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Al-Ṭūsī's Concept of Imāmah in *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*: A Review of the Doctrine of Imāmah in Modern Muslim Socio-Political Models

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Abstract

Purpose – This study examines how Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī constructs the doctrine of imāmah in *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* and how this classical exegetical construction can be traced through subsequent Imāmī scholarship into the modern doctrine of *wilāyat al-faqīh*. It addresses a gap in scholarship that has generally treated al-Ṭūsī's exegesis and modern Shī'ī political thought as separate fields.

Design/methodology/approach – The study employs qualitative library research and thematic analysis. Primary data consist of *al-Tibyān*, with relevant Qur'ānic verses identified through keyword-based selection. Al-Ṭūsī's exegetical arguments are classified according to *naṣṣ*, *ishmah*, and *wilāyah*, while Talal Asad's concept of discursive tradition is used to trace their intellectual transmission across subsequent generations.

Findings – The findings demonstrate that al-Ṭūsī integrates *naql* and *'aql* to construct imāmah as divinely sanctioned leadership centered on the Ahl al-Bayt. This exegetical framework subsequently became a stable reference point for later Imāmī jurists, particularly Naraqī, whose expanded conception of juristic authority provided an identifiable link to Khomeini's formulation of *wilāyat al-faqīh*. **Research implications/limitations** – The study is limited by its library-based design, primary focus on *al-Tibyān*, reliance on secondary sources for parts of the intellectual genealogy, and contextual rather than fully weighted comparison with Sunnī *khilāfah*. **Originality/value** – The study contributes an exegetical genealogy connecting classical Shī'ī *tafsīr* with modern political thought and extends the application of discursive-tradition theory to Qur'ānic hermeneutics.

Keywords: Al-Ṭūsī; Imāmah; Discursive Tradition; Social-Politics.

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Introduction

The study of classical Qur'ānic commentaries constitutes an important field in Qur'ānic exegesis, as these works allow scholars to trace intellectual orientations, methodological approaches, and theological backgrounds that have shaped the interpretations of earlier Muslim scholars. Within the context of Twelver Shī'ī exegesis, one of the most monumental works that marks a milestone in the development of this exegetical tradition is *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460 AH) [1]. This work emerged at a time when Shī'ī exegesis began to occupy a more established scholarly position, signaling a shift from transmission-based interpretation toward rationalization in engaging with the Qur'ānic text [2]. Therefore, the study of al-Ṭūsī's work is crucial for understanding how Shī'ī exegetical methods developed as an intellectual discourse that engaged in dialogue with Sunnī traditions while simultaneously affirming its own theological identity.

In *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, al-Ṭūsī sought to construct a comprehensive and rational exegesis by integrating linguistic analysis, kalām theology, jurisprudence, and philosophy [3]. He argued that earlier exegetical works tended to address only certain aspects of the Qur'ān in a fragmented manner, without presenting a holistic synthesis. In this regard, al-Ṭūsī introduced a moderate exegetical style: neither excessively lengthy so as to cause fatigue, nor overly brief in a way that would hinder full clarification of meaning [4]. His method demonstrates an effort to integrate *naql* (transmitted reports) and *'aql* (reason), a characteristic feature of Shī'ī exegetical epistemology. This approach positions al-Ṭūsī's exegesis as a bridge between the heritage of traditional tafsīr and emerging rational intellectual tendencies, which later became a model for subsequent Shī'ī exegetes.

Furthermore, *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* plays an important role in strengthening the theological construction of *imāmah* as the central doctrine of Shī'ism [5]. Through his interpretation of verses such as Q. al-Mā'idah [5]:55, al-Ṭūsī reads the sacred text not merely in a normative dimension but also as a legitimization of the concept of divinely ordained leadership entrusted to the Imams from the Ahl al-Bayt [6]. Such a hermeneutical approach shows that tafsīr is not only an intellectual activity aimed at understanding the text, but also an ideological instrument in constructing religious authority. Accordingly, the study of al-Ṭūsī's exegesis not only reveals the classical Shī'ī scholarly tradition but also provides deeper insight into how the Qur'ān is interpreted within the dynamics of theological contestation and early Islamic intellectual history.

