

The Doctrine of Mahdism in al-Andalus between the 2nd and 6th Centuries AH / 8th and 12th Centuries AD

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Abstract:

The idea of Mahdism, in the course of Islamic history, is one of the topics that formed a central debate from its emergence and throughout later periods. It also exerted a doctrinal impact on the paths of the sects and schools that adopted it. This was due to the many figures who claimed or embraced this belief in accordance with their intellectual, sectarian, and political orientations. Many opponents of the existing order used it in their quest to reach power. Other groups used it as a means to call for a return to the glory of the ancestors. Still others regarded it as a doctrine that sought change and reform after they had suffered the scourges of injustice and oppression. In this article, the focus is placed on the land of al-Andalus. The study examines the factors that contributed to the emergence of the idea. It considers the composition of Andalusian society and its effect on the growth of conflict among its different groups. It also examines the presence of the Shiite school in al-Andalus, given the stimulus that this school provided for the spread of the idea. The article further discusses the political and social conditions in the region and their role in the growth of the idea of salvation. This idea was among the strongest reasons that created, among its advocates and followers, a readiness to rally around claimants to Mahdism through the stages in which Andalusian history witnessed this type of movement.

Keywords: Mahdism; al-Andalus; Shiism; rule; salvation.

Introduction:

This study examines the doctrine of Mahdism in al-Andalus as a means of obtaining religious legitimacy that leads to political legitimacy in government. Its advocates relied on two basic factors. The first was kinship with the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him. The second was the claim of divine support for the person of the Mahdi. This enabled them to derive legitimacy from the general public. It also contributed to the success of the claimant's uprising and to the achievement of political gains. In this article, we seek to study the effects produced by Mahdism in the history of al-Andalus through three axes: the emergence of the idea in al-Andalus and its relationship with the prevailing conditions in the region; the most prominent Mahdist revolts witnessed by al-Andalus; and the political and doctrinal effects that resulted from its practical application. On this basis, the following problem must be posed: To what extent did the doctrine of Mahdism contribute, politically and doctrinally, to shaping the course of some events in al-Andalus?

1- The Emergence of the Idea in al-Andalus and Its Connection with the Conditions and Circumstances Prevailing in the Region:

The idea of Mahdism did not arise suddenly in al-Andalus at either the political or the intellectual level. It was preceded by a set of indications and preparatory elements, as is the case with similar

doctrinal phenomena. These elements reflected a state of division and tension among the groups of society. These conditions led some Andalusian groups to adopt aspects of Shiite thought within their movement of opposition to the existing authority. Mahdism was one of the pillars on which they relied to achieve their political and sectarian aims.

A particular person was thus clothed with the attribute of the Mahdi and presented in the image of the awaited savior whom the common people longed for. He was expected to establish justice after the spread of injustice, correct doctrinal deviations, and offer practical solutions that would reduce people's suffering until the promise of the appearance of the true savior was fulfilled. Al-Andalus witnessed examples of this course at separate stages of its history. This is what this article addresses.

1.1- Manifestations of Conflict among the Different Elements of Andalusian Society:

Ibn Khaldun's concept of *asabiyya* refers to zeal in support of relatives and kin when they are subjected to injustice or afflicted by harm. He considers this to be the basic purpose of the bond of lineage.¹

Accordingly, it expresses a general feeling of belonging to one origin. This leads to mutual support and solidarity, as Ibn Khaldun indicated. It is also reflected in the nature of the group's relationship with other groups of different ethnic origins, or with the remaining members of society.²

The Islamic period in al-Andalus was marked by many disturbances and uprisings. Division was a principal factor in many tragedies that affected Andalusian society throughout its different stages. In their beginnings, these revolts took an ethnic and tribal character. This conflict appeared on two levels. The first was the disagreement between the two major Arab branches, Qays and Yemen. These tribes carried with them to al-Andalus the spirit of tribal fanaticism that had come from the East. They remained captive to old rancors that they were unable to overcome.³

Another manifestation was the conflict that arose between the *baladiyyun*, meaning the first Arabs and Berbers who settled in al-Andalus, and the Syrians who came to it at a later period.⁴

As a result of these continuous conflicts and tribal disputes, and while the Umayyad Caliphate in the East was preoccupied with the Abbasid *da'wa*, which soon turned into a revolution, al-Andalus entered a state of turmoil. In some periods, its people were dispersed, and it came to be ruled by four governors.⁵

This had negative effects on the internal economic situation. It witnessed a noticeable decline because agricultural lands were transformed into fields of conflict as a result of the violent wars that broke out among the Arabs themselves on the one hand, and between Arabs and Berbers on the other. These

1 - Ibn Khaldun: *Al-Muqaddimah*, ed. Ali Abd al-Wahid Wafi, 2nd ed., Maktabat Nahdat Misr, 2001, p. 197.

2 - Amhammad Ben Abboud: *Aspects of Andalusian Reality during the Fifth Century AH*, Matbaat al-Nur, Tetouan, 1987, p. 18.

3 - Anonymous author: *Akhbar Majmu fi Fath al-Andalus wa-Dhikr Umara'iha wa-l-Hurub al-Waqi'a Baynahum*, ed. Ibrahim al-Abyari, 2nd ed., Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyya and Dar al-Kutub al-Lubnaniyya, Cairo/Beirut, 1989, pp. 45-65.

