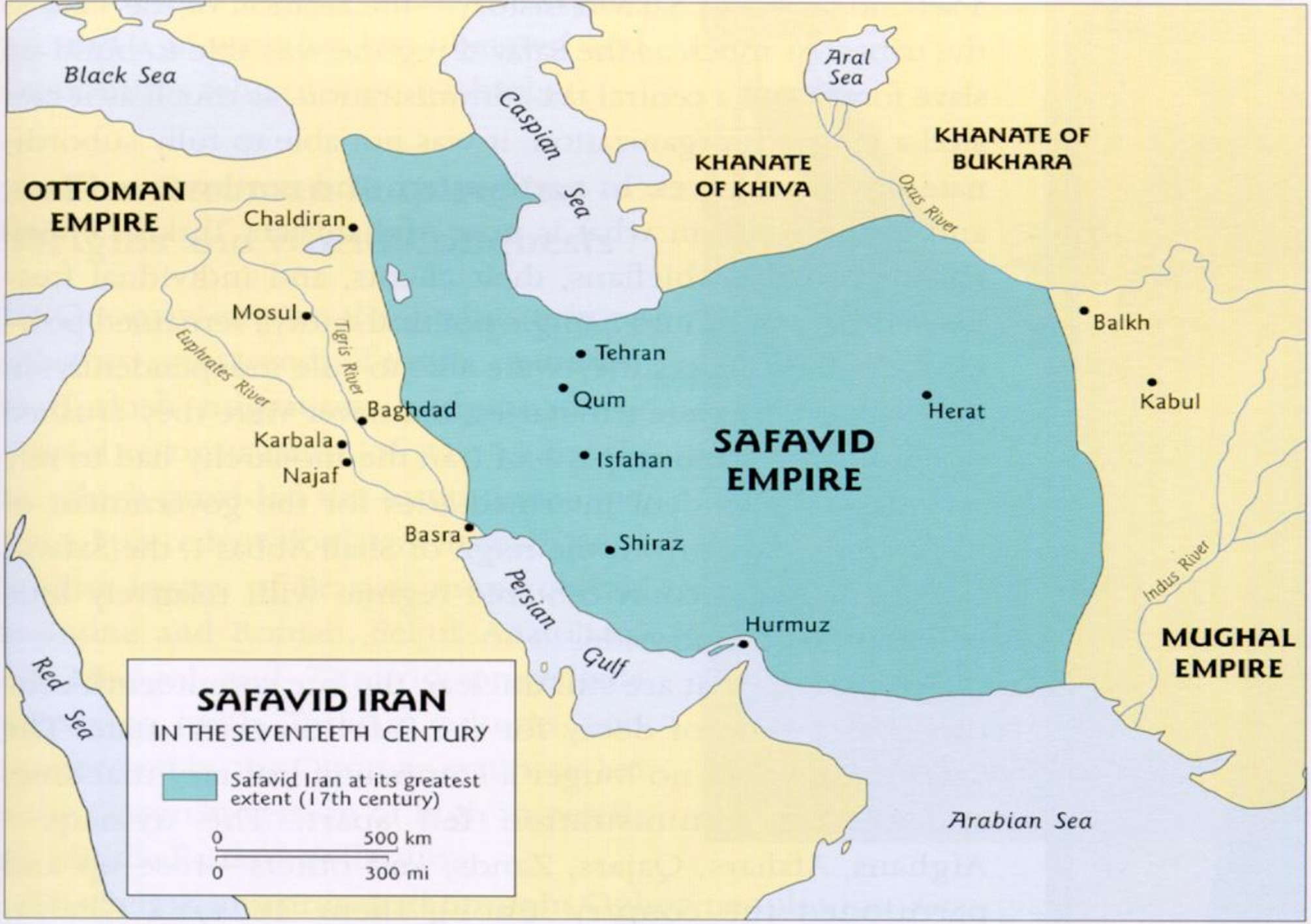
Gunpowder Empires: The Safavids


Black Sea
Caspian Sea
Aral Sea
KHANATE OF BUKHARA
KHANATE OF KHIVA
Oxus River
OTTOMAN EMPIRE
Chaldiran
Mosul
Tigris River
Euphrates River
Baghdad
Karbala
Najaf
Basra
Tehran
Qum
Isfahan
Shiraz
SAFAVID EMPIRE
Herat
Balkh
Kabul
Indus River
MUGHAL EMPIRE
Persian Gulf
Hurmuz
Red Sea
Arabian Sea
SAFAVID IRAN
IN THE SEVENTEETH CENTURY
Safavid Iran at its greatest extent (17th century)
0 500 km
0 300 mi

