central Muslim states, and Christian Europe. A second important development was the ascendancy of particular regional languages and the distinctive cultural styles associated with them. In the sixteenth century, more local tongues gave way to languages associated with expanding states, universalist religions, and international merchant groups.

A Panoramic View

MAP 17.1 Major states of Afroeurasia, late sixteenth century.

The sixteenth century is notable for the growing number of relatively large, politically centralized states. What factors might help explain why most of these states were located in Afroeurasia's north temperate latitudes?

Afroeurasia's Political Panorama

FOCUS What developments in Afroeurasia in the sixteenth century account for the rise of more powerful centralized states?

In the sixteenth century, almost all major states in Afroeurasia had access to roughly equivalent technologies for farming, mining, communications, and war making. And most of those states shared in the population surge and accompanying economic expansion that generally characterized the period. With a few exceptions, states were organized as monarchies. Their kings, queens, emperors, sultans, or shahs occupied the apex of a hierarchy of officials, and they claimed to rule as agents of divine power. Beyond those common features, states varied widely in population, political institutions, and cultural diversity, and in the strategies they adopted to assert power and accumulate wealth (see Map 17.1).

By capitalizing on some combination of firearms technology and more efficient political organization, several states achieved remarkable success in the sixteenth century in at least one of two respects. First, those states became more efficient at controlling, regulating, keeping track of, and taxing their own populations; that is, they achieved greater political and economic centralization. Second, a number of them also used a large part of their financial resources to undertake campaigns of imperial expansion. Conquered states, which had previously been sovereign and perhaps powerful in their own right, either became tribute-paying dependents of bigger states or disappeared altogether. The number of political units in the world dropped steadily in the sixteenth century as powerful, expansionary states absorbed relatively weaker kingdoms, city-states, and self-governing clans and tribes.

The parallel trends toward greater state centralization and territorial expansion, the themes we highlight in this part of the chapter, were, however, not conspicuous in China, at least not in the sixteenth century. The Ming dynasty (1368–1644) reigned over the most populous and in many respects the most economically developed society in the world, and the state had achieved more effective central bureaucratic organization in the previous 130 years. The imperial palace generated laws and policies in consultation with commissions of administrative officials ideally guided by Confucian moral and political values. The dynasty's line of sixteen potentates ranged in leadership ability from brilliant to inept, but the bureaucrats that formed a chain of authority reaching from the capital to the most distant provinces continued for the most part to do their jobs whether the emperor was effective or not.

Nevertheless, China experienced growing political troubles after 1500. Both Confucian officials and imperial eunuchs (who served the emperor as bodyguards and palace administrators) became increasingly factionalized and hostile to one another. Local estate lords found new ways to avoid taxes and make the rural peasantry pay more. In the later century an influx of silver from American mines caused serious economic and financial turbulence. (We return to that issue in Chapter 18.) The later emperors largely rejected imperial expansion and adopted defensive strategies to protect their Inner Eurasian borderlands from Mongol or other nomad assaults. The government extended the Great Wall across western China. As Chinese emperors had long done, the Ming represented the empire as the world's "middle kingdom," deserving of the formal allegiance of all neighbors. Missions from Korea, Vietnam, and various Inner Eurasian power groups traveled periodically to Beijing to offer tribute. But these relationships served more to stimulate trade between China and societies that in fact ran their own political affairs.

The Ottoman Empire's Dramatic Expansion

The Ottoman Turkish sultanate, founded in Anatolia (modern Turkey) in the late 1200s, achieved the most spectacular territorial and seaborne expansion of any sixteenth-century state, with the exception of Spain and its American conquests. The Ottoman sultanate emerged as a major Afroeurasian empire after 1453, when its army seized Constantinople (modern Istanbul) and eradicated the Greek Byzantine empire (see Chapter 15). From that city, which overlooked the Bosporus Strait, the sultans commanded the immensely valuable shipping that passed between the Mediterranean and the Black Seas. By the start of the sixteenth century, the empire embraced the agrarian lands of Anatolia and a large part of the Balkan Peninsula in southeastern Europe. The central government evolved as a system in which the sultan reigned over a hierarchy of advisors and administrators, all of whom had the formal status of imperial slaves. This meant that the sultan commanded the absolute personal loyalty of this ruling elite and could appoint, dismiss, or execute any of its members at will. Starting with the reign of Selim I (1512–1520), the government marshaled its rich farm and commercial resources to undertake a new round of territorial conquests in almost every direction.

Ottoman army and state. All departments of the Ottoman government, except for the system of judicial courts run by Sunni Muslim legal scholars, had a strong military character. In one way or another, those ministries devoted themselves to imperial defense and relentless frontier expansion. In the sixteenth century, Ottoman forces consisted of three major elements. First were cavalry regiments, either Turkish frontier fighters (*ghazis*) or mounted units whose officers (*sipahis*) raised imperial troops in return for the right to tax peasants. The second element were the janissaries, the corps of slave infantry that in the sixteenth century numbered up to about thirty-seven thousand combatants and

Topkapi Palace. The center of Ottoman imperial administration for over 400 years, the palace buildings overlook the Bosporus —then as now a vital commercial waterway. Note the palace's location within a dense urban landscape.

that could match any land force in the world in martial skill and discipline (see Chapter 15). The third arm of Ottoman might was the navy, which in the early century supplanted Venice and Genoa as the preeminent maritime power in the eastern Mediterranean and Black Seas and which advanced into the Arabian Sea nearly simultaneously with the arrival there of Portuguese warships.

Like all early modern monarchs, the Ottoman sultans claimed to rule with divine consent. Their authority was limited only by the requirements of the *shari'a*, or Muslim law. The political nucleus of the empire from the later fifteenth century was the Topkapi Palace, resplendently situated on a site in Istanbul above the Bosporus. A continually growing complex of elaborate pavilions, chambers, and courtyards, Topkapi eventually had room for some five thousand residents, including members of the imperial family, state officials, soldiers, concubines, and a host of servants. From within the palace, the sultan's high council (*divan*) and a sort of prime minister holding the title of *vizir* gave advice and directed the various offices. Government in the provinces was less centralized than, for example, in Ming China. Cavalry officers, not civil bureaucrats, administered local affairs, and they forwarded to the capital fixed proportions of the revenue they collected from peasants.

Sixteenth-century conquests. The most aggressive Ottoman expansion took place in the reigns of Selim and his successor Suleyman I, called "the Magnificent" (r. 1520–1566). Selim extended Ottoman power to the south by conquering the populous Arabic-speaking lands of Syria and Egypt. To the east, he warred repeatedly with the Safavid (SAH-fah-vihd) empire of Persia, mainly for control of the cities and agricultural resources of Iraq. Ottoman forces invaded Egypt in 1517, overthrowing the Sunni Muslim Mamluk dynasty that had ruled there for two and a half centuries. Shortly after that, Turkish privateers sailing under the Ottoman flag seized Tunis, Algiers, and other Mediterranean ports, thereby controlling North Africa's coastline as far west as the frontier of Morocco. Ottoman successes in the Mediterranean, plus persistent threats to invade Italy, set off several decades of warfare with Habsburg Spain and Venice on both land and sea. The tide of battle shifted repeatedly during Suleyman's reign, though in 1580 the adversaries agreed to an extended maritime peace, recognizing that neither of them was going to achieve complete dominance in the Mediterranean.

On the European front, Ottoman land armies invaded Romania in 1504 and subjugated the kingdom of Hungary in 1526. Three years later Suleyman's forces advanced up the Danube River valley and surrounded Vienna, the capital of Habsburg Austria. Though this siege alarmed western Europe, an early winter forced the attackers to retreat. Some historians have referred to the prolonged conflict between the Ottomans and several European powers as the "sixteenth-century world war" because the contending forces fought battles from the western Mediterranean to the coasts of India. The struggle was not, however, a straightforward clash between Muslims and Christians. Both France and several independent German princes allied with the Turks out of shared hostility to the Habsburgs.

The sprawling Ottoman state embraced many ethnolinguistic groups and a total population of about twenty-two million by the later seventeenth century. The ruling class proudly identified with the Turkic-speaking people that in earlier centuries had migrated from the Inner Eurasian steppes and after 1000 C.E. achieved dominance over Anatolia. As the empire grew, however, the Turkic population

Weighing THE EVIDENCE

A European Ambassador Compares Armies

In 1554 Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq (1522–1592) traveled to Constantinople as the Habsburg or Holy Roman empire's ambassador to the Ottoman court. Raised in Flanders and educated in western European universities, Busbecq entered diplomatic service only months before receiving this important mission. During his eight years in Constantinople, he wrote numerous letters to his friend and fellow diplomat Nicholas Michault. In this correspondence he recounted travel stories and his observations of Ottoman life. Busbecq was especially interested in comparing the Holy Roman and Turkish empires. He was worried that Ottoman forces might defeat western European states because they seemed to him much hardier and better disciplined. Busbecq compiled his Turkish Letters *for publication in 1589, long after he left Constantinople. They remain a precious source of knowledge of the Ottoman state.*

The Turkish monarch going to war takes with him over 40,000 camels and nearly as many baggage mules, of which a great part, when he is invading Persia, are loaded with rice and other kinds of grain. These mules and camels also serve to carry tents and armor, and likewise tools and munitions for the campaign. . . . The invading army carefully abstains from encroaching on its magazines [stored supplies] at the outset; as they are well aware that when the season for campaigning draws to a close, they will have to retreat over districts wasted by the enemy, or scraped bare by countless hordes of men and droves of baggage animals. . . . Then the Sultan's magazines are opened, and a ration just sufficient to sustain life is daily weighed out to the Janissaries [imperial slave soldiers] and other troops of the royal household. The rest of the army is badly off, unless they have provided some supplies at their own expense. And this is generally the case, for the greater number, and especially the cavalry, having from their long experience in war already felt such inconveniences, lead with them a sumpter horse [packhorse] by a halter, on which they carry many of the necessities of life; namely, a small piece of canvas which they use as a tent, for protection against sun and rain, with the addition of some clothes and bedding; and as provisions for their private use, a leathern bag or two of the finest flour, with a small pot of butter, and some spices and salt, on which they sustain life when they are hard pressed. . . .

From this you will see that it is the patience, self-denial and thrift of the Turkish soldier that enable him to face the most trying circumstances and come safely out of the dangers that surround him. What a contrast to our men! Christian soldiers on a campaign refuse to put up with their ordinary food, and call for thrushes, beccaficos [a small bird], and suchlike dainty dishes! If these are not supplied, they grow mutinous and work their own ruin; and, if they are supplied, they are ruined all the same. For each man is his own worst enemy, and has no foe more deadly than his own intemperance. . . . It makes me shudder to think of what the result of a struggle between such different systems must be; one of us must prevail and the other be destroyed, at any rate we cannot both exist in safety. On their side is the vast wealth of their empire, unimpaired resources, experience and practice in arms, a veteran soldiery, an uninterrupted series of victories, readiness to endure hardships, union, order, discipline, thrift, and watchfulness. On ours are found an empty exchequer, luxurious habits, exhausted resources, broken spirits, a raw and insubordinate soldiery, and greedy quarrels; there is no regard for discipline, license runs riot, the men indulge in drunkenness and debauchery, and worst of all, the enemy are accustomed to victory, we, to defeat. Can we doubt what the result must be?

Source: Charles Thornton Forster and F. H. Blackburne Daniell, *The Life and Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq*, vol. 1 (London: Kegan Paul, 1881), 219–222.

Thinking Critically

What particular traits does Busbecq believe that Ottoman soldiers possess, compared to European Christian troops? Why does he consider Turks a threat to the Holy Roman empire? How do you think a European reading this letter might react to Busbecq's characterization of the Ottoman army? Do you think that Busbecq might be exaggerating differences between Ottoman and Christian European armies? If so, what attitude or feelings might lead him to exaggerate?

came to be outnumbered by conquered peoples speaking Arabic, Persian (Farsi), Greek, Armenian, several Slavic languages, and a variety of other tongues. In its religious complexion, Muslims accounted for only a slight majority of the empire's total population. Christians in eastern Anatolia, Syria, Egypt, and especially southeastern Europe comprised more than 30 percent of the sultan's subjects. Jews accounted for another 10 percent in the sixteenth century. Indeed, the sultans welcomed thousands of Jews following their expulsion from Christian Spain in 1492. The state organized Greek and Armenian Christian groups, plus Jews, into *millets,* or legally constituted religious communities that were permitted to run their own internal affairs, including courts, schools, and tax collection. But Christians

and Jews did not enjoy legal and social equality with Muslims. Members of these communities could not serve in the government or army, and they paid a tax (the *jizya*) that did not apply to Muslims.

An empire of trade. As it expanded, the Ottoman state spilled across the east–west trade arteries running between the Mediterranean and both Inner Eurasia and the Indian Ocean. In the later sixteenth century, after Portuguese commercial aggression in the Arabian Sea quieted down, Muslim sea traders returned in large numbers, enjoying Ottoman naval protection on the routes through the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. Muslim, Jewish, and Armenian merchants moved goods from one part of the empire to another. Egypt exported rice and sugar, Syria supplied dates and pistachios, Anatolia shipped dried fruit and silk, and the Balkans traded wheat, timber, and wine. To encourage Italian and other European shippers to visit Ottoman ports to buy textiles, carpets, and other products, the government offered them special commercial privileges, beginning with a treaty with France in 1536. Under these **capitulations,** European merchants enjoyed reduced tariffs, freedom from Ottoman taxes, and if they became involved in civil or criminal cases the right to try them in their own consular courts rather than before Muslim judges.

capitulations International agreements in which one state awarded special privileges within its borders to subjects or citizens of another state.