4 - Ibn al-Qutiyya: *Tarikh Iftitah al-Andalus*, ed. Ibrahim al-Abyari, 2nd ed., Dar al-Kitab al-Misri and Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani, 1989, p. 42.

5 - Al-Maqqari: *Nafh al-Tib min Ghusn al-Andalus al-Ratib wa-Dhikr Waziriha Lisan al-Din ibn al-Khatib*, ed. Ihsan Abbas, Dar Sadir, Beirut, n.d., vol. 2, p. 297.

disputes caused a number of inhabitants of al-Andalus to migrate and abandon their agricultural lands, heading toward the Maghreb. This had a major effect on the fall in agricultural production and contributed to the spread of famines in the region. These disturbances and clashes also obstructed the continuation of the jihad movement in northern al-Andalus⁶. Within a few years, these conditions led Muslims to lose a quarter of the lands they had controlled, because Christian resistance in northern al-Andalus was growing.⁷

The intensity of disputes between Arabs and Berbers in al-Andalus worsened in 123 AH/741 AD as a result of several combined factors that helped inflame them. The most prominent of these was the Arabs' monopolization of the spoils of conquest. This is clearly shown in the way areas of residence were distributed between the two sides.⁸ The extension of the influence of the Berber revolts in the Maghreb, which arose under the banner of the Kharijites, also played a major role. This influence is evident in the simultaneous outbreak of revolt on the two shores of the sea, when the Berbers rose against the governor Abd al-Malik ibn Qatan al-Fihri.⁹ They sought to distance the Arabs from remote areas away from the center of the emirate, such as the northwestern regions of Asturias and the lands of Galicia¹⁰. These were areas in which the Berber majority lived. Their pride increased because Tariq ibn Ziyad was one of them and because the conquest had been achieved by their hands. For this reason, they believed that they were more entitled than others to rule al-Andalus.¹¹

It is not possible in this context to review all the movements of the groups and components of Andalusian society. Therefore, the focus will be on the factors that governed these movements. Foremost among them was the factor of shu'ubiyya, which played a decisive role in this conflict. Its first signs began to appear in al-Andalus immediately after the Islamic conquest. It represented one form of contact among the contending parties and extended to several fields, including poetry and poets. This conflict was clearly manifested between the rebellious muwalladun led by Umar ibn Hafsun and the Umayyad authority, both in the military field and in the literary sphere, through poetic polemics between the poets of the two sides.¹²

Because shu'ubiyya represented one form of conflict, it was led by individuals marked by intense hostility toward the Arabs. Among the most prominent was Abu Muhammad Abd Allah ibn al-Hasan (d. 335 AH/947 AD), who worked to diminish the status of the Arabs in a number of his epistles.¹³

6 - Abd al-Aziz Filali: *Political Relations between the Umayyad State in al-Andalus and the States of the Maghreb*, 2nd ed., Dar al-Fajr, Cairo, 1999, p. 59.

7 - Ismat Naz, "Differences among Arabs, Berbers, and Saqaliba in al-Andalus," *Dirasat Andalusiiyya*, no. 2 (June 1999), pp. 55, 75.

8 - Ibn al-Qutiyya: previous source, pp. 43-44.

9 - *Akhbar Majmu'a*, p. 42.

10 - Ibn Idhari al-Marrakushi: *Al-Bayan al-Mughrib fi Akhbar al-Andalus wa-l-Maghrib*, ed. Colin and Levi-Provençal, 3rd ed., Dar al-Thaqafa, Beirut, 1983, vol. 2, p. 30.

11 - Ismat Naz, "Differences among Arabs, Berbers, and Saqaliba in al-Andalus," *Dirasat Andalusiiyya*, no. 2 (June 1999), p. 68.

12 - Juma Shaykha, "Aspects of Shuubiyya in al-Andalus," *Dirasat Andalusiiyya*, no. 4 (June 1990), p. 34.

13 - De Boer: *History of Islamic Philosophy*, trans. Muhammad Abd al-Hadi Abu Rida, Dar al-Nahda al-Arabiyya, Beirut, n.d., p. 111.

It appears that shu‘ubiyya in the Islamic East, although it took the form of debate and conflict between two main elements, Arabs and Persians, emerged in al-Andalus in different forms. In its beginning, the focus was directed mainly against the Arabs as the targeted party, with preference given to some other elements such as the Saqaliba and the muwalladun. It then developed until Arabs and Berbers came to stand on one side against European elements, especially the Saqaliba among them.¹⁴

One of the most prominent manifestations of this appeared in literary battles, especially in the art of epistolary writing. Many epistles circulated in this context. The most famous was the epistle of Ibn Gharsiya, which was characterized by praise and glorification of non-Arabs, together with disparagement and attack against the Arabs. This angered Arab men of letters, who hastened to reply to it and defend the Arabs.¹⁵

All these conflicts helped prepare the ground for the emergence of the idea of Mahdist salvation in al-Andalus. This idea was linked to removing injustice from oppressed groups through the role of the Mahdi, which the sources state consists essentially in ending injustice, establishing justice, and spreading it.

