

## Inter Religious Tolerance Among the People of Elbasan

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**Abstract** A special place in this article is given to the description of inter religious tolerance, as one of the most important cultural values among Albanians. Also this article aims to highlight that complexity of factors, which with their actions have conditioned the birth and existence of the religious tolerance; not only in the city of Elbasan but also in its surrounding areas. Furthermore this article aims to show through facts and their interpretation the main characteristics of such an environment, in comparison to other Albanian territories.

**Keywords:** tolerance, religion, Albania, culture

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We are a nation that has changed its history through a long journey of different cultural and religious absorption from paganism to the present day, a journey that has enriched the Albanian identity from generation to generation and is clearly defined in the words of the esteemed Albanian Renaissance writer, Pashko Vasa: "The Albanians' religion is Albanianism". Albanians are proud of their ancient culture as well as of their centuries old traditions of harmony and good understanding among the four main religions. These inter religious spiritual monuments exist only because of the respect for diversity.

### 1. An analytical approach to religious coexistence in Albania

The presence and the existence of the great monotheistic religions in the world, Islam and Christianity, in the Albanian people, has made inter religious tolerance and understanding an historical must, serving as a tool and a factor that has secured the national unity and co-existence of the of the nation, giving it an inalienable popular value, the most valuable one, that most of the world countries necessarily require, harmony and inter religious co-existence, even the interethnic and intercultural coexistence.

The Albanian people with their multi religion, have been, are and should be a special example and a symbol of the religious harmony in the history of the Balkan people, and even further. Muslims, orthodox and Catholics have lived together in harmony without any confrontation between them, on the contrary they have complemented each other. The very existence of the worship objects like mosques, churches and Teqe, near each other symbolizes the common past of our country.

All people in Albania should understand that the reality not only our destiny but of the whole world, from the beginning to its end, is a variety of faiths and beliefs. The Albanians will not have religious divisions until they believe that religions in Albania are richness and not disgraces and that the god is one and the same for everybody, being them Muslims or Christians. Based on these, the most outstanding representatives of the international dialogue school Fethullah Gylen are of the opinion that: "The inter religious dialogue is raised as a duty and the first step to set it is to abandon all the controversial arguments and to give priority to the common points, which are much more numerous than the points of difference. "

Albania has been the area where the two of the greatest Empires that of Rome and Byzantium met during the middle Ages, where the authority of the two churches Catholic and Orthodox met and divided. Also Islam in Albania has coexisted with Christianity for ages and is one of the constituent religions in Europe from its own origins. In any case, a nation that is able to provide such a wealth, like the inter religious harmony, surely is capable and has the necessary authority to radiate to all the others messages of peace and tolerance. The inner inter religious harmony of a country, is awarded with many points in the evaluation process of the role of such a country in the international, regional, continental and world wide community.

Plenty of Albanians and foreign researchers have argued that religions in Albania have played an important anti-assimilation role. For centuries, the Christian and Muslim patriots have been acting factors against anti Albanian and anti-national politics.

Tolerance is also an ethno typical feature of the Albanians. Maybe this quality is related with the geographical position of the Albanian state. While the West has seen the Balkans and its gate, Albania, as an exotic east, on the contrary the East has seen it as its West. At the intersection of the two worlds, the Albanians have taken and given with both of them by preserving their own core identity, by serving as a bridge of crossing influences and also by acquiring from them. The exchanging street value between the civilizations is also present today to the Albanian people. We can talk about two levels of cultural interactions about the Albanian people: the reports of the Albanian subcultures influenced by the Christian and Muslim religion, and the reports of the Albanian culture with that of the neighboring nations, which started coexistence together within the Albanian people, centuries ago. We find such coexistence in art, architecture, language and beliefs.

In order to create such a tolerant spirit, apart from the beliefs and their representatives in years, a major role was played by the social-anthropological inheritance of the Albanians, their system of traditions and values. Religious tolerance has passed through important components of the psycho cultural modeling of the Albanians towards a national consciousness about this value. From the sociological data that have been collected it is assumed that in the Albanian society the difference in religious affiliations have not locked them inside the consciousness and the narrow exclusive relation defined by their religion.

## 2. Inter religious tolerance, one of the most prominent cultural values of the Albanians

One of the most distinctive cultural values of Albanians is the religious tolerance. A lot of strangers have written with admiration and sometimes with amazement about such a value. For example Faik Konica, just before the Second World War has written: "I believe that is known everywhere that the Albanians are tolerant of other faiths, and perhaps this is the only country in Europe where there have been no religious wars. For this reason many have often spoken of the Albanian "skepticism". (1993:431).

