

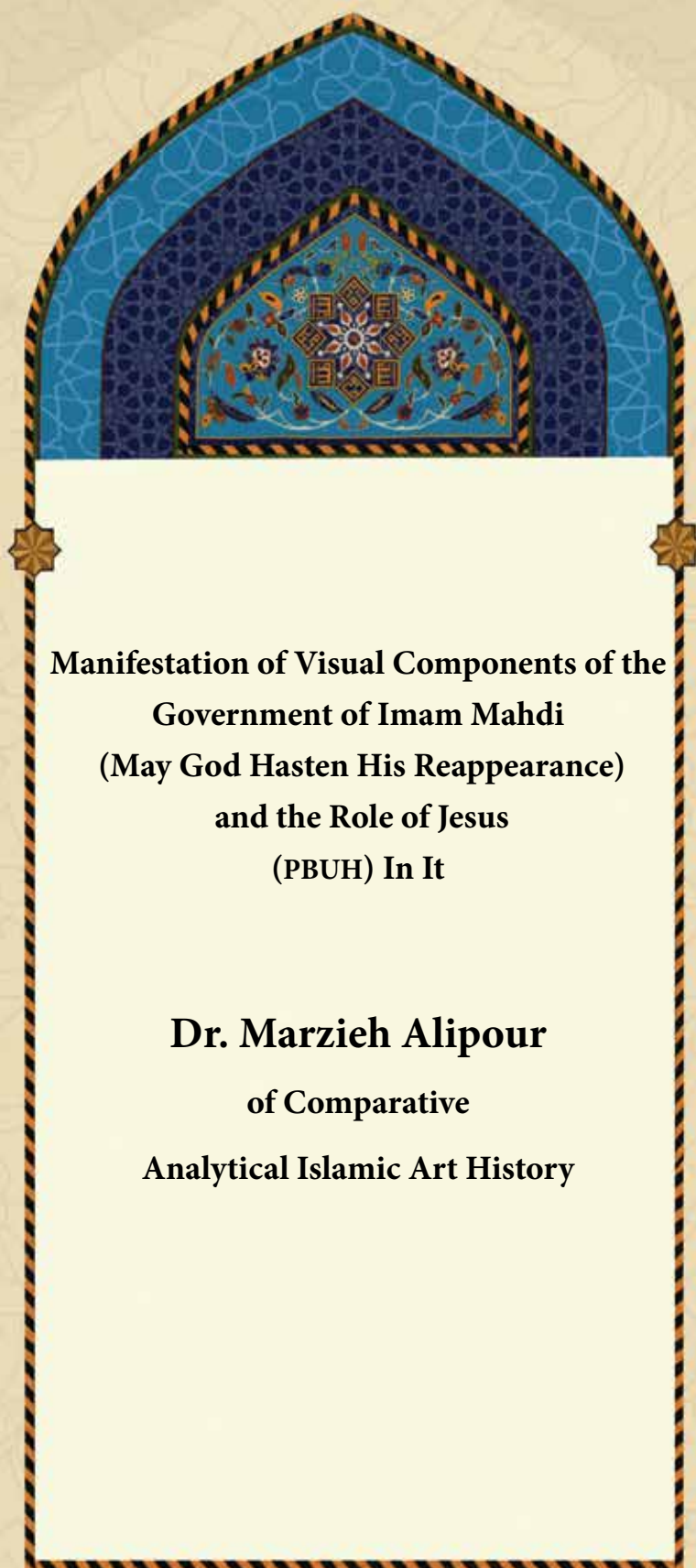


تجليات المكونات البصرية
لحكومة الإمام المهدي عليه السلام
ودور عيسى عليه السلام فيها

**Manifestation of Visual Components of the
Government of Imam Mahdi
(May God Hasten His Reappearance)
and the Role of Jesus
(PBUH) In It**

