

A HISTORICAL EXAMPLE OF MULTICULTURALISM: ACHAEMENID EMPIRE
MULTICULTURALISM¹İbrahim Halil MENEK²

Abstract

Multiculturalism and multiculturalization have emerged conceptually recently however, the worlds of fact and meaning that these concepts expressed by these concepts date back to much older periods. When we embark on a historical journey in the Middle East, it is possible to come across many findings about multiculturalism and multiculturalization. The subject that the most of the experts agreed on is that in the historical process, some of the empires changed into a multicultural nature by unifying the differences under a single roof under liberal atmosphere and they applied multiculturalist policies very successfully in terms of living these differences and if we approach it with today's conceptualization. In the literature, the state considered to have successfully implemented this policy for the first time is the Achaemenid Empire. In this study, it is aimed to examine the Achaemenid Empire in historical perspective, which is thought to give the historical first example of multiculturalism.

Keywords

Multiculturalism
Historical Multiculturalism
Empire
Multilingualism
Tolerance.

Article Info

Research Article
Received: 30.09.2019
Accepted: 28.05.2020
Online Published: 28.05.2020

TARİHSEL BİR ÇOKKÜLTÜRLÜLÜK ÖRNEĞİ: AHAMENİŞ İMPARATORLUĞU
ÇOKKÜLTÜRLÜLÜĞÜ

Öz

Çokkültürlülük ve çokkültürcülük, kavramsal olarak yakın bir zamanda ortaya çıkmıştır ancak bu kavramların ifade ettiği olgu ve anlam dünyaları çok daha eski dönemlere dayanmaktadır. Ortadoğu topraklarında tarihsel bir yolculuğa çıktığımızda çokkültürlülük ve çokkültürcülük ile ilgili çok sayıda bulguya rastlayabilmemiz mümkündür. Konunun uzmanlarının büyük bir bölümünün üzerinde uzlaştığı konu, tarihsel süreç içerisinde kimi imparatorluklar farklılıkları tek bir çatı altında özgürlükçü bir atmosferde toplayarak çokkültürlü bir mahiyete bürünmüş ve bu farklılıkları bir arada yaşatmak konusunda çok başarılı ve günümüz kavramsallaştırması ile bakacak olursak çokkültürcü politikaları başarılı bir şekilde uygulamışlardır. Literatürde, bu politikayı ilk defa başarılı bir şekilde uyguladığı kabul edilen devlet ise Ahameniş İmparatorluğudur. Bu çalışmada ise çokkültürlülüğün tarihsel ilk örneğini verdiği düşünülen Ahameniş İmparatorluğu'nun tarihsel çokkültürlülük çerçevesinde incelenmesi amaçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Çokkültürlülük
Tarihsel Çokkültürlülük
İmparatorluk
Çok Dillilik
Hoşgörü.

Makale Hakkında

Araştırma Makalesi
Gönderim Tarihi: 30.09.2019
Kabul Tarihi: 28.05.2020
E-Yayın Tarihi: 28.05.2020

¹ This paper is based on the fourth chapter of my doctoral dissertation "A Historical Case of Multiculturalism: Scientific Translations in the Early Abbasid Era", being written under supervision of Prof. Dr. Emel Topçu at the Department of Political Science and International Relations, Hasan Kalyoncu University (Gaziantep, Turkey)

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Introduction

If the societies carrying the different cultural values live together within cultural varieties in a manner which is different from the dominant cultural values in the various regions in the world this means that they form the main framework of multiculturalization. Therefore, multiculturalization, as a concept related to the recognition of the cultural differences, is used to define the governances which recognize the cultural varieties besides the dominant culture without externalizing or having an effort to apply assimilation (Kymlicka, 2010).

Multiculturalism as a social and political reality in the conceptual framework emerged in 1970s. For this reason, the debates on multiculturalism have increased especially in recent years and this situation has led to the domination of an incorrect idea that multicultural societies have recently emerged. This misguided idea has given effect to the idea that because nation-state is a new concept in the world political history the multiculturalism challenging the notion is also new. However, when a journey is made through political history, it can be understood that this idea is not true and that the foundations of multicultural administrations are much older. Unlike today's Western countries, multicultural empires had existed in the Near East for a long time. Schumann states that, multicultural empires continued to exist from antiquity until the fall of the Ottoman Empire (Schumann, 2010).

