

## **HISTORICAL-COMPARATIVE MULTICULTURALISMS: REVOLT AGAINST PERSECUTION BY ACHAEMENIDS AND ABBASIDS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study covers the research of the Achaemenid Empire and the early Abbasid Dynasty period, which are examined as two historical examples of multiculturalism based on the framework of the comparative historical method. The analysis have indicated that both Achaemenid (Persian) Empire and the early period of the Abbasid Dynasty (750-833) showed similarities in terms of ending oppressive and assimilations policies of previous civilizations, grabbing the power after a revolution that broke out against social stratification and applying religious freedom policies despite the driving force of a monotheistic religion. These characteristics contributed to the transformation of both empires, which contributed to the emergence and flourishing of multiculturalism. Comparative analysis of these two historical examples of multiculturalism, in the study, based on the data obtained from the literature review within the framework of the comparative historical method, indicate that the two empires shared multicultural similarities.

**Key Words:** Multiculturalism, Historical Multiculturalism, Achaemenid Empire, Early Abbasid Period

**Jel Codes:** R59, O57, N45

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## TARİHSEL-KARŞILAŞTIRMALI ÇOKKÜLTÜRLÜLÜK: BASKILARA KARŞI BİR DİRENİŞ OLARAK AHAMENİŞ VE ERKEN ABBASI DÖNEMİ

### ÖZ

Bu çalışma, çokkültürlülüğün tarihsel anlamda iki örneğini teşkil ettiği değerlendirilen Ahameniş İmparatorluğu ve erken Abbasi döneminin karşılaştırmalı tarihsel yöntem çerçevesinde incelenmesini kapsamaktadır. Araştırma sonucunda, hem Ahameniş (Pers) İmparatorluğunun hem de Abbasi İmparatorluğu'nun ilk döneminin (750-833) önceki medeniyetlerin baskıcı ve asimilasyonist politikalarına son verilmesi, toplumsal tabakalaşmaya karşı patlak veren bir devrimle iktidarı ele geçirmeleri ve tek tanrılı bir dinin itici gücüne rağmen dini özgürlük politikalarını uygulamaları bakımından benzerlikler gösterdiği sonucuna varılmıştır. Bu çerçevede bahsedilen bu özelliklerin, her iki imparatorluğun da çokkültürlü bir topluma dönüşmesine katkı sağladığı değerlendirilmiştir. Bu iki tarihsel çokkültürlülük örneğinin karşılaştırılması amacıyla, karşılaştırmalı analiz yöntemi çerçevesinde arşiv taramasından elde edilen verilere dayalı olarak şekillendirilen çalışmada, iki imparatorluğun, çokkültürlülük açısından çeşitli benzerlikler taşıdığı bulgusu elde edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Çokkültürlülük, Tarihsel Çokkültürlülük, Ahameniş İmparatorluğu, Erken Abbasi Dönemi

**Jel Kodları:** R59, O57

### INTRODUCTION

Multiculturalism, both as a descriptive and normative concept, represents diversity in terms of individual and social perception of beliefs, values and practices. The existence of different cultural groups is an expression of the descriptive side of multiculturalism, while the right to be respected and accepted altogether with the differences that these groups have and the positive approval of the social diversity is an expression of the normative side of multiculturalism. In this context, multiculturalism underlines the importance of cultures and lifestyles in knowing oneself and establishing self-value, both from the point of view of individuals and groups (Heywood, 2010). Thus, this perspective of multiculturalism focuses on the nature of the relationship between the dominant culture and other (subcultures) cultures, which is at the core of this study where a historical perspective is used (Frelas & Elliott, 1992).

Multiculturalism, as a social, educational and political conceptual reality, dates back to the 1970s. Multiculturalism diversity has been strongly grounded on the study of indigenous minorities, who are often old as the societies in which they live and maintain their existence (Kymlicka, 1995). Since the origin of indigenous minorities dates back to ancient times, some multicultural thinkers argue that multicultural studies should explore the historical roots of multiculturalism beyond the modern era. The cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic coexistence has been an important determinant in shaping different societies, cultures and civilizations throughout the dynamic and progressive historical processes. Therefore, advanced

cultures and civilizations have implemented successful social and administrative policies to accommodate multicultural diversity and have set a good example for the scholars of multiculturalism (Aktay, 2003).