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

BLACK SEA
GEORGIA
Tiflis
Derbent
CASPIAN SEA
MER D'ARAL
Syr-Darya (laxarte)
KHANATE OF KHIVA
Khiva
KHANATE OF BUKHARA
Bukhara
Samarcand
Uzbeks
Trebzon
Koura
SHIRVAN
Baku
Yerevan
Araks
ARRAN
Turkmen-s
Amou-Darya (Oxus)
ARMENIA
Baikh
Diyarbakir
Tabriz
Ardabil
MAZANDARAN
Atrek
Merv
Sarakhs
OTTOMAN EMPIRE
Kurds
Mossoul
Tigris
Rasht
Sari
Asterabad
AZERBAIJAN
Soltaniyeh
Qazvin
ELBORZ
Damghan
Nishapur
Mashhad
HINDU KUSH
KHORASAN
Tehran
Ray
Qom
Kabul
Euphrates
Hamedan
Kermanshah
Kashan
Herat
Ghazni
AFGHANISTAN
LORESTAN
Baghdad
Ispahan
Shushtar
Karoun
IRAQ
Yazd
Kandahar
Ahvaz
FARS
Bassora
Shahpur
Kerman
SISTAN
Shiraz
KERMAN
Bandar Bushehr
Indus
PERSIAN GULF
Bandar Abbas
Hormuz 1507 - 1515
1622
Portugueses
BALOUCHISTAN
MOGHOL EMPIRE
SIND
SEA OF OMAN
Qara Qoyunlu tribes ("Black sheep") 15th C.
Qara Qoyunlu tribes ("Black sheep") 15th C.
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

