An Evaluation of the Relationship Between Islam and Social Change*

Translated
Article
Çeviri

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Human beings, who have been made the caliph on earth thanks to the mind bestowed to him to be tested by Allah, were created with the potential to commit both mischief and evil. In this respect, human beings are in need of guidance from the Creator. The purpose of the religion revealed by Allah is to show mankind and their society the true path that they should follow and ensure their happiness in both the material world and the afterlife. Therefore, mankind does not exist for the sake of religion, but the opposite. According to the Quran, which is the primary source of Islam, all the prophets sent to humanity throughout history were sent on Islam for this purpose. Prophet Muhammad is the last of the prophets sent by Allah on Islam. Islam, with its principles and decrees in the fields of faith, worship, morality and law, regulates human and social life by encompassing all its dimensions. Although the principles and provisions in the Quran, which has been revealed in the seventh century of the Gregorian Calendar, the society that is subject to those decrees is subject to social change due to its dynamic structure. The transition of religion to life by becoming livable and its encompassing of the society that it addresses is only possible if it is able to direct social change via the lifelike dialogue established with it. At this point, the relationship between what is stable and what changes should be correctly understood, as well as the axis that it operates upon. The purpose of this article is to eliminate the confusions in this regard by considering the relationship between social change and the provisions of Islam. In the preparation of the article, the studies and works written in regard to this subject were benefitted from. The studies and works utilized in the form of articles and books were shown in the bibliography.

Keywords: Tafsir, Religion, Quran, Judgments, Naskh, Historicity, Social Change.

Abstract

İslâm-Sosyal Değişim İlişkisinin Değerlendirilmesi

İmtihan edilmesi için Allah tarafından kendisine akıl nimeti verilerek yeryüzünde halife kılınan insan, aynı zamanda yeryüzünde bozgunculuk yapabilecek, kötülük işleyebilecek bir potansiyelle yaratılmıştır. Bu bakımdan insan, Yaratıcı tarafından kendisine yol gösterilmesine muhtaç bir varlıktır. Allah tarafından vahyedilen din, insan ve topluma üzerinde yürüyecekleri doğru yolu göstererek dünya ve ahiret hayatında onların mutluluğunu amaçlamaktadır. Dolayısı ile insan din için değil, din insan içindir. İslâm'ın temel kaynağı Kur'ân'a göre, tarih boyunca insanlığa gönderilen bütün peygamberler bu amaca matuf olarak İslâm üzerine gönderilmişlerdir. Hz. Muhammed, Allah tarafından İslâm üzerine gönderilen peygamberlerin sonuncusudur. İslâm, inanç, ibadet, ahlâk ve hukuk alanında getirdiği prensip ve hükümlerle insan ve toplum hayatını bütün boyutlarıyla kuşatarak düzenlemektedir. Miladi yedinci yüzyılda vahyedilen Kur'ân'daki prensip ve hükümler sabit olduğu halde, o hükümlere muhatap olan toplum, dinamik yapısıyla sosyal değişime konudur. Dinin yaşanır hale gelerek hayata intikal etmesi, muhatap aldığı toplumu kuşatması, onunla canlı diyalog kurarak sosyal değişimi yönlendirmesiyle mümkündür. Bu noktada sabit olanla değişken olan arasındaki ilişkinin doğru anlaşılarak mihverine oturtulması gerekmektedir. Bu makalede, sosyal değişimle İslâmî hükümler arasındaki ilişki ele alınarak zihin karışıklıklarının giderilmesi amaçlanmıştır. Makalenin hazırlanmasında konu etrafında yapılan çalışmalardan, yazılan eserlerden istifade edilmiştir. Makale ve kitap şeklinde istifade edilen çalışma ve eserler kaynakçada gösterilmiştir.

Özet

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tefsir, Din, Kur'ân, Ahkâm, Nesh, Tarihsellik, Sosyal Değişim.

Introduction

The religion of Islam, which is based primarily on the Quran and the Sunnah that was made concrete by the exemplary life of the Prophet Muhammad, has been shaping and guiding the spiritual lives, cultures, and civilization perspectives of Muslim societies to certain degrees and at varying tones for fourteen centuries. On the other hand, the matter of social change, which emerges due to the interaction between many different factors, has also been continuing along its own path. The lives of the members of mankind are everchanging. Comparing the past with the present by examining the history of mankind, which includes within its wide scope the days where human beings were living in caves, as well as the modern-day, in which we are launching satellites that reach the moon, allows us the see the scope of this change more clearly. Especially in the last century, nearly all means of life have been altered, as well as many forms of life. Although the great strides in science and technology have affected all of humanity and made their lives easier, but with the effects of globalism, new needs, demands and problems have also arisen. Positivist prophecies, which claim religion and metaphysics, will weaken with the development of science and technology and that science will replace religion and metaphysics, do not mean much in today's world, where religion and science are continuing their existence in their own fields. However, these

developments in science and technology, when coupled with the emergence of certain other factors and dynamics, became triggers for social change, which in turn came to affect religious life. These newly emerging situations, demands, needs and problems bring to the forefront the need for the reinterpretation of religious canonical texts.