William H. McNeill, in his work *World History* (1989), defined multiculturalism not as an ideology, but as the main determinant and a vehicle of world history. According to him, multiculturalism is closely connected with city life (*polis*). Travel, migration and mutual adaptation require long-distance exchanges, which ensure cultural contacts and the creation of an ever-changing world. Consequently, social solidarity and cohesion naturally evolve and develop. In this regard, ancient cultures and civilizations in the Near East demonstrated such multicultural developments. According to McNeill (1989), Sumerians, as founders of culture and civilization in the fourth millennium B.C.E., framed the first cultural contacts and exchanges. Later, in the third millennium, a bilingual society emerged with Semitic Akkadians. While Sumerian language was used for ritual and religious purposes, Akkadian language continued to exist as a commercial and everyday language within the society. In this regard, multicultural scholars can find many examples of cultural contacts and exchanges in Mesopotamian civilization.

Krishnamurthy & Babu (2017) gave the support for historical origins of multiculturalism by arguing that multiculturalism had long existed in the Indian society, which is evident in the foundation of Vedic Aryan culture. Then, Grazulis and Mockiene's and Bosworth's studies examined Hellenic and Hellenistic cultures from the perspective of historical multiculturalism (Grazulis ve Mockiene, 2017; Bosworth, 1994). Therefore, these studies provided examples of multiculturalism in different geographies, cultures and civilizations. Although literature demonstrated cultural contacts and exchanges in ancient civilizations, multicultural models were shaped in both the Achaemenid Empire and Abbasid Dynasty. Therefore, multiculturalism was limited to contacts and basic exchanges, whereby a dominant culture had taken a dominant position over other cultures. Thus, the multicultural model evolved later as a state policy (Foster, 2016).

The Abbasid Dynasty promoted the multicultural teachings based on the religion of Islam, the spirit of the multiethnic Abbasid revolution, as well as Persian influences, especially in management and bureaucracy. The Abbasid caliphs also used the administrative experience from Sassanid statesmen (Robinson, 2005). Thus, the multicultural models established by the Abbasids, who ruled the same lands a thousand years after the Persians, had important similarities with the policies of the Achaemenid Empire in terms of multiculturalism. Consequently, the idea to pen down this work examines the multiculturalism of the Abbasid Dynasty and the Achaemenid Empire within the framework of the historical-comparative method.

## I. METHOD

The qualitative method is useful for illuminating neglected research studies from a different perspective and their integration into current literature (Neuman, 2006). This is the reason why this study was designed as qualitative research.

The comparative method was used for the data analysis. The synthesis of history, political science and sociology led to the emergence of the historical-comparative method, as a sub-branch of the comparative method, which became popular in the 19th century (Sartori, 1991). In particular, the historical-comparative method was used for the study of ancient civilization in Mesopotamia, the Fertile Crescent and Asia Minor, where Oriental studies began to evolve. Therefore, the researchers examined the cultural accumulation of these civilizations, and the idea of using the historical-comparative method arose while making these research studies. Guided with this idea, the analysis of this study, within the framework of the comparative method, can be limited to a historical-comparative method.

Sartori (1991) notes that the comparative-historical method enables the researchers to compare different systems, societies and civilizations as in the studies of Weber, Marx and Toynbee. Since this study compares multiculturalism in different civilizations an analysis system is used within the framework of Toynbee's method. In addition, a thorough analysis of the studies within the framework of the historical-comparative method examines major social transitions and changes. Tilly (1984) conceptualized this approach in his systems analysis by describing large structures, formations, and comparisons.

In the Abbasid Dynasty and the Achaemenid (Persian) Empire, two social systems, analyzed in this study within the framework of the comparative method, initiated major transitions in two different historical periods. These empires became the representatives of significant transitions and changes, especially with regards to libertarian and pluralistic administrative systems. These transitions and changes were shaped by the conditions in which they were located. For this reason, the idea of large structures, formations and comparisons, conceptualized by Tilly, were used in this study. These two states ruled in the geography and similar borders of the Middle East. Although there is a difference of almost a thousand years between them, both empires had implemented libertarian policies with similar goals in similar geographies, which has been evaluated as interesting and the study has emerged as a product of this idea.

**Research Question:** *What are the multicultural similarities between the Achaemenid Empire and the Abbasid Dynasty, within the framework of the historical-comparative method?*

## **II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The coexistence of differences was determined by different geographies where the Achaemenid Empire and the Abbasid Dynasty reigned. The traditional and cultural lifestyles of the Middle East and the Mediterranean Basin were shaped by different peoples over thousands of years. Thus, a climax of the common culture which forms the social structure with human relations has ancient roots. This accelerated diversity prevented the emergence of an exclusive ethnic structure due to the continuous flourishing of cultural diversity (Rastoder, 2016).

