Week 7
Ottoman Central Administration
Ortaylı, 2007:169-222
Unannounced Pop-Quiz Questions

Please answer the following questions:

1. Explain what «primogenituras» and «senyoritas» systems mean (1 pt.)
2. State the arguments for and against whether the Ottoman Empire was a state ruled by sharia or not (2 pt.s)
3. What were the three sources/formulas of political legitimacy for the Ottomans? (2 pt.s)
Ottoman Government Organization

- Central and Provincial Governments
- Central Government
  1. Sultan and Palace
  2. Divan-ı Hümayun and affiliated bureaus
  3. Vezir- Azam and Bab-ı Ali
  4. Bab-i Fetva and Ilmiyye Organization
  5. Defterdarlık (Treasury) and Finance Organization
  6. Kapıkulu (Centralized Army) and Navy
Sultan and Palace

The Sultan was the head of the central organization
  - In the early days, "Bey" or "Han" titles were used

Military Tradition:
  - A simple protocol
  - Customs and customs are based on a consultation style
  - There were representatives of major influential groups and dynasties around
  - A primus inter pares (first among equals) tapering with warrior personality and abilities

Beginning with Yıldırım Bayezid
  - A flamboyant protocol
  - An absolute ruler

Fatih Sultan Mehmed, who originally created the Sultan type
  - Protocol guidelines
  - Laws
Ruling Requirements

- Being a member of Hanedan (Ottoman Dynasty)
  - Unlike Oguz and the Seljuk tradition, the country was not a common property of the dynasty
  - Not every dynasty member had no right to inherit the crown, only the sons of the sultan

- Primogenituras (Eldest son of the sultan gets the throne)
  - First fratricide (killing of brothers/princes), Yıldırım Bayezid
  - Fatih Sultan Mehmed’s laws made fratricide legal

- Senyoritas (the eldest man of the dynasty gets the crown, after Ahmet I)
  - Crown princes was no longer appointed to the provinces but they lived a secluded life in the harem
Sources of Sovereignty & Legitimacy

- Political formulas that provide legitimacy:
  1. Claims to be descendants of "Oghuz Han"
     - Claims that the «Kayı» tribe is the noblest of the Oghuz
  2. Mystical narratives:
     - i.e. Osman Gazi's dream, Sheikh Edebali's comment
     - Motifs of rising to power with divine signs/intervention
       - Similar narratives in Russian Rurik Dynasty and the Austrian Habsburgs
  3. The legitimate source of the dynasty's dominion is based on God
     - Caliphate institution (Caesaro-papism)
Education of Crown Princes (Şehzade)

- Up to the 17th century, crown princes were sent to provinces to get administrative and military training and experience.
- After Selim II, the princes began to be imprisoned in the palace.
  - They lived with fear of executioner.
  - They often did not get a good administrative education.
  - They have lived a life apart from domestic and foreign intellectuals.
Sultans and the Caliphate

- In the 15th century, Ottoman Sultans adopted the title of Roman Caesar rather than the president of the Oguzs
  - Protector and commander of the Muslims
  - Fatih and Bayezid II used similar titles
- The narration that Selim I received ceremonial symbols of caliphate was put forward in the 18th century
  - Selim I did not use the title of caliphate
- With the 1789 Treaty of Aynalı Kavak, the annexation of Crimea by Russia was accepted
  - Caliphate authority has been proposed to establish spiritual authority over Muslims in Crimea and beyond
  - Establishing an international spiritual institution
  - Used by Abdulaziz and Abdülhamit II
    - Cesaro-papizm
Was the Ottoman Empire a Sharia State?

A controversial topic

1. According to some authors, theirs was a system that shar'ia rules were prevailing in the administration and the judiciary
2. Some others say that tolerance is shown to non-Muslim groups; that they had autonomy in terms of administration and justice, that it is a kind of secularism
3. A third group also says that in practice customary laws and customs were more dominant than religious laws

According to them, the basic institutions and associations of society and state life were regulated by traditional law, even by local traditions and customs.
Was the Ottoman Empire a Sharia State?

- In some cases, the religious authorities accept whatever rule the worldly authority declares.
- The social organization was based on both shar'ia and traditions.
- In the secular state, centrally determined laws apply equally to all.
  - In this sense, the Ottoman order is not secular.
  - The millet system.
    - In areas such as taxation, jurisdiction, education, census, judicial and administrative organization was based on some kind of religion-based decentralization.
Sheik ul-Islam

- Responsible for solving the problems of sheria
- Limited the sultan's authority
  - Gave fatwas on subject matters such as declaration of war and the killing of vazirs
- From the 18th century, he was the mufti of the capital city
  - In the 19th century he entered the cabinet as minister of sharia
  - While he had no role in state affairs in the classical period, his social roles increased after the 16th century
  - Religious oppression and intrusion in the 17th and 18th centuries
  - The way to deal with the catastrophes of the 18th and 19th centuries had been to ideologize Islam
1. Harem (Private Quarters)
   - Private living quarters of the ruling family
   - Since the 16th century, rulers began marrying slaves/concubines instead of daughters of neighboring state rulers
     - Harem’s importance had increased
   - Pressure groups formed around Valide (mother) and Haseki (wife) Sultans
   - Graduates of Enderun were married with concubines from harem before their appointment

2. Enderun (Palace School)

3. Birun (Outside, Place of Appointment after Palace School)
   - In all three sections, both private and public services are conducted
     - However, beyond the Babessaade gate begins the private residence of the ruler
Enderun (Palace School)

- The place where the sultans' servants served him and the daily life of the sultans had passed

Enderun School

- The place where the Ottoman ruler was born and developed
- On-the-job training for students (içoğlanları)
- The most intelligent and elite devshirmes
- Training with master-apprentice relationship
- When the devhirme system was abolished, Enderun did not become an aristocratic school

Abolished after 2nd Mesrutiyet (Constitution)

- After the Tanzimat Period, Mekteb-i Sultani (Galatasaray), and the modern bureaucracy school (Mülkiye) were founded.
In Persian, meaning "countryside, exterior"
- All duties/appointments outside the Babassade gate
- Going from Enderun to Birun means graduation and assignment to the province with external duties

Including palace services
- Palace employees who work in banquets, protocols, stables, hunting birds and dogs, medicine, tailoring, calligraphy etc.