For religion to create a space for itself in both lives of the individuals and the social life in general, interpretative activities that are based on the relationship between canonical texts and phenomena are necessary. Neither does naming this phenomenon with certain titles, such as the renewal or reform of religion, nor do the opposition raised by conservative individuals against this matter change the essence of the matter. The approaches made to the Quran via the Naskh theory or historicity approach, both in the past and in the present, should be evaluated within this context. Religion can only encompass the individual and the society if it possesses a dynamic nature, flexible enough to withstand the social phenomena, and that is strong enough to alter and direct such changes towards its own values and principles.

The primary focus of this problem is that, although the dynamic world of phenomena is subject to change in the sociological sense, the primary sources of the religion of Islam, including the Quran and its provisions, remain fixed. Or, in other words, the relationship between what is fixed and what is changing and how this relationship should be established constitutes the focus of this problem. Placing this relationship, which possesses two distinct dimensions from the perspective of Islam, on an axis in a balanced manner, requires the identification of the exact natures of both of these aspects, as well as their proper evaluations.

1. The Nature of Social Change: What Changes and What Does Not Change in Human and Social Life

History is determined by the dynamics of historical-cultural entities.[1] This phenomenon is called "social change", and it occurs within the natural dynamics of society. Thus, change occurs in the fields of production, property, technology, social structuring, beliefs and ideologies, language, culture and traditions. Social change is not necessarily an event that involves progress, but a differentiation from a previous situation.[2] Factors affecting social change are many and varied. Economic, scientific and technological factors, demographic and cultural factors, ideological and political factors, the educational factor, and physical, geographical and biological factors are the primary factors in this regard.[3] However, in order to understand social change correctly, the following question should be answered: Is there anything in the life of humanity that remains constant in the face of social change? If there are things in the life of humanity that remains constant while there are also things that are subject to

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[1]   Emre Kongar, *Toplumsal Değişme Kuramları ve Türkiye Gerçeği* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi Yayınları, 1981), 69.

[2]   Fazil Yozgat, *Sosyal Değişme Faktörleri* (Ankara: 1997), 1.

[3]   For further evaluation see: Yozgat, *Sosyal Değişme Faktörleri,* 42-56.

change, what is the relationship between what is fixed and what changes? Or is there no connection between them, with each moving its own direction?

Explaining history only through social change is a thing done only by those who have not sufficiently grasped the realities of humans and their societies. This is because there are things that remain constant within the life of humanity, in addition to the things that change. While the famous philosopher Heraclitus' aphorism "You cannot wash twice in a river" emphasizes change, other thinkers emphasize continuity, such as Parmenides, who has stated, "Change is simply appearances, what is essential is the not changing". Water passing through a point in a river changes due to the effects of the flow of the river. On the other hand, the continuity of the essential elements that constitute the river is also a fact. In addition to the phenomenon of change, the phenomenon of continuity, which makes it possible for societies to exist and enables societies to be understood, should also be perceived. While reading a historical article about England, for example, this phenomenon of continuity not only allows us to recognize the country in question as England in the 16th century, but it also allows us to do the same when the text moves on to the 20th century. Continuity, when coupled with the phenomenon of change, is what allows us to view a social structure as a whole, despite micro or macro-level changes that may have occurred within it through the passage of time, and it is what protects what is changeless within the crucible of transformation.[4]

Just as there are approaches to the interpretation of history which overlook continuity and view the realities of the society only through the lenses of change, there are also approaches that reduce change into evolutionary, structural-functional or dialectical theories. As a matter of fact, the models which examine social change within the context of dialectics are quite varied. None of the theories put forward to explain social change (evolutionist, dialectical, cyclical, bipolar oscillation or fluctuation theories, or theories based on biological analogies) has managed to reach a general consensus.[5] Although the aforementioned approaches have their place in explaining the phenomenon of social change, which has manifested itself under different circumstances throughout history, it is understood that the phenomenon of social change is too versatile to be explained based on a single point of view and that it occurs via processes that are in constant interaction with each other. The sociologists of the nineteenth century considered change and progress to be one and the same, and their argument was that social change will continue on a linear line as a result of the great strides in science, industry and technology. It would not be wrong to say that the evolutionist model, which addresses social change as a thing that occurs on a progressing straight line and supports the historicist approach to psycho-social phenomena due to this characteristic, is very popular with social scientists. It is acceptable for a certain period of time that social forces affecting social change will create a pattern of change that move towards

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[4] See Nur Vergin, "Değişim ve Süreklilik", *Türkiye Günlüğü*, 25 (Kış-1993), 6.

[5] See Ünver Günay, "Toplumsal Degisme ve Islâmiyet", *Çukurova Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 1/1, (2001), 9.

a certain direction. However, it cannot be expected that this will go parallel with the history of civilization.[6]

The dominance of the evolutionist theory has for a long time prevented the perception of the true characteristics of social and historical change. Turning their attention to researching the factors and trends that ensure unidirectional development, social scientists have overlooked the repetitions, rhythms and revolutions that can be easily observed in social and historical events. In the twentieth century, however, as a result of the social sciences placing more emphasis on the matter of change, emergence of sufficient information about past events and phenomena, and new discoveries regarding the civilizations in the past, the matters of the period, rhythm and repetition in historical and social events have started to attract attention.[7] For example, in his work named 'Social and Cultural Dynamics', Sorokin turned his attention to the rhythmic processes that occur in societies, while also recognizing the linear process that is in effect in this regard. What is meant by rhythm is a series of events that occur in societies asynchronously but with the same characteristics. For him, history is not monotonous, but like a great artist, produces creative variations.[8]

Based on this perspective, it could be concluded that, alongside the total progress in science and technology, psycho-social phenomena and socio-cultural processes may be repeated with certain changes. It does not seem to be consistent to claim that past events will not repeat or reoccur by confining past events to certain periods of history based on the perception that social change is a straight line that progresses in a single direction that is similar to the concept of progress of science and technology. The fact that these sociocultural facts are subject to change does not mean that the values that give them their original and inherent characteristics will change completely and that they will not have any connection with the past. Considering the known history of mankind, it can be observed that primary instincts of humanity have not changed.

