Name: _____

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Muslims in India and the Mughal Empire

Arab merchant sailors set up trading posts along the coast of India by the seventh century. These merchants practiced Islam, a monotheistic faith very different from Hinduism, the traditional religion of the subcontinent. For the next several centuries, Muslims remained a small minority, living mainly in coastal settlements and in the northwest.

Muslim Conquests

Muslim leaders called sultans invaded northern India and set up small kingdoms. During their conquests, some sultans destroyed Hindu temples and imposed special taxes on subjects who kept their traditional beliefs. By 1206, Muslim rulers established a sultanate, or kingdom, in Delhi, a major center of trade in northern India.

The Mughal Empire

In the sixteenth century, a new group of invaders called the Mughals came from Central Asia. Their leader, Babur, became king at only 12, but enemies soon drove him from power. After years of trying to win back his homeland, Babur gave up and turned his attention south toward India.

In 1526, Babur's forces captured Delhi despite being outnumbered. He had lost his homeland, but now ruled a far wealthier kingdom. His victory founded the Mughal Empire, which would eventually expand across nearly the entire subcontinent.

Babur did not live long enough to enjoy the fruits of his victory. He died only four years after capturing Delhi. Under his descendants, the Mughal court became one of the most powerful and luxurious in the world.

Akbar

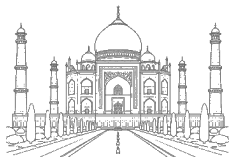
Babur's grandson, Akbar, ruled for nearly fifty years and expanded the empire across much of northern India. His conquests gave the empire wealthy trading cities and access to sea routes connecting India with Europe and the Middle East. Unlike some earlier Muslim rulers, he did not force Hindus to convert. He ended the special tax on non-Muslims and appointed Hindus to important positions in his government. He even married a Hindu princess and encouraged her to practice her faith.

Mughal Art and Architecture

The Mughals brought Persian and Central Asian traditions to India, where they blended with local customs. Persian became the language of the Mughal court, while Hindu and Muslim artists worked together to create new styles of painting and architecture. Mughal rulers built massive forts, palaces, mosques, tombs, and gardens, often decorated with intricate carvings and colorful stone.

Mughal architecture remains one of the most visible reminders of Muslim rule in India. Huge domes, graceful arches, slender towers, and carefully planned gardens became trademarks of Mughal design. Centuries after the dynasty fell, these buildings stand among India's most famous landmarks. Later architects adapted the style for grand palaces, government halls, and hotels worldwide.

The Taj Mahal



Shah Jahan ruled the Mughal Empire from Agra, a thriving trade hub in northern India. When his wife died in childbirth in 1631, he ordered a magnificent mausoleum, or grand tomb, built for her on the banks of the Yamuna River. About twenty thousand workers spent more than twenty years building the white marble structure we know today as the Taj Mahal. Its central dome rises above four corner towers, while reflecting pools and symmetrical gardens lead visitors toward the monument.

The Taj Mahal is one of the most celebrated landmarks on Earth and has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1983. The organization calls the monument "the greatest architectural achievement" of Indo-Islamic art, renowned for its balance, symmetry, and craftsmanship.

Islam in India Today

Today, India is a Hindu-majority nation, but it is also home to one of the largest Muslim populations in the world. Its 213 million Muslims account for about one in every seven people. Ranking third globally behind only Indonesia and Pakistan, Islam remains the nation's second-largest faith, more than a thousand years after the first Muslim communities appeared on the subcontinent.

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Name: _____

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Fill in the Blanks

Muslim m__r__h__n__s began sailing along the coast of India by the s__v__n__h century, but Muslims remained a small m__n__r__ty on the subcontinent for h__n__r__ds of years. Later, Muslim warriors c__n__u__r__d parts of n__r__h__n India and established s__l__i__a__es. In the sixteenth century, B__b__r founded the M__g__al Empire after capturing D__l__i.

Babur's g__a__ds__n Akbar expanded the empire across much of northern I__d__a. His conquests brought w__r__i__g trading cities under Mughal control. A__b__r treated H__n__us more fairly than some earlier Muslim rulers. He ended a special t__x on n__n-M__s__i__s and appointed Hindus to important government positions.

The Mughals blended P__r__i__n and C__n__r__l Asian traditions with I__d__an culture. This combination produced new styles of a__t and a__c__i__e__t__re. The most famous example is the T__j M__h__l, a magnificent t__mb built by Shah J__h__n for his wife.

Answer in Complete Sentences

1. Who were the Mughals?

_____

_____

_____

★2. Give an example of how Akbar was more tolerant of the traditional religion of India than his predecessors.

_____

_____

_____

3. How does the author describe Mughal architecture?

_____

_____

_____

4. Why did Shah Jahan construct the Taj Mahal?

_____

_____

_____

_____

★ This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.

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