Over time, the increase of staff numbers caused financial problems
Kul (Subject)/Devshirme System

Governance of state by kul/devshirme of the sultan
- An unshakable centralism (?)

However, the devshirme system had a short lifespan
- Until the 14th century, members of the local dynasties i.e. Çandarlı family and families of Kösemihaloğulları were in command positions
- In the second half of the 16th century, after the abolition of the devshirme system the Turks and other elements regained the control of the army and bureaucracy
  - E.g. the Köprülü Family in the 17th Century
- A significant part of army (timarli sipahi) was not devshirme

As a result, the devshirme system was short-lived and was not the only source of power
Imperial Divan (Divan-ı Hümayun)

- A highest level responsible body in state affairs
  - It had not been able to maintain its development as a core cabinet
- It was the special advisory body of the sultans
  - Continues to meet in times of battle and peace
  - The state, military and sharia affairs were discussed on behalf of the sultan, either decided on his behalf or he was assisted in his decision
Imperial Divan (Divan-ı Hümayun)

- The Sultans did not attend the meetings after Mehmed II, and they approved the provisions that were negotiated and offered to them.
  - Kazasker was responsible from the judiciary & general administration,
  - Defterdar from financial affairs
  - The grand vizier presented general decisions
- Decisions were announced in the name of the sultan
- With the acceptance of the sultan, it is recorded in the mühimme books
  - In the mühimme books, there were issues related to the provinces & other states such as appointments and proposals
At the same time, the high appeal authority

- Decisions were final
- The judiciary had been referred to Kazasker, no approval from the sultan was necessary
- Those decisions were not recorded in muhimme books
- Corruption and persecution complaints are also listened to
Divan-ı Hümayun

- Decisions that do not require the opening of the Divan or the attention of the sultan were discussed on the divan of the grand vizier's own palace.
  - From the seventeenth century, Divan-ı Hümayun's importance decreased and it was gathered less frequently.
  - With the proliferation of specialization and subjects of duty, there are offices affiliated to the Grand Vizier were formed.

- The divans collected in war was called «ayak divanı»
  - In Janissary riots
  - Victory and ulufe (tri-monthly salary) divans
Member groups

Primary/Noble Members (Erkan-ı Devlet)
- High-ranking statesmen participating and voting in discussions
- Vezir-i azam
- Rumeli and Anatolian Kazasker
- Rumeli and Anatolian Beylerbeys
- Nisancı
- Rumeli Defterdar
- Veziers (3-7, experienced high-ranking commanders)
- Naval commander (Kapdan-ı derya) and janissary commander
- Şeyhül Islam (not a member until the 19th century)
Parts of Divan-ı Hümayun

Bureaucratic organization

- The head of the organization is a nisancı until the 17th century
  - Wrote and sealed some of the resolutions written in the name of the sultan
  - Acted both as the counsel of the divan and the executioner of the decisions about the laws
  - Keeps the land tahrir books
  - It keeps all the land registry records of the empire

- After the 17th century, when the land system began to deteriorate, the importance of the nisancı had decreased
  - The specialist offices attached to the grand vizier have taken the place of the nisancı
Parts of Divan-ı Hümayun

- The chief of the correspondence was reis-ul küttab (the head of the clerks), who was originally the assistant of the nişancı.
  - Over time, he was transformed into an officer of foreign affairs

- There were divan and treasury clerks at his disposal
  - A small staff
  - In one period, there were 25 clerks in the offices of the nişancı and the defterdar
  - It's hard to talk about an intense centralized control
External Relations System

It was organized by Divan-ı Hümayun until the 18th century.

- In the 18th century, these bureaus were connected to grand vizier’s office
- Temporary envoys/ambassadors sent until the 18th century to
  - Notify other rulers about a new sultan
  - Making peace and trade agreements
  - Friendship, courtesy, return visit
  - Sending letters and gifts
  - With the request of that country
- The Ottoman rulers did not consider all foreign rulers equal in terms of protocol
- In the 19th century, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was established
  - Constant envoys sent to other states
Grand Vizier and Bab-ı Ali

- Grand Vizier, sadrazam, sahib-i devlet
  - The Sultan's absolute deputy, carries his seal
  - Accountable only to the sultan
  - He is the owner of high-income dirlik called Has
  - Sees the Ambassadors
  - He has the right of political killing (siyaseten katl)
- Can not intervene in judicial (kazasker) and financial (defterdar) affairs
- Had no power over kapıkulu (Sultan’s) soldiers
  - But as serdar-ı ekrem, in battles he could be the commander instead of sultan
Grand Vizier and Bab-ı Ali

Most of the viziers came from the Turks and the ilmiyye class during the foundation period

- With the reign of Mehmed II, the Conqueror, devshirmes gained power
- During the reign of Mehmed IV, the Turkish element regained power with the Köprülüler era

The government affairs were conducted by gathering various divans

- Every vizier was responsible against monarchy individually
- Cabinet concept took hold only after the second Constitutional period

Grand vizier’s affiliated officials

- Sadrazam kethudası: Responsible for all internal affairs
- Mektubcu: Special correspondence
- Sadaret kaymakamı: Grand vizier’s representative while he is in campaign
- Tax collectors on behalf of the Grand Vizier