

Lesson 4

Student Handout 4—Effects of Gunpowder Weapons in Different Societies

Use each vignette below to fill in the chart at the end of the lesson with the advantages and disadvantages of gunpowder weapons for each society. Your answer may go beyond the information in each vignette to make interpretations based on your own knowledge. Refer to a world map to locate these groups.

1. Russians under Ivan III

Grand Duke Ivan III (1462-1505) consolidated power over Muscovy. His Muscovite successor Ivan the Terrible (1533-1584) attacked the Mongol states along the Volga River and other rivers of Inner Eurasia to control vast new territories. Cannons were mounted on river barges and carried across frozen land on sleds. With his mobile guns, the new Russian leader, or tzar, dominated the territories without effective challenge from traditionally-armed groups.



This giant bronze cannon dated to 1586 was intended for defense of the walls of Moscow, but it was never fired.

Photo by R. Dunn

2. Siberian fur traders

From the ninth-century Vikings to the eighteenth-century Russians, the Inner Eurasian fur trade offered a path to wealth and power. With Russian military expansion along the Inner Eurasian river system, the fur trade kept pace with imperial control. As fur-bearing animals in western Russia were depleted, musket-armed Cossacks pushed eastward into Siberia. These newcomers used firepower to require indigenous people to give them furs as tribute, with serious penalties for failure to do it. Reaching the Pacific Ocean in 1638, the hunt for sea otter pelts enriched the fur trade. Russian fur traders explored and colonized the islands and coastlands of today's Alaska, Canada, and the US, reaching as far south as Bodega Bay north of San Francisco.¹⁷

¹⁷ Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 182-4.

3. Portuguese ship captains in the Indian Ocean

Portuguese ships, which were suited for the rough Atlantic Ocean, were designed to carry cannons on decks close to the waterline, with special gun ports to keep out the seawater. Ships carried guns on both sides. These cannons could blast the hulls of lighter Indian Ocean trading vessels with ease. Although they were newcomers to the Indian Ocean in 1498, the Portuguese used shipboard cannons during the following decades to force coastal rulers to accept their goods in trade or risk having their ships sunk and their ports bombarded. The Portuguese gained access to Chinese and Japanese ports. They also tried to restrict the passage of other European ships through the Strait of Malacca between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, until other Europeans with similar weapons challenged them. While the Portuguese failed to dominate the Indian Ocean or control trade for long, their cannon-bearing ships as well as their aggressive policies altered long-standing trade patterns in the region and set the stage for eventual European domination.¹⁸

4. The sultans of the Ottoman empire

Mehmet the Conqueror used expert gunners to build a huge cannon to help take the city of Constantinople in 1453, ending the Byzantine empire. The Ottoman sultans, already powerful, expanded their territory using a carefully-developed, loyal army. Using artillery and handguns in their annual campaigns, the Ottomans took lands in southern Europe, Southwest Asia, and North Africa. They built a navy on the Mediterranean to challenge the Venetians and others, and they used and protected the trade routes on the Red Sea and the Muslim holy cities of Makka (Mecca) and Madina (Medina). In the early sixteenth century, however, the Ottoman navy suffered defeat by the Portuguese navy at the Strait of Hormuz. Its armaments on light galleys were not a match for the cannons of the heavy Portuguese warships. The Ottoman navy did manage to protect the port of Aden and the entrance to the Red Sea, but they did not challenge the Portuguese on the open waters of the Indian Ocean again.¹⁹

5. European slave traders and African rulers

Tapping into trade networks in West Africa, European slave merchants made alliances to purchase captives of war from local African leaders. They offered Indian cloth, products of the Americas, and other goods to purchase slaves. A Dutch trader in 1700 wrote from the African Gold Coast, “The main military weapons are muskets or carbines, in the use of which these Africans are wonderfully skillful. ... We sell them very great quantities ... but we are forced to do this. For if we did not do it, they would easily get enough muskets from the English, or from the Danes, or from the Prussians. ...” By 1730 “the annual imports of guns into West Africa had reached the figure of 180,000. ... In meeting the heavy demand for arms, the flintlock proved crucial. It enhanced the military capability of its owners and furnished the means of violence for political organizations ...” that could make use of it. Trade and warfare went together in the formation of new African states that controlled land, labor, and resources such as gold.²⁰

¹⁸ “Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center, <http://www.indianoceanhistory.org/>

¹⁹ McNeill, *Age of Gunpowder Empires*, 14-15, 33-6.

