

# **Through a Glass Darkly**

**Author: Islamshia.com**

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## Preface

When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face."

As a Christian and as a researcher who has been studying Islam and Islamic civilization-particularly Mahdist beliefs and movements among Sunni Muslims--for many years, these verses from the New Testament immediately sprang to mind when I began configuring this paper.

My thesis is that previous historical examples of Muslim leaders who declared themselves mahdis--as imperfect , impetuous and immature as they may have been--can nonetheless be instructive for anyone today studying Islamic notions of the future Mahdist state.

This I will humbly seek to do herein, for despite my experience and academic training in Islamic history, I would no more presume to lecture a learned assembly in Iran on their own beliefs than I would, even as a Christian (albeit non-Catholic), to give a paper at the Vatican on Catholic doctrines. I might, however, be able to shed some light on the typology of historical Mahdist movements (mainly, but not all, Sunni) and in particular their leaders' universalistic claims and attempts to reconfigure the international geopolitics in what they saw as a Mahdistic form.

As we proceed I will in particular examine how previously-declared Mahdiyahs dealt with four issues: 1) the status of the madhahib, or schools of Islamic law and the intepretation of the Qur'an and Hadith; 2) Ahl al-Kitab, Christians and Jews; 3) Sufis; and 4) international relations with other Muslim polities (as well as, if data exists, non-Muslim ones).

## II. Examples of Successful Sunni Mahdist States

Despite the higher profile that Mahdism has acquired in recent years, many Western commenatators and analysts-even scholars of the Islamic world, who should know better-are still unaware that belief in the Mahdi exists not just in Shi`i but also in Sunni Islam. It is not my place to ascertain, or argue, which view of the Mahdi is correct. As a historian of Islamic societies, however, it is my place to observe, and comment upon, Mahdism as a historical phenomenon-of which there are numerous examples.

In my book I discuss eight Mahdist movements over the last millennium of Islamic history, all of them Sunni. (These represent but the tip of the Mahdist iceberg; some scholars, in fact, think that over the last fourteen centuries of Islamic history there have been thousands of such movements. ) That analysis reveals that while Sunni Mahdism shares with Shi`ism the general delineation of the Imam Mahdi, that he will be God's instrument for Islamizing the world, it differs in a number of way, primarily in that:

\*Global Islamization will occur via jihad and conquest, rather than more peacefully, as in most of Shi`i thought \* The Mahdi will emerge onto the historical stage for the first time, rather than returning as the final Imam who has already been here \*Lacking any institutional apparatus to verify Mahdist claims, Mahdism is much more likely to occur, and as the province of freelancers in Sunnism-and this is exactly what history demonstrates.

Mahdist movements within Sunnism have tended to move through three stages:

- 1) Dissemination of revivalist propaganda aimed at undermining a Muslim government
- 2) Formation of a renegade military theocracy and attempts to seize power
- 3) Conquest of formation of a territorial state that eventually wanes in religio-ideological fervor.

Since generally only a Mahdist movement which has taken power can indulge aspirations of universality and engage in even marginally realistic attempts to influence the international order, the focus herein will be on Mahdisms that have reached level three-although some groups that have reached levels analogous to number two will also be examined.

The most successful Sunni Mahdist movement in history was that of Abu`Abd Allah Muhammad b. Tumart al-Susi (d. 1130 CE), better known as Ibn Tumart, founder of the al-Muwahhid (Almohad) movement that ruled much of the Maghrib for over a century, until 1269 CE.

Ibn Tumart was a pious, mystically-minded Muslim who after returing from the hajj decided that God had ordained him, as Mahdi, to overthrow the impious al-Murabit (Almoravid) rulers. Exploiting tribal differences in Maghribi society, and capitalizing on opposition to the al-Murabits, Ibn Tumart's intensity, piety and conviction of God's guidance convinced many that he was indeed the Mahdi.

Starting out as a critic and disseminator of anti-Murabit propaganda, before his death in 1130 he created an extra-legal military theocracy, the leadership of which was taken up by his caliph and amir al-mu`minin

("commander of the faithful")`Abd al-Mu'min who, before his own death 33 years later, ruled over a Muwahhid state that included much of what is now Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Spain. This state lasted until 1269, although before then al-Muwahhid caliphs disavowed that Ibn Tumart had been the Mahdi.

In terms of administration, Ibn Tumart seems to have intended to replace the Maliki madhhab with his own Mahdist one, but his premature death prevented that from actually happening (this can be contrasted with the examples of the Fatimids and the Sudanese Mahdists, on which more later in this paper).

He did, while he was alive-and based on his belief in his own `ismah, or "infallibility" as Mahdi-reserve to himself the sole right to interpret the Qur'an and the Hadith, disregarding ijma`. Ibn Tumart and al-Mu'min, as well as later Muwahhid caliphs like Ya`qub al-Mansur, were very intolerant of Jews and Christians, threatening them with conversion or death in many cases.

To be fair, the militant Catholicism emanating from the Normans of Sicily and the Reconquista in Iberia probably had as much to do with this as did religious doct rine. Regarding Sufism, after intial opposition and suppression, the Muwahhid courts became patrons of famous Sufi scholars. As for its universalist claims and international affairs, sources are few and/or not yet well-researched; but a clear sign of Muwahhid idea of their own Islamic primacy is found in the fact that Ibn Tumart's caliph `Abd al-Mu`min did take the title-the first non-Arab to do so, since he was a Berber-of amir al-mu`minin, a rank that until then had been used only by the Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad. And the Muwahhids should get credit for at least facilitating regional Pan-Islamic unity, in that "through unifying the Maghrib under their rule, the Almohads gave for the first and only time a concrete historical existence to the conception of the Maghrib as a distinct religio-cultural entity."

## Supplement 1

The second-most successful Sunni Mahdist movement is one much more recent in time, that of Muhammad Ahmad b. `Abd Allah (d. 1885), the Sudanese Mahdi. A Sufi and-like Ibn Tumart-a pious, ascetic Muslim, Muhammad Ahmad became convinced, through dreams and visions, that God wanted him, as Mahdi, to overthrow the corrupt Turco-Egyptian Ottoman regime ruling Sudan and, indeed, to unite the whole Islamic world under his Mahdiyyah.

After an initial period of secretly informing certain key followers that he was the Mahdi, Muhammad Ahmad went public and claimed the title, whereupon the Ottoman governor sent troops to capture or kill him. The Sudanese Mahdi took his supporters on a hirjah to far southwestern Sudan, whence he build up the movement and sent da`is to other parts of Ottoman Sudan.

Returning to attack territory ruled by the Ottoman regime, Muhammad Ahmad and his growing throng of Mahdists eventually took Khartoum in January 1885, killing and beheading the British general, Charles Gordon, whom the Sultan had put in charge. (Interestingly, however, the Mahdi wrote Gordon a letter first, giving him the choice of converting and joining him.) Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi died six months later, probably of typhoid or malaria, but his followers-led by his primary caliph, `Abd Allah-would rule Sudan for the next 13 years, until British forces invaded in 1898.