Likewise, when considered as a whole, it could also be said that there are no changes in what humans love or move towards with ambition. Similarly, there is nothing that has changed in the tendency of the humans towards the opposite sex, or in their desire to acquire property, or in their aspirations for ruling and power! Just as there are no changes in the human tendency to form societies and continue their lineage, there are also no changes in their curiosity towards to universe, their ambition to better their lives by making the energies of the universe serve themselves, or their attempts to increase the benedictions provided to them by the world.[9] As a matter of fact, the following verse points to this fact:

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[6] Yozgat, *Sosyal Değişme Faktörleri,* 23-24.
[7] Yozgat, *Sosyal Değişme Faktörleri,* 30-31; also see Kongar, *Toplumsal Değişme Kuramları ve Türkiye Gerçeği,* 117-121.
[8] See Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics With a New Introduction by Michel P. Richard* (U.S.A.: 1991), 10/59-61.
[9] For further evaluation see. Muhammed Kutub, *İslâmî Açıdan Tarihe Bakışımız,* trans. Talip Özdeş (İstanbul: Risale Yayınları, 2007), 225-240.

> *"The love of desirable things is made alluring for men– women, children, gold and silver treasures piled up high, horses with fine markings, livestock, and farmland. These may be the joys of this life. However, Allah has the best place to return to." [10]*

The phenomenon called change is the method and form of how human beings satisfy their instincts, inclinations, and desires. In the past, wars were fought using spears, arrows, swords and bows. Today, these have been replaced by aeroplanes, missiles, tanks, armored vehicles, biological weapons, and nuclear bombs. Though the tools and means change, the human instinct to fight remains the same! Beyond being just a story, the tale of the two sons of Prophet Adam, which has been told within the narrative of the Quran[11], actually refers, at its core, to two widely different sets of belief, culture and civilization that are embodied by the brothers in question. The names of these two brothers are traditionally known to be Abel and Cain, and their story is repeated in different periods and places of history. The form of the event and the relevant techniques change, but the essence of human nature and character does not change. As a result, neither human nature is subject to change, nor are the constant values that govern human nature. The consideration of where Islam stands in the face of social change and what sort of a dynamic relation that it enters with this phenomenon of change is directly linked to this matter.

2. The Position of Islam in the Face of Social Change

2.1. Social Change Driven by Divine Revelations

Islam, whose primary source is Quran, is a religion that grasps life as a whole with its dimensions of continuity and variability. It includes the general principles that are continuous for humans and their societies, and guides and directs the human mind and contemplation. This religion imposes certain responsibilities on individuals and societies for renewing and developing themselves. As M. Said Hatiboğlu points out, according to the Qur'an, the worldly responsibility of a Muslim regarding their preparation for the afterlife can be divided into three main categories: The responsibilities towards the Creator, the responsibilities towards the self, and the responsibilities towards other people outside and the environment. The duty of a Muslim towards people other than himself constitutes the phase of his worldly life that is the most far-reaching and it includes every aspect of his relations with other human beings. Islam has imposed basic principles to regulate the political, legal and economic dimensions of these relations. Islam's appearance as a religion that has political aspects and its provisions being subject to change is related to these dimensions.[12] The matter of placing the relationship between Islam and social change is related to correctly understanding and evaluating what Islam means as a religion from a historical perspective.

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[10]   Āl ʿImrān 3/14.
[11]   al-Māʾida 5/27-32.
[12]   See Mehmed Said Hatiboğlu, *İslâm'in Aktuel Değeri Üzerine 2* (Ankara: Otto Yayınları, 2009), 91-97.

According to the Quran, Islam is the religion that Allah revealed to all prophets throughout history. What needs to be understood in this context is that, according to the verses of the Quran, the true religion in the presence of Allah is Islam[13] and no other religion will be accepted in the presence of[14] Allah. As a matter of fact, the Quran names all the prophets, and the faithful who believe in Allah without resorting to shirk by following their call, as "Muslims". As expressed in the Quran, Prophet Noah told his people *"I was commanded to be a Muslim"*.[15] When Allah commanded Prophet Abraham to *"Become a Muslim"*, Abraham replied *"I devote myself to the Lord of the Universe"*, and [16]when he and his son Ishmael were constructing the Kaaba, they prayed *"Our Lord, make us devoted to You (as those who are Muslims), and make our descendants into a community devoted to You (as Muslims)."*[17]

Prophet Moses said, *'My people, if you have faith in Allah and are devoted to Him, put your trust in Him"*.[18] The Disciples of Prophet Jesus said to him *"We believe in Allah, witness that we are Muslims".*[19] In other words, according to the Quran, all prophets are from a single ummah sent by Allah on the basis of Islam. The essence of the books they brought from Allah is one.