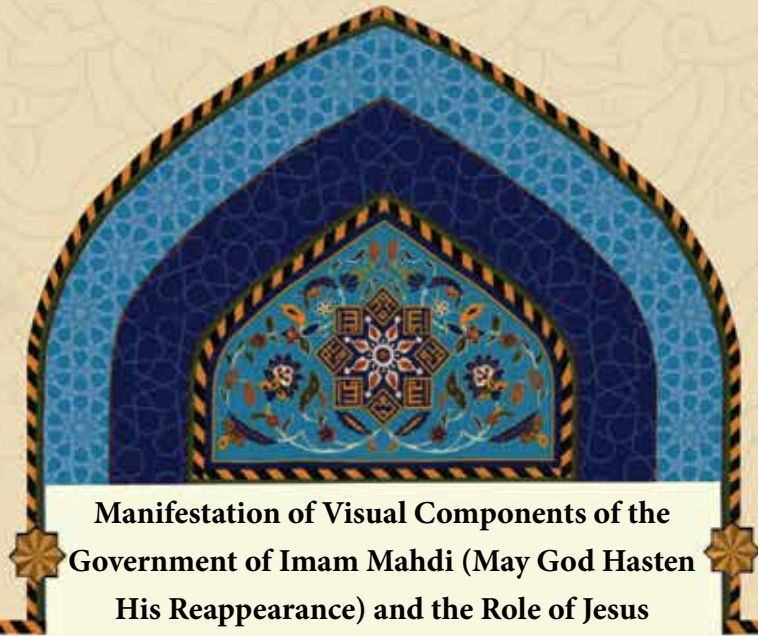
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Comparative Analytical Islamic Art
History**



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Abstract:

Shi'a art is a monotheistic type of art that expresses, exhibits, or tastefully communicates beliefs, thoughts, values, figures, and events of Shi'a history with an emphasis on two principles of imamate and justice. One of the important fundamentals of Imamiyyah Shi'ism is the belief in the continuation of the tradition of Imamate up to the twelfth Imam who is by God's order hidden from eyes and will reappear in the End Time. Believing in the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) and the events following it is an example of the belief in the Unseen that accepting it and identifying its characteristics is not possible but by obeying God and using valid narrations. His worldwide government is characterized by peacemaking, establishing security and justice all around the universe, and eradicating injustice and oppression. In such a government which is led by Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance), all the officeholders and executives must be of the righteous and nobles of nations, hence his government, according to narrations, will consist of prophets and the righteous among whom is Jesus (PBUH) who will help Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) in the globalization of Qur'anic values and an influential factor in the progression of the revolution and government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) will be the presence of that prophet of God by his side. Therefore, this research examines images depicting this content, and its main purpose is studying and comparing those



depictions with Qur'anic verses and Islamic narrations with regard to the government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) and the presence of Jesus (PBUH). To this end, this study identifies symbolic and visual components in those depictions so that what Shi'a narrations insist upon be found. The research method has a symbolist approach based on its descriptive-analytic nature, and the data is gathered through library studies. The findings show that by means of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance), God will lead the progression path of the world's societies towards the end of a single unitary society (presence and cooperation of the prophets of other divine religions in his government) and domination of truth and justice, will make the army of Allah defeat the army of Satan (like the fight of Jesus (PBUH), as a commander of that government, with Dajjal), and will let the righteous and believers be the successors with the leadership of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance).

key words:

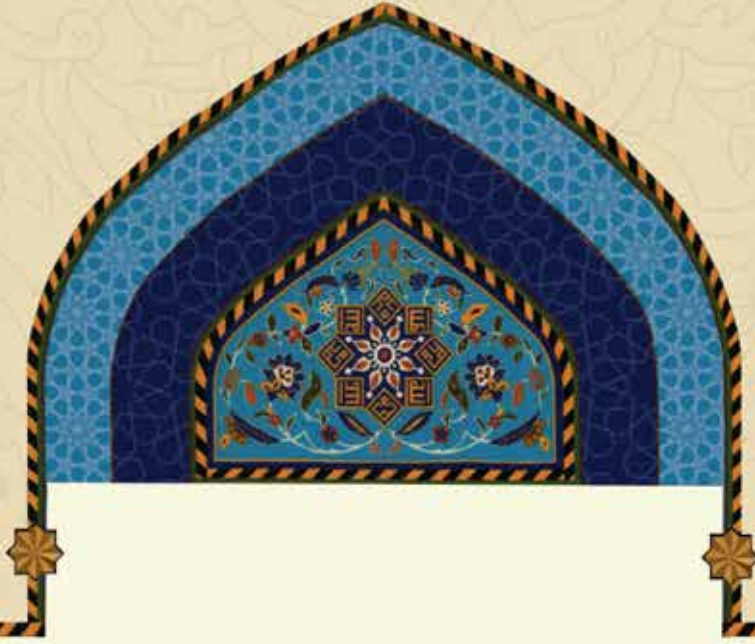
The Prophet's Inadvertent Act, reply letter of the People of Al-Haair, Refutation of Al-Saduq's Beliefs, Treatises of Sheikh Al-Mufid, The Prophet's Inadvertent Act According to the Shias



تجليات المكونات البصرية لحكومة الإمام المهدي عليه السلام ودور عيسى عليه السلام فيها