The administration and foreign policy of the Sudanese Mahdist state is much more known to us than that of the Muwahhids, not least because of a greater source base. Unlike Ibn Tumart, Muhammad Ahmad lived long enough to actually take power and begin handing down fatwas. He dissolved (or at least tried to dissolve) the madhahib, making his Mahdist madhhab preeminent. His Mahdist ijihad was based on Qur'an, Sunnah, Hadith and his own ilham, or "direct inspiration" from God.

Fatwas thus were "final, irrevocable and infallible" and unappealable, since there was no higher legal authority. And in fact death was mandated for apostasy-which was defined as falling away from belief in him as Mahdi. While his legal reforms did, to some measure, improve the status of women-particularly in inheritance matters--under the Sudanese understanding of Islamic law previously regnant, he was almost Taliban-esque in mandating that women wear hijab at all times and avoid the bazaars and main roads.

Even during his lifetime, however, Muhammd Ahmad had designated a qadi al-Islam to administer his legal decisions. There were not enough Jews or Christians (other than British soldiers) in Sudan during the Mahdiyyah to require an official policy; but there were plenty of Sufis, and in fact Muhammad Ahmad had been a member of the Khatmiyah order and Sufis of that and other orders made up a substantial part of his following. However, that did not prevent the Sudanese Mahdi from dissolving all Sufi orders upon his accession to power-although their reappearance after the Mahdist state's conquest by the British in 1898 shows that the Mahdi was not omnipotent.

It is for attempts at Pan-Islamic universalism that the Mahdist State of Sudan is most notable. Such is evident during the Mahdi's lifetime, when he wrote letters to other Muslim leaders asking them to accept him as Mahdi: Muhammad Yusuf, Sultan of Wadai; Muhammad al-Sanusi, head of the Sanusi order in Libya; Hayatin b. Sa'id, grandson of Uthman don Fodio, founder of the Sokoto Caliphate in what is now Nigeria.

Despite the fact that only the last allegedly accepted his Mahdiyyah, such communiques are clear evidence of the Pan-Islamic (or at least Pan-African Muslim) aspirations of Muhammad Ahmad. No doubt his Pan-Islamic vision had been passed on to his followers for "the Ansar expected a long series of victories which would make the Mahdi master of the Islamic world.

The news of his death [thus] came as a terrible shock...."

After Muhammad Ahmad's death the ruling caliph `Abd Allah tried to continue with the Mahdist expansion via jihad. One of the main targets was the neighboring Christian kingdom of Ethiopia, which the Mahdists often invaded but could never subjugate.

Mahdist forces also tried to incorporate, via jihad, territories to the south and west of Sudan, with little success. The Mahdist caliph also tried several campaigns against what was by then British Egypt (the British having occupied the country in 1881, in the wake of the `Urabi Pasha uprising and in order to safeguard the Suez Canal).

All of these failed miserably and in fact the total annihilation of a large Mahdist force in southern Egypt in 1889 effectively ended the expansionist phase of Sudanese Mahdism. As for `Abd Allah's ideology, "the strength of his [ `Abd Allah's] Mahdism made it impossible for him to compromise with the 'infidel' rulers of Egypt...and accept recognition as a mere Sudanese sultan under a protectorate.

His ignorance of the outside world blinded him to the overwhelming superiority in transport and armament possessed by his enemies in Egypt...."

Of course the major obstacle to the acceptance of Muhammad Ahmad as the pan-Islamic-or at least pan-Sunni-Mahdi was the Ottoman Sultanate and Caliphate in Istanbul. In the propaganda responses to Muhammad Ahmad's initial Mahdist claims, the Ottoman `ulama in Khartoum were ordered to point out that the Mahdi would come, according to the relevant Hadiths, at a time when there was no legitimate ruler in Islam-a situation clearly NOT obtaining when Sultan Abdülhamid II was clearly enthroned in Topkap?.

And in fact it seems that Abdülhamid never really took seriously Muhammad Ahmad's religious claims, being "far less interested in the Mahdi's ideology than in his opportunities. Mahdism was a hostile force on a map: what worried the Sultan most was the presence of revolt in the eastern Sudan, from where it might easily spread across the Red Sea to Arabia....Consequently the Ottoman's government's first concern was to prevent the insurrection from spreading into neighbouring regions, and above all into Arabia.

" Abdülhamid, in essence, saw Muhammad Ahmad as a new Saudi-type threat to Mecca and Medina rather than an existential threat to Ottoman

central rule and religious authority. Nonetheless it remains the case that "the Mahdi and his ansar sought, first and foremost, the renewal of Islam and its purification....For them the `liberation' of the Sudan...had nothing to do with territory or with nationalism, but was purely Islamic. It was the first stage in the jihad against the world of unbelievers, starting with the Egyptian and Ottoman Muslim rulers...." [emphasis added].

Another group, this time in the 20th century, that saw Mahdism as a way to Islamically "liberate" a portion of the ummah-and not just any portion, but its historically holiest section, Arabia-was the movement of at least several hundred mainly Saudis and Egyptians led by Juhayman al-`Utaybi in the name of the alleged Mahdi, his brother-in-law Muhammad `Abd Allah al-Qahtani, in late 1979. "On the morning of November 20, 1979, they gunned down guards, cowed thousands of worshippers into submission, placed snipers in the minarets, and began broadcasting over loudspeakers that the Mahdi had come and that the bay`ah (loyalty oath) to the Saudis was henceforth dissolved, to be replaced by one to the Mahdi.

" The KSA forces failed to dislodge the Mahdists and had to call in help from the French. In the several weeks it took to kill or capture them-the alleged Mahdi was killed in the fighting, al-`Utaybi taken prisoner and soon executed-the Mahdist forces broadcast a five-point agenda from the Great Mosque loudspeakers:

- 1) sever relations with the West in order to protect Islamic values
- 2) expel all foreigners from KSA
- 3) stop all oil exports to the West, particularly the U.S.
- 4) overthrow the illegitimate Saudi regime , including its apostate `ulama; and
- 5) redistribute Saudi royal family wealth.

This radical program , coupled with the international membership of the movement-Saudi, Egyptians, Yemenis, even (allegedly) several American converts-underscores the fact that, despite its having made it only to stage two of the Mahdist development level-effectively precluding any chance for him and his Mahdi relative to effect any changes in Islamic law, or any other area--al-`Utaybi's vision was pan-Islamic in scope and international in aspirations.

And while "it has long been assumed that Juhayman al`Utaybi and his movement represent an exceptional and rather short-lived phenomenon....there are many indications that the memory of Juhayman has been kept alive in certain Islamist circles until today, and that his ideology has inspired periodic attempts at reviving his movement" by the likes of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and the Bayt Shubra community in Riyadh.