²⁰ Wolf, *People without History*, 209-11.

6. North American fur traders

French and English fur traders, like their Siberian counterparts, enlisted the services of woodland American Indians to trap beavers and other fur-bearing animals for the rapidly-expanding hat trade in Europe. European forts on the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes were defended by artillery and soldiers bearing muskets. The Europeans spread the taste for metal, cloth, beads, and other goods, including guns, among the Indian peoples in the region. Relations among Indian groups changed because competition for fur-bearing territory provoked wars among them. And Europeans pushed farther and farther west as animal populations were depleted.²¹

7. North American Plains Indians

Apache, Shoshoni, Blackfoot, Comanche, and Dakota tribes were among the peoples that spread the use of horses and mounted warfare and hunting across the Great Plains. The Dakota received guns from the French, who armed them to compete with Indians who supported the English. The Dakota hunted buffalo on horseback using guns and came to dominate the northeastern plains, trading with European merchants on the Mississippi. Gradually, they gave up lives of cultivating the soil. Plains tribes preserved buffalo meat as pemmican and sold it to fur traders as they moved westward in Canada.²²

8. Japanese Samurai

The case of Japanese adoption of gunpowder weapons is remarkable. In 1543, a few Portuguese went to Japan bearing arquebuses, a type of matchlock musket. A local aristocratic leader bought examples of the handguns and gave them to his sword-smiths. The Japanese tradition of metalwork was highly developed, so it was easy for them to reproduce the simple guns. Interest in the new weapons grew among some Japanese clans, and the guns became widely produced and sold among military elites. Elite clan leaders equipped and trained lower-class Japanese farmers to use matchlocks in battle. Although guns required training, it was much less than the training samurai, or noble warriors, needed for their military skills. Firearms training proved an effective way for commanders to gain battlefield advantage. In 1584, this arms race led to victory by a commoner, Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Even though he tried to disarm the peasants and bring the samurai under central control, his death led to more warfare. The Tokugawa Shogunate was established in 1600. This long-lasting ruling group greatly limited the use of guns in Japan, restricting their manufacture and use, and giving the government control over them. The Shogun maintained peace and preserved the social status of the samurai. The tradition of the sword won out over the rule of gunpowder weapons. Although the Japanese became skilled in the manufacture and use of gunpowder weapons, Japan became the only country that rejected them following military success.²³

9. Ming and Qing emperors of China

The Chinese probably invented gunpowder and the earliest gunpowder weapons. However, the Ming emperors, after defeating the Mongols, were more interested in defense than offense. Moreover, early cannons were not reliable enough to be effective against nomadic warriors.

²¹ Ibid.

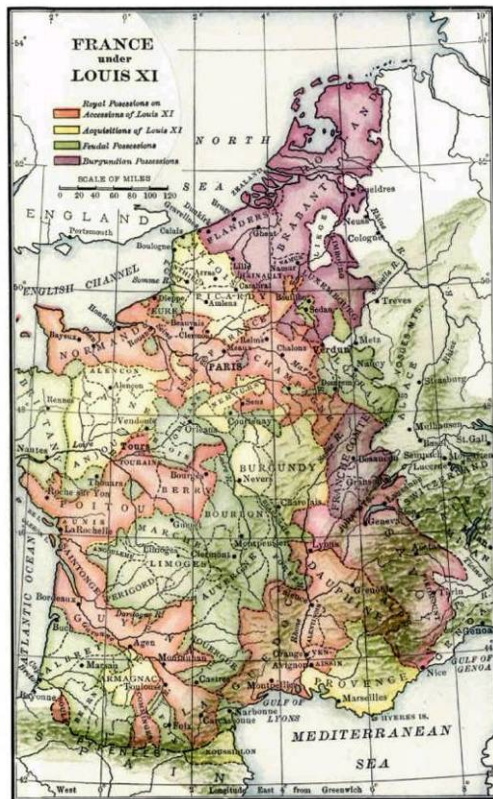
²² Wolf, *People without History*, 176-8.

