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Instrumentalizing *Ta'abbudiyyah* for Political Legitimacy : A *Maqasid al- Shari'ah* Critique

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Abstract

Religious symbols increasingly play a significant role in constructing political legitimacy, yet limited attention has been given to the normative implications of the political instrumentalization of *ta'abbudiyyah* from the perspective of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*. This article analyzes how *ta'abbudiyyah*, originally understood as sincere devotion to Allah, is transformed into a symbolic resource for political legitimacy and develops a *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*-based framework for evaluating this phenomenon. Employing a qualitative normative-conceptual approach based on library research, the study draws upon classical works of fiqh, *usul al-fiqh*, and *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*, complemented by contemporary literature on the sociology of religion and political legitimacy. The findings demonstrate that the political instrumentalization of *ta'abbudiyyah* operates through interconnected mechanisms of desacralization, the commodification of worship symbols, the naturalization of piety discourse, and the conversion of symbolic capital into political legitimacy. From the perspective of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*, these mechanisms have the potential to undermine the preservation of religion (*hifz al-din*), intellect (*hifz al-'aql*), life (*hifz al-nafs*), and wealth (*hifz al-mal*), thereby supporting the preventive application of *sadd al-dhara'i'*. This study contributes to contemporary Islamic legal scholarship by proposing a normative analytical framework that distinguishes the legitimate role of religion in politics from the political instrumentalization of *ta'abbudiyyah* for image-building and political legitimacy.

Keyword

Instrumentalization of *Ta'abbudiyyah*; *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*; Political Legitimacy; Religious Symbols; Symbolic Capital.



Abstrak

Simbol-simbol keagamaan semakin memainkan peran penting dalam mengonstruksi legitimasi politik, namun perhatian terhadap implikasi normatif dari instrumentalisi politik ta'abbudiyyah dari perspektif Maqasid al-Shari'ah masih relatif terbatas. Artikel ini menganalisis bagaimana ta'abbudiyyah, yang pada mulanya dipahami sebagai pengabdian tulus kepada Allah, ditransformasikan menjadi sumber daya simbolis untuk legitimasi politik, sekaligus mengembangkan kerangka kerja berbasis Maqasid al-Shari'ah untuk mengevaluasi fenomena tersebut. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif normatif-konseptual berbasis studi pustaka, penelitian ini mengandalkan karya-karya klasik fiqh, usul al-fiqh, dan Maqasid al-Shari'ah, yang dilengkapi dengan literatur kontemporer tentang sosiologi agama dan legitimasi politik. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa instrumentalisi politik ta'abbudiyyah bekerja melalui empat mekanisme yang saling terhubung: desakralisasi dan komodifikasi simbol-simbol ibadah, naturalisasi wacana kesalehan, serta konversi modal simbolis menjadi legitimasi politik. Dari perspektif Maqasid al-Shari'ah, mekanisme-mekanisme ini berisiko mengikis pemeliharaan agama (hifz al-din), akal (hifz al-'aql), jiwa (hifz al-nafs), dan harta (hifz al-mal), sehingga membenarkan penerapan prinsip pencegahan sadd al-dhara'i'. Studi ini berkontribusi pada kajian hukum Islam kontemporer dengan menawarkan kerangka kerja evaluatif yang membedakan antara keterlibatan agama yang autentik dalam politik dengan manipulasi instrumental ibadah untuk pencitraan politik.

Kata Kunci

Instrumentalisasi Ta'abbudiyyah; Maqasid al-Shari'ah; Legitimasi Politik; Simbol Keagamaan; Modal Simbolik

Introduction

In the tradition of Islamic thought, the concept of *ta'abbudiyyah* (total servitude or worship) is understood as a form of human servitude to Allah that relies on the intention and sincerity of worship. Worship, in this sense, is not only understood as an outward act, but also as a spiritual relationship between the servant and God. Therefore, the *jurists* and *mutakallimun* emphasize the importance of preserving worship from worldly pragmatic impulses that can reduce the meaning of devotion to Allah. Al-Ghazali in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* emphasizes that sincerity of intention (*ikhlas*) is the soul of every act of worship. Without sincerity, outward deeds can lose their spiritual depth and only appear as physical movements (Hidayah et al., 2023). This issue arises when worship in contemporary public spaces is no longer solely present as an expression of faith, but is used to shape a socio-political image.

