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# Preservation of built heritage: an Islamic perspective (1)

Preservation of  
built heritage

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to explore the concept of built heritage preservation from an Islamic perspective. This study will dig out the jurisprudential principles to challenge contemporary destruction of built heritage in the Muslim contexts.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The research challenges the radicals' opinion by revealing their evidence to destroy the various built heritage. In fact, it confronts these acts and assists the international community to understand the basic values of Islam toward the environment and built heritage specifically. This exploratory research will follow this lead and seek the objective, first, by investigating the concept of succession and the urbanization of Earth by mankind. Reassuringly, the research introduces few verses from the Holy Qur'an to support the various arguments presented and provide a qualitative understanding of the interpretations. Moreover, few speeches of the Prophet (PBUH) are added to ease synthesizing the understanding of specific principles related to the Islamic law (Shari'ah). This study provides an in-depth understanding toward the legitimacy of the act of preservation under the umbrella of the intents and objectives of the Islamic law.

**Findings** – This study confirms that preservation of the built heritage is legitimate from the Islamic law perspective; this is due to the fact that Islam mandates mankind to utilize wisely the resources available to shape a proper physical and economic environment. The preservation of the built heritage returns with benefit to the major society and assures that resources are recycled to serve humanity for longer generations.

**Research limitations/implications** – This research promotes the concepts of good/benefit and avoiding harm to support the crux of built heritage preservation from an Islamic perspective. In quest of this notion, various scholars' work throughout the Islamic civilization has been revealed to draw some shed on the rooted arguments to highlight various concepts of Islam toward preservation.

**Originality/value** – This paper fulfills an identified need to prove that Islam is against the destruction of built heritage and historic monuments and against all acts of violence and terrorism.

**Keywords** Preservation, Islamic law, Built heritage, Extremism, Radicalism

**Paper type** Viewpoint

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## 1. Introduction

Like all civilizations that have long suffered from crisis, Muslim scholars must start to confront the emerging principles of terrorism and destruction of built heritage in the name of Islam. Since March 2001, radical militants around the world are destroying various built heritage in Muslim contexts for various reasons, in Afghanistan, the Taliban militia shattered the Buddha Statue in Bamiyan, the world heritage site of Timbuktu in Mali was destroyed, and recently the so-called Islamic militants in Syria and Iraq have destroyed entire heritage compounds of ancient eras causing vandalism (MacEoin, 2014) and massacre toward history and potential resources for mankind. Lately, we experienced militant groups destroying remnants of ancient temples as the Palmyra, ancient Phoenician statues or even shrines, with no difference to the culture or style, yet leaving behind massive destruction and built heritage genocide (see Plates 1 and 2).

The aim of this study is to recognize a philosophical reformation of the preservation and protection of cultural heritage to assist Muslim societies visualize future trajectories, rooted by the revivalism of Islamic thought and transcending its branches toward contemporaneity for the future. There is a major deficiency in understanding preservation from an Islamic perspective, according to El-Habashi (2001, pp. 7-12) in his study argued

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Source: Worley (2017)



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**Plate 1.**  
Before and after photo  
of the historic Arc du  
Triomphe (Triumph's  
Arc) among the  
Palmyra complex in  
an ancient Syrian site

**Plate 2.**  
Before and after photo  
of the historic temple  
of Bel among the  
Palmyra complex in  
an ancient Syrian site

that "Preservation" before 1881 was not been idealistically defined or structured, plus there was no certain directives of what, how and why to preserve and for whom; his attempt was to seek answers regarding the act of preservation at traditional environments while taking part in a universal global civilization. However, his attempt focused on revealing the efforts of preservation through the system of Endowments (*Awqaf*). However, some attempts have been made in earlier periods to legitimize preservation, yet suffered from difficulties during colonialism and the marginalization of various political regimes; leaving behind enormous damages that unfortunately do not dissolve quickly or easily. For instance, since 1836 and the disintegration of the Endowments Systems – *Awaqf* in Turkey, the Turkish government practiced demolitions and

eradication of Ottoman built heritage till the 1950s (Altinyildiz, 2007, pp. 297-298). Thus, governments unintentionally spread difficulties that stalemated and stagnated the development of Islamic thoughts toward present socio-cultural challenges. Since orientalism and afterwards colonization, Muslim societies were confused between visions and practicality, wholeness and subdivisions, and between constants and variables. Either religious illiteracy or operational downsides eventually built multi-layered obstacles blocking the possibilities of research and diligence to cause intellectual stagnation having most contemporary Islamic scholars stand disoriented between Islamic ideologies and methods of modernists and conservatives to revisit the concept of preservation.