A good example of how political systems historically coexisted within cultural diversity in the Middle East and the Mediterranean Basin, particularly in an ancient city of Dura Europos, located within the borders of modern-day Syria (Kraeling, 1956). The city Dura Europos was founded during the reign of the Seleucid Empire in the third century B.C.E. It was a small border city between Part and Rome, in which Latin, Greek, Syriac, and Persian languages were spoken. Different temples and worship sites had coexisted in this city, which reflects the diversity of the communities and represents the ancient traditions that originated in India, the Near East and Europe. Thus, this demonstrated inevitably, mutual interactions between these diverse cultures (Reid, 1987). For instance, a synagogue with frescoes, reflecting a western-style architectural structure that was modeled on the architectural styles of the Near East, was found in this ancient city. In addition, the oldest known church and its excavated archaeological remains are located in city of Dura Europos (Rastoder, 2016; Kraeling, 1956).

From an administrative point of view, efforts to manage cultural diversity have been a challenge for administrations throughout history (Wiesehöfer, 1996). Although some administrations have skilfully integrated multicultural aspects, others have been skeptical about diversity, other than the prevailing ethnic and cultural structures, because of fears from its negative impact on the official culture (Aktay, 2003). Then, as a reflection of these circumstances, they have implemented assimilation policies (Steinberg, 1981). In addition to assimilation, the existence of systems based on social stratification is considered anti-multiculturalism. Due to the intensive implementation of this policy, a sharp social stratification had emerged between the social groups under the domination and the dominant civilizations that make up the ruling class (Garthwaite, 2005).

Although policies based on social stratification, oppression and assimilation were heavily implemented before the Achaemenid Empire, the historical multicultural structures, part of which is briefly mentioned, existed after the Achaemenids (Rastoder, 2016). A thorough assessment of ancient societies in Egypt, Mesopotamia, India and China indicates contacts between different ethnic, cultural and religious groups (Manning & Lucassen, 2010). However, these interactions were limited and some experts define this as partial multiculturalism. For instance, the Hittites and the Kassites, who spoke Indo-European Aryan

languages in the XIII century, adopted each other's gods due to contacts and cultural exchanges (Moret & Davy, 1970).

The balances that existed in Near East before the Achaemenid Empire changed when the Persians established firm governmental and administrative control in the Near East, which are somehow visible even today (Waters, 2014). The Achaemenid Empire emerged as a result of the culmination of three thousand years of civilization and empire-building in the Near East. Therefore, the Achaemenid Empire represented a turning point in the history of the world due to an imperial structure and multicultural frameworks that combined civilizational accumulation from the geographies it conquered (Stronach, 1997). Kissinger describes Achaemenids innovative attitude in terms of its efforts to organize humanitarian and social relations (Eilers, 1974), as *the first empire in history that consciously sought to unite heterogeneous African, Asian and European peoples into an organized society* (Kissinger, 2014).

Although the Abbasids took over a tribal administration from the Umayyad Dynasty, they gradually developed a multicultural social administrative system thanks to the policies they implemented in their early period and the diversity they had in their structure (Kennedy, 1981). Thus, the early period of the Abbasid Dynasty, which overthrew the Umayyad dynasty as a result of a revolution, and Achaemenid Empire, which is often considered as the earliest example of multicultural administrations in history, show similarities in terms of an establishment of a multicultural system. Thus, this research was guided by this objective to further explore and examine the multicultural similarities between the Achaemenid Empire and the Abbasid Dynasty, within the framework of the historical-comparative method.

### III. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF SIMILARITIES

*According to the first finding, the Achaemenid Empire and the Abbasids put an end to the monotypic, repressive and assimilation-based policies of the civilizations and empires that ruled before them.*

Before the Persian expansion in around 550 B.C.E, the relationship between the lands conquered by earlier civilizations and empires that dominated the Near East and Central Asia was based on the exploitation of the local resources, the enslavement of people and neglection of cultural diversity (Mieroop, 2004). Assyrians had the same policy and held the dominance of the region a few centuries before the Persians, and for the Babylonians, Lydians and Medes who ruled after them. The Assyrian policy of oppression and intimidation is represented in the obelisk of Salmanassar, which was discovered in 1846 and is still kept in the British Museum. The obelisk depicts the prostration of Jehu, the King of Omri (the Jew), in front of him, while offering tribute to Salmanassar (Cassin, 1966). The

Babylonian armies, after capturing Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E., destroyed the city, the Temple and exiled thousands of Jews to Babylon (McNeill, 1989). Therefore, the Persian conquest of former Assyrian territories under Cyrus the Great meant the end of oppression and intimidation policy (Mieroop, 2004). The freedom messages written after the conquest of Babylon represent an important sources and examples of multiculturalism. These messages are as follows with a translation by Irving Finkel:

*“My great troops marched in peace through Babylon. The Sumerian and Akkadian people do not need to be afraid of anything. I founded the security of the city of Babylon and all the sanctuaries. I relieved all the fatigues of the Babylonian people and freed them from their bonds”* (Finkel, 2013).