This is probably the most laconic characterization, which illuminates not only the essence of one of the most complex and interesting "segments" of the psycho cultural reality of the traditional and modern Albanian society, but also shows the point of view of this reality by researchers, voyagers and, generally, foreign thinkers.

In the scripts of many non-Albanian thinkers and voyagers there are a lot of characterizations about this issue. For example, Hugo Adolf Bernatzik, when he visited many cities and provinces of Albania, wrote those things about the Albanian society of the year 1929: "Catholics, Orthodox Christians and Muslims live in peace in this small country, they often live together in villages too" often living together in villages too. Religious wars are unknown and in conceiving for the Albanian people "(2003:154).

Tolerance and religious coexistence among the Albanians has worked and works on every level of social organization, among the inhabitants of cities, the rural provinces up to the villages, among members of the clans and even families.

The Italian researcher Roberto dela Roca has highlighted: "The literature of the Albanian history in the modern and contemporary era poses a number of contributions in the best...of the thesis of a fundamental religious tolerance made by Albanian society..." (1994:13). These truths are confirmed by the religious developments in the Albanian post communist transition, on the contrary to what some of the foreign and domestic researcher foretold that the revival of religious beliefs would lead to the strengthening of intolerant and fundamentalist tendencies.

If we could express in figurative language, the cultural value of the inter religious tolerance of the Albanians resembles a pearl, stable and an identifier of the Albanians in the course of many centuries to our days. The issue of inter religious tolerance among the Albanians appears as a rebus, almost indecipherable in the dual background of the prevailing socio cultural reality of many societies in nowadays who experience inter religious problematic conflicts and a dense foggy prejudices that come from the outside, and distorts the appearance of values of the Albanian society.

Since the time of the Crusades (XII-XIII century) to the present days the conflicts, religious wars have been raging and occasionally fainted in different regions of the world, causing a large number of victims and people physically and spiritually hurt. Anthony Giddens has written: During the Middle Ages there was pretty much a constant war between Christian Europe and Muslim countries ..." (1997:452).

It is worth mentioning that religious tolerance, as one of the cultural values of the Albanians is being consolidated, while in many countries around the worlds different fundamentalist movements are being revived, and encourage their followers to hold intolerant attitudes, sometimes even extreme and aggressive towards the other believers, sects and other cults.

But a question arises naturally: What are some historical factors that shed light on inter-religious tolerance and harmony among the Albanians?

Many foreign travelers and researchers, at least, since XVII century until today, have been trying to find and evaluate the social, psycho cultural and religious roots, of the inter religious tolerance among the Albanians.

According to them, the pagan history of the Albanian people has had a significant impact on the monotheistic religions of Albanians. Furthermore, there are foreign researchers and travelers, such as, Edith Durham who has written that "a part of the Albanians ... have passed directly from paganism to Islam" (Durham, E., 1990:158).

The roots of religious tolerance in Albania should also be researched in the precedence of the religious conversion. Such a conversion is interpreted as the result of the shallowness of religious feelings of the Albanians, and their shallow techno-religious formation. Regarding to this issue in her article: "Some thoughts on the phenomenon of the conversion to Islam, starting from the case of Albanian Catholics, observed by a Jesuit mission in late Ottoman era", Nathalie Clayer among all has written that the Albanians are characterized from: "a superficial religion", from "weak links with the religion", that "the Albanians are not fond of the religion" etc (2006: 125, 127, 129, 142).

Of such an opinion is also the anthropological social specialist, the docent of the Cambridge University, Clarisa de Waal, who has conducted a research expedition in the post-communist Albanian society during the 90s of 20th century. Among other, she wrote that the Albanian Christians "do not regularly respect the holy days and hardly ever go to church", "that Catholicism was a source of enthusiasm in practice or a behavior pattern" (Waal, C., 2005: 91.92). It is generally possible that the reason of this conversion may serve as an argument for the tolerance phenomenon. There was a widespread idea among the Albanian intellectual environment that explains the conversion by just a single reason, the taxation system at the time of the Ottoman Empire, which forced the raja Christian peasant to abandon their religion in order to escape the burden of the heavy duties.