الملخص

الفن الشيعي هو نوع من الفن التوحيدي الذي يعبر عن ويعرض ويوصل بشكل جمالي المعتقدات والأفكار والقيم والشخصيات والأحداث من التاريخ الشيعي والتركيز على مبدئين هما الإمامة والعدل، من الأسس المهمة للشيعية الإمامية الإيمان باستمرارية تقليد الإمامة حتى الإمام الثاني عشر الذي هو بأمر من الله محجوب عن الأنظار وسيظهر في آخر الزمان، الإيمان بظهور الإمام المهدي عليه السلام والأحداث التي تليه هو مثال على الإيمان بالغيب الذي لا يمكن قبوله وتحديد خصائصه إلا بطاعة الله واستخدام الروايات الصحيحة، وتتميز حكومته العالمية بصنع السلام وإرساء الأمن والعدل في جميع أنحاء الكون والقضاء على الظلم والجور، ويجب أن يكون جميع المسؤولين والتنفيذيين في مثل هذه الحكومة التي يقودها الإمام المهدي عليه السلام من صالحين وأشراف الأمم وبالتالي فإن حكومته وفقاً للروايات ستتكون من الأنبياء والصالحين ومن بينهم عيسى عليه السلام الذي سيساعد الإمام المهدي عليه السلام في عولمة القيم القرآنية وسيكون عاملاً مؤثراً في تقدم ثورة وحكومة الإمام المهدي عليه السلام. لذلك يدرس هذا البحث الصور التي تصور هذا المحتوى وهدفه الرئيسي هو دراسة ومقارنة تلك التصورات مع الآيات القرآنية والروايات الإسلامية فيما يتعلق بحكومة الإمام المهدي عليه السلام وحضور عيسى عليه السلام، وتحدد هذه الدراسة لهذه الغاية المكونات الرمزية والبصرية في تلك التصورات بحيث يمكن العثور على ما تؤكد عليه الروايات الشيعية، ان منهج البحث له مقارنة رمزية تستند إلى طبيعته الوصفية-التحليلية ويتم



جمع البيانات من خلال الدراسات المكتبية. و سيقود الله سبحانه و تعالى حسب ما تظهر النتائج أنه بواسطة الإمام المهدي عليه السلام سيقود الله مسار تقدم مجتمعات العالم نحو نهاية مجتمع موحد واحد (حضور وتعاون أنبياء الديانات السماوية الأخرى في حكومته) وسيادة الحق والعدل وسيجعل جيش الله يهزم جيش الشيطان (مثل قتال عيسى عليه السلام كقائد لتلك الحكومة مع الدجال) وسيجعل الصالحين والمؤمنين خلفاء بقيادة الإمام المهدي عليه السلام.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

سهو النبي، رسالة جواب أهل الحائر، نقض اعتقادات الصدوق، رسائل الشيخ المفيد، سهو النبي عند الشيعة.

Introduction

To build a unified nation and ummah, one thing is necessary and that is a common worldview, a collective belief. In the era of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance), the days based on justice, a single worldview will rule the world, the method and plan will be just one, real integrity and unity in beliefs and tenets will form, and all the people will harmoniously move towards prosperity, bliss, and happiness. Imam Mahdi (PBUH), who is a true peacemaker and reformer whose method is based on the eternal law of truth and justice compatible with human nature, will establish a unity based on Islamic principles and monotheism, bringing all mankind together under one single religion and faith⁽¹⁾. Since Imam Mahdi (may God has-

(1) Rezvani, Hokoomat-e Hazrat-e Mahdi (a) dar Asr-e Zohoor, 9.

ten his reappearance) will come out to raise the flag of Islam and make the Qur'an rule all over the world, the officeholders and executives in such a government must be of the righteous and nobles of nations, hence his government, according to narrations, will consist of prophets and the righteous among whom is Jesus (PBUH) who will help Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) in the globalization of Qur'anic values and an influential factor in the progression of the revolution and government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) will be the presence of that prophet of God by his side.