"The residents of Bayt Shubra greatly admired Juhayman and saw themselves as his ideological successors," and in fact some of them "continued to believe that the mahdi had not died in 1979."

At the risk of oversimplification, the Mahdi, whether in the Sunni or the Shi`i view, would seem to have three major tasks to perform according to most Muslim commentators: 1) rule the entire world as a Muslim 2) enforce a more equitable distribution of wealth, in order to fill the world with justice

and equity; and 3) restore the true shari`ah. There is a major difference between Sunni and Shi`i Mahdist thought on just how the first will come about: the former, if history is any guide, tend to believe that the Mahdi will wage jihad of the sword in order to effect his planetary rule; the latter, au contraire, prefer a more persuasive style of global Mahdist da`wah. Since neither Ibn Tumart nor Muhammad Ahmad, much less Juhayman al-`Utaybi, came close to ruling the Earth, we can at least acknowledge the univerealistic aspirations of certainly the first two, and most probably the latter. (And note that all three most definitely saw their Mahdisms as jihadist ones.) Of the three Sunni Mahdist movements examined, only the Saudi Mahdism was overtly economically redistributionist, while only the Maghribi and Sudanese varieties tried to re-formulate Islamic law. Thus none of these three overt Mahdisms tried to enact all three of the eschatological Mahdi's tasks, although each did (even if perfunctorily) execute two of three: Ibn Tumart Muhammad Ahmad al-`Utaybi  
Universalism Y Y Y Share the wealth N N Y Rewrite shari`ah Y Y N

### III. Shi`i Mahdist State(s) in History

The most successful, overtly Mahdist Shi`i movement in history--and the only one that will be treated in this paper--would almost certainly be that of the Fatimids, who ruled Egypt for almost a quarter of a millennium, from 969-1171 CE, following a period of 60 years of power in what is now Tunisia.

They of course traced their descent from `Ali and Fatimah, via Isma`il, son of Ja`far al-Sadiq. In the 10th c. CE Isma`ili da`is won over the Kutama Berbers of the Maghrib and, when the chief Isma`ili da`i `Ubayd Allah arrived in Tunisia, he was soon put in power and took the title of al-Mahdi, although he likely thought that the successor (and possibly son), al-Qa'im, was the true Mahdi.

Under the fourth caliph-mahdi, al-Mu`izz, the general Jawhar conquered Egypt and the Fatimid Mahdiah was transferred there. Although even before taking Egypt the Fatimids "proclaimed aloud that universal sovereignty was given to them by divine decree and that they were called to displace the Umayyads of Spain as well as the Abbasids of Baghdad and the Byzantine emperors...."

So there is little doubt about the universalistic Mahdist aspirations of the Fatimids. And unlike the modern views of most Shi`is, at least in the Twelver World, the Fatimids saw no problem with openly proclaiming and waging jihad against their enemies, be they Abbasid or Seljuq Muslims or Christian Byzantines. However, internally, the Fatimids were very tolerant of Christians--and to a lesser extent, of Jews--with the notable exception of the reign of al-Hakim (996-1021).

In fact "Christians and Jews were massively employed in the Fatimid administration," and a number of Christians even became viziers--which is remarkable for Muslim states of the period. Furthermore, the Fatimid government tolerated and even sometimes participated in Christian ceremonies such as Epiphany and Palm Sunday processions.

There is little data on the Sufis under Fatimid rule, but as for the administration of law under the Fatimids: while the Fatimid qa'im-caliphs never arrogated to themselves the status of interpreting the Qur'an and Hadith without recourse to any other input, they did attempt to create a Fatimid madhhab and give it precedence over the other schools of law, enforcing the situation with a Fatimid qadi al-Islam. But by the 11th c. it was relegated to the status of *primus inter pares*, at best.

And as for disseminating the Fatimid da`wah, that was done outside the borders of the state, chiefly via "subversive activities against foreign states" -- but not inside; this meant that the masses in Egypt remained practicing Sunnis, while Isma`ili doctrines and beliefs remained the province of only the ruling elites.

As for whether the masses actually believed the ruler in Cairo was the Mahdi--well, even if they didn't, they no doubt kept that to themselves, rather like the Roman citizens who had doubts about the divinity of the pre-Christian emperors.

The Fatimids are the only major Shi`i movement in history that both ruled a powerful state and openly avowed a living, breathing Mahdi-Caliph

in their palace. Subjecting them to the same analytical scorecard as the aforementioned Sunni Mahdist movements-al-Muwahhids, Sudanese Mahdists and Saudi Mahdists-we find them also batting, to use an American baseball metaphor, .

667 in terms of fulfilling the Mahdi's major functions: they were more assuredly universalistic in aspirations, if not reality, and they did try to construct a new, Mahdist interpretation of Islamic law; however, they were not so enamored of wealth redistribution as the real Mahdi will be.

And eventually, despite the Fatimids' undenied military, diplomatic and cultural power in the medieval Middle East, "they were confronted with the fact that the hopes which the Isma`ili community had placed in the appearance of the Mahdi had not been realized, the law of Muhammad had not been abrogated, the hidden meaning...of the Qur'an had not been revealed, a more perfect law...had not been promulgated,

Fatimid rule had not spread throughout the world....[and] the complete reversal of positions and the victory over the Infidels which the Mahdi was expected to bring about had been postponed to the end of time..." And in fact in 1171 the Fatimid Imamate was extinguished by a Sunni leader, Salah al-Din.

#### **IV. Past "Mahdis" vis-à-vis the Future Mahdi: Alternative Views**

Muslim commentators, whether Sunni or Shi'i, rarely have anything good to say about past claimants to the mantle of the Mahdi. At best they are seen as deluded irrelevancies, at worst as mutamahdis, sowers of dissension, bloodshed and fitnah within the ummah. But might there be another way to look at them that would be of at least some historical-theological, analytical value?

There is a Christian school of hermeneutics known as typology in which "an element found in the Old Testament [Jewish Scriptures] is seen to prefigure one found in the New Testament." For example, the sacrifices the Hebrews practiced in Old Testament times are seen, in this view, as presaging the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross (this indeed seems to be the viewpoint of the writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews).

A more specific example of the Christian understanding of typology is found in the passage from the Gospel of John 3:14: "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up."

Might it be possible to see previous Mahdi claimants as something akin to Islamic types of the eschatological Mahdi-to-come, and previous Mahdi movements as Islamic types of the true Mahdist movement that will accompany and follow its founder in the future? This does NOT mean ascribing to `Ubayd Allah, Ibn Tumart, Muhammad Ahmad or al`Utaybi actual guidance from God-but it would mean, in essence, sometimes giving such men (well, probably not al-`Utaybi, but the others) the benefit of the doubt as to their motives-treating them, in effect charitably, as putative Islamic reformers--and, more analytically, viewing them, to a limited extent, as historical types of the future Mahdi.