This dynamic is evident across various political contests in Indonesia. Ahead of elections, candidates routinely visit Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and the tombs of venerated scholars, organize widely broadcast grand *istighosah* (mass prayer gatherings) or collective *shalawat*, publicly highlight their Umrah pilgrimages, and engage with *fatwa* forums held by Islamic scholars to secure symbolic backing from religious authorities. Lubis et al. (2024) document how religious rituals and symbols are commodified to shape the political representation of actors in Indonesian elections, while Widian et al. (2023) show that religious populism remains a recurring pattern in national electoral contests. These cases demonstrate that the political instrumentalization of *ta'abbudiyyah* is not merely a theoretical possibility, but an empirically documented and pervasive practice.

Beyond its theological implications, this phenomenon touches upon crucial epistemic and sociological dimensions. In his study of charismatic domination, Weber (1978, pp. 241–254) demonstrates how religious authority can be transformed into political capital through processes of routinization and institutionalization. Given the deep historical entanglement of religion and politics in Muslim-majority societies, the central issue here is not whether religion belongs in the political sphere, but how symbols of *ta'abbudiyyah* are specifically leveraged to generate political legitimacy.

While utilizing symbols of devotion to cultivate an image of power is not new, its contemporary expression has grown increasingly complex. Amplified by television, social media, and digital platforms, once-personal and spiritual practices are thrust into the public arena. Geertz (1973, p. 90) conceptualizes religion as a system of symbols that powerfully and durably shapes human moods and motivations. When these symbolic functions are redirected toward political ends, sacred meanings risk shifting into pragmatic, power-oriented instruments.

In these socio-political contexts, political actors construct religious personae through public displays of worship and recognizable symbols of piety. Bourdieu (1991b, pp. 163–170) conceptualizes this process as the accumulation of symbolic capital, which is subsequently converted into political legitimacy. Critically, this conversion does not occur naturally or spontaneously; rather, it is the product of a calculated strategy of representation, frequently veiled beneath a discourse of piety.

Existing scholarship on religion and politics may be grouped into three broad strands. The first examines political legitimacy within Islamic governance, particularly through the perspectives of *siyasa shar'iyah*, public authority, and the ethics of leadership (Zakiruddin et al., 2022). The second focuses on religious populism and the mobilization of religious identity in democratic competition, especially in the Indonesian electoral context (Widian et al., 2023). The third explores the commodification of religious rituals and symbols as resources for constructing political images and public legitimacy (Lubis et al., 2024). More recently, *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* has also emerged as a normative framework for evaluating public policy and legal authority (Taufik et al., 2026).

Despite these contributions, existing studies largely examine religious symbols from sociological or political perspectives, while giving limited attention to the normative implications of their instrumentalization within Islamic legal theory. More specifically, little scholarship has explained how *ta'abbudiyyah* functions as a form of symbolic political capital and how such practices may be evaluated through the hierarchical objectives of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*.

To address this gap, this article develops a *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* framework for analyzing the political instrumentalization of *ta'abbudiyyah*. Rather than treating religious symbols merely as sociological phenomena, this framework evaluates their impact on preserving religion, intellect, life, and property, while incorporating the preventive principle of *sadd al-dhara'i'*. In doing so, it brings Islamic jurisprudence into dialogue with contemporary theories of symbolic power and political legitimacy.

Building on this background, the study examines the mechanisms through which *ta'abbudiyyah* is transformed into political legitimacy. It systematically critiques these practices from a *maqasid* perspective to illuminate their epistemic and social implications. The approach is interdisciplinary, integrating the sociology of religion,

political theory, and Islamic jurisprudence within a coherent analytical framework.

Ultimately, this article aims to advance a *maqasid*-based evaluative framework for interpreting contemporary socio-political phenomena while bridging Islamic legal epistemology with Western political theory. Practically, the proposed framework can assist religious authorities, election organizers, and civil society in formulating clearer criteria to distinguish authentic religious expression from the instrumental use of worship for political imagery.