²³ Michael S. Neiberg, *Warfare in World History* (London: Routledge, 2001), 37.

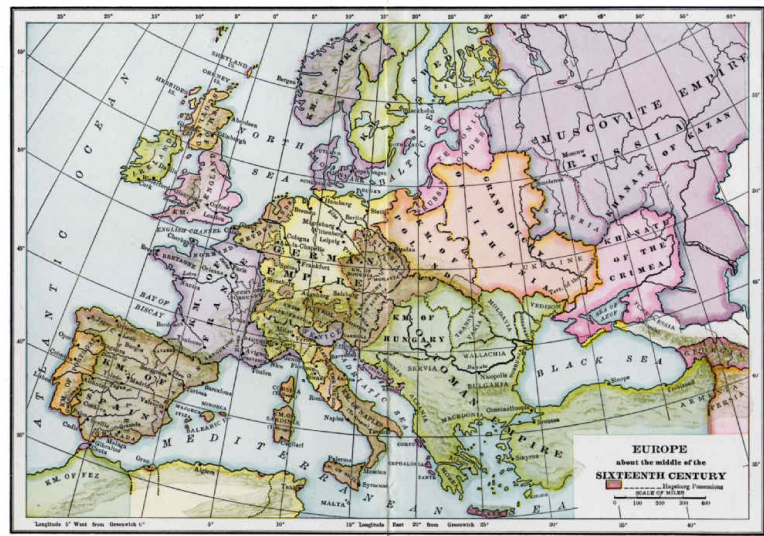
Unlike their European counterparts, Chinese rulers would not benefit from besieging towns and fortresses. Instead, they needed to defend their northeastern frontier, and for this they had to deploy a large infantry equipped with crossbows. Gunpowder and incendiary weapons were a supplement to traditional methods of warfare. Ming commanders studied superior Turkish, Portuguese, and Dutch artillery designs and ordered Chinese metal founders to copy them. China's traditional defenses and the distaste Confucian government officials had for professional soldiers resulted in a growing lag between China and lands further west in developing firearms technology.²⁴

10. France in the reign of Louis XI (1423-83) and in the Mid-Sixteenth Century²⁵

Compare the two maps of France and, using the text on gunpowder in the readings, infer and discuss the effects of gunpowder weapons on the French monarchy.



France under Louis XI (1423-83)
during the Hundred Years' War



Europe in the Mid-Sixteenth Century

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ The Project Gutenberg eBook of An Introduction to the History of Western Europe by James Harvey Robinson, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/26042/26042-h/26042-h.htm>

Lesson 4

Student Handout 4.2—Akbar's Attitudes toward Religion

Akbar was the third ruler of the Mughal Empire in India. He ruled from 1558 to 1603. Akbar and the other Mughal emperors were Muslims. The vast majority of the Indian subjects in the empire were Hindus.

In facing the challenge of ruling a multi-religious state, Akbar appears to have been strongly influenced by Sufism. He regularly visited the tomb in Ajmir of a renowned Sufi saint, who had established the Chishti order in India at the end of the thirteenth century. In 1569, Akbar, who was childless, visited Sheikh Salim Chishti, a Sufi saint from the same order who was living in a hermitage in Sikri. He wanted to get the saint's blessing, and he was gratified that the saint promised him three sons. Akbar's wife, who was a Hindu, soon became pregnant. When she was about to give birth a year later, the emperor sent her to the saint's hermitage. When the child was born, Akbar named the baby Salim, after the saint. He then ordered a new capital built at the small village of Sikri where Salim lived. He used Fatehpur Sikri as his capital from 1571 to 1584.