The Safavid Empire of Persia

After more than a century and a half of political division, a new political force arose in the early sixteenth century to unify Persia, the region centered on the Iranian plateau. Like the Ottoman governing elite, the new Safavid dynasty traced its ancestry to Turkic horse archers who had entered Southwest Asia in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Isma'il, the first Safavid king, began his political career in the late fifteenth century and at the tender age of seven as chief of a Turkic military state located in the hill country that is today Azerbaijan and northwestern Iran. He also headed a Muslim Sufi association, which gave its name to the Safavid political movement. This mystical brotherhood, dedicated to individual spiritual enlightenment, attracted Turkic pastoral groups that inhabited the grassy valleys south of the Caucasus Mountains.

The Safavid state and the ascendance of Shi'a Islam. Beginning in 1501, Isma'il's cavalry vanquished one after another of the several small Turkic states that dominated Iran and Iraq. Isma'il's fighters were known as the Qizilbash, or Red Heads, because of the red Sufi headgear they wore. Advancing down the Tigris-Euphrates River in 1508, warrior bands seized Baghdad in 1508 and in a short time most of the commercial and manufacturing cities of Persia.

Isma'il also declared his devotion to Shi'ism, the wing of Islamic belief and practice that was taking militant forms in Southwest Asia in the fifteenth century. Sunni Islam, the faith of the great majority of Muslims, affirmed that supreme spiritual authority belonged with the Muslim community as a whole. The caliphs, or "deputies," who had succeeded the Prophet Muhammad since the seventh century, were obligated to implement and defend the community's will. Shi'ism proclaimed to the contrary that authority rested with the blood descendants of Ali, who was the fourth caliph and a kinsman of the Prophet. Ali's successors, called imams, were, according to Shi'a teaching, the rightful leaders of all Muslims. Isma'il came to profess the particular variant of Shi'ism that venerates the twelfth imam in the line of succession after Ali. According to Shi'a belief, this imam had gone into an occult, or hidden, state

Shah Isma'il and the Red Heads. This miniature painting depicts the Safavid ruler and his elite warriors, identified by their red hats. Compare this picture to the chapter's opening image. What differences do you notice between Safavid and Ottoman visual representations of military action?

Imam Mosque in Isfahan, Iran. Shah Abbas commissioned this mosque as part of the reconstruction of Isfahan as his new capital city in the early seventeenth century. The walls and domes are covered with inscriptions from the Quran and floral patterns formed from hundreds of thousands of glistening tiles. This type of ornamentation is a distinctive feature of Persian architecture. What architectural elements let you know this building was intended to communicate the power and splendor of a Muslim ruler?

but would one day return to reign over the world with divine authority. Claiming leadership as earthly representative of the Hidden Imam, Isma'il and his warriors strove to impose Shi'a doctrines on subjugated Sunni populations. Shi'a scholars and theologians, many from Iraq and Syria, formed a new religious elite. Gradually, Shi'ism became, by armed pressure or willing conversion, Iran's majority religion, though in many respects Sunni and Shi'a teachings and devotions are identical. In southern Iraq, a province of the Safavid state, Arabic-speaking populations converted to Shi'ism in large numbers. In this period, therefore, Iran and Iraq took on the religious profiles they largely have today.

The reign of Shah Abbas. After Isma'il's death in 1524, his early successors, who claimed the ancient Persian royal title of "shah," had a hard time holding the state together. It survived, however, by balancing the power of Red Head cavalry officers, who had rights to extract taxes from the mass of population, against the influence of urban, educated Iranian and Iraqi families, who ran the central government and enforced Shi'ism as the state religion.

The Safavid empire came to full flower under Shah Abbas, a ruler of unusual talents. Ascending the throne in 1587, he reigned for forty-three years (r. 1587–1629). To check the power of rural tribal commanders, he created a standing professional army. This force of as many as thirty-seven thousand troops included artillery and musket units advised by a group of English mercenaries. Healthy male prisoners seized in wars against the Christian kingdoms of Georgia and Armenia in the Caucasus Mountains were trained to serve in elite military units. These soldiers had the legal status of slaves of the shah, as the janissaries did in the Ottoman state. The shah's gunpowder army showed its mettle in victories over Ottoman forces in Iraq and over the Mughal (MOO-guhl) empire of India in Afghanistan. The Safavids had no navy, but in 1622 Abbas evicted the Portuguese from their fortress at Hormuz on the Persian Gulf with the aid of gunships supplied by friendly English trading partners.

The Persian empire had more limited resources than the Ottomans did. About 70 percent of Iran is extremely arid, and most farming required intensive irrigation. Shah Abbas, however, strengthened the economy by investing in water management, improving the trans-Iranian road and trail system, encouraging silk textile and carpet exports, and striking trade deals with European merchant firms. To boost overland traffic, he appointed Armenian Christian merchants as his special agents. They operated a commercial network linking the Volga River valley in Russia with both Europe and Southwest Asia. The shah's capital at Isfahan, a city built around an expansive central square flanked by spectacular domed mosques and an enormous covered bazaar, attracted a population of about 400,000. The government invited both Armenian and Roman Catholic clerics to build churches in Isfahan, no doubt finding friendly contacts with Christian powers a useful counterweight to the Ottoman empire, its enduring enemy.

Mughal Power in South Asia

Like Persia, South Asia experienced a long period of political fragmentation before achieving unification in the sixteenth century under a new and militarily aggressive dynasty. From the thirteenth to the early sixteenth centuries, several Muslim dynasties in succession dominated the river plains of northern India and the majority population of Hindu farmers and town dwellers. These regimes also fought, and sometimes allied with, local Hindu kingdoms. In 1526, however, Babur, ruler of a minor state in Afghanistan, led an

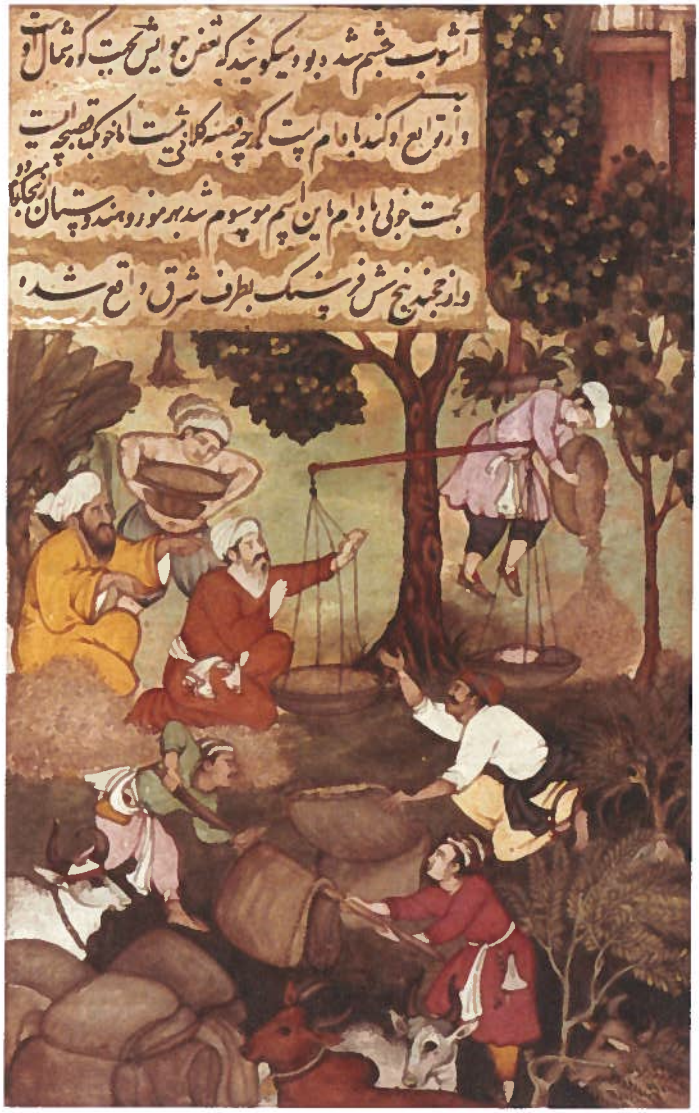
assault on northern India, seizing most of it by fielding an army that included both traditional horse archers and gunpowder cannons. A descendant of the thirteenth-century Mongol conqueror Chingis Khan and a lover of Persian art and poetry, Babur (r. 1526–1530) founded a dynasty that became known as Mughal, a corruption of the word *Mongol*. As in both the Ottoman and Safavid empires, the ruling military elite boasted descent from Inner Eurasian warriors.

The reign of Akbar the Great. Babur governed for only four years, and his son Humayun failed to gain firm control of northern India until just before his death in 1556. It was Babur's grandson Akbar (r. 1556–1605) who put the Mughal state on a firm footing and transformed it into a powerful regional empire. He organized an elaborate system of administration and taxation and during his half-century rule sent armies in all directions—south into the subcontinent's central plateau (the Deccan), north into Himalayan Kashmir, southwest into the cloth-producing region of Gujarat, and east into Bengal, the rice-rich lower Ganges River valley. He made no investment in a navy but relied on Indian Ocean merchants, including Portuguese and other Europeans, to export South Asian cotton textiles and other goods to the wider world.

Akbar had the same ambitions as many other monarchs of that era: to make war on neighboring states, confiscate their treasuries, tax his subjects, ensure public order, and display imperial power on a magnificent scale. To pursue these aims, he organized the upper level of officialdom into thirty-three ranks of imperial commanders, or *amirs*. These officers, including both Muslims and Hindus, raised cavalry troops—the higher the rank, the greater the number of horsemen required—to defend or extend imperial territory. The state paid them salaries or gave them rights to income from farm land. In this way Akbar created a **service nobility.** This was a governing class that enjoyed imperial income and privilege but did not constitute a land-owning aristocracy. It could not pass on property to heirs or build a power base independent of the state. Akbar also bolstered central authority by appointing agents to conduct surveys to determine the value of agricultural land. He then named local princes, landlords, or simply profit-minded entrepreneurs, who used survey information to collect taxes from Hindu and Muslim peasants. These intermediaries transferred a predetermined portion of revenue to the state but kept the balance for themselves to help maintain local order and pay for their own luxurious households.

service nobility A privileged governing class whose members depended entirely on the state rather than on inherited property and titles for their status and income.

Akbar founded the Mughal dynasty's authority on absolute loyalty and service to the monarch—the Royal Person. In this spirit, he and his successors demanded continuous, breathtaking displays of power, including intricate court rituals and lavish consumption of goods. Akbar proclaimed himself *padshah*, or king of kings, a title that recalled ancient



Gathering the almond crop. This painting from the *Babumama*, the memoir of the Mughal conqueror Babur, is included in an illustrated edition published after the ruler's death. Peasants gather the nuts and load bags onto pack animals while more elaborately dressed men weigh the harvest. Why would a ruler's memoirs include a depiction of agricultural activity?

Persian and Hindu ideas of the ruler as a semidivine personality. Antonio Monserrate, a Catholic missionary who resided at the imperial palace in the 1580s, described the subservience of Akbar's courtiers:

> His court is always thronged with multitudes of men of every type, though especially with the nobles, whom he commands to come from their provinces and reside at court for a certain period each year. When he goes outside the palace, he is surrounded and followed by these nobles and a strong body-guard. They have to go on foot until he gives them a nod to indicate that they may mount. All this adds greatly to the wonderful majesty and greatness of the royal court.[2]

Among early modern rulers, Akbar championed peculiarly liberal views on religion. He came to the throne as a Muslim, but much to the dismay of orthodox clerics, he proclaimed a divine religion centered on a Sufi, or mystical,

fraternity that taught that all faiths have spiritual insights to offer. He invited Muslim theologians, Sufis, Hindu sages, and even visiting Roman Catholic priests to debate questions of morality and doctrine. He also took a benevolent view of Sikhism, a new Indian religion whose founder Nanak (1469–1539) taught reconciliation of Hinduism and Islam through simple love of God, pacifism, and strict moral conduct. He gave the Sikhs land in the city of Amritsar to build their Golden Temple, which remains today the world headquarters of the Sikh faith. He also abolished a number of taxes that Hindus had to pay, and he allowed them to build new temples. Akbar's religious movement died with him, but his creative mix of political might and cultural tolerance almost certainly contributed to the social stability that characterized India for nearly a century after his reign.

Akbar had the fortune to come to power at a time of accelerating demographic and economic growth in South Asia. Its population approached 100 million, and the cities of Agra, Bijapur, and Ahmedabad were among the largest in the world. The subcontinent had immense resources in grain, cotton, silk, pepper, sugar, indigo, gems, and timber. Indian spinners and weavers had for centuries led the world in cotton textile production, and once European mariners opened the oceanic routes, global demand for Indian cottons swelled. Akbar obliged his subjects to pay taxes in copper, silver, or gold coins, a policy that pushed more rural farmers into the commercial market to earn money. The economy of Bengal, the rainforested region of the lower Ganges River, was particularly dynamic. Mughal armies conquered Bengal, then encouraged peasants from other parts of India, predominantly Muslims, to migrate there to clear forests, drain swamps, and transform the Ganges delta into endless tracts of rice paddy.

