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**ABSTRACT**

of the dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**THE THEORY OF MAHDISM IN THE  
WORLD RELIGIONS**

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## **GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORK**

**Relevance and development of the topic.** Attitudes towards historical events, ancient national and spiritual heritage, especially religious beliefs have always been a topical issue for the social sciences and humanities. Religious beliefs and national-cultural heritage as a whole are considered to be the spiritual and intangible wealth of every nation. Mythological imagery, oral and written folklore, material cultural monuments, ancient stone chronicles, religious beliefs and traditions are all evidence of the existence of a nation as a whole. The different cultures, traditions, and religious beliefs we observe in different nations are the result of the way of life and the way of thinking that people have formed over a long period of time. Therefore, if there is a sharp turn in the destiny of each nation, the study of cultural and historical heritage, traditions and religious beliefs becomes one of the most important issues for the people to determine their own path of development. The advancement of time and the rapid development of scientific and technical fields cause economic, political, religious and cultural changes in the life of society. The current extreme situation creates the basis for the activation of public opinion, the re-examination of cultural and historical monuments, the study of historical topics in a new style. Although it is impossible to change history, it is possible to reinterpret religious beliefs and texts, to understand them in a new way, to make them a part of our lives today. The study of abstract expressions and concepts, which are widely used in classical texts and ideological currents, in accordance with the requirements of the time, can solve many problems in the correct perception of religious and philosophical concepts. In most cases, the main reason for the emergence of different views and conflicts on religious grounds is the misreading of religious and philosophical concepts and inappropriate extracts from the context. Of course, in order to prevent such negative situations as much as possible, there is a need to study topics that could pose a socio-political threat on religious grounds.

During the Soviet period and the years of independence, religions and religious-related topics were studied in Azerbaijan in various directions. Azerbaijani researchers have done significant work in this area and written valuable research papers. However, it should be noted that the political and ideological course adopted by the Soviet Union in many cases did not allow the study of some topics related to religion, or some issues were not fully covered. Also, in the Soviet era, religions and various religious-related topics were studied under the guise of atheism, which in many cases hindered the achievement of satisfactory results and undermined objectivity. In his speech at the International Symposium *"Islamic Civilization in the Caucasus"* held in Baku in 1998, national leader Heydar Aliyev touched upon a number of interesting points on this issue: *"... During the Soviet era, it was thought that only Islam was a threat to the Soviet system, not Christianity or any other religion in the Soviet Union. These are the truths that I saw with my eyes at that time and read in many ideological documents that I convey to you. In communist ideology, this discrimination against religions was a line of distinction between religions, which means that there is a religion - a good religion, and there is a religion - very bad, and this bad religion is supposed to be Islam. This increased the subjectivity of researchers in the Soviet Union at that time"*.<sup>1</sup>

As can be seen, the attitude towards religions, especially Islam, was not objective and unambiguous during the Soviet era. From this point of view, it is expedient to reconsider the research on religious beliefs conducted at that time.

During the years of independence, new opportunities have emerged in our country in the field of social sciences, especially in the field of religion, and artificial barriers to free scientific research have been eliminated. In the field of religion in Azerbaijan in modern times, the Department of "Religion and history of public opinion" of the Institute of Oriental Studies of ANAS, the former

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<sup>1</sup> Əliyev, H.Ə. Müstəqilliyimiz əbədidir: [46 cilddə] / H.Əliyev. – Bakı: Azərneşr, - c. 18. 2006. – 386 s.

"Department of Philosophy of Religion and Culture" of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, and now the Department of "Islamic Philosophy", Azerbaijan Theological Institute and Caucasian Muslims Office should be emphasized with. In recent years, religious studies in the above-mentioned scientific institutions and organizations and research in related areas are of special importance in the scientific environment of Azerbaijan.

Recent research by Azerbaijani scholars in the field of religion; Ph.D. Esmeralda Hasanova's "Sociology of religion and Muslim mysticism - mysticism in Turkey in the twentieth century." ("Religion and Islamic mysticism in the twentieth century Turkey - the sociology of Sufism"),<sup>2</sup> Ph.D., prof. Sakit Huseynov's "Culture of religious tolerance in Azerbaijan: History and Modernity",<sup>3</sup> acad. Govhar Bakhshaliyeva and Ph.D. Ammar Abbasov's "Islamic encyclopedic dictionary",<sup>4</sup> Ph.D., Abutalib Mammadov's "Islamic fundamentalism: essence, basic principles and forms of manifestation",<sup>5</sup> Ph.D., prof. Asadulla Gurbanov's "Islamic factor in Heydar Aliyev's Eastern policy" (Problems, considerations, proposals), Ph.D. Konul Bunyadzadeh's "Islamic philosophy: history and modernity",<sup>6</sup> Ph.D. Agil Shirinov's "Causes and historical roots of religious radicalism in the Islamic world",<sup>7</sup> Ph.D. Leyla Malikova's "Sources and basic world-view aspects of Bahatism",<sup>8</sup> Ph.D. Aslan Habibov's "History of the interpretation of

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<sup>2</sup> Гасанова, Э. Социология религии и мусульманского мистицизма – тасаввуфа в Турции XX в. / Э. Гасанова. - Bakı: Əli nəşriyyat evi, - 2006. – 288 с.

