

Authenticity of The Hadith of The Sultan of Allah's Shadow on Earth and Its Popularity in Muslim Political History

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Abstract

The authenticity and political interpretation of the ḥadīth al-sultān ḥillullāh fī al-arḍ remain contested within Islamic scholarship, particularly concerning its role in legitimizing monarchical authority. This study investigates the ḥadīth through isnād criticism, matn criticism, and historical contextualisation. Primary sources include Kitāb al-Sunnah by Ibn Abī ‘Āsim, Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb by Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, Syu‘ab al-Īmān by al-Bayhaqī, complemented by Kuntowijoyo’s historical methodology. The findings reveal that while some transmitters are problematic, the existence of multiple transmission chains elevates the ḥadīth to the status of ḥasan li-ghayrih. In terms of matn, its content corresponds to Qur’anic principles of justice (‘adālah) and consultation (shūrā), framing leadership as a trust and a moral legitimacy for just rulers, rather than the sacralization of political authority. Historically, the circulation of this ḥadīth from the Umayyad and Abbasid periods to the Malay-Indonesian sultanates demonstrates its use as a political instrument to sustain authority. Theoretically, this study contributes to Islamic political thought by demonstrating that political aḥadīth function not only as normative-religious texts but also as mechanisms of legitimation and critique of power. Future research is recommended to employ comparative-historical and hermeneutical approaches to further contextualize the role of political ḥadīths in both classical Islamic governance and contemporary contexts.

Abstrak

Otentisitas dan penafsiran politik hadis al-sultān ḥillullāh fī al-arḍ masih menjadi perdebatan dalam kajian Islam, khususnya terkait penggunaannya dalam melegitimasi kekuasaan monarki. Penelitian ini bertujuan menelaah hadis tersebut melalui kritik isnād, kritik matan, dan analisis historis. Sumber utama yang digunakan meliputi Kitāb al-Sunnah karya Ibn Abī ‘Āsim, Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb karya Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, Syu‘ab al-Īmān karya al-Bayhaqī, serta metodologi sejarah Kuntowijoyo. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun terdapat perawi yang bermasalah, keberadaan banyak jalur periwayatan mengangkat hadis ini ke derajat ḥasan li-ghayrih. Dari sisi matan, kandungannya selaras dengan prinsip al-Qur’ān tentang keadilan (‘adālah) dan musyawarah (shūrā), sehingga lebih tepat dipahami sebagai amanah kepemimpinan dan legitimasi bagi penguasa yang adil, bukan sakralisasi kekuasaan. Secara historis, peredaran hadis ini dari era Umayyah, Abbasiyah, hingga kesultanan Melayu-Indonesia menunjukkan fungsinya sebagai instrumen politik dalam menopang otoritas. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan studi pemikiran politik Islam dengan menegaskan bahwa hadis-hadis politik berfungsi bukan hanya sebagai teks normatif-religius, tetapi juga sebagai mekanisme legitimasi dan kritik terhadap kekuasaan. Penelitian mendatang disarankan menggunakan pendekatan historis-komparatif dan hermeneutis untuk menelaah lebih jauh peran hadis politik, baik dalam pemerintahan Islam klasik maupun dalam konteks kontemporer.

Keywords

political ḥadīth; legitimacy of power; isnād and matn criticism; Islamic political thought; just leadership



Introduction

The ḥadīth *al-sultān ḡillullāh fi al-arḍ* (the ruler is God's shadow on earth) has been widely recognized in Islamic political discourse and frequently employed as an instrument to legitimize authority, maintain monarchical hegemony over society, and provide a shar'ī foundation for theocratic governance. This doctrine has been invoked since the period of the Umayyad¹ and Abbasid caliphates, the Ottoman Sultanate,² and even within the context of the Malay Sultanates in the Nusantara.³

This ḥadīth has often served to justify theocratic rule; nevertheless, it remains controversial regarding both its authenticity and interpretation. In terms of authenticity, some scholars deem it ṣaḥīḥ (authentic), whereas others classify it as ḍa'īf (weak). Interpretively, some align it with the general principles of Islamic law, while others contend that it contradicts them.

Ibn Taymiyyah, in *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, authenticates the ḥadīth both in transmission and meaning, interpreting it as a directive for rulers to embody divine attributes of mercy and compassion. He emphasizes that governance entails safeguarding public welfare, protection, and assistance, with societal prosperity hinging on the ruler's justice and virtue, while corruption leads to national decline.⁴ The majority of ḥadīth scholars, however, classify *al-sultān ḡillullāh fi al-arḍ* as ḍa'īf or even mawḍū', often attributing it to Ka'b al-Aḥbār, a Jewish convert associated with the transmission of Isrā'īliyyāt during the caliphate of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. Its themes correspond closely with Jabariyyah theology, which shaped Muslim political thought after the Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn. Maḥmūd Abū Rayyah, in *Aḍwā' 'Alā al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*, critiques the infiltration of Isrā'īliyyāt through transmitters such as Ka'b al-Aḥbār and Abū Hurayrah and challenges the doctrine of 'adālat al-ṣaḥābah.⁵ His critical approach - textual comparison, transmitter analysis, and rational scrutiny - supports the classification of this ḥadīth as weak or fabricated, noting its function in legitimizing political authority within Jabariyyah ideology. Two key issues thus arise: the ḥadīth's authenticity and the historical context that enabled its acceptance in Islamic political discourse.

This study adopts a qualitative, library-based approach, relying on both primary and secondary sources. The primary source is *Kitāb al-Sunnah* by Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, which preserves the text and chain of transmission of the ḥadīth *al-sultān ḡillullāh fi al-arḍ* and serves as the foundation for analyzing its isnād,

¹ Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 24–25, <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=Ow-mV50c2TUC>.