1.2- Shiism in al-Andalus and Its Effect on the Emergence of the Doctrine of Mahdism:

Since the entry of Muslims into al-Andalus, the region adopted the doctrine of Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-Jama‘a. Its inclinations were even Umayyad, since the Umayyads represented the symbol of its strength, cohesion, and unity.¹⁶

Consequently, the Shiite current at that stage was weak. The arrival of some of the Successors who were loyal to Ali ibn Abi Talib may be considered an initial sign of the beginning of the entry of Shiism. Yet it was not doctrinal or political Shiism in the precise sense. Rather, it was based on belief in Ali’s right to the caliphate and his nomination for it after the killing of Caliph Uthman ibn Affan. It also included support for him in his conflict with Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan and then with the Kharijites. Among these men was Hanash al-San‘ani, who accompanied Ali ibn Abi Talib in Kufa, then moved to Egypt after his death, and later participated in the conquest of al-Andalus within the army of Musa ibn Nusayr.¹⁷

Among the newcomers was also Abd Allah ibn Saad ibn Ammar ibn Yasir. He was among the descendants of the Companion Ammar ibn Yasir, who had been one of the supporters of Ali ibn Abi Talib at the Battle of Siffin.¹⁸ He continued his anti-Umayyad stance in al-Andalus until he rose in revolt against Abd al-Rahman al-Dakhil. In this context, al-Maqqari states that Yusuf al-Fihri had written to him asking him to confront Abd al-Rahman al-Marwani, who had entered al-Andalus¹⁹. At that time, Abd Allah was in charge of the Yemeni faction from the Syrian army. He relied on him in fighting because of the old hostility and blood feud between Banu Ammar and Banu Umayya after

14 - Juma Shaykha: previous reference, p. 34.

15 - Ibn Bassam al-Shantarini: *Al-Dhakhira fi Mahasin Ahl al-Jazira*, ed. Ihsan Abbas, Al-Dar al-Arabiyya lil-Kitab, Libya/Tunisia, 1975, vol. 2, p. 355.

16 - Ibn Hazm: *Jamharat Ansab al-Arab*, ed. Abd al-Salam Muhammad Harun, 5th ed., Dar al-Maarif, Cairo, 1980, p. 146.

17 - Ibn al-Faradi: *Tarikh al-Ulama wa-l-Ruwat lil-Ilm bi-l-Andalus*, ed. Ibrahim al-Abyari, 1988, vol. 1, pp. 345-346.

18 - Al-Maqqari: vol. 2, p. 330.

19 - Same source, vol. 3, p. 61.

the killing of Ammar at Siffin. It should be noted that Ammar, may God be pleased with him, was among the supporters of Ali, may God honor his face. His movement ended in failure, as he was executed by beheading before 143 AH/760 AD.²⁰

On the other hand, some signs appeared of the spread of sympathy for the family of the Prophet among certain Andalusians who travelled to the East, where Shiite ideas were widespread. Among them was Muhammad ibn Isa al-Qurtubi (d. 221 AH/835 AD), who seems to have been the first to transmit some Shiite ideas to al-Andalus. He travelled to Iraq, unlike his peers who went to Medina to study the doctrine of Malik ibn Anas. There, he studied under Waki ibn al-Jarrah (d. 197 AH/813 AD). He belonged to the Zaydi tendency and had writings in this doctrine.²¹

After the establishment of the Fatimid state in the Maghreb in 296 AH/909 AD, its rulers began to organize campaigns to confront the doctrine prevailing in al-Andalus, with the aim of spreading Shiite beliefs there. From the time of Ubayd Allah al-Mahdi (296-322 AH/909-934 AD), the Fatimid da'wa represented a double threat to al-Andalus, at both the political and doctrinal levels.²² In this context, the Fatimids sent a group of missionaries and spies in order to spread their da'wa and its principles, to disseminate Shiite ideas in the regions of al-Andalus, and to carry out espionage missions to learn about the religious, economic, and political conditions of its inhabitants.²³

Among these missionaries, Abu al-Yusr al-Riyadi is mentioned, since what remains of his reports supports this view. The author of *Akhbar Majmua* indicated that he was a deceptive man of letters. He entered al-Andalus during the reign of Emir Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman (238-273 AH/853-887 AD), carrying a forged letter attributed to the people of Syria, in which he claimed that they were calling for the Umayyad state in al-Andalus and offering loyalty to its rulers. The emir, however, discovered his trick, which forced him to leave al-Andalus.²⁴

The same applies to Abu Jaafar Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Harun al-Baghdadi, whom Ubayd Allah al-Mahdi sent after al-Riyadi. He succeeded in achieving results in several fields in which his predecessor had failed, as he provided those who sent him with extremely important information about al-Andalus.²⁵

This policy led some Andalusians to embrace the Shiite school. Among the most prominent was Muhammad ibn Hayyun al-Hajjari (d. 305 AH/918 AD), who was associated with Shiism because he offended Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan, may God be pleased with him.²⁶ He sought to conceal his belief for fear of persecution by jurists and rulers, in accordance with the principle of taqiyya, which

20 - Ibn al-Abbar: *Al-Hulla al-Siyara*, ed. Husayn Munis, 2nd ed., Dar al-Maarif, Cairo, 1985, vol. 2, p. 160.

21 - Layla Ahmad Najjar: *Relations between the Maghreb and al-Andalus during the Reign of Abd al-Rahman al-Nasir (300-350 AH/912-961 AD)*, MA thesis in Islamic History, supervised by Ahmad al-Sayyid Darraj, Umm al-Qura University, Makkah, 1983, p. 222.

22 - Abd Allah Muhammad Anan: *Eastern and Andalusian Islamic Biographies*, 2nd ed., Maktabat al-Khanji, Cairo, 1970, p. 181.

23 - Filali Abd al-Aziz: previous reference, p. 127.

24 - *Akhbar Majmu'a*, p. 129.