Methods

This study adopts a qualitative approach featuring a normative-conceptual design grounded in a literature review. This design was selected because the primary focus of this article is to critically analyze the concepts of *ta'abbudiyyah*, political legitimacy, and *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*, rather than empirical field data. The study utilizes Islamic normative texts alongside socio-political theories as the analytical foundation to construct critical arguments regarding the use of worship symbols in the political sphere. The research materials consist of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include core *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh* texts, classical and contemporary *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* literature, as well as relevant Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions (*hadith*) concerning sincerity (*ikhlas*), ostentation (*riya'*), devotion (*'ibadah*), public trust (*amanah*), and leadership ethics. Secondary sources encompass literature on the sociology of religion, political legitimacy theories, symbolic capital theory, and contemporary journal articles addressing identity politics, religious populism, and the commodification of religious symbols. The data analysis is carried out in four sequential stages: First, conceptualizing *ta'abbudiyyah* and delineating its normative parameters within Islamic jurisprudence. Second, mapping the mechanisms through which symbols of worship are instrumentalized and desacralized in the political arena, drawing on the sociology of religion and political legitimacy theory. Third, evaluating these practices through the *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* framework—specifically examining their implications for *hifz al-din* (preservation of religion), *hifz al-'aql* (preservation of intellect), *hifz al-nafs* (preservation of life), *hifz al-mal* (preservation of wealth), alongside the preventive principle of *sadd al-dhara'i'*. Fourth, synthesizing an argumentative framework to explain the normative, epistemic, and social ramifications of instrumentalizing *ta'abbudiyyah* for political legitimacy.

Results and Discussion

Ta'abbudiyyah as an Epistemological Category in Islamic Jurisprudence

The concept of *ta'abbudiyyah* in Islamic jurisprudence includes the entire form of human servitude to Allah. Epistemologically, it differs from *mu'amalah*, which governs social and transactional affairs and is more open to contextual reasoning. In contrast, *ta'abbudiyyah* is based on scriptural authority. Al-Shatibi (1997, pp. 215-220) in *al-Muwafaqat* asserts that the original law of *ta'abbudiyyah* is *tawqifiyyah* (obligatory worship and belief are based on the evidence of the text), so it cannot be explained only through the logic of pragmatic benefits.

From a Weberian perspective, the *ta'abbudiyyah aspect*, which is not entirely subject to instrumental rationality, is precisely the source of its symbolic power. Worship rejects economic calculation and places humans in a transcendent relationship

with God. Problems arise when this transcendent dimension enters into a political logic that tends to be calculative, competitive, and support-oriented. At this point, the sacred value of worship can experience a shift in meaning. The following section explains how this desacralization process occurs.

The Desacralization of Ta'abbudiyyah in Political Contestation

The desacralization of *ta'abbudiyyah* does not occur immediately. This process occurs gradually through the blurring of meaning. Bourdieu (1989, pp. 14-25) calls *misrecognition* a condition where the true power relations are hidden behind symbols that appear natural and legitimate. In the political context, political actors who display religious practices as part of image building do not always express strategic interests, but rather present them as sincere expressions of faith. This condition is important to examine because it can blur the line between authentic and performative worship. Symbols that were originally in the sacred space can shift into the profane space when used to build a political image. This shift does not mean that worship should not be present in the public space. The problem lies in how symbols of worship are used, especially when directed to strengthen certain political positions.

This desacralization process is also evident through the mechanism of commodification. In contemporary media culture, symbols of *ta'abbudiyyah* have a high exchange value. These symbols can build moral impressions, arouse communal sentiments, and create emotional closeness between leaders and the public. Casanova (1994, pp. 5-39) explains that religion in the context of modernity always negotiates its position in a complex field of power. Therefore, the main problem is not the presence of religion itself, but rather its instrumentalization. The use of religion is not as a bearer of universal values, but rather as a partisan tool serving the interests of certain actors.

An illustration of this mechanism can be seen in media reporting patterns leading up to elections, where visits by political figures to Islamic boarding schools, attendance at large-scale religious studies, or the performance of the Umrah pilgrimage often receive extensive coverage and are framed as reflections of *religious leadership*. Such events generally emphasize religious activity over the political context behind it. As a result, the public more easily interprets these actions as manifestations of personal piety rather than as part of a political communication strategy. This phenomenon aligns with the findings of Lubis *et al.* (2024), who showed that religious rituals in election contests have undergone a process of commodification. In this process, worship is no longer understood solely as a personal spiritual practice but is also utilized as a strategically constructed public representation to build a political image.

Constructing Political Legitimacy through Religious Symbols

Legitimacy, as defined by Weber, refers to societal recognition of authority as legitimate and worthy of obedience. Weber divided legitimacy into three ideal types: traditional, legal-rational, and charismatic (Kusumoningtyas *et al.*, 2025). In the use of symbols of *ta'abbudiyyah* for political purposes, a fusion of legal-rational and charismatic legitimacy is evident. Political actors obtain legal-rational legitimacy through democratic procedures, then reinforce it with a religious image that conveys a charismatic impression. Symbols of devotion serve as a bridge between these two forms of legitimacy. Political authority, which is essentially procedural in nature, can acquire a sacred nuance through displays of piety. In this way, support for political actors arises

not only from considerations of program or capacity, but also from the inherent religious image.