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his pure progeny) says: "By He who appointed me the true bearer of glad tidings, if there is nothing left of the world's life but a single day, God will make that day so long





العقد العاشر
السنن الخامسة
١٤٤٦ هـ / ٢٠٢٤ م

until my son, Mahdi, rises up. After his uprising, Jesus, the Spirit of God, will be sent down and perform a Prayer behind him. Then, the earth will become bright with the light of the Lord and his sovereignty and government will reach the east and the west of the world.⁽¹⁾

The art of illustrating the scripts with Shi'a content has always been under the influence of the religious thoughts of the artists and their supporters throughout different eras. The majority of them manifest the narrations with relation to the Holy Prophet and his pure progeny (peace be upon them all). The approach of the artists to that content has resulted in displaying abstract, symbolic, and allegorical image processing in a special manner for narrating other issues in Persian paintings so that they

could reflect Shi'a content with the visual language. What makes Persian painting perfectly distinguished, besides its content, subject, and specific aesthetic system, is the symbol-like aspect. Symbolization and symbolism, which are among the fundamentals and basic principles of the aesthetics of Iranian art in all ages, continued after Islam to be there on the basis of religious teachings and the prohibition of naturalist illustration while the rich ground of national and religious literature guaranteed its continuity and development. Since religious Persian paintings always portray religion and faith, this deep relationship has been reflected in a variety of methods in different periods. Sometimes symbolically, allegorically, semiotically, and in abstract forms, and sometimes simply and explicitly, every time aiming at being the connection between the high-

(1) Shaikh Sadouq, The translation of Kamal Ad-Deen wa Tamam An-Ni'mah, v1, 524

er world and the earthly world. Hence, the inseparability of the beliefs and traditions of the past and cultural and social circumstances and backgrounds creates a special condition for analyzing Persian paintings.

Therefore, this research examines images depicting this content, and its main purpose is studying and comparing those depictions with Qur'anic verses and Islamic narrations with regard to the government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) and the presence of Jesus (PBUH). To this end, this study identifies symbolic and visual components in those depictions so that what Shi'a narrations insist upon be found. The research method has a symbolist approach based on its descriptive-analytic nature, and the data is gathered through library studies.

The Government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance)

One of the important fundamentals of Imamiyyah Shi'ism is the belief in the continuation of the tradition of Imamate up to the twelfth Imam who is by God's order hidden from eyes and will reappear in the End Time. Believing in the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) and the events following it is an example of the belief in the Unseen that accepting it and identifying its characteristics is not possible but by obeying God and using valid narrations.

His worldwide government is characterized by peacemaking, establishing security and justice all around the universe, and eradicating corruption, injustice, wrongdoing, oppression, and crime, as it has been the main goal of all prophets. However, the success of





those noble prophets in their time and that of their successors after them has not been that conspicuous. Yet, establishing worldwide security and justice has been a part of their promises while the pure nature of all mankind has been looking forward throughout history to such days that have the said splendid quality.

«We wish to show favor unto the suppressed ones in the land and to make them leaders and the inheritors on earth⁽¹⁾»

So, since God, the Almighty, the prophets, and the heirs are infallible and they will never break a promise or give false hope to people letting them wait, that promise will undoubtedly be fulfilled with that astonishing transcendent feature. Indeed, the fulfillment of

(١) (٥:٢٨) ﴿وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ﴾

those days of liberty can be considered the goal of creating man. A day on which, by God's mercy, all will be a unified nation, all will come under the flag of monotheism, and disbelief, polytheism (ascribing partners unto God), and hypocrisy will be rooted out.

Imam Baqir (PBUH) quotes his great grandfather, Imam Ali (PBUH), as saying with regard to that Qur'anic verse: "Those who are suppressed in the land are the progeny of Muhammad (PBUH and his pure progeny). God, the Almighty, will raise Mahdi of that progeny. Then, He will hold them (ahlulbait) in high esteem and debase their enemies."⁽²⁾

The prophet (PBUH and his pure progeny) says: "God will demolish falsehood and remove adversity of time by means of Mahdi (may God hasten his reappear-

(2) Shaikh Tousi, The translation of the book "Al-Gheibah", 346.

ance), the discredit of slavery will be lifted from your necks by the medium of him” (ibid). Mahdism or messianism refers to the belief in a savior who will come in the end time to rescue and save human beings and establish peace and justice. The belief in a savior exists in a variety of religions, nations, and ethnic groups with completely different cultures and traditions. For them, the savior and messiah has been introduced in various forms. Among those groups, Shi’a people believe in the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (PBUH).

The meaningful presence of Jesus (PBUH) in Imam Mahdi’s government and the appearance of the government of justice and salvation is so strong that sometimes it has been assumed that Mahdi is no one but Jesus himself. But, the superabundance of such content in the Islamic narrations regarding Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his

reappearance) or the interpretation of those narrations has another message, which is the influential presence of Jesus (PBUH) in Imam Mahdi’s government. In those narrations, Jesus Christ (PBUH) is a member of the widespread world government of Imam Mahdi, not its leader. Probably, one of the reasons for sending Jesus down at the time of Imam Mahdi’s rising is to strengthen his world government as well as acknowledge and approve his truthfulness and Imamate, especially the fact that Jesus (PBUH) will follow (stand behind him as performing a Prayer) Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) and will acknowledge his divine world leadership and approve it.