² S. M. Hārahap, *Da'wah dan Kekuasaan: Perspektif Lintas Sejarah Pemerintahan Islam* (unpublished manuscript, UIN Syekh 'Alī Ḥasan Aḥmad Addary, Padangsidimpuan, 2023), <http://repo.uinsyahada.ac.id/id/eprint/1165>.

³ Mohd Anuar Ramli et al., "Muslim–Malay Women in Political Leadership: Navigating Challenges and Shaping the Future," *Mazāhib: Jurnal Pemikiran Hukum Islam* 23, no. 1 (2024): 307, <https://share.google/O2dVqPux0a4YXyalt>.

⁴ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (Madīnah al-Munawwarah: Majma' al-Malik Fahd li-Tibā'at al-Muṣṣhaf al-Sharīf, 2004), 5:123.

⁵ Muḥammad Ṣobīrīn, "Hermeneutika Ḥadīth Maḥmūd Abū Rayyah dalam Kitāb Aḍwā' 'alā al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah (Kajian 'Adālat al-Ṣaḥābah)," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu al-Qur'ān dan al-Ḥadīth* 15, no. 1 (2014): 113–134, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2014.1501-06>.

matn, and authenticity.⁶ Secondary sources include classical works on hadith methodology, such as Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī's *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, which offers detailed accounts of transmitter reliability and the principles of hadith criticism,⁷ as well as historical studies like Kuntowijoyo's *Pengantar Ilmu Sejarah*, which outlines methodological steps in historical inquiry, heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography.⁸ This combined framework situates the hadith within its socio-political context and enables critical engagement with its historical reception within Islamic political thought.

The analysis was conducted in two stages: isnād criticism (*naqd al-sanad*), which involved assessing the continuity of the transmission chain and the credibility of narrators based on the principles of *jarḥ wa ta'dīl*; and matn criticism (*naqd al-matn*), which evaluated textual coherence, consistency with the Qur'an and authentic ahadith, and indicators of theological influence such as Jabariyyah thought. These were complemented by historical analysis to uncover the socio-political dynamics shaping the hadith's circulation. In line with the established methodology of hadith scholarship, isnād criticism represents external criticism (*naqd al-khārijī*), while matn criticism corresponds to internal criticism (*naqd al-dākhilī*).⁹ This dual framework, supported by reference to classical compilations of fabricated hadiths (*kutub al-mawḍū'āt*), offers a comprehensive assessment of the hadith's authenticity and its role in legitimizing political authority throughout Islamic history.

Mohd Muftaba Ahmed explores political legitimacy in the Delhi Sultanate (13th–14th centuries) through Qur'ānic verses, such as QS. al-Nisā' (4: 59), and related ḥadīths, including *al-sulṭān ḡillullāh fī al-arḍ*. While acknowledging its relevance, the study situates this ḥadīth within a broader synthesis of naqlī sources rather than as its primary focus.¹⁰ Al-Khayyāt, Ibrāhīm, and Maṣṣūr examine the "divine right" as a basis for tyranny, citing Qur'ānic verses and ḥadīths but without analyzing the isnād or matn of *al-sulṭān ḡillullāh fī al-arḍ*.¹¹ Similarly, Karjoo-Ravary discusses its symbolic role in political and Sufi contexts without a detailed authenticity assessment.¹² While these studies highlight the link between religious texts and political legitimacy, they emphasize historical and symbolic dimensions rather than

⁶ Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn 'Amr ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *al-Sunnaḥ*, ed. Nāṣir ibn 'Abd al-Karīm al-'Aql, vol. 2 (Riyāḍ: Dār al-Ṣumay'ī, 1998), 694–698, https://archive.org/details/14722Pdf/mode/1up?utm_source.

⁷ Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, ed. Muḥammad 'Awwāmah (Sūriyā: Dār al-Rashīd, 1986), <https://share.google/9EDrgWwCZX93mn2Nr>.

⁸ Kuntowijoyo, *Pengantar Ilmu Sejarah* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2018), https://archive.org/details/pengantar-ilmu-sejarah-by-kuntowijoyo-z-2/page/n2/mode/1up?utm_source.

⁹ Syuhudi Ismail, *Metodologi Kritik al-Ḥadīth* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1992), 5.

¹⁰ M. M. Ahmed, "Islamic Symbols of Authority: The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth in Delhi Sultanate's Political Legitimacy (13th–14th Centuries)," *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)* 7, no. 3 (2025): 1–15, <https://www.ijfmr.com/papers/2025/3/44009.pdf>.

¹¹ Mostafā Ḥasan Muḥammad al-Khayyāt, 'Abd al-Qaḥḥār bin Ibrāhīm, dan Nūr Ṣalīmah binti Abū Maṣṣūr, "Theory of Divine Right and Its Role in the Industry of Tyranny and the Position of the Islamic Da'wah to It," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 12, no. 12 (2022): 1699–1712, <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v12-i12/15972>.

¹² A. Karjoo-Ravary, "Adorning the King of Islam: Weaving and Unraveling History in Astarabadi's Feasting and Fighting," *Center for the Study of Material & Visual Cultures of Religion* (2022), <https://mavcor.yale.edu/mavcor-journal/adorning-king-islam-many-forms-fourteenth-century-persian-history>.

isnād or matn criticism. This study, by contrast, complements them through a focused examination of isnād, matn, and historical context, thereby offering a distinctive contribution to ḥadīth studies within political legitimacy discourse.

This research is timely and significant because the ḥadīth continues to be invoked to justify authoritarian rule, thereby providing theological legitimacy for practices that contradict Islamic principles of justice (‘adālah) and consultation (shūrā). A rigorous reassessment of its authenticity and interpretative meaning is therefore vital for advancing ḥadīth scholarship and enriching contemporary Islamic political discourse. Moreover, such inquiry contributes to the development of civic education grounded in the values of justice and accountability within Islamic thought.

