The Simple AP® World History Unit 3 Cheat Sheet

3.1 Empires Expand: Overview

Why Land Empires Grew

Gunpowder weapons (cannons, muskets) let rulers conquer walled cities & hold big lands.

Centralization: rulers built armies, bureaucracies & tax systems to control many different peoples.

Empire	Region	Religion
Ottoman	Anatolia, Balkans	Sunni Islam
Safavid	Persia (Iran)	Shia Islam
Mughal	South Asia	Islam
Qing	China	Confucian
Russian	Eurasia	Orthodox

Expansion Patterns

Rivalries: Ottomans vs. Safavids (Sunni vs. Shia Islam) fought over land in the Middle East.

Russia pushed east across Siberia for furs; the Qing pushed west into Central Asia & Tibet.

Trade & taxes: empires taxed farmers & controlled trade routes like the Silk Roads.

Other Empires

Songhai grew rich from Saharan trade; the **Aztec** & **Inca** ruled large empires in the Americas.

Europe: kings like Louis XIV claimed divine right & ruled as absolute monarchs over nobles.

Limits: rivals, revolts & distance slowed growth.

⚠ Don't just say "gunpowder empire"; explain HOW the weapons helped expansion.

✓ Know 1 ruler, 1 policy & 1 building per empire.

The Ottoman Empire

Rise & Peak

1453: Mehmed II used giant cannons to take Constantinople, ending the Byzantine Empire.

Suleiman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566): expanded into Hungary & reformed the laws.

Ruling a Diverse Empire

Devshirme: Christian boys from the Balkans were taken, converted & trained as soldiers or officials.

Janissaries: elite soldiers loyal only to the sultan, which helped him control the nobles.

Millet system: Christians & Jews ran their own religious & legal affairs inside the empire.

Tax farming: officials paid for the right to collect taxes & kept any extra they collected.

Legitimacy

Sultan as caliph: claimed to lead Sunni Islam & built grand mosques like the Süleymaniye.

Trade: Istanbul controlled Europe–Asia routes; tolls pushed Europe to seek sea routes.

Policy	Purpose
Devshirme	Loyal elite
Millets	Manage diversity
Tax farming	Steady revenue

1529: the siege of Vienna failed.

⚠ Tax farming raised money fast but led officials to overtax the peasant farmers.

✓ Ottoman tolerance (millets) contrasts w/ the Safavids' forced conversion to Shia Islam.

Safavid & Mughal Empires

Safavid Persia (1501–1736)

Shah Ismail made Shia Islam the state religion & pushed the Sunni majority to convert.

Chaldiran (1514): Ottoman guns beat Safavid cavalry; the Sunni–Shia rivalry shaped the region.

Shah Abbas I: built a gunpowder army, moved the capital to Isfahan & grew the silk trade.

Safavid tension: forced conversion made Persia a rival of the Sunni Ottomans, not an ally.

Mughal India (1526–1857)

Babur founded the empire in 1526; Muslim Mughal rulers governed a mostly Hindu population.

Akbar: tolerant ruler who ended the jizya tax on non-Muslims & married a Hindu princess.

Zamindars: local landholders who collected taxes for the Mughal state & kept a share of them.

Aurangzeb: brought back the jizya & expanded south, which angered Hindus & Sikhs.

Mughal economy: cotton textiles & a huge population made India one of the richest states.

Mughal decline: wars, revolts & weak heirs after 1707 let the British East India Co. gain power.

Culture

Taj Mahal & Isfahan's mosques show rulers using huge buildings to display their power.

⚠ Akbar was tolerant & Aurangzeb was not, so don't call all Mughal rulers tolerant.

✓ Akbar vs. Aurangzeb is a perfect example of change over time within 1 empire.

Qing China & Russia

Qing Dynasty (1644–1912)

Manchus from the northeast conquered Ming China in 1644, a minority ruling the Han majority.

Kept Confucian rule: kept the civil service exams & paired Manchu & Han officials together.

Queue: Han men had to wear the Manchu hairstyle to show loyalty to the new dynasty.

Kangxi: expanded into Taiwan, Mongolia & Tibet; supported Confucian learning & scholars.

Qianlong: the empire reached its largest size; he limited European trade to the port of Canton.

Qing tension: Han resistance & later rebellions show the limits of minority rule.

Russian Empire

Ivan IV ("the Terrible"): first crowned tsar; expanded east & crushed the nobles (boyars).

Siberia: Cossacks moved east for furs & reached the Pacific Ocean by the mid-1600s.

Peter the Great: Westernized the army & government; built St. Petersburg on the Baltic Sea.

Serfdom: more peasants were bound to the land, giving nobles labor & the tsar loyal landowners.

Russia vs. Qing: both expanded into Central Asia & Siberia & met at the Amur River.