The above message and declaration are also directed to the Jews who were formerly exiled to Babylon. Cyrus the Great intended to provide collective security and safety to all people. In this context, the declaration in terms of multiculturalism ensured freedoms, protection of sacred places, public trust, and that an exiled people, especially the Jews, will be allowed to return to their land (Macuch, 2002).

The early Abbasid period should be viewed within the social context before the Arab expansion and openings. Before these conquests, social stratification and policies, based on oppression and assimilation, had reached the highest level in the Fertile Crescent, Asia Minor and Eastern Mediterranean regions. The Arab conquests are often seen in the context of repressive, assimilationist and social stratification-based policies (Gutas, 2003).

*According to the second finding, both empires were founded by a revolution as a result of the reaction against social stratification.*

Archaeological findings and primary sources show that a structure of a society, divided into classes, had existed in these regions under the rule of the Medes (Behzad, 2007). However, there is a general opinion by some researchers that the Persians had a structure that was divided into dynasties living under the control and pressure of the Medes. However, the Achaemenid Empire was born after the tribes united and rebelled against the Medes' social stratification (Kuhrt, 2008).

This research makes a similar inference about the early Abbasid period. Although the leading officials of the Abbasid Revolution were predominantly Arab, the main revolutionary force was largely made up of non-Arab Muslims who reacted to social injustices and were called Mawali. Since wider revolutionary forces and masses were the main actors and striking forces, the revolution could be seen as a product of the reaction of the Umayyad discriminatory policies. Such practices stem from historical practices and divide the society into ethnically-religiously different strata, whereby the Arabs were privileged in comparison to other ethnic groups and cultures (Kennedy, 1981).

*According to the third finding, although both empires benefited from the strengthening influence of the monotheistic religions (Zoroastrianism and Islam), it was assessed that they established a wide range of religious freedom in the regions under their rule.*

According to some research studies the Persian conquests should be seen within the context of the emergence and spreading of Zoroastrianism. Hultgard (2002) argues that Vishtaspa made a great contribution in spreading the religion by taking Zoroaster under his protection. However, he was the same person as Vishtaspa who was the father of Darius I and Zoroaster. He was with them during the reign of Cyrus the Great as an ardent supporter of the Persians. Although some researchers argue that Zoroastrianism had prevailed since the time of Darius I (Macuch, 2002), the widespread opinion is that Zoroastrianism had existed from the early periods of the Achaemenids, which contributed to religiously motivated conquests (Boyce, 1968).

Although the Achaemenids' governance and power were influenced and shaped by Zoroastrianism, religious freedom seems to be remarkable. For instance, Achaemenid leader Cyrus the Great permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem and allocated the funds from the state budget for rebuilding the Temple (Daryaee, Mousavi & Rezakhani, 2014). Julian Raby, the Director of Galleries at the British Museum, conveys the following; *This was one of the most important moments in Jewish history. After many years of weeping by the river in Babylon, they were finally allowed to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple. This situation reshaped Judaism* (Finkel, 2013). In addition, even the Hebrew and Babylonian sources have a mention of King Kyros as a ruler who established religious freedoms (Boyce, 1968).

The Muslim openings and expansion brought the peoples of different ethnicities, beliefs and cultures together. During the early Abbasid period, openings and expansion were undoubtedly triggered by the religion of Islam and the goal of spreading this religion into the new geographies (Freely, 2009). Therefore, in the post-Islamic Arab administrations, although religious faith was so central, religious tolerance and freedom were established in the new territories, whereby socio-cultural and religious conditions were strongly taken into consideration (Zakeri, 1995). Therefore, the Umayyads used tribalist power to reign in a century in which they had to tackle and deal with numerous uprisings and rebellions. Thus, the early Abbasid rule established broad religious freedoms in a similar way to the Achaemenids (Cameron, 1992). For instance, the religious discussion assemblies were important in order to show the religious freedoms and tolerance for the citizens of different faiths. As Cameron cited, the philosophers and theologians from different religions, faiths and beliefs were permitted to defend their thesis in an environment of freedom. Thus, the discussion assemblies were a reflection of the libertarian environment, established by the representatives of the dominant culture and in which the caliphs attended from time to time (Pulman, 1975). Thus,



a religiously complete mosaic and freedom prevailed in Baghdad and in all the cities of the early Abbasid period. It is important to articulate that freedom was given to various religious groups that were able to criticize the most sensitive theological aspects of the religion of Islam, including the Tradition of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) (Cameron, 1992).

