



Gunpowder Empires: The Safavids



Rise of the Safavid Empire

- ▶ Safavid Empire: 1501 to 1736 CE
- ▶ Power vacuum in Persia after collapse of the Il-Khanate (Mongols)
 - ▶ Shah Ismail I rises to prominence in Azerbaijan
 - ▶ Identifies as a descendent of Ali, therefore leader of Islam according to Shi'a traditions
 - ▶ Likely mixed ethnic origins (Turkic, Georgian, Greek, etc.)
- ▶ Ismail I proclaims himself shah of Azerbaijan
 - ▶ Conquers Iran and Iraq by 1501, Turkmen and Uzbek tribes by 1508



Safavid Expansion and Conflict

- ▶ Shah Ismail I sends Shi'ite missionaries into Anatolia to try and
 - ▶ Spread Shi'a Islam
 - ▶ Loosen Ottoman control over Anatolia
- ▶ Ottomans send in troops, deal Safavids a MASSIVE blow in 1514
 - ▶ Ottomans gain much of Mesopotamia
 - ▶ Heightens tensions between Ottomans and Safavids



- ☆ Qara Qoyunlu tribes ("Black sheep") 15th C.
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- 16th C.**
- Shah Ismail's Safavid empire
- Uzbek dynasty
- Ottoman Empire
- Disputed zone between Uzbeks and Safavids
- Ottoman conquest
- 18th C.**
- Safavid State just before Afghan insurrection in 1722

0 500 km

Shah 'Abbas I

- ▶ Great leader of Safavid Empire: Shah 'Abbas the Great (r. 1587 – 1629)
 - ▶ Contemporaneous with Suleiman the Magnificent in the Ottoman Empire
- ▶ Lost Baghdad to the Ottomans
 - ▶ Prompts modernization of Safavid military on the Ottoman model
 - ▶ Adopts muskets, slave infantry (like the janissaries), professional standing army
 - ▶ Expands territory further to the east
- ▶ Known for artistic patronage