The position and role of Jesus (PBUH) in the government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance)



*Following the lead of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his re-appearance) in Prayer

According to Islamic narrations, Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) will perform a magnificent group Prayer in Jerusalem in the beginning of his rise. Jesus (PBUH) will come down from heavens⁽¹⁾ and will participate in Muslims' group Prayer. Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) will ask him to lead the Prayer but he will decline, considering the respect of the Imam among the people as its reason, and will clearly and explicitly mention the position of the Imam as the leader (Imam) and the king. «Especially when Jesus (PBUH) will follow Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance), perform a Prayer behind him as the leader, and acknowledge his

divine world leadership⁽²⁾». The messenger of God (PBUH and his pure progeny) said: "Jesus, son of Mary, will descend while acknowledging Muhammad and following his religion...»⁽³⁾. When Jesus (PBUH) follows the lead of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) in performing a group Prayer, it has some consequences:

- It proves the universal truth of Imam Mahdi (PBUH)
- It silences the rebellious Christians and Jews and makes them surrender
- The People of the Book will follow Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance)⁽⁴⁾

(2) A group of authors, n.d., Daneshnameye Mahdaviyyatva Emam-e Zaman ajjalallahta'alafarajah, v1, 706.

(3) Ibn Hibban, Sahih Ibn Hibban by Ibn Balban, v15, 223.

(4) Imam Baqir (PBUH) explains the meaning of the Qur'anic verse 4: 159

(٤٣: ٦١) ﴿وَإِنَّهُ لَعَلَّمَ لِّلشَّاعَةِ فَلَا تَمْتَرُنَّ بِهَا﴾ (١)
وَاتَّبِعُونَ هَذَا صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

- The world will be conquered with the least amount of war and bloodshed. Those who do not know Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) will stop fighting because Jesus Christ (PBUH) follows him and will begin to be among his followers⁽¹⁾.

- The followers of religions and schools of thought will help Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) because of Jesus (PBUH) to achieve his divine goals

- A peace treaty and ceasefire agreement will be signed between

as: "Jesus (PBUH) will come down to this world before the resurrection and no one among Christians and Jews be left except they believe in him before death, and he will perform a Prayer behind Mahdi (PBUH)." (Majlesi, Bihar Al-Anwar, v14, 350)

(1) Azizi & Ya'qoubzadeh, The role of Jesus Christ (PBUH) in the government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance), 15.

the followers of Jesus Christ (PBUH) and the followers of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance)

***Ministry in the government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance)**

The ministers of the world government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) are prophets and their successors, pious ones, the righteous of the time and of the past, and some of the chiefs and nobles of the Prophet's companions. According to Islamic narrations, Jesus (PBUH) will be chosen as a minister to Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance), and he is referred to as minister, advisor, hajib (curtain carrier), commander of the army, and treasurer in his government. Other persons are also named in the narrations as ministers, but those ministers are at lower political and governmental levels.





Among them all, Jesus (PBUH) will be the prime minister, supreme judge, and the commander-in-chief of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance), the head of the important affairs of his global government (Ibid.).

*** The commander-in-chief in the government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance)**

The Prophet (PBUH and his pure progeny) says: “Jesus is the right-hand man, curtain carrier, and deputy of Qa’im (i.e., Imam Mahdi) and he will spread security to the west and the east by the favour of Hujjah son of Hasan”⁽¹⁾. Furthermore, Jesus Christ (PBUH) as the commander-in-chief of the government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) will eradicate colonization with its de-

ceiving techniques as well as the instances of corruption and error, such as breaking the Christian cross, killing pigs, annihilating Gog and Magog, and slaying the Dajjal (Antichrist). In Islamic narrations, it is mentioned that the Dajjal will be slain by Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance). In view of the fact that Jesus (PBUH) is appointed by Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) and obeys him, the slaying of the Dajjal by Jesus (PBUH) is identical to the slaying of the Dajjal by Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance). And that is an end to the general movement of the Dajjals⁽²⁾.

***Judging in the government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance)**

(1) Bahrani, n.d., Ghaayah Al-Maram waHujjahAl-Khisam fi Ta’yeenAl-Imam, v 93, 7.

(2) Azizi & Ya’qoubzadeh, The role of Jesus Christ (PBUH) in the government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance), 18.