#### **IV. SIMILARITIES AND ANALYSIS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF MULTICULTURALISM**

According to the former analysis, both empires put an end to the oppression and assimilation-based policies of the earlier civilizations and empires. Then, both empires were established as a result of a revolution, which was the product of the reaction to social stratification. Although they used the reinforcing influence of a monotheistic religion, they applied religious tolerance policies, which culminated in the emergence of multiculturalism.

Since the very foundation of the empire in around 550 B.C.E., the Persians put an end to the oppression and assimilation policies that were implemented by the Babylonians and Medes (Herzfeld, 1947). Such progressive tendencies are possible to analyze through the expressions in Cyrus the Great, which can be considered as the primary source. The following statements are written from the utterances of the Cyrus the Great. This unique work is the first human rights declaration in history and has been translated into six official languages of the UN (Garthwaite, 2005). The statement is as follows: *My great army marched to Babylon without bloodshed; I didn't let anyone scare the Sumerian and Akkadian peoples. I have taken care of the goodness of Babylon and all its sacred centers. I put an end to the drudgery that the last Babylonian king (Nabonidus) imposed on the sacred centers, and which neither the gods wanted nor befitted the people. I eliminated their tedium, I gave them their freedom* (Finkel, 2013).

Statements that express the repressions, which were imposed by the Babylonian King Nabonidus, were eliminated and they point to the Persians' tendency to remove the repressions of previous administrations. In addition, since Cyrus the Great allowed Jews to return from Babylon to Jerusalem again means that the repression and exile policies ended as well as the establishment of religious freedoms. David Ben-Gurion described this situation with the words: *Cyrus the Great had been determinant in ending the repression and exile and the first return to Zion* (Finkel, 2013).

The above discussion and analysis lead to a partially different inference about the early Abbasids. Firstly, in the geographies inherited by the Abbasids from the Umayyads, various religious and sectarian communities were subjected to assimilation policies before the Muslim openings and expansion (Lindholm, 2004). Especially after the Kadıköy Council, the Orthodox assimilation policies, centered in Constantinople, were like a nightmare on the peoples who had been Hellenized for almost a thousand years (Gutas, 2003). In the Sassanid Empire, according to

historian Arthur Christensen, half-slavery and half-feudal order prevailed in the period before the Arab conquests. Christensen notes that the basis of this order was based on blood and ancestry in the early stages of the state, and property and wealth in later periods (Christensen, 1939). According to Shaul Shaked, since the Sassanid religion Zoroastrianism was in a structure which contributed to class conflicts, and sometimes its was used as a tool of oppression, it also led to a deepening of social stratification (Shaked, 2008).

The emergence of the Abbasid Dynasty meant the end of the repressions in the regions under the Islamic civilization. As Lewis cited, a Syriac historian described the end of these repressions: *God saved us from the persecution of the Romans and the Mecusis and their unbearable hatred for us thanks to the Arabs* (Lewis, 2002). Thus, the Muslim conquerors were aware that establishing dominance in these regions can be possible with policies that will be applied based on tolerance. Consequently, the Muslim rulers built a social system in which differences are tolerated in the conquered regions based on the tolerance-based teachings of Islam. In particular, the Abbasids restored the tolerance policies that existed during the period of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) and put an end to the Arab and Umayyad social stratification (Graham, 2006).

The new Abbasid society, founded on the basis of a demographic combination of differences, included mostly the Monophysite Christians who were not in the privileged mass of the Umayyad Dynasty, as well as the anti-Umayyad Iranian and Turkish peoples. During the Abbasid period, minorities belonging to various Christian denominations largely contributed to translation activities and scientific developments that were the product of the translation activities. In this context, the Abbasid dynasty, which skillfully directed the increase in prosperity achieved by the Umayyad conquest policy to scientific activities, created a much more libertarian system compared to the Umayyads against differences, especially when supporting translation activities. However, it should also be emphasized that the Abbasids implemented repressive and slaughtering policies against the Umayyad lineage that they had overthrown (Gutas, 2003).

Secondly, the Achaemenids, a tribe living under the yoke of the Medes, seized power by rebelling against social stratification, and this situation was similar for the Abbasids, who seized power thanks to a successful revolution against Umayyad tribalism.

The following statements are mentioned in the inscription of Nabonidus, the Babylonian King, about the Persian revolt led by Cyrus, which resulted in the establishment of the Achaemenid Empire; *Cyrus, king of Anzan, waged war against his master, in 550-49 BC, Astyages' army rebelled against him, and Cyrus won the battle*. In this transmission, which can be considered as the primary source, the expression that *he waged war against his master* is important in terms of showing the status difference that exists between the Persians and the Medes (Schmitt, 1987). Nicholas of Damascus, who describes the struggle between

Astyages and Cyrus, also draws attention to the social stratification between the Persians and the Medes and the discomfort that the Persians felt (Sarton, 1936). According to Herodotus, when organizing the Persians against the Medes Cyrus inculcated that the Persians did not deserve slavery and that they could establish their own sovereignty by defeating the Medes (Herodotus, 2017).