Although there are certain differences in details arising from cultural, historical and social circumstances, there are no differences between them in terms of the basic principles and decrees they brought from Allah in the matters of faith, worship, morality and law, especially the principle of tawhid. Prophets sent by Allah confirm those sent before them, rather than abrogating them. As stated in the Quran, Allah sent the Quran to confirm the Torah and the Bible, just as he sent the Bible to confirm the Torah.[20] It is certain that this matter of the books sent by Allah, confirming each other is in the original copies which were not tempered by human hands.

The mission of the prophets, each of whom was sent to deliver Islam to different societies and geographies, was to transform, change and guide the societies from shirk to tawhid, from falsehood to truth, from wrong to right, from cruelty to justice, from darkness to light, and from wicked ways to the true path. While carrying out this mission, the prophets were in a position that allowed them direct social change under the guidance of the divine revelations. At this point, the mission of the last of the prophets, Prophet Muhammad, was not to surrender to the social structure that was in error and chaos with all of its structures, religion, and traditions, but to guide that society in accordance with the principles and provisions of the Quran revealed to him. The verse, which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad against the objections and demands of the heretics who asked him to bring a book other than the Quran, states *"When Our clear revelations are recited to them, those who do not expect*

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13 Āl ʿImrān 3/19.
14 Āl ʿImrān 3/85.
15 Yunus 10/72.
16 al-Baqara 2/131.
17 al-Baqara 2/127-128.
18 Yūnus 10/80.
19 Āl ʿImrān 3/52.
20 For the related verses see. Āl ʿImrān 3 / 3-4; al-Māʾida 5/46; al-Ṣaff 61/6.

to meet with Us (after death) said 'Bring [us] a different Quran, or change it'. Say 'It is not for me to change it of my own accord. I only follow what is revealed to me. For I fear the torment of an awesome Day, if I were to disobey my Lord.'"[21] And this verse clearly demonstrates that the Quran cannot be adapted to the minds and mentalities of those Arabs who are heretics.

This phenomenon of change, which occurred under the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad, was not realized by ignoring the socio-cultural realities which were affecting the society that the revelations were sent to, but rather, they were realized by guiding the relevant society's concepts of faith, religion, and culture and the contents of its traditions with the light provided by the revelations. The fact that the Quran was sent down to Prophet Muhammad in approximately twenty-three years in connection with the events and facts is related to the divine revelation encompassing and directing social change. The semantic structure of the Quran provides us with a picture of the nature of this change. The concepts and words used by the Arabs of the Jahilliyah period, including especially the word "Allah" but also together with other words such as "*takwa*", "*karamah*", "*jasarah*", "*jahalah*", "*wafa*", "*sabr*"," *israaf*", "*kufr*", *and "shirk",* were altered within the semantics of Islam without being torn away from the values they originally represented, and they were provided with new meanings and content within the scope of the religion.[22] Thus, the concepts of Jahiliyyah Arabs were changed, and their mentality that was based on shirk and idolatry was transformed in the direction of tawhid. Simultaneously, Islam also began to encompass everyday life: The customs and practices of the Jahiliyyah period such as marriage, divorce, testament, inheritance, trade, and slavery were transformed from within, under the example of the Prophet and the Companions. In this transformation, those concepts which were in accord with Islamic principles and values were approved, some of them were amended, and those that did not comply with the principles and values in question were eliminated.

Throughout this process, the principles, values and norm-based provisions in question were not sacrificed by considering them obscene or historic against the mentalities, traditions, and applications of the Jahilliyah period. The Companions of the Prophet who witnessed the revelation of the Quran, such as Caliph Omar (d. 23/644), Abdullah ibn Masud (d. 67/687), Abu Musa al-Ash'ari (d. 44/665), Caliph Ali (d. 40/661), and Aisha (d. 58/678), did not perceive the revelations as just a text, but as words of divinity that are directly related to the ongoing events and circumstances. In the period following the death of the Prophet, the aforementioned Companions intervened in the events that took place around them and tried to solve the problems that emerged by acting in consideration of the spirit of the Quran, a sense of sound sunnah, the general principles and purposes of the religion, and the reasons and wisdom on which the provisions of the books were based upon. The ijtihads they established are

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[21] Yūnus 10/15.
[22] See Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Quran* (Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust, 2002), 36-41; Toshihiko Izutsu, *Kur'an'da Dini ve Ahlaki Kavramlar*, trans. Selâhattin Ayaz (Istanbul: Pınar Yayınları, n.d.), 46-150, 165-237.

related to when and how these provisions, which are based on the divine revelations, shall be used. We do not have the conveyances or examples that can be construed to make us think that they discussed the nature of abrogation among themselves or made theoretical evaluations while making ijtihad related decisions regarding the verses.[23]

2.2. Discussion of the Changes of Ahkam (Provisions) in the Context of Naskh (Abrogation)

It is understandable that the Quran, which was gradually conveyed to the Prophet over twenty-three years, includes different provisions and rules that are appropriate for different circumstances, such as peace and war. It is within its nature to include different rules and judgments for each and every different situation. And, for example, for the concept of *iddah* period, there are different provisions for different circumstances that may arise within this context, although such circumstances may inherently be similar. For example, iddah periods are not exactly the same for widowed women and divorced women. Likewise, the provision which stipulates an iddah period for those women whose husbands have passed away and the provision which ensures the provision of alimony and inhabitation in their husband's houses for one year for the women who are in the same situation are different from one other in nature. The fact that different provisions are imposed for different aspects of the same situation or that these provisions were sent to the Prophet gradually are neither contradictory to each other nor do the existence of such provisions requires the abrogation of other provisions. The changes in the judgments of the Quran should be understood within this context. However when considering this from the perspective of the theory of Naskh, it is witnessed that the provisions of the Quran that do not conflict or cannot be alternative to one another have been confronted by making them alternative to one another or preferred over the other by considering them invalid forever.