Al-Ṭūsī's construction of *imāmah* also serves as an interpretive framework for reading the trajectory of Shī'ī political thought that later crystallized in the doctrine of *wilāyat al-faqīh*, formulated and popularized by Khomeini following

the 1979 Iranian Revolution [7]. This doctrine marked a decisive transformation in the modern history of Iran's political system, articulating a model of clerical governance without direct precedent in earlier Shī'ī political theory [8]. Read alongside the Sunnī tradition, in which political authority has historically been organized around the institution of *khilāfah* rather than a single jurist's guardianship [9], this trajectory offers a productive point of comparison. Tracing how a classical exegetical construction of *imāmah* relates to its later political articulation, and how this trajectory diverges from Sunnī *khilāfah*, therefore becomes analytically significant for understanding the diverse pathways through which Qur'ānic interpretation has shaped competing models of religious-political authority.

While al-Ṭūsī's exegetical construction of *imāmah* and its crystallization in *wilāyat al-faqīh* have each received scholarly attention, existing literature largely treats these two dimensions as separate objects of study. Works on al-Ṭūsī's exegetical methodology concentrate on hermeneutic technique within *al-Tibyān*, situating it within the development of rational Shī'ī *tafsīr*, but rarely extend analysis toward its later political consequences [10]. Conversely, studies of *wilāyat al-faqīh* typically begin with Naraqi or Khomeini, seldom tracing the doctrine's genealogy back to classical exegesis such as al-Ṭūsī's [11]. Herein lies the research gap this study addresses: no existing study has systematically examined the mechanism through which al-Ṭūsī's classical construction of *imāmah* relates to, and eventually gives rise to, its modern political articulation in *wilāyat al-faqīh*. This gap matters because it leaves unclear whether *wilāyat al-faqīh* is a doctrinally continuous elaboration of al-Ṭūsī's exegesis or a later, loosely connected reinterpretation.

Literature Review

This study aims to examine how al-Ṭūsī constructs the doctrine of *imāmah* through his interpretation of key Qur'ānic verses in *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, and to trace how this classical theological construction relates to its later political articulation in the doctrine of *wilāyat al-faqīh*. Two research questions guide the analysis. *First*, how does al-Ṭūsī construct *imāmah* through his interpretation of Qur'ānic verses such as al-Mā'idah [5]:55 and related passages in *al-Tibyān*? *Second*, through what mechanism can this classical exegetical construction be traced, through successive generations of Imāmī jurisprudence, into its later political transformation into the doctrine of *wilāyat al-faqīh*? In closing, the study briefly discusses how this Shī'ī trajectory resonates with the Sunnī concept of *khilāfah*, not as an equally weighted comparative analysis, but as a contextual reflection that opens space for future dedicated comparative research.

Unlike the primary analysis of *imāmah*, which draws directly on al-Ṭūsī's exegetical text, the concluding discussion of *khilāfah* is treated as a contextual

reflection rather than a fully weighted comparative analysis. It relies on well-established secondary scholarship, principally Rosenthal's systematic account of medieval Islamic political thought, to characterize the Sunnī tradition's general emphasis on contractual selection (*ikhtiyār*) and consultation (*shūrā*), without conducting an independent exegetical reading of Sunnī primary sources comparable in depth to the analysis of *al-Tibyān* undertaken elsewhere in this study [12]. This narrower scope keeps the comparative discussion proportionate to the study's central focus on al-Ṭūsī, while still situating the findings on *imāmah* within a broader field of Islamic political thought, and it avoids evaluative claims of relative superiority that the available data do not support.