نخستین پارتی شاه
فرمانروای
حکومت

Relationship with Gunpowder Empires

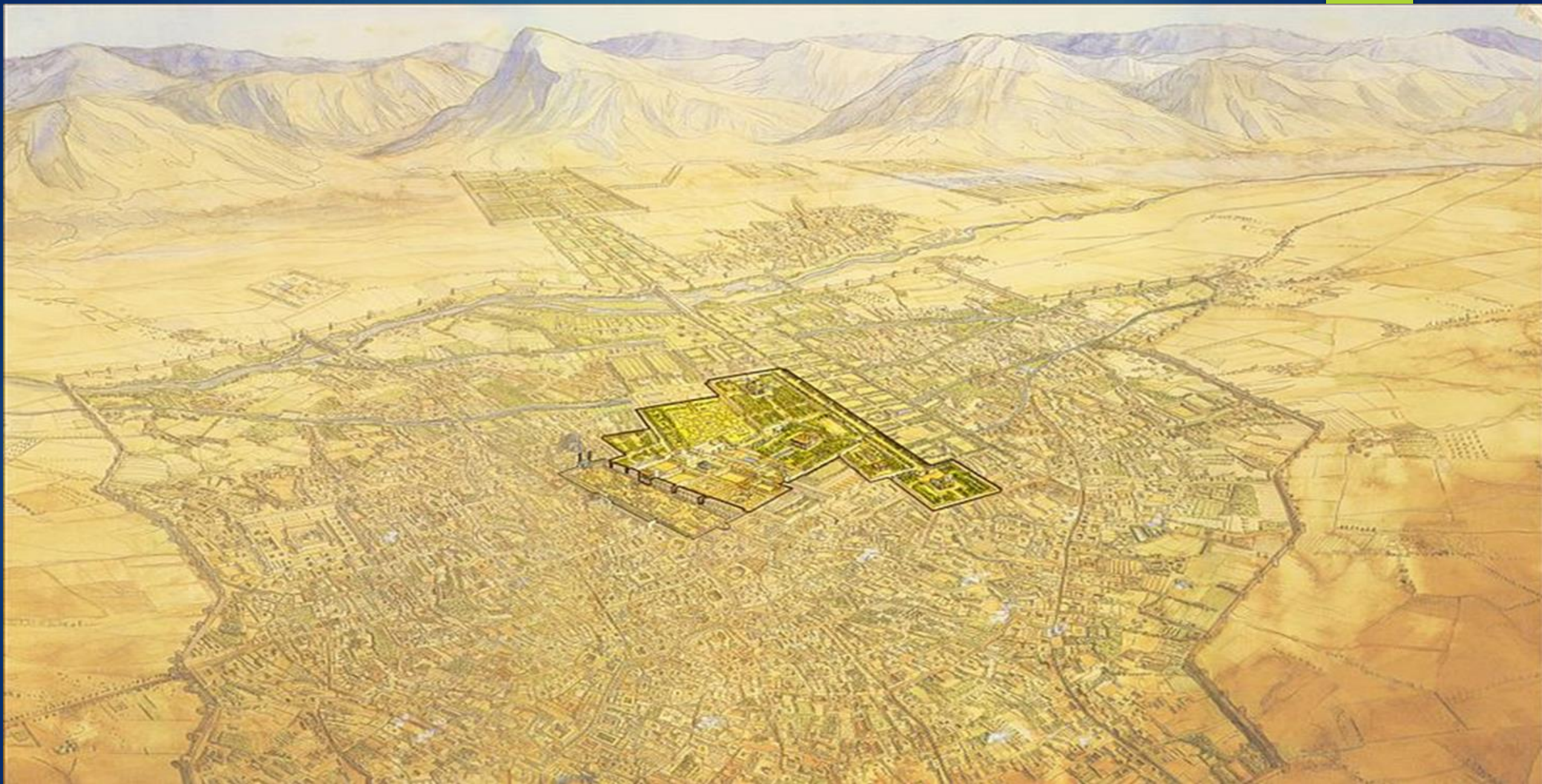
- ▶ Safavid relationship with the Ottomans → extremely strained
 - ▶ Safavid empire did act as a sanctuary for disgraced / disinherited royalty, however
- ▶ Safavid relationship with Mughals → also strained
- ▶ This is because of a tendency to attack to both the east and west
 - ▶ Not always driven by professional military– large groups of difficult to control tribal peoples often attacked along the borders
 - ▶ Also, religious differences: Sunni vs. Shi'a

