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GOVERNING A MINORITY: FREEDOM, TOLERANCE AND PLURALISM RELIGIOUS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE (17TH – 19TH CENTURY)

Gobernar una minoría:
Libertad y tolerancia religiosa en el Imperio Otomano
(siglos XVII–XVIII)

Abstract: During the modern age the Ottoman Empire, despite being a Muslim state, saw within it the presence of two other monotheistic religions: Judaism and Christianity. The presence of Jews and Christians within the empire became an example of multiculturalism, which characterized the Ottoman Empire, and of self-government with the formation of the *millet* system. This work analyzes the role of religious minorities, specifically Jews and Orthodox Christians, present within the Ottoman Empire between the 17th and 18th centuries. The institution of the millets desired by the sultans became not only an example of religious freedom, as conversion was not imposed on Christians and Jews, but a way of maintaining stable power and sultan authority throughout the empire.

Key words: Ottoman Empire, dhimma, multiculturalism, religious freedom.

Resumen: Durante la edad moderna el Imperio Otomano, a pesar de ser un estado musulmán, vio en su interior la presencia de otras dos religiones

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monoteístas: el judaísmo y el cristianismo. La presencia de judíos y cristianos dentro del imperio se convirtió en un ejemplo de multiculturalismo, que caracterizó al Imperio Otomano, y de autogobierno con la formación del sistema *mijo*. Este trabajo analiza el papel de las minorías religiosas, concretamente judías y cristianas ortodoxas, presentes en el Imperio Otomano entre los siglos XVII y XVIII. La institución de los *mijos* deseada por los sultanes se convirtió no solo en un ejemplo de libertad religiosa, ya que no se impuso la conversión a cristianos y judíos, sino en una forma de mantener estable el poder y la autoridad del sultán en todo el imperio.

Palabras clave: Imperio Otomano, *dhimma*, multiculturalismo, libertad religiosa.

Introduction

The end of the Byzantine Empire, with the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 by Sultan Mehmed II “the Conqueror” (1432–1481), the Ottoman sultanate grew to become a transcontinental state. The empire, at the height of its power, created a multicultural, multireligious, and multilingual reality during the many and incessant conquests between the 16th and 17th centuries. In doing so, it incorporated a diverse range of non-Muslim communities who, to some extent, enjoyed life under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. Even though the Caliphate was mainly made up of Muslims, it still allowed “Ahl al-Kitāb” (the people of the Book), namely: the Rums, the Armenians, and the Jews to enjoy Ottoman citizenship and some privileges through the *millet* institute. As one of the most important models for pre-modern religious plurality, the Ottoman *millet* system aimed to implement legal and social regulations under which minorities could, in some way, govern themselves. However, the *millet* system has been immensely criticized by some scholars who have argued that it led to the very crisis of the Ottoman Empire. This article will endeavor to present a historical-critical analysis of the pluralistic nature of the *millet* system, taking into consideration three key questions: how did the *millet* system define the role of other religions within the territories of the Ottoman Empire? How fair was the Ottoman *millet* system? Finally, did the *millet* system, in relation to the theme of freedom and religious tolerance, guarantee the full profession of faith by non-Muslims? As such, this contribution will be divided into three main sections; the first of which will present an overview of the emergence of the term: *millet*, as well as its usage, implications, and key principles. Second, it will shed a lot of light on the role of religious minorities in the Ottoman

Empire under the millet system. Here, he will focus on the role of the *millet* base of the millet and on the religious, political, and sociological structure of the millets. He will then deepen the concept of justice in Ottoman society by contrasting it with the egalitarian doctrine. In the conclusion, an overview of the gradual abolition of the *millet* system with the approval of the liberal decree *Gülhane Hatt-i Şerif* (1839) will be highlighted.

