

# ISLAMIC CULTURAL PLURALISM IN ASIAN SOCIETIES: THE ABBASID MODEL

ŞAHİN DOĞAN\*

## ABSTRACT

Islam sets free the individuals with regard to belief and adopts as a principle that no pressure or whatsoever can be put on people (Qur'an, 2/256). In Qur'anic doctrine, the fact that the duty of the Prophet Mohammed is to promote the religion in the best way possible is described as follows: *"And had your Lord willed, those on earth would have believed, all of them together. So, will you then compel mankind, until they become believers"* (Qur'an, 10/99-100) Pluralist nature such as variant religion, culture, language and nation is the social system Islam projects. Islam regards the existence of different kinds of race, belief and culture as a cultural wealth so as to live in a peaceful environment. *"And had Allah willed, He could have made you (all) one nation. But that (He) may test you in what He has given you. So strive as in a race in good deeds"* (Qur'an, 5/48) Striving in a race and in good deeds as specified in the verse is not an occasion to conflict and despise different race and cultures but it is an occasion for us to understand the cultural blending and living along with those differences in a peaceful environment. This paper will be a brief examination of this issue in the history of Islamic civilization paying attention more to the earlier periods.

**Keywords:** Cultural pluralism, Islam and pluralism, Abbasids, Muslim Christian relations, religious pluralism

\* Çankırı Karatekin University, Çankırı, Turkey

sahindoganogretmen@gmail.com

The first time when the Muslims ran into the Christians dates back to the time of their Hijra to Abyssinia whereas they came across with Jews for the first time during their Hijra to Medina. A pluralist type of religion including Arabs, Jews and Christians was prevailing in the city during the Hijra time (622) of the Prophet Mohammed and his followers from Mecca to Medina. There were around 6000 polytheist Arabs, 4000 Jews and 50 Christians in Medina during the Hijra (Hamidullah, 1998, 95). Conflicts between the people of the city with different kinds of belief led to some bloodshed now and then. There was no unity or order in the city in terms of religious or social matters. Following his arrival to Medina, the Prophet Mohammed first sought for the ways to develop a legal system with a view to make people with different religion and ethnicity come together and he began to set to work. He came up with a written constitution covering all the residents of the city and consisting of 47 articles and that was the first known written constitution of the world. This constitution assured to protect the right to life of Jews, Christians and polytheist Arabs according to their own beliefs. In addition, the allies of Jews inside and outside of Medina were entitled to the same rights. The basic points of this constitution covered up the mutual respect of the people with different religions, the common defense of Medina against the enemies, default of people of Medina in co-operating with a group of enemies in the event that the Muslims or others battle some people outside of Medina, equality before the law and respect to rules of law. This constitution paved way for the people with different religion and ethnicity to live in a peaceful environment. Medina period is the first instance where the cultural pluralism in Islam came to the surface. These rules remained in force even following the death of the Prophet Mohammed

Najran was the area with the most Christian population in Hejaz region. The part of letter of agreement that the Prophet Mohammed made with them is as follows:

Their goods, lives, lands, domiciles, attendants and non-attendants, tribes, religions, trades and everything more or less are in the debit of Allah and his Messenger. None of their priests, religious men and soothsayers can be replaced. There is neither an interest nor a blood feud inherited from ignorance times on them. All of these were abrogated. They shall not be charged for tithe with regard to their farm animals and cattle they feed for their milk and meat as they were not called up to the war. No occupation or invasion of a foreign military to their homes shall ever be allowed. One who claims that the Jizya is too much to pay and that he cannot afford it shall be excused for the half of the Jizya provided that he is neither a tyrant nor a downtrodden” (Abu Yusuf, 1973, 127).

