The Mughal Empire

World History: Week 23
Legacy of Southern Indian Expansion
The Mughal Empire: 1526-1858CE
The Mughal Empire

- It consolidated Islam in South Asia, and spread Muslim (and particularly Persian) arts and culture as well as the faith.
- They also retained the great military skill and cunning of their Mongol ancestors, and were among the first Western military leaders to use guns.
- The Mughals were Muslims who ruled a country with a large Hindu majority. However for much of their empire they allowed Hindus to reach senior government or military positions.
Politics and Religion

- Capitals at Agra and Delhi
- Large bureaucracy
- Took taxes and managed local regions
- Muslim Islamic Sultans rule absolutely
- Powerful military conquered India
- Mostly tolerated Hinduism, Sikhs, and Buddhism which helped stability

- Rulers were generally the Sufi Muslim minority (Persian)
- Generally treated Hindus well (Except Arangzeb)
- **Sikhs:** historically Islam and Hinduism mixed
  - one creator, invisible God (M)
  - believe in reincarnation (H)
  - goal of existence to be freed from cycle of rebirth, attain unity with God (H)
  - Do not practice rituals like pilgrimage, yoga, from the earlier religions
  - Wear turbans, carry a knife, don’t cut beard
Society and Economics

- Population: 110 and 130 million
- Caste system present but less important
- Women gain rights from the mixing of Hindu ideals with Islam.
- People of all castes honored by Sultan.
- The middle class of traders
- 90% were poor farmers who were heavily taxed
- Very wealthy empire

- Money spent on architecture and war
- Creation of a road system; Grand Trunk Road
- Cities grew rapidly
- State-owned karkhanas (factories) produced luxury goods.
- Mughal goods sold throughout the world.
  - Silk and COTTON textiles
  - Steel.
- Advanced shipbuilding industry
Art, Architecture, and legacy

- **Mughal architectural style** = Hindu and Islamic (e.g. the Taj Mahal) Persian art and culture mixed seamlessly
- Loved art and architecture
- Delegated government with respect for human rights
- A system of education that took account of pupils' needs and culture
- **Great wealth** led to awesome buildings weakened by wars of succession, agrarian crises fueling local revolts, growth of religious intolerance, the rise of regional empires
- **First to blend** Indian, Muslim, Persian and Central Asian customs
- Centralized, imperialistic government brought together many smaller kingdoms.
- Established new trade routes across Arab, European and Turkic lands
- European imperialism starting with Portuguese in 1490s
- British colonialism eventually dominates India Architecture
NOTE: Urdu developed as a result of the fusion of the Indian and Islamic cultures during the Mughal period. Modern Hindi which uses Sanskrit-based vocabulary along with loan words from Persian and Arabic, is mutually intelligible with Urdu.
Leadership

Influential Mughal Emperors:

– Babur (1526-1530) *The First of the Mughals*
– Humayun (1530-1556) *The Luckless Leader*
– Akbar (1556-1605) *The Great*
– Jahangir (1605-1627) *The Paragon of Stability*
– Shah Jahan (1627-1658) *The Master Builder*
– Aurangzeb (1658-1707) *The Intolerant*
– Bahadur Shah Zafar (1775-1862) *The Puppet*
Babur's pedigree seems to have been specifically designed for the job.

On his **father's** side, he was a Timurid, a Persianized Turk descended from **Timur the Lame**.
- Warrior of Allah, but his most ferocious attacks were leveled on some of Islam's great cities.
- A brutal (but charming) military genius, Timur is one of history's most fascinating characters.

