Revisiting the Legacy: The Ongoing Discourse on Hadith of Ghadīr Khumm in Shiʻa Studies

The study of the hadith of ghadīr khumm has long been at the center of the Sunni-Shiʻa polemic. While previous research primarily focused on analyzing the *sanad* (chain of transmission) and *matn* (text), contemporary Shiʻa scholarship has increasingly employed it as a tool to continuously reinforce the doctrine of *imāmah* and counter Sunni epistemic dominance. This study examines how the hadith of ghadīr khumm is utilized in Shiʻa academic discourse by exploring the extent to which the polemic surrounding this hadith has evolved beyond mere authentication and how it functions in response to Sunni historiography. The findings indicate that, although many Sunni sources acknowledge the authenticity of the hadith of ghadīr khumm, stark differences in interpretation have led Shiʻa scholars to continue engaging with this hadith academically. This ongoing engagement is driven by the perception that the dissemination of Sunni perspectives remains a dominant force that must be challenged. Recent trends reveal that academic studies are increasingly directed toward integrating hadith interpretation into civilizational narratives as a response to marginalization. However, despite appearing innovative, the underlying argumentative patterns largely follow established precedents. This study opens avenues for further research into how hadith texts hold strong foundational value, ensuring their continued role as primary references in asserting theological legitimacy and shaping the identity of religious sectarian communities within Islam.

Keywords: Hadith of ghadīr khumm, Sunni-Shiʻa polemic, discourse defense.

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Kajian tentang hadis ghadīr khumm telah lama menjadi pusat polemik Sunni-Syiah. Jika sebelumnya penelitian berfokus pada analisis sanad dan matan, kajian Syiah kontemporer kini menggunakannya sebagai alat untuk terus-menerus memperkuat doktrin *imāmah* dan menentang dominasi epistemik Sunni. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana hadis ghadīr khumm digunakan dalam wacana akademik Syiah dengan mengeksplorasi sejauh mana polemik atas hadis ini berkembang melampaui sekadar otentikasi serta bagaimana hal tersebut berfungsi dalam menghadapi historiografi Sunni. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun banyak sumber Sunni mengakui keabsahan hadis ghadīr khumm, tetapi perbedaan interpretasi yang tajam membuat kajian akademik atas hadis ini di kalangan Syiah masih dianggap perlu sebab diseminasi pandangan Sunni hingga kini dipandang sebagai kekuatan dominatif yang harus dilawan. Tren terkini memperlihatkan bagaimana kajian akademik diarahkan pada upaya mengintegrasikan interpretasi hadis dalam narasi peradaban sebagai respons terhadap marginalisasi. Namun, meskipun tampak inovatif, pola argumentasinya tetap mengulang pola lama. Penelitian ini menyediakan peluang untuk penelitian lebih lanjut dalam menelusuri bagaimana teks hadis memiliki nilai fondasional yang kuat sehingga terus menjadi referensi utama dalam menekankan legitimasi teologis dan identitas suatu komunitas aliran keagamaan dalam Islam.

Kata Kunci: Hadis ghadīr khumm, Polemik Sunni-Syiah, Pertahanan wacana.

Introduction

The study of the hadith of ghadīr khumm has remained a recurring discourse in Islamic studies, particularly in the debates between Sunni and Shiʿa scholars. This hadith, which revolves around the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ statement regarding ʿAlī's status as *mawlā*, has undergone various theological and historical interpretations, significantly impacting the formation of identity and the legitimacy of leadership (i.e., the caliphate) in Islam. Since the seventh century, this hadith has not only been a subject of academic and theological discourse but has also played a role in broader political and social dynamics. From the Shiʿa perspective, ghadīr khumm serves as strong evidence supporting the doctrine of *imāmah*, whereas within Sunni discourse, the hadith is more commonly interpreted as an expression of honor and respect toward ʿAlī rather than a binding declaration of leadership. This debate continues into the contemporary era, with ongoing research examining this hadith from various perspectives.

Most previous studies on the hadith of Ghadīr khumm, which situate it within the intersection of Sunni and Shiʿa traditions, have primarily focused on two main aspects: the authenticity of its chain of transmission (*sanad*) and the differences in interpreting its text (*matn*). Sanad analyses generally conclude that this hadith has a strong transmission record, as documented in various Sunni and Shiʿa hadith collections. However, despite extensive discussions on its validity, this hadith remains a subject of polemics, particularly due to differing interpretations of the term *mawlā* within it. Meanwhile, studies that go beyond *sanad* and *matn* analysis remain limited, despite a growing tendency among Shiʿa scholars to explore this discourse in political, social, and civilizational contexts.

This study aims to bridge this gap by examining how the continued scholarly engagement with the hadith of ghadīr khumm can be understood as a Shiʿa discursive strategy in response to Sunni epistemic dominance. First, it explores how the hadith of ghadīr khumm is utilized in Shiʿa academic discourse to uphold the doctrine of *imāmah*. Second, it examines how the continuity of its study within Shiʿa discourse relates to Sunni sources. Third, it analyzes the extent to which Shiʿa scholarship on this hadith has expanded beyond *sanad* and *matn* analysis into socio-political and civilizational studies, while also considering how Sunni academic discourse has responded to recent developments in the study of the hadith of ghadīr khumm. By addressing these aspects, this research seeks to uncover the argumentative patterns used to maintain the relevance of the hadith of ghadīr khumm and to explore how debates surrounding it continue to evolve within contemporary Islamic discourse.

This study argues that the continued scholarly engagement with the hadith of ghadīr khumm within Shiʿa discourse is not merely an academic exploration but rather a deeply rooted defensive strategy within the ongoing Sunni-Shiʿa polemics. While debates over this hadith persist both in academic circles and broader religious discourse, Shiʿa scholarship tends to follow recurring argumentative patterns with only minor methodological or theoretical modifications. Over time, the focus of discussion has gradually shifted from verifying the *sanad* and *matn* to broader socio-political and civilizational considerations. However, despite the adoption of new approaches, the core argument remains centered on maintaining the theological authority and legitimacy of ʿAlī's leadership. Consequently, this study seeks to demonstrate that discussions surrounding the hadith of ghadīr khumm are not purely academic but also part of an ongoing contestation over religious authority and the construction of legitimacy in Islam.