25 - Mahmud Ali Makki: *Shiism in al-Andalus from the Conquest to the End of the Umayyad State*, Maktabat al-Thaqafa al-Diniyya, Cairo, 2004, pp. 26-27.

26 - Ibn al-Faradi: previous source, vol. 2, p. 39.

is one of the foundations of Shiite thought. The Shiite da'wa also succeeded in winning some leaders to its side, among them Ali ibn Hamdun al-Andalusi, as Ibn Hayyan mentioned in *al-Muqtabas*.²⁷

In addition, this policy also attracted a number of scholarly and literary figures, including the poet al-Hasan ibn Hani al-Andalusi. Some researchers also sought to trace certain ideas of Ibn Masarra al-Qurtubi back to the Ismaili Shiite school, using as evidence his stay for a period in the Fatimid capital.²⁸

All of this pushed the Umayyad state to give attention to displaying and consolidating Sunni doctrine, and to present Shiism as a set of deviations and errors.²⁹ It also sought to remove anything that might indicate the existence of Shiism, especially during the reign of Caliph Abd al-Rahman al-Nasir (300-350 AH/913-961 AD). It is likely that his proclamation of the caliphate and his adoption of the title Commander of the Faithful were motivated by fear of the doctrinal disturbances that the Fatimids might seek to provoke after their rule had become established in the Maghreb and after they had founded their caliphate there. This was especially the case in light of the deterioration of the Abbasid Caliphate in the East, which made Abd al-Rahman al-Nasir view himself as the counterpart of the Fatimid caliph.³⁰

The same applies to Caliph al-Hakam al-Mustansir (350-366 AH/961-977 AD), who gave the Shiite question great attention in the field of writing in order to understand their situation. He himself authored a book on the genealogies of the Talibids and the Alids in general who had come to the Maghreb. In it, he explained the invalidity of the Fatimid claims.³¹

A number of men of letters also tended to display loyalty to the Umayyad house and to diminish the status of the Alids. Among these was the writer Ibn Abd Rabbih (d. 328 AH/940 AD), who considered Caliph Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan the fourth of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, thereby passing over the mention of Ali ibn Abi Talib. This provoked the displeasure of the chief judge Mundhir al-Balluti, who satirized him in the following two verses in *al-Kamil* meter:

Is Ali not an Imam among you, O son of the wicked woman? May you never cease to be cursed.

The lord of the cloak and the best of the family of Muhammad; close in loyalty and foremost in Islam.³²

Accordingly, Shiism in al-Andalus remained limited in influence and weak in presence because of the strong Umayyad tendency prevailing there. However, this did not prevent the infiltration of some ideas adopted and developed by the Shiites within Shiite thought. The claim to Mahdism is among the most prominent of these ideas. It arose in the context of political and social conflict and drew its strength from Shiite origins. Later, it became a source of inspiration for a number of movements and oppositions that left their mark on the history of al-Andalus.

2- The Most Prominent Mahdist Movements in al-Andalus:

27 - Ibn Hayyan: *Al-Muqtabas min Tarikh al-Andalus*, ed. Ismail al-Arabi, Dar al-Afaq al-Jadida, Morocco, 1990, p. 34.

28 - Shawqi Dayf: *History of Arabic Literature: The Age of States and Emirates*, al-Andalus, Dar al-Maarif, Cairo, n.d., p. 54; Mahmud Makki, previous reference, p. 21.

29 - Layla Ahmad Najjar: *Relations between the Maghreb and al-Andalus during the Reign of Abd al-Rahman al-Nasir (300-350 AH/912-961 AD)*, MA thesis, Umm al-Qura University, 1983, p. 54.

30 - Ibn Hayyan: previous source, pp. 241-242.

31 - Ibn al-Abbar: *Durar al-Simt min Akhbar al-Sibt*, ed. Abd al-Salam Harras and Said Ahmad Arab, *Matabi al-Maghrib al-Arabi*, Tetouan, 1972, p. 162.

32 - Ibn al-Abbar: *Durar al-Simt min Akhbar al-Sibt*, pp. 161-162.

Al-Andalus witnessed the appearance of several movements led by individuals who adopted the idea of Mahdism in its political context aimed at authority and rule. These movements took multiple directions, whether Shiite or Sufi. Their activity also recurred across different stages of the Islamic history of al-Andalus, without being linked to one specific period. The following are the most prominent movements that claimed Mahdism and appeared in al-Andalus, and that had political and doctrinal influence there.

2.1- Mahdism Attributed to Shaqna ibn Abd al-Wahid al-Miknasi (151-161 AH/768-778 AD):

His origins go back to the Miknasa Berbers of the land of the Maghreb.³³ From there, he settled in one of the areas belonging to Wadi al-Hijara. At the beginning of his life, he was a teacher of children. His mother was named Fatima, and he claimed that he was a Fatimid Shiite.³⁴ Through his claim of affiliation with the family of the Prophet, he sought to give his movement a doctrinal dimension and to make his revolt acceptable even to the Arabs.³⁵

As mentioned above, it seems that the beginning of Shaqna ibn Abd al-Wahid's life as a teacher of children³⁶ was nothing but a cover that he used to pass his call.³⁷