On his **mother's** side, Babur was descended from **Genghis Khan**.
- United the nomadic tribes of northeast Asia, founding Mongol Empire.
- Major Conquest of most of Central and NE Asia.
- Campaigns included (civilian) massacres leading to his feared reputation.
Babur (1526-1530CE)
The First of the Mughals

- Babur succeeded his father as ruler of the state of Farghana (Turkistan), only age 12
- Babur moved into Afghanistan in 1504, and then moved on to India, apparently at the invitation of some Indian princes who wanted to dispose of their ruler. **Babur disposed** of the ruler, and decided to take over himself.
- He captured the Turkic Ghur'iat Sultanate of Delhi in 1526 and defeated the last of the Delhi Sultans, Ibrahim Shah Lodi, at the First Battle of Panipat
- **Gunpowder**, cannons, a skilled commander, trained soldiers on horses contributed to the victory
- The Empire he founded was a sophisticated civilization based on **religious toleration**. It was a mixture of Persian, Mongol and Indian culture.
- Under Babur Hinduism was tolerated and new Hindu temples were built with his permission.
Babur (1526-1530CE)  
The First of the Mughals

- Trade with the rest of the Islamic world, especially Persia and through Persia to Europe, was encouraged.
- Made Agra his new capital.
- The importance of slavery in the Empire diminished and peace was made with the Hindu kingdoms of Southern India.
- Babur brought a broad-minded, confident Islam from central Asia. His first act after conquering Delhi was to forbid the killing of cows because that was offensive to Hindus.
- Babur may have been descended from brutal conquerors, but he was not a barbarian bent on loot and plunder. Instead he had great ideas about civilization, architecture and administration.
- He even wrote an autobiography, The Babur - Namah. The autobiography is candid, honest and at times even poetic.
Humayun (1530-1556)  
The Luckless Leader

- Babur was followed by his son Humayun who was a bad emperor, a better poet, and a drug addict. He rapidly lost the empire. He did eventually recover the throne but died soon afterwards after breaking his neck falling downstairs.

- While Humayan was certainly disastrous as a ruler, his love of poetry and culture heavily influenced his son Akbar, and helped to make the Mughal Empire an artistic power as well as a military one.

- Suffered reversals at the hands of the Pashtun Sher Shah Suri and lost most of the fledgling empire before it could grow beyond a minor regional state.
Akbar (1556-1605)  
The Great

• Akbar was born in the fortress of Umarkot in Sind.
• The third Emperor, Abu Akbar, is regarded as one of the great rulers of all time, regardless of country.
• Akbar succeeded to the throne at 13, and started to recapture the remaining territory lost from Babur's empire.
• War against Sikandar Shah Suri for the throne of Delhi. He soon won his eighteenth victory at age 21 or 22.
• Indian equivalent of Suleiman the Magnificent - huge army
• Akbar’s capital is at Fatehpur Sikri
• In Agra he built the Agra Fort.
Akbar directing the attack against Rao Surjan Hada at Ranthambhor Fort, 1569
Akbar (1556-1605) The Great

• Akbar worked hard to win over the hearts and minds of the Hindu leaders. While this may well have been for political reasons - he married a Hindu princess (and is said to have married several thousand wives for political and diplomatic purposes) - it was also a part of his philosophy.

• Akbar believed that all religions should be tolerated, and that a ruler's duty was to treat all believers equally, whatever their belief.

• Best known for tolerance, especially toward Hindus.

• Removed the poll tax on Hindus,
Akbar (1556-1605)  
The Great

- He established a form of delegate-style government in which the provincial governors were personally responsible to him for the quality of government in their territory.
- Akbar's government machine included many Hindus in positions of responsibility - the governed were allowed to take a major part in the governing.
- Akbar also ended a tax (jizya) that had been imposed on non-Muslims. This discriminatory tax had been much resented, and ending it was a popular move.
Akbar (1556-1605) The Great

- An innovation was the amount of autonomy he allowed to the provinces. For example, non-Muslims were not forced to obey Islamic law (as was the case in many Islamic lands), and Hindus were allowed to regulate themselves through their own law and institutions.
- Introduced standard weights and measures, tax structures and a workable police force.
Akbar and Godism

• Akbar took the policy of religious toleration even further by breaking with conventional Islam.
• The Emperor proclaimed an entirely new state religion of 'God-ism' (Din-i-ilahi) - a jumble of Islamic, Hindu, Christian and Buddhist teaching with himself as deity. It never spread beyond his court and died when he did.
• Invited religious scholars, including Hindus, Jews, and Christians, to debate him in his private chambers
Jahangir (1605-1627)
The Paragon of Stability

- Akbar's son, Emperor Jahangir, **readopted Islam** as the state religion and continued the policy of religious toleration. His court included large numbers of Indian Hindus, Persian Shi'a and Sufis.

