

Temple Law and Hagia

# Sophia in Islamic Civilization

**Prof. Dr. Mehmet Görmez**  
Head of Islamic thought Institute

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Görmez  
Head of Islamic thought Institute

Temple Law and Hagia Sophia in Islamic Civilization

23 July, 2020 / IDE / ANKARA

1

## Temple Law and Hagia Sophia in Islamic Civilization

*Bismillâh.*

*Elhamdü li'llâh.*

*Ve's-Selâmu alâ Resûlillâh.*

*Dear brothers and sisters, firstly I would like to salute you all.*

Hagia Sophia has a magnificent history in terms of human history, history of religion and civilization, and Islamic and Turkish history. For this reason, after an 86-year interval, it was restored to its original nature, and the meeting of the believers with prostration as expected, created great impact all over the world, both east and west.

International organizations, political institutions, religious institutions have reacted respectively. I do not want to dwell on it because the political statements are **bahs-i diğ̈er**.

In particular, religious institutions, both the Orthodox world and the Catholic world addressed the issue from their own angles: Some of the pioneers of the Orthodox world described it as a return to the Middle Ages, while others described it as the beginning of a new conflict between the East and the West. And some said it was against religious freedom. Pope Francis, the spiritual leader of the Catholics, said on Sunday, July 12, "The sea takes my mind far away, to Istanbul. I think of Hagia Sophia and I feel great pain." Apart from these, there were a few rightminded statements.

In the face of these responses, we can't help but ask:

Why is it perceived as "a return to the Middle Ages" that Hagia Sophia, which was the center of the Middle Ages and contributed to the new age, gained its essential nature as a five-hundred-year-old Islamic temple?

Why does worshipping Allah want to be accepted as the reason for a new conflict between the East and West?

Why would turning the museum back into a place of worship harm religious freedom?

Why does it hurt Pope Francis that the magnificent Hagia Sophia is no longer an object of tourism, trampled under one's feet and but instead, turned into a place of worship where the believers prostrate their clean foreheads on the ground?

Besides, what is happening today is nothing more than to put an evil eye on the decision to turn a temple that has been a mosque for five centuries into a museum. When seen from this point of view, the statements and objections from the West are actually inexplicable. However, it is possible to understand the issue to a certain extent, when you look it from their perspective.

However, there is one thing that we have difficulty understanding under all circumstances: the worse reactions came from the Islamic world, not the west. It is not possible to understand this. More oddly, the statements in question were not made by political institutions, but by clergy and scientific institutions. What is even more deplorable is that politicians have had their own political and historical concerns and prejudiced views mentioned by some scholars. Especially the descriptions and statements of Ezher Ulem, who is a pulpit of science throughout history, are very serious in terms of showing the place we have reached at the point of honor and dignity of the science in the paternal relationship between knowledge, power and rulership. In particular, it is not permissible for some Ezher teachers to consider Hagia Sophia as "a hijacked temple, and to pray at the temple is considered unacceptable". Uttering such ignorant sentences with minimum historical, religious, and cultural knowledge, shows us the severity of the situation.

So for all these reasons, in order to answer some questions about these discussions coming from the East and the West, in today's lesson, I will try to talk about the temple law and the principles and guidelines of this law in Islamic civilization.

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

Temple law is one of the truths of our religion, exclusive to Islam. The most basic principle of this law is the immunity of the temple, which is expressed as temple immunity in our civilization.

Unlike many other civilizations, the Islamic civilization never touched the temples of other religions, except if mandatory, although there were different ownerships from time to time. Whether it is a peace or war situation, Muslims ensured the immunity of the temple within the framework of a law, provided them with continuity and ensured that every member of faith freely performed their worship.

1 For detailed information on the Civil Law, see Yılmaz Can, Metin Yılmaz, "The Approach of Muslims to Existing Non-Islamic Temples in Conquered Lands", *Journal of Religious Studies Academic Research*, VIII (2008), number: 2, p. 27-52.

Undoubtedly, sometimes with the Islamization of the peoples, sometimes due to collective displacements, there were on occasion, temples that were destroyed, ruined or necessarily turned into mosques and masjids. However, even though fourteen centuries have passed, thousands of churches, monasteries, synagogues, etc., which have survived in Islamic cities today stand before us as living witnesses of the law of Islamic civilization, which has been subjected to temple immunity. This truth will be even more striking when we consider the losses of the eight-century Andalusian civilization. In this respect, it would be cruel to compare Islamic conquests with the Crusader Invasions and Mongolian Invasions.

The Quran clearly states that the destruction of any temple is against *murad-ı* divinity. In a verse, he mentions the truth with the names of the temples of other religions:

كثيرا الله اسم فيها يذكر ومساجد وصلوات وبيع صوامع لهدمت ببعض بعضهم الناس الله دفع ولولا / If Allah had not prevented a part of the people monasteries, synagogues, churches, temples and in Masjids, in which the name of Allah was mentioned a lot, would be destroyed.