His revolt began in the eastern regions of al-Andalus. There, he called for the adoption of the Shiite school with the aim of liberating people from the rule of the Umayyad state. He then headed to Shantabariya, where a large number of Berbers gathered around him. His influence grew, his status rose, and his power became strong. Emir Abd al-Rahman then went out against him at the head of a large army. Yet he was unable to reach him or eliminate him, because Shaqna followed a precise military plan. Abd al-Rahman also sent several armies to fight him, including an army led by Sulayman ibn Uthman ibn Marwan, but Shaqna defeated him and killed him. He relied on a fighting method familiar among the Berbers: avoiding decisive confrontations in the plains and taking refuge on mountain peaks when danger was sensed.³⁸ As his influence increased, his fame spread, and cities, especially those with a Berber majority, began to pledge allegiance to him. Coria and Merida joined him, and the regions extending from Shantabariya to Merida came under his authority.³⁹

Emir Abd al-Rahman ibn Muawiya showed no leniency toward him, especially as he understood the extent of the danger he could pose to the emirate as a result of the large numbers of Berbers who gathered around him, in addition to his use of the Alid call as a cover. Therefore, Abd al-Rahman went out to confront him himself more than once and sent several armies to eliminate him, but he did not succeed because this rebel relied on the methods of combat mentioned above. Abd al-Rahman was only able to eliminate him through a plot arranged by some of his followers, which ended with his liquidation in 161 AH/778 AD.⁴⁰

Thus, it becomes clear that the Mahdism of Shaqna ibn Abd al-Wahid al-Miknasi appeared through his claim of affiliation with the Alid house and his adoption of the name Muhammad ibn Abd Allah.

33 - Ibn Idhari al-Marrakushi: previous source, vol. 2, p. 55.

34 - Ibn al-Athir: *Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*, ed. Abu al-Fida Abd Allah al-Qadi, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, Beirut, 1987, vol. 5, p. 200.

35 - Abd al-Majid Naanai: *The Umayyad State in al-Andalus: Political History*, Dar al-Nahda al-Arabiyya, Beirut, n.d., p. 157.

36 - Akhbar Majmu'a, pp. 97-98; Ibn al-Athir: previous source, vol. 5, p. 200; Ibn Khaldun: *Al-Ibar*, vol. 5, p. 157.

37 - Ibn al-Abbar: *Durar al-Simt min Akhbar al-Sibt*, p. 161.

38 - Akhbar Majmu'a, p. 157.

39 - Mahmud Ali Makki: previous reference, p. 10.

40 - Akhbar Majmu'a, p. 100; Ibn Idhari al-Marrakushi: previous source, vol. 2, p. 54.

It is likely that he relied on effective propaganda methods in spreading his call, which helped him attract wide segments of people and even some of his opponents. The sources indicate that he was able to persuade the commander Wajih al-Ghassani to join him when Abu Uthman, the commander of the army assigned by Emir Abd al-Rahman to confront him, sent him to Shaqna. Wajih al-Ghassani remained loyal to his call even after his death.⁴¹ He was also able to influence the Berber soldiers who were within the army of Ubayd Allah ibn Uthman. He succeeded in winning their loyalty to his side, which contributed to the defeat of the latter.⁴² This revolt may be considered one of the earliest attempts to establish a Shiite entity in the Islamic West in general, since it preceded the establishment of the Alid Idrisid state by about twenty years. This experience revealed the extent of the success and spread that Shiite calls could achieve within Berber affiliations.⁴³

2.2- Mahdism according to Ahmad ibn Muawiya al-Qatt (288 AH/901 AD):

His name was Ahmad ibn Muawiya ibn Muhammad ibn Emir Hisham al-Umayyad. He was known by the nickname al-Qatt, although this nickname originally belonged to his grandfather.⁴⁴ He benefited from the difficult circumstances that al-Andalus was experiencing at the time, especially with the escalation of the revolt of the muwalladun under the leadership of Umar ibn Hafsun against the Umayyad emirate. This revolt and other disturbances contributed to shaking conditions inside the region and disrupting its stability.⁴⁵

Accordingly, the northern kingdoms in al-Andalus exploited the preoccupation of Emir Abd Allah (275-300 AH/888-913 AD) with the disturbances and movements that swept most Andalusian cities. This resulted in the loss of a number of towns, including Zamora, which Alfonso ibn Ordone, king of Galicia, entered and fortified.⁴⁶

Ahmad was occupied with astrology and the science of the celestial sphere. He was also characterized by a degree of severity and harshness. He rose seeking rule, using the command to enjoin right, forbid wrong, and call to jihad as his pretext. At the same time, however, he practiced divination and relied on concealment and dissimulation. He also claimed that he was the awaited Mahdi and gave himself several titles, including "Faiz al-Din" and "Asim al-Muslimin."⁴⁷

Al-Qatt also appointed a preacher to manage his call. His name was Abu Ali al-Sarraji, whom Ibn Hayyan describes as displaying asceticism while being marked by deceit, malice, and hypocrisy.⁴⁸ His intelligence and ability to dissimulate, together with his missionary activity, helped people gather around him after he went out to Fahs al-Ballut.⁴⁹ A large number assembled around him, most of them Berbers of the north and west and inhabitants of the region of Toledo.⁵⁰ These were the same areas that had known the spread of Shiite calls in earlier stages.

41 - Akhbar Majmu'a, p. 100.

42 - Abd Allah Muhammad Anan: *The State of Islam in al-Andalus*, 4th ed., Maktabat al-Khanji, Cairo, 1997, vol. 1, p. 165.

43 - Mahmud Ali Makki: previous reference, p. 10.