According to some Islamic narrations, Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) will leave the judicial affairs to Jesus (PBUH) in order to expedite the administration of his government, and Jesus (PBUH), as the supreme judge of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance), will handle it well, just like other affairs. The judging method of Jesus (PBUH) is the same as that of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance), which is with no need of witnesses. Of the most important things that Jesus Christ (PBUH) will do after his coming are judging fairly and recovering people's rights, and he will reward everyone in accordance with their actions. The holy Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his pure progeny) with regard to Jesus' judging method said: "I swear by Him in Whose hands is my life, verily the son of Mary will soon

be sent down among you as a just judge ..." ⁽¹⁾.

Examining some Persian paintings depicting "the government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) and the role of Jesus (PBUH) in it"

1) The Persian painting "Imam Mahdi Enthroned (may God hasten his reappearance)"

In this Persian painting, Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) is with a mask on and a flame-like halo around his head, sitting cross-legged on a royal throne under a sunshade, conversing with the people gathered around him. In the foreground, a person with no turban is sitting sorrowfully full-kneeling in front of someone who is probably a governor of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance). Behind the Imam, there is a per-

(1) Koorani, Mu'jam Ahadith Al-Mahdi (aj), v2, 429.





son standing who seems to have a sword that is not unsheathed (because it is not the time of the re-appearance) or a furled flag - there are similar examples of it in the Persian paintings of the Safavid era (Nasr Flag) - which is furled for now.

This image depicts one of the judging sessions of the government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance). The court of his justice is taking place on a hillside from which a stream flows and goes across a plain full of flowers. That flower plain symbolizes the fair and just government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) because the earth will wear a spring face by his reappearance when justice will be established all around the world. Three horizontal epigraphs and four vertical epigraphs are seen in this Persian painting. The first horizontal epigraph is em-

bellished with the Qur'anic verse⁽¹⁾ which speaks about the prophet Idris (Enoch) (PBUH). The second and third horizontal epigraphs and the four vertical ones display some poems about the government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance). The artist has perhaps written the said Qur'anic verse because of the similarity between the government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) and Idris (PBUH). Imam Sadiq (PBUH) says: "Sahlah Mosque is the place of residence for Qa'im (may God hasten his reappearance) and his household. Sahlah Mosque was the place of residence of Idris (PBUH)"⁽²⁾. Idris (PBUH) became hidden from his people when they wished to murder him -just as Imam Baqir (PBUH) says: "Qa'im (may God hasten his reappearance) is the

(1) 19:57 Qur'an

(2) Majlesi, Bihar Al-Anwar, v100, 436.

same. He will disappear when the enemies want to kill him. The disappearance of Idris (PBUH) took so long that his followers were in adversity and hardship and under pressure. The disappearance of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) is likewise so long that his followers will be in extreme adversity, hardship, and under much pressure.”When the disappearance of Idris (PBUH) took too long, the people collectively repented and turned to God. Then, God, the Almighty, made him appear and pushed evil and adversity away from them. The same is the case of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance), that if people agree to repent all together and decide firmly to assist him, God, the Almighty, will make him reappear⁽¹⁾. Therefore, it is likely that the person who has a light

(1) Haeri Qazvini & Esfahani, Mikyal Al-Makarim, v1, 216-218.



Fig 2. Jesus kills Antichrist, Falnama, India, Golconda, 30- 1610s

halo around his head and is sitting on the right side of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) is Idris (PBUH).

In case we consider this person to be Idris (PBUH) who has come back to earth, all the four living prophets should have been depicted. However, there is another possibility which is the person depicted on the right of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reap-



pearance) is Jesus (PBUH) who is depicted with a flame-like halo and has clothing of the same kind of colors as that of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) which probably signifies that he follows Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance).

The Prophet (PBUH and his pure progeny) says: “Jesus is the right-hand man, curtain carrier, and deputy of Qa’im (i.e., Imam Mahdi) and he will spread security to the west and the east by the favor of Hujjah son of Hasan”⁽¹⁾. Moreover, according to Islamic narrations, he will descend at the time of the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance), perform Prayers behind him with him, which means the Imam is the last successor and heir, and assist the Imamin his

government as a minister. According to a narration, Jesus (PBUH) will say to Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance): “Verily, I am sent down as a minister, not a ruler or king.”⁽²⁾ Since Jesus (PBUH) is the right-hand man of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance), it is possible that the person depicted on the right side is Jesus (PBUH). Also, some of the divine prophets who will be present in the government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) have been named in Islamic narrations, of whom the most important is Jesus (PBUH). According to Sunni and Shi’a narrations, Jesus (PBUH) will descend at the time of the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance), perform Prayers behind Imam Mahdi (may

(1) Bahrani, n.d., *Ghaayah Al-Maram waHujjahAl-Khisam fi Ta’yeenAl-Imam*, v7, 93.