The Messenger of Allah also applied the temple law in the light of the Quran and applied it to his companions. The treaty of the Messenger of Allah with Necran Christians is one of the first exercises of the temple law. In the treaty he signed, the Messenger of Allah gave Necranians the protection of their churches, monasteries and clergy centers, and gave them complete freedom in terms of worship. Although he conquered Khayber by war, he did not touch the Jews places of worship. He ordered his army to go to war, not to burn or destroy the shrines and temples of other religious members, and not to touch the priests worshipping in the shrines.

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

We can see the best example of the execution of the temple law, after Allah, in the period of Hadhrat Omar.

Hadhrat Omar conquered Jerusalem peacefully, and instead of turning the Church of Kiyame into a mosque, he said, "If I pray here, Muslims will turn it into a mosque after me." So he did not even pray in it. The same Omar did not hesitate to turn the biggest symbolic temple of the city into a mosque in other regions such as Damascus, Iraq, Iran conquered by war. Temple immunity was applied precisely; Since the eastern front of Damascus was conquered by war and the western front by peace, the eastern half of the St. John's Church, built in the name of John, was opened as a mosque and the western half as a church.

When the Muawiya became the caliph, he wanted to turn John's Church into a mosque but changed his mind with the objection of Christians. Abdülmelik b. Mervan offered Christians a lot of money for this, but despite having 14 churches, this offer was still not accepted. Later, Caliph Velid forcibly destroyed the church and added it to the mosque. When Omar b. Abdulaziz became the caliph, at the request of the Christians, he operated the temple law of Islamic civilization and returned the churches that joined the mosque to the Christians.

2 22/Hac, 40.

3 Muhammad Hamidullah, Prophet of Islam, trans. Salih Tuğ, I. 619, Ankara 2003; Muhammed Hamidullah, Hamidullah, el-Vesâiku's-Siyâsiyye (Political Administrative Documents of the Prophet's Period) p. 194-199.

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

Although there are different schools and different interpretations in Islamic thought, Islamic fiqh schools allied in the immunity of the temples within the framework of the law set by the Quran and the Sunnah; and they agreed on their conservation and reconstruction.

4

When Abbasi Caliph Harun Reşit asked Abu Yusuf, the status of churches and synagogues belonging to zimmi, Abu Yusuf gave his opinion that the temple immunity was essential with examples from the Hulefa-i Rashid era.

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

In our temple law, places of worship in peacefully conquered places are untouchable. There is no exception to this. For this reason, Muslims did not touch any of the shrines where they conquered peacefully. Although the places of worship in places conquered by the war are also untouchable, there are some differences in their applications. According to this, it was adopted as a rule to transform the biggest temple, which is the symbol of the city conquered by war, into a mosque both by considering religious and administrative needs and as a symbol of sovereignty. The Damascus Umayyeh Mosque, the Kurtuba Ulu Mosque and the Hagia Sophia Mosque are the most important examples of this. Muslims paid utmost attention to following this rule in the places they conquered. For example, as stated earlier, when they conquered Damascus by war, they converted the Church of John into a mosque only from the 14 churches that existed, and did not touch the others.

The important point here, is that the conversion to the mosque was done by "law" and a mutual treaty, not by "sword" as it is thought to be. As discussed in the media, there is no such thing as 'sword right' in Islamic jurisprudence. Muslims recorded the conversion of shrines into mosques where they conquered in absolute treaties, and they did so by law, not by bullying.

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

Muslims have not only given immunity to temples under their rule. At the same time, they have given great importance to the preservation of these spaces. They did not interfere with its architecture unless it was absolutely necessary, they took great care to preserve its decoration, and they helped the state treasury repair it. For example, architectural intervention has been made only in the necessary amount even in the important issues such as the bonds of temples converted into mosques to the Qibla. Sa'd b. When Ebi Vakkas conquered Medain in the first years of the Migration, he turned Kisra's Palace into a mosque but did not touch the figures made of plaster. Even these were able to survive two centuries later. A fire temple in Istahr in Iran was turned into a mosque, but the figures in the columns were not touched. Just as none of Hagia Sophia has been touched until today, except for a couple of figures in the qibla. In cities such as Fustat, Basra and Baghdad founded by Muslims, places of worship have been built for non-Muslim subjects.

The Urfa Church was repaired by the Umayyad administration at the request of Christians. During the era of the Abbasid caliphs Harun Reşit and Emin, the construction of many churches was supported and many of them were repaired.

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

*As for Hagia Sophia...*

Standing as it did in its first day, despite its ancient history, Hagia Sophia is a unique example of the Islamic civilization's principles and rules built by the Islamic law regarding the temple law, from the Prophet to the conquest of Istanbul. It is the best example of how to protect a temple that a civilization inherited from another civilization.

The historical information at hand, records with the alliance that this ancient temple was built by the first constructors as a temple of monotheism, for the purpose of worshiping Allah, who created the universe from nothing. Essentially, this grand goal, Feth-i Mübîni, continued to be uninterrupted until the beginning of the last century, with Fatih Sultan Mehmet's conquest of Istanbul in 1453.