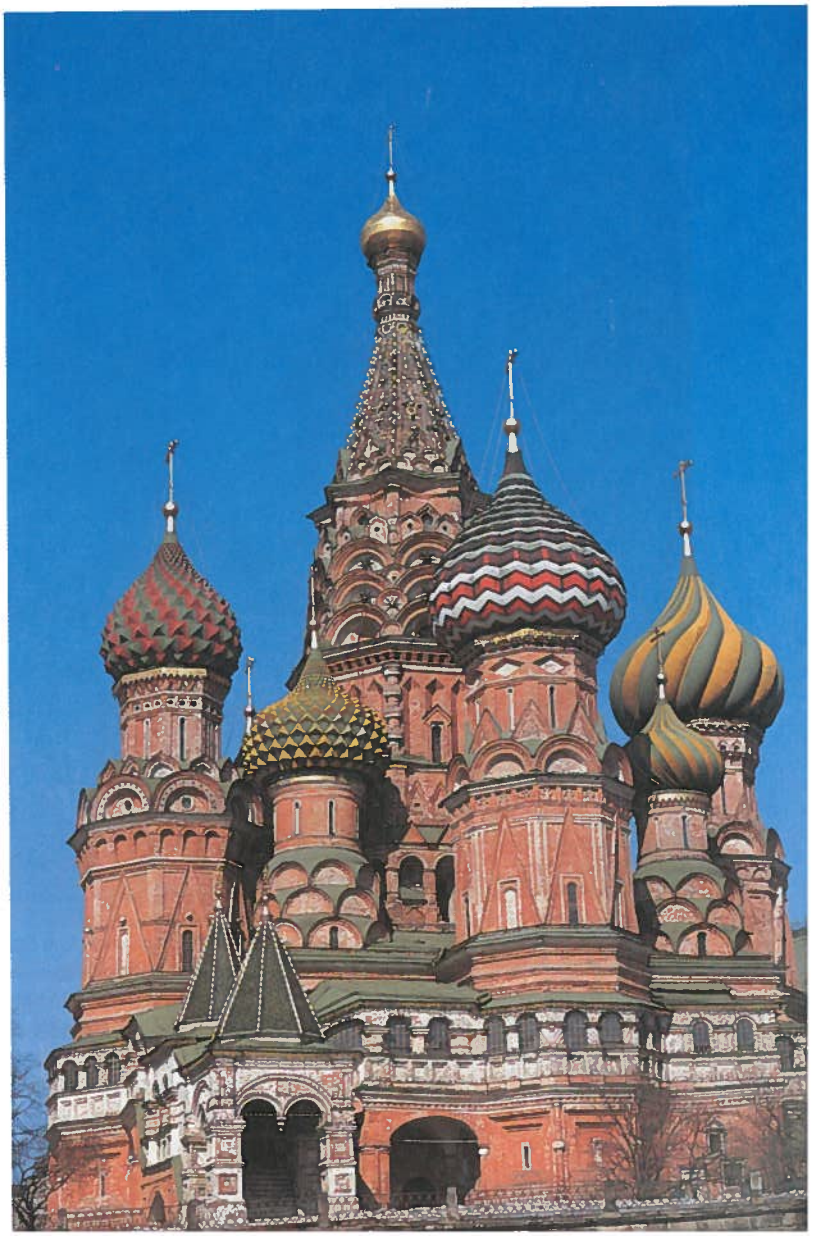
Akbar's successors. Akbar had three intelligent, strong-willed successors: Jahangir (r. 1605–1627), Shah Jahan (r. 1628–1658), and Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707). These kings maintained Akbar's administrative system for the most part, and they continued to add territories to the empire. Jahangir, one of Akbar's sons, consolidated his father's achievements, though in fact his Iranian wife Nur Jahan had a huge influence on state affairs, promoting Persian styles in imperial art and craft, and for a time acting as the de facto ruler. Jahangir's son Shah Jahan also looked toward Muslim Persia for models of civilized art and letters, launching a splendid building program that included the glorious Taj Mahal.

Aurangzeb, the last of the great Mughals, waged wars of conquest throughout the central plateau and sent armies into India's far south. His campaigns, however, consumed twenty-six years of bloody, immensely expensive fighting. To keep revenue flowing in, he taxed rural populations more harshly, which in the later years of his reign provoked rural uprisings and banditry. In stark contrast to Akbar, he also rigorously enforced Muslim orthodoxy, forcing Hindus out of government service, pulling down Hindu temples, and making war on the pacifist Sikhs, who had to take up arms to survive. His narrow view of religion clearly weakened social and cultural bonds within the empire. After he died, the empire deteriorated rapidly, making way for new power groups to carve out local bases of their own. As we will see in Chapter 18, these groups included armed merchants of the English East India Company.

Russia: From Principality to Empire

Russia joined the club of multiethnic empires near the end of the sixteenth century. This state encompassed a much smaller population than the Mughal or Ming Chinese states, but it expanded so rapidly over such great distances that by 1800 it was the world's largest monarchy, in square miles.

St. Basil's Cathedral, Moscow. Ivan the Terrible commissioned this Russian Orthodox cathedral following military victories along the Volga. The building, located on Moscow's Red Square, blends Byzantine arches, towers that resemble northern Russian churches, and features of Asian minarets. Why might the tsar build a monumental church in the center of Moscow after conquering territory in Inner Eurasia?



This was a striking phenomenon considering that Russia originated in the mid-fifteenth century as Moscovy, a small state centered on the city of Moscow.

The rise of Moscovy. Mongol conquerors had subjugated the Russian-speaking lands in the 1240s, but when their power waned two centuries later, the Moscovite princes Ivan III (r. 1462–1505) and his son Vasily III (r. 1505–1533) progressively eliminated rival regional rulers. Their conquests yielded extensive wheat and timber lands, plus key commercial towns, notably the northern fur trade emporium of Novgorod. The early Russian monarchs, or tsars (ZAHRS, from the word "caesar"), allied closely with the Russian Orthodox Church and represented themselves as agents of God and guardians of Christian truth. They also imposed their authority over the land-owning Russian aristocracy, known collectively as the boyars. They did this partly by creating a new governing class drawn largely from a pool of talented military and civil officers who received revenues from farm estates in return for unconditional loyalty. Like the Mughals in India, the tsars aimed to create a service nobility that had no large properties or aristocratic family attachments and could counterbalance the influence of the traditional boyar families.

Ivan IV, who ruled for fifty-two years (1533–1584), pursued the centralizing policies of his predecessors so pitilessly that his subjects came to know him as "Ivan the Terrible." He founded new ministries of state, as well as a special group of imperial enforcers that dressed in menacing black uniforms and carried brooms as emblems of their mission to cleanse the land of treason. In 1550 he founded the *streltsy*, a professional force of musketeers. These soldiers resembled the janissaries in the Ottoman empire, though they were freemen rather than military slaves. Deeply suspicious of the Russian aristocracy, Ivan periodically terrorized nobles families and seized their lands.

Russia's Eurasian empire. Between 1552 and 1556 Ivan IV's armies seized the middle and lower Volga River valley from regional Muslim rulers. These victories had great significance. First, they gave Russia control of the strategic north-south trade route linking the Baltic Sea with Southwest Asia and India. Second, they pushed Russian power closer to the Black Sea and the political orbit of the Ottoman empire. In the later 1500s, the two empires entered into diplomatic and commercial exchanges, but relations also became increasingly tense, leading to wars in later centuries. To the east, cavalry in service to the tsar crossed over the Ural Mountains in the 1580s to penetrate western Siberia. These gun-toting horse soldiers, known as Cossacks, had diverse origins. Many were former Muslim herders, others landless Slavic peasants. They made their living by trading furs and plundering Siberian villages, but they also spearheaded the conquests that gave the tsars access to boundless resources in furs, timber, and potential wheat land.

Yermak Timofeyevich, conqueror of Siberia. This lithograph depicts a Cossack leader responsible for key military victories that enabled Russian expansion into Siberia in the late sixteenth century. This picture, made 300 years later, combines military symbols and images from several regions and time periods. Why might a nineteenth-century artist depict a sixteenth-century soldier in Roman battle dress? What other elements in the lithograph suggest warriors from different places and eras?

To the west, the early tsars sought stronger political and cultural contacts with Europe's Catholic states. In the fifteenth century, Russian merchants, envoys, and scholars began traveling regularly to Germany, Italy, France, and England. Relations with western neighbors, however, were not all happy. Starting in 1558, Ivan IV engaged in a prolonged war with the kingdoms of Sweden and Poland-Lithuania over control of Baltic coastlands. He coveted a warm-water port on the west, but he failed to get it after a quarter-century of fighting.

The high cost of Ivan's wars put heavy pressure on Russian and other Slavic peasants to pay taxes and generate income for aristocratic estate lords. To escape their lot, many peasants fled to sparsely populated lands in the Ukraine or western Siberia. To prevent such flight and to meet rising demand in Europe for Russian wheat, the imperial government placed new

restrictions on farm tenants, gradually reducing them from legally free rent-paying peasants to serfs. This status bound them to live on a particular estate and pay dues to its master. Ironically, serfdom spread widely in Russia at the same time it was disappearing in western Europe.

Ivan's political repression and exhausting wars contributed after his death to a severe "time of troubles." Between 1598 and 1613, central authority nearly collapsed amid civil war, famine, peasant rebellion, and Polish and Swedish border invasions. The state returned to stability, however, after Russian nobles elected Mikhail Romanov tsar (r. 1613–1645). The new Romanov dynasty initiated more conquests in Inner Eurasia and reigned over the empire for more than three hundred years.

Japan and the Tokugawa

Among relatively smaller Afroeurasian states, Japan advanced toward political unity and strong central government in the late 1500s. In the previous two and a half centuries, the Japanese island chain had been politically divided into territories of numerous self-governing estate lords, known as daimyo. Supported by paid knights, or samurai, the daimyo constituted Japan's aristocratic ruling class. The emperor, who resided in the city of Kyoto, had only ritual functions. He appointed a shogun, or "great general," who ideally ruled Japan as his agent. But under the Ashikaga shoguns (1336–1573), named for the noble family that controlled that office, local daimyo did largely as they pleased. After Portuguese merchants introduced firearms to Japan in 1543 and local gunsmiths learned how to make them, warfare among the most powerful daimyo grew in intensity.

Starting in the 1550s, however, Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582), a local warlord from the big island of Honshu, made effective use of both long pikes and muskets to defeat several rival lords. At his death by assassination, his forces controlled a large part of Honshu. Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–1598), a general who built his career in service to Nobunaga, assembled an army of 300,000 soldiers and within a few years emerged as military lord of three of the archipelago's four major islands. Flush with victories at home, he also launched an amphibious invasion of Korea in 1592, even boasting, "I shall take even China in hand, and have control of it during my lifetime."[3] By assaulting Korea, however, he overreached badly. The Korean navy, which included heavily timbered ships equipped with artillery, harassed Japanese military supply lines in the Korea Strait. After six years of intermittent fighting, the Chinese government, which had close ties with Korea's Choson dynasty, sent an army that helped expel the intruders.

Hideyoshi died a much weakened ruler. Nevertheless, Tokugawa Ieyasu (r. 1603–1616), a Hideyoshi ally, held the state together. He took the title of shogun (made legitimate by the endorsement of the ceremonial emperor) and inaugurated the long era of the Tokugawa (TOH-koo-GAH-wah) shogunate (1603–1867). Similarly to other centralizing powers in Afroeurasia, this new regime required a strong army and a steady revenue flow to reduce the power of local magnates and provincial town leaders. Ieyasu and his successors accumulated immense tracts of taxable farm land, forbade ordinary people to own weapons, tore down many castles held by samurai knights, and obliged the 250 or so regional daimyo to contribute to the central treasury. To keep these aristocrats on a short political leash, the shoguns made them live in the capital city of Edo (modern Tokyo) every other year. The Tokugawa did not, however, try to govern the countryside in the direct way that imperial bureaucrats did in Ming China. Rather, they worked out a pragmatic

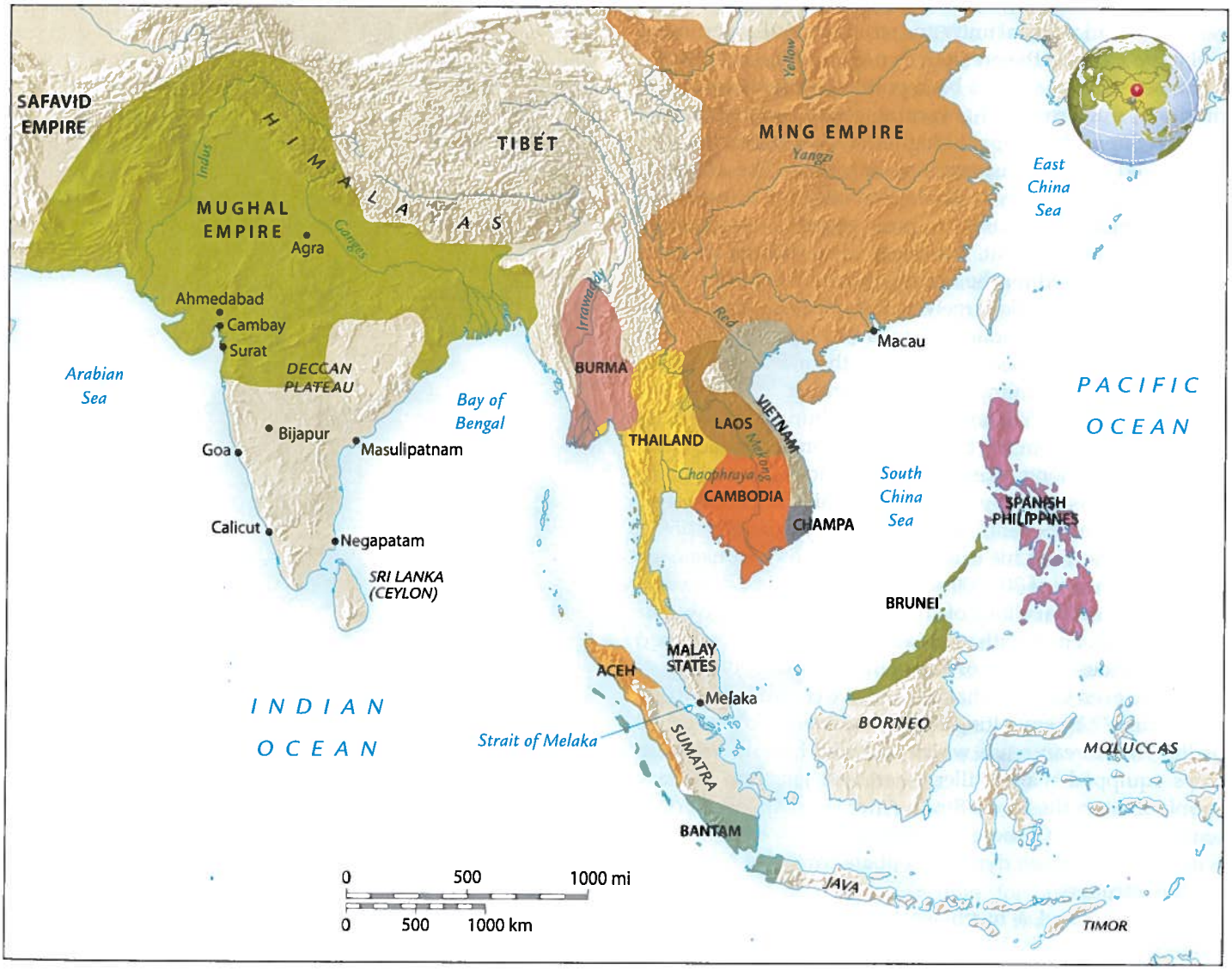
Tokugawa Ieyasu. The first Tokugawa shogun is depicted here as a ruler rather than a warrior. He is seated formally and framed by drapery displaying the Tokugawa family crest—three hollyhock leaves in a circle. In what ways does this silk hanging scroll symbolically legitimize the shogun's centralization of political power in Japan?

bargain with the daimyo that allowed these lords to run local administration and maintain small armies. This division between central and provincial power permitted the shogunate and the daimyo to work together to keep the peace and extract wealth from millions of farmers. From the perspective of ordinary men and women, all levels of government were authoritarian and demanding. On the other hand, Japan achieved greater political stability in the seventeenth century than it had enjoyed for several hundred years.