<sup>3</sup> Hüseynov, Sakit. Azərbaycanca dini tolerantlıq mədəniyyəti: tarix və müasirlik / S.Hüseynov. – Bakı: Təknur, - 2012. - 176 s.

<sup>4</sup> Baxşəliyeva, G. İslam ensiklopedik lüğət / G. Baxşəliyeva, Ə.Abbasov. - Bakı: Elm, - 2013. - 656 s.

<sup>5</sup> Məmmədov, A. İslam fundamentalizmi: Mahiyyəti, əsas prinsipləri və təzahür formaları / A. Məmmədov. – Bakı: Nurlan, - 2004. – 112 s.

<sup>6</sup> Bünyadzadə, K. İslam fəlsəfəsi: tarix və müasirlik / K.Bünyadzadə. – Bakı: Çarşıoğlu, - 2010. – 154 s.

<sup>7</sup> Şirinov, A. İslam dünyasında dini radikalizmin yaranma səbəbləri və tarixi kökləri / A. Şirinov. – Bakı: Nurlar, - 2019. – 73 s.

<sup>8</sup> Меликова, Л. Истоки и основные мировоззренческие аспекты бахаизма / Л. Меликова. - Bakı: Bakı çar evi, - 2011. – 200 с.

the Imamiyya Shiites and the oldest Shiite interpretations that have survived to the present day", Ph.D. Elvusal Mammadov's "Religion and philosophy in medieval Islamic thought",<sup>9</sup> Ph.D. İlkin Alimuradov's "IX-X centuries Azerbaijani hadith scholar Ahmad Harun oğlu al-Bardici (Bardali)", Durdana Jafarli's "Role of the İravan school in the field of religious education in the Caucasus: on the example of the İravan dynasty", Fakhranda İbrahimova's "Tahzib al-ahlaq" in Ibn Miskawayh The problem of mental illness". Given this reality, we can say that the favorable conditions created for free scientific activity allow us to objectively study various topics related to theology, history and philosophy of religion.

The concept of the Mahdism is found in the ideological conception of almost all religions and manifests itself in various forms. Since the essence of the Mahdist beliefs is the idea of the salvation of mankind and the restoration of justice, this belief has always been in the interest of religions. From this point of view, the study of " The Theory of Mahdism in the world religions" is considered scientifically relevant.

The urgency of the topic is also explained by the fact that the return of the Azerbaijani people to national and moral values during the years of independence has increased the interest in these beliefs. In this regard, the study of various topics related to religion and religious beliefs has become an important issue. Especially considering that the Mahdist belief is one of the basic principles of religions, there is a need to study this subject from the point of view of theology and philosophy of religion. It should be noted that the concept of the Mahdism (salvation) in religions has not been studied in Azerbaijan from a scientific point of view, either during the Soviet era or during the years of independence. It is true that in the works of some Azerbaijani researchers one can find superficial opinions on the subject. For example, the Azerbaijani socio-political figure Ahmad bay Aga oğlu touched on the issue of the Mahdist

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<sup>9</sup> Məmmədov, E. Orta əsr islam fikrində din və fəlsəfə / E.Məmmədov. - Bakı: Nurlar, - 2019. - 232 s.

beliefs in his report "Shiism and its sources"<sup>10</sup> at the IX International Congress of European Orientalists in London in September 1892 or another Azerbaijani orientalist Vasim Mammadaliyev briefly commented on the concept of the Mahdism in Sufi thought in his scientific article "Rical-ul-gayb in Sufism".<sup>11</sup> However, in the research of Azerbaijani scientists, this topic has not been identified as a separate problem. Taking all this into account, it should be noted that the topic of the current dissertation has become the object of research for the first time in Azerbaijani theology.

The problem of the Mahdism in the world religions has been partially studied by Turkish theologians, and several important works have been written. Turkish researchers Akram Sarikchioglu, Yılmaz Chapa, Husseyun Gunesh, Mahmud Chinar, Fatih Topaloglu and others have written important works in this field with their interesting research. Turkish researcher Akram Sarikchioglu deserves special mention in connection with our topic. A. Sarikchioglu's work "Mahdism ideas in the Religions"<sup>12</sup> is one of the scientifically interesting works written in this direction. The author has done a lot of work in the work by studying various aspects of the Mahdist faith. However, it is possible to come across some shortcomings in the work of A. Sarikchioglu. For example, the book takes a superficial approach to some topics, or more precisely, the problem of the origin of the Mahdist faith, and does not touch on some topics at all.

The problem of the Mahdist belief is one of the most discussed issues in the Islamic Republic of Iran. It should be noted that there are several "Mahdism Research Centers" in Iran, and research is being conducted in various religious and scientific fields. Iranian researchers Jafar Subhani Tabrizi, Misbah Yazdi,

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<sup>10</sup> Süleymanlı, M. Əhməd Ağaoğlunun ilk elmi əsəri: Şiə dinində məzdəki inancları / M.Süleymanlı. – Bakı: Letterpress, - 2007. -128 s.