Previous studies on Shī'ī *tafsīr* and *wilāyat al-faqīh* have approached this terrain from several distinct angles without converging on the present study's specific concern. Zaim and Sahin examine al-Ṭūsī's, al-Ṭabarsī's, and al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī's shared rejection of *tahrīf al-Qur'ān* [13], while Ramadhani, Kerwanto, and Aini analyze the interpretive patterns and methods of *Tafsīr al-Qummī* and *Tafsīr al-Mīzān* [14], and Abidin traces ideological bias in al-Qummī's reading of Āli 'Imrān and al-Nisā' [15]. Closest to the present study in textual object, Adinnia examines *al-Tibyān*'s interpretation of leadership-related verses through *al-dakhīl* criticism, evaluating the authenticity of the narrations al-Ṭūsī employs rather than the theological argument they construct, and her study does not extend beyond *al-Tibyān* toward the doctrine's later political transformation [16]. On the political side, Bisri traces the influence of Khomeini's *wilāyat al-faqīh* on contemporary Indonesian Islamic thought [17], and Riza examines the ideological contestation underlying the Islamic Republic of Iran [18], but neither traces this doctrine's genealogy back to classical exegesis. Collectively, these six studies remain divided between two separate horizons — classical *tafsīr* authenticity and methodology on one side, and modern *wilāyat al-faqīh* as a political phenomenon on the other — without an explicit theoretical bridge connecting them. Building on this gap, the present study synthesizes thematic exegetical analysis with Talal Asad's discursive-tradition theory to reconstruct al-Ṭūsī's construction of *imāmah* in his interpretation of key Qur'ānic verses and trace the mechanism of its transformation into *wilāyat al-faqīh* in modern Shī'ī political thought.

As the preceding review of previous studies demonstrates, existing scholarship has examined al-Ṭūsī's exegetical methodology, the theological foundations of Shī'ī *imāmah*, and the political development of *wilāyat al-faqīh* largely as separate lines of inquiry, each developed within its own disciplinary boundary. What remains insufficiently addressed is how these three dimensions relate to one another: specifically, how al-Ṭūsī's Qur'ānic exegesis in *al-Tibyān* constructs the doctrinal basis of *imāmah*, how this classical construction can be traced into its later political transformation, and how the resulting model

compares with the Sunnī concept of *khilāfah*. This gap matters because it leaves unclear whether the connection between classical exegesis and modern Shī'ī political theory reflects direct doctrinal continuity or later reinterpretation, a distinction with real consequences for how legitimately *wilāyat al-faqīh* can claim exegetical grounding in al-Ṭūsī's foundational work.

Previous studies have therefore examined al-Ṭūsī's exegetical methodology and the theological foundations of Shī'ī imāmah separately, whereas this study connects the exegetical construction of imāmah in al-Tibyān with its later socio-political transformation into *wilāyat al-faqīh*, and further compares this trajectory with the Sunnī concept of *khilāfah* – a linkage that remains underexplored in the existing literature.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research design, emphasizing a comprehensive understanding of the issue under investigation through a case-by-case analysis [19]. The data processing technique utilized is a literature study—an effort to gather data and information from texts, books, and articles relevant to the research theme. This technique aims to understand al-Ṭūsī's interpretive construction regarding the concept of *imāmah*. Keyword-based selection was conducted using a *mu'jam mufahras* to classify Qur'anic verses based on the specific terms under study [20]. The research examines Qur'anic verses explicitly related to the concept of *imāmah*—specifically those containing key terms within Shī'a political theology. The primary data source is al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān, the main source of interpretation, while secondary data sources include supporting texts—such as books, papers, and articles—relevant to the research theme.