The word *"Naskh"*, whose lexical meaning is "he has cancelled", "he has annulled", "he has abrogated" or "he has removed"[24], was used the 106th verse of the Surah al-Baqara in the present tense: "مَا نَنْسَخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنْسِهَا" (Any revelation We cause to be annulled or forgotten.) The problem is not in relation to the wording of the term "naskh", but about how to understand its content. How the concept was perceived in the past varied between individuals and periods. Neither the Quran, nor the words of the Prophet Muhammad or the narrations conveyed by his companions contain any descriptions or explanations as to what naskh means that has reached our time. Some narrations from the companions show that the issue of naskh has become a topic of discussion for Muslims quite early on. It is known that there were different perceptions of the

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23 Talip Özdeş, "Kavramdan Teoriye Nesh Problemi", *Günümüz Tefsir Problemleri,* ed. Ali Karataş – Yunus Emre Gördük (Ankara: Bilimsel Araştırma Yayınları, 2018), 162.

24 See Ebû'l-Fadl Cemâluddin Muhammed b. Mukerrem b. Manzûr, *Lisânu'l-Arab* (Beyrut: Dâru Sâdır, ts.), 3/61; Râgıb el-İsfehânî, *el-Müfredât fî garîbi'l-Kur'ân*, (Mısır: Dâru'l-'İlmi'l-Melâyîn, 1961), 490; Cubrân Mes´ûd, *er-Râid*, (Beyrut: 1981), 2/1498.

concept of naskh in the early periods of Islamic history. It is known that determination of the absolute, allocation of the general, explanation of a summary, and exceptions were called "naskh" during these periods and that Abdullah ibn Abbas (d. 68/688) and Abdullah ibn Mes'ud titled "mutashabih" (similar) verses as mansūkh (abrogated) and muhkam (decisive) verses as nasikh (abrogating). Likewise, the verses that lay down judgments regarding relations and positions (such as war and peace) vis-a-vis with non-Muslims and make provisions in this context were also examined within the scope of naskh. Similarly, the matter of naskh was understood by some as the delivery of the Quran from the al-Lawh al-Mahfuz (The Preserved Tablet), while it was interpreted by others as Prophet Muhammad being made to forget certain verses.[25]

The definition of naskh as "abolition of a *shar'î* (juristic) provision with another *shar'i* provision delivered afterwards" became a description that Islamic jurists highlighted and popularized, especially after Imam Shafi'i (d. 204/820). While explaining the concept of naskh in his *ar-Risalah*, Shafi'i defined it as "Naskh is the abandonment of a farz (provision)... A provision can never be abrogated (naskh) without being replaced by another farz (provision)".[26] What was originally meant by "nass" in this definition was the verses of the Quran; that is, the abrogation of the provision of a verse that came before on the same subject by another verse that was delivered later. In time, however, the definition of naskh was developed and transformed into meaning "the expiration of a religious provision via the arrival of a later *shar'î* statement/evidence (the elimination of a prior judgment with a later proof)". This has led to the understanding that the sunnah (or more specifically, the hadith) could abrogate (naskh) the verses of the Quran.[27]

Basing his position on Shafi'i (d. 790/1388), Mustafa Zeyd has stated that, until Shafi'i, naskh was perceived as it was perceived during the period of companions and successors, but after Shafi'i, it went beyond being the allocation of the general, determination of the absolute and type of declaration. It came to represent the meaning of the abolition of the provisions of canonical texts after the determination of naskh being constant.[28]

There are no verses in the Quran stating that a verse was abrogated by another verse or that provisions of such verses were cancelled or be made forgotten. Likewise, there are no narrations regarding the Prophet Muhammad, in which it is proclaimed that "this verse was abrogated by that verse". The claim that Allah has sent verses to annul His prior verses in the face of changing social circumstances, events or developments and made Prophet Muhammad forget about these abrogations is, above all, in contradiction with the description of Allah and Quran as they are described by the Quran. Such an

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[25] See Muhammed Cemâluddîn el-Kâsimî, *Mehâsinu't-te'vîl*, thk. Muammed Fu'âd Abdu'l-Bâkî (Dâru İhyâi'l-Kutubi'l-Arabiyye, 1957), 1 (Mukaddime)/33; Özdeş, "Kavramdan Teoriye Nesh Problemi", 161.

[26] See Muhammed b. İdris eş-Şâfi'î, *er-Risale*, critical ed. Ahmed Muhammed Şâkir (Beyrut: n.d.), 106-109.

[27] See Özdeş, "Kavramdan Teoriye Nesh Problemi", 165.