Textual Analysis of the Hadith: The Event of Ghadīr khumm in Sunni and Shiʿa Literature

The textual analysis of hadith generally involves examining the available literature

containing the hadith, assessing the reliability of its sanad, and analyzing its matn. The sources explored in this study are not limited to traditional hadith compilations but also include works from other disciplines—such as history, theology (ʿaqīdah), jurisprudence (fiqh), and Qurʾanic exegesis—that cite and scrutinize the hadith of ghadīr khumm for various discursive purposes. This section will take the hadith of ghadīr khumm as a case study to illustrate sanad verification, employing the takhrīj al-hadith methodology as a guiding framework. The matn analysis will explore textual variations, differences in asbāb al-wurūd (circumstances of revelation), and exegetical trends. To provide a general overview of the divergent Sunni and Shiʿa perspectives on this hadith, the discussion will be structured to present the literature, sanad, and matn analysis in a more concise manner, given that previous studies have extensively covered these aspects.

A preliminary digital search identified approximately forty sources containing the hadith of ghadīr khumm (al-maktabah al-shāmilah), indicating its widespread presence in Islamic literature. Further searches would likely uncover additional sources. Among these forty references, many are considered authoritative (muʿtabar) within both Sunni and Shiʿa traditions. Interestingly, several sources regarded as foundational in Shiʿa discourse originate from Sunni scholarship.

The identified sources can be classified by discipline as follows:

In the field of hadith, key sources include Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 AH), Al-Mustadrak ʿala al-Ṣaḥīḥayn by Abū ʿAbdillāh al-Ḥākim (d. 405 AH), Al-Jāmiʿ al-Sunan al-Tirmidhī by al-Tirmidhī (d. 279 AH), Sunan al-Nasāʾī and Al-Khaṣāʾiṣ al-Nasāʾī by al-Nasāʾī (d. 303 AH), Mushkil al-Āthār by Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 279 AH), Sharḥ al-Sunnah by al-Baghawī (d. 516 AH), Sunan Abī Dāwūd by Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d. 275 AH), Sunan Ibn Mājah by Ibn Mājah (d. 273 AH), and Al-Sunan al-Ṭabarānī by al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360 AH).

In the field of manāqib (virtues) and hadith history, notable sources include Al-Manāqib ʿAlī by Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597 AH), Manaqib al-Imām ʿAlī by Abū ʿAbdillāh Ibn al-Maghāzilī (d. 483 AH), and Al-Gharāʾib al-Multaqiṭah min Musnad al-Firdaws by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852 AH).

For takhrīj and hadith criticism, relevant works include Talkhīṣ al-Mustadrak by Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748 AH), Majmaʿ al-Zawāʾid wa Manbaʿ al-Fawāʾid by al-Haythamī (d. 807 AH), Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852 AH), Al-Fayḍ al-Qadīr by Zayn al-Dīn al-Munāwī (d. 1031 AH), Al-Mirqāt fī Sharḥ al-Mishkāt by al-Harawī (d. 1014 AH), Athrāf al-Musnad al-Muʿtalī bi Athrāf al-Musnad al-Ḥanbalī by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852 AH), and Athrāf al-Gharāʾib wa al-Afrād by Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir ibn ʿAlī al-Maqdisī (d. 507 AH).

In the field of Islamic history and biography, key texts include Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah by Ibn Kathīr (d. 774 AH), Jāmiʿ al-Masānīd wa al-Sunan al-Hādī by Ibn Kathīr (d. 774 AH), Tārīkh Dimashq by Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571 AH), Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalāʾ by al-Dhahabī (d. 748 AH), Al-Iṣābah fī Tamyīz al-Ṣaḥābah by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852 AH), Lisān al-Mīzān by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852 AH), and Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ by al-Dhahabī (d. 748 AH). More specialized biographical works include Tabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyyīn al-Kubrā by al-Subkī (d. 771 AH), Ṭabaqāt ʿUlamāʾ al-Hadith by Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī al-Dimashqī (d. 744 AH), Muʿjam al-Udabāʾ bi Musammā Irshād al-Arīb ilā Maʿrifat al-Adīb by Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (d. 626 AH), and Riyāḍ al-Nufūs fī Ṭabaqāt ʿUlamāʾ al-Qayrawān wa Ifrīqiyyah by Abū Bakr ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad al-Mālikī.

In the field of theology and religious polemics, several key works include Minhāj al-Sunnah by Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 AH), Al-ʿAwāṣim min al-Qawāṣim by Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī al-Mālikī, and Sharḥ Maḏāhib Ahl al-Sunnah by Ibn Shāhīn (d. 385 AH). In the field of exegesis (tafsīr), one of the significant recorded works is Tafsīr al-Zamakhsharī by al-Zamakhsharī

(d. 538 AH). Meanwhile, in the field of history and biographical encyclopedias, there exist *Tārīkh al-Muqrīzī al-Kabīr al-Musammā al-Muqaffā al-Kabīr* by al-Maqrīzī (d. 845 AH) and *Tārīkh al-Kabīr* by Imām al-Bukhārī (d. 256 AH). In the field of *taṣawwuf* (Sufism), *Sirr al-ʿĀlamīn wa Kashf Mā fī al-Dārayn* is attributed to Ḥujjat al-Islām Imām al-Ghazālī (d. 505 AH). Meanwhile, in the field of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and legal traditions (*hadith*), *Irshād al-Ṭullāb al-Ḥaqāʾiq ilā Sunan Khabar al-Khalāʾiq* by al-Nawawī (d. 676 AH) is a notable work. These literatures illustrate the diversity of sources in the study of hadith, Islamic history, exegesis, biography, and theology, particularly concerning the polemics surrounding the event of ghadīr khumm and the role of ʿAlī in Islamic tradition.