If I may: one might indeed argue that a type of typology is implied by Imam Khomeini himself, for according to one understanding of his relevant writings while the Prophet and the Imams will always have a far superior status to almost all of humanity, the fuqaha' can in certain ways fulfill the functions of the Imams, at least insofar as running a government. Thus, in a certain sense, the differentiation between function and status is analogous to the idea of type and fulfillment or reality about which I have been speculating.

Following this line of reasoning, an Ibn Tumart, `Ubayd Allah or Muhammad Ahmad-and to a lesser degree, other less successful "mahdis" over the millennia-are each types of the coming Mahdi, able despite faults to perform some of the functions of the Awaited One on a much less effective and much more limited scale, while never reaching the actual status of Mahdiyyah.

Indeed, if God is in charge of human history-and both Muslims and Christians agree that He is-then He must have allowed the development of the movements of Ibn Tumart, `Ubayd Allah, Muhammad Ahmad and even the despised, deluded al-`Utaybi. Perhaps He allows such false mahdis both to test people's faith, but also perhaps to provide a dark glass, or a dim mirror, through which believers can view a foreshadowing of what true Mahdism will consist when it arrives.



## V. Conclusion

Earlier, I delineated the three primary roles of the Mahdi as being: rule the entire world as a Muslim; enforce a more equitable distribution of wealth, in order to fill the world with justice and equity; and restore the true shari`ah. The only one of these that all four of the movements examined herein shared was the aspiration or ideology of universal Muslim rule (as they saw it).

To that I would add a qualifier that becomes in effect the flip side of the universalism coin: all four-the Fatimids, the Muwahhids, the Sudanese and Saudi Mahdists-shared the methodology of violent jihad. While this employment of jihad-by-the-sword may be a corruption, a misunderstanding mandated by misguided men trying (even in good faith) to do the function of the Mahdi without his status (or guidance from God), the fact remains that jihad was utilized as a methodology for advancing a universalistic Mahdist ideology.

Based on my training and experience teaching world (as well as Islamic/Middle Eastern) history at the college level in America, as well as my own research,I would submit that in the history (so far) of our planet there have only really existed three truly universalistic ideologies, two Western, one "Eastern:"

1) Christianity

2) Secularism (in various forms: atheistic Science/technology; socio-economic libertarianism; and most notably, Marxism/Communism) 3) Islam.

(Of course, as the historian Arnold Toynbee is said to have observed, Communism is merely a Christian heresy, an attempt to keep the social justice elements and do away with the presence of God and His activity in history. But it is no less universalistic for that, and in fact Communism and its epigones are perhaps even more enamored of global power than the Church.)

Before moving on to the ultimate conclusion of this paper, it might be worthwhile penultimately to stop and examine-or at least speculate-on the paucity of Christ claimants in Christian history who actually led militant political movements, vis-à-vis the surfeit (at least comparatively speaking) of Mahdi claimants in Islamic history who tried to, or actually did, seize power. While a myriad of men (and some women) have claimed to be the returned Jesus Christ, the list of those who established political communities centered around that belief-either peacefully or violently-is rather small.

Europe during the Protestant Reformation saw some of these, most notably the so-called "Münster Rebellion" whose leader, John of Leiden, "claim[ed] to be the successor of David...[with] absolute power in the new 'Zion.' He justified his actions by the authority of visions from heaven..... He legalized polygamy, and himself took sixteen wives, one of whom he beheaded himself in the marketplace. Community of goods was also established."

Note that while John did not claim to be Jesus per se, a claim to Davidic descent is rather close. Perhaps the most successful of all such militant messianic movements in Christian history is, ironically enough, not from

Europe at all, but from China: Hong Xiuquan (d. 1864), the leader of the so-called "Taiping Rebellion" against the Qing (Manchu) Dynasty.

Converted by Christian missionaries, he came to see himself as Jesus' younger brother, ordained by God to overthrow the oppressive Manchu regime. He and his followers conquered Nanjing and ruled from there for about 11 years before being annihilated by government forces. Other self-styled christs, such as Jim Jones (killed, along with his followers, in 1978 by drinking poison at their compound in Guyana, South America) and David Koresh (killed along with his followers by the American Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms in an assault in 1993 in Waco, Texas), might be seen as somewhat analogous to false mahdis but they never even came close to taking power.

Much more research and thought needs to go into explicating this clear difference on this point of political history between the world's two largest faiths, Christianity and Islam; but three historically- and theologically-grounded theories come to mind:

1) Jesus specifically eschewed political power when he answered the question of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, "Are you the king of the Jews?" with "My kingdom is not of this world" (Gospel of John 18:33ff). This has made it problematic for any of his followers to try to create the kingdom in the here and now-although some, as aforementioned, have tried.

2) the careers of Jesus Christ and Prophet Muhammad were rather different with respect to political power: the former never held it and the Christians were, for three centuries, a persecuted minority in the pagan Roman Empire, not gaining power until Constantine's time in the early 4th century CE. And post-Constantine political power has been the monopoly of the state and/or the Church organization, rather than easily accessible by individuals with messianic pretensions.

3) The nature of Jesus' earthly departure-the Ascension, in full view of his disciples-and the statement by two angels to the people there that "this same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way...." (Acts of the Apostles 1:10, 11), has made it rather difficult-but not impossible-for anyone to claim the Messianic mantle in Christian history.

There are no doubt a host of socio-economic, psychological and political factors that could be considered, as well; but those will have to wait for another time and paper.

Finally, let me reiterate that just because specific examples of militant "christist" leaders are few and far between, this does not mean that Christianity lacks an expansionist, sometimes militant, fervor; quite the contrary. The Gospel of Matthew ends with the resurrected Jesus saying "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...." (Matthew 28:18ff). For many of Jesus' followers over the last 2,000 years, that directive has been enough to drive Christian expansion, even in the absence of a militant messianic figure. And of course the bulk of Islamic expansion had taken place over the last 14 centuries not at the behest of self-styled mahdis but

simply out of the Islamic mandate to da`wah as carried out by rulers, traders, Sufis, imams, `ulama and ordinary Muslims.

To return to an earlier theme: there are two Western visions of a pan-global ideology: Christianity and Secularism.

While the former, the idea of a global Christendom, is largely moribund the latter is not. Secularism developed in the wake of the 18th century "Enlightenment" and, to vastly oversimplify, its two major aspects were 1) the separation of church and state, and 2) an almost unbridled faith in science and technology to cure all society's ills. Of course, there is a great deal of overlap between the Christianity of Western countries (particularly the U.S.) and Secularism, since the latter sprang from the former.

But whereas in the U.S. itself there is a great deal of tension between pious Christians of many denominations and the Secularist worldview, in much of the rest of the world the two appear often to be coterminous. And thus sometimes little, or no, differentiation is made (by Westerners or by non-Westerners) between the two universalist ideologies, Christianity and its prodigal son Secularism.