<sup>11</sup> Məmmədaliyev, V. Təsəvvüfdə qeyb ərənləri // akad. Vasim Məmmədaliyevin 70 illik yubleyinə həsr olunmuş "Şərqsünaslığın aktual problemləri" mövzusunda Respublika elmi konfransı, - Bakı; "Bakı Universiteti", - 16 noyabr, - 2012, s. 351-352

<sup>12</sup> Sarıkcıoğlu, E. Dinlerde Mehdi tasavvurları / E. Sarıkcıoğlu. - Samsun: Sidre, - 1997. – 139 s.

Nusratullah Ayati, Mohammad Hadi Mansuri and others can be mentioned. Iranian scholars have studied the subject of the Mahdism not through the problem of religious studies, but rather through the prism of theology. In other words, the approach of Iranian researchers to the issue is not a denial of the problem, but rather an attempt to defend the belief in the Mahdi and to dispel doubts about this belief.

The subject of the Mahdism has been of interest to European and American researchers, and works of various contents have been written in this field. Examples include European and American researchers on the subject of the Mahdi (salvation), Arie Van Deursen, Emil Abeg, Hugo Gressman, Martin Rehm, and others. Hugo Gressman touches on the Mahdist belief in Judaism and Christianity and makes a comparative analysis in his book "Der Messias". Of course, the research of European and American scientists on this topic is somewhat interesting, but it is not without its shortcomings. For example, in the research of European and American scientists, it is often possible to come across biased approaches to the subject, and sometimes opinions that do not fit into the scientific and logical basis.

From the above, it can be concluded that the topic of "Theory of Mahdism in the world religions" has not been fully studied as a research work, and the current dissertation can be considered as one of the first steps in this area.

**Object and subject of research.** The object of research is the manifestations of the Mahdist faith in world religions as a whole, and the subject is the study of the psychological, sociological, psycho-social and political effects of the Mahdist belief.

**Objectives and tasks of the research.** The main purpose of the study is to provide a religious and social philosophical analysis of the concept of the Mahdism, which is an integral part of the belief system in religions. For this purpose, we have set the following scientific tasks:

1. Etymological and semantic analysis of terms and expressions such as "Mahdaviyat", "Mahdism", "Mahdi",

"Messiah", as well as comparative equivalents of these expressions in other religions for a clearer understanding of the subject;

2. To study the origin of the belief in the Mahdi and to determine the degree to which religions influence each other in this context;

3. To clarify the psychological, sociological, psycho-social and political effects of the belief in the Mahdi and to determine its role in society;

4. To make a comparative analysis of the Mahdist faith that exists in different religions by following the descriptive-analytical method;

5. To identify traces of the concept of the Mahdism in the works of Azerbaijani thinkers and to comment on the existing relations in this direction;

6. To study the religious and political movements in which the effects of the concept of the Mahdism are observed in the history of Azerbaijan and to determine the place of this belief in historical processes.

**Research methods.** Dissertation is devoted to the study of the place of the theory of Mahdism in world religions, the manifestations of this belief in different religions, as well as its impact on the Azerbaijani scientific and literary environment and historical processes, a systematic complex approach and historical-comparative methods were used. The author has studied the subject in the context of the basic principles of religious studies.

**The main provisions of the defense;**

- Terms and expressions related to the subject, such as "Mahdaviyat", "Mahdism", "Mahdi", "Messiah" have been studied etymologically and semantically and analyzed comparatively;

- The origins of the belief in the Mahdi have been studied in detail;

- The psychological, sociological and political effects of the Mahdist faith have been studied;

- Manifestations and effects of the Mahdist faith in the early tribal religions have been analyzed;

- The belief in the Mahdi has been studied in national religions, and its religious and legal aspects have been determined;
- The belief in the Mahdi in Islam, Christianity and Buddhism has been studied by descriptive-analytical methods, as well as the basic principles of this concept have been compared in all three religions;
- The Mahdist faith researches on the scientific-critical works of Azerbaijani thinkers, and necessary information related to the subject has been shared;
- The religious and political movements in which the concept of the Mahdism was observed in medieval Azerbaijani geography were studied, and the role of this belief in the socio-political life of Azerbaijan was identified.

**Scientific novelty of the research.** The novelty of the work in general can be explained by the fact that the Mahdist faith was studied for the first time in Azerbaijan as a subject of religious studies, taking into account the historical, religious, political and social philosophical aspects.

**Theoretical and practical significance of the research.** The study provides comprehensive information to local experts who study the issue of salvation in world religions and the problems associated with this topic. The materials of the dissertation can be used during lectures and seminars in higher education institutions where religious studies and theology are taught. At the same time, it is possible to create a full picture of the belief in the Mahdi in the world religions and to consider the dissertation as a suitable source in the study of possible religious and political dangers related to this concept.

