Safavid Empire Timeline

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Prezi Presentation

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Event 1: Ismail’s Conquest
Ismail’s Conquest

- His family were Shia Islam priests in a Sunni Islam dominated society.
- At the age of 10, Ismail’s father was killed.
- Fellow priests hid Ismail so he would not be assassinated like his father.
- At the age of 14/15, he led an army numbering around 7,000 soldiers (no gunpowder weapons at this time) to conquer the kingdom of Azerbaijan.
- Went on a series of successful conquests in Georgia, Iran, parts of Anatolia, and parts of Iraq.
- Declared the city of Tabriz to be his capital and declared Shia Islam as the official state religion.
Ismail’s Conquest Effects

- Safavid and Ottoman Empire’s always had a fierce tension with each other, and not always politically.
- The rise of this new empire led to borders between Sunni and Shia Islam, which we still see today (Modern day Iran)
- Tensions and conflicts between the two religions can still be seen today.
Event 2: Shia Islam becoming the state religion
Shah Ismail declaring Shia Islam the State religion

- This border began with Ismail declaring the official state religion of the Safavid Empire to be Shia Islam.
- Ismail wished to spread Shia Islam by any means necessary, including conquest.
- The Safavid Empire was considered to be the center of Shia Islam, while the neighboring Ottoman Empire was considered to be the center of Sunni Islam.
- Both empires had not only political tensions and conflicts, but religious ones as well.
Effects from this declaration

- The creation of this border led to this same border lasting to today.
- Violent tensions and conflicts between the two sects of Islam have increased recently.
- Modern day Iran and Saudi Arabia have a regional rivalry, trying to gain influence over the other nations in the area.
- The two nations are trying to spread their religion to the other neighboring countries, which is causing conflicts.
Event 3: The Shahnama
The Shahnama

- One of the most voluminous epics in the world, written by Abu’l Qasim Firdausi Tusi around 1010 C.E..
- The Shahnama contains 50,000 rhyming couplets.
- The Shahnama was about the history and conquest of ancient Iranian kings, and it was not uncommon for the Shahs to add to the Shahnama.
- The Shahnama was rewritten during the rule of Shah Ismail and his son and successor, Shah Tahmasp.
- When the Shahnama was finished during the reign of Shah Tahmasp, it became one of the most illustrated copy of the epic in Persian history.
The Shahnama changes and effects

- The illustrations were representations of Shah’s courtly environment.
- What was different from this version is that women were actually in the manuscript.
- The female space was more distinguishable from the mens, for example being in different tents or buildings.
- Prior to this, women were not really mentioned in Safavid history, so this was a great achievement for women.
- Led to women getting mentioned more in the arts of the empire, and also women being educated in the arts.
Event 4: Art and Culture
Art and Culture

- When the Safavid Empire began its rule over Persia, Persia became a great center of art and culture.
- Shah Ismail and Shah Tahmasp for example were poets and painters.
- Silks, tiles, and other goods that were produced in the Safavid Empire were praised from many different empires.
Since Shah Ismail and Shah Tahmasp were poets and painters, a great appreciation of art throughout the empire.

Furthermore, this appreciation of art led to the creation of the empire's second capital, Isfahan, which was a showcase of the empire's artistic, cultural, and architectural achievements.

Isfahan had schools, parks, libraries, and numerous elegant mosques that amazed the Persians.

The Persians called Isfahan Nisf-e-Jahan, which translates to “Half the World”, Persians were saying that city is as beautiful as half the world.
Event 5: Gunpowder
The Safavid Empire was bordered between two Gunpowder Empires, the Ottoman and Mughal Empire. When Shah Ismail went on his conquest founding the initial territory for his empire, he didn’t have an army trained in the use of gunpowder weapons (muskets, cannons). When the Safavids and the Ottomans fought at the Battle of Chaldiran, the Ottomans had a serious advantage over the Safavids by using muskets. After a Safavid defeat at Chaldiran, Shah Ismail had a corps of around 7,000 soldiers trained to use muskets.
Safavids Using Gunpowder

- The Safavids still had older gunpowder weapons during the time Shah Abbas came to power.
- During the reign of Shah Abbas, he expanded the military by buying the newest muskets from Europe, and also by buying cannons from Europe, and having people come in to train Safavid soldiers how to use the cannons.
When Shah Ismail first established a corps trained with muskets, the Safavid military was able to compete and prove victorious over their rival, the Ottoman Empire.

Gunpowder stayed in this region and was used in the following nations and empires to come in the region.
Event 6: British Interest in the Middle East
British Interest in the Middle East

- Safavid Empire did not have a strong navy, even though they had access to the sea.
- British interest in the Middle East began when the Safavids had British Ships help them take the strategic waterway of the Strait of Hormuz from the Portuguese.
- The strait was a vital waterway for trade between the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea, which leads to the Mediterranean and to the European Empires.
Effects of Britain's interest in the Middle East

- The British helping the Safavids made the British interested in the Middle East.
- The British went on to establish colonies, ports, and trading posts along Arabia, and even took over Egypt.
- Trade between the two empires expanded.
Event 7: Shah Abbas Improves the Economy
Shah Abbas improves the Safavid economy

- Shah Abbas is considered one of the most influential and greatest Shah’s in the Safavid Empire.
- Not only did he improve the military, retake lands from the Ottomans and Uzbeks, but he greatly strengthened the economy as well.
- Shah Abbas took over the vital waterway of the Strait of Hormuz from the Portuguese with British help.
- He also developed a state monopoly over the silk industry, which was flourishing but was independently owned.
Effects from Shah Abbas’ changes

- With this state monopoly over the silk trade, the Safavid economy got a great source of income.
- With this, along with the conquest of the Strait of Hormuz, the Safavids were able to keep trade away from the Ottoman Empire.
- Also trade opened up with the European powers (Britain, Spain, Netherlands, etc) who greatly desired silks from the Safavids.
Event 8: Decline and fall of the Safavid Empire
Decline of the Safavid Empire

- Many factors played into the decline and fall of the Safavid Empire.
- The Shah’s that followed Shah Abbas were ineffectual towards the empire.
- That, combined with a lavish lifestyle, military spending, and falling revenues resulted in a weak economy.
- The Safavid Empire was unable to quell a small rebellion originating in the area of modern day Afghanistan.
- This small rebellion went on the sack the capital of Isfahan in 1722.
Decline of the Safavid Empire Effects

- The Russian and Ottoman Empires took advantage of the weakened Safavid Empire and took over territories.
- Chaos was impediment to tax collection and centralization.