The Islamic administration, which was established in Arabia under the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad P.B.U.H consisted mainly of Arabs. Early Islamic state also had a libertarian and tolerant character in the process of emergence and spreading. However, it can be argued that this libertarian and tolerant character could not be maintained and the egalitarian policies of Islam that existed, in theory, could not be applied in practice during the Umayyad Dynastic era (Lindholm, 2004). In short, the Umayyad's tribal logic was based on the notion that the Quraysh tribe was superior to other nationalities and tribes. The Umayyads positioned themselves in the upper stratum because they brought the religion of Islam to the conquered peoples. In addition, the Umayyads, who had this idea, did not consider the Mawalis to be equal to them because they came from slavery. They also saw non-Arab Muslims, who had never been slaves, at the level of Mawali. Non-Muslims, on the other hand, were in the lower social stratum (Watt, 1988).

For this reason, the Abbasid Revolution broke out, which was led by different ethnicities, who were called Mawali. According to Kennedy, the Abbasid revolution achieved success not on a racial basis, but an alliance of various groups. In this regard, the differences that came together as a common denominator during the revolution created the opportunity for different ethnicities to get to know each other closely and to continue their alliance after the success of the revolution and formed the founding element of the Early Abbasid society (Kennedy, 1981). Graham, on the other hand, notes that the position of the Mawali in opposition to the Umayyad rule closely influenced the fate of this state, the Mawali participated in numerous rebellions and eventually played an important role in the destruction of the Umayyads, leading the Abbasid revolution movement (Graham, 2006). Robinson also emphasizes that the Abbasids, who managed to bring together various anti-Umayyad groups, successfully finalized the revolution (Robinson, 2005).

Within the framework of these determinations, it seems possible to argue that the Abbasid Revolution was mainly a product of the reaction against an exclusive Arab Umayyad nationalism. The Abbasid Revolution, which achieved success with a rebellion that broke out against the stratification-based system that the Arabs had been prioritized, bears similarities with the revolt of the Achaemenids against the Medes. Within the framework of these thoughts the two multicultural imperial experiences gave freedom to cultural diversity in the lands they had captured and that they were able to prevent exclusive ethnic social stratification.

Another historian Xenophon, who addressed the foundation of the Achaemenid Empire, provided questionable historical information. In his work "The Education of Kyros", the author, who states that there was no dispute between the Persians and the Medes, also points out that Kyaksares, who took the throne after his father Astyages' death, married Cyrus and his daughter and left the Median Kingdom to Cyrus (Xenophon, 2007). On the other hand, Wellhausen, who writes against the general acceptance, based on al-Jahiz's writings that the Abbasid state was composed of Iran and the Marwanis of Khorasan, and the Umayyads are Arabs, concludes that the Abbasid Revolution occurred as a result of a sectarian Shiite rebellion by Iranians (Wellhausen, 1927). These interpretations raise the question that neither rebellion may be against social stratification.

But Wellhausen's opinion about the Abbasids is mainly due to the nationalist ideas which increased their influences at the very beginning of the twentieth century. Although it is argued that ethnic reactions were effective in the Abbasid Revolution, it is generally accepted that the main motivating force of the revolution was not racist tendencies. Revolution, as noted above, was a movement that was supported by the Muslims of different non-Arab ethnicities, who were called 'Mawali' at that time, by non-Muslims and by Arabs who were uncomfortable with Umayyad policies (Yahaya, 2015). Although Xenophon claimed that his son Kyaksares, who took the throne after Astyages' death, left the kingdom to Cyrus as a result of kinship ties, according to general acceptance; the war, which broke out as a result of the Achaemenid rebellion, occurred between Astyages and Cyrus and therefore, Astyages is considered the last Median king (Schmitt, 1987).

Thus, according to the vast majority of thinkers and primary sources, the establishment of a state and empire, as a result of the riots that broke out, was due to the reaction against class differences and it the main point between the two civilizations. Based on this conclusion, the path to the adoption of a multicultural administrative system on the basis of tolerance of differences was opened for both empires during the revolutionary period.