[28] Mustafa Zeyd, *en-Nesh fî'l-Kur'âni'l-Kerîm* (1987), 1/74-75.

understanding is in total contrast with the verses which explicitly state that the Quran was delivered in a manner that is muhkam and hakim (that is, decisive and solid), that it cannot be preceded or succeeded by superstition, that it does not contain any contradictions. The theory of naskh, which came to be formed in a long process following the delivery of the Quran, has led to the claims that the Quran contains mansukh verses and these claims are based solely on subjective evaluations of the matter at hand. As one would expect, there are many controversies regarding this subject. Although it is claimed by the theory in question that the naskh (abrogation) was performed by Allah himself, the fact that there are many conflicts within the ulama regarding the number of verses that are considered to be mansukh and the types of naskh is a clear indicator that this subject is, in essence, related to the ijtihad.[29] Regardless of its name being tafsir or ta'wil, any explanations, interpretations and theories brought by mankind upon the divine revelation are, by their nature, relative and subjective. It is not possible for human interpretations, hypotheses and theories, which are epistemologically relative, to abrogate and invalidate the provisions of the Quran, as these provisions are absolute on the account of being the logoi of Allah. The fact that a theory has largely been accepted at a certain period of history does not automatically render it true. The history of science is full of examples of theories that were disproven and abandoned, but were, once upon a time, widely accepted.

2.3. Discussion of the Changes of Ahkam (Provisions) in the Context of Historicity

As a result of the influence of the studies and interpretations on the holy books and Bibles in the Western world, the issue of whether the provisions of the Qur'an are subject to change in the face of new developments and different situations and problems that have emerged after the Prophet Muhammad's life has come to be discussed within the context of historicity.

> The discussions regarding historicity, which came to be a point of discussion in Turkey in the field of theology, took place on the axis of the translations of the works of Fazlur Rahman (1998). In this sense, Fazlur Rahman came to be known as the pioneer of the idea of the historicity of the Quran or, in other words, the modernist approach. However, historicist approaches came to the fore in Ottoman science and cultural life long before Fazlur Rahman, with many scholars taking positions as the advocates of this position. In contrast to approaches that envision renewal by adhering to traditional methods, opinions demanding radical changes in method and practice and using different arguments can be evaluated within this scope.[30]

The discussions regarding this subject are greatly focused on whether human will, can intervene in divine revelations in the period following the

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29 For detailed information and evaluations on this subject, see. Özdeş, "Kavramdan Teoriye Nesh Problemi", 166-167; Talip Özdeş, *Kur'an ve Nesh Problemi-Allah'ın Kitabında Çelişki Var mı?* (Ankara: Fecr Yayınları, 2018), 31-117.

30 Recep Orhan Özel, "Dil ve Üslup Açısından Ahkâm Âyetlerinin Bağlayıcılığı ve Tarihselciliğin İmkânı", *Gaziosmanpaşa Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 5/1 (2017/I), 27.

Prophet Muhammad, where the source of the divine revelations is not present anymore, and if the human will can intervene in the revelations, to what extent will this be performed or what forms will this intervention take. Although most Muslims advocate that the provisions of the Quran cannot be altered after the Prophet Muhammad, a certain minority has assumed the point of view that such changes may be valid on the basis of the law. Those who defend the matter of human intervention in the divine revelations justify their perspectives via the belief that divine message cannot be to the detriment of people.[31] However, those who are advocates of this line of thought must answer whether it is Allah or human beings who determine this concept of detriment in the context of Islamic theology. The second question that needs to be answered in this regard is whether the Quran was sent down to be as an object that is subject to human reason or as an object to transform human reason. Those who defend that all provisions of the Quran regarding social life, procedure and law are historic and they are invalid in today's world refer to the theory of naskh to find support for their points of view, and claim that the existence of naskh is a truth based on the Quran.[32] However, it is an undeniable fact that the theory of naskh, which is based on a completely subjective basis, is a complex subject on which disputes are concentrated the most, as stated above. Moreover, those who accept this theory claim that naskh can only be performed by Allah, while those who adopt the historicity view give this power of intervention to human beings, who are subject to many personal weaknesses and on whom common mentalities, customs and traditions, political, sectarian and ideological convictions are effective, which in turns renders the Quran subject to the authority of the mankind. Those who advocate this point of view also refer to the evidence provided by the practices of the companions. However, the actions of the companions, particularly those of Caliph Omar, cannot be construed within the scope of historicity due to their nature.

For instance, the fact that Caliph Omar did not follow the provisions of the verses[33] on war spoils after the conquest of the realm of Iraq by arms and left the obtained spoils in the hands of the previous owners of the realm in question instead of distributing it amongst the ghazi was based on another verse[34] of the Quran, which stipulates that spoils of war should not be a benefit that circulates amongst the rich. This is because of the fact that the verses of the Quran have within themselves to acknowledge and validate one other. Caliph Omar, considering future generations, made such an ijtihad based on the Qur'an.[35] Through this disposition of Caliph Omar, we can understand that he based his actions on the relationship between canonical texts and phenomena, primary goals and objectives of the religion, and the relevant interests by placing the entirety of the Quran at the centre of his focus. Through dispositions of the Mujtahid Companions, we understand that they were familiar with the concept

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[31] Hatiboğlu, *İslâm'ın Aktüel Değeri Üzerine 2*, 93.
[32] See Hatiboğlu, *İslâm'ın Aktüel Değeri Üzerine 2*, 93.
[33] al-Anfāl 8/41.
[34] al-Ḥashr 59/6-8.
[35] See Muhammed Mustafa Şelebî, *Ta'lîlu'l-ahkâm* (Mısır: 1947), 48-55.

of social change and that, in the implementation of the provisions of the Quran; they focused on phenomena and events by basing their actions on reason and wisdom.