The factual and semantic worlds, which concepts refer to, has also existed before those conceptualizations were made. However, with conceptualization, discussions are made on the meaning and facts, which are presented to the attention and gained to the academic literature, and systematic thoughts are produced. Although multiculturalism and multiculturalization are also new in concept, the factual and semantic world they refer to date back to ancient times (Şan and Şimşek, 2011).

It is not possible to say that multiculturalism is unique only to the present day because of the models of political organization that have adopted different management styles and include more than one cultural group in the past. The coexistence of societies which has different cultures and ethnicities has been an important problem that all societies have to face throughout the historical process. During this time, some empires have implemented very successful policies to keep differences alive and set a good example for multiculturalism (Aktay, 2003).

In fact, there are researchers who argue that multicultural management models are more frequently encountered in empires than nation-state structures that center a single culture and are based on the suppression and assimilation of the other cultures by the central culture. Because the empires, due to their expansionist characteristics, have become political structures that integrate members of different languages, religions, sects and races into their system. In contrast to the nation-state systems in which a single language, belief and culture are considered dominant, it is possible to say that, such imposition was much less common in a significant number of the empires throughout the history than in nation-states thus the basis of multiculturalism was much easier to come by (Anık, 2012).

Abdur-Rahman Momin says the following about the issue:

"Some of the past societies and civilisations have tried hard to come to terms with the vexing problems of cultural diversity, and have tried to solve this problem not through forced assimilation and homogenization, but through principles such as tolerance, peaceful living and respect for human and social rights. I suggest that, some important lessons can be learned for the benefit of contemporary multicultural societies from the productive experiences of such societies in which harmonious living and multicultural coexistence are practiced" (Momin, 2010).

1. A Historical Multiculturalism Example: Achaemenid Empire Multiculturalism

When mentioning about historical background of multiculturalism, we have to open a separate bracket to the borders of Anatolia, Mesopotamia, the Mediterranean basin and the Persian Gulf. Because the first multicultural contacts of historical significance have emerged and developed in these regions (Dandamaev and Lukonin, 1989). Moreover, the communities that migrated to these regions integrated into the cultural structure of these regions and dissolved their own values within these structures. The traditional way of life and cultural values of the region remained alive continuously, and as a result of wars and migrations, an atmosphere of continuous cultural contact was formed. Therefore, the common culture that shapes human relations and social structure in these regions has a very long history. Eroğlu, by

making a special assessment on Anatolia, state that Anatolia was historically multicultural and there was an atmosphere in Anatolia where constant coexistence of differences based on the findings obtained so far (Eroğlu, 2016).

Various views have been argued the historical background of multiculturalism and what period it dates back to. As a general opinion, the first political system which is based on the emphasis obtained in the historical sense, based on the administrative, economic and cultural system developed as a state policy, being the first to present a sociologically multicultural structure is regarded as the Achaemenid Empire (539-333), which formed a new style of governance on the Iranian plateau in the sixth century B.C. (Waters, 2014).

It is accepted that no models of governance that would mark history and provide multiculturalism in every sense emerged before the Achaemenid Empire. During the contacts in this period, the level of multiculturalism in general occurred in a way in which its level was limited and a dominant culture took a derogatory attitude to other cultures. In this way, multiculturalist state mechanism adopting multiculturalism as a state policy didn't emerge (Foster, 2016).

The traditional life of Mesopotamia and Anatolia be formed by the accumulation of peoples who had come to the region for thousands of years, and the common culture that shaped human relations and social structure had a very ancient history. Mentioned diversity was so intense that the formation of the ethnic structure didn't become possible in some situations because of cultural diversity and richness (Rastoder, 2016). The Persians, which living in the east of Mesopotamia, much more affected by this atmosphere because they were part of this rich cultural accumulation. Their involvement in this cultural atmosphere greatly influenced the policies that the Achaemenid dynasty applied. In this way, they turned into a multiculturalist empire by embracing numerous ethnic, legal, social and political communities and administrative units (Wiesehöfer, 1996).