This study employs a thematic method, which involves gathering data and information related to the research theme from sources such as religious texts, books, articles, and papers. Accordingly, the data analysis technique in this research is carried out in two stages [21]. *First*, al-Ṭūsī's exegetical arguments were classified according to the specific dimensions of *imāmah* they supported—the legitimacy of designation (*naṣṣ*), the quality of infallibility or immunity from sin (*iṣmah*), or governmental authority (*wilāyah*)—thereby allowing the network of argumentation to be traced. *Second*, these classified arguments were examined cumulatively to assess how al-Ṭūsī constructed the concept of *imāmah* as an interconnected doctrinal structure spanning various verses, rather than as a series of disjointed exegetical comments. This two-stage procedure operationalizes what was previously described only in general terms as qualitative library-based research, thereby enabling future researchers to build upon this analysis.

Meanwhile, the conceptual bridge between al-Tusi's *imamah* and Khomeini's *wilayat al-faqih* is examined through the lens of Talal Asad's theory of "discursive tradition". In *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, Asad asserts that Islam is neither a distinct social structure nor merely a heterogeneous collection of beliefs, artifacts, customs, and morals; rather, it is "a tradition" [22]. According to him, this is a Muslim discursive tradition oriented toward conceptions of Islam's past and future, while constantly referencing specific Islamic practices in the present. This theory aligns with the author's research objective: to trace the trajectory from al-Tusi's *imamah* and Naraqī's *'awā'id al-ayyām* to Khomeini's *wilayat al-faqih*—a progression that successfully transitioned from theological concept to practical politics, mobilizing ideals to bring about a new reality.

Result and Discussion

The analysis of al-Ṭūsī's concept of imāmah requires consideration of the intellectual, scholarly, and socio-political context in which his exegetical thought was formed. As a major figure in the development of Twelver Shī'ī scholarship, al-Ṭūsī's interpretation of the Qur'an cannot be separated from his engagement with ḥadīth, fiqh, kalām, uṣūl al-fiqh, linguistic studies, and the sectarian and political dynamics of his time. His intellectual formation is particularly important for understanding why al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān integrates transmitted reports (naql/riwāyah) with rational argumentation ('aql/dirāyah) in constructing theological claims concerning imāmah. Accordingly, this section first examines al-Ṭūsī's intellectual biography and scholarly formation as a contextual foundation for analyzing his exegetical construction of imāmah. It then proceeds to examine the structure of al-Tibyān, the theological conception of imāmah, its Qur'anic foundations, and the subsequent intellectual trajectory leading toward wilāyat al-faqih. This sequence is intended to demonstrate that al-Ṭūsī's interpretation should be understood not as a series of isolated exegetical statements, but as part of a broader intellectual tradition in which Qur'anic interpretation, theology, and religious-political authority are closely interconnected.

Intellectual Biography of Muhammad al-Hasan al-Ṭūsī

Shaykh al-Ṭā'ifāh Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī is regarded as one of the most influential figures in the intellectual history of Islam, particularly within the Twelver Shī'ī tradition [23, p. ba']. He was born in the city of Ṭūs in the Khurāsān region in the month of Ramaḍān in 385 AH. The nisbah "al-Ṭūsī" attached to his name refers to his birthplace, a region that, at that time, was recognized as one of the major centers of learning in the Islamic world [24]. The socio-intellectual environment of Ṭūs significantly shaped al-Ṭūsī's early intellectual formation before he eventually migrated to Baghdad in 408 AH at the

age of approximately twenty-three [25]. This migration marked a crucial turning point in his academic career, as Baghdad at the time functioned as a major center of Islamic civilization and a vibrant arena for diverse scholarly traditions, legal schools, and intellectual debates.

In Baghdad, al-Ṭūsī studied under several prominent scholars who laid the foundations of his intellectual and methodological development. His most influential teacher was Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413 AH), one of the greatest theologians and jurists in the Twelver Shī'ī tradition [26]. After al-Mufīd's death, he continued his intellectual training under Shaykh al-Murtaḍā 'Alam al-Hudā (d. 436 AH), with whom he studied for approximately twenty-three years [27]. In addition to these figures, al-Ṭūsī also studied with Ibn 'Abdūn al-Ḥajjāl, Ḥusayn ibn 'Ubayd Allāh al-Ghaḍā'irī, and Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Ahwāzī. This scholarly network demonstrates that al-Ṭūsī's intellectual formation was not confined to a single discipline, but encompassed ḥadīth, fiqh, kalām, uṣūl al-fiqh, and various other branches of Islamic sciences that flourished during his time [23, p. jim-dal].