Relationship with Europe

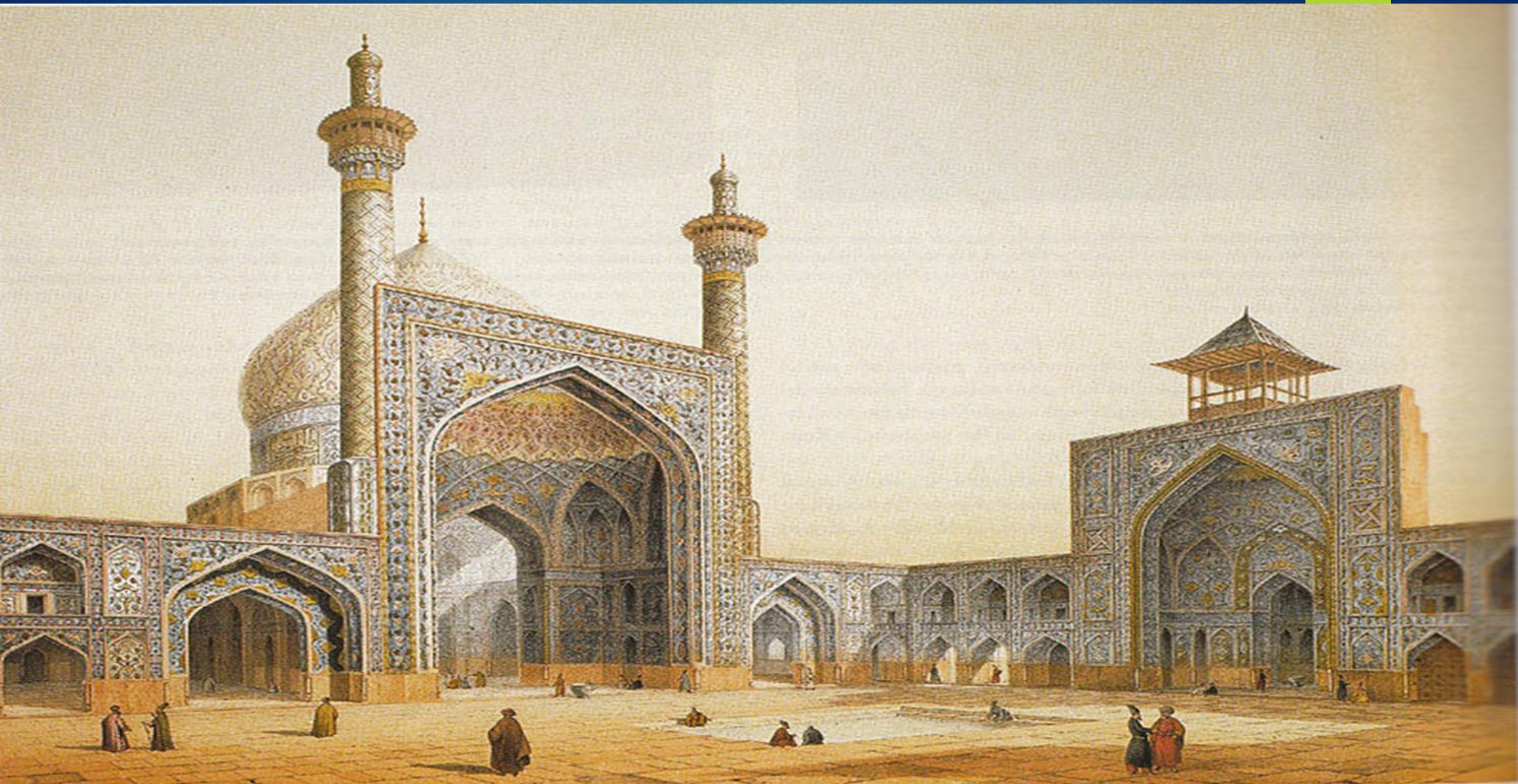
- ▶ Strong trade relationship with England, Russia
 - ▶ Used European resentment of Ottoman attacks into Western Europe to their advantage
 - ▶ Difficult to trade overland, however– Ottomans in the way