Strong Monarchies in Southeast Asia

In Indochina (mainland Southeast Asia), the tropical rice-growing lands south of China, trends toward political consolidation got seriously under way in the late fifteenth century. Three kingdoms—Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, and Vietnam—gained control of most of Indochina, which had a population in 1600 of perhaps ten million (see Map 17.2). These three Buddhist monarchies conquered and assimilated numerous smaller states and mountain chiefdoms, using some of the same state-strengthening techniques as other Afroeurasian monarchies. They acquired firearms, organized conscript armies, and adopted new governing strategies for wringing revenue from their subjects. In the sixteenth century they hired foreign advisors and mercenaries, mainly Europeans but also Japanese. All three kingdoms financed centralization with wealth from flourishing rice economies centered on the region's great river valleys.

The Burmese state launched a centralizing project shortly after 1500, conquering neighbors up and down the Irrawaddy



MAP 17.2 Major Southeast Asian states, sixteenth century.

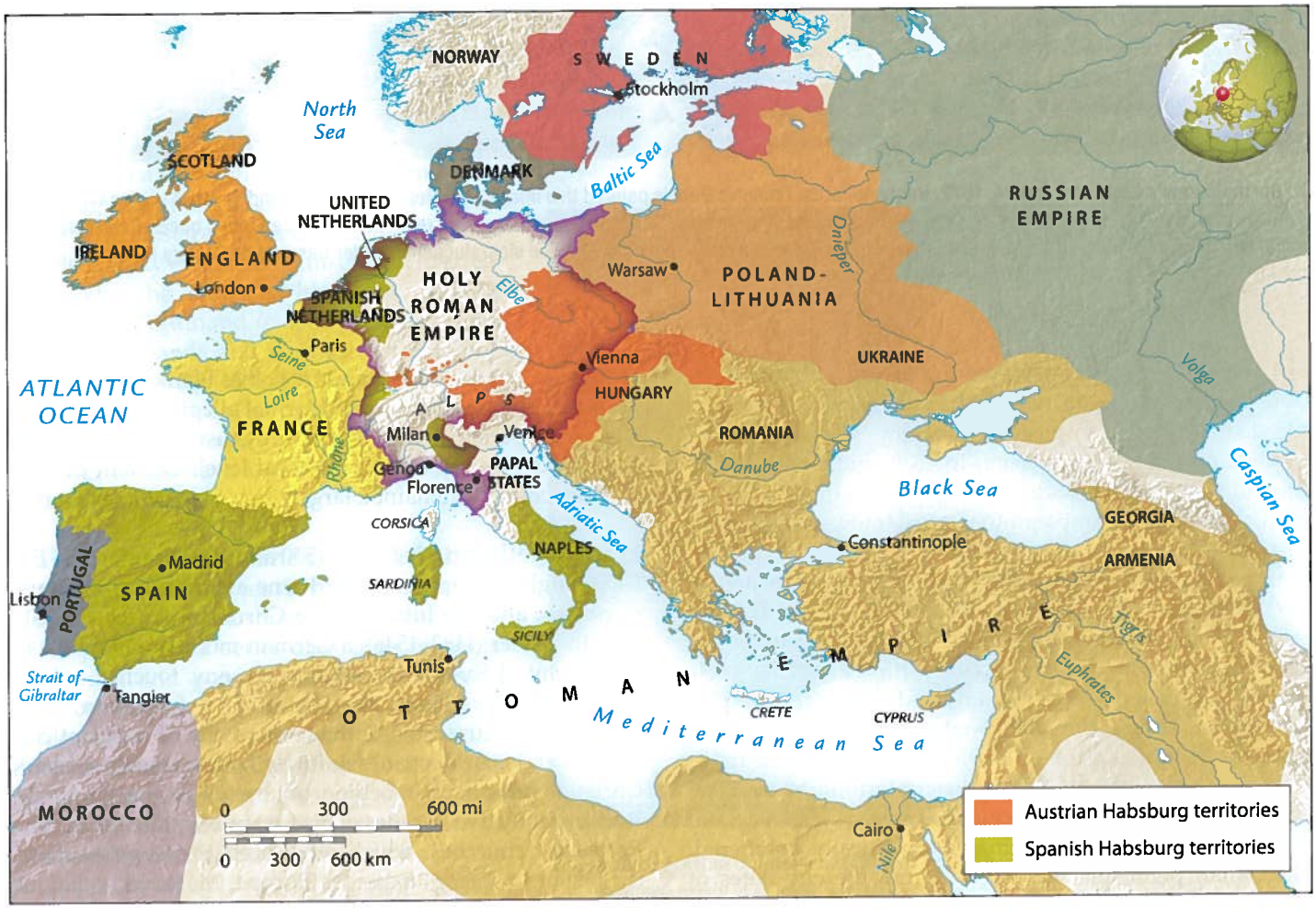
In the premodern centuries, China and its Confucian values wielded great cultural influence in Vietnam. South Asia's Hindu and Buddhist traditions had comparable impact on Burma, Thailand, and Cambodia. What geographical factors might help account for this difference?

River valley. Similarly, Vietnam expanded from the state's core region in the Red River valley southward along the coast of the South China Sea. Near the end of the sixteenth century, two aristocratic families, one in the north and the other in the south, divided Vietnam into two autonomous power centers, though these leaders kept up a fiction of unity by paying allegiance to the same, politically feeble emperor. Thailand also had great military success. In the later fifteenth century the energetic King Trailok (r. 1448–1488) colonized Cambodia and the Mekong River valley, codified royal laws, and reduced independent noble strongholds to the status of tax-paying provinces. After several fierce wars with Burma in the later sixteenth century, Thailand emerged as the stronger power.

The European States

In the fifteenth century, Europe west of Russia was a jumble of sovereign kingdoms, principalities, city-states, and mountain chieftaincies. By the end of the sixteenth century, however, a small number of regional powers extended their authority at the expense of weaker monarchs and princes. This centralization process took place in the larger context of Europe's expanding population, production, and trade. Agricultural and commercial wealth gave the strongest states the means to build armies and administrative bureaucracies.

Large states and small. In rough terms, the most successful experiments in state consolidation took place at the western and eastern extremes of Europe (see Map 17.3). In the west, France, England, Portugal, Spain, and, after 1600, the Netherlands emerged as larger and more tightly centralized states, though in all of them rulers had regularly to negotiate and compromise with rich noble families and other local power groups. If we recognize that the Strait of Gibraltar was a negligible barrier to communication between the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa, we may add Morocco to this list. That Muslim sultanate was involved deeply with both Spain and Portugal in trade, diplomacy,



MAP 17.3 Major European states, 1600.

Consolidation of royal power over larger territories characterized some parts of Europe in the sixteenth century. How would you account for differences in the size and number of states in Europe compared to South Asia, Southeast Asia, or East Asia in the sixteenth century?

St. Bartholomew's Night, August 24, 1572. Huguenot artist François Dubois painted this image after fleeing to Switzerland. It is not known whether Dubois witnessed this event in Paris, but the painting depicts two incidents described or illustrated in other sources. The French queen Catherine de Medici, dressed in black, stands outside the palace to inspect a pile of dead bodies. The slain Huguenot leader Gaspard de Coligny hangs out a window. Does the artist reveal a pro-Protestant bias in this painting? If so, in what ways?

and war. It lost coastal enclaves to Portugal, but from the 1570s the Saadian dynasty (1554–1659) emerged as a strong and economically prosperous monarchy. Moroccan forces repelled a Portuguese invasion in 1578, and under Sultan Ahmad al-Mansur undertook, as we saw in the chapter introduction, a bold campaign to control trade across the Sahara Desert.

In eastern Europe, Poland-Lithuania, a state created in 1569 by the merger of two dynasties, encompassed more territory than any other European polity west of Russia. But its rulers continued to share power with the leading noble families, which collectively dominated financial and military affairs. In Scandinavia, Sweden emerged as a strong monarchy and, for a time, a leading player in European diplomacy and war. Most of southeastern Europe, by contrast, was incorporated into the Ottoman empire.

Europe's middle zone remained politically splintered. The Italian peninsula was divided into the city-states of Genoa, Florence, Milan, Venice, and a few others, together with the papal states (lands ruled directly by the Catholic pope) and territorial dependencies of Spain. In Germany, as well as in the Netherlands before 1600, a conglomeration of more than 150 dukedoms and free cities blanketed the land. Most of these small states paid formal allegiance to the Holy Roman emperors of the Habsburg dynasty, whose core territory was Austria. But on the local level, German princes and city councils remained largely free of royal interference.

Wars of religion. Between 1500 and 1650 the states of Europe fought multiple wars with one another over territory, resources, and the future of the Christian church. In 1517 Martin Luther (1483–1546), a German monk and a native of the Duchy of Saxony in central Germany, touched off the movement later labeled the Protestant Reformation when he publicly accused the Catholic hierarchy of rampant corruption and false doctrines. Initially Luther wanted to spark Christian reform, not rebellion, but events escalated quickly. Within barely two decades of his first public statements, new Protestant churches, which renounced the pope's authority, began to spring up across Europe. Moreover, religious quarrels broke out not only between loyal Catholics and Protestants in general but also between one Protestant community and another. All of Europe's rulers chose sides in these clashes, at the cost of much bitterness and bloodshed.

In that era, Europeans, like societies in most of the world, took it for granted that rulers had the right to specify the religious allegiance of their subjects. When a ruler opted for one or another Protestant church, the entire population was expected to conform. Protestant princes typically persecuted or expelled men and women who remained loyal to the Catholic Church. Catholic rulers did the same to Protestants. (We return to doctrinal and organizational changes in sixteenth-century Europe later in the chapter.)

Even before the religious wars broke out, two alliances of states, one headed by the Habsburg empire and the other by France, fought to shape Europe's political future. In 1519 Charles V (r. 1519–1556) succeeded to the Habsburg throne, inheriting sovereignty over a large part of central Europe (German- and Slavic-speaking regions), most of the Netherlands, parts of Italy, Spain, and the young Spanish empire in America and the Philippines. A pious and resolute Catholic, he envisioned himself transforming Europe from a conglomeration of squabbling kingdoms into a unitary Christian empire under Habsburg family leadership. Once Europe's states were united, Charles predicted, they would drive the Ottoman Turks from southeastern Europe and the Mediterranean. In fact, Charles spent more time warring with other Christian states than with the Ottomans. The French kings Francis I (r. 1515–1547) and Henry II (r. 1547–1559) had no intention of being absorbed into Charles's Christian empire and violently resisted the idea. France even allied with the Turks against him. After fighting France, Ottomans, and several German Protestant princes for three decades, Charles finally exhausted himself and his treasury. When he abdicated his throne in 1555, his brother Ferdinand (r. 1558–1564) inherited the German lands and the office of emperor; his son Philip II (r. 1556–1598) took Spain and the Spanish empire. Thereafter, European rulers accepted the reality that multiple centers of power would have to coexist, at least for the time being.

France, the Netherlands, and England.

In the later sixteenth century the titanic struggle between the Habsburgs and French alliances yielded to a series of smaller conflicts, civil wars, and popular rebellions, many of them colored by religious hostility. In France, battles between Catholic and Protestant factions continued on and off from 1562 to 1598, punctuated by urban massacres and assassinations. In 1572, for example, Catholic officials and soldiers marked St. Bartholomew's Day on August 24 by conspiring with Parisian mobs to murder thousands of Protestants. The slaughter then spread to other cities. France's civil war finally ended in compromise. The monarchy remained Catholic, but French Protestants (Huguenots) received limited religious rights. Under King Henry IV (r. 1589–1610), France returned to political stability, and the monarchy amassed more power.