Authenticity of the Hadith: The Sultan is the Shadow of God on Earth

The ḥadīth *al-sultān ḡillullāh fī al-arḍ* is attributed to several Companions ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, Abū Bakrah, Abū Hurayrah, Anas ibn Mālīk, and Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān—as well as the tābi‘ī Kathīr ibn Murrah. This study highlights the versions from Ibn ‘Umar, ‘Umar, and Kathīr as representative of the main transmission lines. One narration, reported through Kathīr, states:

إن السلطان ظل الله في الأرض، يأوي إليه كل مظلوم من عباده، فإذا عدل كان له الأجر وعلى الرعية الشكر، وإذا جار كان عليه»
«الإصر وعلى الرعية الصبر

“Indeed, the Sultan is the shadow of Allah on earth. Every oppressed servant seeks refuge in him. If he is just, he is rewarded and the people are grateful; if unjust, he bears the sin, and the people must endure with patience.” While transmitters like Mu‘āwiyah ibn Ṣālīḥ and Abū al-Zahriyyah are considered reliable, Kathīr’s status as a tābi‘ī renders the chain *mursal* and thus weak (ḍa‘īf).

The narration from Ibn ‘Umar, transmitted through Sa‘īd bin Sinan Abu Mahdi, classified as *matrūk* and accused of fabrication, is considered weak due to both unreliable transmitters and a broken chain that ends with the tābi‘ī Kathīr ibn Murrah. Similarly, the version from ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, reported by Abū Nu‘aym, is also weak because its chain includes ‘Amr bin ‘Abd al-Ghaffar al-Faqīmī, who has likewise been judged *matrūk al-ḥadīth* and accused of forgery. Both isnāds, therefore, are lacking in reliability despite conveying the theme of the ruler as “the shadow of Allah on earth.”

‘Amr bin ‘Abd al-Ghaffar al-Faqīmī was severely criticized in *jarḥ wa ta’dīl*. Al-Bukhārī classified him as *matrūk* in *al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr*,¹³ Ibn Ḥibbān listed him in *al-Majrūḥīn* as a transmitter of fabricated reports,¹⁴ and Ibn ‘Adī identified him as a fabricator in *al-Kāmil fī Ḍu‘afā’ al-Rijāl*.¹⁵

¹³ al-Bukhārī, *al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr*, vol. 6 (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1986), 254.

¹⁴ Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Majrūḥīn*, vol. 2 (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 1976), 93.

¹⁵ Ibn ‘Adī, *al-Kāmil fī Ḍu‘afā’ al-Rijāl*, vol. 6 (Bayrūt: Dār al-Fikr, 1997), 409.

Consequently, his narrations cannot serve as valid evidence. Al-Ṣanʿānī, in *al-Tanwīr Sharḥ al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaghīr*, cites three ḥadīths on leadership using the phrase “The Sultan is the shadow of Allah on earth”: advising rulers sincerely, the necessity of governance for social order, and rulers as a refuge for the oppressed.¹⁶ While transmitted by figures such as Anas ibn Mālik and Ibn ʿUmar, al-Ṣanʿānī emphasizes that these reports suffer from weak chains of transmission.

Muḥammad ibn Yūnus al-Qurashī (al-Kudaymī) was declared a fabricator by Ibn ʿAdī, with al-Dhahabī confirming his unreliability in *al-Ḍuʿafāʾ*.¹⁷ Hence, these ḥadīth cannot serve as a sound legal basis, although their moral message concerning just leadership remains valuable. Legally, they require corroboration from stronger textual or empirical evidence. Overall, *al-Sulṭān ḥillullāhi fī al-arḍ* is weak in both sanad and matan: its chains are mursal and include narrators judged munkar or fabricators, while al-ʿIrāqī in *Takhrīj Aḥādīth al-Iḥyāʾ* deems the Abū Hurayrah route ḍaʿīf.¹⁸ The matan is likewise weak, reflecting Jabariyyah ideology traced by al-Idlibī to Kaʿb al-Aḥbār.

In hadith studies, reports are classified as weak (ḍaʿīf) if their sanad is disconnected, includes unreliable narrators, or their matan contradicts established Islamic principles or empirical reality.¹⁹ Scholars such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-Nawawī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī developed rigorous criteria for authentic (ṣaḥīḥ) hadith: a continuous sanad, narrators who are upright (ʿadl) and precise (ḍābiṭ), and freedom from hidden defects (ʿillah) or anomalies (shādh-dh). However, modern critics such as Schacht and Juynboll argue that isnāds often reflect later constructs serving legal or political purposes. Hence, ḥadīth analysis must extend beyond *sanad* evaluation to encompass historical context and the socio-political functions of transmission.²⁰

Criticism of Hadith and Its Implications for Political Legitimacy

The ḥadīth *al-sulṭān ḥillullāh fī al-arḍ* remains a subject of debate in Islamic political discourse, particularly concerning its authenticity and function. Classical scholars such as al-Bukhārī and Muslim prioritized sanad and matn criticism, while Orientalists such as Goldziher and Schacht employed historical-critical methods, viewing political ḥadīths as later socio-political constructs.²¹

¹⁶ Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Ṣanʿānī, *al-Tanwīr Sharḥ al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaghīr*, ed. Muḥammad Ishāq Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, vol. 6 (Riyāḍ: Maktabat Dār al-Salām, 2011), 474.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī, *Takhrīj Aḥādīth al-Iḥyāʾ* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Fikr, 1990), 4:17.

¹⁹ ʿAbd al-Jabbār ibn Hādī ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Marrānī, “Types of Ḥadīths That Have Been Weakened by Ḥadīth Scholars in Terms of the Authenticity of the Chain of Transmission and the Correctness of the Meaning,” *International Journal of Religion* 5, no. 1 (2024): 474–500, <https://doi.org/10.61707/yykf0g32>.