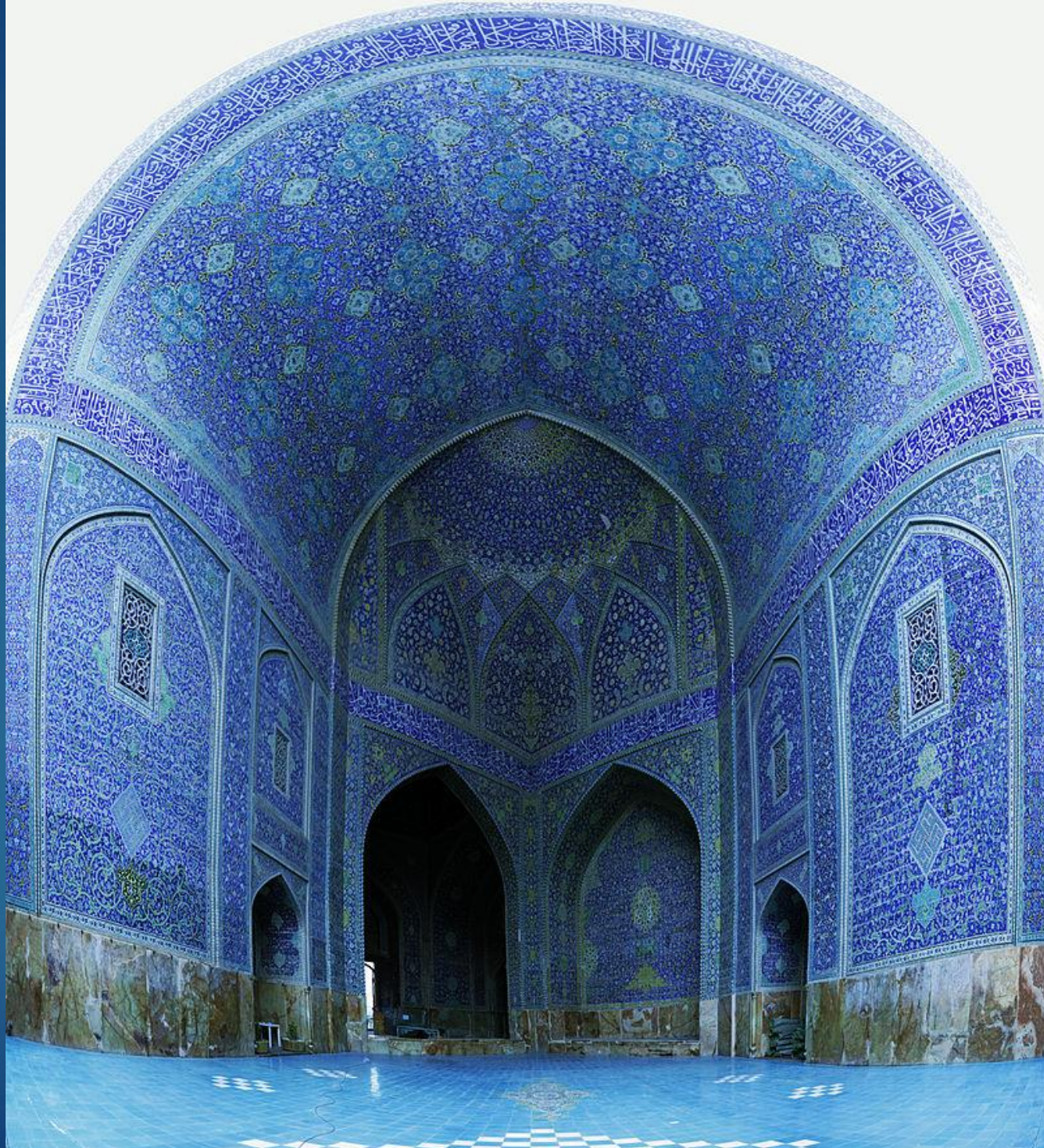
Culture in the Safavid Empire

- ▶ Safavids famous for detailed and delicate architecture
 - ▶ Creation of the capital city Isfahan under Shah 'Abbas I
 - ▶ Highly decorated mosques and palaces
- ▶ Shah Mosque