Among the aforementioned literatures, it is notable that *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* by al-Bukhārī (d. 256 AH), often regarded as the principal hadith collection, does not include a report on Ghadīr khumm. However, al-Bukhārī does mention it in another work, *Al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr*, meaning that its transmission chain was not verified in the same manner as in *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*. In contrast, Muslim (d. 261 AH), whose *Ṣaḥīḥ* is frequently paired with that of al-Bukhārī under the designation *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, records the hadith of ghadīr khumm through the narration of Zaid b. Arqam as follows:

عن زيد بن أرقم أنه قال: قام رسـول الله (صلى الله عليه وسلم) يوما فينا خطيبا بماء يدعى خما بين مكة والمدينة, فحمد الله وأثنى عليه ووعظ وذكركم ثم قال: أما بعد ألا أيها الناس, فإنما أنا بشر يوشك أن يأتي رسول ربي فأجيب, وإني تارك فيكم ثقلين, أولهما كتاب الله فيه الهدى والنور, فخذوا بكتاب الله واستمسكوا به -- فحث على كتاب الله ورغب فيه -- ثم قال: "وأهل بيتي, أذكركم الله في أهل بيتي أذكركم الله في أهل بيتي"[25]

One day, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stood before us as a *khaṭīb* (preacher) at a place called Khumm, which lies between Mecca and Medina. He praised and glorified Allah, gave us advice and warnings, and then said: *"Amma baʿdu. O people! Indeed, I am only a human being, and soon the messenger of my Lord will come to take me, and I will respond to His call. I leave behind for you two weighty matters (al-thaqalayn): the first is the Book of Allah, in which there is guidance and light. Hold firmly to the Book of Allah and adhere to it!"*

Then, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ urged adherence to the Book of Allah and emphasized its significance. He then said: *"And [the second is] my Ahl al-Bayt. I remind you of Allah regarding my Ahl al-Bayt! I remind you of Allah regarding my Ahl al-Bayt!"* (no. 2408)

Several studies suggest that Muslim's narration is considered an incomplete reportage, with its full account found in other hadith collections, including *musnad* and *sunan* works. Muslim provides an initial version, while other sources supplement it with a key phrase stating: *"Man kuntu mawlāhu fa ʿAliyyun mawlāhu—Whoever takes me as his mawlā, then ʿAli is his mawlā",*.[26]

Although this phrase does not appear in Muslim's narration in its entirety, it serves as the focal point of exegetical differences between Sunni and Shiʿa interpretations, which will be discussed later. Some variations of the narration from Zaid b. Arqam that provide additional wording beyond the version in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* are as follows:

▪ *Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*

عن زيد بن أرقم قال: نزلنا مع رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وسلم) بواد يقال له : واد خم, فأمر بالصلاة فصلاها بهجير, قال: فخطبنا, وظلل لرسول الله (صلى الله عليه وسلم) بثوب على شجرة سمرة من الشمس, فقال رسول الله: ألستم تعلمون ؟ ألستم تشهدون أني أولى بكل مؤمن من نفسه ؟ قالوا : بلى,

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[25] Muslim ibn Al-Ḥajjāj, *Al-Jāmiʿ Al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2003), 1200.

[26] Ibn Ḥamzah al-Ḥusaynī Al-Ḥanafī, *Al-Bayān Wa Al-Taʿrīf Fī Asbāb Wurūd Al-Ḥadīth Al-Sharīf*, 3 (Beirut: Al-Maktabah al-ʾIlmiyah, 1982), 233–234.

قال: "فمن كانت مولاه فإن عليا مولاه, اللهم عاد من عاداهووال من والاه" [27]

Zaid b. Arqam reported: We once stopped with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in a valley called Khumm. He ordered that the prayer be established, and he performed it at midday under the intense heat. He then delivered a sermon while being shaded by a cloth that was placed over a samurah tree to shield him from the sun. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: *"Do you not know? Do you not bear witness that I have greater authority over every believer than he has over himself?"* They replied, *"Yes, O Messenger of Allah!"* He then said: *"Whoever takes me as his mawlā, then 'Ali is his mawlā. O Allah, love those who love him and oppose those who oppose him!"*

• *Sunan al-Nasā ʾī*

عن زيدبن أرقم قال: لما رجع رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وسلم) من حجة الوداع ونزل غدير خم, أمر بدوحات فقممن -- أي فكنسن -- ثم قال: قد دعيت فأجبت, وإني تارك فيكم الثقلين, أحدهما أكبر من الآخر: كتاب الله وعترتي وأهل بيتي, فانظروا كيف تخلفوني فيهما, فإنهما لن يفترقا حتى يردا على الحوض, ثم قال: "إن الله مولاي وأنا ولي كل مؤمن, ثم إنه أخذ بيد علي (رضي الله عنه) وقال: من كنت وليه فهذا وليه, اللهم وال من والاه وعاد من عاداه". يقول أبو الطفيل : فقلت : سمعته من رسول الله ؟ فقال: إنه -- وفي بعض الألفاظ : والله, بدل إنه -- ما كان فى الدوحات أحدا إلا رآه بعينه وسمعه بأذنيه. فهذان لفظان بسندين معتبرين عن زيد بن أرقم.

From Zaid b. Arqam, who said: When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ returned from the Farewell Pilgrimage (Ḥajj al-Wadaʾ) and arrived at Ghadīr khumm, he ordered that some large trees be cleared of fallen leaves. He then said: *" "I have been called (by Allah), and I will soon respond. I leave behind for you two weighty matters (al-thaqalayn): one of them is greater than the other—the Book of Allah and my 'itrah (progeny) and Ahl al-*

Bayt. *Be mindful of how you uphold them after me, for indeed, they shall never be separated until they meet me at the Ḥawḍ (the Pond of Kawthar)."*

He then said: *"Indeed, Allah is my guardian (mawlā), and I am the guardian of every believer."* Then, he took the hand of 'Ali (raḍiyallāhu 'anhu) and said: *"Whoever takes me as his guardian (walī), then this is his guardian. O Allah, befriend those who befriend him and oppose those who oppose him!"* Abu al-Ṭufayl said: *"I asked: 'Did you hear this from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ?'"* Zaid b. Arqam replied: *"By Allah! There was no one under those trees who did not see it with their own eyes and hear it with their own ears."* This hadith has been narrated with two different wordings but with authentic chains (*sanad*) from Zaid b. Arqam.