Thus, Saidoni (2010, p. 72) mentioned that preservationists in Islamic societies applied western methodologies of conservation without acknowledging the spiritual and philosophical dimensions of preservation; losing focus toward the socio-economic needs. Accordingly, the main challenge that resides here is that the reformation of thought stays the hostage and victim with no development to tackle contemporary requirements. The current authoritarian regimes have not helped Muslim societies to solve this everlasting contradiction, suppressing the attempts of reformation toward Islamic thought and prevent it from developing. Thus, we realize that Islamic societies suffering from ignorance and poverty tend to misjudge resources and mishandle their built heritage. In addition, such suppressed environments tend to increase potential for radical thought and interpretation against other communities and societies. Accordingly, a wide spectrum of intellectual scholars still symbolizes Islamic architecture by the arch and dome similar as Islamic faith that is imprisoned in dress uniforms, external appearances, and conflict-based differentiations.

Thus, it is important that this research tackles the philosophies of destruction toward built heritage from an Islamic perspective by challenging the extreme ideologies and believes. It is our role as researchers and academics to confront these acts of destruction by militant groups in Afghanistan or recently in Syria, it is crucial to reveal the philosophies supporting it. This paper is among a series of articles which will tackle the subject from various perspectives. This study will focus on the religious interpretations and proofs to support the concept of preservation of cultural heritage within a broader sense. The current paper will follow an exploratory methodology to demonstrate the connection between Islamic necessities of Shari'ah and Islamic law toward the act of preservation, plus, it will confront radical's destructive ideologies by Quranic verses. In later stages, an additional paper will follow to demonstrate a collective opinion based on most doctrines, sects, and institutions of the Muslim world toward the concept of preservation of either non-Muslim or Muslim cultural heritage. The second paper will visit the concepts of *Awqaf* as an operational mechanism that may develop according to socio-economic contemporary needs. The research will investigate the acts of preservation toward various scales of cultural heritage such as objects, idols, built heritage, and manuscripts.

Through extensive searching and synthesizing, the research came across only one important source that support destruction of monuments and built heritage. An e-book called *The Proof of Obligation to Destroy Idols* authored by Sheikh Nasr Bin Hamad Bin Fahd[1] discusses the legitimacy of destroying all idols and acknowledges the acts of Taliban in Afghanistan to sustain the theory of monotheism against atheism. The author divided the e-book into two sections discussing the profanity of statues and historic monuments, the second section presents various proof to destroy the statues from a radical perspective and drive radical groups into destruction (Fahd, 2003). During this study, the research will present other legitimate Islamic proof to preserve and protect various typologies of built heritage while provide a critical dialogue/comparison with the destructive opinion.

### 1.1 The notion of succession

Initially, in regard to the perception of mankind existence, it is linked to the purpose of the lifetime test of humanity to pursue the struggle between right and wrong or good and evil. All conditions and terms of achieving the goal are linked to the creation of universe and the legitimacy to utilize and urbanize it. God Almighty granted mankind and other creatures the pleasure to live and create life in this environment. According to the Qur'an[2].

And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." They said, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?" Allah said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know." وَإِذْ قَالِ رَبِّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَنُجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلِمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

Surahat Al-Baqarah (30) (30) (سورة البقرة)

And it is He who has made you successors upon the earth and has raised some of you above others in degrees [of rank] that He may try you through what He has given you. Indeed, your Lord is swift in penalty; but indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful. وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِيَتْلُوكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Surahat Al-Ana'am (165) (165) (سورة الأنعام)

And We have certainly established you upon the earth and made for you therein ways of livelihood. Little are you grateful. وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّاكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعَايِشَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ

Surahat Al-A'araf (10) (10) (سورة الأعراف)

The privilege that mankind has by utilizing the Earth comes a way to achieve the goal of existence and sustainability. The Qur'an defines precisely the true nature of man and his/her appropriate position in the universe. The holy text also enlightens us to a period of mankind's past that is otherwise inaccessible, yet, come succession as a purpose and delivering the sacred message of Islam through humanity. Thus, the notion of succession is strongly related to the purpose of existence, and if the aspects of existence vanish, the concept of succession loses its legitimacy. The Holy Qur'an demonstrates here the means and methods of life to give mankind the rightfulness to urbanize the environment with architecture. The surrendering to the sovereignty of God only happens by mankind's appropriateness in every action and respect of His instructions and prohibitions. Therefore, the concept of succession is a pillar of control to construct a relationship with the universe, other creatures, and all the creations of God to promote a successful societal organization and create civilizations as a whole. Nevertheless, urbanism and architecture is one of the main aspects of mankind's relationship to the universe. Overall, the concept of succession leads to the acts of sheltering and urbanization.