Traditionally the French king took advice on taxation and other matters from the Estates-General. This was a council of delegates from the country's social hierarchy of three "estates": the high Catholic clergy, the nobility, and the common population. The third estate was represented by merchants, lawyers, and other members of the bourgeoisie, or urban middle class. Louis XIII (r. 1610–1643), however, never called the Estates-General in to session after 1614, putting forward the doctrine that the ruler had responsibilities to his subjects for law, order, and territorial defense but that he answered directly to God, not to the three estates. In fact, no French king called the Estates-General for another 175 years. Meanwhile, the monarchs continued to consolidate power as salaried officials whittled away at the customary rights and powers of provincial aristocrats and notables, much as rulers were striving to do in other parts of Afroeurasia.

In the Netherlands, which belonged to the Habsburgs, several commercially prosperous cities revolted against Philip II, who followed Charles V on the Habsburg throne. In 1579 the rebels proclaimed independence as the United Provinces of the Netherlands, or simply the United Netherlands. (This new state was also known as the Dutch Republic and the United Provinces.) Fighting with Habsburg armies, however, dragged on intermittently for eighty years.

The *Armada Portrait* of Queen Elizabeth I. This late sixteenth-century portrait of the English queen exists in at least three different versions, attesting to the monarch's popularity and the powerful symbolism of the image. The windows behind Elizabeth offer two views on the English victory over the Spanish invasion fleet. Note that she has her back to the nighttime storm and turns toward the calmer scene on the left. What other symbols of the monarch's power can you identify in this picture?

Though Catholics and Protestants fought on both sides, the United Netherlands emerged eventually as a thoroughly Protestant country, whereas the Spanish Netherlands, the region that gained independence centuries later as Belgium, remained predominantly Catholic.

England entered the sixteenth century a much smaller, militarily weaker monarchy than either France or the Habsburg empire. King Henry VIII (r. 1509–1547) tried to reconquer territory that the English crown had once held in France but with no success. Henry also provoked a major religious crisis when in the 1530s he repudiated papal authority, made himself head of what became the Church of England, and seized the extensive lands held by Catholic monasteries. He did this, not because of any heartfelt conversion to Protestantism, but because of a dispute with the pope over his marital affairs and a larger ambition to gain religious as well as political supremacy in his realm. Under Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603), Henry's daughter and successor, England enjoyed political stability and stayed out of foreign wars until the 1580s when it supported the Dutch fight for freedom from Spain. Elizabeth invested energetically in naval ship building, and in 1588 the English fleet defeated the Spanish Armada, a force Philip II launched in a failed attempt to invade Britain.

Like France, England traditionally had a royal advisory council, but this parliament, as it was called, gained rather than lost power in the early modern era. Parliament's members were landed aristocrats, high churchmen, lesser nobles, and, on occasion, town leaders. Henry VIII and Elizabeth pressured Parliament to bend to their will, but they also depended on it for taxes and loans, especially if they wished to fund wars. Gradually, Parliament won the authority to approve new taxes before the ruler had the legal right to collect them. This assembly of notables thus emerged as a more effective counterweight to kingly power than such advisory groups managed to do in other centralizing monarchies of the era.

The Songhay Empire

Population growth, agricultural expansion, and the development of trade networks all encouraged the formation of more and larger centralized states in Africa south of the Sahara in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (see Chapter 16). Trans-Saharan caravan trade, which linked the Mediterranean world with tropical Africa, spurred the development of monarchies in the Sudan, that is, the agrarian and partially urbanized region of open or wooded savannas just south of the desert.

Named for the ethnolinguistic population that inhabited a region along the Niger River where it passes close to the Sahara, Songhay was the largest African empire in the sixteenth century. It began as a modest chieftaincy paying tribute to Mali, the giant Sudanic state that had flourished in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Mali's gradual deterioration left a regional power vacuum that Sunni Ali

Sankore Mosque, Timbuktu. Like the structure in the city of Jenne (see Chapter 13, p. 382), this building combines the shape of a mosque—minaret and an interior courtyard—with Sudanic mud-brick architecture. The Sankore mosque was the focal point of Timbuktu's leading madrasa, or college of religion and law. It emerged as an important site of Muslim scholarship in the sixteenth century. What geographic and economic factors do you think contributed to Timbuktu's growth as a center of learning?

(r. 1464–1492) and Askiya Muhammad (r. 1493–1528), the two most energetic Songhay monarchs, rose to fill. Centered on Gao, a key commercial center on the Niger, Songhay at its height extended for more than seven hundred miles along the Niger and incorporated farming and herding peoples speaking numerous languages. The governing and commercial classes were largely Muslim, though the majority of the population adhered to traditional polytheistic beliefs and rituals.

Songhay exported gold, ivory, and slaves across the Sahara, but its economic foundation was farming and cattle herding. In Askiya Muhammad's time, Niger valley farmers constructed canals, dykes, and reservoirs, expanding irrigation to produce rice on a large scale. Around 1500 the region experienced the start of a climatic wet cycle. Over the ensuing decades, average annual rainfall increased, and summer rains extended farther into the fringes of the desert, opening up new areas for grain growing and cattle.

Askiya Muhammad undertook a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1495, and he funded mosques and patronized numerous Muslim scholars, both local intellectuals and visitors from North Africa. In the sixteenth century, Timbuktu gained a wide reputation as a center of Arabic learning. The Muslim scholar Leo Africanus, who crossed the Sahara from Morocco about 1510, described Timbuktu in his *History and Description of Africa:* "Here are many shops of artificers and merchants, and especially of such as weave linen and cotton cloth. And hither do the Barbarie [North African] merchants bring cloth of Europe. . . . Here are great store of doctors, judges, priests [Muslim clerics], and other learned men, that are bountifully maintained at the king's cost and charges. And hither are brought diverse manuscripts or written books out of Barbarie."[4]

Songhay had no firearms that we know of, but like the Ottomans and Safavids it recruited a standing army of military slaves to fight alongside local militias called up when needed. It fielded a massive cavalry force, its bowmen and lancers clothed in armor of thick cloth quilting. The king appointed royal kinsmen to provincial governorships, and scholars literate in Arabic constituted a central administration of secretaries and scribes organized in ministries.

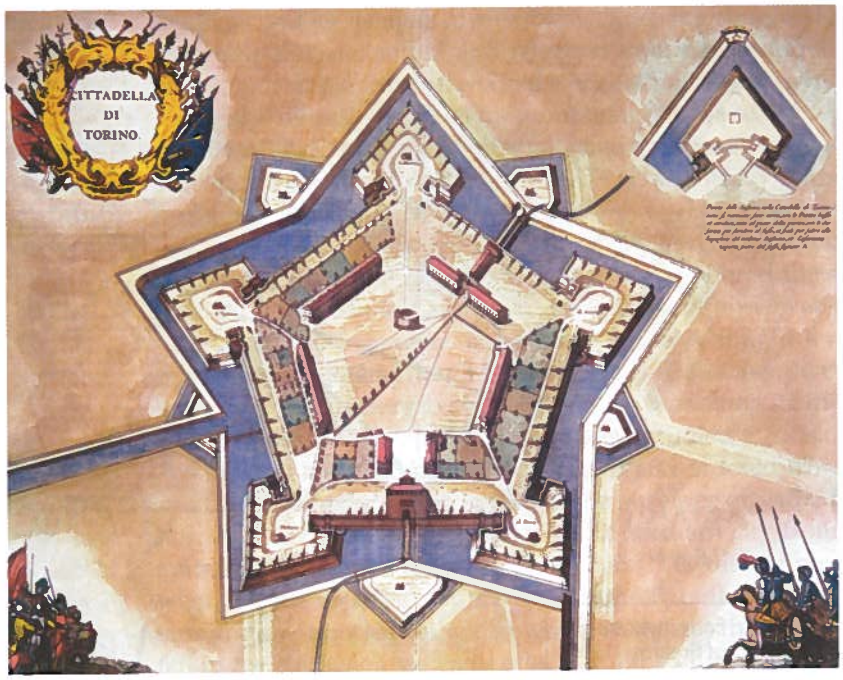
As we described in the chapter introduction, Songhay's imperial history ended abruptly. The Moroccan musket and artillery troops that appeared suddenly from out of the desert in 1591 dispersed the Songhay cavalry in a single battle. In short order, chiefs and nobles who had paid tribute to the king rose in rebellion, and the central regime disintegrated. No monarchy of the scale of Mali or Songhay appeared again in the western Sudan until the nineteenth century.

The New Era of Guns

FOCUS In what ways did the wide adoption of gunpowder technology affect political, economic, and social patterns in Afroeurasia in the sixteenth century?

Among the instruments of centralizing power that Afroeurasian states deployed in the early modern era, none was more important than firearms. At the start of the thirteenth century, the world had no guns. In the sixteenth century it bristled with them, and they were beginning to transform the way humans waged war, organized governments, and kept public order.

In the two centuries from 1300 to 1500, artisans working in several lands progressively transformed primitive metal tubes that fired stone balls in wildly unpredictable directions into lethal artillery that could demolish castles, gouge gaping holes in the sides of ships, and kill many soldiers all at once. As technological and tactical innovations enhanced the power and accuracy of guns, wars became progressively more deadly. One scholar has estimated that in the first 1,500 years of the Common Era about 3.7 million men and women died from war-related causes, including famine and disease. But in the sixteenth century alone, about 1.6 million people died in wars. In the seventeenth century, the number jumped to 6.1 million.[5]



The Citadel of Turin, Italy, in 1644. Star forts, or *traces italienne*, replaced circular defensive walls in parts of Europe where rulers could afford these expensive strongholds. The triangular bastions, or projections, allowed soldiers on facing ramparts to give each other defensive cover. A deep moat or ditch and an outer defensive wall of loosely packed earth kept enemy artillery at a distance and forced advancing infantry into vulnerable positions before they could reach the inner stone walls. What other changes in military organization and tactics do you think the development of gunpowder weapons brought about?

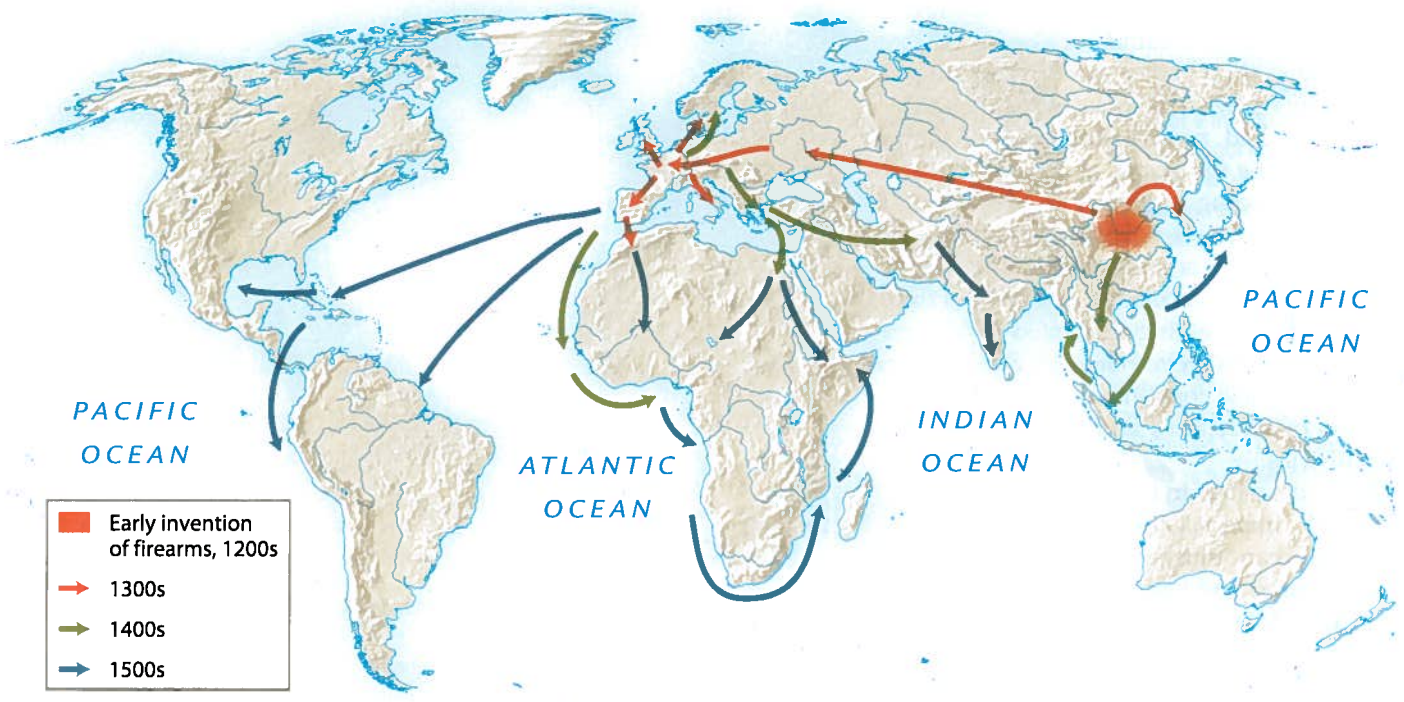
New and Deadly Armies

By the later 1400s, rulers learned that gunpowder weapons worked best when manufactured in large numbers and issued to ranks of troops who fired volleys of shot at defensive fortifications or charging cavalry. Small states and stateless societies invariably lacked the material wealth to deploy such massed firepower. Even those states that could afford large arsenals had to solve numerous logistical and tactical problems that armies had never previously faced.