Al-Ṭūsī's intellectual maturity reached its peak following the death of Shaykh al-Murtaḍā in 436 AH. From that moment, he emerged as the leading authority of the Twelver Shī'ī school and was granted the honorific title Shaykh al-Ṭā'ifāh, signifying his central position as both an intellectual and religious leader of the Shī'ī community [24]. His teaching circle in the al-Karkh district of Baghdad became one of the most influential centers of Islamic learning in his era. Moreover, Caliph al-Qā'im bi-Amr Allāh granted him a chair in kalām, an academic recognition that reflects the breadth of al-Ṭūsī's scholarly authority not only among Shī'īs but also within the broader intellectual landscape of the Islamic world [6, p. dal-ha'].

Al-Ṭūsī's life trajectory cannot be separated from the political conditions of the fifth century AH. The weakening of the Būyid dynasty and the increasing sectarian tensions between Sunnī and Shī'ī groups created an unstable situation in Baghdad. Between 447–449 AH, al-Ṭūsī's house and library became targets of anti-Shī'ī mob attacks, resulting in the destruction of many of his scholarly collections by fire. This event forced him to leave Baghdad and migrate to Najaf [6, p. za']. However, this relocation in fact marked a new and decisive phase in the history of Shī'ī Islamic scholarship, as al-Ṭūsī laid the foundations of the Ḥawzah 'Ilmiyyah of Najaf, which later developed into one of the most influential centers of Islamic education up to the contemporary period.

As a scholar, al-Ṭūsī's influence was not limited to his teaching activities but was also reflected in the scholarly network formed by his students. Among his most prominent disciples were his own son, Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, as well as

al-Faḍl ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabrisī, the author of the monumental exegesis *Majma' al-Bayān*, along with several other scholars who later played significant roles in the intellectual development of Islam [6, p. dal-waw]. The large number of students who studied under him indicates that al-Ṭūsī's scholarly authority extended beyond local communities and became a reference point for various intellectual circles across the Islamic world.

Al-Ṭūsī's greatest contribution is evident in his works, which encompass nearly all major disciplines of Islamic scholarship. In the field of Qur'ānic exegesis, he authored *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, regarded as one of the most important classical Shī'ī commentaries. In jurisprudence, he produced *al-Mabsūṭ* and *al-Nihāyah*, which significantly influenced the development of Shī'ī Islamic law. In ḥadīth studies, he compiled *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām* and *al-Istibṣār*, which are included among the four principal ḥadīth collections (al-kutub al-arba'ah) of the Imāmī school. In addition, he authored important works in 'ilm al-rijāl, kalām, uṣūl al-fiqh, and other disciplines [6, p. za'-qaf]. This diversity of works demonstrates that al-Ṭūsī's position in Islamic intellectual history was not merely that of a jurist or ḥadīth scholar, but rather that of a major architect who contributed to the comprehensive construction of the Imāmī Shī'ī scholarly system.

Shaykh al-Ṭūsī passed away in Najaf on 22 Muḥarram 460 AH after dedicating most of his life to scholarly activity, teaching, and writing [28, p. 84]. His intellectual legacy is not limited to dozens of works that continue to be studied today, but also includes a scholarly tradition that he successfully established and institutionalized through the Ḥawzah of Najaf [28]. Therefore, in the history of Islamic thought, al-Ṭūsī is not only remembered as a major scholar, but also as a figure who succeeded in integrating the traditions of ḥadīth transmission, jurisprudence, theology, and Qur'ānic exegesis into a coherent epistemological framework that has exerted lasting influence across generations.