Islamic Mahdist universalism, as envisioned under the banner of the future Imam Mahdi, is like and unlike both the Christian and Secularist brand. Its seven major aspects, according to Seyed Sadegh Hagheghat of Mofid University, are:

- 1) reintegration of religion and politics (contra Secularism)
- 2) divine-, not people-derived (contra Secularism)
- 3) morality-based (contra Secularism and corrupt Christianity)
- 4) socioeconomically just (contra Secularism and Christianity)
- 5) jihadist: "In Imam Mahdi's era, Jihad will be against those unbelievers who fight against Muslims, not against secular states" (contra, presumably, Christianity?!)
- 6) ummistic (contra Secularism and Christianity)
- 7) trans-national: opposed to the Western nation-state division of the world (contra Secularism).

Christian universalists would agree with 1, 3, 4 and perhaps 7-albeit, of course, on the condition that Christianity rather than Islam be the operative principle. Secular universalists would probably agree with 4 and 7, although of course their trans-nationality would be for a Secular world government rather than a Mahdiyyah.

What would the previous Mahdist claimants and their movements covered herein-the Fatimids, Muwahhids, Sudanese Mahdists and Saudi Mahdists-say about these seven envisioned aspects of the future Mahdiyyah? No doubt each would agree with all of them, provided that their founders (or descendants) were put in charge.

But to what extent does the future reality of this Mahdist world order, in this vision, comport with the imperfect types of Mahdism realized in the past?

- 1) Integrating religion and state: irrelevant, since religion and politics were already integrated, even among the Mahdists' opponents
- 2) Divine in guidance and legitimacy: of course anyone claiming to be the Mahdi would claim this

- 3) Moral: Mahdist movements always claim to be restoring morality
- 4) Justice and equity: previous, especially pre-modern, mahdis tend to pay this more lip service than real honor
- 5) Jihad: pre-modern mahdis in particular, as we have seen, wage jihad against-primarily-OTHER Muslims, who are cast (often) as "unbelievers"
- 6) Ummah-focused: a Mahdist ummah is seen as recapitulating that of the Prophet
- 7) Trans-national: pre-modern mahdis see themselves as pan-Islamic leaders.

So, mutatis mutandis-primarily by recalling the limits to their scope and power and keeping in mind the lack of divine guidance actually available to these earlier attempts at Mahdism-and disregarding number 1 for the reason given, we can say that `Ubayd Allah and the Fatimid caliph-mahdis, Ibn Tumart and his Mahdist caliphs, Muhammad Ahmad and his lone caliph, as well as to a certain extent al-`Utaybi in the name of his mahdi-all at least tried to implement all the elements of the future Mahdist state as envisioned by Seyed Hagheghat.

To borrow the terminology of Imam Khomeini: these erstwhile, imitation mahdis tried (sometimes sincerely, and in good faith) to fill the function of the true, eschatological Mahdi while simultaneously lacking the status to do so. So at best they could only create a type-flawed at best--of a Mahdist state. They all, indeed, saw "through a glass darkly" or, in an alternative translation of the New Testament text with which I began this paper, "in a mirror dimly"-whereas when the true Mahdi comes, all will be made clear. [5,813 words]

Timothy R. Furnish, Ph.D.  
222 Falling Water Way  
Woodstock, GA 30188  
678-393-9551 (home)  
678-230-6120 (cell)

## **Mahdism Doctrine and Urbanism**

The basic concept of Mahdism is that the just ruler and the virtuous awaiting Imam Al-Mahdi (a.s.), the twelfth Imam of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), will appear in the future -in an unknown time- to fill the earth with justice and equality as it would have been filled with oppression and injustice. At that time, humanity would reach highest levels of integration and amalgamation, so everything would be ideal and perfect in that ideal Islamic state.

The idea of 'filling the earth with justice and equality' suggests a global system and regulations that rules the earth under the tenets of Islam, which could be called as 'Islamic globalization'.

The term 'globalization' refers nowadays to a global system based on the increasing integration of economies around the world, particularly through trade and financial flows. It also refers to the movement of people (labour), knowledge (technology) across international borders, in addition to the broader cultural, political, and environmental dimensions. The most dominant fields are the economic and communal globalizations, which are critiqued for encouraging domination, unparalleled growth, and increased inequality, because the strongest gains have been made by the advanced countries only.

In urbanism, globalization refers to the adaptation of urban forms that are out of their native habitats. It has been the material of debate and conflict between urban designers in the last fifty years. It is strongly rejected and critiqued for it's by products like domination, segregation, placelessness (diminishing importance of place), isolation, and insertion. At the same time, urban designers are in favour of a retrospective view that recognizes the social and cultural dimensions of urban life and maintains the authenticity and identity of place.

This paper discusses globalization phenomenon from the urban design perspective, which is related to social policy. The paper first reviews the literature of urbanism in the historic Islamic cities, and discusses the preliminary arrangements and tools necessary to build the future State of Al-Mahdi (a.s.).

Then the paper explores issues of globalization and culture, aiming to contribute to this growing literature by bringing together diverse themes to be discussed in conjunction with one another. The main purpose is to establish a new theoretical approach for 'Islamic globalization' in the field of urbanism, and determine the positive issues that could lead to create the right regulations and guidelines for building a perfect Islamic state.

## Introduction

The attempt to establish conceptual linkages between urbanism, globalization, and cultural studies on one hand, and Mahdism theory, which is strongly related to Islam, on the other hand, is a critical one. The researcher is responsible to bring out clear discussion of issues of methodology embedded within this type of study. The wrong understanding of Islamic ideals, the difficulty of constructing a clear image of pure Islamic experience from the Islamic history, the ambiguity of some aspects of the Mahdism doctrine; especially for non-Muslims, the bias attitudes of those strongly admiring Western civilization, and the lack of correspondent studies regarding these issues, are all challenges to the researcher.

Moreover, there is the important question of the researcher's position as an insider or outsider in the process of transfers of Islamic ideas and methodologies, "If the method of research and thinking is not an Islamic one or does not, at least, go along with its tendency, the effects will be wrong to unite with the Islamic spirit" (Al-Balagh, 1994). The complicated factors that shaped traditional Islamic cities make it a dilemma to explore them, and establish subtle conception of those factors them, and the main forces that controlled the building process at that time.

This study aims to bring out a discussion of the conflict of the interlocking terminologies of urbanism, globalization, and culture, in relation to Islamic principles and fundamentals. For this purpose, the paper briefly reviews Islamic doctrine in relation to urbanism, the urbanism practice in historic Islamic cities, and how globalization effects has reshaped their urban fabric interconnectedly, in order to reconstruct Islamic urban theory and reconceptualize globalization to develop the notion of 'Islamic globalization'.

