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BETWEEN I AND WE: COEXISTENCE EXPERIENCE IN ANATOLIAN TURKISH-ISLAMIC CULTURE

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Abstract

Throughout history Turks have coexisted with members of different race and faiths. After this experience of living together merged with Islamic practices and customs following Islamization of Turks, a unique experience, form and conscience of 'living together' emerged. In this paper, the coexisting experience in Anatolian Turkish-Islamic Culture, in particular in the context of its examples during Ottoman period with their sociological background and outcomes, has been explored.

Keywords: Coexisting Experience, Turkish-Islamic Culture, Islamic Practices, Ottoman Period.

Ben ve Biz Arasında: Anadolu Türk-İslam Kültüründe Bir Arada Yaşama Tecrübesi

Öz

Türkler, tarih boyunca yaşadıkları geniş coğrafyalarda başka ırk ve inanç mensuplarıyla birlikte yaşamışlardır. Türklerin bir arada yaşama pratiği, Müslümanlığı kabul etmelerinin ardından İslam geleneği ve uygulamalarıyla da birleşince tarihte eşine ender rastlanan bir "birlikte yaşama" bilinci, biçimi ve tecrübesi ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bu makalede, Anadolu Türk-İslam Kültürü'nde birlikte yaşama tecrübesinin, özellikle Osmanlılar dönemindeki örnekleri sosyolojik arkaplanı ve sonuçları bağlamında incelenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bir Arada Yaşama Tecrübesi, Türk-İslam Kültürü, İslami Uygulamalar, Osmanlı Dönemi.

Introduction

Due to the nature of its creation, human beings are in need of living together as a society. Throughout history, this characteristic of human beings has been one of fundamentally propelling and constitutive factor in the existence of nations. It would not be an exaggeration to say that a lone-

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living man would only be subject to tale and stories which have not got societal reality. Therefore, it is almost impossible to find a true life or widespread examples of people who have led or lead a life exclusive of society. In reality, to be the object of the history is only possible by living together through strong social bonds. Because, history is not the product of a single man living on his own but is the product of people who are able to live together. Again, history is of examples which talks about success of societies which have been able to maintain social solidarity and integration as well as disappearance of societies which have failed to coexist and as a result, faced disintegration. Integrating around religious, national and cultural values as a whole and coexisting by having common ideals are imperative for the future and survival of societies.

Societies do not consist of human masses who have come together coincidentally and between whom there is not any organic bond. There are historical, social and cultural bonds which constitute societies, bring people together and establish the ground for living together through thick and thin, sharing pain and joy, poverty and affluence, disasters and well being. These bonds help the societies to run towards the same goals. These bonds neither exist through simple coincidences nor they can be destroyed quickly when desired. Just like their existence process, their evanescence from public culture and its common memory takes a lifetime process. These bonds can strengthen and get sounder over time as well as getting looser and disintegrated. Which direction the society takes or towards which direction it proceeds, in other words its course, is directly proportional to the common will of people who have come together through aforementioned bonds and also, it is directly proportional to their determination for living together. Those societies, which have been able to show the determination and perseverance of living together by owning their historical and cultural heritages, have managed to set an example by getting recognition not only during the period of their existence but afterwards, too. Turkish History is of these examples.¹ Throughout history Turks have coexisted with members of different race and faiths. After this experience of living together merged with Islamic practices and customs following Islamization of Turks, a unique experience, form and conscience of 'living together' emerged. In this paper, the coexisting experience in Anatolian Turkish-Islamic Culture, in

¹ İhsan Çapcıoğlu, "İslam'da İnsan Onuru ve Sosyo-Kültürel Bütünleşme", *Diyanet Aylık Dergi*, (January 2008) Number 205, pp. 22.

particular in the context of its examples during Ottoman period with their sociological background and outcomes, has been explored.