The concrete mechanisms can be analyzed through Bourdieu's theory of symbolic capital. Religious capital is built through the accumulation of symbols of piety, closeness to religious institutions, and the ability to use theological discourse. This capital is then converted into political capital through a process Bourdieu calls *the alchemy of consecration* (Bourdieu, 1990, pp. 112-116; Bourdieu, 1991a, pp. 1-44). In this process, religious scholars or religious institutions can act as mediators, providing moral support to political actors. When influential religious figures endorse a particular candidate, this action is not always understood as a mere personal choice. In a religious social space, such support can be interpreted as a transfer of religious authority to the supported candidate. This situation has significant implications for the integrity and independence of religious institutions. Institutions that should maintain a critical distance from political interests can be drawn into the process of shaping the image of power.

The production of religious imagery also operates through a process of naturalization. Fairclough (2023, pp. 11-22) explains naturalization as a way of presenting certain ideological constructs as if they were a natural and unquestionable reality. In this context, the narrative that a devout leader is a trustworthy leader, or that ritual piety is always in line with moral integrity, can be examples of such naturalization. As a result, criticism of the use of religious symbols in politics often shifts in meaning. Criticism initially directed at political strategy can be perceived as an attack on religion itself. This shift narrows the scope for criticism. The public finds it difficult to distinguish between respect for religion and criticism of the use of religious symbols for political gain.

Another important mechanism is the formation of imagined communities based on religious identity. Bellah (2017, pp. 101-105), using the concept of *civil religion*, explains that religious symbolism can unite political communities through shared rituals that build collective togetherness. In pluralistic Muslim societies, symbols of *ta'abbudiyyah* become markers of identity that transcend class, ethnicity, and ideological differences. However, in certain practices, these symbols can also become tools of differentiation. Groups deemed inadequately representative of Islamic identity can be positioned as outsiders. This is where a paradox arises: religious symbols that should strengthen moral values and togetherness can instead be used to construct social boundaries. Afrimadona's (2021) study of Jakarta voters shows that political polarization is related to differences in attitudes toward the role of Islam and religious scholars in politics. This finding strengthens the discussion that religious symbols and authority can influence the formation of political identity and how society evaluates political actors in electoral contests.

Maqasid al-Shari'ah as a Framework for Normative Analysis

Maqasid al-Shari'ah framework, developed since al-Ghazali, systematized by al-Shatibi, and expanded by Ibn 'Ashur in the modern era, emphasizes that the basic objective of sharia is to safeguard five primary needs (*al-dharuriyyat*

al-khams). These five needs include *hifz al-din* (preservation of religion), *hifz al-'aql* (preservation of intellect), *hifz al-nafs* (preservation of life), *hifz al-mal* (preservation of wealth) (Al-Ghazali, 1993, pp. 174-175). Within this framework, every religious practice, including *ta'abbudiyyah*, should be directed towards maintaining true welfare, not towards temporary instrumental interests. Ibn 'Ashur expanded the scope of *maqasid* by emphasizing the importance of maintaining a just social order as a universal principle underlying the entire structure of Islamic law. Thus, *maqasid* not only functions as a normative goal of the Shari'a, but also as a measure for assessing socio-political practices (Ibn 'Ashur, 2001). At this point, the use of *ta'abbudiyyah* for political purposes can be read as a deviation from the basic direction of *maqasid*. These deviations can be seen in stages through the following dimensions.

To avoid the impression of declarative argumentation, the analysis of each dimension of *the maqasid al-shari'ah* in this study is directed at demonstrating the causal relationship between the instrumentalization of symbols of worship and the potential disruption of the objectives of sharia. First, each dimension is analyzed systematically by first explaining the object that is the target of sharia protection (*mahall al-hifz*). Second, the sociological and political mechanisms that explain how the use of symbols of worship in political practice can disrupt this protective function are explained. Third, the assessment is assessed whether the resulting impact has met the criteria of *mafsadah* according to the perspective of *usul al-fiqh*. This assessment is not based on assumptions about individual intentions or sincerity, but rather on empirical patterns that are recurring and socially observable so that they meet the standard of *ghalabat al-zann* as the basis for applying the principle of *sadd al-dhara'i*. With this framework, the discussion of each dimension of *maqasid* does not stop at normative assessments, but demonstrates argumentatively how a political practice can be considered to threaten the objectives of sharia protection.