Apart from the taxation system there was also another significant reason but which has not been taken into consideration. The Albanian lands were precisely the ones where the Christianity lines were broken creating two incompatible wings. In some aspects the Eastern and Western Church that got into conflicts for centuries in row. The boundaries and areas of influence of those two churches moved so quickly, that the population who was in between would have been annihilated if they would have followed the confliction lines of those two religious superstructures.

On the contrary, this uninterrupted movement created indifference about this long process which they didn't feel as it was related to them. On the other hand, almost always, this was a perpetual process with a political content, which in most of the cases it led the local feudal lords to follow it. In the Albanian history it is mentioned as an example, the case of Strazimir Basha who in 1365 changed his religion from orthodox into the Islamic one, as was the whole population under his rule (History of Albania, 1967:255). From such reasoning we can emphasize that there were those feudal lords who moved the first in the process of Islamisation paving the way to the vast rural population which generally followed this stream relatively later, with a centurial duration, apparently when they saw that this phenomena had started to take shape and consolidate.

In the Albanian society, especially that of the 15th century up to the late 19th century, it has been functioning the Crypto Christian phenomena as a very complex phenomena (Roka, R, 1994:24-25).

In the long centurial period of the Albanian invasion from the Ottoman-Turkish Empire, the conversion from Christianity to Islam generally provided many benefits for the Albanians like greater opportunities to be enriched, advance in their political, administrative, military and cultural career.

The relevant bodies of the occupational totalitarian regime looked up with suspicion every secret link with the previous religion of the Albanians converted to Muslims. However, a considerable number of Muslim Albanians, in the course of several generations, secretly exercised the Christian religious rites. It is understood that, if the Albanians wouldn't have had such deep religious feelings, they wouldn't have put their lives into risk by the Turkish occupation authorities, turning their eyes back to the previous religion. The shallow religious feelings can not legitimize the Crypto Christianity phenomenon.

In the final analysis Crypto Christianity was coexistence and a tolerance. If this problem would be analyzed from the point of view of the basic unit of society, the family, than it can be easily deduced about the Albanian society in general. In this case it doesn't seem a surprise why religious conflicts don't arise here. This ambiguity was something accepted consciously for pragmatic interests and none of the pressures coming up from above in order to fire up conflict couldn't succeed.

Faik Konica in the section "Religion" of his writing "Albania, the rocky garden of the South-Eastern Europe", after talking about the skepticism of the Albanians he concludes: "Behind all these talks about skepticism there has been a total wondering of the Turks and Greeks, when they noticed the mutual tolerance of the Muslim and Christian Albanians. A Turkish official has quoted to Tozer three quarter of century ago: "The Mohammedans here are not true ones, and the Christians are not true Christians". Obviously they haven't been if the requirements for being good Christians and

Muslims was the mutual intolerance and brutal clashes, as it occurred in the other parts of the Turkish Empire" (Konica F, 1993:495).

After this moment we pass to the National Revival which would need to openly display the problems between different religions if they really existed. If we would suppose that in the course of time these problems had been covered, now they can be visibly reflected. We can say that the National Revival as a conscious arousing was also a huge proof to the Albanians maturity in all the aspects, mostly in the terms of a mutual religious tolerance.

Independence, as a culminating moment, evidently reaffirmed the indisputable values that were already established in the terms of religions coexistence. The main figures that achieved the independence were of a different religions, while the first organs of the Albanian state were a faithful reflection of a of the multi religion reality of the country. The legal basis of the modern principle of the separation of state from the religion and that of an equal treatment, undifferentiated because of the numbers of each community in the percentage of the population, were observed since independence.

The period from 1920-1939 as a culminating moment in the construction of the first real state in Albania was really significant about the strengthening of the elements that favored the religious tolerance. The rise of nationalism in those years was also a positive element that reinforced the positions of the religious coexistence without problems.

The process of secularization that took place in those years parallel to the laistic state was a consequence of the later. In the years of the Second World War, the foreign powers that were installed in Albania generally followed the same line that now was with clear features – the respect of all the religions and treating them all as equals. The positions taken by different religious communities, in the course of the war and in the complicated situations created by them, were matters of positions mainly of their leaders and didn't create any problems of resistance during the war and any collaboration that would derivate from such positions.

The slogan that emerged from the Peza's Conference is really meaningful: "The union of the Albanian people, regardless of religion, region and idea" means that political forces and the participants of this Conference knew and appreciated the three main elements changing in mentality, where the first one, was the element of religious diversity.