## 2. Understanding Urbanism and architecture via Islam

Architecture is an act opposite of destruction. In most cases, it is the action of designing buildings, urban spaces, and shaping the built environment with acceptable aesthetic qualities.

Architecture often includes design and control of construction work, preservation and restoration, or remodeling of existing buildings. As stated in the Qur'an. Preservation of built heritage

Have they not traveled through the earth and observed how was the end of those before them? They were greater than them in power, and they plowed the earth and built it up more than they have built it up, and their messengers came to them with clear evidences. And Allah would not ever have wronged them, but they were wronging themselves. **أَوَلَمْ يَتَّبِعُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِمَّا عَمَرُوا وَجَاءَهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ**

Surahat Al-Rom (9) (9) (سورة الروم)

The mosques of Allah are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakah and do not fear except Allah, for it is expected that those will be of the [rightly] guided (18). Have you made the providing of water for the pilgrim and the maintenance of al-Masjid al-Haram equal to [the deeds of] one who believes in Allah and the Last Day and strives in the cause of Allah? They are not equal in the sight

of Allah. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people. **إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ فَعَسَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ** (18) **أَجْعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَاجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَجَاهَدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَوُونَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ**

Surahat Al-Touba (18-19) (سورة التوبة)

And We have certainly established you upon the earth and made for you therein ways of livelihood. Little are you grateful. **وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّاكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعَايِشَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ**

Surahat Al-A'araf (10) (10) (سورة الأعراف)

The Holy Qur'an promotes construction or preservation to allow and sustain the ability to conduct act of worship within responsive man-made environment, similar to the architecture of which constructed and preserved in Mecca for the Umrah rituals. Nevertheless, the Holy Qur'an states that to survive, places of living are offered, and this unlimited to construction but include encouraging the acts of preservation toward most typologies of the built environment. On the other hand, some scholars thought of urbanizing the surrounding environment as an act of worship, considering it as a method to submit to Islam and get surrender to God. Since, urbanization and architecture serves the good and benefit of all, then, its reward continues and includes all stakeholders who were involved (Al Bar, 2010).

### 3. Objectives of Islamic law toward urbanism

Muslim societies have been suffering from the disengagement of the Islamic law with practices of urbanism causing a massive gap in shaping the contemporary built environment. By diagnosing and rationalizing the Islamic law, it is recognized that Islam encourages urbanization to establish civilized communities. In contrary, the annulment and denial of current understandings of Islam caused negligence of this discipline. Some Islamic scholars consider the discipline of urbanism as the concerns of the present transitory life against the Hereafter, and thus did not give it attention or consideration within their religious focus, leaving it as a resultant to current life forces instead of putting more efforts in planning it. Specifically, knowledge and research may have helped to prosper the practice

of urbanization and architecture, but breaking it away from Islam created a great loss in the quality of architecture and less connection to the thought, understandings, traditions, and norms of Muslims. In fact, the purpose of reinterpreting urbanism in parallel to Islamic thought is to demonstrate the strong relationship between the religious and socio-cultural aspects, and acknowledge reflecting those forces into architecture. The ultimate goal is to provide a comprehensive understanding between the making of architecture and religion to find solutions for the deterioration of built heritage and the uncertain future of valuable architecture.

### 3.1 Overview of Islamic law

The Islamic law and guidance promote good endeavor in any period or place, and prevent desecration toward the human life. The Islamic law emphasis five basic necessities for succession: preserve religion, preserve soul, preserve offspring, preserve money, and preserve the mind. Imam Al-Ghazali[3] in the twelfth century (1993, pp. 481-483) added that, “these five necessities are impossible not to be included in any religion nor law for the sake to sustain creation.” These five basic intents are necessary not for one particular activity or objective, but may serve limitless number of activities. Thus, we may hypothesize that preservation of the built environment against endangered hazards is among these objectives of the Islamic law, as it complements the need to save all souls from slow destruction and extinction. Qur’an reflects this argument through various verses, such as.

And cause no corruption upon the earth after its reformation. And invoke Him in fear and aspiration. Indeed, the mercy of Allah is near to the doers of good. وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ  
Surahat Al-A’araf (56) (56) (سورة الأعراف)

The Qur’anic verse here mandates to avoid corruption after reconstruction and repair, and thus saving the built environment from destruction comes within the necessity to avoid corruption. Another verse in the holy Qur’an states.

