



The attitude of the Seljuk rulers towards the non-Muslim population in Turkish historiography

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Abstract

Numerous works in Turkish historiography have been written on various problems of the Seljuk state, one of the 11th century Turkic states of the Middle East, distinguished by multicultural traditions and tolerance. This article examines the attitude of the rulers of the Seljuk state to the minority and non-Muslim population of the country from the point of view of historiography. Numerous scientific works on this topic in Turkish historiography from the beginning of the XX century to the present day have been considered, the current state of research of this problem in Turkish historiography has been studied.

Keywords: Turkey, Anatolia, tolerance, multiculturalism, Seljuk, non-Muslims

Introduction

There are numerous facts in historical sources confirming that Turkic-speaking ethnic groups have been historically tolerant and multicultural peoples. Today, the widespread expressions of tolerance and multiculturalism have historically been the way of life of the Caspian Turks, the Great Seljuk state, the Eldegiz state, the Great Mongol Empire and the Safavid dynasty. The Turkic peoples, who created empires at different stages of history, did not touch the religion and language of the local peoples in the territories they occupied, and lived in peace and tolerance with them. This was due to their national traditions and from their own characters.

One of the most important contributions of the Turks to world culture is tolerance, mutual understanding, dialogue with other cultures and respect for all cultures. No nation in the world has developed these values and owned them like Turks.

One of the Turkic states distinguished by its tolerant, multicultural traditions was the Seljuk state originated in the Middle East in the 11th century. Numerous scientific research works in Turkish history have been written on various problems of the Great Seljuk state. In this article the attitude of the rulers of the great empire of the Seljuk's to other ethnic groups and non-Muslims living in the empire are investigated in the works of Turkish historians.

About the attitude of the Seljuk's and their rulers towards non-Muslims in Turkish historiography is more found in the works of Professor Osman Turan. Although the researcher did not devote a separate work to the subject of the Seljuk sultans' relations with non-Muslims, he gave detailed information on this subject in his numerous research works devoted to the history of the Seljuk state.

In his numerous works named "History of the Turkish world domination", "The Seljuks and Islam", "Suleyman-Shah I. (B. Kutalmış)", "History of Seljuks and Turkish Islamic Civilization" is widely available information about the tolerant attitude of the Seljuk sultans towards the non-Muslim population.

Referring to medieval historical sources, in the section "Seljuks and non-Muslims" of the chapter "The origin and early periods of Seljuks" of his work named "History of Seljuks and Turkish Islamic culture" he writes about the attitude of the Seljuk sultans towards non-Muslims: "The Seljuks maintained the same mentality against non-Muslim elements such as Christians and Jews they encountered in the nearby Orient; they did not spare any unprecedented tolerance and affection (1, p.249).

The researcher said that despite the conquest of Christian lands by the Seljuk ruler Alp Arslan, he is also described as a just and merciful man notes that no words were said against him in the sources.

Referring to Christian sources about the Sultan Melik Shah, he writes: "The heart of Melik Shah was full of compassion for Christians; he behaved to the people of the countries that he passed on as fathers, so in 1086 many provinces passed under his rule. Armenia and Rome recognized its laws"; "The twelve nations lived under his rule."

Referring to another Christian source, he writes, "Melik Shah was the most excellent men; was known for his kindness and compassion; He was known for his justice and goodness towards the Christians.

In Turkish historiography, little information on this subject is found in the works of Ali Sevim. On his work which co-authored with Erdogan Merchil, "History of the Seljuk States: Politics, Organization and Culture," states that the great Seljuk sultans were tolerant by all non-Muslims, especially Armenians, in the countries they ruled by .

Referring to Islamic, Byzantine, Armenian and Syrian sources, the author stating about how fair and compassionate Sultan Alp Arslan treated non-Muslims and his rivals and writes: "After the Battle of Manzikert, emperor Alp Arslan treated Romanes Diogenes not as a captive but as a guest ruler. As soon as he learned that he was the ruler, he ordered that a separate tent be set up for him and that a certain amount of money be set aside to cover his expenses.