1. *Hifz al-din* (Protection of Religion)

In the dimension of *hifz al-din*, the use of symbols of worship as political capital has the potential to shift the community's understanding of the essence of worship. Worship, which should be based on sincerity, can become a means of social representation fraught with vested interests. Al-Ghazali emphasized that *riya'* (showing off in worship) is a form of *shirk khafi* (minor shirk), a condition where the orientation of deeds is no longer entirely directed towards God, but rather towards human recognition. (Shuhari & Hamat, 2015, p. 41). The Qur'an firmly criticizes this tendency in QS. al-Ma'un (107): 4-7:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ ۚ
الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاءُونَ وَيَمْنَعُونَ
الْمَاعُونَ ۝

“So woe to those who pray, yet are heedless of their prayers, those who perform their worship only to be seen by others, while withholding even small acts of kindness”
(Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019, Q. 107:4–7).

This verse shows that the main problem lies not in the ritual practice itself, but rather in the loss of sincerity, the core of worship. In a political context, the symbol

of *ta'abbudiyyah* displayed to gain legitimacy or public sympathy can encourage the formalization of worship. Worship remains outwardly visible, but its spiritual meaning risks narrowing. The function of *taqarrub*, which is to draw closer to God, can shift to being a means of establishing the legitimacy of worldly power.

The three elements of the analysis above can be summarized explicitly. The objects protected in this dimension are the purity of the intention of worship and the position of worship as the exclusive right of Allah (*tawhid al-'ibadah*). The mechanism occurs when the performance of worship is scheduled and packaged according to the political calendar so that the orientation of the deed is mixed between *qashd al-taqarrub* (the urge to draw closer to Allah) and *qashd al-istimalah al-jamahiriyah* (the urge to gain public sympathy), a mixture of intentions that Al-Ghazali views as reducing the spiritual quality of the deed even if its outward form remains perfect. The threshold of *mafsadah* in this dimension is not determined by an assessment of each individual's sincerity, which is impossible to verify empirically, but rather by the systematic repetition of patterns as documented in studies of the commodification of religious rituals (Lubis *et al.*, 2024). When these patterns are repeated across actors and across electoral contests, *sadd al-dhara'i'* operates at the level of mechanisms, not the individual, so that the criticisms raised remain consistent with the principle that the human heart is known only to Allah.

2. *Hifz al-'Aql* (Preservation of Intellect)

In the dimension of *hifz al-'aql*, the instrumentalization of *ta'abbudiyyah* can influence the public's ability to assess policies based on rational considerations. Reason in the Islamic legal and philosophical tradition is positioned as a crucial instrument for understanding reality, weighing arguments, and distinguishing valid claims from manipulative ones. Ibn Rushd (1972) emphasized that reason must be protected from various forms of distortion, including the use of religious authority as legitimacy without adequate argumentation. When symbols of piety are placed in place of substantive arguments in political discourse, the public can lose a more comprehensive measure of judgment. Assessment of political actors is no longer solely based on capacity, track record, programs, or policy integrity, but is more influenced by the religious image they project.

This mechanism often operates through the affective side of society. Emotionally appealing displays of worship can generate a more immediate response than rational explanations that require deeper assessment. Social psychology research shows that judgments of figures with a religious image tend to be more resistant to rational criticism. This explains why symbols of piety have a strong legitimacy in the public sphere (Haidt, 2012). This situation creates an imbalance in political discourse. Religious images are relatively easy to construct, but not so easy to critique. Criticism of the use of religious symbols often risks being interpreted as anti-religious, when in fact the criticism is not the religion itself, but rather the way religious symbols are used for political gain.

Referring to the same analytical structure, the object protected in this dimension is the public's critical reasoning capacity to weigh arguments independently. The mechanism works through heuristic substitution, where the assessment of leadership capacity that should require in-depth rational consideration is replaced by a more rapid affective response to symbols of piety, a tendency that is structurally reinforced by the media's political-economic logic that prioritizes content with high emotional appeal

(Munch, 2012). The threshold of *mafsadah* in this dimension is evident in the discursive asymmetry mentioned above, namely that religious images are relatively easy to build but difficult to criticize, so that the space for rational evaluation of policies and track records is actually narrowed. This asymmetry is an indicator that disruption to *hifzh al-'aql* has exceeded the level of hypothetical risk and reached the level of structural disruption to public discourse, which operationally meets the standard of *ghalabat al-zann* for the validity of *sadd al-dhara'i*.