Power and Minorities: The Millet System between 16th and 18th Centuries

Linguistically, the word millet originally comes from the Arabic word: millah, and is often translated as: nation (Öztürk, 2014). The term seems to have emerged during the 18th century in the terminology of the Ottoman state (Dimitrios, 2006). Moreover, the transition in use of the terminology from taife kl-firlerin to Millet-i Rum – in reference to Orthodox Christians – can be dated to around the 18th century, when the term was used to refer to non-Muslim religious communities under Ottoman rule (Balta, 2003). However, any look at the aftermath of the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 would be sufficient to trace the origins of religious pluralism and tolerance within the Ottoman Empire. Sultan Mehmed II, after taking control of Constantinople, the new capital of his empire, appointed Gennadius Scholarius II (1405–1473) as patriarch of the Greek population, thus keeping the Orthodox Church intact. However, it is worth pointing out that Gennadius II, had been chosen by the sultan, as he became known for opposing the attempted rapprochement with the Latin West (Braude, 2014). Therefore, the appointment of Gennadius seemed to be in the best interests of the sultanate. Because of this, and in return for accepting Ottoman authority, the sultan granted the church a few privileges, allowing it to keep its land and assuming authority over legal autonomy for the Orthodox community (Plested, 2012). Although it may seem that the conquest of the capital of the Byzantine Empire marked the establishment of Ottoman religious pluralism within the empire, however, “the Ottoman sultans did not introduce the millet system into their empire only at the capture of Constantinople, but were already applying its principles to the non-Muslim communities already under their rule” (Bowen, Gibb, 1957). This, perhaps, reinforces the hypothesis that the Ottomans did, in fact, adapt and regulate religious pluralism in their approach to the non-Muslim minorities in the Ottoman Empire even before the fall

of Constantinople. Contrary to Braude's assertion that such a system of tolerance was only implemented in the 15th century (Konortas, 1998). Thus, paving the way in the 16th century for some exponents of the m, not in the entire empire (Braude, 2014). Above all, it is worth noting that the pillars and principles of the millet system had already been instilled in the Islamic tradition since the Medina and medieval Islamic era. Furthermore, it can be argued that the millet system finds its basic principles in the 'Medina Charter' that was established by Muhammad during the post-Medina era. The constitution probably guaranteed protection for Muslims, Jews, and other religious minorities in Medina (Cook, 1996). In support of this, Peters suggests that Muhammad effectively created a pluralistic society in which "the contracting parties, although not embracing Islam, recognised the Prophet's authority, accepted him as the leader of the community, and respected his policy judgments" (Peters, 1994). Thus, the constitution of Medina regulated personal and public norms for minorities living under Islamic rule. Unlike the followers of other religions, the *Qur'ān* recognized Jews and Christians as "Ahl al-Kitāb", meaning: the people of the book (*Qur'ān*, 5:19). In quanto tali, ai cittadini ebrei e cristiani dello stato islamico veniva concesso un rango speciale noto come: il popolo della dhimmah, in altre parole, la popolazione protetta (Sadan, 1995). The *dhimmah* agreement is defined as a contractual bond established between a Muslim ruler and a non-Muslim subject, whereby the latter must be granted permission to live and practise their religion (Braude, 2014). Even though dhimmis were obliged to pay the jizyah, they still enjoyed significant privileges under *Sharī'ah* law. For example, they were granted the authority to govern themselves according to their own laws. This is evidently exemplified in the Jewish halakhic communities in Medina, through which the Jewish community regulated their religious and social affairs under the Islamic state in Medina (Cohen, 1995). Despite the many privileges granted to non-Muslim minorities under Islamic rule, some have argued that Ottoman practices failed to recognize individual autonomy and instead "followed and dictated the community's orthodox socio-religious orders" (Öztürk, 2014, 73). However, those who belonged to the dhimmah – like Muslim subjects – were internal elements of Islamic society, with obligations and rights towards the state deriving from their status. Derived from historical Islamic models, the Ottoman millet system served as a vehicle for administrative purposes (Hovannisian, 2004) whereby each milletbasi: be it the Romanian-Armenian patriarch or the

rabbi represented their religious community. This, in essence, is the cornerstone of the millet system and the foundation of Ottoman politics.