The Persian revolt led by Cyrus the Great strongly opposed social stratification and increased its effectiveness by using the driving force of Zoroastrianism. Accordingly, the scattered Persian tribes, united with the teachings of Zoroastrianism and deacons, trusted the social system of the Medes based on classes, establishing a libertarian administration whose religion was Zoroastrianism but in which all beliefs were respected (Boyce, 1968). Ernst Herzfeld, who was accepted among the leading names of the archaeology of the Achaemenid period, states that Zoroaster lived in the time of Cyrus and Darius in his book in which clarified philological texts of the Avesta (Herzfeld, 1947), while Macuch claims that Darius was able to gain strength by being backed by the vitality of the new religion, Zoroastrianism (Macuch, 2002). The existence of references to the Zoroastrian faith and its God, Ahura Mazda in a significant part of the stone inscriptions and clay tablets dating from the Achaemenid period in the regions

where the Persian conquests were carried out, and the association of the Zoroastrian teachings with the Persian conquests in these citations is another factor that strengthens the mentioned thesis (Mcneill, 1989).

Without a detailed analysis the Arab conquests took place undoubtedly, according to the general acceptance in the literature, with the idea of spreading monotheistic Islam, which was a new religion at that time. However, the Abbasid case is different because a large part of these conquests were made during the previous Islamic administrations (Freely, 2009). What the Abbasids, who inherited this heritage, did was to establish a demographic combination of differences in a libertarian atmosphere (Huart, 2010).

After mentioning the critical role played by Zoroaster in the Persian revolt, the question arises whether any religious leader influenced the Abbasid revolution. It is possible to answer this question with Abu Hanifa's<sup>1</sup> attitude he took during the Abbasid Revolution and the preparation of the revolution. Abu Hanifa's explicit support for the Zaid Bin Ali rebellion, that broke out in 740 when the disturbances against the autocratic Umayyad administration, were expressed aloud. In addition connecting this rebellion to the Battle of Badr commanded by Hz. Muhammad (P.B.U.H) can be shown as a basis for the answer above (Jackson, 2006). Moreover, based on the various citations on Abu Hanifa, it is also known that he opposed an exclusive Arabist rule of the Umayyads, openly supported the Abbasid revolution and was pleased with its success (Zakeri, 1995). This attitude asserts, one of the driving forces of the revolution was Abu Hanifa (Jackson, 2006). In addition, since Abu Hanifa is one of the greatest scholars of Sunni jurisprudence (*fiqh*) it contributes to the refutation of views which interpret the Abbasid Revolution as a Shiite uprising and supports the view claiming that the rebellion succeeded with the alliance of various groups without sectarian division, who were uncomfortable with autocratic Umayyad rule. In addition, it should be emphasized that although Abu Hanifa supported the Abbasid Revolution by opposing the Umayyad rule, he also dissented from the Abbasid administration, whose practices he didn't like, and lost his life in the Abbasid dungeons (Zakeri, 1995).

The ongoing part of the research deals with the three main comparative findings, mentioned in the findings section, and as well as the contributions made by both empires to multiculturalism. Firstly, the end of the oppression and assimilation-based policies and the two empires affected the recognition and acceptance of the cultural diversity. It can be argued that those who had various religious, racial and sectarian affiliations were accepted socially and politically and became part of social life along with their differences rather than being assimilated.

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<sup>1</sup> Abu Hanifa (Numan bin Sabit): The founder of the Hanafi sect, one of the four fiqh sects of Islam, and a Sunni scholar who played a major role in the development of Islamic law and jurisprudence. Abu Hanifa is referred to as "Imam-i A'zam" due to the fact that he trained a large number of students and that his definitions and analyses of Islamic jurisprudence and law still have wide validity in the Islamic world.

It can also be noted that the end of the uniformization policies that had been going on for a long time in the Middle East and Central Asia led to the fact that peoples with different cultures, who were feeling exasperated by oppression, flooded into the cities of these two empires. Thus, it can be stated that both multicultural society and empire, in which peoples with different sectarian and religious identities and speaking different languages coexist, are constantly supported by migrations. When considering that cultural exchange is becoming continuous where there is migration, it is possible to argue that the multicultural social system was strengthened after being rooted in the early Abbasid period and the Achaemenid Empire.

Another finding is related to the emergence of a multicultural environment because of the establishment of two empires. Thus, in response to the social stratification denominational, religious or cultural groups either have privileges or are excluded due to a feature they obtain in stratification-based social systems. It becomes difficult for cultural diversity to coexist in societies where certain parts of the society are constantly located in the upper or lower level. Therefore, it seems possible that social systems based on stratifications can be defined as the opposite of the multicultural society model, in which the people with cultural diversity coexist with their differences. In addition, if the actions of the upper class on the people of the lower-level class in social stratification are not subject to any restrictions, it opens the way for pressure-based frictions in these societies (Howe, 2002). Because the revolutions in Persian Empire and the Abbasids meant the end of these stratifications, it is concluded that the elimination of the systems based on social stratification by both empires was one of the factors to reach a multicultural society.