### 3. The factors that cultivate inter religious tolerance at the Elbasani people.

The phenomenon of religious tolerance has always been present in the Albanian environment, but my piece of work doesn't aim only the identification of those factors that confirm and condition the presence of this phenomenon in this environment. Seen in this context, my piece of work aims to demonstrate salience of the cultural value among the Elbasani people.

You feel really satisfied when you distinguish that the feeling of the religious tolerance phenomenon, in the frame of the Elbasani social environment, above all testifies a resonance of the phenomenon in the whole Albanian environment. Meanwhile it also affirms a number of important indicators of existence of such a phenomenon in contrast to the national environment, giving us in this way a number of special values for the problem we are analyzing.

Having researched and consulted with the studies of different authors, historical documents, and the press published abroad and in Elbasan in years 20'-30', it is best confirmed the proper character of those values, as well as it comes out the origin of their creation. Precisely, this origin is a product of collaboration of a variety of different factors, from which i would highlight those which are the most important and which have had a significant impact.

### 4. The factor of geographical nature

Being an in between area this has limited the action of such a factor. Being an area that was between the Catholic north and the Orthodox South, until the 13th century, it has been characterized by the strong affluence of the two churches. Meanwhile, the geographical position exposed the Elbasani environment to the threat of a Slavic assimilation from the east and that of a Norman assimilation from the west. Such a fact served as a strong motive for the Elbasani region, in the interest of an ethnic survival, to be characterized by a lack of fanaticism about the catholic rites or about the orthodox ones that was not to create deep roots towards the above mentioned religions.

Furthermore, such a phenomenon is also mentioned by an anonymous western observer, who in 1308, while passing through this region would express: "The people of these provinces do not move from one place to another..., but have stable residences and towns, they are neither Catholics not Orthodox (1962:111)

### 5. The factor of cultural nature

The Elbasani environment is nationally known not only for the values that it has historically inherited, but also for its

radiation at the right time and moment. High indicators of the emancipation of this environment would constitute an important prerequisite for the dawn of a cooperation climate between existing religious beliefs and for resolving major issues emerged in certain historical periods. Seen from this point of view, it would have been natural that from such an environment would be born, cultivated and developed the national consciousness with an increasingly comprehensive index, which in certain circumstances found its support at the outburst of the sense of patriotism

This national consciousness and patriotism in Elbasan and its surroundings is mounted on the religious sentiment. Such an approach has not gone unnoticed by many local and foreign researchers. Among the noteworthy local researchers Aleksander Xhuvani, who in the context of developing the national consciousness in the events of 1907, through a newspaper article that was sent to "Drita" in Sofia, 1907, among others wrote: "It worth to be noticed that only in this city the religious fanaticism is slowly decreasing between the Albanians - they can not last for a long time now that the ideas for saving the motherland have been spread out".

Muslims and Christians have gone along quite well. Harmony among members of various religious communities and the tolerance that characterized them was one of the main features of the coexistence of the population in the Elbasan region. In Elbasan the relations between Muslims and Christians, despite the ambivalences that many fanatics tried to create, were quite good.

Such a fact is also noticed by Alexander Noli, who at the same article stated: "The poem of Naim Frasherit" "All the Albanians are all of a certain tribe", We all know in Elbasan, all the people work for Albania; if you ask small children "What are you?"- they will answer you "We are Albanians". In the article that Aleksander Xhuvani send to the editorial board of "Drita" in Sofia in 1907, it was written: " In Elbasan Muslims and Christians together are like brothers, and there is nothing that divides them and every Muslim table would have a few Christians around."

The well-known British ethnologists Edith Durham, especially for the problem in question, on her way to Elbasan would write: "Patriotism in this province is fierce and stays above all of the religious doctrines" (1990:81).

Meanwhile, the most brilliant proof of the raise of patriotism, over the religious divisions would be represent in the cooperation between Muslims and Christians in the context of the development of the general uprising of 1912 in the Elbasan region, which culminated with the signing of a major act for the declaration of independence on 25th November 1912. In the telegram that was sent to Ismail Qemali in Vlora, especially about the problem in question it was written: "All our people, Muslims and Christians, have gathered today, to declare unanimously the independence ... (1924:213), then the following 35 firms according to the religion. The celebration of the independence anniversary would be perceived in Elbasan with strong emotions, in such a wonderful climate of understanding, that the press the 20', would consider them as the "Bajrami Bajrameve" and the "Easter of the Easters" ("Shkumbini Bridge" third autumn 28, Elbasan, 1923).