The Christians in Najran came to the first Caliph, Abu Bakr following the death of the Prophet Mohammed and he inscribed the following pact for them:

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful! This is an epistle inscribed by Abdullah Abu Bakr, the caliph of Allah, to the people of Najran. Abu Bakr – on behalf of Allah and his Messenger – safeguards (sticking to the epistle inscribed for them by Allah) the lives, goods, lands, religions, dependents, prayers, attendants and non-attendants, priests, monks, trades and everything within their reach as they shall be exposed to no damage or trouble and none of their priests and monks shall be replaced. What’s inscribed in this epistle shall be in debit of Allah’s Messenger. Their obligation is to pay attention to the preaching and come to the reason, act in good will, correct themselves, fulfil their duties and comply with the rights. (Abu Yusuf, 1973, 128).

The Christians in Najran came during the caliphates of Umar, Uthman, Ali and they were entitled to the rights that the Prophet Mohammed and Abu Bakr bestowed. We do not include the other letters of agreement in order to save space.

The same tolerance had lasted in the periods of Umayyads, Abbasids, al-Andalus, Seljuks and Ottomans following the footprints of the Prophet Mohammed and Rashidun. Arnold Toynbee, the famous British historian, described the respect of the Muslims to the various religions as follows: “The Christians were not ordered other than to preach and train. They, however, eradicated non-Christians with iron and fire since the very early times... Make no mistake, if the Christians in the West had ruled over Asia instead of the Arabs and Turks then we would not be able to chance upon any remnants of Byzantine church. The Christians in the West never had the same kind of tolerance that the Islam had towards the Christianity.” (Toynbee, 2008, 208)

This is an *emannah*, a certificate handed to the enemy in Islamic states to notify that they are safe and which was inscribed during the time surrender of Jerusalem to Umar: “In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful! This is an AMANNAME by Umar, a vassal of Allah and the command to believers, to the people around here. The command to believers, ill or not and in good or bad shape, assures that the life and property will be protected. He safeguards that there will be no intervention to their prayer rooms, crosses and religions. We will neither wreck churches of the people

nor make them residences. The rights they used to be entitled to will be intact. Neither their properties will be injured nor will there be a pressure on them with regard to their religious sects. None by no means will suffer.” (Arnold: 1982, 70).

“Umar as a caliph was always merciful to the followers of other religions and it is rumored that he ordered for a financial and victual aid to the Christians suffering from leprosy. Umar also prohibited the pressure on *dhimmis* (non-Muslims living in Muslim countries) who did not pay their *jizyas* (taxes) and he said this, in his preaching prior to his death, with regard to the protection of the rights of dhimmis:” “... I, in compliance with the pacts and specifications to the my successor of caliph, preach for the absolute rehabilitation of the rights to the dhimmis of the Messenger of Allah, battle if necessary for the sake of their life and property and no overburden on their shoulders” (Abu Yusuf, 1973, 203-204). He, in the light of this ruling, is in favor of maximum observance of the rights to the dhimmis and battling if necessary for the sake of security of their life and property.

The Muslim soldiers were always kind to the civilians during the conquests. Umar Ibn Abdulaziz says in his letter to Mansur Ibn Ghalib who he sent to the war front: “Do not interfere with the ones who do not violate the pacts but stay away from them. The ones on road to the campaign shall not walk into their markets and communities. However, one may walk into the marketplaces with a view to meet his needs unless there will be no harm to them and yourselves. Do not ever oppress them. You are being tested in terms of being friendly to them. I assure you that you do not need them. I brought everything you need. Put your faith in Allah; the power and will belong to Him.” (Ağırakça, 2006, 97).

Hourani describes the Abbasi period as the prime in terms of both political power and cultural “Renaissance” as he defines the latter periods as a political dissolution and cultural stagnation (Hourani, 2001, 266). The Abbasi period stands out as a period when different kinds of religions and communities lived together in harmony. Umayyad period is referred as a period when the Arabs mainly dominate and possess a perception looking down on other communities. Such attitudes of theirs had a negative impact on various religions and cultures. The acceptance of Islam for the Turks was not in groups but on individual level or in small groups. The Abbasi period is a fundamental change not only in caliphate but also in state policy. Relations between Turks and Arabs were settled in the Abbasi period. Spread of Islam among the Turks gained momentum. It would be a requisite to say that the second caliph Jafar al-Mansur and his son Mahdi were amongst the ones who positively contributed to the