Patronage politics and privileges: Armenians, Jews, and Orthodox in the Ottoman Empire

As stated above, Sultan Mehmed II appointed Gennadius Scholarius II Patriarch of the Orthodox Church. As the first of the three millets, the Ottoman Caliphate referred to the Orthodox sect as Millet-i Rum or Rum Millet. The milletbasi – in this case the Ecumenical Patriarch – was considered to hold the highest religious and political authority over the Sultan's Orthodox subjects. However, the Ecumenical Patriarch was responsible to the Sultan for the conduct of the people in his millet, as well as being the main interlocutor of the Sublime Port. Although the Rum-millet consisted mainly of Greeks, it nevertheless included more than five ethnic groups: Albanians, Bulgarians, Georgians, Serbs and Wallachians (Dragostinova, 2011). They were all considered part of the Christian Orthodox millet despite their differences in language and ethnicity. Like the case of the Rum Millet, in 1461 Mehmed II granted the Armenians millet status by officially recognising them as citizens of the Ottoman Empire and Hovakim I was chosen by the sultan as Armenian patriarch. As milletbasi and Armenian patriarch of Constantinople, Hovakim was also considered the religious and secular leader of the Armenian subjects in the empire (Maksoudian, 2004). Interestingly, until the 19th century, there was a single Armenian *millet* that served all Armenians regardless of whether they were affiliated with the Armenian Protestant Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church, or the Armenian Catholic Church (İlber, 2006). Jews also enjoyed privileges like those of the Rums and Armenians. The thousands of Jews who fled the Spanish Inquisition in the aftermath of the Edict of Expulsion (1492) were formally invited into the empire by Bayezid II. They were also represented under the millet system by the Hakham Basi, who held powers with which he would regulate the administrative autonomy of the inhabitants of the Jewish religion. Here it is of great importance to refer to Stillman's analysis of Jewish-Muslim relations. He notes that the prosperity of medieval Jews was closely linked to that of their Muslim rulers (Stillman, 1991); indicating that many Jews viewed the millet system favourably. So much so that Rabbi Sarfati reportedly wrote to some European Jews inviting them to the Ottoman Empire: "Is it not better for you to live under Muslims than under Christians?" (Lewis, 2014).

Moreover, Ottoman religious and ethnic pluralism evidently manifested itself through the notion of equality in the civil service for both Muslims and non-Muslims. As such, Christians and Jews held prominent roles in the bureaucratic, organisational apparatus of the empire (Öztürk, 2014). For example, among the women of the Jewish religion, we can cite the cases of Esperanza Malchi and Esther Handali, who held the role of Kira and served the Sultan Valides, the title held by the mothers of the sultans, and the Haseki, the favourites of the rulers (Zilfi, 1997). Among the men, we can mention the finance minister of Sultan Mehmed II: Hekim Yakup Pasa and his doctor of Portuguese origin: Moses Hamon (Barnay, 1992). The millet system was based on community and socio-cultural frameworks, primarily according to religion and secondarily to ethnicity (Karpas, 1982). Communities were divided within the empire according to their religious affiliations and as such, each religious community formed a singular millet; whose responsibility was to establish and maintain their own institutions. The millets were responsible for the governance of their institutions, in the educational, religious and judicial fields (Shaw, 1976). Within the millet system, each religious community maintained its own courts, judges and legal principles relating to civil and family laws. Moreover, the millet system allowed the Rum, Armenians, and Jews to form their own religious communities and establish independent religious institutions within Istanbul. As part of the Ottoman Empire's multi-religious environment, its millet system included several legal systems. The Ottomans recognised that they were unable to impose all aspects of Islamic *Sharī'ah* law on the three major non-Muslim millets: Greeks, Armenians, and Jews. Consequently, non-Muslims were allowed to maintain their own courts and legal systems through which they legislated their own religious rules, independent of imperial law. Although non-Muslims were granted the privilege of being tried by their own courts according to the millet system, they were nevertheless allowed to "apply their own religious community court or Sharia court and when they went to the Sharia court, the verdicts of the Muslim judge were based on Islamic law" (Öztürk, 2014). This further indicates that religious affiliation was decisive in one's identity within the Ottoman Empire (Üngör, 2009). Which clearly shows the extent to which the millet system was driven by religion. This is because it grants powers to patriarchal leaders within minority groups, thus representing a form of patronage politics (Inalcik, Quataert, 1994). verdicts in a similar way to how the verdicts of *Sharī'ah* courts are applied (Bostanci, 2005). Here, it is worth mentioning that Jews and Christians were

exempt from the Ottoman imperial court in cases of succession, legitimacy, and family law (Aydin, 1996). However, there were some restrictions to the above privileges. The Ottomans decreed that if the case was criminal, or if either party to the conflict was Muslim, non-Muslims would be obliged to join the Shari'ah court in such cases (Akgündüz, 2002). Thus, it may seem that the millet system did not offer equal constitutional citizenship based on the notion that everything is equal in the eyes of the law.