Typical indicators of the fact that national consciousness expressed in a form of patriotism was above the religious divisions is the event of early December 1912, when the commander of the Serb troops in Elbasan, Col. Hadzic, in a meeting with the Orthodox men of the castle in the metropolis of the church would claim: "Listen men, the Turks era ended once and for all, the day has come to get revenge of the crimes, robberies, rapes that were committed by the Turks (Muslims understood) on the Christian element, thus against you ..." (2006: 125). As it is clearly understood from this statement, the Serbian Colonel intended that through the promotion of religious hatred he could incite bloodsheds and then use it for political purposes of a chauvinistic nature. However, just like other times the national consciousness, prevailed even in this case over the religious feelings. This is shown from the reaction of one of the participants in the meeting, which would address the above colonel with these words: "We Christians in Elbasan have not seen crimes or persecution by the Muslims, on the contrary the religious elements Muslims and Christians together proclaimed Albania's independence, detaching from the Turkish oppression (2066:215).

The emancipated Elbasani environment can not be understood without the outlines of the patriotic and intellectual thought, which the city didn't lack. In cases when their contributions of an intellectual and the patriotic nature coincided with the national interests the reputation that they won was really absolute

In this context we can affirm that Aqif Pasha enjoyed the full support of the Muslims, and had the same support from the Christians. Also, Lef Nosi enjoyed undisputed reputation among the Christians and at the same time, had the same reputation in the outskirts of Elbasan, resulting Muslim.

The harmony between members of different religious communities and the tolerance between them is also reflected in the phenomenon of Crypto Christianity that has been present in the Elbasani Region. This phenomenon represent a transition state of two religions in which individual Christians adopted Islam only formally, in order to avoid payment of Jizya tax and enjoyed equality with the Muslim population in the social life. While in public, these individuals presented themselves as Muslims and kept Islamic faith names, went to mosques, etc., while in their families, secretly practiced the Christian rite. There were a lot of families, where the Islam religion was embraced only by the head of that family, while other family members remained Christians.

This ethno-cultural relics today evidences a particular situation that accompanied the process of Islamisation, that of the long coexistence within the same family of different religious beliefs.

The famous English ethnologists Edith Durham for example, speaks of the residents of the province of Shpati who hold two names, a Christian one in relationship to each other and a Muslim one in relationship to the authorities (1990:87).

Being continually together, the Christians learned many things from the Muslims, for example, how to celebrate the Friday that was the Muslim's main feast, as the Muslims derived from the Christians, kept many customs of the latter. Both parties invited each other in festive celebrations in deaths, weddings, etc. Many of the Christians, by taking and giving to the Muslims, believed that they would exempt from sin, if they had any.

Despite the efforts that were made by some fanatical believers to foster religious divisions, the relations between Muslims and Christians in the Elbasani region of appeared to be good. Here there have been no quarrels between the Muslims and Christians to be remembered. Religious differences have not "worked" as a source of conflict. On the contrary, religious differences have led the Elbasani people to be more cautious in the relationships with each another, and be more inclined to balance the interests between them. Here in Elbasan, the residents of this city say, it is better to have a neighbor from another religion, as they don't hassle you for anything, and they try to help with whatever they can. The Relations between Orthodox and Muslim neighbors are good, because they don't get intermingled into politics, parties, and troubles dealing with them.

It is really interesting the fact that Muslim believers and the Christian ones regularly exchange visits to each other. The American Sociologist R.B. Taylor has argued that the approach of the beliefs in religious practices has played an important role in the strengthening of the integration trends in the lifestyle (1988:220).

This affirmation is authenticated in the culture and the lifestyle of the inhabitants of the city of Elbasan where it has been acting firmly the integrated tendencies. Nowadays there are inconsiderable differences or no differences at all between the Muslims and Christian families in the way many of the joyful ceremonies like engagement, marriage feast, friends welcoming etc are celebrated. The best example of this tolerance and coexistence between religion was the "Kala" neighborhood, inside which existed the church of "Saint Mary", in which the Orthodox believers performed their rites, and the "King" mosque where faithful Muslims performed the prayers.

On the special days marked the inhabitants of this neighborhood, despite their belief performed family visits to each other to show respect and gratitude.