One key advance was recruitment of much larger infantry forces to fight alongside cavalry, which had traditionally enjoyed higher social status than foot soldiers. An infantry unit armed with muskets and marching in close order could devastate an advancing enemy with a wall of fire. Muskets, however, took longer to load than crossbows or longbows because the infantryman had to swab out the barrel and insert a powder charge and ball. Officers could speed up the firing rate, however, by organizing troops in ranks, or rows. In a battle, the front rank would fire, then move back to reload as the second row stepped forward. The earliest use of this tactic may have been in sixteenth-century Japan, where Oda Nobunaga taught soldiers to fire in multiple ranks. A short time later, Dutch officers refined this tactic by exhaustively drilling infantry to maneuver, load, and shoot in synchronized harmony. In the seventeenth century, massed infantry tactics spread to all armies in Europe, as well as to the Ottoman empire. Mounted warriors also got better at controlling handguns. Cavalry in sixteenth-century Morocco may have been the first in the world to master the art of firing guns from horseback.[6]

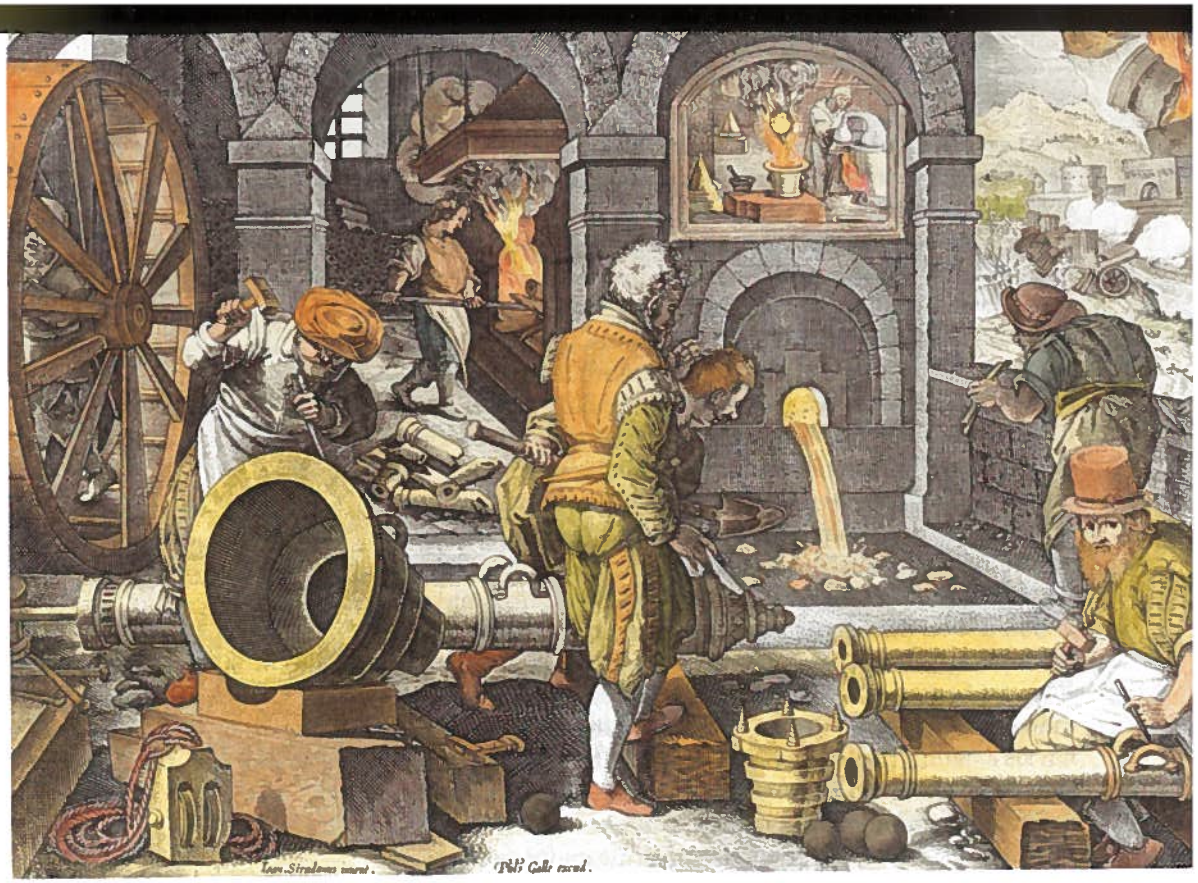
Rulers also had to recruit bigger armies to accommodate the complex technology of both artillery and the defenses against it. Bronze, brass, and cast iron artillery required large teams to transport and repair them. Sixteenth-century cannons did their most damage smashing holes in defensive walls. In response, Italian engineers made cities and castles less vulnerable by constructing earthen ramparts and ditches that kept enemy artillery from approaching too close and by placing defensive guns on high bastions. Consequently, rulers had to recruit even more soldiers to build and garrison massive fortifications.

After 1500 the size of armies catapulted upward. By 1595 France had 80,000 fighters on duty, and by 1710, around 360,000. Ming China maintained the largest military in the world, posting several hundred thousand soldiers along its frontier with Inner Eurasia. These figures would be even larger if they included the great numbers of noncombatants that almost always accompanied early modern armies on the march. Support personnel included supply contractors, mechanics, horse grooms, merchants, servants, and construction laborers. They also included many women, who went along as traders, cooks, laundresses, prostitutes, and caregivers to the sick and wounded. Wives and children frequently accompanied soldiers on the march, foraging for food not provided by the army. A Dutch document of 1622 describes



MAP 17.4 Spread of firearms, fourteenth through sixteenth centuries.

In the sixteenth century gunpowder weaponry reached every continent except Australia. What differences do you notice in the direction of the spread of firearms in the fourteenth century compared to the sixteenth? What might explain these differences?



The Invention of Gunpowder and the First Casting of Bronze Cannon. This engraving by Dutch artist Philip Galle appeared in 1600 in a collection called *New Discoveries.* The image depicts many facets of arms production. Skilled craftsmen are at work while assistants stoke the fires and provide mechanical power—look carefully at the wheel on the left. Describe the action portrayed outside the foundry in the background on the right. Why might the engraver have included that detail?

"a small army of carts, baggage horses, nags, sutlers [traders], lackeys, women, children, and a rabble which numbered far more than the army itself."[7]

The Military Revolution

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, gunpowder technology spread westward from China across Afroeurasia. After 1450, however, the patterns of innovation and diffusion became more complicated. The Ottoman Turks, for example, pioneered muskets with strong steel barrels. Indian metalsmiths excelled at making brass cannons, and French technicians led the way in designing light, mobile field artillery. Rulers aspiring to compete for wealth and territory had little choice but to join the stampede for guns.

The spread of firearms. States that lacked gunpowder weapons might face disaster, as the Songhay empire discovered in 1591 when Moroccan musketeers turned up. Firearms contributed, if much less decisively than disease epidemics, to Spain's rapid defeat of the Aztec and Inca empires. Ottoman forces seized Egypt and Syria in 1517 because musket and cannon units were not well integrated into the Mamluk army. Its aristocratic cavalry preferred to fight with bows, lances, and swords. The Ottoman army entered Egypt with guns booming and quickly overran the Mamluk horse regiments. Japan was something of an exception to the dominant pattern. The founders of the Tokugawa shogunate triumphed with the aid of cannons and musketry. In 1637, however, the shoguns had to put down a serious revolt led by musket-wielding Japanese Christian converts. In the aftermath of that disturbance, the state gradually abolished the manufacture and sale of firearms and let its arsenal rust away. Since the shogunate enjoyed political stability and faced no imminent external threat, radical gun control worked well. Tokugawa Japan remained practically war free for more than 250 years.

After European sailors opened new transoceanic passages, knowledge of firearms spread faster, and heavy guns could be transported from one part of the world to another in a matter of months (see Map 17.4). Private gun merchants, mercenaries, and freelance technical advisors offered their services far and wide. German and Hungarian gunners advised the Ottoman army. Japanese musketeers fought for the king of Thailand. In China, the Ming government enlisted foreign advisors to strengthen firepower along its Inner Eurasian frontier. Ming commanders studied Turkish, Portuguese, and Dutch artillery designs and ordered Chinese metal founders to copy them. One observer described how Ming artillerymen in 1626 saved a northern city from an assault of Manchurian horse archers: "As the cannon went off, one could see in the light of the fires the barbarians and their horses being thrown up in the air; those who fell in the confusion were countless, and the villains, being badly defeated, ran away."[8] States also sent guns and military missions to allies. The Ottoman sultans shipped artillery to Southeast Asia to help Aceh, a Muslim kingdom on the island of Sumatra, fight off Portuguese assailants. In northeastern Africa, the Christian monarchy of Ethiopia bolstered its army with four hundred Portuguese musketeers, while neighboring Muslim states accepted help from Ottoman gunners.

Many Afroeurasian states with access to the sea supported navies of one size or another, and from the mid-sixteenth century, several rulers adopted the Iberian tactic of mounting cannons on ships (see Chapter 16). China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and Thailand, as well as Southeast Asian maritime kingdoms, built vessels to accommodate mortars or artillery, if only to defend ports and protect local sea trade. The Ottoman Turks built hundreds of armed galleys, which operated on all the seas from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean. Near the end of the sixteenth century, England, the United Netherlands, and France, the three richest states of northwestern Europe, began to deploy shipboard artillery to challenge Spanish and Portuguese dominance of the oceanic routes. These powers interloped on Portugal's lucrative spice trade in the Indian Ocean and negotiated their own deals with Asian sellers.

Paying for gunpowder armies. Historians have called the worldwide transition to gunpowder-based armies and navies a "military revolution" because of its far-reaching impact on economy and society. States aiming to make war on neighbors, subdue local aristocrats, and turn defiant peasants into submissive taxpayers had to recruit and pay fighters, expand chains of command, and procure guns, uniforms, horses, ships, and countless supplies. They had to ensure production of iron, copper, and other metals and build roads, bridges, and harbors to move troops and materiel. They had to employ metalsmiths, engineers, accountants, doctors, and commercial agents. In other words, no state could accumulate power without investing great sums of public money. Therefore, the military revolution also involved, as some historians have called it, a "fiscal revolution." That is, rulers had to put heavy demands on the **fisc** if they hoped to achieve armed advantage over their rivals. The most powerful states sometimes dedicated 70 to 90 percent of their total annual budgets to military expenses, a much larger proportion of expenditure than any country allocates today.

fisc The treasury of a sovereign state; a state department concerned with financial matters.

European monarchs invented an array of new taxes to harvest revenue. In the seventeenth century, the tsars of Russia collected at least 280 different taxes, including levies on honey, salt, bathhouses, and the contracting of third marriages.[9] Some states strengthened direct rule in the provinces, sending officials from the capital to collect taxes, set up legal courts, and keep the peace in collaboration with local nobles, town magistrates, and religious leaders. Where they had the military backing to do it, royal agents bypassed these local authorities altogether. Many governments also borrowed from rich private families to get infusions of cash for wars. In Europe, bankers, such as the Fugger family of southern Germany, became immensely rich advancing funds to rulers. Big loans, however, pushed states deeper into debt, periodically destabilizing financial markets. The Spanish Habsburg emperor Philip II spent so much on his wars that, despite his access to American silver, he had to declare bankruptcy four different times.

The Limits of Central Power

We should not overemphasize the power of early modern regimes to monitor and regulate their subject populations. States learned how to do it on a much larger scale in later centuries. In the 1500s, communication technology, dependent as it was on animals, wagons, and boot leather, prevented micromanagement of far-flung provinces. Midsized states, such as France or Thailand, tended to have more success at direct rule than did giant ones like the Ottoman or Mughal empires. Central regimes also left economic improvements and education mostly to local communities and religious institutions. Some rulers undertook censuses and land surveys to maximize revenue collection, but early modern states had limited knowledge of the numbers, incomes, and whereabouts of the people they ruled, certainly compared to the databases that government agencies work with today.

Some monarchs strengthened their authority over local aristocrats and town authorities, though at the price of incessant negotiations over long-established rights, privileges, and legal jurisdictions. After dispatching soldiers to reduce a rural area to submission, rulers often found it less expensive and bothersome to let local leaders continue to run affairs and perhaps grant rights of **tax farming** to landed nobles or private contractors.

tax farming A system in which a government awards the right of tax collection to a private individual or group in return for a fee or a percentage of the taxes gathered.

State intrusions in local affairs rarely went uncontested. Revenue-hungry monarchs had to confront aristocratic resistance movements, urban uprisings, peasant rebellions, and banditry. Between 1514 and 1551, for example, the kings of France, fixated on raising money for wars, had to suppress tax revolts in ten different cities and six different regions.[10] The long Dutch revolt against the Spanish Habsburgs began as a violent tax protest in 1571. Rural men and women also slipped from the grasp of centralizing rulers simply by fleeing. In Mughal India, farmers frequently avoided burdensome taxes by running away to forests or sparsely populated frontiers where state agents would not venture. In Russia, tax-loathing peasants ran off to the Ukraine or Siberia to get beyond the tsar's reach.

Trends in Religion, Language, and Culture

FOCUS In what ways did political and economic changes in the sixteenth century affect patterns of cultural life in different parts of Afroeurasia?

The number of sovereign states in the world shrank in the sixteenth century because rulers with guns absorbed weaker states and societies into their own expanding territories. Similarly, and partly as a consequence of political centralization, consolidation also took place in religion, language, and styles of culture. By 1500, all of the major belief systems that exist today had already appeared in Afroeurasia. Three

of them—Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam—reached out to millions of potential converts as missionaries, as well as merchants, soldiers, and scholars with religious messages to share, moved out along the global communication networks. These three universalist faiths progressively assimilated, modified, or displaced many purely local religious beliefs and practices, a phenomenon that had been occurring in earlier centuries. Global communication and interchange also sped up what linguists have labeled **language death.** Scholars have estimated that in the past one thousand years, the number of languages spoken in the world has fallen from between 10,000 and 15,000 to fewer than 7,000, and the process continues to accelerate. By one current estimate, one language goes extinct every two weeks.[11] In the early modern era, local tongues and the cultural ideas and practices that those tongues expressed lost ground to ascendant languages associated with expanding states, universalist religions, or merchant networks.

language death A process in which the number of native or fluent speakers of a particular language declines over time until no community of speakers remains.