process of acceptance of Islam for the Turks. The acceptance of Islam for the Turks began to accelerate as of 9<sup>th</sup> century and some Muslim states, whose people were Turkish, began to emerge as of 10<sup>th</sup> century. The 10<sup>th</sup> century in which the Turks adopted the Islam is an era when the Islamic civilization hit the top and then began to stagnate. The borders of the Islamic state expanded extensively but the controlling of this geography had become more and more challenging. The Arabs and Persians substantially lost their energy. Just adopting the Islam, the Turks took charge in deeds such as the security and other services that the Islam is in need of. The Turks had been assigned to major duties. It can be even said that the army at the time predominantly consisted of the Turks. The Turks provided major services in politics, administration and science as well as in military (Yazıcı, 2002, 57-69).

It is in this period clear to see a picture of Islamic world consisting of various people such as the Arabs, the Persians and the Turks. The Muslims both kept the different cultures amongst them together and paved way for a life in which different cultures such as the Jews, the Christians, the Mandaics, the Majuses and the Gnostics live together within the frame of tolerance and rules of law.

## I. FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Islam basically adopts the fact that there could be different beliefs and preaches for the requisite to respect these beliefs. Accordingly, we all know that the Prophet Mohammed was – to the utmost - always been respectful to the followers of different religions. We can observe his exemplary behaviors to the non-Muslims outside of Mecca and Medina, not only in Medina period but also in latter periods, both in pacts and his practices in daily life. Other than the pact he agreed upon with the Christians in Najran, he points out in his letter to Muaz b. Jabal that “the Jews will not be converted from Judaism”. Hagar and Yemeni Majuses accordingly were put into the same practice and there was no pressure or interception on account of their beliefs. The inhabited people in the region were charged only for Jizya which was known as a protection tax. The Prophet Mohammed preached to Muaz b. Jabal only for the proper narration of the basic rules of the religion (Balazuri, 1987:103-104,115). There was no pressure on people with different religious beliefs to adopt Islam as well as no objection to their converting to other religions.

Khalid ibn al-Walid says in his letter to the people of Damascus: “This is an epistle by

Khalid ibn al-Walid to the people of Damascus. I guarantee for their lives, properties and churches” (Abu ‘Ubayd, 1981:241).

The basic principle, as mentioned above, of the Islam is the fact that there can be no pressure when it comes to the religion. In addition to the pacts mentioned above, it is recorded that he preached as a will – prior to his death - for the good behaviour to the Dhimmis. The hadith of the Prophet Mohammed in which he says “those who are unkind to the Dhimmi will take a stand against me ” is a good example to disclose his attitude with regard to good behavior to the Dhimmis. When looked at the sites of the followers of other regions outside of the Muslims during the period of the Prophet Mohammed, there were Jews in Khaybar, Vadilkura, Fedek, Makna, Teyma and the Christians in Eyle, Ezruh, Dümetülcendel, Najran and partly the Majuses in Hagar and Bahrain. Non-Muslims were assured to be entitled to their rights to live their own religion and culture by the courtesy of these pacts. In addition, there was never a policy of cultural assimilation that put into practice. (Sarıçam ve Erşahin, 2008:69). We observe that there was always a care about the protection of religious and cultural liberties in Rashidun period.

Religious Education: The abbeys were the bodies where the basic religious education was put into practice in Christianity. Some abbeys even raised religious officials. The religious education continued even in the period they were under the safeguard of the Muslims and religious officials were raised. There had been no restraint on education. They carried out their religious education in their own bodies as there had been no restraint on their prayers. Communities with different religions and tribes used their own language in their religious education and prayers. The Arabic was the language of bureaucracy in Abbasi period as they carried out their prayers in Syriac, Aramaic, Persian and Coptic. Various languages, in addition, continued to be used in daily life as well (Öztürk, 2005: 45).