The fact that the companions delayed the application of punishment (hadd) to those who have committed crimes in line with the directives of the Prophet Muhammad to keep them from joining the [36]ranks of their adversaries is also a good example of the aforementioned approach. Likewise, the result of this approach is also evident in another event, where, after the theft of a donkey by a starving slave, Caliph Omar decreed, instead of punishing the slave, that the owner of the slave would pay the damages for starving the slave.[37] The thing that was done in the above-mentioned event was not the abrogation and annulment of a provision regarding the punishment of the slave that is included within the book of Allah, but instead was the application of the divine provision based on the present circumstances by considering the reason and wisdom that it was based upon. The expression which states "If a tradition is changed, the provisions of the Shari'a that are based on customs will be applied in accordance with the new tradition" does not mean that the *provision*[38] in question is annulled and voided. The application of divine judgment depends on the factual existence of the situation requiring its application. If the situation requiring the application of the judgment does not exist on factual grounds, that is, namely if there is no response for the judgment in reality, then it will not be applied. This does not mean that the original provision will never be applied on the grounds that it has been abrogated and made historic. If the event in question occurs, the original provision shall be implemented and made effective according to the current conditions.

Caliph Omar's refusal to give shares of zakat income to certain individuals known as al-muallafat qulubuhum whose hearts were warmed to Islam[39] after the death of the Messenger of Allah and during the rule of Caliph Abu Bakr has become a subject to evaluations and interpretations, which are based on the grounds of naskh and historicity, that a provision of the Quran was abrogated via ijtihad.[40] It is essentially erroneous to claim via an approach that is based on the classical theory of abrogation that Caliph Omar performed naskh (abrogation) on a provision of the Holy Book, which stipulates zakat can only be given to eight categories of people,[41] due to the provision question becoming historic at his time. This is because this action of Caliph Omar was based on the fact that the logic of the necessity of the implementation of this provision no longer being present. This means that Caliph Omar turned down those who had requested shares from the zakat under their title of al-muallafat qulubuhum on the account that he no longer perceived them as al-muallafat qulubuhum, which was an action that prevented the abuse of the subject in question. Moreover, according to the relevant verse, zakat is not required to be divided into eight

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36   See Şelebî, *Ta'lîlu'l-ahkâm*, 36.
37   See Şelebî, *Ta'lîlu'l-ahkâm*, 62-63.
38   Hatiboğlu, *İslâm'ın Aktüel Değeri Üzerine 1* (Ankara: Otto Yayınları, 2009), 133.
39   See Şelebî, *Ta'lîlu'l-ahkâm*, 62-63.
40   For example, see. Mehmed Said Hatiboğlu, *İslâm'ın Aktüel Değeri Üzerine 1*, 133.
41   al-Tawba 9/60.

equal shares. Although zakat can be divided into eight equal shares in accordance with the eight categories of people indicated under the verse, if the Ulu'l-amr/ruler deems it necessary, zakat can also be distributed only to certain categories, or even to a single category. The fact that this practice of Caliph Omar was called "naskh via ijtihad on the grounds that the cause for the implementation of the provision no longer existing" in Imam Maturidi's work titled "Ta'wilat al-Qur'an" is also based on this idea[42]. Therefore, this event cannot be included as an evidence for the classical naskh approach. Maturidi's approach to the subject abrogation coincides with the approach of the Companions, the Successors and early Hanafis of the early period.[43]

The matter of the changes in ahkam in Islam is also a subject of the evaluations that are performed from the perspective of the distinction between religion and *shari'a*.[44] The viewpoint, which advocates that the religion is stable while shari'as are variable, is represented by individuals such as Qatāda (d. 118/739), Abd al-Razzaq ibn Hammam (d. 221/836), Abu Hanifa (d. 150/767), [45], İmam Maturidi (d. 333/944)[46], Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328), and Shah Waliullah Dehlawi (d. 1238/1823). According to the viewpoints in question, worship is sincerely dedicated to only to Allah alongside the belief in His Oneness in the matter of religion, while the works and provisions arising from it are considered as sharia, which is deemed to be variable. In other words, religion refers to the originals that constitute the basis of the religion in question, while shariah refers to the details arising from that religion. This subject takes shape around the following verses:

> "*In matters of religion, He has laid down for you the same shariah (order of law) that He gave Noah, which We have revealed to you [Muhammad] and which We recommended to Abraham and Moses and Jesus. That is to say: Keep the religion true and do not fall into disagreement within it. As for the idolaters, what you call them to is outrageous to them. God chooses whoever He pleases for Himself and guides towards Himself those who turn to Him.*" and [47] "*We have sent down the true Book (Quran) upon you to confirm and preserve the Books preceding it. So, judge between them according to what Allah has sent down. Do not follow their whims, which deviate from the truth that has come to you. (Oh, the ummah) We have assigned a law and a path to each of you. If Allah had so willed, He would have made you one community. But He wanted to test you through that which He has given you (the paths*

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42 Ebû Mansûr Muhammed b. Mahmûd el-Mâturîdî, *Te'vilâtu ehli's-sünne* (İstanbul: Selimağa Kütüphanesi, No. 40), 307 b.