Afroeurasia's religious landscape changed significantly in early modern times, not only because "big religions" spread more widely, but also because accelerating global change raised numerous new questions about humankind, nature, and the cosmos. Transoceanic communication confronted societies in both Afroeurasia and the Americas with ideas and things that seemed strange, unexplainable, and perhaps dangerous. Christians, for example, debated whether American Indians descended from Adam and Eve or, because the Bible does not account for them, represented an entirely separate divine creation. Chinese Confucian scholars who hosted European missionaries tried to wrap their minds around such novel ideas as the supreme being's taking a three-part form—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Practitioners of local polytheistic religions in Indonesia or West Africa met Muslims who urged them to renounce their nature spirits and household deities and submit to the One God.

The major universalist faiths had for many centuries experienced internal divisions or disagreements about belief and practice. The very fact that Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam spread so widely and crossed so many linguistic and ethnic frontiers made it inevitable that doctrinal differences and organizational splits would occur. The early modern era witnessed intense religious debates and ruptures, especially when popular movements to improve society or recharge moral energies gathered support.

Intellectual and Moral Ferment in China

In the last century and a half of the Ming dynasty, people in Beijing and several coastal cities began to debate the nature and proper direction of Chinese society. Rapid economic change, the growth of city populations, and new contacts with people and products from abroad stimulated their thinking. Roman Catholic missionaries were among the new influences, bringing Christian teachings, as well as astronomy, geometry, and clock making. These newcomers generated lively debate with Chinese intellectuals, though they had little impact on popular beliefs.

Millions of Chinese performed Buddhist and Daoist devotions, and the educated classes, especially the huge Ming bureaucracy, looked to the moral and ethical precepts of neo-Confucianism for guidance in social and public life. An amplification of the teachings of Confucius (551–479 B.C.E.) and other ancient sages, neo-Confucianism emphasized righteous moral behavior, daily ritual, respect for hierarchy, and dedication to family and local community. To encourage social harmony throughout the land, the Ming state made neo-Confucianism the imperial orthodoxy and closely regulated the activities of religious groups, including Muslims and Christians.

Chinese intellectuals nonetheless argued over neo-Confucian ideas during this period. Corruption and cronyism plagued the imperial government in the sixteenth century, and to some educated people, neo-Confucian doctrines appeared sterile and elitist. One response was a lively reform movement initiated by Wang Yangming (1472–1529), a Chinese military officer, public official, and philosopher. He argued that, contrary to neo-Confucian orthodoxy, all human beings possess innate moral knowledge and can therefore discern good from evil. Ordinary men and women may discover intuitively how to lead an honest life without mastering Confucian texts or performing complex rituals. Wang's proposition that neo-Confucian scholars had no corner on truth or virtue won him a large following among young literate people, including Buddhists and Daoists already inclined to personal introspection. After Wang died, some of his disciples expanded on his ideas to preach individual creativity, education for the poor, and respect for women's inherent intellectual abilities. Neo-Confucian officials who championed strict hierarchy and male authority struck back, and some of Wang's disciples ended up in prison or dead. Nevertheless, Wang's movement freed up and broadened the scope of Chinese intellectual life.

Tension between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims

Although Islam spread to more people than any other major faith in the early modern era, quarrels between Sunni Muslims and adherents of Shi'ism caused serious political and social distress. Sunni and Shi'a communities had shown for centuries that they could live near one another in mutual toleration. But when Shi'a doctrine became the "official" religion of the Safavid state, which occupied the geographical heart of the Muslim world, ill feelings were aggravated. The neighboring Ottomans, whose Sunni sultans claimed the title of caliph, doubted the loyalty of Shi'a communities within their empire. For their part, Shi'a clerical leaders rejected the legitimacy of the Ottoman caliph. Safavid and Ottoman armies fought each other mainly over territory, not doctrine, but mutually hostile religious

rhetoric fueled this chronic conflict. Indeed, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the idea hardened that Sunni and Shi'a Islam constituted two distinct and mutually exclusive forms of the faith.

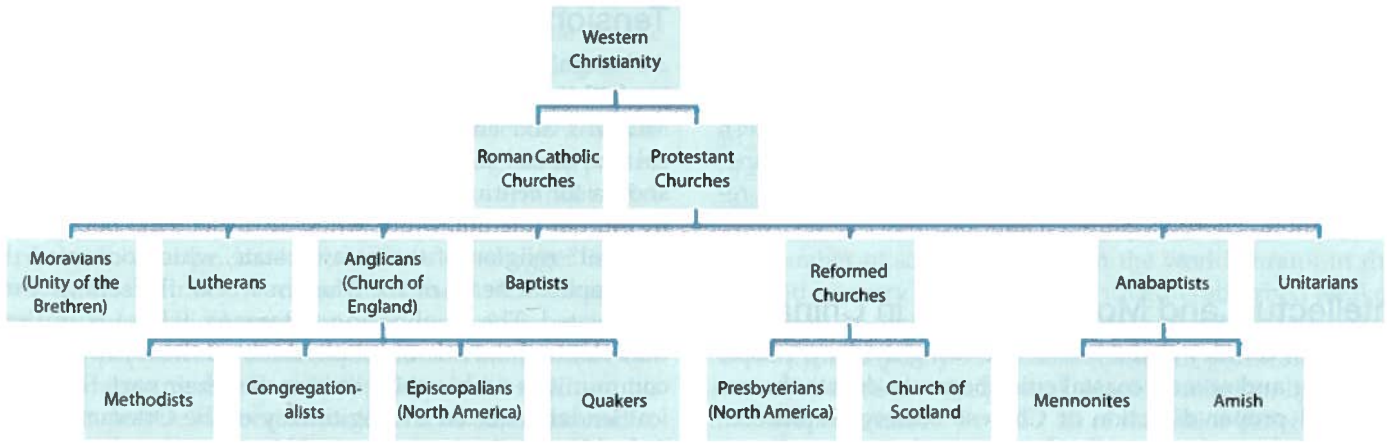
Religious Crisis in Europe

Religious organization in both Islam and Buddhism tended to be fluid, informal, and no more than loosely centralized. In Christianity, by contrast, churches formally supervised doctrine and practice. The Roman Catholic Church, the exclusive Christian organization in western and central Europe up to the sixteenth century, was a huge administrative, financial, and educational institution. When church leaders clashed over belief and worship, the crisis affected nearly everyone (see Map 17.5).

The Roman church had presided over western Europe's medieval cultural flowering. By 1400, however, the church's moral light was dimming. Its integrity depended on principled men and women occupying the highest offices—pope, cardinals, bishops, and the heads of monasteries and nunneries. In the 1300s the clergy's reputation plummeted. Many Christians faulted the church for failing to prevent or relieve the horrors of the Black Death, and they watched in bewilderment as two, and at one point three, rival popes struggled for supremacy for forty years (the Western Schism, 1378–1417). Across Europe, dismayed Christians told stories of corrupt and greedy bishops, priests with bastard children, and materialistic popes dedicated mainly to their family's fortunes. Higher-minded clerics bewailed this state of affairs but achieved little change.

The Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther reiterated the protests of earlier critics when in 1517 he published a scholarly disputation in the form of Ninety-Five Theses, directed mainly against the sale of indulgences. This was a church practice in which clerics took donations from people on the promise of offering special prayers to help deceased friends and relatives move up to heaven from purgatory (the place of temporary punishment for earthly sin). Luther denounced this "indulgences market," and he deplored priestly immorality and church wealth. He damned the pope as the antichrist and proposed bold new interpretations of biblical scripture. In 1520, to no one's surprise, the church excommunicated him. Resolute and brave, but also bad tempered and tactless, Luther might have died a martyr at the stake had not the Elector of Saxony and other German princes protected him from arrest. Those rulers had complex motives for supporting a religious rebel. In varying degrees they sympathized with Luther's religious ideas. But they also resented the flow of German wealth to the Vatican treasury, and they saw an opportunity to assert their rights of self-government against Charles V, the Holy Roman emperor and a staunch Catholic. Because mechanical printing presses were just then appearing across Europe, Luther's books, pamphlets, and hymns spread faster than they would have in any earlier age. He became something of a religious sensation, and within two decades, supportive Christians were organizing independent worship communities in Germany, Switzerland, and other countries.

All these protesters, or Protestants, rejected the pope's authority, but not all of them became "Lutherans." Other emerging leaders disagreed with Luther on various points of theology and church organization. For example, disputes arose among Protestants over the display of images of Jesus in church buildings, how churches should be governed, and what exactly Jesus meant at the Last Supper when he took a piece of bread and said, "This is my body." The most prominent early Protestant scholars and preachers included Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531), who pioneered reform in Switzerland, and the French lawyer John Calvin (1509–1564), who set up a church in Geneva that became a model for Protestant organization across Europe. More radical groups, such as Anabaptists, Quakers, and Unitarians, variously advocated baptism for adults rather than infants, political pacifism, vows of poverty, and the principle that God's nature is singular rather than a separate but united trinity. In short, Protestant sects multiplied, and the Roman church permanently lost its monopoly over Christian doctrine and worship.



Principal divisions of western Christianity, sixteenth through eighteenth centuries.

MAP 17.5 Religions of Europe, 1560.

Where do religious boundaries match political borders on this map? Can you account for the places where religion and political rule coincide, and where they are different?

Protestant teachings. Despite their differences, Protestants shared certain precepts that generally distinguished them from Roman Catholics, and still do. One was the doctrine that the Holy Bible is the only valid Christian authority. Believers must seek divine truth through scripture alone. No bishop, priest, or saint has divine authority to intercede between an individual and God. This doctrine did much to encourage people to read their Bibles and stimulate literacy, but it also meant that Protestantism was sure to branch out in several directions.

Protestants also professed that human beings are justified, that is, redeemed or saved, exclusively by faith in God's love, not by anything they may do to overcome sin or to gain divine favor. The Catholic Church encouraged Christians to perform "good works" in expectation of realizing God's forgiveness and entry to heaven. These works included acts of kindness and charity but also obedience to church doctrines, laws, and sacraments. Protestant reformers countered that if people have heartfelt faith in God's grace, good works will follow naturally. In Luther's view, unconditional surrender to the divine will—without expectation that this devotion will guarantee any particular results—liberates Christians from the fear that they can never do enough good deeds or conquer enough of their sins to receive God's grace. Somewhat differently, John Calvin asserted that God predestined some to salvation and others to hell regardless of how many good works they might do. To Catholics, such a teaching suggested that God could be fickle and punitive.

Protestant churches also allowed members of the clergy to marry. The Catholic Church taught that priests and nuns must remain celibate, devoting themselves totally to God's service and remaining free of family cares and obligations. Protestant leaders argued to the contrary that wholesome family life would educate children in Christian virtue, help ministers avoid sexual sin, and provide pastors with female companions and helpmeets. In the early Protestant churches, women sometimes took on leadership roles as writers and organizers. Catholic and Protestant clerics mostly agreed, however, that although males and females are spiritually equal, women should keep silent in churches, submit themselves to the will of male relatives, and accept intellectual inferiority as part of the divine order of things. A few brave women retorted that Christians should challenge traditional gender roles inherited from the medieval

Religious differences in Germany, 1529. This woodcut depicting rival Christian services circulated in Europe in the new and inexpensive print medium aimed at popular audiences. On the right, a Catholic priest in elaborate robes preaches to a somewhat distracted congregation. On the left, a Protestant minister uses a Bible to preach to congregants, who are also reading Bibles. What other differences do you notice in the two scenes? What message do you think the creator of this woodcut aimed to convey?

church. As a German woman wrote in 1524, "Although St. Paul [in the New Testament] forbade women to preach in churches and instructed them to obey their husbands, what if the churches were full of liars?"[12] For the most part, however, these women's voices went unheard.

Europe became religiously plural after 1550, but no Protestant denomination advocated religious freedom. Rather, they all insisted on the correctness of their own particular version of Christian truth. Consequently, Lutherans, Calvinists, and members of other sects frequently persecuted (and sometimes murdered) one another. Catholic Spain convened special courts known as the Holy Inquisition to rid the country of all religious deviants—Muslims, Jews, and Protestants alike. Intolerance took a particularly abhorrent turn in the later sixteenth century, when trying, torturing, and executing people accused of witchcraft became a popular civic pastime in both Protestant and Catholic countries. The great majority of victims were women, often poor, elderly, socially isolated individuals who had few defenses against richer and more powerful people who accused them of conspiring with Satan.

The Catholic Reformation. Once a significant number of European rulers aligned themselves with Protestantism, the Roman church could not simply go on as before. Many Catholic clerics wanted reform as badly as Luther did but from within the existing church. Internal reform initiatives got under way in the 1540s, and they had two major aims: to frustrate Protestant success and to reinvigorate the church's moral authority, tacitly recognizing that critics had made some legitimate points.

A Catholic reform council, which met intermittently between 1545 and 1563 in the Italian city of Trent, reaffirmed most of the church's fundamental doctrines but also took numerous actions to strengthen the clergy's moral and spiritual fiber. Church leaders insisted, for example, that priests and monks become literate. A series of devout church fathers, beginning with Pope Paul III (1534–1549), also worked for change. The Catholic Reformation, sometimes called the Counter Reformation, approved the creation of several new religious orders committed to restoring the church's integrity and energy. The Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits, founded in 1540 by the Spanish nobleman Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556), became most active on a world scale. Loyola argued that the spiritual weapons against Protestantism must include advanced education and missionary zeal. He established schools to train young priests, and he dispatched Jesuit missionaries to America, Africa, and Asia, where they often learned local languages and offered non-Christian rulers technical and scientific advice. In 1535 Angela Merici (1474–1540), an Italian aristocrat, founded the Company of St. Ursula. Members of this order, called Ursulines, took vows as nuns. But they resided with their families rather than in cloisters, and they dedicated themselves to Christian education of girls in both Europe and overseas colonies.