General Overview of the Book *Al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*

Al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān is a monumental work by Shaykh al-Ṭūsī that occupies an important position in the development of the Twelver Shī'ī exegetical tradition. This work consists of ten volumes that systematically and comprehensively discuss the entirety of the Qur'ānic text [23]. Its early edition was published in Tehran in 1407 AH under the initiative of Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥujjah al-Ṭibrīzī, later reprinted in Najaf by al-Nu'mān al-'Ilmiyyah Press between 1376–1382 AH, and subsequently republished by Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī in Beirut in 1412 AH [29]. The emergence of *al-Tibyān* marks an important phase in the maturation of Shī'ī exegetical methodology, as for the first time a Qur'ānic commentary was composed with such broad scope, not only explaining

the meanings of verses but also integrating various Islamic disciplines into a unified exegetical framework. Consequently, this work became one of the primary references for later generations of Shī'ī exegetes after al-Ṭūsī.

The composition of *al-Tibyān* was motivated by al-Ṭūsī's intention to produce a more comprehensive exegesis compared to earlier works, which he considered to be overly focused on specific aspects such as grammar, linguistic analysis, or theological disputation alone. Through this work, he sought to present Qur'ānic interpretation that simultaneously encompasses linguistic, theological, legal, and social dimensions [30]. In the introduction to his commentary, al-Ṭūsī discusses several foundational themes, including the authenticity of the Qur'ān, *nāsikh* and *mansūkh*, *muḥkam* and *mutashābih*, as well as the fundamental principles of interpretation. His writing style is relatively moderate and systematic, reflecting an effort to balance analytical depth with accessibility. This characteristic makes *al-Tibyān* function not only as a work of tafsīr but also as an encyclopedia of Qur'ānic sciences that brings together various branches of Islamic knowledge [10].

One of the key features of *al-Tibyān* is its integrative approach, which balances the methods of *riwāyah* and *dirāyah*. In interpreting Qur'ānic verses, al-Ṭūsī relies on transmitted reports from the Ahl al-Bayt as a primary source, while at the same time not neglecting rational analysis and scholarly argumentation [31]. This approach is evident in his discussions of *qirā'āt*, *asbāb al-nuzūl*, *i'rāb*, and linguistic issues that require critical reasoning. To support his analysis, al-Ṭūsī frequently cites prominent linguistic and grammatical authorities such as Sībawayh, al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī, Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī, and al-Zajjāj. In addition, he also draws on the views of earlier exegetes such as Muḥammad ibn Baḥr al-Iṣfahānī and al-Rummānī. This combination of transmitted authority and rational argumentation forms the core methodological foundation of his exegesis.

On the theological level, he affirms several foundational principles of Twelver Shī'ī doctrine, such as divine unity (*tawḥīd*), divine justice (*'adl*), and the concept of *imāmah*, by integrating rational proofs with transmitted (*naqlī*) arguments [32]. In the field of jurisprudence, he interprets legal verses concerning inheritance, marriage, commercial transactions, and various social issues based on the legal principles developed within the Imāmī tradition of Islamic law. This orientation demonstrates that *al-Tibyān* is not merely aimed at explicating the Qur'ānic text, but also at offering normative solutions to various religious issues faced by Muslim society in his time [30]. This comprehensive exegetical character makes *al-Tibyān* one of the key milestones in the history of Shī'ī exegesis and exerted a significant influence on subsequent works, while

consolidating al-Ṭūsī's position as one of the principal architects of the Twelver Shī'ī intellectual tradition.