43 For a broad assessment of the subject, see. Talip Özdeş, *Mâturîdî'nin Tefsir Anlayışı* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2003), 235-237; Özdeş, *Kur'an ve Nesh Problemi-Allah'ın Kitabında Çelişki Var mı?*, 85-87.

44 For example, see. İlhami Güler, *Sabit Din Dinamik Şeriat* (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 1999), 9-37; Hatiboğlu, *İslâm'ın Aktüel Değeri Üzerine 1*, 127-134.

45 For the explanations of Abu Hanifa on the subject, see. Ebû Hanîfe, "el-'Âlim ve'l-mute'allim", *İmam-ı Azam'ın Beş Eseri*, trans. Mustafa Öz, (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 1981), 12-13.

46 For the evaluation of Maturidi's explanations and views on the difference between religion and Sharia, see. Talip Özdeş, "Mâturîdî'nin Din ve Şeriat Anlayışı", *Büyük Türk Bilgini Mâturîdî ve Mâturîdîlik Milletlerarası Tartışmalı İlmî Toplantı*, 22-24 Mayıs 2009 İstanbul (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi Vakfı Yayınları, 2012), 123-137.

47 al-Shūrā 42/13.

and the laws). Compete with each other in performing good deeds. All of you will return to Allah. He will make clear to you the matters you differed about."[48]

Although the approaches to the subject are based on similar points, the issue of what is understood from religion and *shari'a*, what these concepts contain and what their dimensions are is quite complex, and the explanations and comments made regarding this appear to be quite subjective. Again, whether this change in the provisions occur between prophets due to their different historical and socio-cultural context or whether this change occurs between the provisions of the same book that a prophet has received from Allah (or, in other words, whether different provisions of the same book abrogate each other or not), is subject to analysis and examination.

In addition, whether it is correct to associate with the current interpretations of historicity the explanations made on the subject by those who have distinguished themselves in the field of tafsir, fiqh and theology in the early or later periods or not is a separate area of analysis. Since the evaluation of these points will significantly exceed the physical limits of this article, it would be more appropriate to consider and evaluate this subject in a future article.

Conclusion

In the life of human beings, there are things that are changeless, as well as things that change due to certain factors, and these constitute the two intertwined and interdependent aspects of the physical, biological, and psycho-social reality. Scientific and technological developments progress linearly by building on top of the prior developments. However, circumstances that emerge due to human nature reoccur in ways that are alternating and that show similarities and differences from the previous occurrences. Throughout history, there has been no change in the inherent characteristics, main tendencies and weaknesses of human beings. Although colors, shapes, actors and scenes change, there is no change in the main adventure of human beings. The religion, which was made a law upon human beings by Allah, becomes livable by establishing influence over both the individuals and society and guiding social change in line with the values, principles and provisions that it aims to build by understanding human and society through their nature.

A movement that aims to perform deep changes in the areas of faith, worship, morality and law could have only carried out such changes through dialogue with the society it aims to change. Throughout history, all prophets sent to humanity have tried to fulfil their mission regarding Islam in accordance with the sunnatullah. Prophet Muhammad, to whom the Quran was revealed as the Khatam-al Anbiya, also carried out this mission according to this sunnah.

The most basic feature of the religion (Islam) chosen by Allah for humans and their societies is its conformity to human nature. While fitrat (nature of a being) reveals itself in different ways and under different circumstances at

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[48]   al-Māʾida 5/48.

different times, its primary characteristics do not ever change. The principles and decrees imposed by Allah on the basis of fitrat via different languages are aimed at building and reviving permanent values in the fields of creed, worship, morality and law. These values are the subject of the matter of fitrat, and they are confirmed via divine revelations. These fundamental principles and provisions can be implemented and become livable only if they are adopted and internalized by society. The fact that they are implemented through different methods due to sociological circumstances, historical and cultural factors, human interpretation or the effect of the ijtihad does not render their original forms altered or annulled. Changes in the *shari'a* do not affect the original or the essence of the provision, but how it is implemented. The existence of a meaningful relationship between the principles and decrees imposed by the language of the society that is subjected to revelation for the construction of value for guidance by Allah and the culture, living conditions, traditions, customs and acceptances of that society means that the divine messages and directions are shaped according to the structure of that society. What is addressed by the Quran to the individual and society are not historical in terms of being binding, despite the provisions within it being historical.

The fact that Muslim societies around the world have come to assume a passive position and lost certain values due to certain internal and external factors and have failed to renew themselves in line with the principles of the divine revelation and have surrendered to the change brought on by the initiatives of global projects in today's world does not mean that the fitrat-based provisions stipulated in the Quran by Allah are historical or that they cannot be implemented once again. The basic dynamic of social change lies with human beings. Changes that occur in line with the divine revelations are changes that occur starting with an individual proliferate all the way up to the structures within that society, and such changes occur on the basis of human nature, human belief, and humanity's internalization of the divine revelations. It is not a change that becomes politicized by becoming ideological, and a change that imposes itself by the repressive top down methods! For, as it is stated in the Quran, Allah does not change societies unless they change themselves. Today, the passive and submissive attitudes of Muslims in the face of social phenomena, circumstances and the social change that is significantly driven by global actors cannot be attributed to the religion itself and the provisions of the Quran.

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