²⁰ Kamaruddīn Amīn, “The Reliability of the Traditional Science of Ḥadīth: A Critical Reconsideration,” *al-Jāmiʿah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 43, no. 2 (2005): 261.

²¹ Muḥammad Nūr Aḥsan, “Dari Sejarah ke Studi Ḥadīth: Memahami Metode Sejarah Kritis dan Penanggalan Ḥadīth di Barat,” *al-Quds: Jurnal Studi al-Qurʾān dan Ḥadīth* 5, no. 2 (2021): 439–451, <https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v5i2.2611>.

Fuat Sezgin refuted Goldziher's claim of purely oral transmission by demonstrating the existence of early written compilations, thereby affirming both historical continuity and the relative reliability of ḥadīth transmission.²² His findings reinforce the authenticity of *al-sulṭān ẓillullāh fī al-arḍ* and enrich its understanding within Islamic political thought.²³ In contrast, Schacht and Juynboll maintained that isnād often served as a retrospective fabrication for legal or political purposes.²⁴ This methodological divergence underscores differing interpretive frameworks between Islamic and Western scholarship. Overall, the ḥadīth's recurring use across Islamic dynasties and modern contexts reveals that its importance lies not only in transmission but also in interpretation, reflecting the enduring interaction between religion and political authority.

The Ḥadīth: The Sultan is the Shadow of God on Earth as a Political Concept

There is no consensus on the notion of a theocratic state following the Prophet. The early caliphs adopted the title *Khalīfat Rasūlillāh* rather than *Khalīfatullāh* or *Zillullāh*, signifying political succession rather than a divine mandate. Abū Bakr explicitly rejected being called "Caliph of Allah," affirming his role only as the Prophet's successor. The latter title *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* reflected leadership of the community, not divine representation. Scholars such as 'Abd al-Raḥmān Sālim emphasize that Islam does not recognize religious hierarchy, and the sacralization of rulers derives from pre-Islamic traditions used to legitimize power. Historical evidence further shows that even the Abbasids did not employ titles like *Khalīfatullāh* or *Zillullāh*.²⁵

In the Nusantara context, the conferral of religious titles on sultans served as a means of legitimizing authority. Tawalinuddin Haris shows that in the Kasultanan Samawa, such titles reflected responses to 17th–20th century political and social dynamics.²⁶ Endang Rochmiatun's study of Palembang Sultanate manuscripts reveals the use of religious elements for economic legitimacy and civilizational identity.²⁷ Agus Iswanto further notes the Yogyakarta Palace's ongoing use of religious symbolism through digital cultural literacy.²⁸ Notably, no evidence suggests that the Abbasids adopted titles like

²² Muḥammad 'Alwī Nāṣir, Zulfahmī 'Alwī, and Siti 'Ā'isyah Karā, "Fuat Sezgin's Thoughts on Ḥadīth Criticism: Revisiting Ignaz Goldziher's Views on Doubts About the Authenticity of Ḥadīth," *al-Quds: Jurnal Studi al-Qur'ān dan Ḥadīth* 8, no. 3 (2024): 439, <https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v8i3.8807>.

²³ *Ibid.*, 513.

²⁴ Muḥammad Nūr Aḥsan, "Dari Sejarah ke Studi Ḥadīth: Memahami Metode Sejarah Kritis dan Penanggalan Ḥadīth di Barat," *al-Quds: Jurnal Studi al-Qur'ān dan Ḥadīth* 5, no. 2 (2021): 450, <https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v5i2.2611>.

²⁵ 'Abd al-Raḥmān Sālim, *al-Muṣlimūn wa al-Rūm fī 'Aṣr al-Nubuwwah* (Miṣr: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 2000), 154.

²⁶ Tawālīnuddīn Ḥāris, "Kasultanan Samawa di Pulau Sumbawa dalam Kurun Waktu Abad XVII–XX," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 13, no. 1 (2015): 1–30, <https://share.google/72Vkb6n3ltYT32BI>

²⁷ Endang Rochmiatun, "Perubahan Ekonomi dan Perkembangan Peradaban Islam di Palembang Abad XVII–XIX M: Telaah atas Naskah-naskah Kontrak Sultan Palembang," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 13, no. 2 (2015): 369–392, <https://jlka.kemenag.go.id/index.php/lektur/article/view/231>.

²⁸ Agus Iswanto, "Keraton Yogyakarta dan Praktik Literasi Budaya Keagamaan Melalui Media Digital," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 17, no. 2 (2019): 321–348, <https://jlka.kemenag.go.id/index.php/lektur/article/view/598>.

Khalīfatullāh or *Zillullāh*, underscoring that such sacralized titles were political strategies rather than doctrinal imperatives.

Al-Ghazālī recognized the concept of *Zillullāh fī al-Arḍ* as central to Sunni political thought but interpreted it as a mandate for divine justice, not divine superiority. In *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk*, he portrayed the ideal ruler as embodying justice, knowledge, integrity, compassion, and wisdom—reflecting humanity's role as *khalīfah*. Leadership, he argued, is a moral and intellectual trust (*amānah*) grounded in justice and accountability rather than in status or title. Power devoid of justice, he warned, inevitably leads to corruption and societal decay.²⁹

The Title of *Zillullāh fī al-Arḍ*: Origins and Development

Throughout Islamic history, ḥadīths have served as key sources of political legitimacy. The ḥadīth *al-sulṭān ḡillullāhī fī al-arḍ* (the sultan is the shadow of God on earth), despite weaknesses in both sanad and matan, has profoundly influenced Islamic political doctrine by legitimizing monarchical authority. In Malay-Muslim contexts, interpretations of such ḥadīths reinforced male-dominated leadership as both a religious and social duty.³⁰ The concept of *Zillullāh fī al-Arḍ* subsequently replaced the Hindu-Buddhist Devaraja system, incorporating Islamic notions of sacred kingship.³¹ Similarly, in broader Sunni thought, this ḥadīth underpinned doctrines promoting obedience and stability, often elevating rulers as divinely sanctioned figures.³² Hence, a historical-contextual study is essential to reveal how religious texts have been employed to construct political legitimacy across Islamic societies.