**Approbation and application of research.** The dissertation was prepared at the department of "Religion and history of public opinion" of the Institute of Oriental Studies of ANAS named after Z.M.Bunyadov, discussed at the department meeting and in the Scientific Council of the institute and recommended to be defended as a completed work. The main content of the research is reflected

in the author's articles published in various scientific journals, reports at scientific conferences in the country and abroad.

**Name of the organization where the dissertation work is performed.**

"Religion and history of public opinion" department of the Institute of Oriental Studies of ANAS named after Z.M.Bunyadov

**The total volume of the dissertation with the indication of the volume of the structural units of the dissertation separately:** Introduction consists of 14618; chapter I 63101; chapter II 120971; chapter III 56689; conclusion 19386; a list of references 21749 symbols. The total volume of the dissertation is 298812 symbols.

### **MAIN CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION**

In short, in the introductory part of the dissertation the purpose and tasks are defined by indicating the object of the work, its resources and sources are defined, the level of study of the subject is researched, the theoretical and practical significance is substantiated and the approbation and structure of the dissertation is explained.

If we look at the research conducted by theologians in various fields related to religions, it is possible to see several classifications of religions. Religions can be classified according to typological, phenomenological and other features. According to the German theologian Annamaria Schimmel, religions are divided into three groups: early tribal religions, national religions, and world religions.<sup>13</sup>

The belief in Mahdi exists in almost all religions and some religious and philosophical systems. Describe natural disasters, wars, widespread diseases and epidemics at various times in human history as feelings of psychological fact, such as trusting in a savior in times of despair or waiting for something to save people from a difficult situation. Of course, opinions about the Mahdi are ambiguous, and beliefs on this subject may vary by religion, nation,

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<sup>13</sup> Schimmel, A. Dinler tarihine giriş / A. Schimmel. – İstanbul: Külliyyat, - 2016, səh. 3-7.

political and philosophical thought, time and place. According to the nuances we have listed above regarding the belief in the Mahdi, there are both commonalities and differences. The common denominator is that a person in a difficult situation hopes for a being who will save him psychologically. Beliefs, such as war, political and economic hardship, disease, and so on, are common to all religions. However, the differences regarding the Mahdi appear in the details related to the subject. Thus, the identity of the Mahdi, his physical or metaphysical existence, where and when he will appear, and other details may vary according to religions, sects, nations, and schools of philosophical and political thought.

The first chapter of the dissertation, entitled "**The origin of the belief in Mahdi and the reasons that give rise to this belief**" consists of three paragraphs. The first paragraph, entitled "**Etymological and semantic analysis of the expression of the Mahdism**" examines the etymological and semantic study of terms and expressions such as "Mahdaviyat", "Mahdism," "Mahdi" and "Messiah" as well as linguistic analyzes showing comparable equivalents of these expressions in other religions and languages.

Explanations of expressions such as "Mahdaviyat", "Mahdism" and "Mahdi" may provide a better understanding of the subject. First of all, it is necessary to give a brief semantic and etymological explanation of the word Mahdi. The word Mahdi is of Arabic origin and is a noun derived from the Arabic verbs "ha", "ه", "dal", "د", "ya", "ي" (hada) "هدى".<sup>14</sup> According to the grammar of the Arabic language, a noun is a model of an adjective derived from an unknown type of verb and influenced by the action performed by the verb.<sup>15</sup>

The expressions "Mahdiyat" or "Mahdism" are substantivized nouns derived from the word Mahdi. The essence of the above-mentioned expressions and the religious concept on this topic are such ideas as the salvation of the world, the restoration of

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<sup>14</sup> ابن زكريا. معجم مقاييس اللغة / ابن زكريا. - بيروت: دار احياء التراث العربي، - 2008. - 1027 ص.

<sup>15</sup> الغلابيني، مصطفى. جامع الدروس العربية / مصطفى الغلابيني. - قم: ستارة، - 2007. - 135 ص

universal peace. Although the equivalents of this expression are different in other religions and languages, they are very close in meaning and essence to salvation or similar meanings. Because, in any religious and philosophical-moral system of thought, if there is a belief in the Mahdi, its essence is the idea of the end of wars, the salvation of mankind and the beginning of the golden age. In Zoroastrianism, the savior is expressed in the ancient Pahlavi language by the word Saoshyant (سوشیانت). The word Saoshyant is used in the Pahlavi language to mean a religious leader,<sup>16</sup> savior<sup>17</sup> or leader derived from the word “seve”.

In Judaism, the savior is expressed in Aramaic as “Messiah” and in Hebrew as “Mashiah” (מָשִׁיחַ). The dictionary definition of these words includes rubbing, stroking, cleansing, removing sins, anointing with oil, or wiping with oil. In Arabic, however, the word is similar and synonymous with the word Messiah, and in Arabic it was used for Jesus, provided that it is found in several places in the Qur'an. The expression Christ is also used in the Azerbaijani language for those who are accepted as saviors in Judaism and Christianity. Initially, the term was applied to rulers, and later to chief priests as well as clergy. According to Jewish tradition, when a ruler ascended the throne, the monks anointed them with oil, believing that the ruler was empowered and sanctified. Later, this tradition began to be performed on the prophets. In the terminological sense, the Jewish ethic of salvation is defined as the Messiah “a prophet or religious leader<sup>18</sup> sent by God in the last days to guide mankind, save mankind from oppression and injustice, and establish world domination”. In Christianity, the savior is called “mashiah” in Hebrew and “christos” (χριστός) in Greek.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> شاهرخ، کیخسرو. آیینہ آیین مزدیسنی / کیخسرو شاهرخ. - تهران: مردم، - 1964. - 105 ص  
<sup>17</sup> پوردادو، ابراهیم. - فرهنگ ایران باستان / ابراهیم پوردادو. - تهران: شاهنشاهی، - 2006. - 14 ص.