www.fouman.com Iranian Photographs Gallery

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

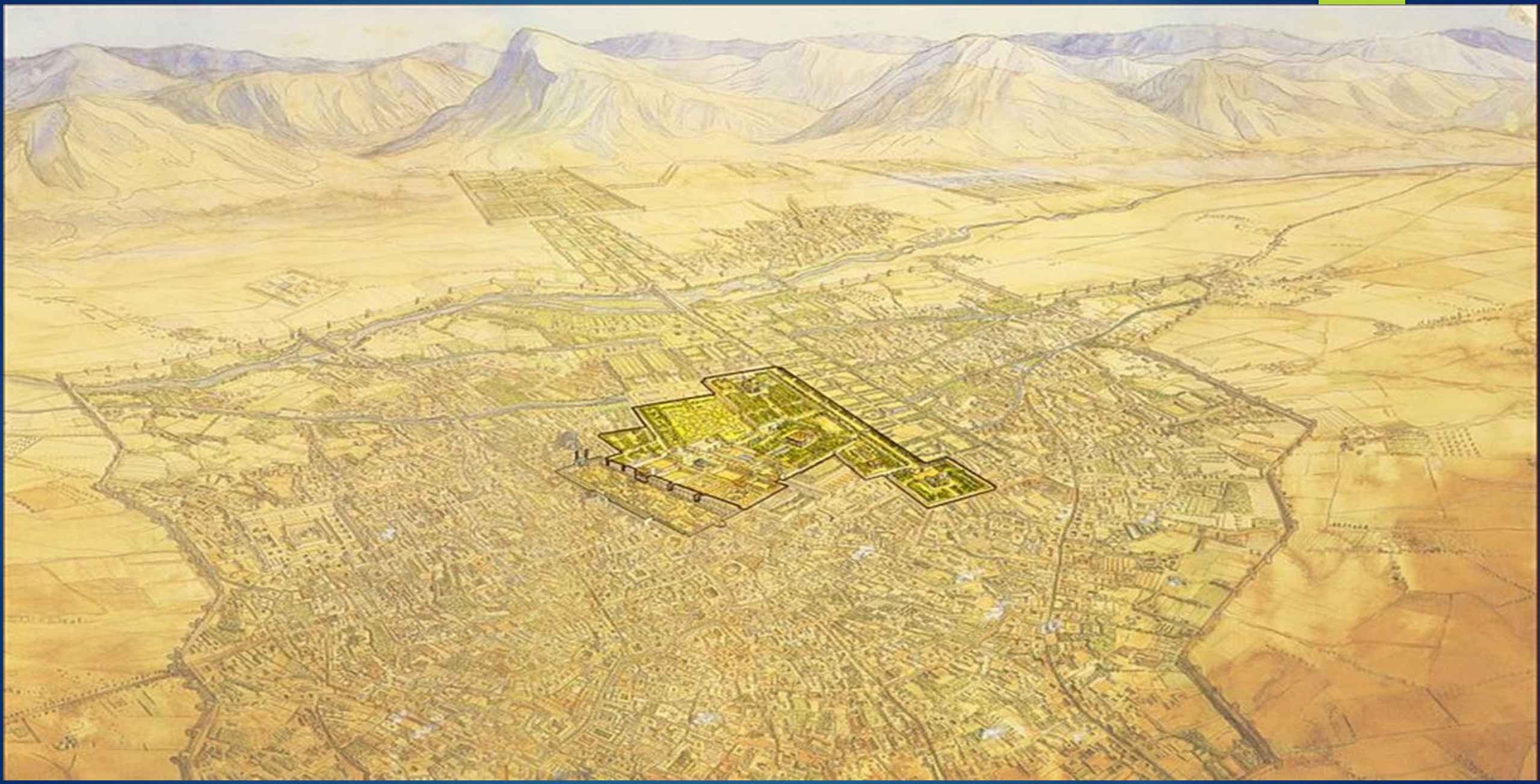
Relationship with Europe

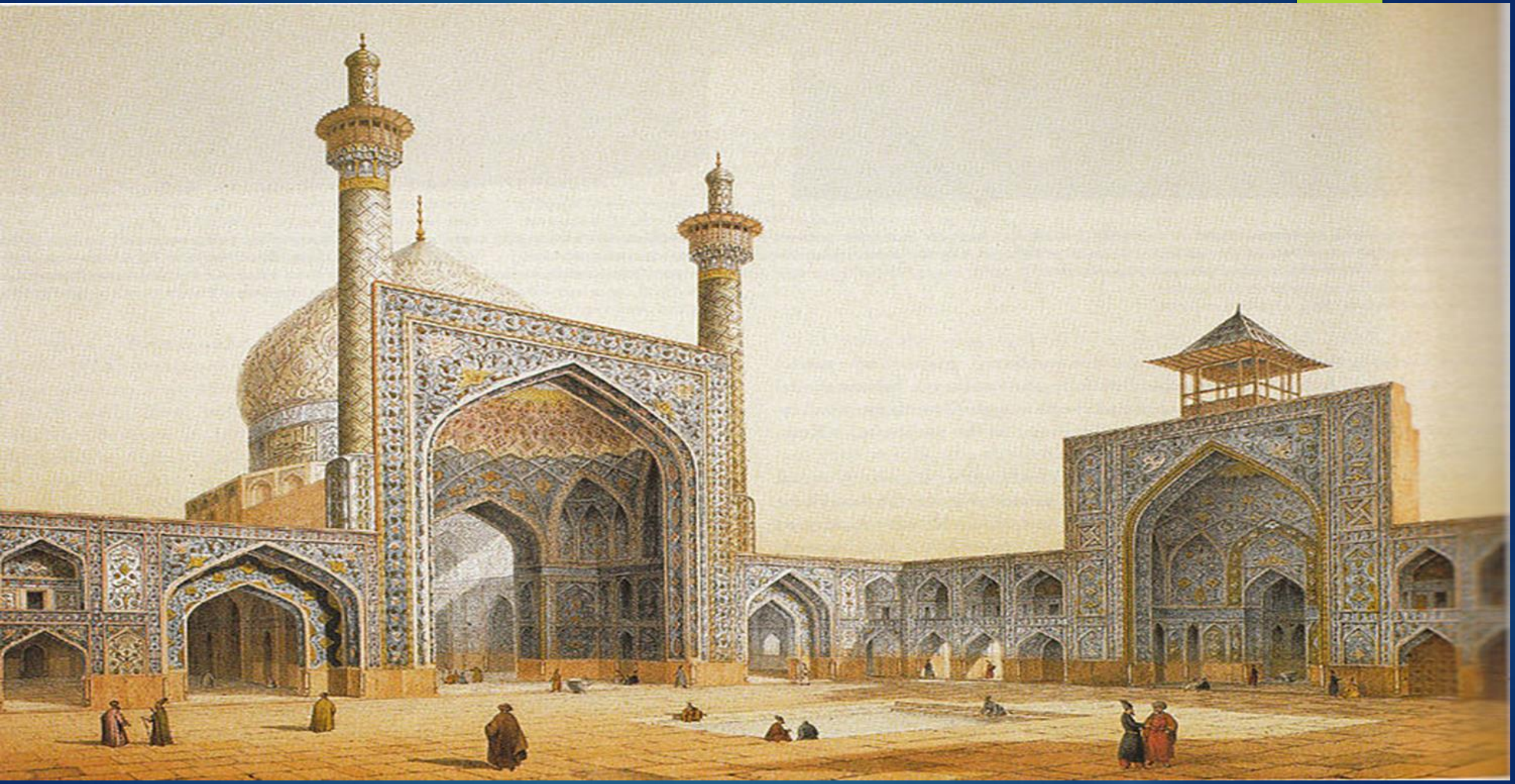
- Strong trade relationship with England, Russia
  - Used European resentment of Ottoman attacks into Western Europe to their advantage
  - Difficult to trade overland, however– Ottomans in the way