• *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Sunan al-Tirmidhī*

من حديث زيد بن أرقم رضي الله عنه عن النبي (صلى الله عليه وسلم) قال: "من كنت مولاه فعلي مولاه". قال الترمذي: هذا حديث حسن صحيح

From the hadith of Zaid b. Arqam (raḍiyallāhu 'anhu), the Prophet ﷺ said: *"Whoever takes me as his mawlā, then 'Ali is his mawlā."* Al-Tirmidhi stated, "This hadith is *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* (sound and authentic)."

The narration transmitted by Zaid b. Arqam is supported by a strong chain of transmission (*isnād*). The three examples presented above are merely some of the variations recorded in hadith literature. Similar or closely related versions are found in numerous other hadith sources, with approximately forty references, including sources beyond hadith collections. This narration is not isolated; rather, it is corroborated by multiple chains of transmission that mutually reinforce each other. For instance, Al-Haythamī cited a narration from Ḥabashī b. Janādah. Additionally, sources that document the narration of Zaid b. Arqam also include other chains of transmission. One such example is Al-Nasā ʾī's record of the narration from Saʾd b. Abī Waqqāṣ:

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[27] Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*, 5 (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' wa al-Turath, 1994), 501.

أخبرني زكريا بن يحيى قال حدثنا نصر بن علي قال أخبرنا عبد الله بن داود عن عبد الواحد بن أيمن عن أبيه أن سعدا قال قال رسولالله صلى اللهعليه و سلم: من كنت مولاه فعلي مولاه

Narrated by Zakariyyā b. Yaḥyā, who said: Nashr b. 'Ali reported to us, saying: 'Abdullāh b. Dāwūd informed us, from 'Abd al-Wāḥid b. Ayman, from his father, that Sa'd said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever takes me as his *mawlā*, then 'Ali is his *mawlā*."[28]

Al-Nasāʾī received this hadith from his teacher, Zakariyyā b. Yaḥyā. According to *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb* by Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, the two narrators above Zakariyyā—Nashr b. 'Ali and 'Abdullāh b. Dāwūd—are deemed trustworthy (*thiqah*). Meanwhile, the two narrators preceding Sa'd—'Abd al-Wāḥid b. Ayman and his father, Ayman—are evaluated as *lā ba'sa bihi* (no criticism is found against them). Since *lā ba'sa bihi* indicates a reliability level below *thiqah*, this chain is classified as moderately strong. However, when assessed alongside supporting chains (*shawāhid* and *mutāba'āt*), it collectively strengthens the reliability of the narration.

From a Sunni perspective, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī compiled the chains of transmission for the hadith of ghadīr khumm to provide a comprehensive (*shumūl*) and thorough (*tajammu'*) account of the Companions who transmitted it. His study identified at least twenty-five Companions, including Ibn 'Abbās, Abū Hurayrah, and 'Umar b. Khaṭṭāb, as narrators of this hadith. Based on this, al-Suyūṭī classified the narration as *mutawātir* (mass-transmitted). From a Shi'a perspective, 'Abd al-Ḥusayn al-Amīnī documented as many as 110 Companions who transmitted the narration.

Al-Suyūṭī's assessment aligns with the *matn* (content) of the hadith, which, despite variations in wording, consistently refers to the same

historical event: the Prophet's ﷺ sermon (*khuṭbah*). Given that this was a public sermon, it is plausible that a large number of Companions were present as witnesses. Variations in wording among different narrations, even within reports from Zaid b. Arqam himself, are expected within the discipline of hadith textual analysis (*dirāsat al-matn*). As long as these variations do not present significant contradictions, they are regarded as instances of *riwāyat bi al-ma'nā* (narration by meaning), indicating that the different wordings convey the same essential content.

From both Sunni and Shi'a perspectives, the hadith of Ghadīr khumm is considered authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*), with differences arising in the interpretation of the term *mawlā* in the statement: "Whoever takes me as his *mawlā*, then 'Ali is his *mawlā*." The key issue lies in the linguistic nuance of *mawlā*, which, in Arabic tradition, is closely associated with *walī*. This term has multiple meanings depending on its usage, including "leader," "beloved," "protector," or "companion." It is also related to *al-ūlā*, meaning "the foremost" or "the one with no equal."

The polysemous nature of *mawlā* allows for multiple interpretations. While Sunni scholars interpret the hadith of Ghadīr khumm as an affirmation of 'Alī's excellence—recognizing him not only as one of the Companions with a high degree of virtue but also as someone closely positioned after the Prophet ﷺ within the framework of Ahl al-Bayt—Shi'a scholars take a more definitive stance, considering the hadith a proclamation that 'Alī is the leader of the Muslim community and the rightful successor to the Prophet ﷺ after his passing, thus leading to the doctrine of *imāmah*. In this interpretation, *mawlā* signifies "leader," making the event at Ghadīr khumm a declaration of leadership succession. The Shi'a understanding of *mawlā* operates at a strong level of semantic gradation, whereas Sunni scholars emphasize the testament

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[28] Nur al-Dīn al-Haythamī, *Majma' Al-Zawā'Id Wa Manba' Al-Fawā'Id*, 9 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 109.

to ʿAlī's virtue, not merely as a linguistic issue but also in connection with the different versions of the *sabab al-wurūd* (circumstantial context of the hadith).