<sup>18</sup> Küçük, A. Dönemler tarihi / A. Küçük. - Ankara: Rehber, - 2005, s. 104.

<sup>19</sup> Walter, A.E. The Tyndale Bible Dictionary / A.E. Walter, P.W. Comfort. - Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, - 2001, s. 266.

The vocabulary of the above expressions differs in meaning, it carries the same meaning as the term. Although the word Mahdi is an expression of the Arabic language and Islam, it is sometimes used in a broader sense and generalized to the saviors expected in other religions.

The second paragraph of the first chapter, entitled “**The Origin of the Mahdist belief**” examines various theories about the origin of the Mahdist beliefs and examines the extent to which religions influence each other in this context.

Theories about the origin of the belief in the Mahdi differ according to researchers. Some point to the origins of this belief in early tribal religions, while others point to beliefs such as the belief in a savior from the Sumerians, some from ancient Egypt, and some from Zoroastrianism. At the same time, there are researchers who point out that the belief in the Mahdi originates from within each religion and does not arise as a result of the influence of religions on each other. In any case, the belief in the Mahdi has become one of the main beliefs of many religions and has been in the spotlight for many years. Of course, some religions and denominations have paid more attention to this issue, while some religions and denominations have taken a superficial approach to the issue.

The third paragraph of the first chapter, “**Psychological, sociological and political causes of the Mahdist belief**” examines the psychological, sociological, socio-social and political effects of the Mahdist faith and identifies its role in many religious societies.

The Mahdist belief has a special place in many religions, manifesting itself in various forms. It should be noted that it is incorrect to approach the belief in the Mahdi from one perspective, and this religious-political concept must be studied from a historical, theological, ideological, psycho-social and economic point of view. Without taking into account the above-mentioned details, it is impossible to fully understand the belief in the Mahdi and the religious and political theories developed on this belief. It should be borne in mind that beliefs and theories such as the expectation of a savior, belief in its appearance, salvation of the world, a prosperous

life, and a just society are found in many religions and schools of political and philosophical thought. The image of the Savior is most evident in societies that are hopeless and helpless. However, even in societies that are stronger and have more material and spiritual well-being, it is possible to see such ideas as belief in a savior. In other words, waiting for the Mahdi or the savior, is a defense mechanism for an unjust society or group. In some religions and cultures, he is regarded as a leader (imam or prophet) sent by divine power in the last days to save mankind, and in some religions as God himself. Of course, opinions about the Mahdi are ambiguous, and beliefs on this subject may vary by religion, nation, political and philosophical thought, time and place. From this point of view, the study of the Mahdi faith must take into account social, psychological and political aspects.

At times, the belief in the Mahdi has been the only source of hope for many societies to solve their despair and failure. Of course, psychological, sociological and political reasons underlie the belief in the Mahdi that exists in some religions and religious-political currents. In this regard, it is one of the most important issues from the theological and philosophical point of view to take into account these factors when studying the religious and political movements that have taken place historically and today under the name of the concept of salvation.

The second chapter of the dissertation is entitled “**The Mahdist belief in the world religions**”. This chapter consists of three paragraphs. The first paragraph of the chapter, entitled “**Manifestations of the Mahdist belief in the Early Tribal Religions**” analyzes the manifestations and effects of the Mahdi faith in the early tribal religions.

Since there were no written texts or monuments in the early tribal religions, their beliefs were passed down orally from generation to generation through stories. Such ancient societies, which were engaged in hunting, fishing, and gathering, believed in the appearance of a savior for a variety of reasons. One of the reasons is the desire to change lifestyles for the better. Another

reason is that they need an extraordinary being to save them during destructive natural disasters or inter-tribal wars.

It should be noted that in the early tribal religions, the image of the savior was thought to be more of a mythical, unreal being. The salvation prototype expected in other systemic religions, especially Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, is of the human race. But, in the early tribal religions and in the peoples with primitive beliefs, the savior is a mythical and abstract being.

The second paragraph of the second chapter, **“The Mahdist belief in National Religions”** examines the principles of Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and Taoism, as well as the Mahdist faith in Judaism, in accordance with the descriptive-analytical method.