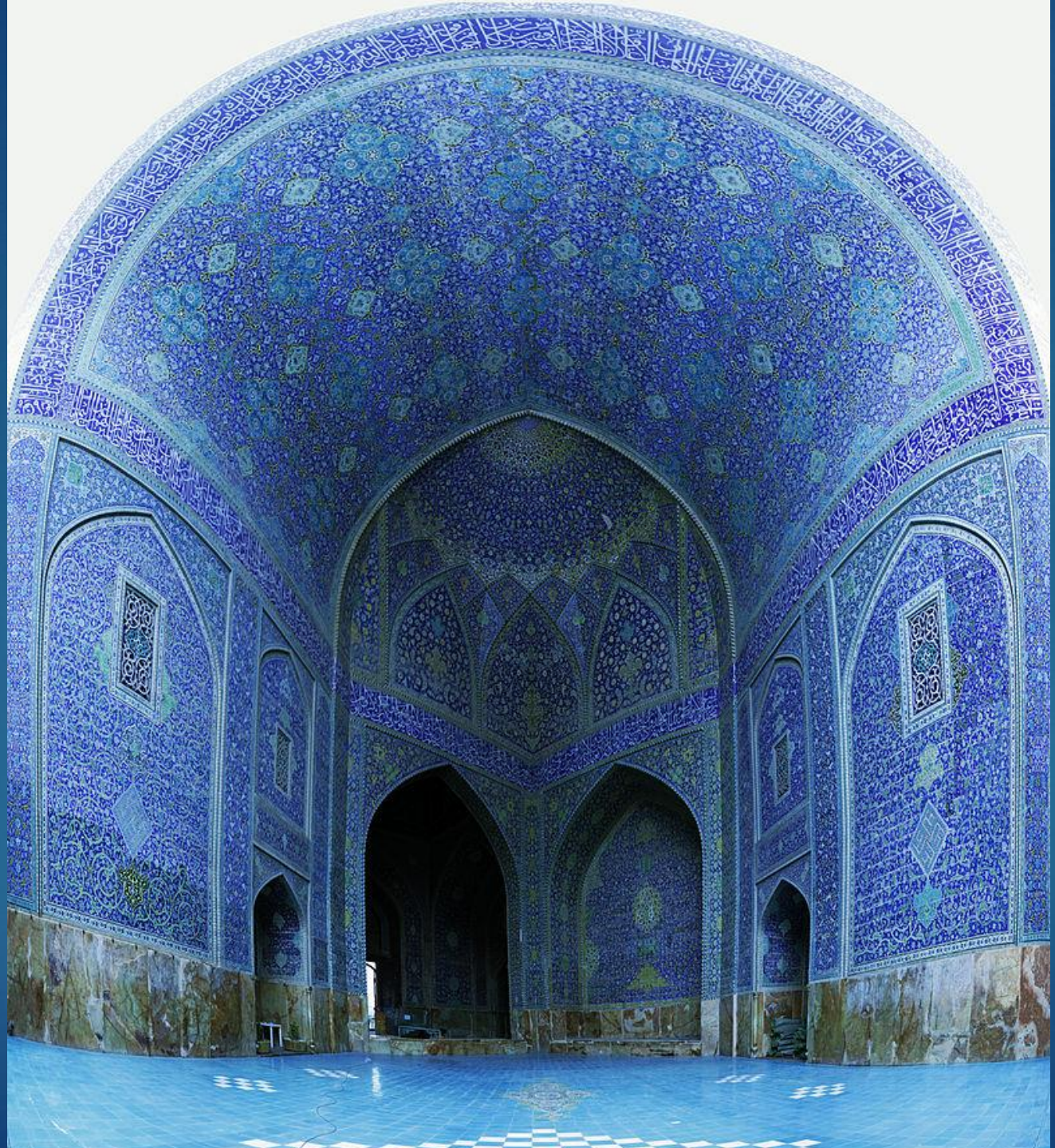
Culture in the Safavid Empire

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

- Shah Mosque