Fatih Sultan Mehmet left all non-Muslims living in Istanbul free in their beliefs, worship and lives with the Emanname / Ahitname published immediately after the conquest of Istanbul; By saying "we will protect you as well as protecting ourselves", it has protected all kinds of life and property, especially places of worship. However, as an exception, he converted Hagia Sophia into a mosque for the above-mentioned sublime goal, and he gave it to the Islamic Ummah, provided that he continued his existence as an Islamic temple until the apocalypse. Foundation law is universal; there is no old and new, there is no Ottoman Republic.

In contrast to the fact that it was subjected to severe destruction by its believers in places before the conquest, this unique temple was always protected by our nation with great care; Even its name did not need to be changed. With the minarets added by Mimar Sinan as the symbol of monotheism and prosthetics made by believers to the compassionate Allah, for hundreds of years, the continuation of the temple property that made the sublime goals of the first constructors ensured.

A lot of attention was paid to its unique architecture; Except for a few figures in the qibla, no intervention was made in frescoes, reliefs, mosaics, portraits until modern times. There was not even a matter of debate until the Kadizadeli Movement. After centuries, Evliya Çelebi personally described every figure and picture in Hagia Sophia in his travel book. In its repair, materials in accordance with art and historical characteristics were used, and these repairs were directed by the most important architects of the period.

Beyond being a temple that is worshiped in Hagia Sophia, science institutions have been built around many areas from fiqh to speech, mathematics to astronomy. So much so that with its most important library of its era (Hagia Sophia), as a science and wisdom complex, in which divine wisdom was collected, it continued its existence for five centuries. It has served humanity for centuries with its

important outbuildings required by its age such as the almshouse, soup kitchen, inn, bathhouse, and fountain.

In the Republican era, Hagia Sophia was closed to worship in 1934 for repairs, and later with a decision was turned into a museum. This situation, which has been in contradiction with both the temple of mastery and the historical acquis and the tradition of the foundation, has led to a great bitterness in the Islamic community, and the disappointment experienced has been the source of an ever-widening unrest. Whether Hagia Sophia was opened to worship or not, as a matter of independence and freedom, or even a guardianship in the name of our country from time to time, has always turned into a regret and deeply injured every member of the ummah, especially our nation.

Finally; Hagia Sophia has been converted from a church to a mosque with the original identity, as it was written and drawn in western neighborhoods from the moment the decision to open it was made. Special attention should be paid to this issue. Contrary to the perception desired to be created, Hagia Sophia was not transformed from a church in which people worship, into a mosque. Therefore, it is extremely wrong to consider the re-opening of Hagia Sophia as an Islamic temple as a part of a globally unrestrained tension literature and to code these innocent and justified demands as a sign of a potential religion and civilization conflict. This issue has been met by the members of a civilization that has not always had difficulties to open liberating areas for all religions throughout history.

The joy and enthusiasm of the whole nation is exciting, in the face of a temple that has been deprived of the nation for eighty-six years, after a disrupted unpleasant process, opening its doors to believers today. The integrity shown by the different political tendencies, dispositions and schools concerning Hagia Sophia, once again demonstrated how accurate the steps taken to overcome this historical delay.

It is certain that Hagia Sophia, like our other temples throughout history, will keep its doors wide open, not only for vast volunteers, but for anyone who wants to find a way to Allah from Hagia Sophia. Those who host the visitors to Hagia Sophia to find a passage to a high spirituality have proved at every opportunity that they are always ready for this as the children of a long and ancient civilization.

For all these reasons, the fact that Hagia Sophia was reopened for worship is above all kinds of appreciation. On this occasion it is necessary to state that this step, which interprets the accumulated feelings of both our nation and the entire Islamic world, deserves a deep respect above all.

*As I finish my words, I would like to say this;*

The law of Hagia Sophia over the believers is just beginning. The real great law of Hagia Sophia is the law that started with its opening. Today, the temple law in Hagia Sophia is not fulfilled only by making an official opening. Being content with this is nothing more than adding a new one to our mosques. The requirement of this law is to stand in the Supreme Court in morning, night and day with youth and elderly, women and men, and perform prayers that will keep us away from all kinds of evil. When we can transform Hagia Sophia from being a place of worship to an information place, a place of unity, a

place of fragmented hearts, we will fulfill the real requirement of this law. We can fulfill this law only by spreading amnesty and sincerity from the altar, the knowledge and wisdom from the pulpit, the morality and justice from the mimbar, and by calling upon the minarets for truth and compassion. Then Hagia Sophia will be more than happy to meet us. The main thing is not only to open but to revive and reconstruct until eternity. It is certain that it will bring us a spirit of resurrection as we continue to revive and reconstruct it.

*May it bring luck to the whole Islamic world.*

*Just like our temples, our hearts are also thriving.*

*May Allah, bring us to our original identity, as well as Hagia Sophia.*

*I greet you all with respect.*

*May Allah protect you.*

Temple Immunity and Hagia Sophia in Islamic Civilization / Titles

1.....

2.....

3.....

4.....