National religions belong to any people or any geographical area, the beliefs of the religions included in this classification also nationalize and cover a limited circle. From this point of view, the belief in the Mahdi that we encounter in national religions has taken on a national form and includes only one people or geographical area. Thus, what distinguishes the belief in the Mahdi in the national religions from the religions belonging to other classifications is that it belongs only to the salvation of one nation. Of course, the essence of the belief in the Mahdi is the elimination of oppression and injustice, the establishment of a happy and prosperous life, and the appearance of any promised savior in difficult times. Psychologically, religious societies feel under God's protection and try to adapt their lives to God's commands. Societies that believe that God is omnipotent leave matters beyond their control to the God they believe in. This step psychologically expresses the desire of people to ensure and protect their lives. From this point of view, man's innate sense of waiting for a savior in difficult times has created the basis for religions to pay attention to this issue. Many aspects of the belief in salvation in national religions; It is possible to see the sociological, psychological, psycho-sociological and political aspects. At the heart of the belief in the Mahdi in national religions are ideas such as the salvation of any nation or religion,

the realization of a happy and prosperous future, the material and spiritual evolution of human beings, and the establishment of a just and secure society.

The third paragraph of the second chapter, **“The Mahdist belief in the World (Universal) Religions”** examines and compares the concepts of this belief in Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam.

In Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, the belief in salvation is universal. The belief in salvation offered by these religions is not limited to any nation or geography, but extends to the whole of humanity, regardless of national or racial differences. In this respect, the concepts of salvation in the world religions differ from the concepts of salvation in the national religions. In Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, the issue of the Mahdi encompasses concepts such as the revival of the religion, the call to God, and spiritual evolution. However, the Mahdist belief in national religions is more widely accepted from a national and political point of view. Of course, the essence of the Mahdi faith in the world religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Islam) is the same as in other religions, such as the salvation of oppressed people, the restoration of justice, the end of wars, the establishment of a happy society and the beginning of the golden age.

It is possible to see certain differences in the details of the Mahdist belief in the world religions. In Buddhism, for example, the savior is sometimes seen as the incarnation of God on earth. These aspects can also be seen in Christianity. Thus, in Christianity, the Savior Jesus Christ is both a prophet and a God. But, in Islam, the savior is neither accepted as God nor as a prophet. According to Islam, Mahdi, the future savior, is a religious and political leader. In conclusion, we can say that the belief in the Mahdi is strong enough in all three religions and has a special significance in the formation of those religions.

The third chapter of the dissertation, entitled **“Activities in the scientific, artistic and religious-political spheres in the**

**history of Azerbaijan in connection with the Mahdist belief”** consists of two paragraphs.

The first paragraph, entitled **“Manifestations of the Mahdist belief in the works of Azerbaijani Thinkers”** examines the subject of the Mahdism in the works of Azerbaijani scholars and writers.

It should be noted that two directions can be seen in the study of the concept of the Mahdism in the scientific and artistic environment of Azerbaijan. Medieval Azerbaijani scholars and writers approached the belief in the Mahdi from a traditional religious perspective and studied this problem in the context of theological sciences. Examples are Nasreddin Tusi, Mohammad Fuzuli and other Azerbaijani thinkers. Thus, the scholars belonging to this group have studied the religious foundations of the Mahdi faith, its place in the religion and the legal aspects of the subject by applying the methodology of theology in their works. Many classical Azerbaijani scholars have defended the views of Islam, especially the Imamiyya sect, on the Mahdist faith. This trend is more noticeable in Tusi, Nasimi, Fizuli and others. The second direction in the study of the concept of the Mahdism is seen in the research of modern Azerbaijani thinkers. Thus, scholars and socio-political figures such as Ahmad bay Agaoglu, Vasim Mammadaliyev, who touched upon this topic in their scientific activities, studied the subject not as a method of theological sciences, but as a subject of oriental studies. This approach is based on analytical-descriptive methodology without any religious or sectarian prejudices. From this point of view, the approach of modern Azerbaijani thinkers to the subject of the Mahdist faith can be considered as a new stage in this field.

The subject of the Mahdist faith is one of the most widely used religious and philosophical concepts in classical Azerbaijani poetry, and the subject of the Mahdist faith has been extensively developed in various directions in the works of Azerbaijani thinkers. Thoughts on the concept of salvation can be seen in the works of Shah Ismail Khatayi, Abbasgulu aga Bakikhanov, Seyid Azim

Shirvani, Mir Mohsun Navvab and other thinkers. It should be noted that hundreds of Azerbaijani scholars and writers have shared the traditional religious ideas of the Mahdist faith, sung by their predecessors Tusi, Nizami, Nasimi and Fuzuli.

The second paragraph of the third chapter, **“The conception of the Mahdism in the ideological concepts of religious and political movements in the history of Azerbaijan”** examines the religious and political movements in the history of medieval Azerbaijan and the role of this belief in the socio-political life of Azerbaijan.