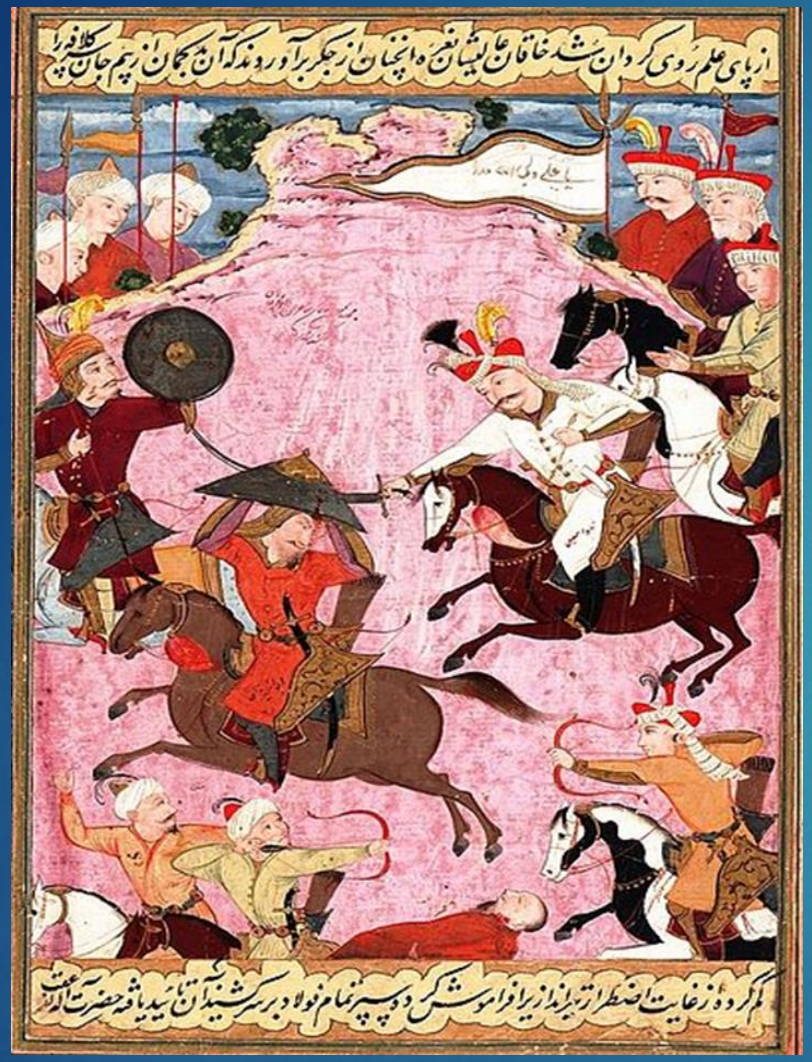


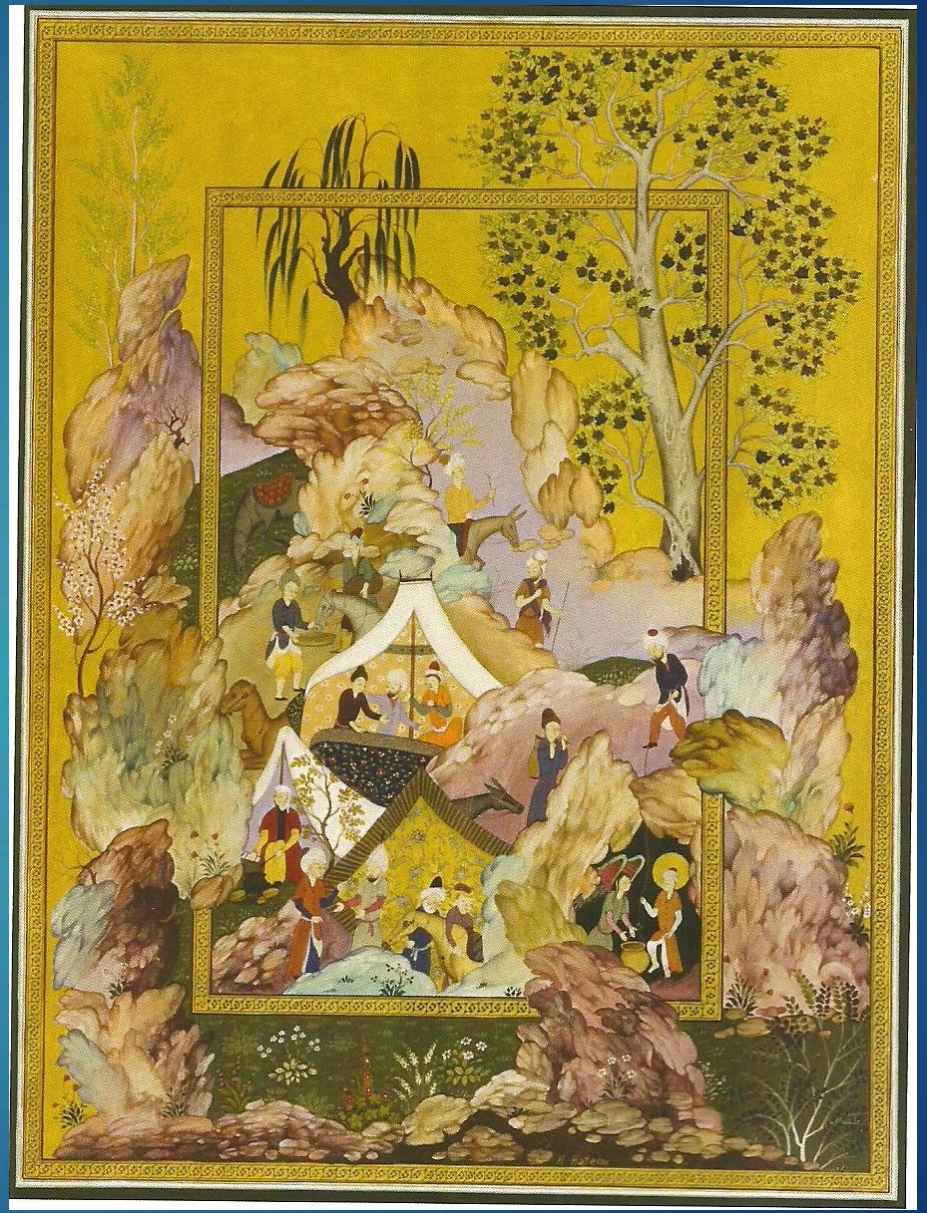


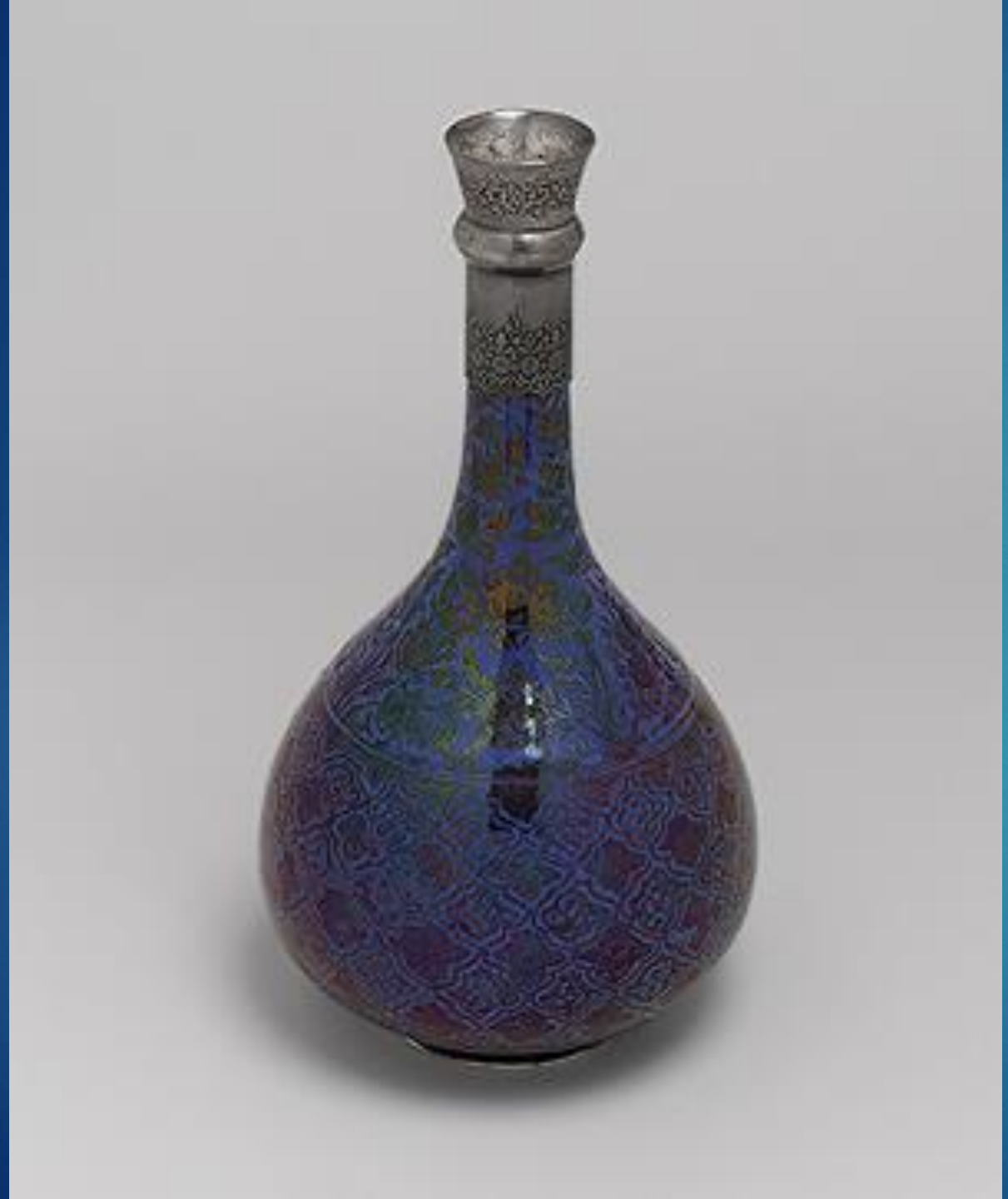


Culture in the Safavid Empire

- 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 minatures
- Portraits, scenes from epic poems and stories, everyday life