The Sunni perspective is inclined toward a *sabab al-wurūd* narrative that recounts events before the *Ḥajj al-Wadāʿ* (Farewell Pilgrimage). In this account, the Prophet ﷺ had sent Khālid b. al-Walīd to Yemen on a military mission and to distribute *ghanīmah* (war booty). Upon arrival, Khālid sent a report to the Prophet ﷺ regarding the situation, including details about an individual who had distributed one-fifth (*khums*) of the obtained *ghanīmah*. To verify this information, the Prophet ﷺ then dispatched ʿAlī, instructing him to meet Khālid during the pilgrimage season. Upon meeting, ʿAlī distributed the *ghanīmah* according to the Qur'anic prescription: four-fifths were allocated to the *mujāhidīn*, while one-fifth was designated for Allah, the Prophet ﷺ, his relatives, orphans, the needy, and the *ibn sabīl* (wayfarers). ʿAlī also took a portion of the one-fifth share for his relatives. However, some Companions, including Buraydah, disapproved of this action and ultimately reported it to the Prophet ﷺ.[29]

In the Shiʿa version, the hadith of ghadīr khumm describes one of the most significant historical events in Islam. This event took place when the Prophet ﷺ was returning from the *Ḥajj al-Wadāʿ* and stopped at a location known as ghadīr khumm. Following divine instruction, the Prophet ﷺ informed the Muslim community of ʿAlī's rightful succession, declaring him as their *imām* and *khalīfah*. During this moment, senior Companions and the assembled pilgrims pledged their allegiance to him.

This designation of authority is closely linked to the revelation of Āyat al-Tablīgh (Qur'ān 5:67), in which Allah commands His Prophet to convey the divine message: *"O Messenger, convey what has been revealed to you from your Lord. And if you do not, then you have not*

conveyed His message. And Allah will protect you from the people. Indeed, Allah does not guide the disbelieving people." (Q.S. al-Māʾidah [5]:67)

Following the Prophet's proclamation of ʿAlī's rightful succession, *Āyat al-Ikmāl* (Qur'ān 5:3) was also revealed, signifying the completion of the religion and the perfection of divine blessings: *"This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as your religion."* (Q.S. al-Māʾidah [5]:3). Based on this event, the *Ahl al-Maʿṣūmīn* (the infallible imams) regarded it as definitive evidence (*ḥujjah*) of ʿAlī's rightful succession to the Prophet ﷺ.[30]

A general analysis of the hadith of ghadīr khumm indicates that both Sunni and Shiʿa literatures exhibit a high level of acceptance regarding its transmission. However, a notable point of concern is the absence of this hadith in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, despite its mention in his historical works. The acceptance of the hadith text and its authenticity is generally undisputed by both Sunni and Shiʿa scholars. Instead, it is the differences in interpretation that serve as the primary point of divergence, leading not only to varying understandings of the hadith but also to significant theological implications.

The Hadith of Ghadīr khumm Across Time and Space

This section examines the consequences of the interpretative polemics surrounding the hadith of ghadīr khumm between Sunni and Shiʿa scholars, focusing on the dimensions of personality and historical context. These dimensions have magnified the distinction between the two groups, as the crystallization of hadith interpretation into theological identity has, over time, evolved into tradition and historical attitudes. Due to its historical nature, this hadith inevitably intersects with the dynamics of history, including social and cultural manifestations and, more critically, political disputes. In other words, the hadith

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[29] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jalāl al-Dīn Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Durr Al-Manthūr Fī Al-Tafsīr Al-Maʾthūr*, 3 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2009), 123.

[30] ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Al-Amīnī, *Al-Ghadīr Fī Al-Kitāb Wa Al-Sunnah Wa Al-Adab*, 2 (Muassasah al-ʾAlami al-Mathbuʾat, n.d.), 37.

remains alive within the polemics between the two sects.

The dimension of personality revolves around 'Ali, while the dimension of historical context concerns the time and place of the event. The personality dimension is reflected in the attributes associated with 'Ali. As previously discussed, the Shi'a uphold the doctrine of imāmah, while the Sunni acknowledge the historical reality of leadership succession, recognizing 'Ali as the fourth khalīfah and an esteemed Companion as well as a member of *Ahl al-Bayt*. However, references to the hadith of ghadīr khumm do appear within Sunni traditions, particularly in the context of *al-thaqalayn* (as seen in the narrations of Muslim and al-Nasāʾī), to emphasize the importance of loving the *haba'ib* (descendants of the Prophet ﷺ through 'Ali).

The historical context dimension includes the time and place of occurrence. Both Sunni and Shi'a agree, based on *sabab al-wurūd* reports, that the event took place after the Ḥajj al-Wada'. The location is identified as Ghadīr khumm, a pond situated in the valley of Juhfah, at the intersection of present-day Mecca, Medina, and Iraq. The Shi'a believe that the *khuṭbah* (sermon) of Ghadīr khumm occurred on the 18th of Dhul-Hijjah. As a result, Shi'a communities around the world commemorate this date annually under the name Eid al-Ghadīr. In Iran, a country that has proclaimed itself a Shi'a state, Eid al-Ghadīr is celebrated on a grand scale.

This tradition starkly contrasts with Sunni practices. While the commemoration of Karbala—the martyrdom of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī—is still acknowledged by some Sunni communities as a significant event on *'Ashura* (the 10th of

Muḥarram), which is traditionally observed as a day of fasting and remembrance of noble historical events, Eid al-Ghadīr remains virtually absent from Sunni traditions. [38] Shi'a celebrations of this occasion in minority communities, such as in India[39] and Indonesia[40], often face social challenges from the predominantly Sunni population.

The spirit emanating from every *Eid al-Ghadīr* celebration has, from its inception, been closely associated with resistance. In reality, to this day, the Shi'a perceive themselves—or are perceived—as a subdominant sect compared to the Sunni, based on the numerical size of their respective followers, a distinction that is inevitably linked to global influence. Within Shi'a imagery, as proposed in Attarzadeh's thesis, *Eid al-Ghadīr* serves as a tradition aimed at revitalizing prophetic initiatives by negating dominant authority. [41] In majority Shi'a strongholds, such as Iran, *Eid al-Ghadīr* is utilized as a moment to reinforce belief in *imāmah*, thereby supporting efforts to unify communal identity by revisiting the foundations of their existence.