After 1650, following a century and a half of debilitating warfare among European states, the region's religious map generally stabilized. Most rulers agreed to accept one

A Mennonite minister and his wife. This oil painting by the celebrated Dutch artist Rembrandt van Rijn expresses the values of well-to-do Protestant elites in the Netherlands. Conelis Claesz Anslo, the clergyman, was the son of a successful merchant and leader of Amsterdam's Mennonite community. His wife Aeltje Gerritsdr Schoueten listens attentively to him. Although their dress is somber, the fur trim of his coat and the fine lace of Aeltje's cap display their wealth. The Asian tapestry used as a table covering and large books on the left signal Anslo's connections to the global market and his status as a man of learning. What do you think the image communicates about the status of women in Protestant households?

another's spiritual preferences. States sometimes persecuted minority sects, and Jewish or Muslim residents might be tolerated only as long as they accepted their legal and social inferiority. Northern Europe became predominantly Protestant, whereas the southern and eastern countries remained Catholic. Protestant movements budded early in Bohemia, Hungary, and Poland but then faltered owing to the energy of Catholic reform and the loyalty of rulers to Rome.

Vernacular Languages and the State

The centralization and expansion of states in the sixteenth century had important consequences for language and literate culture. When rulers deployed gunpowder armies to seize new territories or impose direct government on previously autonomous regions, they also often introduced the language and cultural preferences of the state's core area as the medium of administration and law. Moreover, local aristocrats and business leaders usually saw the political and social advantages of learning the language and imitating the fashions and public rituals of the central regime. Consequently, local languages and customs might gradually lose prestige and even disappear.

Across Afroeurasia, language consolidation accompanied nearly every state-centralizing project. In Europe, people babbled in many tongues, but in the early modern centuries a relatively small number of languages, all of them written, spread more widely. The most important of these **vernacular languages** were Italian, French, German, English,

vernacular language The native language commonly spoken by ordinary people in a region.

Individuals MATTER

Gracia Luna Mendes Nasi: A Sixteenth-Century Businesswoman

A bronze medal of Gracia Luna Mendes Nasi.

The Protestant and Catholic Reformations had grim consequences for European Jews. Rivaling one another to display their Christian piety, many clerical leaders fanned the always-smoldering fires of anti-Semitism, urging rulers to more ruthlessly restrict, segregate, or even expel their Jewish minorities. In response to intensifying legal discrimination and social pressures, tens of thousands of Jews left western Europe to resettle in Poland, North Africa, or the Ottoman empire. In those lands they found, not full social equality, but greater odds of living in peace and economic security.

The family of Gracia Luna Mendes Nasi (1510–1569) originated in Spain but moved to Portugal sometime after 1492, when King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella decreed that Jews must either become Catholics or leave the country. A few years later, the Portuguese crown made a similar decree. Not wanting to emigrate again, Gracia Nasi's parents accepted, or were forced to accept, conversion. Nasi therefore grew up a *converso*, or "New Christian," and when she was eighteen she married Francisco Mendes, also a *converso* and an immensely wealthy merchant banker.

Following her husband's untimely death in 1536, Nasi and her young daughter sailed to Antwerp, Europe's most thriving seaport. The Mendes family already had large mercantile interests there, and Gracia soon immersed herself in the business, which included the profitable Indian pepper trade between Lisbon and northern Europe. Plainly a woman of commercial talent, she took full charge of the Mendes fortune after her husband's brother died in 1542.

In the heat of the early Protestant movement, however, *conversos* were vulnerable to charges of being secret Jews bent on persuading other New Christians to renounce their faith. In this threatening climate, Nasi slipped out of Antwerp and made for Venice, where she arrived about 1546. The Mendes firm had commercial agents in several Italian cities, but Nasi found no permanent haven there. She even spent a short time in a Venetian prison and had to deposit part of the family fortune with the public treasury.

Consequently, in 1549, she moved again, this time to the Italian city of Ferrara. She and her fortune received a warmer welcome there, and she openly returned to her Jewish roots. The Roman church, however, demanded that the city enact stronger anti-Jewish legislation. Fortunately for Nasi, she had an invitation from the Ottoman emperor Suleyman to settle in Istanbul, much as a modern government might entice a major corporation to move in. In 1552 she left Christian Europe for good. Once established in the empire, where Jews enjoyed formal legal status, Nasi shed her *converso* identity and moved socially in the Jewish community. She lavishly patronized Jewish scholarship, synagogues, schools, and, some evidence suggests, new Jewish and *converso* immigrants arriving from western Europe.

Nasi never married again and died in 1569 at the age of fifty-nine. Running an international business empire of mammoth proportions, she was hardly typical of a sixteenth-century women, whatever her religion. But she does exemplify the remarkable migratory shift of western European Jews toward eastern Europe and the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean.

Thinking Critically

What political, social, cultural, or personal factors do you think were most important in explaining Gracia Mendes Nasi's success as a businesswoman?

Polish, Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch. In France before the fourteenth century, for example, people spoke the language ancestral to modern French only in the Paris region. Elsewhere, twenty-two or so other tongues could be heard. French, however, was the language of the rising monarchy. Parisian French accompanied royal armies, administrators, and judges into the provinces, where local nobles and town merchants quickly concluded that they should learn it. In 1539 King Francis I decreed that all state documents must be produced "in the maternal French language," by which he meant Parisian French.[13] Today, only a few of the other old languages, notably Provençal, Breton, and Basque, are still spoken at all. In the British Isles, Henry VIII and other monarchs stipulated English as the state language and tried by various means to stifle use of Celtic tongues like Irish, Welsh, or Cornish in the royal domain. In 1536, for example,

Henry urged inhabitants of Galway, a part of Ireland under English rule, to endeavor "to speak English, and to use themselves after the English fashion; and specially that you, and every one of you, do put forth your child to school, to learn to speak English."[14]

In Asia, China had long had a standardized written language, but it also accommodated numerous Chinese dialects, as well as tongues of other linguistic families, notably Turkic. Confucian officials favored Mandarin Chinese, the dialect associated with the capital city of Beijing. Consequently, Mandarin evolved into the most prestigious medium of verbal communication throughout the empire. Urban presses generated thousands of books on innumerable subjects, and literacy expanded among both men and women. The Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci, who lived in Beijing from 1601 to 1611, remarked on "the exceedingly large number of books in circulation here and the ridiculously low prices at which they are sold."[15] In Southeast Asia, the rise of Burma, Thailand, and Vietnam as strong monarchies propelled the Burmese, Thai, and Vietnamese languages to regional primacy, thereby displacing in some measure local tongues that peoples of mountain and forest had traditionally spoken. Tokugawa Japan, by contrast, already had a single dominant vernacular. This circumstance, along with widespread literacy and a flourishing woodblock printing industry, promoted the archipelago's cultural unity.

Languages of Cultural Prestige

Whenever a language spread from one region to another, a full package of ideas and cultural behavior usually went with it because the elements of culture expressed through language, gesture, art, and ritual cannot be disentangled.

Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. Arabic and Persian shared high status as the principal carriers of Muslim theology, philosophy, literature, and science in the early modern centuries. Persian served as a medium of diplomacy and intellectual exchange from Bengal to the Mediterranean. Peoples of South Asia spoke many tongues, but Persian was the chief Mughal administrative language. Urdu, which is a Hindi language infused with Persian loan words, became an important literary medium in northern India. Muslims everywhere esteemed Arabic as the language of the Prophet Muhammad and the Holy Quran. It was the dominant language of all the western Muslim lands from Iraq to the Atlantic in early modern times, and it still is today. Arabic also served as the language of intellectual culture and political administration in Sudanic Africa.

In the Ottoman domains, Oghuz, the Turkic language that evolved into modern Turkish, competed successfully with Persian among government officials and the learned class. From the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, the sultan dispensed patronage to poets, astronomers, geographers, and historians, who wrote in Arabic, as well as in Persian and Turkish, both of which used a modified Arabic script. By contrast, Greek, the language of the deceased Byzantine empire, went into permanent eclipse as a major carrier of new knowledge, though remaining the language of modern Greece and the Greek Orthodox Church.

Print languages of Europe. In Europe, mechanical printing presses began in the sixteenth century to pour out thousands of books and pamphlets in the leading vernacular languages. These "print languages" gradually standardized vocabularies and grammars. Partly because inexpensive books became available, more people learned to read vernaculars, especially in northern Europe. Literate women who had little access to classical Greek or Latin found at least narrow avenues for publishing essays, poetry, and religious pamphlets in the regional vernaculars. Novelists, playwrights, poets, and religious writers broadcast their works in vernaculars. Martin Luther produced floods of religious pamphlets in German. Miguel Cervantes's monumental novel titled *Don Quixote* was published in Spanish (in two parts in 1605 and 1615) and quickly translated into several other languages. The poet Anna Bijns (1494–1575) wrote satirical verse in Dutch. And the English writer William Shakespeare (1564–1616) produced much poetry and, we should note, thirty-two plays.

Languages of humanism. The European print languages carried the humanist movement from its base in northern Italy to all parts of the subcontinent. Humanism flowered in the later fourteenth century as an intellectual mission to recover the lost knowledge of the ancient Romans and Greeks (see Chapter 15). Its advocates prized education in grammar, rhetoric, history, and moral philosophy, which they believed gave students the disciplinary tools needed to understand classical texts. Humanist scholars also contended that the Bible should be as open to critical analysis as any other ancient document. In 1516 the Dutch intellectual Desiderius Erasmus (1469–1536), a loyal Roman Catholic but scathing critic of church vice and bigotry, published the first printed edition of the New Testament in Greek. The Oxford University cleric William Tyndale (1490–1536) later translated it from Greek into English—before being burned at the stake as a Protestant heretic. Educated men and women in Moscow read Latin scientific works and translated them into Russian. Tsar Ivan III married Sofia Palaiologina (1455–1503), a noblewoman raised in Italy who made a lifelong project of strengthening language and cultural ties between the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic worlds.

Conclusion

The start of the seventeenth century marked a significant transition in world history. By then, most states in Afroeurasia had access to firearms. The most successful ones acquired gunpowder armies, central bureaucracies, and law courts with increased powers to keep the peace, amass revenue, and safeguard commerce. Those states also exerted cultural influence on wider circles of population, persuading their subjects, especially the wealthy and educated classes, to accept greater homogeneity in religion, language, legal custom, and public taste. States had never wielded such power in any earlier era. Nevertheless, limitations on early modern systems of overland communication left plenty of room for subjects of centralizing rulers to protest, rebel, hide, run away, or keep local languages and cultural traditions alive.

As of the early seventeenth century, no single Afroeurasian state, no matter the size of its army, held a decided advantage over the others in commanding resources and labor or marshaling firepower. Because of the great global convergence of the same century, configurations of both regional and global power remained extremely fluid. The circulation of American silver, the spread of food crops to new places, rising population and productivity in many lands, and maritime innovations that made transoceanic travel routine all worked together to produce a genuinely global and increasingly complex system of commercial, cultural, and demographic exchange.

As a result, all but the most remote societies were forced to confront new ideas, products, and cultural challenges. Moreover, some states, social groups, and economic interests benefited from accelerating global change more than others did. Thus the largest centers of population, farm production, and manufacturing remained in Asia, and these resources supported a few mammoth and powerful states, plus numerous smaller ones. Even so, circumstances led western Europeans—not Poles, Russians, Ottoman Turks, or Ming Chinese—to take charge of maritime trade across the Atlantic and to exploit immense mineral and agricultural wealth in the Americas. We explore this emerging Atlantic system and other global developments of the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Chapter 18.

• • •

Key Terms

capitulations 490
Catholic Reformation (also, Counter Reformation) 508
fisc 504
gunpowder armies 491
Habsburg dynasty 498
Jesuits 508
language death 505
Moscovy 494
Mughal empire 491
Protestant Reformation 498
Romanov dynasty 495
service nobility 492
Sikhism 492
tax farming 504
Tokugawa shogunate 495
vernacular language 509

Change over Time

1448–1488	King Trailok reigns in Thailand (Siam), creating a strong central state in Southeast Asia.
1453	Ottoman Turks capture Constantinople, strengthening the Ottoman sultanate's position as a major Afroeurasian power.
1469–1539	The sage Nanak lives in India and founds the Sikh religion.
1472–1529	The philosopher Wang Yangming lives in China and challenges the elitist principles of neo-Confucianism.
1493–1528	The Songhay empire in the Sudan region of Africa expands during the reign of Askiya Muhammad.
1516	The Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus publishes the first printed edition of the New Testament in Greek.
1517	Martin Luther publishes his Ninety-Five Theses critical of the Catholic Church, launching the movement that would become the Protestant Reformation.
1517	Ottoman forces armed with gunpowder weapons overthrow the Mamluks in Egypt and Syria.
1519–1556	Charles V reigns as Holy Roman emperor and head of the Habsburg dynasty, leading an unsuccessful attempt to unify Europe and drive out the Ottoman Turks.
1520–1566	Suleyman I "the Magnificent" rules the Ottoman empire during a period of expansion in southeastern Europe.
1533–1584	Central government is strengthened in Russia during the reign of Ivan IV ("Ivan the Terrible").
1540	Spanish nobleman Ignatius Loyola founds the Jesuits, a leading religious order of the Catholic Reformation.
1556–1605	Akbar the Great rules in South Asia, transforming the Mughal state into a powerful empire.
1564–1616	William Shakespeare lives in England as a playwright and poet.
1587–1629	The Safavid empire of Persia comes to full flower under the reign of Shah Abbas.
1600–1616	Tokugawa Ieyasu, founder of the Tokugawa shogunate, rules in Japan.

Please see end of book reference section for additional reading suggestions related to this chapter.