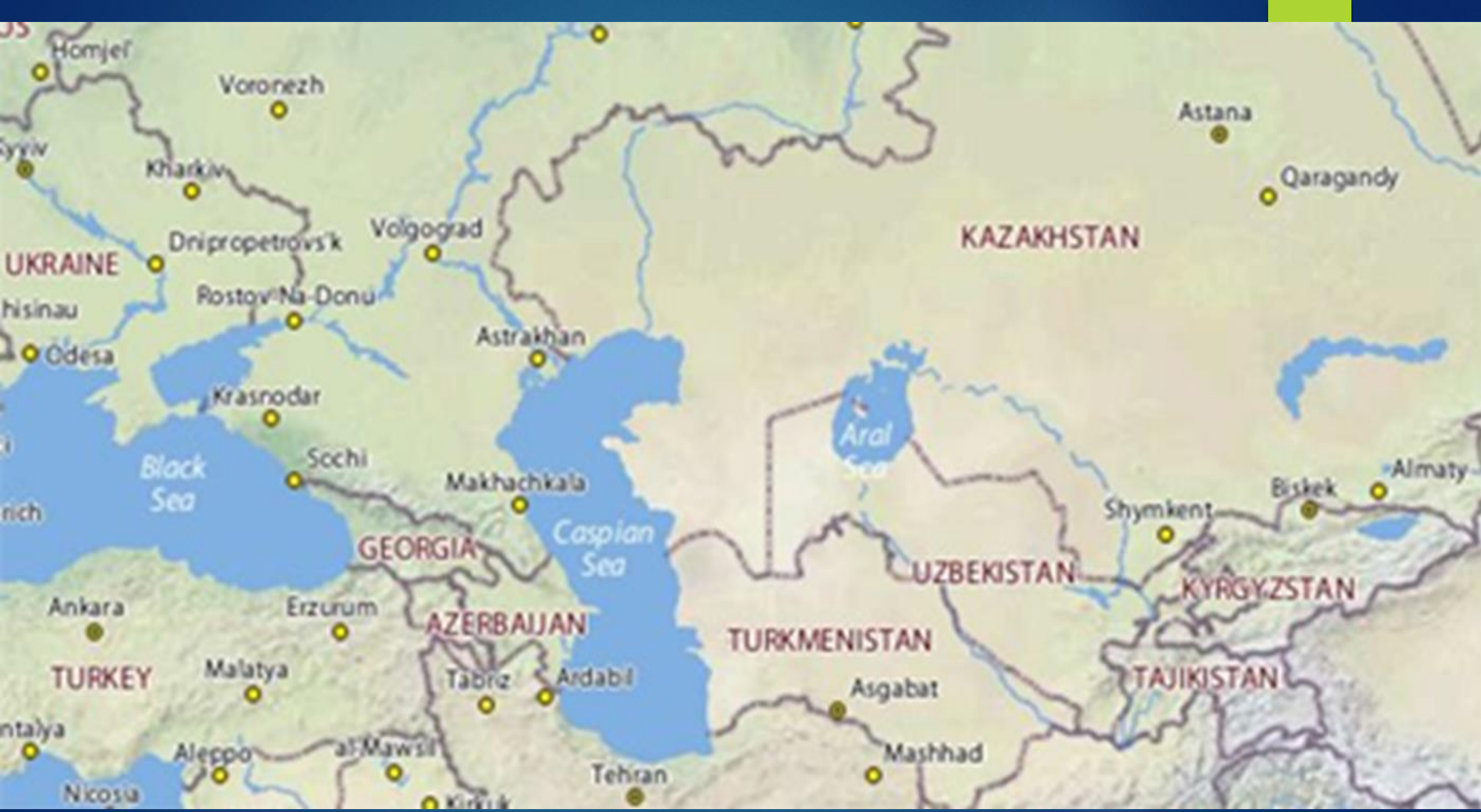


Religion in the Safavid Empire

- 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 cconvert
  - 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


Homjel'
Vororezh
Astana
Kharkiv
Qaragandy
Volgograd
KAZAKHSTAN
UKRAINE
Dnipropetrovs'k
Rostov-Na-Donu
Astrakhan
Odesa
Krasnodar
Aral
Sochi
Black Sea
Makhachkala
Caspian Sea
Almaty
Bishek
Shymkent
GEORGIA
UZBEKISTAN
KYRGYZSTAN
Ankara
Erzurum
AZERBAIJAN
TURKMENISTAN
TURKEY
Malatya
Tabriz
Ardabil
TAJIKISTAN
Asgabat
Aleppo
al Mawsil
Mashhad
Tehran
Nicosia

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