Economy and Trade

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# *Introduction*

Generally, it happens when people of different faiths, cultural background, and localities come together to depend on each other socially and economically, many things happen. Some things are positive in nature which changes the course of the way while others are the negative changes that come along with plenty of diversity. This is a similar situation that happened to Muslims and Christians in the Medieval time period. Although both the groups were professionalism in their attitude of dealing with the commonly occurred issues but still due to their actions and decisions economy was significantly affected. This essay is written to address the issue of interaction faced by both the parties in relation to the economic activities in the Medieval period. *The essay aims at stating that although Muslims and Christians were always ready to go in battles each other, still they were able to ensure that their faiths do not come in the way of economic development and trade.* The essay will provide many shreds of evidence in support of the smooth and stable economic interaction of Muslims with Christians.

***Discussion***

Ibn Jubayr known as one of the prominent travelers of the Mediaeval period shares his experiences of astonishment when he embarked on one of the longest journeys experiences many socio-cultural differences[[1]](#footnote-1). The most surprising was the interaction of Muslims and Christians and the mercantile activities they performed in relation to the taxes and customs duties. He states that although they had enormous differences and conflicts with each other and used to go on battles against each other without taking any mercy. They still managed to keep their business and trade away from the influence of the wars and battles. There was no hardship faced by any side when their merchants traveled the other side too for business. Never were the Christians merchants stopped in the areas of Muslims dominance and same was the case with the Christians.

The Christians used to secure themselves from the Muslims in their lands by imposing a tax on them and the same method was opted by the Muslims to have full security. There was an agreement between with respect to the equal treatments in all the cases. The cultivation was divided evenly between the Muslims and the franks with a boundary made separation of crops. Their cattle were also mingled together with no issues facing by the different faiths because of that. Going further to the next place which was a village named al-Masiyah, franks were concentrated there and they used to receive tax from the outsiders who tried to enter this place. They were of the view that earlier they never took a penny from the Maghrebis and Maghrebis were free to come to their areas anytime. But, when they showed their participation against the Franks that too to support Muslims against Maghrebis, a heavy fine is imposed on them ever since. In some of the areas, Muslims used to live together with Franks and handed them over half of their crops at the time of harvest[[2]](#footnote-2). They also used to pay some amount of tax apart from surrendering their portion of crops. Apart them, nothing was taken from them and they were left with their houses on full possession. But, Muslims started feeling uncomfortable because they wanted Muslim governance over them.

Franks was very professional and they do not have such pride in them that stopped the Muslims from going forward under their governance. This is due to the fact that on one occasion where Ibn Jubayr and his companions have stayed in a village of Franks dominance, a Muslim was given the authority to supervise the Muslim workers in the major event. He was given the position of the chief of the customs to check the custom contracts related to farming. A warm welcome was given to all the Muslim guests and great hospitality. There was no harshness and unfairness in their attitudes and all the arrangements were done with great civility and respect.

As far as the matters of trading are concerned between the Muslims and the Christians, despite the war atmosphere, the trade was never restricted between the people of different faiths. But the Christians put restrictions on the trade of military appliance that included the ships, bullets, horses, weapons etc., in fact, anything that had a military implication. Larges areas of forestation where the wood was used to make the navy strong were owned by the Christians while the region of Muslims was majorly deforested. Muslim princes were left with the disadvantage of not having enough timber supplies and Christians were on edge here. The Venetians looked forward to the decision of Pope III who wanted to exempt this military ban from trading as it was damaging their economy[[3]](#footnote-3). Pope, however, kept the military supplies restrictions as it is but gave trading license to the Venetians for trading in other goods.

Due to the exemption of certain goods from trading, many issues aroused related to the trading and business partnerships between Muslims and Christians. Despite the limitations of particular goods, there was the presence of an effective trade between the two parties. Due to the competitive advantage of timber, Christians were given preference in trading in the major cities of Africa, Egypt, Pisans, Catalans etc. The local economies of these cities became majorly dependent on the trade of Christian merchants. Immediately two letters were issued to discuss the complexities of the presence of Christians merchants in Muslims populated areas. This act led to the engagement of Pisans to the piracy acts that made their goods seized. The consequences had to be bared by their Muslim partners who were left in the middle of the conflict. The Muslim partners were left with no choice but to simultaneously try to maintain their business ties with the Pisans and also make sure that they are timely paid[[4]](#footnote-4).

There is no denying that the merchants had to suffer a lot in keeping economic relations with other parties as they traveled from one city to another with a complete change in the economic, religious, cultural and legal environment. Most of the times, they ended up with severe arguments in the host cities as they didn't agree on much altogether. There were numerous laws, changing customs, new rules and policies that didn't allow the merchants to keep their business for a much longer period of time there. This issue led to the decision of appointing officially named sea consuls the cities to act as an arbitrage between the parties of the dispute. The process of maritime was soon regulated by the Consulate. The new regulations of the consulate which were introduced greatly influenced the patterns of actions and behavior in both the parties whether it be Muslims or Christians. This regulation initiative regulated the interaction between the two rivals i.e. Muslims and Christians.

***Conclusion***

Keeping into consideration the entire analysis of the Muslims and Christians interaction, it is concluded that the two parties didn't make economic aspect as another reason for their ongoing battles. They acted fairly and evenly whenever an economic issue was concerned. The interaction between them was found to be competitive and support to expand the trade and improve the economy. Although there were many disputes they faced with each other as they often treated the other party as "the other" but even then they were always ready to negotiate for economic issues.

End Notes

1. Hollister, C. Warren, Joe W. Leedom, Marc A. Meyer, and David Spear. Medieval Europe: a short sourcebook. Knopf, 1982.
2. Jubayr, Ibn, and R. Broadhurst. "The Travels of Ibn Jubayr." Translated by RC Broadhurst. London: Jonathan Cape (2001).
3. Medieval trade in the Mediterranean world: illustrative documents. No. 52. Columbia University Press, 2001.
4. Rodriguez, Jarbel, ed. *Muslim and Christian contact in the Middle Ages: a reader*. Vol. 18. University of Toronto Press, 2015.
1. Jubayr, Ibn, and R. Broadhurst. "The Travels of Ibn Jubayr." Translated by RC Broadhurst. London: Jonathan Cape (2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Hollister, C. Warren, Joe W. Leedom, Marc A. Meyer, and David Spear. Medieval Europe: a short sourcebook. Knopf, 1982. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Medieval trade in the Mediterranean world: illustrative documents. No. 52. Columbia University Press, 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Rodriguez, Jarbel, ed. Muslim and Christian contact in the Middle Ages: a reader. Vol. 18. University of Toronto Press, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)