The Muslims were welcomed and accompanied by special honors in the Christian families: they were not served pork and alcoholic drinks. Some families even kept special kitchen utensils, which were used only when they were expecting Muslims friends, especially Muslim imams. When the Christian families invited the Muslims in the wedding ceremonies and other special events not only were they honored in special ways, but they were even put in the best place. The Christians believers' houses are naturally intermingled with Muslim's houses. The Bungalow houses, inherited from the totalitarian socialist regime, are being replaced by large two-three story, plenty of them are surrounded by wide balconies on all sides. In the architecture of old houses and villas there is almost no new element to identify their religious affiliation.

## 6. Factor the relationship between religious beliefs

It is already a well known fact that the proportion between religious beliefs not only in the city but also at the region level visibly claims a Muslim religion dominance. This proportion originated from the seventeenth century, during which time took place the process of Islamization of the mass population. The prevalence Muslim religion in all of Elbasani Region, has not served as an opportunity to indoctrinate, on the contrary, it appears pale, thus creating a favorable premise, which in one form or another, set the origin and existence of religious tolerance, especially in the context of Elbasani civil society. Seen from this perspective, we notice that there is no single document which evidences any conflict between Muslims and Christians in the region of Elbasan, with the exception of an episode that appeared in late June 1876. In relation to this episode a contemporary person informs us: "On 30-th of June 1876 evil people spread out the news that wild Christians have entered in Tirana and Durres and would also attack Elbsani, so lets attack the Christians of the Castle on the castle and kill them." For the sake of truth, it must be emphasized that at that time such news sparked a movement which in its ranks included only fanatics, who fortunately, were of a low number. Further more this movement was suppressed, at the right moment, as a result of a vigorous and authoritative intervention from the two most popular personalities of the time: Konstantin Kristoforidhi and Mahmoud Biçaku.

We affirm that the failure of such a conflict with religious connotation is one of the indicators which show not only the existence of a religious tolerance, but also the harmony that prevailed in the relations between the two religious communities.

Meanwhile, the history of the Elbasani region from the seventeenth century up nowadays confirms the coexistence of two religions, its conciliation with the reality of the created proportion, its respect towards the religious rites responsible, mutual visits for special occasions such as Easter and Bajram, and as far as the establishment of marriage relations between them.

### 7. Elbasani's tradition factor

The organization and superb celebration of the Summer Day has been a very important factor in the cultivation of the religious tolerance in Elbasani environment. Being a pagan holiday, derived from the depths of history, it has served as a factor of collaboration and integration between the Muslims and Christians. Its organization and traditional celebration, every year on the night of the 13th of March and throughout the day of the 14th of March, has served as a factor for cooperation, tolerance, peace, thus creating a truly festive atmosphere and transforming it in a symbol day for Elbasan and its surroundings.

### 8. The psycho-social cross-country factor

Some foreign travelers and researchers, over the course of several centuries interpret the religious tolerance of the Albanians as a result of the shallowness of their religious feelings, and their superficial techno-religious formation. For example, one of the most experienced travelers of the Turkish Empire, Evlia Çelebi, who visited many cities and Albanian rural regions during the seventeenth century, wrote that the Albanians "do not care about the religious doctrine" (Çelebi, E., 2000 : 53). Two and a half centuries later Edith Durham in her analytical traveler diary analytical would underline: "There are nations that have liability for the religion ...The Albanians have never considered Christianity seriously, but even Islam, hasn't been spread as it should have". (1990:45).

Seen in this context even the social environment of the Elbasani region, has for various reasons, enabled the formation, and cultivation of a mentality somewhat of a hesitant nature in the population of this region, a mentality that led to the adoption of a position not strongly active against several problems, including the religion. Seen in this context, we emphasize that the presence of the phenomenon of the religious tolerance in Elbasan is somewhat the result of the engagement of such a factor. However, in the frame of the engagement of such a factor, we should be careful and not understand this attitude as an indifferent one. If it would be taken as granted such identification (tolerance -indifference), we would naturally face the dilemma: Elbasani is tolerant or indifferent in its attitudes about religions. From what I have researched and presented in this paper I am supporting the tolerance thesis. From the analysis made and the arguments I have brought it is clearly seen that the rise and presence of tolerance, along with the inter religious understanding (tolerance) of the Elbasani people, among others is conditioned by the action of these factors.

It is precisely their complexity the basic prerequisite that enabled the characteristic features, which made Elbasan and its surrounding regions offer an exhibition of the religious tolerance, in comparison with other Albanian territories. Those features are precisely the ones that enabled the dawn and nurturing of features such as social harmony, peace, cooperation and cohesion, which dominated over the religious divisions, violence, conflict, and discrimination between the religions.

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