(2) Ibn Tawous, *Al-Malahimwal Fitan fi Dhuhoor Al-Gha’ibAl-Muntadharajjalallahfarajah*, v1, 83.

God hasten his reappearance), and aid Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) in his government. The holy Prophet (PBUH and his pure progeny) says: “I swear by Him in Whose hands is my life, Jesus, son of Mary, will soon be sent down unto you as a just judge and a fair ruler...”⁽¹⁾. That might be why a judging session with the presence of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) and Jesus (PBUH) is depicted, just as the poem on the second epigraph on the top speaks about the justice-spreading government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance). The holy Prophet (PBUH and his pure progeny) says: “Your condition will constantly remain the same until in the midst of oppression and trials will be born one whom

people do not know, then the earth will be full of oppression so much so that no one will be able to say ‘Allah’ (and mention the name of the truth). Then, God, the Almighty, will raise a man from my descent and my progeny that he will fill the earth with justice as they have filled it with oppression before him”⁽²⁾. In the clear blue sky above the hill, there is a cloud on which a sun is shining. It probably symbolizes the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) from behind the curtain of occultation because, according to Islamic narrations, Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) at the time of his occultation is like the sun behind clouds, and here the artist has situated the sun in front of the clouds due to the Imam’s reappearance.

2) The Persian painting “Jesus kills Antichrist”

(1) Shams Shami, *Subul Al-Huda war Rashad fi Seerati Khayr Al-'Ibad*, v10, 183.

(2) Majlesi, *Bihar Al-Anwar*, v 28, 18.





This Persian painting has been painted using the positional perspective. On top of the painting is Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) with a mask on his face and a flame-like halo, riding on a horse with the army of Islam, watching the battle of Jesus Christ (PBUH) with Dajjal (Antichrist), and the lower part of the image displays it in the foreground. In this painting, Jesus (PBUH) is depicted with a flame-like halo around his face, wearing clothing of the same color as the clothing of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) -which probably signifies that he follows the Imam-, and fighting on a piebald horse with Dajjal. While he has plunged a lance into Dajjal's arm Dajjal, wearing a ceremonial quiver and sword on the waist, has raised the right hand with an angry and worried face. It seems that, by showing the size of



Fig 1. Imam Mahdi Enthroned, Probably Iran, 1570s

Dajjal bigger than Jesus (PBUH) and his great fighting equipment and clothing, the artist has wanted to add to the significance of what Jesus (PBUH) is doing. The tower displayed behind Jesus (PBUH) can be a reference to the place of his battle with Dajjal (Lod Gate). Lod (also known as Lydda) is a place near Jerusalem in Palestine that has been introduced as the de-

scending place of Jesus (PBUH)⁽¹⁾. However, the city of Lod is known mainly due to the hadiths that have introduced it as the place where Jesus (PBUH) will slay Dajjal⁽²⁾. For instance, during the night of his ascent (Mi'raj), the Prophet (PBUH and his pure progeny) saw Dajjal, who had one eye, on the way to Jerusalem⁽³⁾.

In this depiction, some signs of End Times such as the appearance of Dajjal (Antichrist), the rising of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance), and the battle of Jesus (PBUH) with Dajjal are observable. According to some Islamic narrations, "Jesus (PBUH) will perform Prayers behind Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance), strive before him, and slay dajjal at the presence of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reap-

pearance) ..."⁽⁴⁾. Therefore, Jesus Christ (PBUH) plays a role too in killing Dajjal, making the religion of Islam superior, and creating the ideal society of the end time. Twelver Shi'a people count Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) one of the infallible Imams, the twelfth and the last one, indeed. After quoting the hadiths about Jesus (PBUH) following Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) in Prayer and after mentioning the discussion of the superiority of an Imam or a prophet, Allameh Majlesi writes: "Jesus and Mahdi (peace be upon them) are both leaders. One, a prophet, and the other, an Imam. However, if they both gather together in one place and the Imam takes the position of leadership, he is inevitably the leader and the head to the other who is a prophet..." (Ibid.). On that account, those two

(1) Ibid., v47, 497.

(2) Ibid., v11, 233.

(3) Ibn Katheer, Tafsir Ibn Kathir, v5, 39

(4) Majlesi, Bihar Al-Anwar, v51, 89.