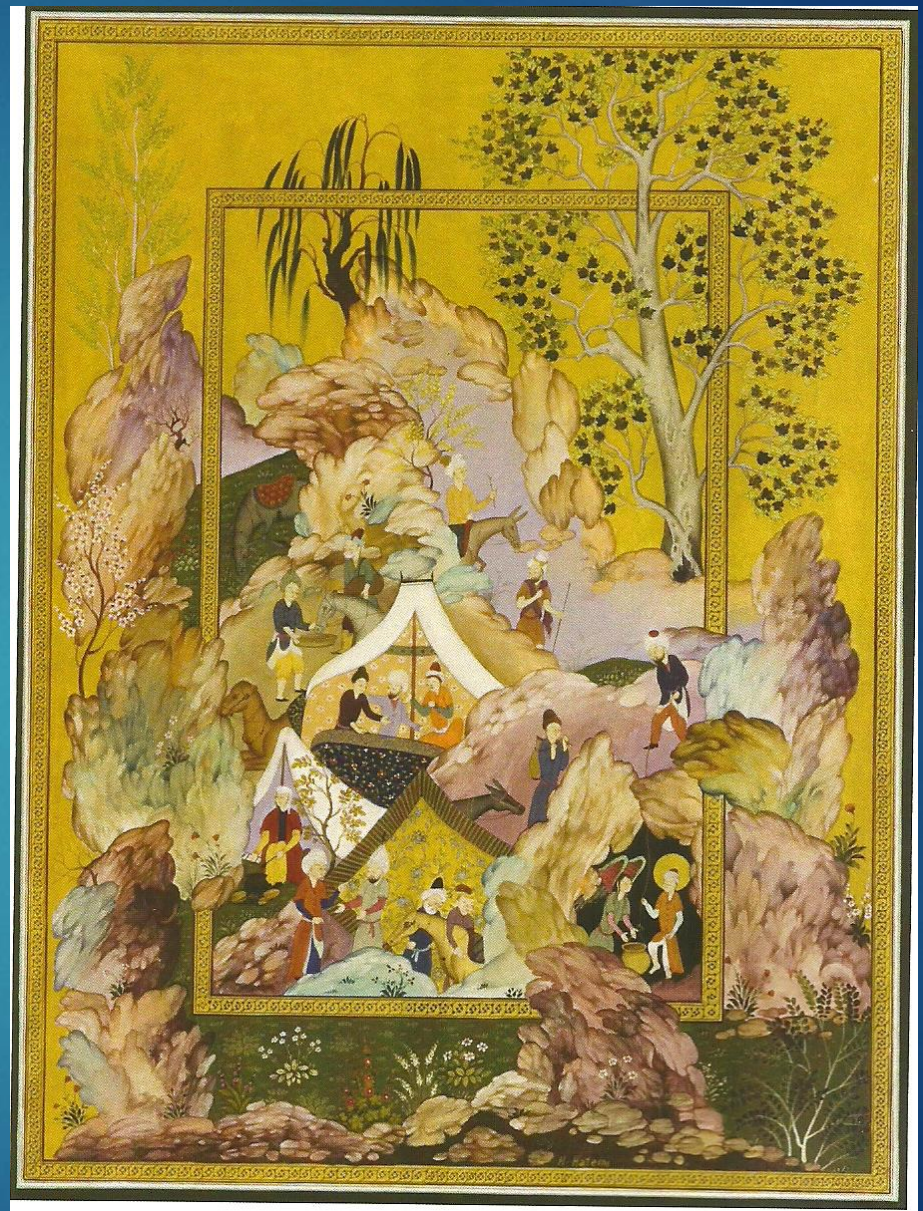
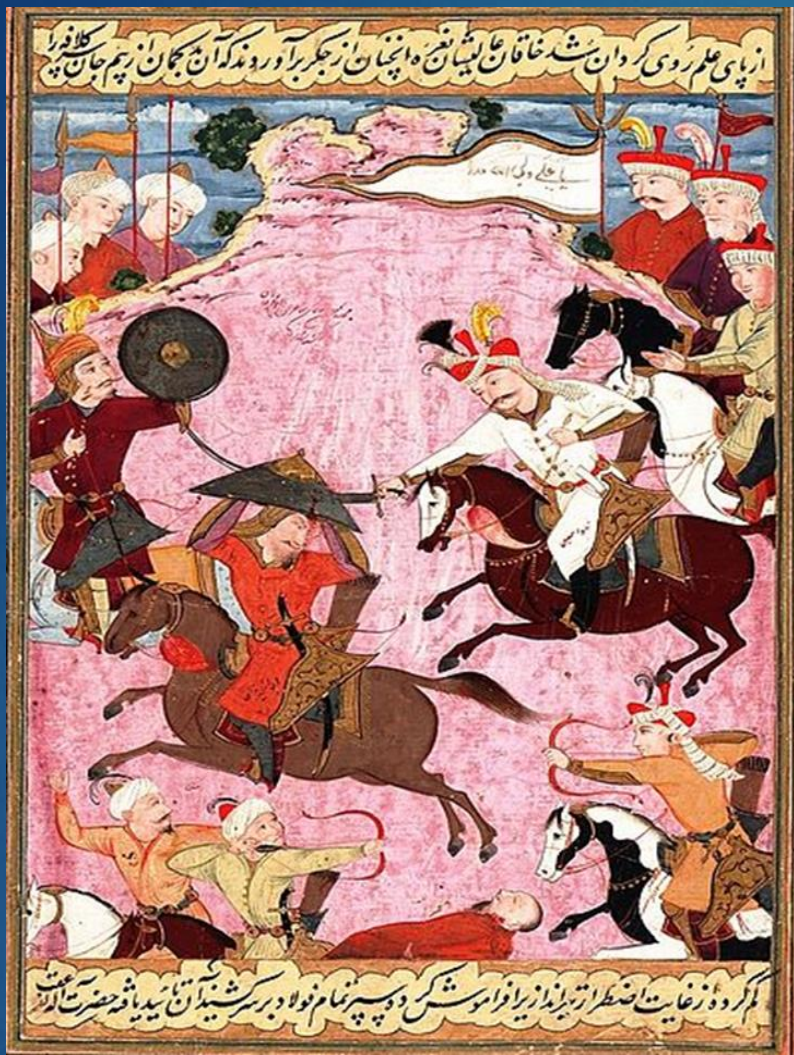
اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَخَرِّجْهُم مِّنَ النَّارِ إِنَّكَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