The title of “the ruler as the shadow of God on earth” first emerged during the late Abbasid period.³³ Mid-Abbasid sources, such as Ibn Abī ‘Āṣim’s *al-Sunnah*, include a chapter emphasizing respect for rulers, where most ḥadīths are weak (ḡa‘īf) except *al-sulṭān ḡillullāh fī al-arḍ*, which he classifies as ḡasan (sound).³⁴ Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds note that the idea originated in the Umayyad era as a theological-political construct rather than an authentic Prophetic doctrine.³⁵ Jaradat and al-Balādhurī further report that ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān invoked the phrase “the sultan is the

²⁹ Aḡmad Manba‘ūl Ulūm, “Negara Adil dan Makmur (Refleksi Filsafat Politik al-Ghazālī),” *Politea: Jurnal Pemikiran Politik Islam* 5, no. 1 (2022): 124, <https://journal.iainkudus.ac.id/index.php/politea/article/view/14529>.

³⁰ Mohd Anuar Ramli et al., “Muslim–Malay Women in Political Leadership: Navigating Challenges and Shaping the Future,” *Mazāhib: Jurnal Pemikiran Ḥukum Islam* 23, no. 1 (2024): 307, <https://doi.org/10.21093/mj.v23i1.7500>. <https://share.google/rvnoMvxmBma3amutM>.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 308, 310

³² *Ibid.*, 313

³³ S. M. Ḥarahap, *Dakwah dan Kekuasaan: Perspektif Lintas Sejarah Pemerintahan Islam* (unpublished manuscript, UIN Syekh ‘Alī Ḥasan Aḡmad Addary, Padangsidimpuan, 2023), 15–17, <http://repo.uinsyahada.ac.id/id/eprint/1165>.

³⁴ Abū Bakr Aḡmad ibn ‘Amr ibn Abī ‘Āṣim, *al-Sunnah*, ed. Nāṣir ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm al-‘Aql, vol. 2 (Riyād: Dār al-Ṣumay‘ī, 1998), 694–698, https://archive.org/details/14722Pdf/mode/1up?utm_source

³⁵ Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God’s Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 24–25, <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=Ow-mV50c2TUC>.

shadow of God on earth” to reinforce his rule, demonstrating how Jabariyyah theology and religious rhetoric were instrumentalized to consolidate political power.³⁶

The concept of *Zillullāh fī al-Arḍ* (Shadow of God on Earth) served as a title for sultans asserting divine legitimacy as Allah’s trustees on earth. In the Malay world, it supplanted the pre-Islamic Devaraja belief, reinterpreting kingship as a sacred *amānah* to uphold religion and divine law. Malay rulers such as Sultan Muḥammad Shah, Sultan Muzaffar Shah, and Sultan Mansur Shah adopted this concept to strengthen both religious and socio-political authority within a hierarchical order.³⁷

Similar expressions appeared in Ottoman and Nasrid architecture, including calligraphic inscriptions in the Topkapi and Alhambra Palaces, where rulers proclaimed themselves *Zillullāh fī al-Arḍ*. One Nasrid inscription reads: *Zillullāh ‘alā al-jamī’* (The Shadow of God over all things)”, symbolizing the fusion of religious and political legitimacy in Islamic rulership.³⁸ Such poetic inscriptions not only reinforced the ruler’s legitimacy but also symbolized the intertwining of religious and political authority within the governance of the Nasrid Sultanate.

In the Malay royal tradition, *Zillullāhi fī al-Arḍ* functioned as both an honorary and political title that reinforced royal authority. As noted by Jajat Burhanudin, Islam deeply shaped Malay politics, with rulers adopting titles like *khalīfah* and *Zillullāh fī al-‘Ālam* to affirm their dual religious and political roles. Yet, governance in practice was largely managed by officials—historically the Bendahara and Laksamana, and later by modern bureaucratic elites, indicating that while the title symbolized sovereignty, real power rested in bureaucratic structures.³⁹

Matn Criticism

A systematic analysis of the matn of the ḥadīth *al-sultān zillullāh fī al-arḍ* is essential to ensure alignment with the procedures of matn criticism developed by the scholars of ḥadīth. *First*, from the aspect of conformity with the Qur’ān, this ḥadīth presents a problem insofar as it appears to legitimize political authority in absolute terms without reference to the principles of ‘*adālah* (justice) and *shūrā* (consultation). The Qur’ān emphasizes that legitimate leadership must be established upon the principle of justice (QS. al-Naḥl [16]: 90) and consultation (QS. al-Shūrā [42]: 38). These two verses explicitly repudiate notions of absolute legitimacy that negate the space for criticism and accountability of rulers. Furthermore, in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 30, Allah designates Prophet Adam (As.) as *khalīfah fī al-arḍ*.

³⁶ Aḥmad ibn Yahyā al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, vol. 7 (Bayrūt: Dār al-Fikr, 1997), 111.

³⁷ Muḥammad ‘Aidīl Adhā bin Zulkurnain, *Pengaruh Feudalisme dalam Masyarakat Melayu* (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2023), 9.

³⁸ José Miguel Puerta Vilchez, *Reading the Al-Hamra: A Visual Guide to the Alhambra Through Its Inscriptions* (Granada: The Alhambra and Generalife, 2015), 46, 107.

³⁹ Jajat Burhanudin, “The Triumph of Ruler: Islam and Statecraft in Pre-Colonial Malay Archipelago,” *al-Jāmi‘ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 55, no. 1 (2017): 211–240, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2017.551.211-240>.