And when he goes away, he strives throughout the land to cause corruption therein and destroy crops and animals. And Allah does not like corruption. وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَى فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَهَلَكَ الْحَرثُ وَالنَّسْلُ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُسَادَ  
Surahat Al-Baqarah (205) (205) (سورة البقرة)

The acts of destruction are forbidden. The above verse highlights that destruction includes killing or damaging natural environment and life. Moreover, the verse seeks generalization in its meaning to include every resource; thus, it indeed covers destruction of current tangible forms and built environments. Therefore, preserving the built environment from destruction may have been covered from different intents of the Islamic law and from different perspectives. From another angle, preserving the built environment may be covered in Islamic law through the calls of avoiding aspects of consumerism and misuse of resources. The intents of Islamic law toward preservation and sustainable development was not noted earlier through legal mandates nor detailed instructions as directly as some might

imagine that laws have been specially developed to address the current destructive crisis by radicals and terrorists. However, religious text tends to generalize directives toward life concerns, and in some cases tends to detail when related to acts of worship and rights, but they all aim to increase environmental protection awareness.

Thus, this requires a necessity for clarifying and proofing validity to attain legitimacy of built heritage preservation within the characteristics of the Islamic law. Reinterpreting jurisprudence to save the built heritage for continuation is crucial against the acts of destruction within the contemporary circumstances. Literally, this makes this specific objective among major necessities, due to the loss of mass religious and secular buildings. Accordingly, destruction and ruining the built heritage should stop, as no human may benefit from this disorder and nor escape the wide stretched damages in the long term. It is our role to increase awareness and guidance to legitimize the need for built heritage and efforts of preservation, and prohibit offenders by all controlling mechanisms both religious and judicial.

The Islamic law mandated Muslims to preserve the “Mind” allowing mankind to achieve joy, bliss, and benefit of resources; this may exist through advancing in science and knowledge with appropriate ethics to keep mankind away from corruption. Such as to avoid new inventions produced by contemporary minds harming the human race, because it lacked religious guidance. The five necessities assist mankind to navigate properly for the utilization of resources including constructed architecture through time. Almighty organized resources for the mankind to maintain and utilize for the benefit of man. Islam expressed that architecture and built heritage are commodities similar to money, and all of God’s creation.

#### 4. Intent of the Islamic law toward preservation

The Islamic law has established in its entirety number of principles toward the environment. These principles contain the knowledge and directions that came to appreciate the interests of people in life and eternity, and the verses of the Qur’an and the Prophet (PBUH) demonstrates them. Ultimately, we can point out two main issues related to preservation of the built heritage: first, scholars defined that the achievement of the five main necessities has significant impact on creating a healthy atmosphere to ensure materialization of the concept of succession. However, it is important to highlight that if mankind loses faith and direction, this increases the desires of resources exclusivity to secure personal favors and prevent others from benefit; and eventually spoiling the overall built environment.

Second, Islamic jurisprudence toward the built environment relies on a general rule “Do no Harm and Cause no Harm” and this is captured from a famous speech of the Prophet (PBUH).

As of Abu Sa’id Sa’d bin Malik bin Sinan al-Khudri (ra) that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: “There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm.” عن أبي سعيد سعد بن سنان ، حديث حسن الخدري رضي الله عنه : أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال : ( لا ضرر ولا ضرار ) ، حديث حسن رواه ابن ماجة والدارقطني وغيرهما مسندا ، ورواه مالك

The message contains a very important impact on the Islamic Law; the various interpretations highlights that there shall be no harming others, and there shall be no bringing harm to you (i.e. by harming others). Thus, Islamic law focuses on two notions to comprehend preservation of built heritage: first, the laws and principles are



meant to be a path toward truth and righteousness in documenting the history and facts for shaping the socio-cultural environment. Second, preservation is necessary to sustain the civilization constructed in many forms including the physical setting, for instance, maintaining the religious and civic structures. Thus, destroying the built heritage and leftovers of earlier dynasties will cause harm to Islam, mankind, and owners of these environments; and this is considerably being forbidden. Nevertheless, Ibn Khaldun (1377) mentioned in his popular manuscript "Prolegomena" (*Al-Muqadimah* – المقدمة).