- Jahangir also began building the magnificent **monuments** and **gardens** by which the Mughals are chiefly remembered today, importing hundreds of Persian architects to build palaces and create magnificent gardens.

- Jahangir's approach was typified by the development of Urdu as the **official language** of Empire. Urdu uses an Arabic script, but Persian vocabulary and Hindi grammatical structure.
Testing his court...
Shah Jahan (1627-1658)
The Master Builder

- The architectural achievements of the Mughals peaked between 1592 and 1666, during the reign of Jahangir's successor Jahan.
- The Taj Mahal, commissioned by Emperor Jahan, marks the apex of the Mughal Empire.
- The Taj Mahal built in honor of his wife who died during childbirth.
- Nearly bankrupted the empire.
- 20,000 laborers 17 years to complete the job.
Shah Jahan (1627-1658)  
The Master Builder

- By Jahan's period the capital had moved to the Red Fort in Delhi, putting the Fort at the heart of Mughal power. As if to confirm it, Jahan had these lines inscribed there: "If there is Paradise on earth, it is here, it is here."

- Built the Peacock Throne
- imposed heavy taxes on people
- Demanded half of all crops
- Led to hardship, famine for many
The building is a mausoleum built by Jahan for his wife Mumtaz and it has come to symbolise the love between two people.
Aurangzeb (1658-1707)
The Intolerant

- Aurangzeb ruled for nearly 50 years. He came to the throne after imprisoning his father and having his older brother killed.
- He was a strong leader, whose conquests expanded the Mughal Empire to its **greatest size**.
- Aurangzeb was a very observant and religious Muslim who **ended** the policy of religious tolerance followed by earlier emperors.
- He no longer allowed the Hindu community to live under their own laws and customs, but imposed **Sharia law** (Islamic law) over the whole empire.
Aurangzeb (1658-1707) The Intolerant

- Thousands of Hindu temples and shrines were torn down and a punitive tax on Hindu subjects was re-imposed.

- In the last decades of the seventeenth century Aurangzeb invaded the Hindu kingdoms in central and southern India, conquering much territory and taking many slaves.

- The Muslim Governor of Hydrabad in southern India rebelled and established a separate Shi'a state; he also reintroduced religious toleration.
Aurangzeb (1658-1707)
The Intolerant

• Under Aurangzeb, the Mughal empire reached the peak of its military power, but the rule was unstable. This was partly because of the hostility that Aurangzeb's intolerance and taxation inspired hatred within the population, but also because the empire had simply become too big to be successfully governed.

• The Hindu kingdoms also fought back, often supported by the French and the British, who used them to tighten their grip on the sub-continent.
Aurangzeb (1658-1707)
The Intolerant

- The great Mughal city of Calcutta came under the control of the East India Company in 1696 and in the decades that followed Europeans and European - backed by Hindu princes conquered most of the Mughal territory.
- Aurangzeb's extremism caused Mughal territory and creativity to dry up and the Empire went into decline. The Mughal Emperors that followed Aurangzeb effectively became British or French puppets.
Bahadur Shah Zafar (1775-1862)

The Puppet

- The last Mughal Emperor
- By the time of Bahadur Shah Zafar, the Mughal rule was confined to the Red Fort.
- Bahadur Shah Zafar was obliged to live on British pension, while the reins of real power lay in the hands of the East India Company.
- Urdu Poetry promoted
- author of four diwans.
- He was a great patron of poetry and literary work and some of the most eminent and famous Urdu poets
Bahadur Shah Zafar (1775-1862)
The Puppet

- It was at the time of Bahadur Shah that the **War of Independence in 1857** started.
- Bye Bye... to Muslim rule and hello to British and French **colonization**.
Decline 1750-1850

- Weakened by wars of succession,
- Agrarian crises fueling local revolts,
- Growth of religious intolerance,
- The rise of regional empires
- European imperialism starting with Portuguese in 1490s
- British colonialism eventually dominates India
Procession to celebrate Bahadur Shah Zafar II – notice the Europeans?
Mughal India Legacy?