1. Coexistence Experience in Islamic History

We can see that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has aimed from the beginning a transition from bedouin communities, which were established on tribal principles, to a civilised form of society amongst whose members there is love, loyalty, competence, tolerance and justice principals. In this new form of society/model of coexistence generated by Islam, interpersonal relations were not determined in line with race and kin superiority but basic humanistic and religious values and principals which are set out in the Quran and Sunna of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). In this form of society, as it was during pre-Islamic period, the value of human beings was not related to a social status gained by being a member of a certain tribe. On the contrary, being human was a value on its own without any connections. In this model of society, the fundamental principle was the notion that human beings are the most valuable creature on earth. As long as human beings protects this value, which has been bestowed upon them by their creator, and lead responsible life, they won't need any other superiority criteria. Such a life can only be realized by protecting human honour. Human honour is a value which shall be protected under all circumstances, held above everything, dignified and cherished. It has been preserved under the most difficult circumstances. For example, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) have advised his companions (and all humanity) not to treat captives and those who have asked for forgiveness in a degrading way. Instead he advised them to treat these people in a beautiful manner. The fact that Christians of Nejran were allowed to have their church service in Muslims' masjid and the ultimatum which ordered governors to stay away from forcing Christians and Jews to shift their religions can be shown as excellent examples of tolerance. In this society model in which Islamic/Quranic way of living has been demonstrated in practices, which have become concrete in the personality of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), it can be seen that human honour has been preserved and an atmosphere of peace, love, well-being and trust has been targeted.²

Five months after Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) emigration from Mecca to Medina, a meeting, which was attended by the family heads of Ansar (residents of Medina) and Muhajir/immigrant (those who left Mecca

² Çapcıoğlu, "İslam'da İnsan Onuru ve Sosyo-Kültürel Bütünleşme", pp. 21-24.

for Medina), was held. The aim of this meeting was to create a peaceful atmosphere in which immigrants/muhajir can live in peace and security. In this meeting, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) declared Ansar and Muhajir as brothers. According to this brotherhood agreement, both sides were going to work together, share what they were going to earn and even they were going to be heirs to one another. Both sides welcomed the agreement and many families from Mecca and Medina were matched as brothers. In this way, the trouble faced by Muslims from Mecca who left all their belongings behind was alleviated and in order for them to lead a peaceful life such a step was made. Besides, the unity between Muslims was reinforced by aforementioned brotherhood agreement in which families from Mecca and Medina were matched and named as brothers. However, it was not only Muslims who lived in Medina. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) wanted to live in harmony with all groups and thus, made an agreement with non-Muslim residents of Medina such as Jews and Christians. With this purpose, he made some negotiations with them. Consequently, all parties came to an agreement on a city-state structure and a text which included principles that redesigned the Medina society.³

With this text which is known as “Medina Contract”, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) brought together Jews, non-Muslim Arabs and Muslims around the same agreement and demonstrated one of the first and significant examples of coexisting experience in the world.⁴ According to Medina Contract, everybody was free in performing their religions, people were going to live in peace, no blood was going to be shed, in case of an external attack Medina was going to be defended by all groups and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was going to be accepted as arbitrator when any kind of disagreement emerges.⁵ Subsequent to negotiations between parties, various peace agreements were signed with Christians and other different faith members. As it can be seen from the very early days of Islamic history Muslims, Jews, Christians and people from different faiths have lived together in the same society within the framework of certain rights and

³ Nahide Bozkurt, “Peygamberlik: Medine Dönemi”, *Peygamberim*. Sixth Edition. Ankara, 2009, pp. 57–58.

⁴ For detailed explanations please see. İbrahim Sarıçam, “İlk Müslüman Toplumda Birarada Yaşama Tecrübesi”, *İslam Medeniyetinde Birarada Yaşama Tecrübesi*. Ankara, 2009, pp. 117–127.

⁵ Muhammed Hamidullah, *İslam Peygamberi*. Translated by Salih Tuğ. İstanbul 1980, pp. 131–134.

responsibilities. And they built relations of religious, political, economical and social context based on peace agreements reached between them.

The relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims have been maintained from the time of Hulefa-i Rasidin throughout the time of Umayyads, Abbacies, Seljuks and Ottomans. During the sovereignty of Muslims over Andalusia, which carried on for eight centuries (711–1492), Muslims, Christians and Jews lived in the same country without facing any significant problems. In Andalusia, Christians and Jews preserved their religious beliefs, institutions, laws, traditions and customs. Before Andalusia was conquered, Jews who were put under pressure by Christian administrators and who were made subject to forceful Christianization, maintained their religious beliefs in indulgence as a result of the fair approach by Muslims. The same moderate policy went for Christians, too.⁶ In conclusion, as well as embodying people of different characteristics such as ethnicity, language and geography, Islam has foreseen a society structure open to religious and cultural differences and Islamic societies have presented epitome of this with their historical experiences.

2. Coexistence Experience in Anatolian Turkish-Islamic Culture

The oldest word pertaining to the religion of Turks is deity. Moreover, we always come across this word as a main principle throughout history. For example, we find out from Chinese resources that Hun Turks believed in Tengri. Throughout history although this word has taken different forms of pronunciation and writing such as “Tengri”, “Tenggeri”, “Tanara”, “Teri” etc, this belief existed amongst Gok Turks and other Turkish societies as a fundamental belief, so much so that it is possible to express the religious history of Turks from the beginning to the end with the remark of a subject matter expert which is “the reflection of ‘sacred’”⁷ in the world conditions. As a matter of fact, in many other societies which had “nomad steppe culture”, it is expressed that some form of monotheism or rather “deism” existed, especially in the religion of Turks.⁸

However, the encountering of Turks with world-wide big religious systems and their Islamization after a long process can't be seen solely as a change of belief in the Turkish history as it has brought about very

⁶ See Mehmet Özdemir, *Endülüs Müslümanları (Siyasî Tarih)*. Ankara, 2009.

⁷ For more detailed information please see Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas, Vol. 3: From Muhammad to the Age of Reforms*. Chicago 1988.

⁸ See Hikmet Tanyu, *İslamıktan Önce Türklerde Tek Tanrı İnancı*. Ankara, 1980.

significant and radical social and cultural changes. In this way, Islamization has also manifested itself as a change of civilization for Turks. In this respect, sociologically the process of transition of Turks from the Far Eastern Civilization to Middle Eastern Islamic Civilization or their transition from nomadic life style to a settled life style or even to a city life or from a verbal culture to a written culture is largely related to the Islamization of Turks. In any case, Turks, who had the capacity to easily adapt to changing moral circumstances, which is one of the most important characteristics of them, have easily identified their universal deity belief with Islam's universal Allah belief and divinities of other universal big religions they converted to before converting to Islam. Again, they virtually redesigned their history, legends and customs, in other words their life style, world view and culture with Islamic soul and motifs during the above mentioned process of change and transformation of religion, culture, civilization and life style.⁹

In this way, Islam and Turkishness have demonstrated such an integration to an extent that over time they have become synonyms. Eventually, Turks, whose one of important characteristics is administration and organization, have turned their direction towards West not East after converting to Islam and have managed to realize more comprehensive and ongoing socio-political formations. In line with this, they have become the defender of Islam religion and Muslim world against the Crusades. Besides, Turks have revitalized the Islamic civilization which was experiencing a recession period and as a result, they became the representative, advocate and spreaders of this religion across the world. In essence, this characteristic of Turks, who are warrior peoples, accorded very quickly with the Jihadist spirit of Islam. In fact, Turks encountered Islam on the borders. The Islam that was presented to them on the borders constituted a special form. This form of religiousness differed from the big scholars's one. It was a form which was presented by wanderer scholars, dervishes who were loved by the society, merchants of various culture levels and soldiers. In this form of religiousness, alongside basic principles of Islam, various customs and magics were talked about. This way of public religiousness differed from other sects of Islam which are in contradiction with one another. For the sake of this belief, veterans fought on the borders for long years¹⁰ and they

⁹ Osman Turan, *Türk Cihan Hâkimiyeti Mefkûresi Tarihi*. Seventh Edition. İstanbul, 1994.