3. *Hifz al-nafs* (preservation of the Life)

In a broader sense, *hifz al-nafs* is not only related to physical protection, but also encompasses human dignity and autonomy. Yusuf al-Qaradawi (1998) in *al-Siyasah al-Shar'iyyah* asserts that manipulating public awareness through any means, including religious ones, contradicts the principle of justice in Islam. Worship is essentially an expression of human spiritual freedom before God; therefore, worship should not be reduced to external, pragmatic interests. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

إِذَا ضَيِّعَتِ الْأَمَانَةُ فَانْتَظِرِ السَّاعَةَ

"If the trust is wasted, then wait for its destruction. (HR. al-Bukhari; Al-Bukhari, 2002).

This hadith emphasizes the importance of trust in social life and leadership. In a political context, the use of symbols of *ta'abbudiyyah* to disguise political calculations behind a facade of piety can be understood as a form of squandering trust. In *Islamic jurisprudence*, trust is a crucial requirement for legitimacy of leadership. Therefore, such practices are not only ethical but also have serious normative implications within the legal and ethical framework of Islamic politics.

In this aspect, the object being protected is not only physical safety, but also human spiritual autonomy, both in the political actor and in the society that is the target of representation. The mechanism is two-way, in the political actor, the instrumentalization of worship has the potential to erode personal integrity because it changes the means of closeness to God into a tool for seeking worldly recognition in society, this mechanism forms political support that is born from emotional-symbolic touch, not from free and autonomous rational considerations, thus reducing the quality of public approval as a truly independent action. The threshold of *mafsadah* in this aspect obtains a strong textual footing through the hadith on trust that has been quoted, which emphasizes that the squandering of trust has implications for the destruction of the social order. and obtains empirical support through the symptoms of fragmentation of religious authority and social polarization that have been described (Habermas, 2008; Eickelman, 2018). The convergence between normative foundations and sociological evidence is what makes disturbances to *hifzh al-nafs* serious enough to be addressed through the principle of *sadd al-dhara'i*.

4. *Hifz al-mal* (Preservation of Wealth)

Although not the primary focus of this study, the dimension of *hifz al-mal* is also relevant to briefly touch on. When symbols of *ta'abbudiyyah* are converted into political capital, the process is often linked to the use of material resources. This can be seen in

the financing of religious activities with electoral motives, donations or social assistance disguised as symbols of worship to build an image of generous piety, and practices that approach money politics but are disguised in religious language. In *Islamic jurisprudence*, wealth obtained or used through means that disguise its true purpose has the potential to undermine *hifz al-mal* by diverting the function of wealth from public welfare to an instrument for the accumulation of personal influence. This aspect requires a separate, more in-depth study of the political economy of religious symbols, but it suffices to emphasize here that the deviations in *hifz al-din*, *hifz al-'aql*, and *hifz al-nafs* discussed above are often not isolated. All three are related to the motives and material flows that underpin these legitimacy mechanisms.

5. *Sadd al-Dhara'i'*

Within the framework of *usul fiqh*, an action that structurally has the potential to damage *maqasid* can be analyzed through the principle of *sadd al-dhara'i'*. This principle means blocking the path that leads to damage or *mafsadah* (Al-Shatibi, 1997, p. 182). With this principle, Islamic law not only looks at the outward form of an action, but also considers its impact and consequences in social life. Al-Shatibi emphasized that sharia considers the subsequent consequences of an action, especially those related to the moral and social stability of society. Based on this framework, the instrumentalization of *ta'abbudiyyah* is not merely a personal ethical problem; this practice can also become a normative issue because it has the potential to pave the way for broader damage, particularly to the purity of worship, religious authority, and the socio-political order.

Table 1. Analysis Conceptual Deviation Maqasid al- Shari'ah in Instrumentalization *Ta'abbudiyyah*

Dimensions Maqasid	Mechanism Sociological-Political	Form Deviation	Foundation Normative
<i>Hifz al-din</i>	Commodification of symbols (Casanova) and <i>misrecognition</i> (Bourdieu)	The loss of sincerity of worship and the emergence of <i>riya'</i> as <i>shirk khafi</i>	QS. al-Ma'un (107): 4-7 and al-Ghazali, <i>Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din</i>
<i>Hifz al-'Aql</i>	Naturalization discourse (Fairclough) and hegemony affective (Gramsci)	The weakening of public rational evaluation as substantive arguments are replaced by images of piety	Ibn Rushd, <i>Fasl al-Maqal</i>
<i>Hifz al-nafs</i>	Accumulation capital symbolic (Bourdieu) and civil religion (Bellah)	Decreased spiritual autonomy and weakened leadership trust	Al-Qaradawi, <i>al-Siyasah al-Shar'iyyah</i> and the trustworthy hadith narrated by al-Bukhari
<i>Hifz al-mal</i>	The conversion of symbolic capital into political capital and the political economy of the media	The use of material resources wrapped in symbols of worship and the risk of abuse of the trust of the people's property	The principle of property trust in <i>political jurisprudence</i> and <i>usul fiqh</i>
<i>Sadd al-Dhara'i'</i>	Media reproduction and symbolic repetition (Benjamin)	Potential structural damage to religious authority and socio-political order	Al- Shatibi , <i>al-Muwafaqat</i>