Vali Nasr notes that when examining Shi'a political power, despite the absence of a formally recognized pan-Shi'ism movement or centralized leadership within the sect, Shi'a adherents maintain a coherent worldview. This perspective originates from the theological crystallization of the *hadith* of Ghadīr khumm, marking a historical divergence from Sunni Islam as early as the seventh century. [42] This coherent worldview acts as fuel for political mobilization, although its practical implementation remains debated, particularly when its accommodation takes on pragmatic

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[38] Ronen A. Cohen, "The Story of the Shi'a," in *The Hojjatiyeh Society in Iran* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2013), 4.

[39] Sayyad Mohd. Afzal, "Shi'i in India: A Minority within the Minority," in *Islam in Indaia* (London: Routledge, 2023), 9.

[40] Agus Masrukhin et al., "Islamic Tradition: Islamic Mass Organization Responses To Shia's Eid Ghadir

Tradition In Jakarta Bandung," in *International Conference of Global Education and Society Science*, 2020, 1–9.

[41] Mujtaba Attarzadeh, "Ghadir Khum: Prophetic Initiative to Negate Dominative Power," *Imam Aliʾ s Studies* 2, no. 3 (2011): 133–151.

[42] Vali Nasr, "When the Shiites Rise," *Foreign Affairs*, last modified 2006, accessed July 12, 2024, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/2006-07-01/when-shiites-rise.

manifestations, as is common in political power dynamics. [43]

The interplay between political power and tradition is inextricable, influencing whether a tradition is accommodated as a means of consolidating strength or restricted as a form of identity suppression. Several Shi'a scholars have conducted extensive research that extends beyond Shi'a sources to include Sunni and broader historical accounts. These studies trace the evolving significance of Ghadīr khumm over time. Historical reports, including those by al-Birūnī (d. 440 AH), who observed that Shi'a adherents in the Arab/Middle Eastern world celebrated Eid al-Ghadīr with great enthusiasm, provide valuable insights. Likewise, Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597 AH) and al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538 AH) documented that the night of the 18th of Dhul-Hijjah was regarded by Shi'a followers as an esteemed occasion. The historical reports of such grand celebrations are closely tied to the political context of their respective periods. During the fifth to at least the seventh century AH, Shi'a dynasties such as the Hamdānids and the Fāṭimids exerted significant political influence, leaving a lasting impact on the prominence of Eid al-Ghadīr as a socio-political and religious event.[44]

The negation of dominant authority is evident in how historical reports about *Eid al-Ghadīr* emerged. The association of *Eid al-Ghadīr* with the influence of Shi'a dynasties suggests that, before the rise of these political powers, this tradition was not widely recognized. Dadashnejad, in his study of religious developments in the medieval period, categorizes the early phase of the *hadith* of Ghadīr khumm—prior to its manifestation in the religious practice of *Eid al-Ghadīr*—as a period of

"neglect of Ghadīr" (*tajāhul al-ghadīr*). [45] This neglect is also apparent in geographical literature, where the designation *Ghadīr khumm* as the specific site of the *hadith*'s sermon remained unfamiliar and was rarely mentioned. Instead, geographical works from that period typically referred to the broader region, identifying it as the valley of Juhfah (*al-Juḥfah*). The representation of *al-Khumm* as part of Juhfah was overshadowed by Juhfah's status as a well-known *mīqāt* (pilgrimage station) for *ḥajj* pilgrims.

In al-Wāqidī's (d. 205 AH) historical reports, *al-Khumm* is mentioned only three times, and even then, there is no reference to the *hadith* of Ghadīr khumm. He describes *al-Khumm* as a location approximately two miles from Juhfah, where the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ once prayed for Medina's protection from disease, raised the banner of Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, and where Ibn 'Umar is recorded to have prayed at a mosque. Dadashnejad's research indicates that until the third century AH, even Shi'a-authored geographical literature referred to *al-Khumm* only as a location near Juhfah or as a *mīqāt* site between Mecca and Medina. It was not until the fourth century AH that *al-Khumm* began to be narrated as a sacred site due to its connection to the *hadith* of Ghadīr khumm. [46] However, this claim is primarily supported by Shi'a sources. Some of these fourth-century Shi'a texts even include poetry affirming 'Alī's rightful leadership based on the *hadith* of Ghadīr khumm. In separate analyses, this poetry has been attributed to Ḥassān b. Thābit, though Sunni scholars question its authenticity.

Today, the site of Ghadīr khumm is an empty tract of land with slightly undulating terrain. Unlike the arid landscapes of the

[43] Arshi Saleem Hasmi, "Iranian Synthesis of Ideology & Pragmatism: It's Role in Regional Politics," *Focus on Regional Issues* 26, no. 1 (2008): 2.

[44] Paula Sanders, "Claiming the Past: Ghadîr Khumm and the Rise of Ḥâfiẓî Historiography in Late Fâțimid Egypt," *Studi Islamica*, no. 75 (1992): 103; Sayyid Naser Musavi, Mohammad Ali Chelongar, and Shokuh al-Sadat A'arabi Hashemi, "The Evolution of Ghadir Festival

in the Fatimid Era of Egypt," *The Quarterly Journal of Islam and Social Studies* 7, no. 28 (2020): 152–178.

[45] Mansur Dadashnejad, "Ghadir Geography in the Midst of Historical and Religious Development," *Scientific-Specialized Bi-Annual Journal* 1, no. 1 (2021): 104.