According to al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 AH), contextually khalīfah may be defined as a servant of God entrusted with the mandate to act as God's vicegerent on earth, implementing His laws and commands within human society.⁴⁰ Thus, leadership in the Qur'ānic perspective is a trust (amānah) aimed at promoting universal welfare rather than conferring absolute sacred authority.

Second, in terms of correlation with other ḥadīths, it is important to note the wording preserved in al-Sunnah by Ibn Abī 'Āṣim (no. 1058):

«السُّلْطَانُ ظِلُّ اللَّهِ فِي الْأَرْضِ، فَمَنْ أَكْرَمَهُ أَكْرَمَ اللَّهُ، وَمَنْ أَهَانَهُ أَهَانَهُ اللَّهُ»

which Ibn Abī 'Āṣim (d. 287 AH) classified as ḥasan,⁴¹ is the primary narration to be compared with the version transmitted by al-Bayhaqī in *Su'ab al-Īmān* (no. 6985):

«إن السلطان ظل الله في الأرض يأوي إليه كل مظلوم من عباده، فإذا عدل كان له الأجر وعلى الرعية الشكر، وإذا جار كان عليه»
«الإصر وعلى الرعية الصبر»

which al-Bayhaqī (d. 458 AH) regarded as ḍa'if jiddan.⁴²

These two variants demonstrate that the phrase *al-sultān ḡillullāh fī al-arḍ* should not be interpreted in isolation but in relation to its explanatory clause (tafsīr al-khabar). In Ibn Abī 'Āṣim's narration, it stresses the duty to honor rulers, while in al-Bayhaqī's version, it depicts the ruler as a refuge for the oppressed, contingent upon his justice. Thus, "the shadow of God on earth" conveys a metaphorical meaning—leadership as a divine trust that protects the people, akin to a cloud offering shade. This interpretation aligns with the ḥadīth of Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī:

«إِنَّ مِنْ إِجْلَالِ اللَّهِ إِكْرَامَ ذِي الشَّيْبَةِ الْمُسْلِمِ، وَحَامِلِ الْقُرْآنِ غَيْرِ الْغَالِي فِيهِ وَالْجَافِي عَنْهُ، وَإِكْرَامَ ذِي السُّلْطَانِ الْمَقْسُطِ»

which affirms that honoring a just ruler constitutes part of glorifying Allah, recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ Abī Dāwūd no. 4843 and classified as ḥasan by al-Albānī (d. 1420 AH).⁴³ This ḥadīth cannot be used to justify honoring unjust rulers, as its clauses indicate that the proper response to tyranny is ṣabr (patience)—restraint coupled with truthful counsel. A literal reading risks legitimizing despotism; however, when contextualized with Qur'ānic principles and authentic ḥadīths, *al-sultān ḡillullāh fī al-arḍ* underscores the

⁴⁰ Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī, assisted by Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Yūnus (Bayrūt: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2006), 394–395, <https://share.google/GGQcbGRWQM3LpnT6o>.

⁴¹ Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn 'Amr ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *al-Sunnah*, ed. Nāṣir ibn 'Abd al-Karīm al-'Aql, vol. 2 (Riyāḍ: Dār al-Ṣumay'ī, 1998), 694–698, https://archive.org/details/14722Pdf/mode/1up?utm_source.

⁴² Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *Su'ab al-Īmān*, ed. 'Abd al-'Alī 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ḥamīd, supervised by Mukhtār Aḥmad al-Nadwī, 1st ed. (Riyāḍ: Maktabat al-Rushd in cooperation with al-Dār al-Salafiyyah, Bombay, 1423 AH/2003 CE), 9:475–476, <https://shamela.ws/book/10660/4825#p1>.

⁴³ Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān ibn al-Ash'ath al-Sijistānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, taḥqīq Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, vol. 1 (Riyāḍ: Maktabah al-Ma'ārif li-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', 1998), 189, <https://share.google/pAjQCEFsQFQt8sWuS>.

ruler's duty to uphold justice, not absolute power. Hence, from matn criticism, its meaning is ḥasan li-ghayrih, reflecting the Qur'ān's universal values of justice and public welfare.

Analysis of Transmitters and Data

The study of the isnād of the ḥadīth *al-sultān ẓillullāh fī al-arḍ* necessitates an in-depth analysis of the transmitters involved in its transmission chains, as the authenticity of a ḥadīth is highly dependent upon the credibility of its narrators. This ḥadīth was transmitted through multiple companions, two of whom are Abū Bakrah (d. 51 AH), who is recognized as thiqaḥ (trustworthy) and meticulous in transmission, and 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar (d. 73 AH), known for his strictness and precision (mutashaddid) in transmitting reports.

Ibn Abī 'Āṣim (d. 287 AH) recorded this ḥadīth in *al-Sunnah* and classified it as ḥasan,⁴⁴ whereas al-Bayhaqī (d. 458 AH) included it in *Syū'ab al-Īmān* with the status of ḍa'īf jiddan.⁴⁵ The complete chain (isnad) through the chain of Abū Bakrah is as follows: "Al-Muqaddamī narrated to us, Muslim ibn Sa'īd al-Khawlānī narrated to us, Ḥumayd ibn Mihrān narrated to us, from Sa'īd ibn Aws, from Ziyād ibn Kusayb, from Abū Bakrah."⁴⁶ Meanwhile, the isnād transmitted through the chain of Ibn 'Umar is: "Abū Sa'd al-Mālīnī informed us, Abū Aḥmad ibn 'Adī informed us, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Qutaybah narrated to us, Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn 'Umar Ruwād narrated to us, Bishr ibn Bakr narrated to us, Sa'īd ibn Sinān narrated to us, from Abū al-Zāhiriyyah, from Kathīr ibn Murrah, from Ibn 'Umar."⁴⁷