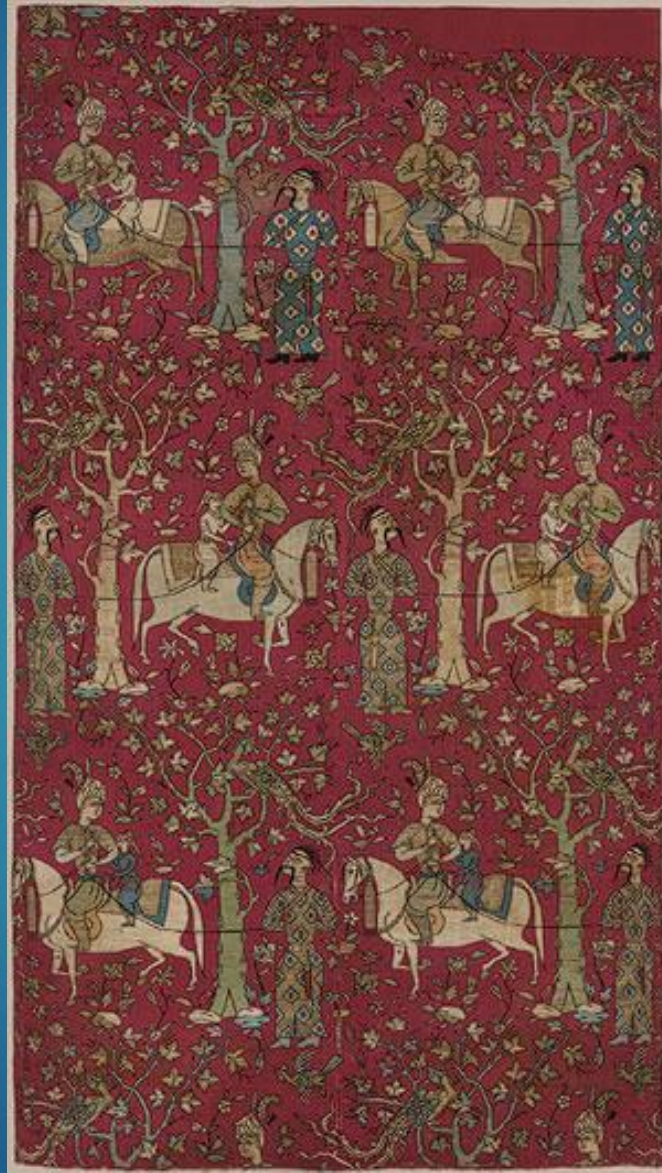
اللهم صل على محمد وآل محمد
وخرِّجهم من النار



Culture in the Safavid Empire

- ▶ Famous for tile, glass, and metal wares
- ▶ Textile production
 - ▶ Embroidered clothing and tapestries as well as carpets– in high demand in Europe
 - ▶ Wool (every day use) and silk (fine production)
- ▶ Illuminated manuscripts and Persian miniatures
- ▶ Portraits, scenes from epic poems and stories, everyday life













Religion in the Safavid Empire

- ▶ Official religions is Shi'a Islam
 - ▶ Used as a force to unify various cultures and subjects in Safavid Empire
 - ▶ Many Jews, Christians, Sunnis, and Sufis forced to convert to Shi'a Islam
- ▶ Early years of empire extremely hardline in terms of religious adherence
 - ▶ Death sentences for those who don't convert
 - ▶ Shah 'Abbas I more lenient towards Christians (better for business with Europe)

Economics in the Safavid Empire

- ▶ Government heavily involved in regulation of trade
 - ▶ Shah personally checks on merchants and artisans regarding production and trade
- ▶ Caspian Sea trade to Russia to Europe
- ▶ Control of Persian Gulf
 - ▶ Significant sea trade with Portugal and the Dutch



Decline of the Safavid Empire

- ▶ Increased tribal activity
- ▶ Reaction against shah for being not hardline enough against non-Shi'ites
 - ▶ Shi'a militants increase activity
 - ▶ Shah responds by becoming more conservative
 - ▶ Loss of personal rights and intellectual freedoms
- ▶ Afghani tribal revolt
 - ▶ Captured Isfahan