"Mankind collaborates in their presence, they need ruling methods and morals relying on Islamic law, that people in need to address the intents of jurisprudence, such as what the scholars mention to explain legal provisions purposes that adultery wrecks offspring, killing is damageable, injustice ruin urbanization leading to corruption, as for the principles of the Islamic law they are all based on the preservation of urbanization, it is apparent from we speak in these matters as well as in different words of previous scholars [...] O ruler, this monarchy is not valid except only by Islamic law, obey God, and follow His commands and prohibits. The strength of the Islamic law come through implementation, no nobility to a king except through his companion, no strength of men except by money, no way to validate money except through architecture, no way for Architecture except only by justice, and justice is the balance by the Lord of creation." "أن البشر متعاونون في وجودهم فيحتاجون فيه إلى الحاكم والوازع ومثل ما يذكر في أصول الفقه في باب إثبات اللغات أن الناس محتاجون إلى العبارة عن المقاصد بطبيعة التعاون والاجتماع وتبين العبارات أخف ومثل ما يذكره الفقهاء في تعليل الأحكام الشرعية بالمقاصد في أن الزنا مخلط للأنساب مفسد للنوع وأن القتل أيضاً مفسد للنوع وأن الظلم مؤذن بخراب العمران [4] المفضي لفساد النوع غير ذلك من سائر المقاصد الشرعية في الأحكام فإنها كلها مبنية على المحافظة على العمران فكان لها النظر فيما يعرض له وهو ظاهر من كلامنا هذا في هذه المسائل الممثلة وكذلك أيضاً يقع إلينا القليل من مسائله في كلمات متفرقة لحكماء الخليفة لكنهم لم يستوفوه ... أيها الملك إن الملك لا يتم عزه إلا بالشرعية والقيام لله بطاعته والتصرف تحت أمره ونهيه ولا قوام للشرعية إلا بالملك ولا عز للملك إلا بالرجال ولا قوام للرجال إلا بالمال ولا سبيل للمال إلا بالعمارة ولا سبيل للعمارة إلا بالعدل والعدل الميزان المنصوب بين الخليفة والنصبة الرب وجعل له قيماً وهو الملك."

Ibn Khaldun mentioned that Islam promotes the protection and preservation of the environment by securing the balance "الميزان" in the utilization of resources and governance. He additionally stressed that in order to secure a proper and healthy living civilization; we should well preserve and sustain the built environment to avoid imbalance within the social structure beside the physical environment. He sought that the act of preservation has the same importance of any principle mentioned in the Islamic law.

Similarly, approximately 100 years before Ibn Khaldun's Prolegomena, Abdel al- Latif al-Baghdadi exactly in 1202 A.D (1286) confirmed that previous Islamic regimes respected and acknowledged earlier built heritage and monuments, and did not cause any destruction. In contrary, in these present days, Sheikh Nasr bin Fahd mentioned in his book *The Proof of Obligation to Destroy Idols* that this notion is wrong and misleading. He relied in his argument on the various attempts by earlier Muslim rulers to destroy the Taq-i Kisra[5], complex of Sasanian King Anushirvan Khusraw or the Great Pyramids of Egypt.

Yet, al-Baghdadi in 1286 (p. 34), almost seven centuries earlier, challenges Sheikh Nasr bin Fahd proof of destruction when he mentioned that.

## Preservation of built heritage

“And still the Kings take into account the survival of these built heritage and prevent damaging it, even though they belong to enemies and they were doing it for their interests, including the remaining history alerts them, including that it be a witness for thee book, the Holy Qur'an mentioned it and its people. By seeing it you envision the good news and the ratification of the impact and of which they retell destiny and tell-tale money and which it indicates something of the conditions of advances and their careers and provide their sciences and clarity of their thoughts and so on and all this which encourage the soul to know and view it.”  
وما زالت الملوك تراعى بقاء هذه الآثار وتمنع من العبث فيها وإن كانوا أعداء”  
لأربابها وكانوا يفعلون ذلك لمصالح، منها لتبقى تاريخاً يتنبه بها على الأحقاب، ومنها انها تكون شاهدة للكتب المنزلة فأن القران العظيم ذكرها وذكر أهلها ففي رؤيتها خير الخبر وتصديق الأثر ومنها أنها مذكرة بالمصير ومنبهة على المال ومنها انها تدل على شيء من أحوال من سلف وسيرتهم وتوفر علومهم وصفاء فكرهم وغير ذلك وهذا كله مما شتاق النفس إلى معرفته وتؤثر الاطلاع عليه

The above statement by Abd a-Latif al-Baghdadi proves that the Islamic civilizations before and during the thirteenth century protects and preserves the various built heritage either in forms of buildings or monuments or sculptures. In his book, he describes the various ancient Egyptian monuments and statues and contributed with this text against vandalism and looting toward these historic treasures. Personally, Sheikh Nasr bin Fahd from a radical point of view supposed that the attempts of destruction were related to remove signs against monotheism and acknowledging previous atheistic and heresiatic beliefs, while in reality they were trying to remove earlier signs of monarchy and power of earlier civilizations to reinforce their own existence. This agrees with Ibn Khaldun's ideas that civilization through history constructs great structures to congeal their presence and difficult for others to remove.