In that article mentioned about Kılınc Arslan compassion, tolerance and justice for Muslim and Christian peoples and scholars, and it is written that he was one of the great rulers of Turkish history (2, p.85).

One of the works written on this subject in Turkish historiography is N.Yazıcı's article "An evaluation of the culture of tolerance and coexistence of Muslim Turks in Anatolia before the Ottoman Empire". Commenting the tolerant attitude of the Seljuk Turks and their rulers towards non-Muslims based on historical sources, the author stating that non-Muslims and

their clergy were not persecuted and wrote: Even the Greek pastors of Anatolia under the rule of the Seljuks were able to maintain relations with the Byzantines and the Patriarch of Istanbul in the conditions of war with the Byzantines. Both they and Christians of different denominations could worship comfortably, protect their temples, and even build new ones.

The researcher expresses Suleyman Shah's son Kılıç Arslan's very fair and tolerant behavior towards the non-Muslim population in the following words: When The founder of the Turkish Seljuk empire, the son of Suleyman shah Kılıç Arslan I (1092-1107) besieged Malatya although the Armenians and Assyrians wanted to deliver the city, Gabriel, who ruled here, did not accept it and killed the Syrian Patriarch due to his attempt to mediate. On the other hand, Kılıç Arslan did not hesitate to treat the native Christian people with compassion and tolerance despite the tough struggles he had with the Crusaders, because of this attitude, Christians also mourned his death "(2, p.336-338).

One of the articles devoted to this problem in Turkish historiography is Abdurrahman Kuchuk's article "Religious tolerance of Turks to minorities in Anatolia (for example: to Armenians and Jewish)".

The article examines the religious tolerance of Turkish sultans towards the minority peoples living in Anatolia. The author notes that in almost all Syrian, Armenian and Greek sources written that the Seljuk Turks have a good attitude towards foreign races and religions, among which Armenians and Jews have a special place.

The article describes more the attitude of the Seljuks to the Armenian minority than others. Expressing the Romans persecuted the Armenians for their religious differences the researcher writes: When the Byzantines dominated and tortured the Armenians, and when the Turks started threatening the Byzantine Empire, the Armenian people were not interested in the situation of the Byzantine Empire, wanted them to go away and Turks dominate them. Muslims emerged when the Greeks began to see themselves as the sole authority and forced other Christians accept their authority and Orthodox beliefs (4, p. 559).

The book describes on the basis of historical sources the Seljuk rulers tolerant attitude towards non-Muslim ethnic groups, respecting their religion and culture which starting with Chagri Bey and his nephew Alp Arslan, who made their first reconnaissance visit to Anatolia. The Author expresses Malik shah's tolerant and fair treatment towards Armenians coming to the power after the death of the Alp Arslan such: "Ani Armenian Catholicos asked Melik shah to reduce the taxes imposed on them. Sultan Melik Shah also well received Barseg and gave him a decree which containing in itself "Representation of Armenian Catholicism with a single authority, excluding all churches, monasteries and clerics from taxes..." After that, taxes were abolished, The places where the Armenians were found were zoned, the Armenian Church and its monasteries were taken under the protection of the Seljuk State" (4, p. 567).

The Author conveys Sultan Malik shah's highly tolerant attitude towards minorities with the words of the Armenian historian Mateos from Urfa who said on the occasion of Malik shah's death:"In the same year died Malik Shah, the father of everyone and the owner of mercy and kindness to all people...The death of Malik Shah mourned the whole world."

However, it should be noted that the religious tolerance of the Seljuk sultans towards the non-Muslim people has been interpreted differently by some Armenian historians.

Kirakos from Ganja wrote that the seizure of the head of the Catholicos in Albania was carried out by the head of the Turkish government. He explained this by the exploitation of the Christian part of the local population (5, p. 56).

One of the researchers in this field in Turkish historiography is M.Kamaloglu.

In his article named "Social relationships with non-Muslim subjects of the Seljuk Turks" on the bases of written sources she notes that they had a better life and religious freedom during the reign of the Seljuk Turks than during Byzantine Empire.