Ming → Qing: same capital, same exams.

⚠ Peter's reforms were top-down; serfdom & absolute rule by the tsar stayed in place.

✓ Qing & Mughal = minority rulers of a majority population; a strong comparison pair.

3.2 Administration & Legitimacy

Methods to Consolidate Power

Method	Examples
Bureaucratic elites	Ottoman devshirme, Qing exams
Military professionals	Janissaries, Qing banners
Tax collection	Ottoman tax farms, zamindars
Tribute & labor	Aztec tribute, Inca mit'a
Monumental art	Taj Mahal, Versailles

Bureaucracy: trained officials loyal to the ruler balanced the power of old landed nobles.

Military: standing armies w/ gunpowder weapons, paid by the ruler so they stayed loyal.

Legitimacy

Religion: rulers claimed God's support: caliph, divine right, Mandate of Heaven.

Buildings: palaces & temples like Versailles, the Taj Mahal & the Inca Sun Temple showed power.

Revenue

Inca mit'a: required labor on state projects like roads & terraces instead of paying money.

Aztec tribute: conquered city-states sent goods like cloth & cacao to Tenochtitlan.

⚠ An LEQ on HOW states kept power wants specific methods + examples, not lists.

✓ Group your evidence by method: military, bureaucracy, religion & taxes collected.

3.3 Belief Systems

Christianity Splits

Protestant Reformation: Luther's 95 Theses (1517) attacked indulgences & papal power.

Spread: the printing press & support from German princes spread Protestant ideas quickly.

Counter-Reformation: the Council of Trent restated beliefs; Jesuits spread Catholicism.

Wars of religion: the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) ended w/ the Peace of Westphalia.

Ex: Henry VIII broke from Rome (1534) to form the Church of England, a political move.

Islam Divides Politically

Sunni Ottomans vs. Shia Safavids: religious differences fueled wars & shaped borders.

New Faiths

Sikhism: founded by Guru Nanak in Punjab; blends ideas from Hinduism & Islam & rejects caste.

Akbar's Din-i Ilahi: a court faith that mixed religions; it gained few followers.

Development	Political effect
Reformation	Weakened papal power
Sunni–Shia rivalry	Ottoman–Safavid wars
Sikhism	Later Mughal conflict

Catholic missions spread to the Americas & Asia.

⚠ The Reformation was religious AND political; kings used it to gain power over the Church.

✓ For SAQs, name a specific cause or effect (the printing press, the Peace of Westphalia).

3.4 Comparing Land-Based Empires

Comparison Table

Empire	Diversity policy	Admin tool	Decline factor
Ottoman	Millets	Devshirme	Corruption
Safavid	Forced Shia	Shah's army	Afghan invasion
Mughal	Akbar tolerant	Zamindars	Aurangzeb wars
Qing	Han + Manchu	Exams	Rebellions later

Similarities

All used gunpowder armies, bureaucracies & religion or art to justify rule over diverse peoples.

Minority rule: the Mughals (Muslim over Hindu) & Qing (Manchu over Han) needed majority support.

Differences

Religion: Ottoman millets & Akbar's tolerance vs. Safavid forced conversion & Aurangzeb's limits.

Revenue: tax farming (Ottoman), zamindars (Mughal), mit'a labor (Inca) & tribute (Aztec).

Ex: Ottomans recruited outsiders (devshirme) while the Qing kept Han scholars through exams.

Continuity & Change

Continuity: farming economies & peasant taxes.

Change: bigger, more centralized states.

⚠ A comparison needs a similarity or difference AND the reason why it existed.

✓ Compare 2 empires on 1 category at a time.

Unit 3 on the Exam

Exam Format

Section	Questions	Time	Weight
MCQ	55	55 min	40%
SAQ	3	40 min	20%
DBQ	1	60 min	25%
LEQ	1	40 min	15%

Unit 3 = 12–15% of the exam & often pairs w/ Unit 4 (also 1450–1750) in question sets.

Likely Questions

SAQ: "Identify 1 way the Ottomans consolidated power" → devshirme or Janissaries + a detail.

LEQ: "Compare how 2 land-based empires legitimized rule" → pick 2 empires & 1 category.

MCQ stimulus: maps, monuments or royal edicts; identify the purpose & context.

Thesis Template

Comparison: "Both the Mughals & Qing used X to rule majorities; however, the Mughals... while..."

Causation: "Gunpowder weapons & strong bureaucracies enabled expansion b/c... & b/c..."

Rubric Reminder

LEQ: thesis (1), context (1), evidence (2), reasoning & complexity (2) = 6 points in total.

DBQ: source 2+ docs (purpose, audience).

⚠ Date your evidence: Unit 3 is c. 1450–1750.

✓ For each empire: founder, peak ruler, religion, 1 policy & 1 cause of its decline.