Minorities in dialogue: The case of the Janissaries and Jews in the city of Thessaloniki

Between the 16th and 17th century, Christians and Jews residing in the Ottoman Empire performed different tasks at the Ottoman court, coming to hold important positions and to be influential within it. The expulsion of Sephardic Jews from the Iberian Peninsula to the Ottoman Empire brought not only craftsmen, merchants, and bankers, but also a considerable number of physicians. The Jewish medical tradition was quite famous in Europe, so much so that rulers of the Iberian Peninsula such as Alfonso X and even Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon had Jewish doctors in their service (Amrán, 2015). With the arrival of the Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire, sultans, and high officials of the 'Sublime Porte' began to have Jewish doctors in their service. In the middle of this century, there were 41 Jewish doctors in the palace compared to 21 surgeons (Nuri Paşa, 1979, 152). This hegemony of Jewish doctors did not last long, and in time they were replaced by their European-educated Greek colleagues. Infact However, it is seen that Jewish surgeons and doctors continued to be used in the Ottoman army (BOA, C.AS., 193/8510, 29 S 1237; BOA., C.AS., 507/21070, 25 Ra 1230). The "Levantins" Jews, besides being renowned doctors, were very famous for their trading activities in the Mediterranean and, at a certain point in the history of the Ottoman Empire, for having entered into business with the Janissary Corps. In a decree dated 1808–1809, it is stated that there was no merchant officer named Ocak in earlier periods and this duty was performed by a Janissary officer. However, in a report, one of the officer's assistant's states that a *dhimmi* named İstavrakioğlu aspired to become a merchant «at the time of the deceased celestial *fırdevs-i âşîyân* and *mağfürün-leh* Sultan Mustafa Han tabe *serâhu*», before the opposition from the landlords, Jews were given the opportunity to act as intermediaries on behalf of the Janissary corps (BOA, A.DVN.MHM.d 230/110/328,

Evâhir B 1223). The ruling does not clarify who Sultan Mustafa is, however, according to information provided by Ignatius Mouradgea D'Ohsson, the domestic merchant worked in the retinue of the *beytûlmalci*, and this task has long been monopolized by the Zonana Jewish family (Mouradgea D'Ohsson, 1824, 318). David Zonana was the first of this family to practice the profession of marker during the reign of Mahmud I (1730–1754); based on this information, it is possible to say that the sultan mentioned in the ruling was Mustafa II (1695–1703) (Skolnik, 2007, 668). The exact number of Jews who fulfilled their duty as merchants could not be determined; however, a trader who was laid off or died was usually replaced by another relative and the *Bezîrgan* title could be passed from father to son or from one brother to another. After 1768 the affairs of the janissary company of the *ocak*, for a certain period monopolized by the Zonana family, passed into the hands of the Aciman family (Skolnik, 2007, 669–670). As a sign of this, those who were appointed as trade managers of the stone quarry were dressed in hilat and among other things received numerous orders for the raw material (BOA, A.DVN.MHM.d 230/110/340, Evâhir B 1223). This is testified by what is reported in the sources, which refer to various masonry rooms in the Valide Han and in other inns for conducting the merchants' business and storing their money, possessions and documents belonging to the quarries (BOA, HAT., 1382/54698, tsz.; Uzunçarşılı, 1988, 407).

The merchants of *ocak* had various tasks in financial matters, the most important of which was to carry out the tasks related to the salaries of the Janissaries in Serhats. Some items of income were intended for the salaries of the janissaries who worked on the front lines and performed other types of duties. Even the Jewish merchants, who collected this revenue through the Sâlyâne vendors, paid their wages through them, in return, they would receive a certain share of the revenue collected in the month of January (Kaya, 2010, 81). Another duty of the home traders was to provide for the needs in cash or in kind of the officers, clerks and soup men who would go to the front. With the permission of the owners and officials, the trader bought the goods with the money he needed or with a stamped bill (BOA., A.DVNS.AHK.İS. d., 5/41/126, Evâil Ca 1172; BOA., A.DVNS.AHK.İS. d., 5/259/787, Evâhir Z 1173). The Thessaloniki merchants' guild, between the 16th and 17th centuries, had the custom of electing a leader from among members of the city's Jewish families. The surprising point here is that the end of the practice of choosing the head of the merchant guild coincided with the rule of Alemdar Mustafa Pasha, that is, a period when the janissary

