

Power & Trade in the Ottoman Empire

- ❖ Ottoman rulers enhanced their prestige through public works and the patronage of scholars. Resources were directed to construct mosques, government buildings, palaces, bridges, fountains, schools, hospitals and soup kitchens for the poor.
- ❖ The Ottomans took to beautifying their principle cities, especially Istanbul. Dilapidated and deserted after the conquest, it was transformed into a city of over 1 million inhabitants. At its heart was the great Topkapi Palace.
 - The Palace housed government offices, the mint, and meeting places for the Imperial Court. At its heart was the sultan's residence with its harem, gardens, pleasure pavilions, and a repository for the most sacred possessions of the empire.

Trade

- ❖ By controlling the east-west trade route, and later the north-south route, the empire was able to maintain its trade supremacy for close to four centuries.
 - During the 15th and 16th centuries, when Ottomans emerged as a great power, the primary goal of trade was the self-sufficiency of the empire. Ottoman trade focussed on imports while exports were prohibited – this is a dramatic contrast to European policies which encouraged mercantilism (imports were discouraged and exports were encouraged).



- The Ottoman's economic policy would be devastating to their development during the Industrial Revolution that swept Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries.
- English merchants introduced tobacco to the Ottomans around 1600, claiming it was useful for medicinal purposes. It spread rapidly.
- The Ottoman Empire also took to coffee and sugar, and by the 1700s were being supplied solely by American producers and European merchants.
- Coffeehouses (places to drink coffee and smoke tobacco) popped up all over the Ottoman Empire. Later sultans tried to curb the consumption of these items, but to no avail.
- Toward the middle of the 19th century it was found that traditional Ottoman industries could not compete with the more productive European ones, and many Ottoman industries started to collapse. The empire tried to react by developing new economic policies during the 19th century, including free-trade, but development was stalled by the First World War (1914-1918).