The establishment of religious freedoms should be considered as one of the most important building blocks of multicultural social systems in both modern and historical periods. A monotheistic faith (Zoroastrianism and Islam) served as the main source of motivation for spreading of both empires, which constituted the main subject of the work, over wide borders. However, by looking at the general acceptance in the literature, the Persian and Arab conquerors who conveyed their religion to the new regions did not use the coercion method. Despite the strong religious motivation, the establishment of religious freedom in the conquered regions is distinctive in terms of ensuring freedom to the racial, linguistic, and other differences.

In both periods, Zoroastrianism and Islam are two belief systems that affect every aspect of life. Considering the balances that exist in the Middle East and Central Asia, as well as the presence of peoples who firmly adhere to their beliefs against oppression, it can be noted that religion becomes more important in these regions (Huart, 2010; Stronach, 1997). Consequently, the establishment of religious freedom extends to all stages of social life and ensures the preservation of differences and the emergence of a multicultural social system. In this context, it is

possible to argue that both empires, which embarked on conquest activities with the enthusiasm of a monotheistic religion, provided freedom of belief in the conquered territories, had a facilitating effect on the establishment of freedom at many stages of life. For this reason, this similarity in the two empires constitutes an important issue in terms of the emergence of a multicultural social model.

The main goal in the implementation of the mentioned policies in both empires, which are studied comparatively from a historical perspective, is the preservation of economic and political stability. However, these policies also contributed to the emergence of multiculturalism. Given the conditions of the two periods concerned, more despotic practices could have been implemented to establish an economic and political order. The threats of the Umayyad lineage were eliminated, the Chinese were defeated in the battle of Talas and a possible threat from the Far East was exterminated during the early Abbasid period. Moreover, almost all of the opponents were defeated, and the territory of Persia was expanded. The authority was provided and sufficient power was obtained for the establishment of a repressive regime for both empires. However, the two empires did not resort to the repressive and assimilationist policies that were widely preferred during their period, and chose the way of establishing economic and political stability as a result of the libertarian and multicultural policies.

## CONCLUSION

Pluralism and multiculturalism don't characterize only the modern world but peaceful coexistence, pluralism, tolerance and tolerance were relevant in ancient times too. In this regard, numerous historical examples of multiculturalism have been given, which argue that these historical models of multiculturalism have various partnerships.

The Achaemenish Empire and the early Abbasid Dynasty, which constitute two of these historical examples of multiculturalism, ended the uniformist administrations of the civilizations that were their predecessors, based on oppression and assimilation and became representatives of significant changes and transitions in the sense of ensuring the emergence of libertarian and pluralistic administrative systems. Thus, they built systems that can be called from the historical point of view libertarian and multiculturalist. These historical multicultural systems put an end to the assimilationist and homogenizing tendencies that were felt in historical periods by giving freedom of space to cultural diversity, various peoples who were enslaved, assimilated, driven out of their ancestral lands and massacred together with the conquests greeted these libertarian conquerors with great enthusiasm.

Although both empires rationally implemented pluralistic and libertarian policies to ensure economic and political stability, it is possible that these policies can be evaluated within multiculturalism with the comparative method.

Although these two systems, which can be described as multicultural, are not based on modern intermediary elements that have emerged as a result of the universal declaration of human rights and democratic society practices, they had very advanced libertarian meanings despite the age they were in. Communities from various ethnicities, beliefs and cultures coexisted together with their differences within these structures and this socio-cultural environment was established by the leaders of the dominant culture.

This study provides an excellent analysis of the Achaemenid and Early Abbasid multiculturalism within the framework of the comparative-historical method. The meaning world expressed by multiculturalism is not unique to today's modern societies and it also serves the purpose of arguing the thesis that multicultural societies existed in much earlier periods. At this stage, the word of Edward Wadie Said, cited by Gutas, comes to the mind: *All cultures have been interconnected; none is unique, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated* (Gutas, 2003).

The Achaemenid and Early Abbasid Dynasty, which is considered multicultural, may not fully meet the requirements of multiculturalism of the modern era, in which the theories of identity, recognition, individual and group rights are discussed, the rights are guaranteed constitutionally, the people have various rights from birth and there are international rights, such as the universal declaration of human rights. Nonetheless, these two rare historical multicultural systems seem remarkable, given the steps taken to end the repressive and assimilation-based policies of previous civilizations and empires, eliminate social stratification, and establish a space of freedom for cultural diversity.

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