44 - See Ibn Hazm: *Jamharat Ansab al-Arab*, ed. Abd al-Salam Muhammad Harun, 5th ed., Dar al-Maarif, Cairo, 1980, p. 97; Ibn al-Abbar: *Al-Hulla al-Siyara*, vol. 2, p. 368.

45 - Abd Allah Anan: *The State of Islam in al-Andalus*, vol. 1, p. 345.

46 - Khazal Yasin Mustafa: *The Umayyads and Their Role in Public Life (138-422 AH/755-1030 AD)*, PhD dissertation, supervised by Salih Natiq Matlub, University of Mosul, 2004, p. 83.

47 - Ibn Hayyan: previous source, p. 156.

48 - Same source, p. 156.

49 - Ibn Idhari al-Marrakushi: previous source, vol. 2, p. 140.

50 - Ibn al-Abbar: *Al-Hulla al-Siyara*, vol. 2, p. 345.

Although this movement originally began from a motive of seeking authority and attacking the person of Emir Abd Allah, emir of al-Andalus⁵¹, it soon turned later toward directing its efforts to jihad against the Christians in northern al-Andalus without referring back to the emir. This indicated his inability to undertake the duties of jihad.⁵² It also allows another reason for the spread of the idea of Mahdism in al-Andalus to be understood: the feeling of inability before the Christian powers led people to look toward the appearance of a savior who would rescue them from this situation.

He then sent messengers and delegations to the inhabitants of the north and to the Arabs, calling them to jihad under his banner.⁵³ A large number responded, estimated at about sixty thousand fighters, both horsemen and foot soldiers.⁵⁴ After that, he headed to Zamora to recover it. Violent battles took place between him and the king of Galicia and lasted four days. During them, however, some Berber leaders deserted him, while he and those with him remained steadfast until he was killed on the fourth day of fighting.⁵⁵

Although Ahmad ibn Muawiya belonged to the Umayyad house, Shiite features were clear in his movement. This is evident in his naming himself the Mahdi, his taking the title “Asim al-Muslimin,” and his reliance on preachers, similar to what the Ismaili da‘wa had done in the Maghreb. He also resorted to displaying miracles and highlighting his scientific knowledge in order to influence the Berbers and win them over to his call.⁵⁶

2.3- Mahdism according to Ahmad ibn Qasi (539-540 AH/1145-1146 AD):

The conditions of the Maghreb reflected upon al-Andalus because of the strong connection between the two regions. After conditions in the Maghreb deteriorated and the Almohads began to advance against the Almoravids, this had a strong impact on Almoravid rule in al-Andalus. Wide revolts broke out across its regions from east to west, as if the rebels had been waiting for that moment to begin, especially after the killing of Ali ibn Tashfin. Among the most prominent of these movements was the revolt of the Muridun, led by a Sufi named Ahmad ibn Qasi.⁵⁷

As for the role of Sufism in al-Andalus, it witnessed clear prosperity during the first half of the sixth century AH/twelfth century AD, with the appearance of several leading Sufi figures, among them Ibn al-Arif, Ibn Barjan, and Ahmad ibn Qasi. Each of them had his own method, while being influenced by the writings and ideas of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali.⁵⁸ Abd Allah al-Arawi indicated that the burning of al-Ghazali’s *Ihya* by Abu Hamid al-Ghazali was due to its theological and Sufi character.⁵⁹ This may be considered one of the factors explaining the revolt of the Muridun, alongside other causes,

51 - Ibn Hayyan: previous source, p. 156.

52 - Mahmud Ali Makki: previous reference, p. 13; Mustafa Bensaab et al., *Morocco and al-Andalus: Studies and Translations*, Faculty of Arts and Humanities Publications, Tetouan, 2010, p. 83.

53 - Ibn Hayyan: previous source, p. 156.

54 - Ibn al-Abbar: *Al-Hulla al-Siyara*, vol. 2, p. 368.

55 - Ibn al-Abbar: *Al-Hulla al-Siyara*, vol. 2, p. 369.

56 - Mahmud Ali Makki: previous reference, pp. 14-15.

57 - Ismat Abd al-Latif Dandash: *al-Andalus at the End of the Almoravids and the Beginning of the Almohads: The Second Taifa Period (510-546 AH/1116-1151 AD)*, Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, Beirut, 1988, p. 49.

58 - Mustafa Bensaab et al.: previous reference, pp. 39, 40.

59 - Laroui, A., *L'Histoire du Maghreb*, Maspero, Paris, 1976, p. 155.

such as the growing advantage of the Christian kingdoms and the repeated attacks launched by the Castilians against western al-Andalus, in contrast with the limited response of the Almoravid forces.⁶⁰ By contrast, some Orientalists tried to explain the revolt of Ibn Qasi by referring it to various factors. One group saw it as a national movement with a religious character, nourished by a sense of belonging to the Spanish element and by rejection of foreign presence. Others considered it an extension of secret movements that had appeared in al-Andalus during the late third century AH. A third group interpreted it as an expression of Ahmad ibn Qasi's rejection, and of the Sufis' rejection in general, of the use of Christians within the Almoravid army and court.⁶¹

The figure who represented this Mahdism was Ibn Qasi, who was of Roman origin from the outskirts of Silves. He grew up working in administrative service and then displayed asceticism. He also met the famous Sufi Abu al-Abbas ibn al-Arif in Almeria and turned to studying the books of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali.⁶² It seems that he did not belong to the school of Almeria, but perhaps adopted some of its principles in order to promote them in western al-Andalus in a manner that served his interests and objectives in that region.⁶³