¹⁰ Claude Cahen, *Osmanlılardan Önce Anadolu'da Türkler*. Translated by Yıldız Moran., İstanbul, 1979, p. 108 et al.

rendered this veteran spirit as one of the most important characteristics of Muslim Turks. After all, public religiousness which was embellished with ghaza (military act on behalf of Islam) spirit, was to a large extent an extension of public religion and religiousness which was molded with an Islamic spirit and existed in the traditional Turkish religion and religiousness before the conversion into Islam. In this way, however much Turks clinged to their new religion and identified themselves with it, they managed to maintain a sub-culture of Muslim Turkishness by creating a form of public religiousness. By doing so, they maintained lots of elements pertaining to the old religion, beliefs, culture and customs which were redesigned with Islamic principles.¹¹

The religious and cultural life which got shaped in Anatolia became characterized with a certain dynamism especially during the foundation period of the Ottoman State and tolerance doors were left wide open in the field of religion. This tolerance towards non-Muslims is very well illustrated in the example of Jews who escaped the cruelty in Spain and Portugal in 1492 and sought refuge from Ottomans. Alongside the frequent contact with the foreign cultures and religions in the Turkish history, the socio-cultural circumstances that existed from the very beginning enabled the formation of an important characteristic in the Turkish culture which is a tolerant attitude towards the beliefs and traditions of other foreign nations. This characteristic became a tradition over time.¹² The most typical examples of this religious tolerance are presented in the examples of sufism scholars such as *Mevlâna*, *Yunus*, *Ahi Evran* and *Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli* in Anatolia. Bektashism which is accepted as one of the divisions of Yesevism which got formed in Anatolia and Dervishs such as *Hacı Bektâs-ı Velî*, *Ahi Evran*, *Evhâdüdîn-i Kirmânî*, *Sadreddîn-i Konevî*, *Yunus Emre* and *Mevlânâ*, who were members of similar tariqah (sufi path), were culture envoys who brought Turkish traditions and customs to Anatolia with Islam.

Amongst these scholars, there is a need to focus more on *Mevlânâ Celâleddin Rûmî* due to the topic of our study. Because, he managed to bring members of different beliefs and religions together with his tolerant attitude. *Mevlana's* tolerance approach is reflected in his life and works. His universal message which got symbolized with 'come whoever you are'

¹¹ Ünver Günay and Harun Güngör, *Başlangıçtan Günümüze Türklerin Dinî Tarihi*, İstanbul, 2009.

¹² Günay and Güngör, *Başlangıçtan Günümüze Türklerin Dinî Tarihi*; Ünver Günay, "Anadolu'nun Dinî Tarihinde Çoğulculuk ve Hoşgörü". *ERDEM Türklerde Hoşgörü Özel Sayısı- I*, 1996, Volume 8, Number 22, pp. 189-220.

words is based on the principle which loves all people by seeing all of them as parts of the same body. The big intellectual, who said 'with one of my feet fixed in Islam, I wander 72 nations', appreciated every person from any religion, race and colour without making any discrimination between man-woman or poor-rich. He values people just because they are human beings and has always shown respect towards them. Mevlana has advised that for social peace we shall show tolerance to one another and confront difficulties together. It is easy to see and love thornless rose but since there is no rose without thorn, rose shall be seen with its thorn and even the thorn shall come before the rose. With his wide tolerance approach Mevlana endeavoured to lead a life by showing respect and remaining in dialogue with people from different religions, beliefs, languages, professions and classes without excluding any of them. Mevlana advises all people love in their relationships and states "we love and the well being of our life is because of this; we believe and the beauty of our life style is because of this". In line with this he draws attention to the importance of love when making relations with other people and expresses as follows how love is an indispensable element in human's life and for their inner comfort:

Love people so that you find yourself always amongst flowers and roses. If you see all of them as enemy, their imagination will come before your eyes and you will feel like walking around snakes and thorns day and night.¹³