Before the Achaemenids appear on the stage of history, the developments in Anatolia and Mesopotamia occurred following the dissolution of the Assyrians dominance, the greatest power in the Near East, lasting 1200 years, and in the process

in which they were largely directed by the Med, Scythians and Babylonians (Kuhrt, 1995). The withdrawal of the Assyrians from the historical scene provided the Babylonians and Medes take control of the lands where the Achaemenid Empire would spread in the future. During this period, the Babylonians lord it over Mesopotamia, the Medes ruled Central Anatolia, (from eastern Anatolia to Kızılırmak) while the Lydians ruled on the other side of Kızılırmak (Daryaee, 2013). During the period in which Persian Emperor Cyrus rising the Babylonians, who controlled the trade routes and dominated the most fertile lands of Mesopotamia, had established a prosperous state. The Babylonians, who were at odds with Egypt to establish dominance over Palestine and Syria, attacked Jerusalem during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar in revenge for the Kingdom of Judah, which had been on Egypt's side during this fight. Babylonian armies in 587 B.C., destroyed Jerusalem by capturing the city and drove thousands of Jews to Babylon (Mcneill, 1989).

In the land of the Medes, another dominant power of pre-asia along with the Babylonians, there was a social structure divided into social classes. The Medes generally pursued a policy aimed at ruling the neighbouring peoples. In this way, class differences were formed between the other social groups they dominated and a sharp social stratification occurred between the Medes, who formed the ruling class, and the Persians, who formed the slave class, and other peoples (Garthwaite, 2005). It is narrated that Cyrus, the founding king of the Achaemenid, who grew up in such an atmosphere, was capable of becoming a leader since he was a little boy. The following story of Herodotus related to the subject poses importance;

"When Cyrus was ten years old, he was playing with the children of his own peer in the village where the cattle were housed. The children had chosen Cyrus, whom they called the son of the cattle driver, as their king for the sake of the game. During the game, the boy, son of Artembares, one of the elders of the Medes, did not listen to Kyros order. At that time, Cyrus punished the boy by beating him with whips with the help of other children involved in the game. As soon as the boy escaped from Kyros hand, he ran to his fathers side. He lamented bitterly that Kyros had humiliated him. Artembares went to Astyages

with great anger and said they had faced an embarrassing situation”
(Herodotus, 2017).

The Iranian historian Murtaza Ravendi states that before the Achaemenids became an empire, they were a community divided into tribes based on blood ties within the framework of self-exclusive relations, not based on class and strata (Ravendi, 1979). As a matter of fact, Herodotus says that the Achaemenid divided into 10 to 12 tribes and that these tribes consisted of a few dudmans¹ and several families each dudman were consisted of several families, and that the state was formed as a result of the union of these tribes and an empire were formed with these conquests (Herodotus, 2017).

Assyrians with their withdrawal from the historical scene in B.C. 612, it is assumed that the strengthening of the Persians coincided with the same date. Prior to Cyrus the great, the half-independent Persian kingdom centered in Anshan was ruled respectively by Achaemenid, Teispes, I. Cyrus and I. Cambyses. It is thought that the Persians, who lived with the Elam communities for hundreds of years, formed their own noble strata through the efforts of the Teispes, and that the first seeds of the Achaemenid dynasty were laid by the Teispes. During this period, the Persians, who lived dependently on Elamites and whose capital was Anshan, were known as the people of the cities of Anshan and Susa by Elamites (Dandamayev, 1996). The successors of Teispes maintained Persian dominance in these cities, and continued their political existence under Assyrian rule after the destruction of the Elamites by the Assyrians in 639 B.C. After this, it is thought that the Persians united with the Med and Babylonians against the Assyrians, who became a great power in Mesopotamia, came under Med domination during the period in which Assyrians were defeated and the Medes rose. Subsequently, they became an independent state as a result of the Persian tribes uprising against the Meds under the leadership of Cyrus (Wiesehöfer, 1996).