The Mahdist faith and the religious-political theories formed on the basis of this belief have emerged as an influential idea in the socio-political life of Azerbaijan. This point has become especially relevant since the 7th century and has been observed in the ideological doctrines of many religious and political movements in the region, such as "Khurramiyya", "Razzamiyya", "Sunbadi", "Babekiyya" and others. The theory of the Mahdism played a special role in the religious and political uprisings against the Abbasid caliphate in the 7th and 8th centuries. Ideas such as belief in the future within the belief in the Mahdi provided a stimulus to the oppressed and defeated masses. At the same time, the concept of the Mahdism was easily digested by the faithful because it was a religious belief. From this point of view, the Mahdist faith was used as the most suitable weapon in the struggle against the occupying forces and totalitarian regimes. We can observe such facts in many historical events that took place in Azerbaijan. In this context, the religious and political movements that took place in Azerbaijan can be exemplified by the Khurram movement, which covers the VIII-IX centuries, as well as the Qizilbash-Safavid activities that emerged in the XV-XVI centuries. In this regard, the study of the concept of the Mahdi in various directions is of great importance in the study of the history of medieval Azerbaijan.

It should be noted that the Mahdist faith was widely used in the ideological doctrine of the religious and political movements listed above. This can be explained in two ways. First of all, the

region where these religious movements appeared and developed are Iran and Azerbaijan. Thus, because of the strong belief in the Mahdi and salvation in Zoroastrianism, Mazdakism, and other local religions that prevailed in these areas before Islam, it is possible that the emerging currents were influenced by local beliefs. Another reason is that the Mahdi faith is quite strong in Islam itself, especially in Shiism, and the Shiite tendency of the above-mentioned religious and political currents has led to the manifestation of the Mahdist faith in these currents.

In the “**Conclusion**” part of the dissertation the research is summed up, the main conclusions are summarized. The influence of the theory of Mahdism and the theories formed on the basis of this belief on religions and societies is determined.

1. The word Mahdi is of Arabic origin and is a noun derived from the Arabic verbs "ha", "ه", "dal", "د", "ya", "ي" (hada) "هدى"<sup>20</sup>. According to the grammar of the Arabic language, a noun is a model of an adjective derived from an unknown type of verb and influenced by the action performed by the verb.<sup>21</sup>The expressions “Mahdiyati” or “Mahdism” are substantivized nouns derived from the word Mahdi. The essence of the above-mentioned expressions and the religious concept on this topic are such ideas as the salvation of the world, the restoration of universal peace. Although the equivalents of this expression are different in other religions and languages, they are very close in meaning and essence to salvation or similar meanings.

2. Theories about the origin of the belief in the Mahdi differ according to researchers. Some point to the origins of this belief in early tribal religions, while others point to beliefs such as the belief in a savior from the Sumerians, some from ancient Egypt, and some from Zoroastrianism. At the same time, there are researchers who point out that the belief in the Mahdi originates from within each

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<sup>20</sup> ابن زكريا. معجم مقاييس اللغة / ابن زكريا. - بيروت: دار احياء التراث العربي، - 2008. - 1027 ص.

<sup>21</sup> الغلابيني، مصطفى. جامع الدروس العربية / مصطفى الغلابيني. - قم: ستارة، - 2007. - 135 ص

religion and does not arise as a result of the influence of religions on each other.

3. Social, psychological and political reasons have been identified for the spread of the belief in the Mahdi among the masses. It should be noted that it is incorrect to approach the belief in the Mahdi from one perspective, and this religious-political concept must be studied from a historical, theological, ideological, psycho-social and economic point of view.

4. The belief in the Mahdi has come to the fore in the early tribal religions to meet the basic needs of peoples without written literature and sacred texts. In the early tribal religions and primitive beliefs, the belief in the Mahdi became more relevant in the face of natural disasters, famines, and similar hardships, and the formation of ideas about the salvation of a divine metaphysical being.

5. The concept of the promised savior and the religious beliefs on this subject are very strong in Zoroastrianism, and the sacred books of Zoroastrianism contain ample information about this belief. It should be noted that the belief in the Mahdi in Zoroastrianism emerged in the form of a new and unique concept compared to other religions until the seventh century BC.

6. The identity of the savior in Hinduism is essentially defined in their own religious texts, and information about the work to be done is given. According to Hindu beliefs, the savior has two functions at the same time, both social and spiritual. In the written religious texts of Hinduism, the information about the scale of the Savior's activity is different. According to some reports, his mission is universal, while in others his activities are limited to the people of India.

7. The fact that the Jews have been subjected to religious and political persecution at various times in history and have been exiled several times has led them to accept the Mahdist faith with ease. Later, Judaism, which took on a national form, also nationalized the belief in salvation, and gave impetus to its transformation into an ideological concept related only to the salvation of Jews. Beliefs

about the gospel of the Savior's appearance in the last days are first found in the Jewish scriptures.

8. The belief in the Mahdi is also very strong in Buddhism. In this sense, the belief in salvation, as in many religions, has become a useful tool in the history of Buddhism to attract people's interest or to strengthen the foundations of power. Another characteristic of the belief in salvation in Buddhism is that it embodies universal ideas.

9. The belief in salvation in Christianity was adopted from Judaism and later formed in accordance with its own principles. Of course, the belief in salvation in Christianity and the belief in salvation in Judaism have much in common.

10. The belief in the Mahdi has a special place in the Islamic religious worldview. It should be noted that this issue is taken into account to a different extent among Islamic sects. Although some Islamic sects have a superficial approach to the belief in the Mahdi, in some Islamic sects this belief is very strong and forms the main platform of these sects. In other words, the belief in the Mahdi plays a role as the most important element in the religious, philosophical and socio-political life of some sects and is considered to be the most important factor in the formation of belief systems.