The Concept of Imāmah in Shī'ī Doctrine

The concept of *imāmah* linguistically derives from the root *amma-ya'ummu*, which conveys the meanings of leading, being in front, or serving as a model for others. From this root emerges the term *imām*, referring to a figure who is followed and taken as a role model in various aspects of life. Within the Islamic intellectual tradition, the term *imām* is used in multiple contexts, ranging from the leader of ritual *shalat* (prayer), the founder of a legal school, to the head of state [33]. However, within Shī'ī theological construction, the meaning of *imāmah* develops into a far more foundational concept with extensive doctrinal implications. *Imāmah* is understood as a form of religious, spiritual, and political authority specifically granted to selected individuals from the lineage of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). These Imams are believed to receive direct divine legitimation from God and are designated to the community through the mechanism of *naṣṣ*, either by the Prophet himself or by a preceding Imam [34]. For this reason, *imāmah* is not merely conceived as a political office, but as a divinely instituted system that continues the function of prophethood and forms the cornerstone of Twelver Shī'ī belief.

In Twelver Shī'ī theology, *imāmah* occupies a fundamentally central position and constitutes an inseparable component of the doctrinal structure alongside other articles of faith. This school establishes five (*uṣūl al-dīn*): divine unity (*tawḥīd*), divine justice (*'adl*), prophethood (*nubuwwah*), *imāmah*, and resurrection (*ma'ād*) [35]. The placement of *imāmah* alongside these core theological principles demonstrates that leadership is not regarded as a purely political issue, but as an integral element of religious belief. Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (1201–1274 CE), one of the most prominent Shī'ī theologians, explains that the Imam functions as an intermediary (*wasīlah*) between human beings and God, as his presence guides people toward obedience and distances them from deviation. Thus, *imāmah* is understood as the continuation of divine guidance after the end of prophethood. On this basis, many Shī'ī scholars argue that denying *imāmah* effectively amounts to rejecting the continuity of divinely sourced authority transmitted through prophets and Imams.

The emergence of the doctrine of *imāmah* is closely connected to the issue of political succession following the death of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) in 632 CE. From the Shī'ī perspective, the Prophet had already indicated the leadership of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, particularly during the event of Ghadīr Khumm on 18 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 10 AH. On that occasion, the Prophet reportedly stated: “man kuntu mawlāhu fa-'Alīyun mawlāhu” (“Whoever

considers me his *mawlā*, then 'Alī is his *mawlā*") [36]. This event is interpreted as the foundational legitimization of 'Alī's *imāmah* after the Prophet. Wilferd Madelung, in his work *The Succession to Muhammad* (1997), further argues that the Shī'ī claim regarding 'Alī's right to leadership possesses considerable historical grounding in modern academic studies. Meanwhile, the event of Saqīfah Banī Sā'idah, which resulted in the selection of Abū Bakr without the presence of 'Alī and the Prophet's family, is viewed as a deviation from that designation [37]. This awareness was further intensified after the tragedy of Karbalā' in 680 CE, in which Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī and his followers were killed, leading the doctrine of *imāmah* to evolve into both a symbol of resistance against injustice and a path of salvation for the Shī'ī community [33, p. 11–12].

The doctrine of *imāmah* within the Shī'ī tradition did not emerge in a fully developed form at once, but rather underwent a long process of intellectual development before reaching a systematic theological formulation. During the period when the Imams were still present, particularly between the first and third centuries AH, the concept was articulated through the teachings and transmitted reports of the Ahl al-Bayt Imams, especially Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir and Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq. These two figures played a central role in establishing the foundational framework of *imāmah* theory, including the concepts of *iṣmah* (infallibility), *ilm ladunnī* (divinely granted knowledge), and the exclusive right of the Prophet's family to lead the Muslim community [38].

Within the circles of their disciples, more systematic attempts then emerged to provide rational foundations for the doctrine. One important figure was Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam, who argued that the existence of a *ma'ṣūm* Imam is a rational necessity for the community, since religion requires an infallible authority to prevent interpretive error and doctrinal deviation [39]. This process of conceptual elaboration continued into the period of the Minor Occultation (*al-Ghaybah al-Ṣughrā*) and subsequently the Major Occultation (*al-Ghaybah al-Kubrā*), during which practical leadership was gradually transferred to scholars and jurists as representatives of religious authority.