The balances that existed before the Persians in pre-asia were changed in a moment when the Achaemenids took over the rule on Iran. The idea that the takeover of the Achaemenid dynasty was the result of a reaction against the social stratification established by the Meds under the leadership of Cyrus is a view that scholars working

on the issue have largely agreed on. In addition, it seems likely that the Achaemenids had the support of other groups that were disturbed by social stratification during this uprising. In this way, the Persians who took power by opposing the classification that Meds caused, developed a multicultural system of administration that welcomed the different social classes with tolerance in the great empire they were to establish in a short time (Daryaee, 2013).

With the rise of the Achaemenid Empire in the sixth century BC, a new form of government emerged. (Waters, 2014). Kissinger described this governance form of Achaemenid Empire as *"the first empire in history to attempt to **consciously** unify heterogeneous African, Asian and European peoples in an organized society."* The word conscious used by Kissinger is important because the conscious implementation of this system as a state policy is important in terms of the fact that the Achaemenid Empire is a multicultural empire and that it poses an example to today's multicultural states (Kissinger, 2014).

As mentioned before, cultural diversity and political developments in Mesopotamia and Anatolia was shaped the background of the Achaemenid political and economic policies that took shape during Cyros period (Kuhrt, 1995). The Achaemenid Empire is regarded as the first great empire of the ancient world. From its beginning, the Achaemenids, which reached very wide boundaries with the conquests of the ruler Cyros (later to be called Cyros the great) and his son Cambyses turned into exact world empire by becoming a complex administrative and financial power in the time of Darius and Xerxes. The Achaemenid Empire is regarded as a political structure that deserves to be analysed because of its impacts on the world history (Waters, 2014).

The Achaemenid Empire is described as the culminating point of three thousand years of civilization accumulation in the Near East and two thousand years of empire-building efforts. Because of these characteristics, it is considered to be a turning point in the world history and the first empire structure that combines the accumulation that has existed for many years in the conquered geographies and possesses multicultural characteristics. Empire like civilisations which house different groups in their bodies previously dominated, but the Achaemenids are quite innovative in terms of the effort

to organize human and social relations. Cyrus, the founder of the Achaemenid Empire, is an important example of how imperial structures emerged and embodied. Cyrus was the ruler of the ancient city of Anzar, the capital of the Elams with ancient traditions, well-established administrative and hierarchical system, before the Achaemenids developed into a great empire. In addition, the Cyrus was a representative of the Persian society, one of the Indo-European peoples who had migrated to this region only a few centuries earlier. Although he was a ruler of Elam, he was a leader who carried the conquering spirit of the Persians (Eilers, 1974). So Cyrus, in addition to being the executor of a thousand year old tradition of Elam based on established agriculture with a sophisticated bureaucracy dating back to the past, also carried on himself something new, the spirit of Persian conquest, with the influence of his supporters who migrated to these lands with him (Stronach, 1997).

As a result of a revolution, the Persians destroyed the Medes and began conquests against the two great empires, the Babylonians and Assyrians, who held the fertile lands of Anatolia. The Persian capture of the ancient centers of civilization based on animal husbandry and agriculture in Anatolia and Mesopotamia formed the first step in the policies they would follow. The Assyrians and Babylonians, who held the fertile lands of the Anatolian highlands, invaded Syria and Palestine in their attempts to conquer and control the rest of the Near East, established trade networks in the Taurus Mountains and tried to control Anatolian trade. The relationship between them and the territories conquered by the Assyrians was briefly based on the confiscation of most of the local resources in the areas seized in exchange for the cessation of looting activities. It is a largely accepted idea that the Babylonian Empire also implemented a similar policy (Mieroop, 2004).

Cyrus conquest of Anatolia and Babylon after the Persian Plateau meant the end of this policy of the ancient Near Eastern empires. Darius, who took the throne in a short time after Cyrus, divided the conquered lands into semi-autonomous regions by adopting a completely new style of government, appointed local rulers from within the local population to these regions and established a well-organized imperial system. At the same time, he kept each province under the control of the central administration, with imperial representatives, tax-collecting officers and garrison commanders called

“*satrap*”. The most unique feature of the empire that Cyrus founded is the fact that, civilizations, perfected by Darius, in constant conflict in Anatolia, Elam, Mesopotamia and the Persian Plateau, were able together under the roof of a largely peaceful and multicultural empire. This policy implemented by Cyrus can be understood from the sources and archaeological descriptions of the conquered peoples, namely Assyrians and Babylonians (Daryaei, Mousavi & Rezaei, 2014).