11. The theme of the faith in the Mahdi is widely reflected in the works of Azerbaijani thinkers. Of course, although this topic is developed as a problem of Islam, many Azerbaijani thinkers have touched on the psychological, sociological and political aspects of the issue and expressed their views on this concept. Medieval Azerbaijani scholars and writers approached the belief in the Mahdi from a traditional religious perspective and studied this problem in the context of theological sciences. Examples are Nasreddin Tusi, Mohammad Fuzuli and other Azerbaijani thinkers. It should be noted that many classical scholars have defended the views of Islam, especially the Shiite sect, on the Mahdi faith. The second direction in the study of the concept of the Mahdi is seen in the research of modern Azerbaijani thinkers. Thus, scholars and socio-political figures such as Ahmad bey Agaoglu and academician Vasim

Mammadaliyev, who touched upon this topic in their scientific activities, studied the subject not as a method of theological sciences, but as a subject of theology or oriental studies.

12. The belief in the Mahdi and the theories formed on the basis of this belief have emerged as an influential force in the socio-political life of Azerbaijan. This point has become especially relevant since the 7th century and has been observed in the ideological doctrines of many religious and political movements in the region. The theory of the Mahdi played a special role in the religious and political uprisings against the Abbasid caliphate in the 7th and 8th centuries. Ideas such as belief in the future within the belief in the Mahdi provided a stimulus to the oppressed and defeated masses. At the same time, the concept of the Mahdi was easily digested by the masses because it was a religious belief. From this point of view, the Mahdi faith was used as the most suitable weapon in the struggle against the occupying forces and totalitarian regimes. We can observe such facts in many historical events that took place in Azerbaijan. In this context, the religious and political movements that took place in Azerbaijan can be exemplified by the Khurram movement, which covers the VIII-IX centuries, as well as the Qizilbash-Safavid activities that emerged in the XV-XVI centuries. In this regard, the study of the concept of the Mahdi in various directions is of great importance in the study of the history of medieval Azerbaijan.

**The main content of the dissertation is reflected in the following articles published by the author in the country and abroad and in his reports at national scientific-theoretical conferences:**

1. “Reasons for the spread of Islam in the world” // Scientific Journal of the Faculty of Theology. № 21. Baku: “Nurlar”, 2014, p. 315-324

2. "History of the arrival of Islam in Azerbaijan" // Materials of the IV International Scientific Conference of Young Researchers. Baku. 2016, p. 1681-1682

3. "The manifestations of Mahdist beliefs in the works of Imadud-Din Nasimi" // Problems of Oriental Philosophy. № 22. Baku. 2018, p. 97-115

4. "The manifestation of Mahdist beliefs in the work of Imadud-Din Nasimi" // Problems of Eastern Philosophy. № 22. Baku. 2018, p. 102-122

5. "Manifestations of the Mahdi faith in world religions" // Materials of the international scientific conference "Actual problems of modern Oriental Studies" ("Ziya Bunyadov's readings") dedicated to the memory of the full member of ANAS, Hero of the Soviet Union Ziya Musa oglu Bunyadov. Baku: Papirus NP, 2018, p. 331-337

6. "Manifestations of Mahdism (salvation) in the poems of Imadud-Din Nasimi" // Materials (theses) of the II International Symposium "Islamic Civilization in the Caucasus". Baku: 2019, p. 417-421

7. "Motifs of the Mahdist belief in Zoroastrianism" // Khoja Ahmad Yasawi 2. Full text book of the International Congress of Scientific Research. Turkey: Iksad Publications, 2019, p. 460-469

8. "Scientific theories on the origin of the Mahdist faith" // Journal of Religious Studies. № 1 (4). Baku: Nurlar, 2020, p. 93-105

9. "Religious and philosophical thoughts of Ahmad bay Agaoglu on the belief in the Mahdi in Islam" // Journal of public opinion on the state and religion. № 02. Baku: "Universal Polygraph", 2020, p. 74-83

10. "Social, Psychological and Political Causes of the Mahdist Belief" // Journal of Religious Studies. № 2 (5). Baku: "Nurlar", 2020 // p. 43-55

11. "The place of faith in Mahdism in the ideological policy of the Safavid state" // Вчені записки, Tavriysky National University

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12. "Motives of Mahdist beliefs in early tribal religions" // NotaBene, The Southwest University "Neofit Rilski". № 50 (20). Bulgaria. 2020, p. 5-15, <http://notabene-bg.org/read.php?id=1044>.

13. "The role of the Mahdist faith in the ideological policy of the Safavid state" // The First Congress of Oriental Peoples - Baku, 1920. Theses of the international scientific conference 100 years ago and today. Baku: "Science", 2020, p. 79-81

14. "The belief in the Mahdi in the struggle for political power in the early history of Islam" // Journal of public opinion on the state and religion, № 01 (68). Baku: "Universal Polygraph", 2021, p. 16-26



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