Meanwhile, radicals and few Islamic scholars disregarded and ignored that with destruction humans are causing imbalance to the overall urban system, and ultimately decreasing the functional performance of the urban neighborhoods on the micro level. Nevertheless, these destructive acts create negative impact and decline on the progress of the whole city. Despite this, the Islamic law may reform these radical actions by seeking repair and conservation of the built environment to preserve mind and money. Ragab (2003, p. 152) added that preservation and adaptive reuse of built heritage play an important role to solve the problems of negligence and ruins, driven by an economic potential reasoning. The major challenge is that Islamic scholars did not highlight that preservation and conservation is an independent objective of the Islamic law confronting with all destructive radicals. According to this notion, when we relate to this Quranic verse.

Have they not traveled through the earth and observed how was the end of those before them? They were greater than them in power, and they plowed the earth and built it up more than they have built it up, and their messengers came to them with clear evidences. And Allah would not ever have wronged them, but they were wronging themselves. **أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَأَنَارُوا الْأَرْضَ وَعَمَرُوهَا أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا عَمَرُوهَا وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ**

سورة الروم (9) Surahat Al-Rom

We discover that the Quran is proving the concept of preservation to sustain earlier civilization cultural heritage including the idols or pyramids. In fact, by destroying these proved inherited elements of earlier civilizations whether based on Abrahamic religion or not, we are causing more harm to the Quran and Islam. Therefore, it is due in time to rethink regarding the preservative approach as one of the major necessity of the Islamic law, not just to sustain the built heritage put to protect the environment in general, including idol objects that stand as proof of earlier civilizations.

Specifically, it is important to include the necessity of preservation among the other necessities of the Islamic law to complement the intent of saving money or resources, such as the resources of built heritage. In respect to this notion, the Islamic scholar, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, published a book in 2001 titled *The Upkeep of the Environment in the Islamic Law*. Qaradawi's (2001) input was unique and attempts to reform Islamic thought. He acknowledged that the activity of preservation is common and complements all the main five necessities of Islamic law – sustain religion, soul, offspring, money, and the mind, thus, not just within one necessity but all. His thoughtful reform stems from that any misconduct toward the environment – including both natural and built environment – is a crime and against the essence of Islam. Thus, he endorses the fact that the preservation of built environment assist in the self-protection, because the health of mankind and security relies on their suitable surrounding environment. In addition, he thought of it as part of sustaining the offspring, because the crime to the built environment threatens future generations by breaking down in the social structure. In addition, he thought that preservation complements with the sphere of sustaining the mind because the preservation of the environment helps to maintain the rights of physical and mental integrity. Finally, he also relates preservation with the protection of money, because money has a broader meaning, and it include all valuable resources.

Within the same path, Mubarak (2013) in his research agreed with al-Qaradawi's notion that the intents of the Islamic law is strongly related to preservation and conservation and that all preservative approaches reflect the five basic necessities. However, by analyzing *The Proof of Obligation to Destroy Idols* by Sheikh Nasr bin Fahd, none of his proves to destruct earlier monuments discussed the means of objectives and necessities of the Islamic Law, and this is a crucial point. As mentioned earlier, Islam is driven by these strategic objectives extracted from the Qur'an, and due to time change, our interpretation toward life requirements also change, yet the main strategic objectives stay untouched. His radical and extreme philosophy to destroy idols and monuments did not consider both the necessities of the Islamic law or time difference between the fourteenth century and twenty-first centuries. He relied in his argument on historic events following the Salafist[6] methodologies of practicing Islam.

On the other hand, Al-Naggar (2008) introduced a new, dramatic, and reformative notion regarding the five main necessities of the Islamic law, his argument introduces an additional necessity that focus on the preservation of the environment serving the mankind's successful establishment on Earth. Personally, preservation of the built environment advised to stem out of all the basic necessities of the Islamic law. There is no doubt that preservation of the built heritage intervenes with all five necessities. In particular, the purposes of law, as most conservatives thought, are that the Islamic law came to establish interests of people and recover built heritage for the future. Nevertheless, the intent and objectives of the Islamic law is to sustain God's creation, and appoint the law toward both the private and public spheres (Rafe'a, 2009), and thus, preservation of built heritage is another tool to implement the Islamic law toward urbanism to serve both spheres.

#### 4.1 Principles to achieve good and prevent wrong

There are additional important concepts of preserving the built heritage in Islam; first, achieve good (تحقيق المصلحة), and second, prevent erroneous (درء المفسدة). Achieve public good to commit toward the environment for the task of worshiping, for which man was created in first place, and secure the concept of succession by constructing, planting and maintaining the present. As for the second concept, it is to fight against corruption of the environment including the damage of buildings and wasting available resources. The Holy Qur'an stated that all resources are blessings from God that require respect and preservation to keep and sustain.