The Cyrus cylinder, which contains very important information about the policies of Cyrus, is a unique archaeological finding on this subject. This unique artifact, found in the temple of Marduk in Babylon in the territory of present-day Iraq by the Assyrian researcher Hormuzd Rassam during an expedition sponsored by the British Museum in 1879, provides amazing insights into the libertarian and multicultural policies of Achaemenids. This 45 line inscription, written in Babylonian language in 539 BC after the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus the great, was made of clay which was turned into a cylindrical shape and was strengthened by being baked. The parts where the first and last lines of the inscription are written have been disappeared. Despite two parts of these disappeared parts were later found but the other parts could not be reached. Therefore, some of the first and last lines of the text in the cylinder could not be read. However, the read parts of the text are sufficient to provide us with very important information about that period (Stevens, 2014).

Neil MacGregor, director of the British Museum, states that Cyrus distributed it to the Babylonian people after copying the samples of the proclamation he had printed to justify the invasion of Babylon, which he had captured in 539 BC, into a large number of clay tablets. MacGregor underlines that, this inference can be made because these clay tablet fragments, which have survived to the present day, have a similar style of expression as the Cyrus cylinder. Irving Finkel, curator at the British Museum, also states that the Cyrus cylinder was written in the Babylonian language because it was addressed to the Babylonian people (Finkel, 2013).



Figure 1: Kyros Cylinder (Source: British Museum).

The related summary of a large text which talks about numerous issues such as inconsistent state of the king of Babylon in religious and administrative matters, the genealogy of Cyrus, how Babylon were seized by the Persians, pray of Cyrus to the god Marduk, building activities of Cyrus in Babylon and, of course, emancipatory and tolerant policies of Cyrus is possible to reach in such way with the translation by the curator of cuneiform collections in British Museum, Irving Finkel:

“I am Cyrus, King of the world, great king, powerful king, King of Babylon, King of Sumer and Akkadian, King of the four quarters, son of Cambyses, great king, King of Anshan, eternal royal descendant of Teispes, King of great king Ansan. I entered Babylon peacefully and kept the royal palace as a residence. I went into an environment of pleasure and happiness. Our great master Marduk has given me a great heart that endears Babylon. This generous heart guides me through my daily work. My great army marched to Babylon without bloodshed; I did not allow anyone to frighten the Sumerian

and Akkadian peoples. I took care of the good of Babylon and all its sacred centers. I put an end to the drudgery that the last Babylonian king (Nabonidus) had imposed upon him, which neither the gods wanted nor befits the people. I took away their tedium, gave them their freedom. Our great Lord Marduk was pleased with what I had done. He blessed me..." (Finkel, 2013).

The Cyrus cylinder is described by some scholar as "*the first declaration of human rights in history*" because it contains messages such as peace, freedom, recognition of the right to life to differences against oppressive policies based on assimilation that were widely applied in antiquity. However, interpreted the Cyrus cylinder is a unique document in that we can understand the tolerant and multicultural policies of the Achaemenid Empire (Stevens, 2014).

Before the Achaemenids, the ancient Mesopotamian empires practiced a common strategy. This strategy is, in order to sever the political and cultural unity of the conquered population and make them less dangerous to the dominant power, religious and cultural groups have been removed from their respective geographies. The Achaemenid emperors, applied the opposite of this policy and gave back everything related to the local freedoms, traditional religions and legal systems having been taken from them, of all the peoples they had added to their borders. To this end, Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and granted them the authority of the religious centers of Egypt and Babylon in exchange for their loyalty. The statements written in the Cyrus cylinder also confirm this policy in every respect (McNeill, 1989).