Reduction of the Value of Worship as a Tool: An Axiological Review

Criticism of the use of worship as a political tool needs to be placed on a clear theological foundation. In Islamic tradition, worship is understood as the primary purpose of human creation, as affirmed in QS. al-Dzariyat (51): 56-57

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ مَا أُرِيدُ مِنْهُمْ مِنْ رِزْقٍ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ يُطْعَمُوا

“ I (Allah) did not create jinn and humankind except that they may worship Me. I seek no provision from them, nor do I ask that they should feed Me” (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019, Q. 51:56–57).

This verse positions worship as the ultimate goal (*ghayah*), not merely a means to other interests. Therefore, when worship is used as an instrument for political ends, its fundamental meaning can shift. From an Islamic axiological perspective, worship has intrinsic value that should not be subordinated to temporary, pragmatic interests. If worship is directed toward non-transcendental goals, its spiritual function and meaning can be diminished. Therefore, criticism of the instrumentalization of *ta'abbudiyyah* does not stem from subjective judgment, but from the structure of Islamic values that places worship as the primary orientation of human life.

Ibn Taymiyyah & Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (1969) in *al-Siyasah al-Shar'iyah* distinguish between the use of religion as a normative guideline in politics (which he supports) and the use of religious symbols for the benefit of individual power (which he sharply criticizes). This distinction is important, in the first category, politics is directed to realize the values of justice, trust, and welfare. In the second category, religious symbols are used to strengthen the legitimacy of power. The shift from the first to the second category can have serious consequences for the moral authority of religion and the integrity of religious practices in the public sphere.

The reduction in the value of worship can also occur through repetition and habituation. When religious practices are continually displayed in the context of campaigns and the consolidation of power, worship risks losing its sacred atmosphere as it becomes a public spectacle. Walter Benjamin (1969, pp. 217-252) explained that mechanical reproduction can diminish a work's aura of authenticity. This idea can be analogized to religious symbols. When sacred symbols are repeatedly reproduced in profane spaces, their transcendent dimension can be weakened.

From a fiqh perspective, the use of worship as a tool is also related to the status of intention. Intention (*niyyah*) is a crucial element in assessing a deed. When intention is mixed with worldly goals, especially the desire to gain human recognition, the spiritual value of the deed can be diminished. Al-Ghazali (nd, p. 384) explains that the mixture of worldly intentions can damage the spiritual quality of a deed, even if it appears outwardly perfect. In a social context, Ibn Khaldun also pointed out that the weakening of a society's spiritual values can be an early sign of the decline of civilization (Sriyanto, 2018). This perspective is relevant for understanding the long-term impact of the use of symbols of worship in the political sphere.

Broader Implications of the Instrumentalization of Ta'abbudiyyah

1. Crisis of Religious Authority

The use of symbols of *ta'abbudiyyah* as an instrument of political legitimacy impacts the structure of religious authority. In classical Islamic tradition, religious authority is built through knowledge (*'ilm*), moral integrity, and a long process of self-development.

This authority is not born merely from symbolic displays, but from mastery of knowledge and exemplary morals. When political actors lacking a background in religious knowledge are able to build symbolic authority through displays of worship, a shift occurs in how society interprets religious authority. On the one hand, religious symbols become more accessible. On the other hand, the scientific and moral standards that should underpin authority can be weakened. This condition can be called a paradoxical democratization of religious authority, as it expands the use of religious symbols while simultaneously obscuring the extent of legitimate authority (Brown, 2014, pp. 45-60).

Olivier Roy (1994, pp. 3-14) refers to the phenomenon of “Islamization without Islam,” a situation where Islamic symbols are strengthened in appearance, while the substance of deep religious knowledge and practice is weakened. In the political arena, a similar trend can be seen when more and more actors use symbols of *ta'abbudiyyah* to build a religious image, while knowledge-based religious discourse does not always receive adequate space. As a result, scholars who strictly maintain scientific traditions can lose social relevance in a society increasingly familiar with the symbolic logic of the media.