Surely, as well as there are good people amongst human beings there are also bad and hatred people. However, Mevlana reminds us that it is possible to change maliciousness into goodness and enemies into friendships with the criteria set out in Surah Fussilet, verse 34: "Goodness and maliciousness can't be the same. Therefore, maliciousness shall be gotten rid of with goodness. By this, you may see that people with whom you are enemy have become your friends. Those who can show patience can reach this point."¹⁴ Mevlana assumed responsibility for society's morality as part of his tolerance approach and wrote his book called 'Mesnevi' in which he gives examples which suggest differences shall be approached with tolerance and wrongdoings shall be rectified with a love-based education. One day, Mevlana is asked as to how non-Muslims enjoys his speeches whilst distinguished Muslims had difficulty in understanding his

¹³ Mevlana Celaleddin-i Rumi. *Mesnevi*. Translated by V. İzbulak. İstanbul, 2010, p. 1276.

¹⁴ Quran, Fussilet, 34.

poems and thoughts. To this question Mevlana answered that although non-Muslims' way of believing in God is different, the purpose is the same. With this answer Mevlana indicated that non-Muslims understood the essence of his remarks. Especially, before and after Mongol invasion, scholars and sufis who were full of Anatolia played an important role in the enlightenment of Anatolia. They also showed that they could live together with members of different religions, sects and tariqa who were not from their belief.¹⁵ In essence, one of important common characteristics of this big Turkish scholars and Turkish tariqahes such as Mevleviyeh and Bektashism was the fact that they developed some sort of 'Turkish humanizm'. This form of humanizm is not separatist but unifying. In this form of humanizm, Turkish thought, traditions, tolerance and moral is sovereign. On one hand, this form of humanizm emphasizes national values on the other hand it is open to humanity.¹⁶ Through religious history of Turks, love and tolerance has always been superior to fanaticism and therefore, big fanaticism periods have not been experienced, at least fanaticism has not found support widely in long term and amongst masses.

In essence, Anatolia has been home to various civilizations throughout history. Due to this characteristic of Anatolia, it is seen that Hittites, Lydians, Phrygians, Lycians, Romans, Byzantines, Seljuks, Ottomans and other communities from Balkans, Caucasuses, Blacksea and Middle Asia have constituted harmony among themselves. This harmony is hosting modern Turkey's historical and cultural legacy. Beside, it is possible to see culture heritages of Jews-Christians, Greco-Latin culture heritages and all features of Islamic culture which has been sovereign for more than thousand years in Anatolia on which current Turkey is built. In other words, different ethnic, religious and cultural communities have lived together in peace on this land for centuries and this geography has provided humanity with the model of living together in peace and comfort.

3. Coexistence Experience in the Ottoman State: Istanbul Example

Throughout history Istanbul owes its development to its geographical location which is suitable for political, economical and cultural developments. Istanbul, which has been besieged several times and been subject to occupation attempts by many nations, has also embraced different cultures. Istanbul's conquest by Sultan Mehmed II in 1453 has been

¹⁵ Mehmet Şeker, *Anadolu'da Birarada Yaşama Tecrübesi*. Third Edition. Ankara, 2005, pp. 79-85.

¹⁶ İ. Ağâh Çubukçu, *Türk Düşüncesinde Felsefe Hareketleri*. Ankara, 1986, p. 224.

described as the opening of a new era. This conquest shall be assessed not only for Ottomans, Turks and Muslim world but also for Europeans in terms of the relations between Ottomans and non-Muslims.¹⁷

During the days following Istanbul's conquest, after turmoils were prevented Padishah ordered for those who were hiding not to hide any longer and commanded for the necessary measure to be taken so that everybody can freely walk around the city. Beside, it was declared that fugitives can return to the city and people will continue to maintain their life style according to their belief and customs irregardless of their religion and traditions. Upon this, those were hiding and those who sought refuge in Galata returned to their original places. Also, it was facilitated for captives to settle in Istanbul and houses were allocated for them. Fatih Sultan Mehmed immediately carried out restoration work in the city and got occupied with increasing the number of mosques and masjids and constitution of Muslim neighbourhoods. Besides, he also dealt with Christian society. The churches, which were not damaged, were not destroyed and some of active churches were left to Christians. To confirm this after the conquest, out of the churches and monasteries in the city only one or two were taken over for basic needs. Some of them were left as they were as they were, in an already ruined state. As for other existing churches, they were allowed to be used after restoration.