Upon the death of Cyrus, his son Cambyses, as a successor who had followed his father's policies closely, completed the unfinished invasion of the Middle East and seized Egypt, as soon as he took the throne. The rapid and successful realization of these conquests led to opinions that the occupation plans were drawn up by Cyrus. Conquest of Egypt meant that Egypt watered by the fertility of the Nile and in conflict with Asian and Anatolian societies for many years, was united with its ancient enemies successfully and long-lastingly. This was a truly unique event, and it contributed greatly to the transformation of the Achaemenid empire into a multicultural (Stronach, 1997).

Darius, who took the throne after Cambyses, is called “the great”, not because of his conquests contrary to Cyrus and Alexander, but because he is the founder of the system that is the basis of state administration even today. During his reign, he strengthened the local government mechanism established by Cyrus and established a system of supervision that followed local administrators. In addition, by literally reforming the taxation system, Darius who established a system of economic stimulus that was unprecedented up to that time, freed local rulers in their internal affairs (Shaked, 2008). With this idea, the city states which have different forms of government have not been touched and have been allowed to continue the same management system. For example, Phoenician cities, which were ruled by a minority of wealthy merchants, retained these positions under Achaemenid administration. In addition, the continuation of the political-religious rule in Palestine had been allowed. The Greek city states, which had a democratic form of government, maintained their management systems (Mansel, 2014).

Darius, who had an exceptional place in terms of Achaemenid multiculturalism, had left behind after his death the broadest boundaries of the empire it had ever had. Darius, who ruled the vast lands acquired by conquests through a libertarian system, was able to unite a large number of communities with differences under a multicultural administrative mechanism. In the reliefs adorning the sarcophagus of Naqsh-e Rostam in Persepolis, paintings depicting the victories of Darius and the different peoples he collected under his rule were performed. In one of these reliefs, Darius is depicted seated on a throne carried by 28 envoys, symbolizing the different peoples under his rule. With the transfer of Lendering, Darius tombstone contains the following phrases:

“If you wonder and ask yourself how many countries Darius has ruled over, count the engraved figures carrying his throne. Then you understand that the spear of Persia has reached the farthest and you know that Persia has fought far from home” (Lendering, 2009).

It is possible to mention about other Persepolis reliefs in which these policies of the empire that can be described as multicultural was performed. In another relief found in the Treasury Department of the Persepolis Palace, the beginning of the acceptance ceremony of the satrapic envoys is pictured:

The king, holding his wand and a lotus flower in his hand, sits on his throne; behind the King is the Crown Prince of the Empire and a high-ranking officer armed with weapons such as swords, axes, arrows and bows, representing the power of the kingdom. The palace minister, who is heading to the King's throne for the initiation of the reception ceremony, and the satrap emissaries, who are waiting their turn to come into the presence of King in the long queue behind him, are present. This long queue representing the ambassadors is pictured on the palace stairs. On each of the stairs of the palace are the ambassadors with gifts from their regions: Meds; pitcher, mug, gold jewelry and fabric; Scythians; bow, jewellery, fabric and a horse, the Greeks; container, weaving and wool bales, Syrians; container (a Jewish caftan embellished with tassels as a present to the king by one of Syrian ambassadors), Ethiopians are waiting to go into the King's presence with gifts made from ivory.

According to this description, The Achaemenids united the geographies possessing differences under their rule, and the peoples of these geographies offered their loyalty to their masters. In response to this loyalty, the unique differences of each society and culture were accepted in the palace of the Persian kings, and as a result, a multicultural system in which differences were accepted emerged in the empire (Lendering, 2009).



Figure 2: The envoys waiting their turn to present to the King the gifts unique to their respective regions in each palace staircase during the emissary reception ceremony (Source: Civitatis).