This crisis of authority also has an institutional dimension. When formal religious institutions become too closely involved in the process of political legitimacy, their epistemic independence can be compromised. This independence is crucial for religious authorities to remain able to speak from a moral position that transcends partisan interests. Habermas (2008, pp. 101-113) emphasizes the importance of religion maintaining its ability to make ethical contributions in the public sphere without losing its critical distance from power. The long-term implication of this condition is the fragmentation of religious references within society. When the boundaries of who has the authority to speak on behalf of religion become blurred, social space opens up to numerous actors competing for legitimacy. This situation can weaken religion-based social cohesion and make society more vulnerable to political mobilization that utilizes religious symbols (Eickelman, 2018, pp. 27-46).

2. Manipulating Public Perception and Social Polarization

The most disturbing dimension of the instrumentalization of *ta'abbudiyyah* also influences public awareness. Gramsci (2020, pp. 141-142), in his theory of hegemony, explains that the most effective form of domination does not always come through coercion, but through societal acceptance of a perspective as normal. In a political context, symbols of piety can shape the public's assessment of leadership. The public can be encouraged to judge political figures not primarily on their capacity, programs, and track record, but on the religious image they project. When symbols of piety are understood as the primary indicator of leadership, the public's evaluation standards can shift. Assessments that should rely on substantive and verifiable aspects can be replaced by more readily visible symbolic indicators. This shift weakens the public's critical ability to assess leadership quality rationally and comprehensively.

An aspect that requires further critique is the media's role in reinforcing this manipulation mechanism. Contemporary media, with its political-economic logic that prioritizes high-engagement content, structurally reinforces the representation of symbols of piety due to their strong emotional appeal and potential for widespread dissemination. This condition creates an information ecosystem biased toward

performative aspects, where visual and emotional appeals are more prominent than profound but less spectacular substance (Munch, 2012, pp. 134-145).

The social consequences of this mechanism are evident in religious identity-based polarization. In electoral politics, politicized religious symbols can reinforce social divisions. Differences in political choices are no longer always debated through programmatic arguments, but can instead transform into moral dichotomies about who is considered more representative of Islamic identity. This condition makes the democratic space more emotional and less deliberative. Soderborg and Muhtadi (2023) show that political polarization in Indonesia is related to the mobilization of religious and ethnic identities in electoral contests. Meanwhile, Majid and Amirulkamar (2023) explain that identity politics in the lead-up to the 2024 elections also takes place through social media, using religious, ethnic, and cultural identities to influence voter preferences. Thus, the use of religious symbols in politics not only impacts the quality of leadership but also the religious life of the community. Standards of religiosity can shift to become more performative and competitive, rather than substantive and inclusive. In the long term, this condition can weaken the health of the public sphere and diminish the depth of the meaning of worship in social life.

Conclusion

This article has shown that the instrumentalization of *ta'abbudiyyah* in contemporary political contestation transforms worship from an expression of sincere devotion into a symbolic resource for constructing political legitimacy. This transformation operates through the desacralization and commodification of worship symbols, the naturalization of piety discourse, and the conversion of symbolic capital into political legitimacy. Accordingly, the critique developed in this study is not directed at the relationship between religion and politics itself, but at the strategic use of symbols of worship to construct political authority. From the perspective of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*, such practices have the potential to undermine the preservation of religion (*hifz al-din*), intellect (*hifz al-'aql*), life (*hifz al-nafs*), and wealth (*hifz al-mal*). In this regard, the principle of *sadd al-dhara'i'* provides an important normative basis for preventing practices that may gradually weaken the spiritual integrity of worship, the credibility of religious authority, and the ethical foundations of public life. More broadly, this article contributes to contemporary Islamic legal scholarship by proposing a *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*-based analytical framework that distinguishes the legitimate role of religion in politics from the political instrumentalization of *ta'abbudiyyah*. This study is limited by its normative-conceptual design and therefore does not empirically examine the intentions of political actors or public responses to the use of religious symbols. Consequently, the proposed framework should be understood as a normative analytical model rather than an empirical explanation of political behaviour. Future research may strengthen this framework through media discourse analysis, political ethnography, public perception studies, or comparative research across different religious and political contexts. Ultimately, the challenge for contemporary Muslim societies is not whether religion should participate in political life, but how the sanctity of worship can be preserved when symbols of *ta'abbudiyyah* increasingly function as instruments of political legitimacy.

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