Thus, the first section focuses on urbanism experience in the historic Islamic cities, including the economic, social, and political conditions in which they were produced, and the influences exercised on their production. The second section concentrates on the current issues of urban design and its implications on urbanism in the future Islamic State, particularly recent theories of globalization and culture. The third section tries to address the context of urbanism in the future Islamic cities based on Islamic doctrine, and depict a picture of 'Islamic globalization' in the Islamic State of Al-Mahdi (a.s).

However, it is important to note that this study attempts at analyzing concepts and establishing a broad image of the planning regulations for the state of Imam Al-Mahdi (as). Further studies and extensive researches are essential.

## **1. Islam and Urbanism**

The perfect Islamic state, associated with the appearance of Al-Mahdi (a.s) would not be built from scratch. Current urban fabrics of existent cities are the basis for its construction. This realistic vision requires a pragmatic analysis of the current urban forms. Although future Islamic State of Al-Mahdi (a.s) would conjoin all the cities in the globe together, this study focuses on the specific features of traditional Islamic cities, as they are considered idols and references for many of the researchers in this field.

Before analyzing issues of urbanism in Islamic cities, it is useful to define the term 'urbanism' and its related components, which would emphasize its significance in building our cities.

## Urbanism, Meaning and Objectives

Urbanism is defined as "the study of cities; their economic, political, social and cultural environment, and the imprint of all these forces on the built environment" (Encyclopedia). Urbanism is about creating human communities and living together. It is about 'quality of life'. It is dynamic, diverse, moving, consistent, aesthetic, and systematic. Urbanism is beyond limits, the urban designer is an artist, ecologist, archaeologist, socialist, scientist, historian, and philosopher.

The word 'urban' refers to the city life, in contrary to rural. Urbanism is a system established to overcome problems of urban rural areas, and pursue a clear understanding of contemporary living. In the beginning of 20th century, the awareness of urbanism increased in many parts of the world, basis for planning established, and town planning laws and building laws for urban areas were adopted.

Urban design regulations are important to create a new art of city planning that encompasses policies and strategies regarding land use, zoning regulations, urban change, living standards, sustainable use of resources , and economic proficiency, based on the social structure of the city. The essential urban design qualities include; context, accessibility, connectivity, versatility, legibility, compatibility, creativity, choice, and collaboration.

7

Urbanism of the Historic Islamic Cities Urbanism of the Historic Islamic Cities

"The most mystical, most religious, most wonderful, they are more ordinary than most things" (Alexander, 1979)

Historic city discourse in the field of urbanism usually associated with the notions of culture (a framework that recognizes social and historical dimensions of urban life), identity (specific characteristics of place), and authenticity. These concepts were invented and adopted as the main focus of a retrospective attitude in the confront with modernity and globalization.

In the case of Islamic historic cities, questions of culture, identity, and authenticity were often misjudged and misunderstood. Orientalism, which is a kind of Western intellectual authority and a style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient within Western culture, has dominated the area. Orientalist's knowledge of Islam was superficial; as a result, some concepts were misunderstood, wrongly chosen or incompletely applied. Orientalism was developed during the colonialism era that represents imbalance of power. However, powerless people had some capacity, this reticulation made the process of sorting and differentiation between authentic and exotic, much more complicated.

The history of traditional Islamic cities regarding urbanism, could be categorized into three phases; the early decades after the expedition of Prophet Mohammed (s.a.w), the following two centuries (Umayyad and Abbasid States), and the colonialism era.

## **Urbanism of the Historic Islamic Cities**

First, it is important to note that Islam, the eternal message, has reformed the lives of Islamic societies, and had great impact on the social life. It is a religion of action and a system of life, conveyed to guide humanity, so that people march in its light and build life and culture according to its teachings.

During the early decades of Islam, cities that witnessed remarkable changes were the cities with majority converters to the new religion. The city of Al-Medina was the first city that witnessed changes. Prophet Mohammed (s.a.w), who was the ruler and the highest authority, established the cornerstone for the city of Medina. The most apparent features and policies to build the city were as follows:

Building a relatively big and central mosque (Masjid), which was a place for administration, and social gathering, in addition to worshipping Encouraging people to build their city with respect to each others' rights and with the sustainable use of available resources The urban form of the past wasn't rejected, it was developed and improved to correspond to the new requirements Collective life was encouraged; people were urged to perform their prayers in the Masjid, and deal with each other as brothers and sisters regardless their roots and social status However, the time the prophet Mohammed (s.a.w) was going through was very harsh; too many challenges and too many people wanted to stop the new faith and to do so many plots to injure and kill him. The battles between Muslims and unbelievers dominated their life activities. As a result, Islamic theory and principles didn't come to be fully practiced in urban life.

## Urbanism in the First Two Centuries of Islam

"Islamic culture has always been primarily urban" (Grabar, 1995) In the first two centuries, Islamic civilization attained high level of cultural productivity. Ostentation, which is almost an expression of power (not related to Islam), was the most remarkable feature of architecture, "whatever it's social or personal function, there hardly exists a major monument of Islamic architecture that does not reflect power in some fashion" (Grabar, 1995). In this regard, it is useful to emphasize that urban features of the city are centre to this paper rather than individual buildings details.

The urban fabric of the traditional city consisted of central mosques that were multi-purpose and accessible to all, markets that encompassed other public services, a net of compressed streets of all shapes and sizes, few squares (maidans), and series of detached houses, which often contain courtyards.

The main features of urbanism were as follows There were no strict rules for the buildings' construction, however, Islamic Jurisprudence (Fiqh) endeavoured to deduce Islamic laws and extract the regulations from their sources (Qur'an, the word of Allah, and Sunnah, sayings of Prophet Mohammed), provided systems of decision-making to organize the building process and the urban physical character.

Tyrant rulers were controlling the building process, their decisions were macro. As a result, the urban form (the three dimensional state of the city) was often an expression of their desires, and didn't conduct a pure message of Islam Although ruler's decisions where macro in nature, Islamic laws could affect the road restrictions and legislations, and the citizens aggregate significant impact on building process to some instant. Islamic affairs of the road rights and the relations with neighbours,

Islamic law of 'waqf' which resulted into real-estate perpetuity, the obligations of controlling visual overlooking for the sanctity of the family, and Islamic recommendations of beauty and aesthetic values, are some examples of that impact Traditional Islamic city was shaped by some structural elements,

including; the domes and minarets that dominated the skyline, the street qualities; such as rhythm, repetitiveness, and walkability, the axial composition with clustered houses, and the use of the square forms and courtyards The question of identity and authenticity, in terms of following Islamic theory, became very critical. The structure of the city was immense and astonishing production of coherent cultures, which responded to the rulers' wishes, building requirements and construction capabilities, but relatively engaged with Islamic thoughts Islamic teachings urge people to learn, work hard, be productive, be honest, and contribute to the civilization and the restoration of the globe. These teachings collaborated with the spiritual and love interactions to rise great commitments and devotions to build and develop all aspects of life.