This was indeed achieved. A large number of supporters gathered around him. They devoted themselves to reading Sufi and esoteric books, such as the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity and others, and they turned to observing the manners and rituals of the path. Their fame spread, especially in the regions of Silves, Mertola, Niebla, and other parts of western al-Andalus. They became known as the group of the Muridun.⁶⁴

To launch his revolt and confirm his claim to sainthood, Ibn Qasi claimed that he was the Mahdi.⁶⁵ He composed his book *Khal' al-Na'layn*⁶⁶ and adopted the title of Imam. He also claimed the ability to manifest extraordinary acts. Among these claims was his assertion that he had performed the pilgrimage in a single night and that he possessed the ability to hold private communion with whomever he wished.⁶⁷ The matter did not stop there. He ordered coins to be minted in his name, bearing the inscription: "God is our Lord, Muhammad is our Prophet, and the Mahdi is our Imam."⁶⁸ It is noteworthy that his teacher, Abu al-Abbas ibn al-Arif, rejected belief in the awaited Mahdi. In a letter responding to one of his students, he wrote: "Disparaging states and waiting for a Mahdi through whom they will be set right is not a belief held by a prudent person, nor is such a thing presumed of a Muslim except one who is weak."⁶⁹ This difference may be considered an indication of Ibn Qasi's use of Sufism to achieve political aims. It also reveals the development of the concept of imamate

⁶⁰ - Fatima al-Zahra Jeddou: *Authority and Sufis in al-Andalus during the Almoravid and Almohad Periods (479-635 AH/1036-1238 AD)*, MA thesis in Medieval History, supervised by Ibrahim Bakir Behaz, University of Mentouri, Constantine, 2008, p. 64.

⁶¹ - Ibrahim al-Qadiri Boutchich: *Morocco and al-Andalus in the Almoravid Period: Society, Mentalities, Saints*, Dar al-Tali'a, Beirut, 1993, p. 164.

⁶² - Ibn al-Abbar: *Al-Hulla al-Siyara*, vol. 1, p. 197.

⁶³ - Fatima al-Zahra Jeddou: previous reference, p. 68.

⁶⁴ - Abd Allah Anan: *The State of Islam in al-Andalus*, vol. 3, p. 307.

⁶⁵ - Ibn al-Abbar: *Al-Hulla al-Siyara*, vol. 2, p. 369.

⁶⁶ - Ibn al-Khatib: *Amal al-Alam fi-man Buyi'a Qabla al-Ihtilam (History of Islamic Spain)*, ed. and annotated by Levi-Provençal, 2nd ed., Dar al-Makshuf, Beirut, 1956, vol. 2, p. 149.

⁶⁷ - Ibn al-Khatib: previous source, vol. 2, p. 149.

⁶⁸ - Ibn Yusuf al-Hakim, "Al-Dawha al-Mushtabika fi Dawabit Dar al-Sikka," ed. Husayn Munis, *Journal of the Egyptian Institute for Islamic Studies in Madrid*, vol. 6, nos. 1-2 (1958), p. 111, note 1.

⁶⁹ - Juma Shaykha: previous reference, p. 74.

among some Sufis in a political context, as it moved from its religious meaning connected with sainthood to an ambition seeking leadership and authority.⁷⁰

After his affair became widely known and news of him reached the Almoravids, who sought to pursue him, he hid in the district of Shadhuna. This occurred after some of his followers had been arrested by a group known as Banu al-Sunna.⁷¹ Among his supporters was a man named Muhammad ibn Yahya, known as Ibn al-Qabila. Ibn al-Khatib described him as singular in his age in firmness, courage, cunning, and eloquence. Ibn Qasi made him the sword of his revolt⁷², which may make him comparable to a preacher for the new Mahdi.

In 539 AH/1145 AD, he ordered his followers among the Muridun to go out with Muhammad ibn Yahya and head toward the fortress of Mertola. They answered his call and carried out his instructions.⁷³ Ibn al-Khatib states that, after its occupation, he began to spread his doctrine, called himself Imam, and wrote to the provinces urging them to revolt against the Almoravids. He also gave them money in return, claiming that money did not run out with him.⁷⁴

This policy quickly produced tangible results. Silves and Evora submitted to his authority. This led to the expansion of the revolt against the Almoravids, especially after a number of notables in western al-Andalus joined him, among them Abu al-Walid Muhammad ibn Umar ibn al-Mundhir and Mahmud ibn Sidray.⁷⁵

However, this situation did not last long. Disputes soon broke out among his followers. He considered corresponding with the Almohads and claimed that he had adopted the same doctrines proclaimed by Ibn Tumart. Soon after, however, he reversed this position and disavowed them after the revolt of Ibn Hud al-Massi against them.⁷⁶ He then fled to al-Andalus and allied himself with the king of Portugal. This caused many of his supporters to distance themselves from him⁷⁷, foremost among them Ibn Sidray, who called for the judge Ibn Hamdin, leader of the Cordoba revolt, before Ibn Qasi was killed by some of his followers in 546 AH/1151 AD.⁷⁸

3- The Political and Doctrinal Effects of the Doctrine of Mahdism in al-Andalus:

3.1- Political Effects:

A close examination of Mahdism within its Andalusian context shows that it arose within the conditions and circumstances experienced by the Andalusian Peninsula, especially those connected with ethnic conflicts. These conflicts contributed to increasing the intensity of tension among the components of Andalusian society. This strengthened the growth of aspiration toward salvation, even among some non-Muslim groups, from Islamic control over the region at the hands of Saint James.⁷⁹ During that period, many Jewish prophecies connected with the idea of salvation also spread.