Temples: During the ongoing Islamic conquests following the death of the Prophet Mohammed, most sites were conquered by means of peace. Some pacts were made with the local people whose lands were conquered. There was an article in the pacts with regard to protection of the prayer rooms. The Muslims kept intact the prayer sites such as the synagogues, churches, fire temples and Buddhist temples and even had the old and demolished house of prayers repaired. The pact between Khalid ibn al-Walid and the Anat city ruler is only one of these instances. This pact assures not to tear down the churches. The right to life, property and other rights were guaranteed in the pact made with the people of Gaza, Sebastiyeh and Nablus conquered by Amr b. As at the time of Abu Bakr. It was guaranteed, in the pact made

with the people of Tiberia conquered by Shurahbil b. Hasane by means of peace, that the churches would remain intact. (Ozturk, 1995: 86-87).

The freedom of picking up a name is one of subjects we need to stress on in terms of religious freedom. There is no restraint on non-Muslims to pick up their children’s name in Islamic world. The names have always been of vital importance since they are regarded – in numerous cultures - as the symbol of beliefs and cultural identity in history and present. The names does not only reflect the culture but also play a role to pass the culture on to next generations. The fact that there are even today policies in some countries where a change in the name is quite difficult for the people and the follower of different cultures and that there are reactions to these practices point out how the freedom of picking up a name is of importance. One needs to recall the policy of Bulgarian government that is implemented on Turks with regard to change of name.

## II. LEGAL PLURALISM: LEGAL STATUS of NON-MUSLIMS

The term of dhimmi is none available in Quran. However, it is possible to come across with them in the practices of the Prophet Mohammed. It is a name given to the People of the Book with whom a pact was made. This was based on the verse of jizya. The Prophet Mohammed asked the People of the Book to choose either war or jizya and made “debit” with the People of the Book who agreed to a pact. The term of dhimmi began to be used as of then and reached to the present. (Öztürk, 1995:161), (Hadduri, 1999: 177178).

Tolerant practices in the period of the Prophet Mohammed continued as well in the period of Rashidun. The local people, whose lands were conquered in the period of the Prophet Umar, were never exposed to slavery like the ones captured in war and given a status of dhimmi as an indicator of great humanity. The local people, whose lands were captured in war or in pact, were rewarded with the status of dhimmi by the curtest of the practices (Öztürk, 1995: 161).

What the status of dhimmi meant was to pay a sum of taxes called “jizya” and acknowledge the Islamic dominance. The word Jizya was a proper name for all kinds of taxes that the non-Muslims paid to the Muslims. It was thereafter called as the tax each individual is entitled to pay following the new regulations of the statesmen with regard to the finance. Only men were obligated to pay the Jizya. Women and kids were exempt. It looks like an easy task when compared to the mandatory military service burdened only on the Muslims. Non-Muslims

were obligated to pay only jizya. The Muslims, on the other hand, were responsible for both military service and zakat (Arnold, 1982: 72).

Those who paid jizya and acknowledged the Islamic dominance acquired a legal status (Hadduri, 1999:177). The ones with this status were entitled to security of life and property, freedom of thought and faith, exempt from military service, refund of jizya if necessary, practicing their own laws and appropriation from the state treasury. The Muslims, in return, were charged of less tax. The Jizya, as some people point out, was not a penalty to the Christians since they did not adopt the Islam. The jizya was a tax for their protection, not for suppressing them. It is the protection tax against the Dhimmi were obliged to pay since they, as mentioned above, were exempt from the military service. Following their agreement on the payment of the jizya, the people of Hire said “we do pay this tax provided that the Muslims and their leaders will protect us against the attacks we might be exposed to by the Muslims or another state” (Arnold: 1982: 74).

The dhimmis were assured to be protected in exchange for the taxes. It is known that the Muslims returned the taxes on the ground of their fear about inability to protect the local people against the Byzantines during the movements of conquest and those local people were extremely impressed with this act of the Muslims (Öztürk, 1995:161-162).

