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**A comparative study of the status of ruler in Shahab al-Din Sohravardi and
Imam Khomeini's viewpoints¹**

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Introduction

Research Paper

The issue of political leadership has always been an important concern of the Muslim thinkers. Many thinkers have discussed this issue, but the pick of philosophizing in this area was during the fourth and fifth centuries hegira, which is mentioned as the golden age in the history. Sohravardi lived in an era when the socio-political situation was unstable and the golden age was facing serious challenges. Sohravardi in formulation of his political philosophy tries to find out some solutions to the problems of his society. Therefore, he relies on philosophy and mysticism to develop his notion. He tried to formulate his utopia and the qualifications of an ideal Muslim ruler within the framework of Illumination Philosophy. Sohravardi, through combining Islamic mystical and philosophical viewpoints, monarchical philosophical ideas, and the concept of the perfect human being, tried to formulate his suitable preference for the leadership of an Islamic society. In Sohravardi's viewpoint, man is a social being and needs cooperation and collaboration to survive. However, society needs a human being to sets the traditions, spreads justice and eliminates oppression. Such qualifications are seen the divine prophets and for Sahravadi's notion, he finds these qualifications in Prophet Muhammad. According to Sohravardi, the society can be run smoothly to insure the happiness in the world and felicity in the afterlife if it is run by the divine deliberation, which possible only when a perfect man takes the helm of the political affairs. In fact, the perfect man is a medium for access to the divine

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deliberation. The divine deliberation is accessed through revelation in case of the Prophets and through the Divine Khorah in case of some of the ancient Iranian kings.

Several centuries after Sohravardi, Imam Khomeini, in reaction to the conditions prevailing in his society, tried to develop his notion of an Islamic government and the qualifications of a Muslim ruler. Through combining jurisprudential, philosophical, mystical, and theological notions within the framework of the concept of the perfect human being, he looks for his suitable preference for the leadership of an Islamic society. Although Imam Khomeini relied on the concept of perfect man to develop his notion of an Islamic government and the qualifications of the ruler, in the final analysis he heavily relied on the Shia jurisprudence in the formulating his political philosophy. As a result, he came up with the idea of “rule of jurisprudent” (Vilayt-e Faqih) in which there is not explicit reference to mysticism and mystical qualifications of the Muslim ruler during the occultation of the Twelfth Shia Imam. His reference to perfect man is confined to the Prophet of Islam and Shia Imams as his ideal rulers. The argument of this paper is that due to the fusion of the notion of perfect human being and power, which are respectively two mystical and political concepts, the ideas of the “theologian philosopher”, and, the “rule of jurisprudent” (Vilayt-e Faqih) were respectively formulated by Sohravardi and Imam Khomeini.

Statement of the Problem

This research is an attempt to study the viewpoints of Shahab al-Din Sohravardi and Imam Khomeini about the issue of the leadership of the Islamic society based on their philosophical and mystical principles (ontology, epistemology, and anthropology).

Research Method

Comparative and descriptive research methods were employed in this article. The comparative method was used to find out the differences and similarities between the political philosophies of the two thinkers.

Findings and Conclusion

The findings of the research indicated that the concept of the ruler of Islamic society was the outcome of the fusion of mystical and political viewpoints of the two thinkers. However there are similarities as well as differences between the viewpoints of the two Muslim thinkers. Both of them transfer mysticism from private sphere to the public sphere. Both of them argue that the leader of Islamic society must be a perfect human being (the ideal perfect human being is the Prophet of Islam). However, in Imam Khomeini’s viewpoint the ruler of the Islamic society during the occultation of the Twelfth Imam is a qualified Jurisprudent, while in

Sohravadi's viewpoint the rule should be a theologian-philosopher who is blessed with God and receives the divine Khorah. Both argue that human happiness is subject to society's happiness. If theologian-philosopher or a jurisprudent does not take charge of the society's rule, the society will deteriorate. The inference from this statement is that legitimacy comes from God through a ruler who enjoys the divine Khorah or is a qualified jurisprudent. Although Imam Khomeini in his remarks has emphasized on the role of people in legitimation of the government, only a Muslim jurisprudent is qualified to rule the society. Both the thinkers argue that man needs a divine source of blessing or the divine light for wayfaring to the higher stages. This divine source enables the ruler to rule powerfully and defeat the enemies.

However, one of the differences between the two thinkers is that Sohravardi lays emphasis on a theologian-philosopher, while Imam Khomeini lays emphasis on a jurisprudent as the ruler of Islamic society. Another difference between the two is that Sohravardi give a serious weight to the ancient Iranian society in formulating his political philosophy, while Imam Khomeini merely emphasizes on the Shia jurisprudence. In Sohravardi's political philosophy mysticism is intermingle with Illumination Philosophy (Hikmat Ishraq), while in Imam Khomeini's political philosophy mysticism is heavily influenced by the Shia teachings. Another difference between the two political philosophies is realization of their political theories. Soharavadi's theologian-philosopher is hard to find in today's society because he does not enumerate the actual qualifications of the ruler, except mentioning that a ruler must be blessed by divine khorah, but, Imam Khomeini's political philosophy led to the Islamic Revolution and establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In sum, both the thinkers develop their political philosophies based on similar ontology, but reach different conclusions. This is to some extent because of the influence of socio-political conditions of their times as well was their focus on different aspects of Islamic teachings. The fact that there is no reference to the mystical qualifications of the Muslim ruler during the occultation of the Shia Twelfth Imam in Imam Khomeini's political philosophy indicates that he is heavily influenced by Shia jurisprudence not mysticism in his notion of ideal Muslim ruler.

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