In 1578, at the age of 36, Akbar was reportedly sickened by the slaughter of animals during a hunt. Calling off the hunt, he appeared to have had a religious experience very much like the Sufi sense of achieving oneness with God. That same year he began to invite learned Hindu, Parsi (followers of Zoroaster), Jain, and Christian scholars to debate religious issues with one another. He was so open and tolerant during these debates that the Jesuit missionaries who attended dared hope they might be able to convert the emperor.

Akbar also instituted a number of reforms intended to placate his Hindu subjects and make them more loyal to him. He showed his tolerance by allowing Salim's mother to worship a sacred tulsi tree she had placed in the center of her courtyard at Fatehpur Sikri. She also placed images of various Hindu deities in her courtyard walls. Many of Akbar's wives were Hindu, and while most of these marriages had been arranged for political purposes, their influence on him must have been considerable.

In 1562, Akbar abolished the practice of enslaving prisoners of war and their families and no longer made them convert to Islam. In 1563, he repealed the tax on pilgrims. The next year he did away with the humiliating tax on non-Muslims, making Hindus and Muslims equal.

Akbar also established a translation department and ordered scholars to translate the Hindu epics into Persian so that non-Hindus could come to understand and appreciate them. He encouraged the use of Hindi as well as Urdu and Persian at the court. He adopted a semi-vegetarian diet, meat only during a few months of the year. He forbade the consumption of beef and other red meat. If a Hindu had been converted to Islam in childhood, he was given the option of becoming Hindu again if he wished. He discouraged child marriage but encouraged voluntary marriages between Hindus and Muslims. He awarded jobs in his government on the basis of merit and

service to him, and he also appointed Hindus to prominent positions. Out of 137 high officials (*mansabdars*), 14 were Hindu. He also allowed Christians to try to convert people in India.

In 1581, Akbar proclaimed himself the head of a new faith, which he called Din-i-Ilahi (Divine Faith). He proclaimed that it would include the best elements of Islam, Hinduism, [Zoroastrianism](#), and Christianity. The next year he held a council whose purpose was to take the best ideas from all these faiths and create that true religion, “not losing what is good in any one religion while gaining whatever is better in another.” He meant to have the scholars determine those “good things.”

Borrowing ideas from Zoroastrianism in creating his new faith, he tried to make the sun the center of worship, arguing that worshipping the sun was a means to worship Allah. When his subjects came into his presence, they cried out “Allah Akbar” which means “God is great,” but which can also be interpreted as “Akbar is God.” Picturing Akbar sitting at dawn in the Public Audience hall at Fatehpur Sikri as the rising sun fell on his face, we can almost hear him proclaim: “The very sight of kings has been held to be a part of divine worship. They have been styled conventionally the shadow of God, and indeed to behold them is a means of calling to mind the Creator, and suggests the protection of the Almighty.”

Din-i-Ilahi never materialized as an organized religion. Many of the leaders in his court may have feared that Akbar’s main motivation was neither tolerance nor religion, but an attempt to strengthen his own position as the unquestioned ruler of India. In addition, the *ulama*, that is, the Muslim religious leaders who were the guardians of Islamic law, objected to what appeared to them Akbar’s attempt to take over their authority. In addition, other groups that had come into the subcontinent had eventually been absorbed into Hindu society. The *ulama* feared that Akbar’s policies of religious tolerance might result in Islam meeting the same fate.