[46] Dadashnejad, "Ghadir Geography in the Midst of Historical and Religious Development," 105–108.

surrounding region, it has some grass and a few trees. Shi'a often depict the *hadith* of Ghadīr khumm in illustrations, portraying the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ raising 'Alī's hand beneath a large, shady tree in front of a gathered audience. Remnants of old structures can also be seen in the area, possibly the ruins of a mosque. Al-Wāqidī's report about Ibn 'Umar's visit to the site provides historical evidence suggesting that a mosque once stood in Ghadīr khumm. This mosque appears to have undergone cycles of construction and decline, reflecting the fluctuating political influence of Shi'a rulers. Dadashnejad interprets this report as significant for the Shi'a, indicating that Ghadīr khumm was regarded as a sacred site from the early Islamic period, reinforcing the deep historical roots of the *hadith* of Ghadīr khumm. Evidence of a mosque at the site also corroborates early Shi'a sources that emphasize the recommendation (*sunnah*) of praying at the Ghadīr khumm mosque. Al-Kulaynī (d. 329 AH) mentions this recommendation as a directive from the two Shi'a Imams, al-Ṣādiq and al-Kāẓim, a claim later affirmed by al-Ṭūsī (d. 360 AH).[47]

A religious text remains relevant as long as it continues to be revived by its adherents—whether through religious practice or as a subject of polemical debate among differing interpretations. Communal religious practice often crystallizes into traditions and identities passed down across generations, while polemics manifest in the ongoing contestation of theological discourse. The *hadith* of Ghadīr khumm serves as a clear example of how a text can undergo transformations in meaning and function—not only as a theological foundation but also as an element of identity, tradition, and even political legitimacy. Within the dynamic interactions between Sunni and Shi'a communities, this *hadith* is more than a historical narrative; it represents a pivotal point of

divergence in their perspectives on Islamic leadership and authority. The historical trajectory of this *hadith* demonstrates that its acceptance or rejection has often aligned with the prevailing political power structures of different times and regions. Thus, the discourse surrounding Ghadīr khumm is not merely about the past; it is about how the past continues to be reconstructed within evolving social, political, and religious contexts.

Several (Recent) Points of Contention in the Study of the *Hadith* of Ghadīr khumm

Mosapur's research findings are significant in understanding the latest developments in the study of the hadith of Ghadīr khumm. The availability of numerous Sunni sources that affirm the authenticity of the *hadith* text has rendered debates on its textual authenticity and validity—through *isnād* (chain of transmission) and *matn* (content) analysis—less relevant or even obsolete. If studies, whether Sunni- or Shi'a-oriented or neutral, still examine issues of authenticity and validity, they are likely to reach similar conclusions.[48] Researchers or research projects with a Shi'a inclination have moved beyond conventional *hadith* studies in addressing the *hadith* of Ghadīr khumm. While *isnād* and *matn* analysis remain fundamental in *hadith* studies, polemical discourse requires alternative approaches or arguments beyond traditional *hadith* criticism—yet still maintaining a significant connection—to sustain the existence of the *hadith* of Ghadīr khumm, thereby reinforcing theological claims and legitimacy.

In the evolving academic discourse, particularly over the past decade, two major points of contention can be observed in discussions on the hadith of Ghadīr khumm. Besides applying alternative approaches and arguments in hadith studies, as mentioned

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[47] Dadashnejad, "Ghadir Geography in the Midst of Historical and Religious Development," 108.

[48] Jasim Mosapur and Abdulhossein Khosropanah, "A Study on the Existence of the Phrase « أ لست أولى بكم من

أنفسكم» in the Sermon of Ghadir Khumm in Sunni Sources," *Emamat Pajouhi* 1 (2021): 257–293.

earlier, the examination of Sunni sources remains a recurrent point of debate. These two areas of contention follow patterns that, from the perspective of Sunni-Shi'a contestation, are historically well-established. [49] This is why the section title includes the term "recent" in parentheses—the novelty lies not in the repetitive patterns of argumentation but in the specific content of the polemics.

The study of sources generally falls into two categories. On one hand, Sunni sources are analyzed to confirm the existence of Ghadīr khumm, thereby strengthening the authenticity and validity of the hadith, including historical testimonies, as discussed in the previous section. On the other hand, particularly in matters of interpretation, Sunni sources are scrutinized, critiqued, and their arguments questioned. [50] The Sunni polemic against Shi'a sources follows a similar pattern—Shi'a sources are almost invariably viewed with skepticism, especially when they intersect with foundational doctrines.

Both approaches are often found within a single study, reflecting an effort at selective filtration. Motahari's research, for instance, critiques *Tārīkh al-Islām* by Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748 AH), questioning al-Dhahabī's acceptance of the historical reality of the *hadith* of Ghadīr khumm while simultaneously subjecting Shi'a interpretations to extensive criticism. Given *Tārīkh al-Islām*'s significant

influence among Muslims, particularly Sunnis, al-Dhahabī's recognition of the event serves as confirmation of its authenticity. However, efforts are made to highlight his interpretive stance as problematic. [51] This polemical attitude toward sources is a key area of Shi'a critique. A common narrative in such critiques is not only the neglect of Shi'a sources but also the influence of dominant Sunni perspectives on broader academic studies.

The dissemination of Sunni viewpoints is believed to have influenced some early Orientalist studies of the Qur'an and Islamic history, resulting in the diminished visibility of the *hadith* of Ghadīr khumm's integrity. The principle of doubting Shi'a sources—central to Sunni polemics—is also thought to have shaped the vision of Orientalists, traces of which can still be found in contemporary scholars of Islam (*Islamologists*). [52]

As part of an effort to clarify the Orientalist vision or to present *hadith* studies that can be recognized by a broader academic audience, the significance of research employing interdisciplinary approaches related to *hadith* studies has become an important consideration. *Isnād* (chain of transmission) analysis is reinforced by tracing 'neglected history,' even incorporating geographical studies as mentioned earlier. [53] The study of the *matn* (content) of the *hadith* of Ghadīr khumm is

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[49] Muhammad Yahya et al., "Comparative Critical Analysis of Methodologies for Establishing the Validity of Hadith Among Sunni and Shia," *International Journal of Religion* 5, no. 6 (May 1, 2024): 788–789, https://ijor.co.uk/ijor/article/view/4098.