Should the need arises for the instances in addition to the preaching of the Prophet Muhammed mentioned above with regard to protection of the Dhimmi: “Whoever unjustly kills a dhimmi (the person with a pact) cannot catch a whiff of the heaven from forty year range” and “whoever bullies or overburdens him is my foe.” (el-Buhari Cizye,5)

One of the utterances best reflecting Islamic perspective with regard to dhimmis belongs to the Prophet Ali: “It is contracted that their properties of contractual debits shall be our property as their blood shall be our blood.” The dhimmis, according to the Islamic law, cannot be murdered but protected if they resort to the castles of the ones (harbi) in war with the Muslims and if the dhimmis can be recognized when the castle is captured.

An appropriation is provided to the elder dhimmis as a rule of the Islamic law and taken under protection. As an example of the treatment to the Dhimmi who are under the rule of Muslims, we can point out one from the practices of the caliph Umar. He said “it is unacceptable to charge you for jizya when you were young and leave you alone when you got old.” It is also known that the caliph ‘Umar made an appropriation to the leprous Christians in Jabiyeh allocating a share from zakat (Öztürk, 1995: 161–162).

Following the footprints of the instances and similar practices mentioned above, wise

men of Hanafi regarded the non-Muslims as the citizens with a pact. The Dhimmi easily benefited from public rights in social life all the time. There were some restraints on the statute law on the ground of the political issues between the Muslims and the Christians at the time but they were never implemented in practice.

### III. LEGAL ISSUES AND PROVISIONS OF FIQH TO THE DHIMMIS

It is a basic principle of Islam for the communities within the Islamic administration to rule their own legal issues according to their religious rules and follow these rules. However, the Islamic law would make the decision if the non-Muslims ask to be judged according to the legal rules of the Muslims (Hadduri, 1999:177).

The Christians had their own court to deal with their own legal issues and then these courts practiced canon laws. The Patriarchs gave a fatwa over daily legal issues. There are reports in the sources about their fatwa in various subjects of that time such as heritage, mahr, debts of the dead, emancipation of slaves and theft. It is noteworthy that the non-Muslims extremely resorted to the Islamic courts in time. The underlying reason for that is the fact that the Islamic courts were fairer. The church did not like this trend of non-Muslims. Timasavus, the Nestorian Patriarch, issued a notice in 9<sup>th</sup> century condemning this case. The notice questioned the demand for the non-Christian courts in order to avoid the orders and laws of Sharia and their sincerity with regard to the Christianity. A judgment for each crime within the Islamic soils was traditionally institutionalized according to the Islamic law. The Islamic jurists had various opinions with regard to the practices to the dhimmis as they agree upon not disciplining the habits, which are halal to the dhimmis, such as pork meat and alcohol (Öztürk, 1995:164).

Breach: The pact used to remain in force as long as a dhimmi pays his jizya but the articles to breach the pact were short in number. These articles, however, increased in latter periods. These are specified shortly as follows:

Helping those in fight against the Muslims.

Killing the Muslims

Blocking roads

Hiding the polytheist spies  
 Inscribing state secrets to the polytheists  
 Missionary activities  
 Getting married to a Muslim woman  
 Adultery with a Muslim woman (Öztürk, 1995:170).

#### IV. BUREAUCRATIC PLURALISM

The assignment of non-Muslims within the state staff dates back to the period of Umayyads. Portraying the period of Muawiyah I, Bernard Lewis says “it asserts itself as a caliph to the Sassanid and Byzantine Empire rather than Arabic character and the administrative organization along with the staff remained intact” (Öztürk,1995:322).

Some policies, in the period of Umayyads, were implemented with a view to benefit from the experience of some statesmen and especially take the Christian Arabs to their side and reinforce their regime. The number and power of especially the Christian Arabs within the state bureaucracy increased in consequence of these attitudes by the state. Non-Muslims, with a position of supervisor to the Muslims in many levels, were entitled to assign any officer they wish. Non-Muslims naturally were influential on their caliphs in such a circumstance. The authorities did not pay attention to the reactions of the Muslims and Ulama who were complaining about the privileged status of Non-Muslims.