العقد العاشر
السنين الخامسة
١٤٤٦ هـ / ٢٠٢٤ م

statements are not contrary to each other because Jesus (PBUH) will be among the retinue of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his re-appearance) and what a soldier does (Jesus (PBUH) slays Dajjal) can also be attributed to the commander. The Prophet (PBUH and his pure progeny) said: "... once he appears, he will spread disturbance and riot all over the world, there will be a war between him and the army of Qa'im (Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his re-appearance)), and the cursed he will eventually be killed by the holy Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his re-appearance) or Jesus, son of Mary (peace be upon them both)"⁽¹⁾. Likewise, an Islamic narration mentioned in Bihar al-Anwaar relates that Dajjal will eventually be

slayed by Jesus⁽²⁾ (PBUH)⁽³⁾.

Conclusion

One of the important fundamentals of Imamiyyah Shi'ism is the belief in the continuation of the tradition of Imamate up to the twelfth Imam who is by God's order hidden from eyes and will reappear in the End Time. Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his re-appearance) will create a unified nation and ummah under the rule of the Qur'an all over the world. In such a government, its officeholders and executives must also be

(2) According to a divine (Qudsi) hadith, God said to Jesus (PBUH): "O Jesus, I will ascend you unto myself and in End Time will send you down to earth so that you witness the wonders of ___ the people of that prophet and be of assistance in repelling Dajjal, the cursed. I will send you at the time of Prayer so that you perform the Prayer with him. Indeed, they are the blessed nation." (Shaikh Sadouq, 2009, v1, 318)

(3) Majlesi, Bihar Al-Anwar, v14, 349.

(1) Noori Tabarsi, n.d., Kifayah Al-Muwahhideen, v3, 401.

of the righteous and nobles of nations, hence his government consists of prophets and the righteous among whom is Jesus (PBUH). And one of the influential factors in the progression of Imam Mahdi's revolution and world government is the presence of that Ulul'azm (stout of heart) prophet by the side of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance). In this regard, the Persian paintings produced by painting artists have depicted an output of cultural and religious thoughts held by the affiliated groups in addition to expressing the beliefs of the artists and their supporters. Among them all, the government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) has a central role in Persian paintings and the role of Jesus (PBUH) in that government is noticeable. The painters of these Persian paintings have used visual and symbolic elements blended

with Qur'anic verses, Islamic narrations, and Shi'a beliefs.

In the Persian painting "the government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance)", the painter has portrayed a judging session of Jesus (PBUH) in the presence of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance), based on Shi'a beliefs. Shi'a visual elements are seen in these paintings in the form of portraying a distinguished special place for Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) in comparison to others, his bigger size, and using a positional perspective. Symbols like a white turban with twelve lines, a white mask, and a spread flame-like halo display another symbolic aspect in the depiction. A flame-like halo is also used around the face of Jesus (PBUH) In this painting because he is a prophet and due to his distinctness against other agents and officials





العقود العاشر
السنة الخامسة
١٤٤٦ هـ / ٢٠٢٤ م

of the government of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance). Portraying nature in spring-time and displaying the event and the subject in such a situation is a symbolic sign of the happiness, bliss, and prosperity of the earth and the time in the era of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance). Similarly, showing the sun that has come out from behind clouds is another symbolic reference to Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance).

In the Persian painting “Dajjal (Antichrist)”, some signs of End Time, such as the rising of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance), the appearance of Dajjal, and the battle of Jesus (PBUH) with Dajjal, are seen. In this painting, to show that Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) is superior and the leader of the prophet Jesus (PBUH), a positional perspective is used,

Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) is portrayed bigger at the top of the painting while having a white mask in addition to having symbols like a white turban with twelve lines, and a spread flame-like halo (the same as Jesus (PBUH)). Also, Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) is watching the fight of Jesus (PBUH), the commander of his army, with Dajjal, and that is another symbolic reference to the position of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) as the leader of Jesus (PBUH).

The artists of Iran’s Falnameh and Golconda’s Falnameh have utilized visual elements and symbolic processing skillfully and in an easy method in order to express deep spiritual concepts full of divine might. Ergo, reflecting the truth of some Shi’a narrations must be considered one of the most noticeable characteristics of Shi’a

Persian paintings in those two.

References of Persian Painting

Fig 1. Imam Mahdi Enthroned, Probably Iran, 1570s, (Farhad, 2009, 59).

Fig 2. Jesus kills Antichrist, Falnama, India, Golconda, 1610-30s, (Farhad, 2009, 45).

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العقد العاشر
السنة الخامسة
١٤٤٦ هـ / ٢٠٢٤ م

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