And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe. وَإِذْ تَأَذَّرْتُكَ لِنِّسْكَ لَنِّ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ ۖ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ  
(سورة إبراهيم (7) (7) Surahat Ibrahim)

Precisely, the verse mentions that resources God created are one of the blessings surrounding mankind and we must perform thanks to maintain them, and avoid depreciate. It reflects the purposes of Islam in preservation of the environment, and utilizes the needed resources to exercise mankind's succession through architecture and maintenance. However, the development and exploitation of architecture through time create certain damages in the surrounding environment; yet, preservation brings architecture and overall environment in an appropriate shape to serve the contemporary society. Nonetheless, preservation of built heritage should not be practiced based on certain style or adjective (i.e. Islamic, Pharaonic, Buddhist, etc.) but because Islam encourages to sustain the values and morals that will remain and evolve after preservation (Mahdy, 1992), whatever it is and whom it belongs to. Actually, throughout the Islamic history, no structures related to Abrahamic religions were destroyed, and if took place it would be an act of violence and Islam prohibits this.

Aesthetically, built heritage and architecture are resources that shine with beauty and style in our cities, same as everything else in our environment that has beauty. The Lord states in the Qur'an.

O children of Adam, take your adornment at every masjid, and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess. Say (31). يَا بَنِي آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِندَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ (31)  
(سورة الأعراف (31) (32) Surahat Al-A'araf)

Abdullah bin Mas'ud (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Prophet (PBUH) said, "He who has, in his heart, an ant's weight of arrogance will not enter Jannah." Someone said: "A man likes to wear beautiful clothes and shoes?" Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "Allah is Beautiful, He loves beauty. Arrogance means ridiculing and rejecting the Truth and despising people. وعن عبد الله بن مسعود رضي الله عنه عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: "لا يدخل الجنة من كان في قلبه مثقال ذرة من كبر" فقال رجل "إن الرجل يحب أن يكون ثوبه حسناً ونعله ((حسناً؟ قال: "إن الله جميل يحب الجمال الكبر بطر الحق وغمط الناس" (رواه مسلم).

Beauty and perfection of external appearance is essential to Islam, as ordered by The Lord while people are going for prayers. Nevertheless, the Prophet's statement that our appearances are crucial and we need to show case. In our contemporary time, Ashraf Ibrahim (2105, p. 80) mentions that unfortunately we – as Muslims – did not explore the meaning of texts related to aesthetical beautification of our cities and architecture, he expands by elaborating that we lack a balance between our present needs and the thoughts our notions of beauty starting with our own heritage. Thus, if external beauty and good aesthetics were not preserved, then it would be missed and not replaced. However, there is different proposition that the human and moral values are the most important to be preserved. Thus, the aesthetical value and form are not what should only be preserved and should not contradict with any human well-being (Mahdy, 1992). Hence, Almighty honored mankind to live and utilize the environment, yet, with respect and care, to avoid causing any imbalance to the system (Mufraq, 2014) and eventually the whole urban structure. However, to achieve this practice of preservation, education is required to shape future generations of respecting built heritage and preserve its existing.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper presents the concept of preservation of built heritage within the circle of religious study, yet this is a challenging attempt to venture such sensitive and crucial topics from a religious perspective and it will open up counter arguments and discourses. Principally, mankind is the successor on Earth then he/she must maintain life and preserve the overall environment, in order to avoid corruption, pollution and any harm. In general, God mandates mankind to develop and preserve the environment. In this research, we clarified that mankind has the right to live in a healthy and well-built environment. We have discussed the Islamic principles and commitment toward urbanism and architecture to prevent the abuse of buildings through history. Urbanism includes architecture and any construction, but indeed the improvement of past architecture, renovate buildings to secure souls, and the ongoing maintenance to sustain vibrant and intact urbanism. Thus, the act of preservation secures the city with sense of justice, virtuous urbanization, and upholding past and future architecture. The study explored the concept of preservation through Islamic law while challenging the Radical ideologies of destruction; to initiate and clarify reformed understanding and new outcomes from the Islamic jurisprudence perspective. This will highlight the vital role of Jurisprudence (Fiqh) in human service and satisfaction of the society. The main aim of this study was to provide a renaissance in the understanding of built heritage preservation in Islamic contexts. Qur'anic verses made this possible through limited texts in their wording and broad in their meaning and implications. Thus, it is clear that the acts of destruction toward any inherited cultural heritage, such as the Buddha Statue in Bamiyan, or the world heritage site of Timbuktu in Mali, or Palmyra in the Levant is completely wrong and against the Islamic Law and prohibited. Thus, the jurisprudential analysis to support preservation of the built heritage and urbanism has succeeded in drawing a fundamental approach depending on the mental deduction; understand language semantics and reflection of text on present circumstances. This reformative approach is a progressive revolution in current time at the level of Islamic thought in general, collecting thoughts between rational curricula, dialectical and experimental evidences on the changing reality.