The practices in the period of Abbasi with regard to the Non-Muslims were sequels to the ones in the period of Umayyads. Non-Muslims took charges within the state staff as of the period of Caliph As-Saffah and their duties even increased within the staff in this period. There were some among whom were promoted even to the duty of vizier. The Umayyads were heavily under the influence of the Byzantines as the Abbasi were influenced by the Sassanid Empire. They opted to maintain the ongoing system and staff rather than developing a system based on their own culture in the state organization. The Muslim people had different expectations in the early times of the Abbasi but these expectations could not be realized. The number of complaints about non-Muslims increased as of the period of Al-Mansur on the grounds of negative or sometimes even cruel acts by the non-Muslims bureaucrats, promoted to the higher positions in the state, to the people. They would not pay attention to the complaints of the people but non-Muslims sometimes were relieved of their duties as a consequence of their

betrayal to the caliph, as in the example of insurgency of the Christians in Baghdad when the Caliph Al-Ma'mun was in Egypt (Öztürk, 1995:323).

In short, non-Muslims and especially the Christians in this period took charge in positions such as vizier, taxman, clerk and officers. And they were never restrained in science and they took charge in major positions especially in medicine. There were even some non-Muslim doctors taking charge in the Palace.

#### V. PLURALISM IN SOCIAL LIFE AND CELEBRATION OF THE HOLIDAYS

There is not much of an insight till the period of Abbasi with regard to the celebration of the holidays for Christians who lived in Islamic soils. Some bards told about the holidays such as Hamisu'l Fish, Sheanin and Baus at the time of ignorance but no detailed information is available with regard to how they celebrated these holidays. The holidays of Sheanin and Baus are referred in the pacts made with the Christians in the period of the Caliph Umar. The detailed insight with regard to their celebration of holidays dates back to the sources of Abbasi and latter periods. It is rumored that wanton Muslims commuted to the churches and abbeys in their regions in the period of Abbasi and even stayed overnight for days. The Muslims commuting to these sites let us shed some light on their celebration of holidays since they participated in the celebrations every now and then. These celebrations are referred in the poems. One, however, can come across with the most detailed information over this subject in the work of al-Birûni called “Asa al-Baqiya anil Gurun Halin” and in the work of al-Shabushti that focused on the research of Islamic geography (Öztürk, 1995:139-140).

Ibn Kayyım says with regard to the emergence of the holidays for the Christians that they emerged three centuries after Jesus and the motive for this emergence was “the religious instructions, blurred with many philosophical concepts and contradicted with pure intelligence, being the focal point of the hatred by the people with common sense. The men of the cloth tried to compensate this dissolution in the society with decorations and holidays focusing on culture and art. Thus, lots of holidays, which did not exist in the period of Jesus, had emerged and these were achieved with the celebration of saints and special days (Öztürk, 1995: 142–143).

B. Ali Shaybani, a wise man, a bard and a commuter to the abbeys of the Christians,

in his poems names the celebrations he witnessed as follows: Shem'un, al-Salib, al-Fitr, al-Sheanin, Mar Mari, Yawm al-Hamis, al-Milad, al-Fitr. He gives us a little information with regard to some of them. For instance, he says that Shamun holiday was celebrated with oil and palm branches as Şa'ya holiday was celebrated with fumes around the statues. Another poet constantly commuting to the abbeys alludes holidays such as Abu Nuwas, Dihn, Baus, Ushmuni, wa'sab, Fish, Maret, Meryem (Öztürk,1995: 143).

As far as we could analyze the information with regard to the celebrations in the poems of both poets, not everyone would take part in the celebrations but there were an amalgamation and brotherhood to a certain extent. Geographer al-Muqaddasi says that the Muslims named the holidays the Christians celebrated, in Damascus and in 10<sup>th</sup> century, depending on the seasons. These are: al-Fish: Spring al-Ansara: Summer El-Milad: Winter Barbara: Autumn (Öztürk, 1995: 144).