Lesson 4

Student Handout 4.3—Emperor Aurangzeb’s Attitudes toward Non-Muslims

When Aurangzeb became ruler of the Mughal Empire in 1658, Mughal India was still very much a multicultural society. Emperor Aurangzeb, like Akbar, had to decide what policy he would employ with the various groups of different faiths under his rule. Personally, Aurangzeb was a strict Muslim. He avoided pleasures of the senses, ate no animal food, and drank only water. Since the prophet Muhammad had said everyone should have a trade, Aurangzeb made skull-caps. He knew the Qur’an by heart and copied it twice. Although he could not make the pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*), he provided facilities for pilgrims.

The Indian Rajputs were the pick of the warrior class of India. It was up to Aurangzeb to decide whether he would invite them to serve him as loyal servants or treat them as his most foe. Aurangzeb felt he had to curb any possibility that Rajput power would increase, as well as strive to keep the provincial governors from giving their prestige to their sons and trying to found competing dynasties. He may also have felt he should try to breathe new life into the Mughal army, whom many felt had become pale copies of the Muslim warriors who had originally invaded India in the early sixteenth century.

To Aurangzeb, Hinduism and the other sects, the religions of the majority of his subjects, were mischievous and idol-worshipping and should be persecuted, even stamped out. He employed a variety of methods, some of which are listed below:

- He suppressed music and dancing at court.
- He ordered the destruction of Hindu temples (1659).
- He banned the celebration of Hindu festivals.
- He ordered all provincial governors “to destroy with a willing hand the schools and temples of the infidels and put an entire stop to their religious practices and teaching” (1669).
- He reimposed the *jizya*, a tax that all non-Muslims had to pay personally, but not if one converted (1679).
- He gave converts to Islam special recognition and, sometimes, influential government jobs.
- He removed hundreds of Hindus from their government positions when they refused to convert.
- When there was a quarrel over land between a Muslim and non-Muslim, he decreed that the Muslim should get the non-Muslim’s property.
- He reimposed the pilgrim tax.
- He proclaimed that Hindus should not dress like Muslims, nor ride a horse or elephant or be transported in a palanquin.

Lesson 4

Student Handout.4.5—Guru Nanak and the Origin of Sikhism

By the fifteenth century, many of the Muslims living in India were observing caste distinctions, visiting Hindu temples, and adapting many Hindu customs and conventions associated with marriage and other events. The stage was set for the emergence of a faith that merged the principles common to Islam and Hinduism.

Like the Reformation in Europe, this Indian movement, known in history as Sikhism, was basically a protest against religious dogma, ritual, and intolerance. Its believers taught that personal ethics were the kernel of religion and that the form and place of worship were of little consequence. They also taught that Hinduism and Islam had the same basic values; only the terminology was different. They evolved a form of religious poetry with a vocabulary that borrowed liberally from the sacred texts of both Hindus and Muslims. These teachings had a spontaneity that appealed to the masses. The founder of the Sikh faith was Guru Nanak (1469-1539).

Guru Nanak was more concerned with spreading religious tolerance than with founding a new community. His teaching, however, fired the imagination of Punjab peasants, and even during his lifetime, a large group of followers gathered around him. At first, they were just known as his disciples (“shish” in Sanskrit). Sometime later, these disciples became a homogeneous people whose faith was based exclusively on the teachings of Nanak. The Shish became the “Sikhs.”

Guru Nanak was content to be a teacher. He laid no claims to divinity. He did not claim his writing to be prophecy nor his words to be a sacred message. His teaching was against insincerity and humbug, and his life was patterned after what he taught.

Guru Nanak ignored religious and caste distinctions and took as his associates a Muslim musician and a low-caste Hindu. He personally went to the Hindu places of pilgrimage and demonstrated to worshippers the absurdity of these rituals. Likewise, he went on a pilgrimage to Muslim shrines and reprimanded religious leaders who transgressed the injunctions of the Qur’an. He was acclaimed by both communities, and on his death both clamored for his body—the Muslims wanting to bury him and the Hindus wanting to cremate him. Even today, he is regarded as a symbol of harmony between Hindus and Muslims.