Several narrators in these two transmission routes, when evaluated by Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, one of the major authorities in *jarḥ wa-ta'dīl* through his *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, show a range of reliability. In the chain of Abū Bakrah, the Companion Abū Bakrah himself is a well-known thiqaḥ mashhūr. Ziyād ibn Kusayb is evaluated as maqbūl, meaning his narrations are acceptable provided they are corroborated by other chains, and he belongs to the third ṭabaqah. Sa'īd ibn Aws ibn Thābit Abū Zayd al-Anṣārī (d. 223 AH), a grammarian from Basra, is judged as ṣadūq (truthful and generally reliable) though prone to some errors (awḥām), and he is placed in the ninth ṭabaqah.⁴⁸ In the chain of Ibn 'Umar, the disputed transmitter is Sa'īd ibn Sinān, who is considered by the scholars to be ṣadūq (truthful and

⁴⁴ Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn 'Amr ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *al-Sunnah*, ed. Nāṣir ibn 'Abd al-Karīm al-'Aql, vol. 2 (Riyāḍ: Dār al-Ṣumay'ī, 1998), 694–698, https://archive.org/details/14722Pdf/mode/1up?utm_source.

⁴⁵ Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, ed. 'Abd al-'Alī 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ḥamīd, supervised by Mukhtār Aḥmad al-Nadwī, 1st ed. (Riyāḍ: Maktabat al-Rushd in cooperation with al-Dār al-Salafiyyah, Bombay, 1423 AH/2003 CE), 9:475–476, <https://shamela.ws/book/10660/4825#p1>.

⁴⁶ Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn 'Amr ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *al-Sunnah*, ed. Nāṣir ibn 'Abd al-Karīm al-'Aql, vol. 2 (Riyāḍ: Dār al-Ṣumay'ī, 1998), 694–698, https://archive.org/details/14722Pdf/mode/1up?utm_source.

⁴⁷ Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, ed. 'Abd al-'Alī 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ḥamīd, supervised by Mukhtār Aḥmad al-Nadwī, 1st ed. (Riyāḍ: Maktabat al-Rushd in cooperation with al-Dār al-Salafiyyah, Bombay, 1423 AH/2003 CE), 9:475–476, <https://shamela.ws/book/10660/4825#p1>.

⁴⁸ Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, ed. Muḥammad 'Awwāmah (Sūriyā: Dār al-Rashīd, 1986), 347, 374. <https://share.google/9EDrgWwCZX93mn2Nr>.

generally acceptable), although some of his narrations contain *wahm* (errors). He is categorized within the sixth *ṭabaqah*.⁴⁹

Overall, the *isnād* of the *ḥadīth al-sulṭān ẓillullāh fī al-arḍ* through Abū Bakrah is relatively stronger than that of Ibn 'Umar, as most of its narrators are *ṣadūq* or *maqḅūl*, though corroboration from other chains remains necessary. By contrast, the Ibn 'Umar route is weaker due to Sa'īd ibn Sinān's frequent errors. Nevertheless, when both transmission lines corroborate with each other, the *ḥadīth* can be elevated from *ḍa'īf* to *ḥasan li-ghayrih*, since its weaknesses are not severe. Hence, scholars' classification of this *ḥadīth* as *ḥasan li-ghayrih* is methodologically justified. Doctrinally, it emphasizes that rulership is a divine trust bound by justice and public welfare, not a means of absolute or sacred authority.

Summary Table of Disputed Transmitters (*Mukhtalaf fih*) in the *Isnād* of the *Ḥadīth al-sulṭān ẓillullāh fī al-arḍ*

1. Chain of Abū Bakrah

No.	Disputed Transmitter (<i>Mukhtalaf fih</i>)	Ṭabaqah	Scholars' Evaluation	Remarks
1.	Ziyād ibn Kusayb	3rd	<i>Maqḅūl</i> → acceptable if corroborated	His status is not as strong as <i>thiqah</i> ; his reports require supporting evidence (<i>shāhid</i> or <i>mutāba'ah</i>).
2.	Sa'īd ibn Aws ibn Thābit al-Anṣārī (Abū Zayd)	9th	<i>Ṣadūq</i> (truthful), but prone to many <i>awḥām</i> (errors)	A grammarian from Basra; acknowledged for his honesty but susceptible to transmission mistakes.

2. Chain of Ibn 'Umar

No.	Disputed Transmitter (<i>Mukhtalaf fih</i>)	Ṭabaqah	Scholars' Evaluation	Remarks
1.	Sa'īd ibn Sinān	6th	<i>Ṣadūq</i> (truthful), but frequently mistaken (<i>wahm</i>)	Represents the main weakness in the chain of Ibn 'Umar, thereby rendering the <i>isnād</i> comparatively weaker.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 381.

Considering the quality of the transmitters, the isnād of the ḥadīth *al-sulṭān ḡillullāh fī al-arḍ* through Abū Bakrah is relatively stronger, as most narrators are ṣadūq or maqbūl, while the Ibn ‘Umar chain is weaker due to Sa‘īd ibn Sinān’s frequent errors. When both chains corroborate each other, the ḥadīth may be elevated to the status of ḥasan li-ghayrih. However, the significant chronological gaps among transmitters in the third, sixth, and ninth ṭabaqāt suggest a low probability of direct encounter (liqā’), thereby affecting its continuity. Hence, the ḥadīth’s reliability depends not only on the narrator’s credibility but also on chronological coherence, which necessitates corroboration from additional chains to affirm its validity.