corps collapsed, and soon after Alemdar's death, the old method returned to increase at the request of the corporation. It seems that traders under the auspices of the Janissary corps had a great influence on the ocak. Jewish family members protect the merchants even when the Sultan and the Porte feel threatened. Everard Fawkener (1694–1758), who was British ambassador in 1742, draws attention to this point in his report to the country about him on an incident. According to the ambassador's report, the merchant's servant, who was arrested by the grand vizier's men for not complying with the dress restrictions for non-Muslims, was rescued by the janissaries. Although the Grand Vizier is dissatisfied with this event, he can do nothing. The Jewish merchant is so influential that all family members are under his control and any candidate seeking admission to the janissary needs his approval (Olson, 1996, 23–24). The fact that David Zonana, the merchant mentioned by the British ambassador, reached the height of his power during the grand vizirate of Seyyid Hasan Pasha, and by the way a great ally of the Janissaries, and was executed after his dismissal, it also shows the extent of the bond between the militia's Ocak Company and the merchant. The advantageous relations between the janissary corps and the Jews will remain stable and profitable until the time when the sultans decide to modernize the Ottoman Empire, in which the janissary caste will be suppressed (1826) and subsequently the millet system will be abolished. The Jews, now weak, will be replaced in the 19th century in the fields of business, commerce, education and medicine by the Greek elite of the Phanariots, since the latter had begun to study in Europe.

The rise of a modern empire: The crisis of the *millet* system and the Tanzimat period

The empire's fall was marked by its progressive decline and weakness which started in the late 17th century and accelerated during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Cagatbay, 2006). The Ottomans experienced major military shortcomings, whereby accepting the fact that they have grown to become weak in the eyes of the European nations. Thereupon, they started to make amends and reformatations to catch up with the West and modernize the empire (Yetişgin, 2007). Some reforms were developed and implemented during the reign of Sultan Selim III (1789–1807) and Sultan Mahmud II (1808–1839). However, the subsequent *Tanzimat* reforms during that era were arguably, “the most remarkable efforts of administrative organization

ever displayed in any country” (Midhat, 1903, 22). The *Tanzimat*, which literally referred to the reorganization of the Ottoman empire (Cleveland, Bunton, 2009) sought to reform the overall administration, health, education, and communication systems amongst other governmental and military sectors within the state. The reforms, decreed by Sultan Abdülmecid I (1839–1861) in 1839, granted the non-Muslim minorities more privileges within the empire (Devereux, 1963). Although the *Tanzimat Ferman* decree was formally issued by Sultan Abdülmecid, it nonetheless emerged from the mind of a European- educated Ottoman reformist, namely: the Grand Vizier Mustafa Reşid Paşa. Having been the empire’s ambassador to London and France, he was greatly influenced by Western politicians, their political and social life as well as their administrative methods (Yetişgin, 2007). As such, the *Tanzimat* reforms promised the reform of conscription, the abolition of tax farming, and most notably the promise to guarantee equal rights to all Ottoman citizens regardless of their religion or ethnic descent (Cleveland, Bunton, 2009). Furthermore, to counteract the rising nationalist movements created by the *millet* system, the *Tanzimat Ferman* aimed at promoting Ottomanism amongst the diverse ethnic groups in the empire. The Ottomans understood that nationalization – through-religion – which was deeply rooted within the *millet* system – contributed towards the decline of the empire. Thus, the minorities’ understanding of ethnicity and nationalism was moulded by the *millet* system (Cagatbay, 2006). The first major reform of the *Tanzimat* was the imperial decree of *Gülhane*. Having been named after the Rose Chamber of the Topkapi Palace, the decree created a bureaucratic system of taxation with salaried tax collectors (Trencsényi, Kopeček, 2006). The *Gülhane* edict comprised of many clauses, however it may be debated that the most significant decree was the enforcement of the rule of law upon all subjects, whether Muslims or non-Muslims (Barbieri, 2014). By doing so, the Ottomans abolished the *kul* system: which allowed the ruler to confiscate his servant’s properties at his desire (Toledano, 1998). Also, it gradually led to the elimination the *millet* system by establishing legal and social equality for all Ottoman citizens (Barbieri, 2014). Therefore, the application of the *Gülhane Hatt-i Şerif* meant that religious communities were no longer allowed to operate their religious communities independent of the state’s law, consequently putting an end to their privileges. The *millet* system, therefore, precluded the development of a well-integrated community within the state. This is primarily since each *millet* looked upon its own personal affairs whilst

