

Islamic Leaders 12th - 18th Centuries

Saladin (1137/1138–1193)

Famous for winning the Battle of Hattin in 1187, which paved the way for Islamic re-conquest of Jerusalem and other Holy Land cities in the Near East. During the subsequent Third Crusade, Saladin was unable to defeat the armies led by England's King Richard I (the Lionheart), resulting in the loss of much of this conquered territory. However, he was able to negotiate a truce with Richard I that allowed for continued Muslim control of Jerusalem.

Osman Ghazi (1258–1326)

Father of the Ottoman Empire, Osman was born in 1258 in the town of Sogut. After his ascension to throne, he gathered several Turcoman groups around himself and fought against Byzantines, collaborating with Alaaddin Keykubat of the Seljuks. When the Seljuk Empire remained rulerless after the exile of Alaaddin, Osman Gazi reunited them under his rule in 1299 marking the history as the foundation of the Ottoman Empire. Osman Gazi continued his campaigns against the remaining Byzantine Empire in the area along with his brothers, sons, and close supporters. He cut the Byzantine trade routes forcing local rulers to surrender. After 1320 he got sick so his sons continued to fight, capturing many towns from the Byzantines. He died of gout at the age of 68 in Sogut and buried in Bursa. During his rule, he married Mal Hatun first, from which he had a son, Orhan Gazi who later became the next sultan. After Mal Hatun he married Bala Hatun from which another son, Alaaddin was born who became his Grand Vizier when grown up. He had a total of 8 sons and 1 daughter. Osman Gazi was nicknamed as Black (Kara in Turkish), which according to an ancient Turcoman tradition signifies brave and heroic person. He was a tall man with a broad and high chest and long arms, dark tan, round face with a thin beard and long thick mustache, ram-nose, hazel eyes, thick eyebrows, had deep and fine voice, expert on horse riding, sword using, and battle strategies. He was fair, helped very much to the poor people, even giving them his own clothes if he saw a person in need. Besides military actions, Osman Gazi also established all new measures to form a new empire, such as bringing new laws based on Seljuk laws as well, adopting taxes, minting the first Ottoman coins (Akce), and so on.

Mehmed the Conqueror (1432-1481)

Mehmed II, also known as The Conqueror is one of the famous sultans of Ottoman Empire with his intelligence. Mehmed II ruled the Ottoman for a brief time, from 1444 to 1446, after his father. After that time Sultan Murad II renounced the throne but when he died Mehmed II ruled the Ottoman Empire from 1451 to 1481. Mehmet II was a genius statesman and a military leader who was also interested in literature, fine arts and monumental architecture. He was educated by famous scholar Aksemseddin and according to Ottoman historians he was speaking seven languages fluently.

Suleiman (Solomon) the Magnificent (1494 –1566)

Suleyman the Magnificent ruled the Ottoman Empire for 46 years between 1520 - 1566 and doubled his territory. This was a rising period for Istanbul, as it was for the whole Empire. Many valuable buildings were constructed during this period which survived until our days with no or little damage thanks to the great architect Sinan. The city was restored with a better plan including new dams, aqueducts and fountains, theological schools (medrese), caravanserai, Turkish baths, botanical gardens and bridges. The port of Golden Horn, of which the surveillance was made from Galata Tower, became one of the busiest ports. Some of the important monuments and mosques built during this period are: Suleymaniye Mosque and annexes, Sehzadebasi Mosque and establishments, Sultan Selim Mosque and establishments, Cihangir Mosque and Haseki establishments and baths built on behalf of the Hurrem Sultan (the only loved wife of the Sultan).

Safavid Empire (1502 – 1736)

Iranian dynasty whose establishment of Shī'ite Islam as the state religion of Iran was a major factor in the emergence of a unified national consciousness among the various ethnic and linguistic elements of the country. The Šafavids were descended from Sheykh Šafī al-Dīn (1253–1334) of Ardabīl, head of the Sufi order of Šafavīyeh (Šafawiyyah), but about 1399 exchanged their Sunni affiliation for Shī'ism. The founder of the dynasty, Ismā'īl I, as head of the Sufis of Ardabīl, won enough support from the local Turkmens and other disaffected heterodox tribes to enable him to capture Tabrīz from the Ak Koyunlu (Turkish: "White Sheep"), an Uzbek Turkmen confederation, and in July 1501 Ismā'īl was enthroned as shah, although his area of control was initially limited to Azerbaijan. In the next 10 years he subjugated the greater part of Iran and annexed the Iraqī provinces of Baghdad and Mosul. Despite the predominantly Sunni character of this territory, he proclaimed Shī'ism the state religion. In August 1514 Ismā'īl was seriously defeated at Chāldirān by his Sunni rival, the Ottoman sultan Selim I. Thereafter, the continuing struggle against the Sunnis—the Ottomans in the west and the Uzbeks in the northeast—cost the Šafavids Kurdistan, Diyarbakır, and Baghdad; the Šafavid capital had to be relocated at Ešfahān temporarily—permanently by about the early 17th century. Iran weakened appreciably during the reign of Ismā'īl's eldest son, Shah Tahmāsp I (1524–76), and persistent and unopposed Turkmen forays into the country increased under his incompetent successors. In 1588 'Abbās I was brought to the throne. Realizing the limits of his military strength, 'Abbās made peace with the Ottomans on unfavourable terms in 1590 and directed his

onslaughts against the Uzbeks. Meeting with little success, ʿAbbās engaged (1599) the Englishman Sir Robert Sherley to direct a major army reform. Three bodies of troops were formed, all trained and armed in the European manner and paid out of the royal treasury: the ghulāms (slaves), the tofangchīs (musketeers), and the topchīs (artillerymen). With his new army, ʿAbbās defeated the Turks in 1603, forcing them to relinquish all the territory they had seized, and captured Baghdad. He also expelled (1602, 1622) the Portuguese traders who had seized the island of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf early in the 16th century. Shah ʿAbbās's remarkable reign, with its striking military successes and efficient administrative system, raised Iran to the status of a great power. Trade with the West and industry expanded, communications improved. The capital, Eṣfahān, became the centre of Ṣafavid architectural achievement, manifest in the mosques Masjid-i Shāh and Masjid-i Sheykh Loṭfollāh and other monuments including the ʿAlī Qāpū, the Chehel Sotūn, and the Meydān-i Shāh. Despite the Ṣafavid Shīʿite zeal, Christians were tolerated and several missions and churches were built. After the death of Shah ʿAbbās I (1629), the Ṣafavid dynasty lasted for about a century, but, except for an interlude during the reign of Shah ʿAbbās II (1642–66), it was a period of decline. Eṣfahān fell to the Ghilzai Afghans of Qandahār in 1722. Seven years later Shah Ṭahmāsp II recovered Eṣfahān and ascended the throne, only to be deposed in 1732 by his Afshārid lieutenant Nadr Qolī Beg (the future Nādir Shāh).