70 - Fatima Jeddou: previous reference, p. 72.

71 - Ibn al-Abbar: Al-Hulla al-Siyara, vol. 1, p. 197.

72 - Ibn al-Khatib: previous source, vol. 2, p. 250.

73 - Ibn al-Abbar: Al-Hulla al-Siyara, vol. 1, p. 198.

74 - Ibn al-Khatib: previous source, vol. 2, p. 250.

75 - Al-Qadiri Boutchich: previous reference, p. 169.

76 - Ibn al-Khatib: previous source, vol. 2, p. 251.

77 - Ibn al-Abbar: Al-Hulla al-Siyara, vol. 1, p. 170; Ibn al-Khatib: previous source, vol. 2, p. 251.

78 - Ibn al-Khatib: previous source, vol. 2, p. 251.

79 - Americo Castro: Spain in Its History: Christians, Muslims, and Jews, trans. Ali Ibrahim Manufi, rev. Hamid Abu Ahmad, Supreme Council of Culture, Cairo, 2003, p. 131; Abd al-Muttalib Mustafa: Dhimmis in al-Andalus under Umayyad Rule (Emirate and Caliphate Periods, 138-421 AH/756-1030

Among the most prominent political effects of Mahdism in al-Andalus is that it left varying marks on political conditions in terms of intensity and influence, according to the revolts and regions involved. It also contributed to increasing tensions. This appears clearly in the way it made use of the state of fitna and disturbances witnessed by al-Andalus, since it arose and developed within those crises.⁸⁰ By contrast, the Mahdist movements in al-Andalus were unable to establish stable political entities. Nevertheless, this idea contributed to bringing certain groups within Andalusian society to the fore, above all the Berbers, who participated in a number of revolts that took Mahdism as their point of departure, such as the revolt of Shaqna and the movement of Ahmad ibn Muawiya. Although these movements did not arise from deep belief in the idea, they exploited it to affirm their presence as an active and influential force among the components of Andalusian society.

3.2- Doctrinal Effects:

As for the influence of the principle of Mahdism on the doctrinal side in al-Andalus, it appears in the emergence of the Shiite current as one of the sources from which some Mahdist movements drew their ideas. At the very least, they adopted concepts that intersected with Shiism, such as the idea of imamate and the claim of affiliation with the Alid house. This included a number of Mahdist movements that appeared in the region, such as the movement of Shaqna ibn Abd al-Wahid and Ahmad al-Qatt, down to the Mahdism of Ibn Qasi, who was influenced by some Shiite concepts such as infallibility, taqiyya, and divinely bestowed knowledge.⁸¹

It also fell within the sectarian struggles prevailing between the Fatimids in the Maghreb and the Umayyad state in al-Andalus. The Mahdism of Ahmad al-Qatt was clearly influenced by the Shiite da'wa at that stage.⁸²

Mahdism in al-Andalus presented a different and unconventional model, represented by Sufi Mahdism, or what is known as the Mahdism of Sufi sainthood, through the movement of Ahmad ibn Qasi. He claimed the imamate and Mahdism without having affiliation with the family of the Prophet, which was an essential condition in this conception. Nevertheless, his Mahdism left a clear impact on the history of Sufism.⁸³

Conclusion:

At the end of this article on the doctrine of Mahdism in al-Andalus during the selected period of study, the following conclusions can be stated:

- The general conditions experienced by al-Andalus were marked by political conflict between Muslims and Crusaders on the one hand, and among the different Andalusian forces themselves on the other. These conditions also included social tension among the components of society and the emergence of ethnic tendencies. They led to the spread of a general feeling of the absence of justice and equality. As a result, various segments, whether Muslim or otherwise, turned toward the hope of achieving justice and security through belief in the figure of the savior.
- The entry of Shiite ideas into the region, especially after the success of the Fatimid Mahdist da'wa in establishing a political entity in the Maghreb, contributed to the emergence of a number of revolts

AD), MA thesis, supervised by Salih Muhammad Fayyad Abu Diyyak, Yarmouk University, 1999, p. 75.

80 - Same reference, p. 93.

81 - Fatima al-Zahra Jeddou: previous reference, p. 72.

82 - Mahmud Ali Makki: previous reference, p. 14.

83 - Al-Qadiri Boutchich: previous reference, p. 174.

that raised the slogan of Mahdism. This factor is one of the most important reasons that helped the appearance of successive Mahdist movements. It also strengthened the presence of the Shiite current and the spread of its ideas and beliefs in the region, especially those related to Sufi Mahdism and the claim of affiliation with the Alid house.

- Mahdist movements in al-Andalus generally failed to establish their political projects. This was due to several factors, the most important of which was the absence of an organized da'wa accompanying them, unlike the Ismaili da'wa, which was able to achieve a strong presence in the Maghreb among the Berber tribes. This shows the importance of the existence of a well-structured missionary organization before engaging in political and military action, since it is the foundation on which the process of state formation is built. The da'wa represents the starting base, while political and military empowerment constitutes the peak stage in this course.

- Mahdist movements did not arise on the basis of organized ideas or principles within an integrated doctrine or a clear reform project. Rather, their aim was, in most cases, to seek political empowerment and to redistribute social positions in favor of some groups at the expense of others.

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