We find out from Fatih Foundation that the neighbourhoods that religious communities settled in were named after their religion. "Neighbourhood of Edirne Jews" is the most evident example of this. This foundation book (waqfiye) shows us clearly that there were neighbourhoods in which Jews, Christians and Muslims lived together during the time of Fatih Sultan Mehmed. Moreover, as well as getting foundations built for Muslims, the following statement, which indicates that Fatih Sultan Mehmed got a church built for Christians and made it over, is an excellent example which shows that administrators took into consideration all needs of city people: "His excellency has made over the church that is in Seyyidi Ali Neighbourhood to the foundation."¹⁸

During the time of Ottomans, members of other religions, in particular Jews and Christians, and Muslims, have lived very closely, side by

¹⁷ Şeker, *Anadolu'da Birarada Yaşama Tecrübesi*, pp. 121–122.

¹⁸ Mehmet Şeker, "Fatih Vakfiyesine Göre XV. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Sosyal yapısı". *Belleten*, 1994, Volume LVII, Number 219, p. 505.

side. In the Waqfiye that Sultan Fatih got written in 1470, non-Muslim community is mentioned separate to Muslim community. In the Waqfiye, it is talked about Muslim villages, villages that were inhabited by Muslims and non-Muslims and villages that were only inhabited by non-Muslims. For example, it is noted that when villages bound to Corlu subdistrict were counted, villages of non-Muslims were called with their original names.¹⁹ Meanwhile, we see that in order to prevent any confusion due to the similarity between Muslim and Jewish names, different spellings have been used in the Waqfiye. For instance, while the word 'Musa' is written with 'sin' for Muslims, it is written with 'sad' for Jews. It is possible to give similar examples. This situation is one of clear examples of the fact that Muslims and non-Muslims used to live together. The below table which is derived from the Waqfiye sets out this situation very clearly.²⁰

Table 1. Fatih's Waqfiye on the Position of non-Muslims in Istanbul

Page Number of the Waqfiye	District Name	Settlement Situation
100-101	District of Edirne Jews	Building owned by Jews
101	As above	Building owned by Jews
102	As above	A building owned by a Jewish woman called "Kostra".
103	As above	- Five jews - Six buildings owned by a Christian woman called "Komnati".
104-106	In the same neighbourhood-near fish market	12 buildings owned by Christians and Jews
134	Hızır Bey Çelebi Neighbourhood	A church and three shops existed. They were adjacent to one another and the church was owned by Fatih

¹⁹ Şeker, "Fatih Vakfiyesine Göre XV. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Sosyal yapısı", pp. 496-497.

²⁰ Şeker, *Anadolu'da Birarada Yaşama Tecrübesi*, p. 125.

		foundation.
166	Lis (Lips) Monastery Neighbourhood	The property of Christian Alexy – A church owned by Fatih Foundation.