From the Shī‘ī perspective, the ḥadīth *al-sulṭān ḡillullāh fī al-arḍ* is not understood merely as political legitimization in the manner of the Sunnī tradition but is closely tied to the doctrine of imāmah. Sunnīs emphasize this ḥadīth as a symbol of legitimizing rulers in maintaining social order and the implementation of the sharī‘ah, whereas the Shī‘ah reject such generalization, asserting that only the infallible Imām (al-imām al-ma‘šūm) or his legitimate representative can be properly described as the “shadow of God” on earth. Since the earliest period of Islam, the Shī‘ah have upheld the view that Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib’s leadership was divinely appointed by the Prophet during the events of Da‘wat dhu ‘l-‘Ashīra and Ghadīr Khumm, thereby affirming that imāmah is divinely ordained rather than a product of political consensus.⁵⁰

Moreover, the metaphorical interpretation of “shadow” within Shī‘ī discourse extends beyond the political symbolism to the theological meaning, representing the Imām as a luminous guide for the community. Narratives regarding the absence of the Imam’s physical shadow are thus understood as an affirmation of their exalted spiritual status rather than literal descriptions.⁵¹ In contemporary Shī‘ī thought, Imam Khomeini reinterprets the “shadow of God” motif as a foundation for legitimizing the concept of *wilāyat al-faqīh* in the era of occultation (ghaybah), whereby the jurist (faqīh) acts as the rightful representative of the Imām al-Zamān, exercising both spiritual and political authority. This reinterpretation marks a fundamental departure from the Sunnī doctrine of the khilāfah, emphasizing divine guardianship over communal consensus.⁵²

⁵⁰ S. M. Rizvi, *Shi‘ism, Imamate and Wilayat* (Toronto: Al-Ma‘ārif Books, 1999), 7–8, 13–14, https://najaf.org/books/pdf/239.pdf?utm_source.

⁵¹ M. Kohantorabi, “Validating of Belief in Luminous Bodies of Impeccable Imams in Narrative Sources of Farīqayn (Shia and Sunni): A Case Study—Belief in the Absence of Shadow,” *Hadith Studies and Researches* 1, no. 2 (2024): 169–202, <https://doi.org/10.22034/HSR.2024.13607>.

⁵² Z. Azhar, “Leadership in Modern Shī‘ī Thought: Examining the Theory of Imam Khomeini,” *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 8, no. 2 (2023): 55–75, https://ajis.com.au/index.php/ajis/article/download/533/247/3119?utm_source.

Political Implications in History

Normatively, the ḥadīth *al-sultān ḥillullāh fī al-arḍ* portrays the just ruler as the “shadow of God on earth,” whose justice sustains social and political order. Historically, however, this ḥadīth evolved from a moral axiom into an instrument of political legitimation, employed by both just and authoritarian rulers. During the Umayyad dynasty, the consultative nature of the caliphate transformed into a hereditary monarchy when Mu‘āwiyah appointed Yazīd as his successor,⁵³ while the Abbasids consolidated their authority through the doctrine of divine representation and strategic patronage of the ‘ulamā’.⁵⁴ Similar patterns appeared in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, where local sultans, together with the Wali Songo, integrated Islam into indigenous traditions—a legacy later institutionalized by Nahdlatul Ulama through the concept of Islam Nusantara.⁵⁵ Thus, across historical and political contexts, both virtuous and oppressive rulers have repeatedly invoked this ḥadīth to justify their authority.

In Shī‘ī political thought, however, the legitimacy of authority is not determined merely by moral claims as implied in the ḥadīth *al-sultān ḥillullāh fī al-arḍ* but must instead be rooted in the twin principles of imāmah and ‘adl. An unjust ruler is considered to have forfeited all legitimacy, and obedience to such a ruler is even deemed impermissible. This principle is exemplified by the stance of Imām Ḥusayn, who refused to pledge allegiance (bay‘ah) to Yazīd and instead chose to struggle for *amr bi ‘l-ma‘rūf wa nahy ‘an al-munkar*, thereby transforming resistance against tyranny into a religious obligation.⁵⁶ This underscores that Shī‘ī political doctrine not only legitimizes but also sanctifies resistance to unjust regimes.

From a historical perspective, the ḥadīth primarily functions as a moral framework for righteous governance. By principle, the guarantee of justice applies exclusively to the four *al-khulafā’ al-rāshidūn*, whereas subsequent rulers did not inherit this divine assurance, resulting in variations between just and unjust leadership. Therefore, the theoretical implication that may be drawn is that legitimation based on this ḥadīth is only valid when two conditions are fulfilled simultaneously: the ruler must be just, and rebellion must be directed against that just ruler. If either condition is absent, then invoking this ḥadīth as an absolute source of political legitimation becomes untenable.

⁵³ R. Doğan, “Analysing the Institution of Caliphate in the Context of Political Islamists,” *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 15 (2019): 116–122, <https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.15.2019.011>.

⁵⁴ Firdaus Sudirman et al., “Islamic Political Theory During the Abbasid Government and Its Implications Toward Education,” *BIS-HSS 2020 Conference Proceedings* (2021): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.18-11-2020.2311803>.

⁵⁵ H. Katō, “The Islam Nusantara Movement in Indonesia,” in *Islamic Thought in Southeast Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 111–118, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004435544_008.

⁵⁶ Muḥsin Kadivar, *An Analysis of Shi‘ite Political Thought* (Amman: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2023). lkjh, 20–24, <https://share.google/unaNLh6NBsQ2QZ43j>.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the ḥadīth *al-sultān ẓillullāh fī al-arḍ* attains the status of *ḥasan li-ghayrih* through corroborative transmission chains, with its meaning harmonized with Qur'ānic principles of justice ('adālah) and consultation (shūrā). Historically, its application from the Umayyad and Abbasid periods to the Malay-Indonesian sultanates illustrates how the ḥadīth served as a theological and political instrument for legitimizing rule. Theoretically, this research demonstrates that political ḥadīths function not merely as normative-religious texts but as discursive frameworks for constructing and critiquing political authority. Future studies are encouraged to employ comparative and hermeneutical methodologies to further contextualize the relevance of such ḥadīths in both classical Islamic governance and contemporary political thought.

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