[50] ADDIN CSL_CITATION {"citationItems":[{"id":"ITEM-1","itemData":{"abstract":"حبیب فرشته 2 سارا نهیبی: 3 دریافت تاریخ

پذیر می زمینه و هدف: چکیده 26 / 11 / 1401 تاریخ پذیرش17 / 11 / 1400 :
آن از امینرت مناطق ساحلی به عنوان یکی مناطق پررفت و آمد و گردشگر است ارتقای امنتت و ایینی در برابر انوا باشند که طراحی و زیباسازی منظر ک ع حوادث و به عبارتی تاب آور بستار زیادی برخوردار است اما آنچه مهم تراب آوری اسرت کره بره روی تو رت ی روش بررسی :باشد .ردن آن می مدف اساسی این پژومش طراحی منظر ساحلی شهر سلیانشهر با مدف ارتقرای است .جامعه آماری آن را کلته عوامل درگتر با محدوده شامل ساکنتن ،گردش تعداد تشکتل می اسران ان و کارشن گر تحلتلی و مطالعات متدانی انجام گردیده گردیده اند .تجزیه و تحلتل اطالعات با است اده از روی تحلتل 100 دمند که روی تحلتل رگرستون و تحلتل، T آماره ن ر به عنوان نیونه آماری انتخاب

که بتن طراحی منظر و ارتقای یافته ها :انجام گردیده است. SWOT-QSPM است تاب آوری در محدوده رابطه مستقتم و معناداری نتایج بدست آمده نشان داد تاب آوری در محدوده بوده است که جهت ساماندمی منظر با روی بعالوه. برقرار دارد .در کرد تاب آوری یافته ما نشان دمنده مشکالت فراوان در حوزه منظر و این محدوده است اده از رامکارمای محافظه کارانه در اولویت اول قرار آوری مری تواند موجرش رشرد و توسرعه گردشگر حث و نتیجه گیری :ب محدوده شود .ی در ساماندمی و طراحی منظر ساحل سلیانشهر با ریکرد تاب سلیانشهر ، تاب پایداری ، گردشگری ،ساماندمی ،طراحی منظر های کلیدی :واژه طراحی کارشناسی ارشد،گروه مهندسی خته دانش آمو. 1-آوری،

infused not only with linguistic philosophy but also with communication philosophy and public narrative theory. In this way, these studies attempt to demonstrate that the *hadith* of Ghadīr khumm represents the necessity of conveying the identity of the successor to the prophetic mission, who would uphold Islamic civilization. The manner in which the Prophet ﷺ first emphasized the virtues of ʿAlī and his *Ahl al-Bayt*, concluding with the designation of 'mawlā', serves as evidence of succession closely linked to the post-*Ḥajj al-Wadāʿ* moment. In other words, this *hadith* can be understood as a civilizational-political narrative that was fundamentally needed.[54] These efforts aim to expand the scope of studies on Ghadīr khumm, which are difficult to separate from the larger agenda—or at least the network of polemical agendas—against Sunni 'dominant power,' while simultaneously distancing themselves from accusations of 'sectarian interpretation.'

Considering the evolving academic landscape of *hadith* studies on Ghadīr khumm, it is evident that the ongoing polemics do not present entirely new patterns. Most research continues to operate within the framework of contestation that has persisted for centuries, with recurring argumentative structures, despite appearing more interdisciplinary in approach. What is referred to as innovation in recent research is often found in the content of the polemic rather than in a genuinely novel perspective on Ghadīr khumm itself. Even when methodologies are expanded to include civilizational, communication, or geographical studies, the ultimate objective remains tied to affirming or negating the authority of a particular interpretation within the Sunni-Shiʿa framework. Therefore, while these studies hold significant academic value, they remain within the larger current of polemics that have become institutionalized in Islamic discourse, without offering a paradigmatic shift that can fully transcend the deeply rooted theological dichotomy.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the sustained examination of the *hadith* of Ghadīr khumm within Shiʿa discourse is not merely an academic endeavor but rather a defensive strategy deeply rooted in the dynamics of Sunni-Shiʿa polemics. This hadith is not only solidified as a theological doctrine of *imāmah* but also utilized as a tool of legitimacy to reinforce Shiʿa political and civilizational identity. Sunni scholarship, for the most part, remains focused on critiquing the validity of Shiʿa interpretations rather than questioning the authenticity of the hadith itself, given that numerous Sunni sources acknowledge its existence. Consequently, this study has successfully addressed how the *hadith* of Ghadīr khumm is preserved within Shiʿa discourse, how it has evolved beyond *isnād* and *matn* analysis, and how Sunni academia has responded to it. More importantly, this study asserts that the persistence of this polemic does not introduce a fundamentally new pattern but rather reflects a shift in argumentative strategies to uphold deeply entrenched theological claims that have endured for centuries.

However, this study has several noteworthy limitations. It remains focused on the academic discourse and has yet to explore how the *hadith* of Ghadīr khumm functions in contemporary Shiʿa socio-political praxis. Furthermore, it does not provide an in-depth comparison of how Shiʿa and Sunni approaches to *hadith* studies have evolved in the modern context, particularly in response to the increasingly complex challenges posed by Orientalist scholarship. Another limitation is the absence of a comprehensive analysis of how this *hadith* is contextualized within Shiʿa political narratives beyond theological studies, especially in Muslim societies dominated by Sunni populations.

For future research, an exploration of the utilization of the *hadith* of Ghadīr khumm in Shi'a political strategies within Sunni-majority countries could be a compelling focus. Additionally, studies could be expanded to examine how this *hadith* is positioned in Orientalist scholarship and how Western academic discourse influences internal debates within the Islamic world. An interdisciplinary approach that integrates *hadith* studies with political analysis, the sociology of religion, and intellectual history could provide a broader perspective on how the *hadith* of Ghadīr khumm continues to thrive and develop within the contestation of Islamic discourse. Thus, future research can further reveal how religious texts are not merely theological inheritances but also instruments of power negotiation within Islamic identity politics.

Acknowledgements

Competing Interests

I confirm that there are no financial or personal relationships that could have influenced this research.

Author Contributions

As the sole author, I take full responsibility for the development of this article.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical guidelines and did not involve direct interaction with human or animal subjects.

Funding Information

Data Availability

No new data were generated or analyzed in this study; therefore, data sharing is not applicable.

Disclaimer

The views and conclusions expressed in this article are solely my own and do not necessarily represent those of any affiliated institution.

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