Much can be said about the tax policy of the Achaemenids, the road system that inspired even the Romans, reaching up to 2,000 km in places, the communication networks and many other administrative achievements (Graf, 1990). The greatest achievement of the Empire, however, is that it was able to unite the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, the Nile and the Indus under one roof, especially under Darius rule, and to unite the vast area between the Persian Plateau and Anatolia for a long time under the same political system. Darius provided this unification between the centres of civilization with its full meaning by developing ways of commerce and communication. The first version of the canal between the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea, providing a sea link from Africa to Asia, was built during the reign of Darius (Dandamaev & Lukonin, 1989). In the inscription of Darius, it is claimed that he wanted to connect these two centres with watercourses, in order to improve the connection between Egypt and Iran. According to scholars working on this issue, Darius certainly intended to establish a maritime connection between Iran, Mesopotamia and Egypt. To achieve this unification must be considered a magnificent

achievement because the ancient centres of civilization that existed in the 2,000 km area between the Indus and Tigris rivers and the 1000 km area between the Euphrates and Nile rivers, which had been hostile for many years, were united under the same political and economic system. In spite of both the animosity and differences between the civilizations living in these geographies and the geographical and physical difficulties of these regions, it is regarded as a unique achievement to achieve this unification. All of these regions mentioned were never united under the same political system by anyone, including Alexander the Great, except by Achaemenid empire (Tuplin, 1988).

1.1. Trilingual Inscriptions as a Sign of Multiculturalism

While speaking of multiculturalism in the Achaemenid period, it can be said that a multilingual atmosphere exists in the lands of the empire as one of the main parameters of multiculturalism. The large number of sources we have makes it possible for us to easily defend this thesis. The archaeological artefacts that shed light on Achaemenid multiculturalism, which were used in other parts of the study, also attest to this situation (Basello, 2013).

When we look at these data mentioned, beyond an empire that ruled the large lands where different languages are spoken, every freedom of language was recognized and even we meet with a multilingual state structure in which a large number of official and unofficial records that have survived to the present day are kept with different languages. Ahameniş has provided the differences to be passed on to future generations through policies that enable different languages to be used in many areas, by not implementing policies of assimilation and oppression, it maintained these languages by the hand of the state itself, even, it provided the transfer of these languages to the future generations to be done by the hand of the state by accepting them among the official languages of the state (Tuplin, 1988).

In particular, the fact that official records have been kept with different languages other than ancient Persian makes it possible to infer that the Achaemenid Empire recognized these languages as official languages (Noble, 2013). As a matter of fact, Newell Stultz defines the official language as the language which is legally recognized and used in the functioning of state power (Stultz, 2009). When we look at

the archaeological data and official records, we can say that the Achaemenid Empire adopted many languages as official languages since the Cyrus period. The fact that the founding emperor Cyrus of Achaemenid printed the Cyrus cylinder in Babylonian language to glorify the conquest of Babylon is a good example that can be given to this situation (Noble, 2013).

Beyond this, we need to open a separate parenthesis to the fact that the Achaemenid inscriptions, which started to be seen especially from the time of Darius, are written in three languages. This situation is an important proof that different languages are accepted by the Persians as official languages and can be regarded as an indicator of multiculturalism (Dandamaev & Lukonin, 1989).

In fact, the writing of the same inscription in more than one language is not a tradition started by the Achaemenids. The history of this tradition dates back to texts written in Akkadian and Sumerian belonging to the ancient Akkadian Kings in the second half of the 3000 B.C. Moreover, the bilingual Aslantaş inscription which is dated to 8th century B.C. found in Osmaniye-Turkey, discovered by Professor Helmut Bossert and Dr. Halet Çambel and is written in Phoenician and Luwice. In addition, Akkadian and Urartian texts written by the Kings of Urartu in 8th and 9th centuries B.C. is another example that can be given to the multilingual inscriptions before the Achaemenid period (Payne, 2012).

The Achaemenid Empire trilingual inscriptions, however, are regarded as very important inscriptions both in terms of the fact that a significant parts of them have survived with little destruction to the present day and the multicultural meanings they contain beyond trilingualism (Potts, 2017).

In a statement in February 2019 by IRNA, the official news agency of the Islamic Republic of Iran, it was stated that a very important inscription was found in support of Achaemenid multiculturalism during the works carried out on a hillside where the Tomb of Darius is located in the Naqsh-e Rostam area. According to a statement by French archaeologist Werther Henkelman; *"an epitaph was discovered containing writings in three distinct languages, which had been hidden under moss and lichen for over two thousand years, and whose existence until now had not been noticed."* It was

stated that this inscription, which contains inscriptions in Persian, Babylonian and Elamic, contains important information about the ring that formed the genealogy, allies and advisors of the Achaemenid emperors (<https://tr.irna.ir/>).

