KAY 492
Turkish Administrative History

Week 1
Ortaylı, pp. 15-29

Course Introduction &
Middle Ages Iranian Sassanian
(Sassanid) Administration
Course Objective

☐ Better understand the Ottoman Empire & the Republic of Turkey
  ■ Interactions between the Eastern & Western Worlds
  ■ 3 Roman Empires born out of the Mediterranean Basin

☐ Administrative institutions & traditions
  ■ Guides in reforming government

☐ Comparative institutional analysis
  ■ Dimensions of time & space
Course Outline

☐ Geography/Space
  ■ Main Focus: The Mediterranean Basin
    ☐ Balkans, Middle East, North Africa

☐ Turkish history and social order is a Mediterranean synthesis
  ■ Turkish Language
    ☐ Many words & expressions from Arabic, Persian, Italian, Greek, etc.
    ☐ Key Concept: Lingua Franca:
      ■ Bridge/common language, used for communication between speakers of different languages, among elites

■ Turkish Cuisine
  ☐ A mixture of Balkan & Middle Eastern cuisines
Introduction: Middle East & the Mediterranean Region

- First agricultural activities near rivers
  - Emergence of urbanization, organized societies & states

- Cradle of Civilizations
  - Emergence of great empires that shape history
    - Small states cannot survive in arid and sparsely-populated areas

- Countries where urbanization, bureaucracy and writing emerged
  - A mosaic of religions & languages
  - Cultural interaction & assimilation
Middle East & the Mediterranean

- Simple transportation & communication technologies
  - Based on organic energy
- Inadequate means of control
  - Bureaucratic, postal & monetary systems
- (De)Centralized state?
  - Monetary & administrative control, construction & transportation duties mostly performed by local units
  - Local control of peasants & artisans
Sasanian Iran (224-651)

- East-West Competition
  - Persians vs. Greeks
  - Parthians vs. Romans
  - Alexander the Great vs. Achaemenid Empire

- After 224, Sasanians & Eastern Roman Empire
  - A classical model of Middle Eastern/Mediterranean empire
  - Their wars/fighting eased Islamic Conquests
  - The empire collapsed after the loss of Al-Qauddissiyah (Kadisiye) Battle in 635
7. ve 8. yy'da
Dört Halife Devri

Hz. Muhammed'in ölümü
srasındaki yerler (632)
Dört Halife Devrinde alınan
yerler (632–661)
Emeviler zamanında
alan yerler (661–750)

• Araplar tarafından
kuran şehirler

• Arapların iğgat ettiği
yerlerin sınırları

• Muharebe

1000 km
Sasanian Iran: Administrative System

- System of a grand-vizier (wuzurg framadar) & viziers
- Inventory of land & population
  - Tax assessment & identification of taxpayers
  - Forecasting and recording harvests
  - Establishment of different taxation rates for different products
- **RESULT:** Decreasing uncertainty & corruption in government revenues
Taxation

- Tax on Land: «Haraç»
  - Varies due to produce type & land productivity (Varies between 1/3 & 1/6 of the harvest)
  - Elderly, children & women are not subject to this tax

- Head (Capitation, Poll) Tax: «Gezit» (Then «cizye»)
  - From urban dwellers, Jews & Christians; not from peasants
  - Varies according to social status & income
  - Brings exemption from draft/military service
Sasanian Iran: Social Structure

- **Cast system**, similar to India
  - “Every member of the society should be content with the place and work given by the God»
  - Very limited mobility among different casts

- **Casts:**
  - Priests (Judges, High-level bureaucrats)
  - Warriors
  - Scribes (Medicine, teaching, mid & low-level bureaucrats)
  - Common people (Peasants & artisans)-main tax burden & forced labor

- Clear status for each group: House size, rules for consumption
  - Silk clothes, privileges to ride a horse, etc.
Sassanian Army

- Army commanders come from 7 noble families
- Infantry
  - Peasants as unpaid soldiers
- Cavalry & War Elephants
- Navy
Sasanian Iran: Religion & Language

- A mosaic of religions & languages
- Key concept: **Caesaropapism**
  - One person holding both divine & worldly power
    - Caesar (Emperor, Head of state) & Pope (Religious leader) being the same person
- There is not just one official language
  - Multi-language bureaucratic documents
- Religious Heterogeneity
  - Zoroastrianism (established state religion), Judaism, Christianity (Nestorian Church)...
  - Apostasie/Religion change is punishable by death
  - Mazdakian Revolts (Demands for social equality reforms)
Sassanian Empire & Its Neighbors
Sasanian Iran: Central & Provincial Administration

- Providing a model administrative systems for ancient Middle Eastern empires
  - System of a grand-vizier & viziers
  - Shahanshah (King of Kings) is also the supreme judge
- Provinces (Satrapdoms)
  - The country is divided into administrative-military units
    - In each unit, there is a viceroy & a military commander
    - Dehqans: knights & minor land-owners
      - managed local affairs such as taxation & draft
  - An advanced transportation & postal system
Sasanian Iran: Culture

- Mirrors of Kings (Nasihatname) Literature
  - Firdevsi: Şehname
    - Keeping the old (Pre-Islamic) Iranian culture alive
    - Influenced Nizamülmülk’s Siyasetname

- When the Sasanian Empire was conquered by the Islamic Empire
  - Iran is Islamized
  - Iranian culture & state system became a model for the growing Islamic Empire