The researcher's information about the sultan of the Anatolian Seljuk state, Aladdin Keygubad, is a clear example of the Seljuk rulers' tolerant, multicultural attitude towards non-Muslims. Stating about Sultan's tolerant attitude towards non-Muslims The author writes: When Sultan approach Kayseri returning from Yassichmen battle Muslims went to meet the Sultan with their imams, Christians with their priests and their crosses and instruments in their hands, Muslims pushed the Chiristians backwards, as they did not want allow them to be in the front row in their wishes for congratulations and friendship, upon this Christians went up a hill and somehow showed themselves.

Alaeddin Keykubad, who realized that his Christian subjects was separate, he got up from his camp came to them and got involved, he ordered them to play their instruments and sing their songs out loud. He entered the city among them and gave them gifts and presents” (6, p. 174)

One of the research works dedicated to the religious policy of the Seljuk rulers is the article "Religious policy of the Seljuks" written by A.Ocak. The author writes that the Seljuks pursued their religious policies in accordance with their domestic and foreign policies.

The author declaring Seljuk rulers were closely interested in the non-Muslim population of the empire and responded to their social, religious and cultural problems writes that they also showed their tolerance in the field of collection of taxes from Christian Jews and people of other religions living in the country, and thus ensured the commitment of non-Muslims to the state (7, pp. 388-389).

The author reports that the Seljuk sultans were not only tolerant towards non-Muslims beside it they did not touch non-Muslim's religious places; they create conditions for them for the construction of new ones.

In the work has been showed, the Barsuma monastery, as one of the religious centers that maintained its previous position during the Seljuk period. By writing that Turkish sultans also visited this place, the author once again demonstrates the multicultural and tolerant position of the Seljuk rulers.

He also explains the high multicultural and tolerant position of the Seljuk Sultans with the facts that non-Muslims held high positions in public administration and the Sultans married with them. So that the author notes the presence of Armenian and Syrian doctors in the Seljuk Palace and even participation in the city administration(8, p.429).

This problem has also take place in the article Turkish historian N.Arginasli named “The factors that facilitate the conquest of Anatolia” Comparing to Byzantine Empire the author explains the Seljuk’s advancing comfortably in the lands of Anatolia with the tolerant and multicultural policies of the Seljuk sultans towards the people. As is known, the Byzantine

Empire pursued a policy of Romanization and orthodoxy against the Armenians and Syrians living in Anatolia. Mikhail, a Syrian, says that the Patriarch of Istanbul destroyed books and sacred objects in Syrian churches because he did not accept different religions and that the same thing happened to the Armenians.

The author writes that in accordance with the traditions of the Seljuk Turkic state and the requirements of Islam the Seljuks paid a lot of attention to tolerance, they were not only tolerant and multicultural with the people of other sects, but they were also tolerant towards the peoples of other religions and cultures.

The researcher writes that the Anatolian population was expelled from their homeland frightened by the arrival of the Seljuk and Turkmen communities. He also notes that they did not hesitate evaluate the activity of the governing bodies of Turkish state based on the tolerance and multiculturalism and accepts their rule (9, p.181).

One of the works written in this subject in Turkish historiography is the Gunay Unver's article named "Pluralism and tolerance in the religious history of Anatolia". Expressing that the sultans of the Great Seljuks were tolerant and fair to non-Muslims, regardless of religion or sect, the author writes that this tradition was continued during the Anatolian state of the Seljuk.

Expressing that during this period non-Muslims have not been discriminated, author writes they have been showed high tolerance by the Anatolian Seljuk Sultans, they worked in government positions, as well as being engaged in with a number of major art fields, as it was in the time of the Great Seljuks.

The author notes that while non-Muslims were required to wear different clothes during the Abbasid and Great Seljuk periods, they were not required to do so during Anatolian Seljuk rule (10, p.198).

Thus, in Turkish historiography, numerous scientific research works have been written on the tolerant multicultural attitude of the Seljuk rulers towards the non-Muslim population. These works not only clarifies the attitude of the Seljuk rulers towards the ethnic and religious minorities living in the territory of the empire, but also of great scientific importance for the study of the Seljuk state from the point of view of historiography.

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