On the basis of this, it should be noted that the policies of the Achaemenid related language are another indication of their multiculturalist thinking. Although, Aramaic was used as a common language for a long time, it can be understood from the tablets found in Behistun and Susa, and ancient Persian language, the mother tongue of the kings, was also used effectively. The fact that all of the names in the old Persian language end with the same letter, the Dorians with '*san*' and the Ionians with '*sigma*' is an indication that the old Persian language was influenced by other linguistic traditions (Wiesehöfer, 1996). In addition, while the Akkadian language continued to be used as a trade language in Mesopotamia for a long time, the Phoenician and Egyptian languages remained the administrative language of their own regions. Herodotus says that, the payment to the builders working in the construction of the Achaemenid Palace was kept in the records of the Persepolis tablets in the Elam language (Daryaei, Mousavi & Rezakhani, 2014).

1.2. Achaemenid Religious Policies as a Sign of Multiculturalism

Although the Achaemenid were firmly committed to the Zoroastrian faith, there was full religious freedom throughout the empire. This tolerance of the Achaemenid was not limited to the recognition of freedom of belief, but also by giving limited political powers to the religious leaders, who were representatives of different faith communities, a religiously autonomous environment had been formed. As a result of this policy, the Jews who were exiled by the Babylonians mentioned earlier in the work were allowed to return to Jerusalem and establish a tribute state connected to the empire. While this may seem like an act of generosity, it is probably a precalculated move by Cyrus to ensure the Jews' devotion and thus maintain the general policy of tolerance. However, this move, for whatever purpose, has contributed to the tolerant structure of the empire and is one of the important examples that can be shown to be defined as a multicultural state implementing multiculturalism as a public policy (Dandamaev & Lukonin, 1989).

The Achaemenids worldviews were being shaped on the basis of their religious beliefs, and the atmosphere of full religious freedom was dominant. According to Zoroastrian teachings, the king should have formed a heaven from Earth, a world in which all peoples within the borders of the Empire could live in peace. We can understand this from the word "*frasa*" that Darius used to describe the palace complex in Susa. This word, meaning perfect or impeccable, also had a religious meaning at the same time. In order for such a world to be formed, an air of freedom had to prevail in religious terms. King Cyrus, who was firmly committed to the Zoroastrian faith, did not force his people to believe in Ahuramazda after taking control of Babylon. Darius and his successors likewise respected the beliefs of the conquered territories and even gave state support for the repair and reconstruction of places of worship belonging to different religions in Jerusalem and Egypt. The religion under the Achaemenid administration served as a social identity in determining administrative policies (Daryaei, 2013).

Conclusion

All in all, the Achaemenid Empire embodied the idea of justice and order. This concept is referred to as "*arta*" in the old Persian language, meaning the establishment and survival of an order at the centre of chaos. Under the rule of Achaemenids, a Persian monarchy was formed in the conquered regions and controlled through these satraps. However, there was no interference to the local tradition and local traditions were protected by being guaranteed with a comprehensive law (Briant, 1999). With this understanding, the Achaemenids, instead of imposing Persian culture on the peoples of the conquered lands, guaranteed the protection of local cultural heritage and adopted a conciliatory attitude towards the local norms and the sections considered elite according to these norms (Snell, 1997).

Despite all their faults, the Achaemenid rulers maintained this administrative system, which had been implemented since Cyrus. As Darius states in the Behistun inscription, the Achaemenids lands adopted centrally uniform, however; locally, a diverse administrative, economic and cultural model. In this way, all the regions entering into Achaemenid administration kept their political and cultural

characteristics and succeeded to transfer them to future generations by providing continuity (Briant, 1999).

For all these reasons, the success of the Achaemenid dynasty under the leadership of the Cyros the great, emerging out from the steppes of the East, and Persian economical, political and tolerant policies led by the successors of the of Cyros should be accepted as the first and the most important example in history of how a traditionalist society became a multicultural empire as a result of conquests (Lendering, 2009).

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