In conclusion, we can confirm that the preservation of the built heritage is legitimate from the Islamic law perspective; this is because Islam mandates mankind to utilize wisely the resources available to shape a proper physical and economic environment. Preservation of the built heritage returns with benefit to the major society and assures that resources are recycled to serve humanity for longer generations. However, the Islamic world consists of various geographical and historical contexts that require further research in relation to the concepts of ownership and maintenance toward the historic environments, to react toward

local cultural and norms in-depth not just the religious principles solely. This research will continue to investigate the degree of acceptance of the ideas presented earlier among the wider communities, Islamic scholars and institutions, and preservationists together to avoid any faulty gaps that may leads to other catastrophes and losses.

## Notes

1. Shiekh Nasr Bin Hamad Bin Fahd, a Saudi Islamic Jihadist scholar, born in January 1969 and brought up in Riyadh. After high school, he joined the Faculty of Engineering at King Saud University. Later, during his third year he got more religious and transferred to the Faculty of Shariah (Islamic Law) at the Islamic University of Imam Muhammad bin Saud. He was a prominent scholar and persistent toward his thoughts, later prisoned in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for three years, terminated of being an academic staff, and prisoned again till today due to his radical actions (Fahd, 2016). He authored the book discovered in this study “إقامة البرهان على وجوب كسر الأوثان” translated by the research author as *The Proof of Obligation to Destroy Idols*. For more information regarding this author, please visit [https://justpaste.it/Nasser\\_alfahaaad](https://justpaste.it/Nasser_alfahaaad)
2. All translated verses of the Qur’an were imported from the Electronic Holy Quran Project developed by King Saud University with the English translation at <http://quran.ksu.edu.sa/>. Moreover, for assurance purposes all translations were rechecked with a second source at <http://quran.com/1> to avoid any misleading information.
3. Imam Al-Ghazali’s Biography: Abu Hamid Ibn Muhammad Ibn Muhammad al-Tusi al-Shafi’i al-Ghazali was born in 1058 A.D. in Khorasan, Iran. He acquired a high standard of scholarship in religion and philosophy and was recognized as one of the most reputed institutions of learning in the golden era of Muslim history. He died in 1128 A.D. in Baghdad. Ghazali’s major contribution lies in religion, philosophy and Sufism. In religion, particularly mysticism, he cleansed the approach of Sufism of its excesses and reestablished the authority of the orthodox religion. He was a prolific writer. His immortal books include *Tuhafut al-Falasifa* (The incoherence of the philosophers), *Ihya’ Ulum al-Din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), “The Beginning of Guidance and his Autobiography”, “Deliverance from Error”. Some of his works were translated into European languages in the middle ages (Marvin, n.d.).
4. Definition of العمران: the word Umran here means “Urbanization” (Game’a, 2017) and it has various derivations, yet it is not meant the Science of Sociology as some scholars suggest, when Ibn Khaldun mentions “علم العمران” he means by this specific phrase “Social Science - علم الاجتماع” but this is not the case here. Below is the Arabic word with its definitions to validate the argument presented above. Please visit to the following link for more derivations and their meanings: [www.almaany.com/ar/dict/ar-ar/%D8%B9%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86/](http://www.almaany.com/ar/dict/ar-ar/%D8%B9%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86/)  
العُمْرَانُ : مَا يُعْمَرُ بِهِ الْبَلَدُ وَيُحَسَّنُ حَالَهُ بِوَسْاطَةِ الْفَلَاحَةِ وَالصَّنَاعَةِ وَالتَّجَارَةِ وَكثيرة الأهلِي وَيُجْح الأعمال والتمدن حَضَارَةٌ / عَمْرَانٌ : حَزْكَ وَأَعْمَالٌ وَتَشْيِيدٌ وَتَمَدُّنٌ / العُمْرَانُ : التَّبْيَاتُ
5. Taqi Kisra, which means Iwan of Khusraw, was once the palatial complex of Sasanian King Anushirvan Khusraw meant to earlier anthropologists such as Ibn Khaldun, that such great and massive structure represents strength and wealth of earlier civilizations.
6. As per the Oxford Dictionary, Salafist is a member of a strictly orthodox Sunni Muslim sect advocating a return to the early Islam of the Qur’an and Sunna (Prophet Practices), in all means of life, such as earlier dresses, practices, actions toward other Muslims and non-Muslims (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016). They are strict in their ideologies and barely accept other thoughts, moreover, they are against moderate thoughts and contemporaneity.

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