completely disregarding the welfare of other *millets* (Payton, 2006). Besides the continuous divisions caused by the *millet* system, it also prevented the religio-ethnic minorities to have a similar culture, and accordingly failed in unifying all subjects as a single Ottoman nation. This – in addition to the *devşirme* practice – further paved the way for the emergence of some *millet*-born separatist groups (Yetişgin, 2007; Nicolle, 2011, 273–274). It has been alleged that the *millet* system was seen as the most prominent stumbling block to the formation of an integrated society, hence it is believed to be the fundamental weakness of the Ottoman state (Sugar, 1983). The *millet* system transformed from an example of a tolerant religious model to the very reason for the abolition of the economic, social and demographical structures of the Ottoman empire (Al-Izzawi, 2003). The French Orientalist André Miquel reveals some of those reasons. He particularly confirms that the dense activities of the Western religious missionaries started to link the Christian sects economically and culturally in the Ottoman empire, or some of them, to the West (Miquel, 1981). This would not have been possible, had it not been for the manifold privileges which were guaranteed by Ottoman *millet* system since the reign of Mehmed II until the late seventeenth century. The Ottomans also allowed the West to send Christian missionaries and establish Christian schools within the Sultanate (Al-Izzawi, 2003). Furthermore, the well-established relationship between the non-Muslim minorities and their Western custodians could be further illustrated through the observation of the French consul in August 1702. During a visit to the Maronite Church – in nowadays Lebanon – he noticed the picture of the French King in the church; during which the Maronite Patriarch was supplicating for the protection of the King (Al-Nadwi, 1983). Accordingly, it is believed that the privileges provided by the *millet* system did, in fact, facilitate the good ties between Christian minorities and the West; allowing this particular ottoman religious sect to hang up the picture of the French King and supplicate of him instead of the Sultan (Al-Izzawi, 2003).

Conclusion

In conclusion, scholarly consensus indicates that the *millet* system did exist, as it was acknowledged by historians and formally adopted by the Ottomans. Contrary to Braude's claims that there is no confirmation for the existence of any agreement document which shows that only Christians and Jews were granted a special status. He surprisingly regards the

system as “a myth” (Tas, 2014). The Ottomans have endeavoured, since the fourteenth century, to establish a multireligious state wherein citizens from different ethnicities and religious allegiances would coexist under one state. The *millet* system was the manifestation of this endeavour. As an administrative system, it had some advantages but also several disadvantages. Regarding to the former, it created a mild and advanced system of legal autonomy under which the Rums, Armenians and Jews would regulate their affairs and enjoy certain rights and privileges. Moreover, both Muslims and non-Muslims were equally required to pay towards the state’s treasury; whether in the form of *zakāh* or *jizyah*. Albeit the fact that Muslims were obligated by law to join the army, unlike the non-Muslims who were, for a very long time, exempted from military service. Although the does not portray egalitarian equality, however it illustrates the extent to which the *millet* system strived so as accommodate religious minorities in the state. Yet, it was described as fundamental weakness of the Ottoman state whose granting of many privileges turned religious factions into nationalist separatists. Alongside the *millet* system, Western powers played a significant role in the weakening of the Ottoman Sultanate. With the rise of *millet*-born separatists, as well as the strengthening of ties between the Christian minorities and their Western custodians. Such episodes led the Ottomans to internal change and reformation. The minorities aspired for freedom, human rights, individualism, constitutional rights, and democracy. To this, Ottomans attempted, to a certain degree, to adopt such notions. However, it was quite late as the minorities had begun to revolt against the empire. The *millet* system was not the sole reason for the destruction of Islamic Caliphate, but it did lend itself to the destruction of the Caliphate. On the other hand, historical facts affirm that for hundreds of years, the Ottoman society was a mosaic of religions and cultures whose members lived in peace and harmony.

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