In fifty years of travel and teaching, Guru Nanak had attracted followers who primarily dissented from both Hinduism and Islam. It was left to his successors to mold this group into a community with its own language, literature, institutions, and traditions.

Source: Adapted from the introduction to Khushwant Singh, *Jupji, the Sikh Prayer* (London: Royal Indian, Pakistan, and Ceylon Society, 1952), 1-23.

Lesson 5

Student Handout 5.2— Islam Spreads throughout Southeast Asia

The spread of Islam in Southeast Asia was largely peaceful and voluntary. Throughout the area, Muslim merchants, sailors, and Sufi teachers brought their faith to the urban entrepôts along the coast of Sumatra and the northern coast of Java. Islamization and urbanization went hand-in-hand as new trading cities sprang up on both the mainland and the archipelago.

By 1500, there was a significant Islamic presence along the coasts of Sumatra, Malaysia, and Java, and during the next century-and-a-half, the new faith moved inland. Under the rule of the central kingdom of Majapahit, which the Javanese consider their Golden Age, the kings had remained steadfastly Hindu-Buddhist. However, after Javanese Muslims conquered Majapahit in 1527, the spread of Islam to the interior accelerated.

Although political and economic factors contributed to the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia, its acceptance in the region, as in the Indian subcontinent, was largely due to Sufi mystics and the way that the Sufi brand of Islam resonated with local, particularly Javanese mysticism.

By 1600, Makasar, a major trading city in eastern Indonesia, had mushroomed from a small village into an urban center of some fifty thousand people. A Dutch observer wrote in 1607 of a city where “goats, buffaloes, and pigs abound ... [and] where women walk naked above the waist.”³ Only 40 years later, another visitor wrote that in Manaskara “there were no hogs” and “the women are entirely covered from head to foot, in such fashion that not even their faces can be seen.”⁴ Clearly ritual aspects of Islamization, in the short span of 47 years, had taken hold among these local people. However, in many ways, “the old culture grew and lived on in a more-or-less Islamic garb.”

On a deeper level, the process of Islamization was far slower and took many generations. Mystical Sufi Islam, especially in Java, gradually blended with the existing Hindu-Buddhist mystical traditions. In this process, the local elite would adopt Islamic rituals and practices such as burial customs, circumcision, ritual prayers, the *hajj*, and certain dietary restrictions, but also maintain their earlier beliefs in spirits, and especially their reverence for Ratu Kidul, the Goddess of the Southern Ocean, a decidedly non-Islamic belief. At the same time, as the Javanese and other indigenous groups were experiencing a process of Islamization, Arab and other foreign Muslims living in the ports were going through a process of Javanization. These dual processes resulted in an amalgamation of the identities: the Javanese thought of themselves as both Javanese and Muslim.

Mataram in central Java, one of the strongest states during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, exemplifies the blending of indigenous and Islamic beliefs. Senapati (1584-1601), the

³ Anthony Reid, *Charting the Shape of Early Southeast Asia* (Bangkok, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 1999), 25.

⁴ Ibid.

first Mataram ruler, is said to have spent three days before he began to rule in Ratu Kidul's underwater palace. Sultan Agung (1613-1645), the most famous Mataram ruler, made a pilgrimage to the burial site of a *wali* (one of the Muslim holy men who are believed to have brought Islam to Java) probably to “harness to his purpose the supernatural powers of Islam.”³ ... When he revised the calendar, he adopted the Muslim year of 354-55 days but retained the existing Javanese starting date. This slow process of Islamization reached its height in Southeast Asia between 1550 and 1650.

Source: Qtd. from Donald Johnson, “Rethinking the Rise of European Hegemony: Asia in World History, 1450-1750,” *Education about Asia* 12 (Spring 2007): 20-1.

³ M. C. Ricklefs, “Six Centuries of Islamization in Java,” in Nehemia Levtzion, *Conversion to Islam* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979), 105.