Population increase quickened even further during the time of Bayezid II and Suleyman The Magnificent but during these periods due to the rise in the number of Muslims a considerable increase in Turkicization was also noted. Despite this, during the middle of seventeenth century it was not only Turks who lived in Istanbul, which had most of the population, but also Greeks, Armenians and Jews. Subsequent to conquests of Yavuz Sultan Selim (Selim I) and Kanuni Sultan Suleyman, craftsmen and artists came either willingly to the capital or were brought to the capital. For example, Moldovians were brought to Istanbul by Bayezid II. Similarly, after certain parts of Caucasus and Tebriz were conquered ceramicists were brought to Istanbul. In the same way, craftmen and artists from Syria and Egypt were sent and relocated to Istanbul. Also, during the time of Kanuni, after Belgrade conquest, Serbs were placed around Belgrade door which is near Yedikule (Seven tower). Although Muslims from Spain moved to Galata during the middle of sixteenth century, they did not manage to stay there. Despite this, Istanbul's attractiveness has attracted Muslims, Christians and Jews. To confirm this, Jews of Selanik and Safed, Armenians of Tokat, Sivas, Kayseri, Bursa and Amasra and Greeks of Mora and the Princess' Islands moved to and settled in Istanbul. Sinan Pasha's private doctor, Cristobal from Villalon, indicates that there were 40.000 Christians, 4.000 Jews and 60.000 Turkish houses and 10.000 suburban houses in Istanbul during 1550s. According to this, the rate of Muslims was 57,7 % whereas non-Muslims rate was 42,3 %. This proportion has roughly continued till the 19th century.²¹

Evaluation and Conclusion

Considering the examples that we presented so far, it is possible to summarize the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in Ottoman society as follows:

- The Muslims and non-Muslims in Ottoman Society resided in neighbouring villages as well as building cities in which they

²¹ Şeker, *Anadolu'da Birarada Yaşama Tecrübesi*, p. 126.

dwelled together. In these cities, they established common organizations from which they benefited together.

- They preferred to maintain their relations by either living side by side or in neighbouring neighbourhoods. They shopped from the same market, ate at the same almshouse and quenched their thirst from the same tap.
- Despite not praying in the same chapel, they respected each other's church, mosque and synagogue. Saturday holidays of Jews, Sunday observances of Christians and Friday prayers of Muslims gained recognition among conventional traditions of members of society and continued to be a way of living for hundred of years. Even common pilgrimage places have been visited many times at the same time and they have not refrained from being together in shrines which they have accepted as sacred places.
- Whether Muslim or non-Muslim, in Ottoman society people took lawsuits which they could not settle amongst themselves to the qadis (Muslim judges). This indicates that non-Muslims had trust in qadis. This is understood from the fact that non-Muslims wanted their lawsuits to be heard at the same court as Muslims. This can be clearly seen in the court documents which indicate that Muslims complied with court decisions which addressed complaints of non-Muslims and which were not in their favour.
- There are examples of Muslims getting married with non-Muslim women, building happy families and having children which are the very best examples of living together. Therefore, they led a life of not only common tastes of garments but architecture and folk dances as well as sharing common characteristics in cuisine, exterior and interior designs.
- Muslim and non-Muslims shared the taste of the same melodies when they came together during eids, entertainments and day to day activities to meet their various needs. Also, they did not stay away from one another during their sorrowful and unhappy moments just like they did during their happy and joyful moments.²²

²² Şeker, *Anadolu'da Birarada Yaşama Tecrübesi*, pp. 181-182.

To date, Muslims have been a model not only for their children but also for future generations with their coexisting experience. As it can be seen in the historical experience of Turkish-Islamic culture, the way to lead a happy and humanlike life by preserving honour and dignity depends on building a society on principles such as love, attention, dependency, togetherness and trust. Societies in which relationships are built on loyalty, sincerity and trust are able to assess the past and design the future bravely. Societies, amongst whose members the experience of togetherness, sincerity and trust is not established and sustained or the common cultural heritage is not transferred to future generations, are bound to deal with chaos and distrust. Such societies are unable to predict the future because of failing to learn lessons from the past. In essence, although one can speak geographically about the existence of a society which has difficulties in terms of building a safe bond between the past and the future, the social and cultural existence, in other words its independence and future, is at stake. In this context, the fact that trust is one of the prominent concepts in the definition of Muslim by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) shows that the existence of individual and social peace and trust is key for socio-cultural integration of societies and their future: "A Muslim is someone from whose tongue and hands mankind is safe". Nowadays when the world needs peace and trust more than ever, Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) definition of Muslim shall be re-thought about together with Turkish-Islamic historical and cultural experience and we should not delay learning necessary lessons to prevent the history from repeating itself.

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