Islamic conquests resulted into a great mixture of civilizations that contributed to the produce of the urban fabric. This patchwork turned the city into a panoramic displays of various cultures, and affected the building process, which made it a dilemma to separate between the genuine Islamic

production and the imported one, because of some similarities between cultures, "all cultures were originally and internally coherent, bound together by a spirit and genius"(Grabar, 1995).

## Urbanism of the Colonialism Era

The 19th and 20th centuries were an era of accelerated diffusion of Western ideas around the world, with no exception regarding urban design. In this period, many historic Islamic cities came under the control of different non-Islamic forces that have different ideologies and diverse policies of building and urban life. Orientalism was developed during this period, and foreign ideologies dominated. As a result, alien building modes and strange urban forms were imposed, which contributed to the loss of identity.

Urbanism features of this period were as follows Irrespective of the interpretation, colonial urbanization constructed new urban forms as a result of the coincidence between cultural hegemony and political domination. Those forms delivered a segregation system that was both ethnic and social, reflecting the colonial environment.

The urban fabric was still compact, inherited some distinctive features from the previous period. However, discrete rulers and colonizers kept dominating the decision-making process and adding dramatic changes to the coherent fabric of the city.

Sometimes, the aspirations of some of the colonized may coincide with the objectives of the colonizer, which made planning techniques and visible symbols of specific cultures easily integrated into the local context. The local context may assimilate Western style urbanism, resulting into endogenous policy of importation of Western born forms and techniques rather than from an exportation of these via colonial dominance. Introducing new forms and techniques with multiple identities weakened the cultural influence and cultural appreciation of the colonized and enhanced globalization.

The 'urban ills' associated with colonial urbanization urged the need to adopt new planning techniques, which contributed to the development of town planning. New concepts and notions evolved regarding place and space.

This demonstration of the urbanism process in the history of Islamic cities outlines the difficult and complicated task of extracting the concepts and methods that related purely to Islam, and stresses the need to study and analyze basic Islamic doctrine in relation to town planning, in order to establish a firm basis for the policies and regulations necessary to build the future Islamic State of Al-Mahdi (a.s)

## **2. Globalization and culture in the Current Urbanism Practice of Islamic cities**

"Places are constantly in tension between what they are, what they ought to become and what the mediations of global capital and power make of them" (Arefi, 1999)

The process of urbanization and the cultural production have developed in a dialectical relationship, as they have influenced, constructed, shaped and reshaped each other. The urban fabric of most Islamic cities has changed drastically due to the influence of colonial urbanism. The diverse and tangled urban forms emerged from the colonized period, the loss of identity and authenticity due to the ideologies of the rulers which were remote from Islamic ideology, the consecutive foreign and dictator governments, and the gradual diverge of Muslims' thoughts from the basic Islamic beliefs, have evolved into a great rejection of the past and glorification of the new standards and techniques, which promoted the proliferation of inauthentic places and the emergence of placelessness.

Moreover, the invention of the car and the wide spread use of it as a way of transportation, had great impact on the urban fabric. New neighbourhoods were built on the borders of old neighbourhoods without planning strategies for integration, which widened the gap between the old and the new. In addition to that, new roads were cut into the old fabric without any considerations to the urban and social values. "In addition to commodification and devaluation of place, the roots of placelessness lie deep in globalization" (Arefi, 1999).

In the last few decades, sensible and knowledgeable architects led a retrospective revolution for cultural and identity appreciation. As a result, new attitudes like urban infill and urban conservation practice were adopted to enhance authenticity and allow flexibility to integrate the old fabric into the modern city development plans. International standards became less important and local historical identity was enhanced.

However, the contemporary discourse on the authenticity of place "has been largely influenced by modernity and globalization" (Arefi, 1999). Due to this influence on urban conservation process, cultural production has turned into a "source of opportunities and threats" (Ouf, 2001) in urban restructuring.

Cultural production, in the meantime, represents basically visible signs and symbols that express a distinct history, provide art display, and attract tourists and public with the spirit of the past "business of cities" (Sibel, 2001), without comprehensive studies for the basic elements and tools required for a successful urban practice that considers the basic principles of Islam rather than architectural symbols of a specific time.

## Local or Global

"The call for proper connections between places goes far beyond a test of architectural ability and talent for urban design. The dilemma lies deep in our social norms and collective consciousness" ( Arefi, 1999)

The subtle arguments of local verses global are significant to the evolution of our understanding of global systemic change. The critique of the social evolutionism literature has dominated the efforts to locate globalization, because globalization, in general, weakens local ties and enhances homogeneity and sameness, based on the tenets of consumerism and capital mobility. On the other hand, social relations strengthen local ties and identity, and promote the process of place development.

The current problematic of place evolved from using criteria such as applicability and importance in selecting Western models, "the input of experts whose work was closely modeled on foreign examples was often not appropriate for the special context" (Nasr, eds., 2003).

The debate about global urbanization, which is based on the significance of cities and the development process, revolving around the process of framing a relationship between globalization and locality impacts, exportation or importation of urbanism techniques, the network structure of globalizing cities, the methodological debates about understanding global networks with urban change and with the synchronization movement of people. Continuous urban change draws conceptual framework for local changes and transformation.

The theoretical synthesis of 'transnational urbanism' presented by the urban theorist,

Michael Peter Smith, is considered as "the most balanced theoretical approach to globalization, seeing it as it works, without any vilification or glorification" (Encyclopedia). The term 'transnational urbanism' refers to a sophisticated and complicated process involving cultures, policies, institutions, actors, and localities. The primary sites of this 'cultural metaphor' are global cities.

This theory deepens our conceptual complication on globalization. It frames stimulating connections between the field of urban studies and the field of transnational studies, suggests methods for reconstructing urban theory to coincide with socio-spatial dynamics and the changing urban international relations. Smith suggests that we need to look beyond the intention of globalization and post-modernity, to recognize locality and the growth of cultural practices from a different point of view.

The theory of 'transnational urbanism' could bring a rational balance to the problematic of globalization and the loss of identity, but with the unbalanced laws that govern the earth and the dominance of man-made laws and the commanding forces, this balance will be restricted and confined to specific societies.

On the contrary, in the case of 'Islamic globalization' and the State of Al - Mahdi (as), when the Divine law controls the earth and brings out unity, justice, and equal opportunities to all societies, 'transnational urbanism' would achieve its fundamental goal of the balance between those conflicting issues.



## **Islamic Globalization and associated Teachings of Islam**

In order to enrich our ideas about 'Islamic globalization', it is important to specify some Islamic teachings that enhance globalization. Islamic message is extensive and global, it was forwarded to all nations on the globe, not only one nation. It was conducted for building and spreading civilization on the earth. It is a broad message that covers the matters of ideology, culture, health, education, social life, and every aspect of our life.