The Christians were not collectively celebrating the holidays in the period of Abbasi with all the communions. The celebration of the holidays varied on regions with both their names and the way of celebration. The Christians in Baghdad, according to EşŞabuşti, were celebrating the holidays in abbeys. "The first day of the holiday for fasting (sawm) was celebrated in the abbey of al-Hawat where the nuns stayed. Each one taking part in the celebrations would enjoy the holiday. They would organize a festivity called al-Mashush to which everyone would attend in the evening of this holiday. People would do anything they wish later at night and stay up all night in the abbey" (Öztürk, 1995:144).

The holiday of fasting (sawm), lasting for fifty days, would be celebrated every Sunday in various abbeys. Participants to these celebrations would stay here for days and everyone fond of having fun would join these holidays. This abbey was also an entertainment center at the same time. This kind of entertaining celebrations would be held in various centers in Baghdad. The Christians would wear their prettiest clothes, put their cross on their neck, hymn with thuribles in their hands in a glittering picture and create a stirring atmosphere. Most of the Muslims would attend to these celebrations. It is concluded from the beauty of the Seanin holiday celebrated in the abbey of A'la in Mosul that the celebrations are quite fun and attendance is tremendous. It is rumored that people stay here, have fun and get some drinks for days. The statesmen and even the caliphs would attend to these celebrations of holiday now and then (Öztürk, 1995:144).

Al-Muqaddasi, introducing Shiraz where he stopped by late in 10th century, points out that the neighbourhood, even bazaars and streets of the Muslims were adorned for the holidays

of non-Muslims and there was no interference and even Muslims adorned their stores as well (Öztürk, 1995:155).

There was no interference to these celebrations of the Christians at first. Once the conquests flourished and the Muslims began to live with Christians in the same cities then they were able to be closely acquainted with customs of the Christians. They witnessed how the holidays diverged from their religious identity and became a sort of entertainment. They decided to hold these celebrations upstate since they became a moral issue that would bother the Muslims. The upstate abbeys began to be trapped within the cities as a result of expansion of the cities in the course of the time. Most of the Muslims began to join the holidays of the Christians to have fun since the population became more and more cosmopolitan and the Christians came to the fore in some aspects of the social life and the cultural interaction increased (Öztürk, 1995:144).

## CONCLUSION

Islam, as a principle, adopts the individual freedom and responsibility and does not interfere with the belief and choice of the subject under any circumstances. It is preached many times in Quran that people should drive themselves to the good and the beautiful using their head. It is implied to the Prophet Mohammed that his mission is only to express the Islam in the finest way possible. The Quran itself states that it is natural for people to vary on beliefs. Division into different tribes and their differentiation in their languages are regarded as a cultural wealth in Islam and the point of these differences is a better amalgamation and living in peace.

We can observe that the law guaranteed for the co-existence of different religions and cultures in the period of Medina and the first example of multiculturalism was there when the Prophet Mohammed was alive. It is proven in the sources that issues such as the security of life, property, belief, individual rights and liberties were legally guaranteed as a result of the pacts with the followers of other religions. It is recorded both in the Islamic and western researchers' resources that there was an atmosphere of tolerance based on cultural differences in the period of Rashidun and latter ones just like in the period of the Prophet Mohammed. Moreover, the fact that the Christians said that they had not seen anything like the justice and the tolerance of the Muslims from their own coreligionist leaders, is a case reiterated in



different periods such as the Abbasi's and the Ottoman's. The basic element for the spread of Islam to an immense geography is the rule of the Muslims based on justice and tolerance. Although there might be exceptions or personal mistakes as it can be in any subject, the differences have fundamentally always been regarded as a cultural wealth in Islamic history and civilization and no one has been hard done by due to his belief and ethnicity, except in cases such as the breach of the pacts and insurgencies. The regime based on cultural wealth and tolerance has reached to the present as a tradition in force since the period of Medina as well as the Rashidun, Abbasi, Seljuk, Al-Andalusian and Ottoman periods.

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