Prophet Mohammed (s.a.w) is the Messenger of Allah (s.w.t) for all people in the globe. Quraan declared that Prophet Mohammed (s.a.w) was appointed as a messenger of goodness, truth and grace for all people living on the earth "And we sent thee not (O' Our Apostle Muhammad) but a mercy unto all the worlds" (Holy Quraan 21:107)

Humanitarian Equality is another feature of Islamic teachings. Islam considers all people on earth equal in their humanitarian rights, without any differentiations between them. The only distinction would be with more fear of Allah (s.w.t) "Verily the most honoured of you with God is the one of you who guardeth (himself) the most against evil" (Holy Quraan 49:13).

Islam considers all Muslims as brothers, despite their origins, languages, and cultures. Love, loyalty, and responsibility are the key elements of the countenance of this brotherhood, and this bond of unity and cooperation attaches Muslims to each other, any where on earth. Islamic doctrine encompasses many collective aspects that encourage social bonds. While respecting the rights of individuals, Islam expresses plenty of regulations for the right of groups. Islam encourages collectivity in all kinds of worshipping, eating, and various aspects of social life.

### **3. Towards a New Approach**

The developments in political, economic, cultural and social spheres restructure urban spaces. These changes could affect the fabrication of urban space and lead to more invention of concepts. Consequently, town planning law and the building law for urban areas will develop and change. Before suggesting some urbanism guidelines for the future Islamic State of Al-Mahdi (a.s), it is useful to analyze parts of the Islamic theory and their Implications on town planning process, in order to propose a conceptual framework for a pure Islamic practice in urbanism.

## **Islamic theory and its Implication on urbanism**

The term 'Islam' means submission and obedience. It can be defined - descriptively- as "following the orders and prohibitions without objection" (Al-Balagh, 1994). The religion of Islam is composed of three key elements; doctrine, legislation (social laws), and morals. Islamic message is complete, can solve all the problems, and encompass all aspects of life, including urbanism, "Never is there anything without a law concerning it or a known Sunnah" (Imam Sadiq/Al-Balagh, 1994).

The basic goal of the Islamic message is to guide people towards the perfection and happiness in their lives. Following are some Islamic beliefs that would affect urbanism and the building process The belief of the Oneness of Allah in himself, His attributes, His actions, and worship, has a perfecting impact on the human spirit, as the ultimate goal of a Muslim is to attain Allah's pleasure.

This spiritual interaction can be reflected on life affairs and translated into an integral system that aims to establish perfect society and perfect urban life The aim of creating humanity is to worship Allah (s.w.t), reform the earth, and achieve longevity with good and sustainable use of the available resources. People are urged to mobilize their energies in the domain of good and constructive work, and avoid being dissipated and lost In Islam, the basic criteria and guide for various life activities is that they should respect their nature and impact on social life.

In other words, they should be clear from crime and evil. Islam strongly challenges injustice, corruption, tyranny, and despotism. This criteria should be considered in the process of framing planning policies, specially land use proposals The incorporation of religious activities with different aspects of life is emphasized in Islamic theory, and could be translated into mixed use developments, and reflected on some facilities -like mosques- in discrete diversity of functions and a lively social life The belief in justice, socio-equality, and distribution equity would strongly affect planning strategies and regulations There is no coercion in Islam.

Freedom of choice is represented in Islamic legislations, in a condition that no damage or harm will occur to anybody as a result of that freedom Noxious ethics such as monopoly, bribery, egoism, subversion, and perversion are prohibited in Islam, and should be prevented in town planning process Worshipping in Islam is not always individually performed. Islam urges Muslims to perform worshipping together, which would promote collectivity and affect urban life Islamic teachings provoke people to demand knowledge, wisdom, and be flexible to change.

Islam has provided unchangeable rules for the constant needs of humanity, but with fluctuating needs, the rules are much more changeable as far as they coincide with Islamic key principles. This would enhance flexibility in dealing with urban change Duties in Islam are within man's ability.

There is never a duty or an obligation that is beyond people's forbearance Islamic recommendations of beauty, adornment, and cleanliness would preserve public health for individuals and for the society, and affect the aesthetic components of urbanism The belief in the eternal life after death

and the resurrection notion can create a spiritual motivation and movements in mankind and the design thinking Islamic doctrine stresses the significance and eternity of the soul, which may result in the perpetuity of special buildings -such as tombs- which affects urban rules and regulations.

## **Urbanism Guidelines for the Islamic State of Al-Mahdi (a.s)**

The developments and transformation of the components of urban spaces should be taken into consideration in the process of establishing a package of precepts and urbanism guidelines for the future Islamic State of Al-Mahdi (a.s). Components of such package -in addition to the previous notes-include:

Implementation of town planning law and building law that is based on Islamic doctrine as the main reference, and the main source of legislation rather than specific urban forms that might not be completely related to Islam. The key element for this derivation is the originality of those sources.

Synthesizing with other ideas, practices, professions and with communities, which may lead to further innovation Adoption of transnational and trans-cultural planning process, that takes place between nations, and provide a framework for spatial analysis that extend beyond them, and construct strong relations and unity between them, while acknowledging their different requirements.

Implementation of the socially progressive planning policies that enhance the fixed identity (distinctive character and heritage), reflect it on the urban environment, and diminish the negative impacts of flexible identities (imported forms and models) to create a compatible urban fabric Strong institutions that enhance education, training, research and development, to promote productivity Strategic policy developments and management to ensure adequate resources for sustainable development and lead to economic stability Diversity and freedom of choice for people,

considering the great variety of locals (elite or weak members) Strong accessibility and connectivity with different networks, which achieve linkages between different cities and societies, so that people enjoy the freedom and brotherhood atmosphere of the Islamic State.

## **Conclusion**

Globalization, associated with complexity, social, and spatial fragmentation, has had major implications for the nexus between social relations and space. Thus, the question remains as how invading global cities could be channelled and how cultural production, as the only way to create or restore genuine and authentic places, could be the cure to the current problematic of place.

Islamic globalization in the future Islamic State of Al-Mahdi (as), would achieve a balance between positive aspects of globalization, on one hand, and cultural and authentic characteristics of place, on the other hand. Islam is a timeless and livable religion; it doesn't belong to a specific place or specific time. In the process of producing town planning laws that are based on Islam, Islamic doctrine and legislations should be questioned and analyzed, in order to deduce the right rules from their origins. Monuments from the past maybe questioned and analyzed to add to the experience, but not to be considered as the main references.

Islam provides Divine judgment for every occurrence, understands human's physical requirements, and establishes rules and regulations that are based on values sufficient for him. With the respectful vision to the city's own criteria, establishing stabilization between collectivity and particularism, accommodation with various and innovative urban concepts, flexibility in dealing with the continuous changes in the urban environment, and in the shade of the Divine and prudent rules, Islamic globalization is capable of providing a superior and extraordinary experience to urbanism.

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