Within Shī'ī theology, *imāmah* functions not only as a concept of leadership but also as a foundational institution that sustains the religious and social life of the community. First, the Imam serves as *marja'īyyah dīniyyah*, the highest authority in interpreting and explaining Islamic teachings. The Imams are believed to possess the capacity to uncover both the outward (*ẓāhir*) and inward (*bāṭin*) meanings of the Qur'ān, making all legal and doctrinal matters ultimately refer back to them [40, p. 151]. In addition, the Imam fulfills the role of *ḥirāsah al-sharī'ah*, namely preserving the purity of the divine law from deviation after the end of prophethood. Politically, the Imam is regarded as the legitimate leader who holds both religious authority and public governance. Abdulaziz Sachedina

explains that the Imam's authority in Shī'ī tradition extends broadly from ritual obligations to state administration [41]. Furthermore, the Imam is also understood as a spiritual mediator connecting human beings to divine grace, giving *imāmah* a pronounced metaphysical dimension within Shī'ī spirituality.

The most significant differences regarding the concept of *imāmah* can be observed among the three major Shī'ī branches: Twelver Shī'ism (*Ithnā 'Ashariyyah*), Ismā'ilism, and Zaydism. Among these, Twelver Shī'ism constitutes the largest group, grounding its belief system in the doctrine of the Twelve Imams. According to this view, the legitimate line of Imams begins with 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and ends with Muḥammad al-Mahdī, who is believed to have entered occultation in 260 AH/874 CE [42]. Each Imam is required to fulfill several essential conditions that are inseparable from one another: being descended from the Prophet through 'Alī and Fāṭimah, receiving explicit designation (*naṣṣ*) from the preceding Imam, and possessing *'iṣmah* that ensures immunity from sin and error. Based on these criteria, any leadership outside the designated Imams is considered to lack full religious legitimacy. The belief in the occultation of the Twelfth Imam thus becomes a central element preserving the continuity of the doctrine of *imāmah* until the end of time, when he is expected to reappear to establish justice on earth [43].

In its historical development, Shī'ī Ismā'ilism, also known as the Seven-Imam branch, emerged as the second major branch within the Shī'ī tradition following disagreements over leadership succession after the death of Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq in 148 AH. In contrast to Twelver Shī'ism (*Ithnā 'Ashariyyah*), which recognizes Mūsā al-Kāẓim as the succeeding Imam, Ismā'ilīs affirmed Ismā'il ibn Ja'far, the eldest son of al-Ṣādiq, as the legitimate seventh Imam, despite his having died before his father. This position produced a conception of *imāmah* that is more esoteric in character compared to the formulation developed within Twelver Shī'ism.

Farhad Daftary, in *The Ismā'ilīs: Their History and Doctrines* (1990), explains that the Imam in Ismā'ilī tradition functions not only as an outward political leader (*ẓāhir*) but also as the holder of *ta'wīl* authority, capable of uncovering the inner meanings (*bāṭin*) of the Qur'ān and divine revelation [44]. Meanwhile, Zaydī Shī'ism, which developed extensively in Yemen, offers a more rational conception of *imāmah* that is relatively closer to Sunnī political thought. This branch does not require *'iṣmah* for the Imam, does not restrict leadership exclusively to the lineage of Ḥusayn, and allows for the presence of multiple Imams in different regions. For the Zaydīs, the legitimacy of an Imam is determined by descent from Fāṭimah, scholarly competence, courage, piety, and the ability to perform *khurūj* (armed uprising) in order to establish legitimate leadership.

In the modern period, the doctrine of *imāmah* underwent significant reinterpretation through the theory of *wilāyat al-faqīh* formulated by Āyatullāh Rūḥullāh Khomeini (1902–1989). Based on the belief that the Twelfth Imam remains in occultation and that the community cannot be left without authoritative leadership, Khomeini argued that this responsibility must be assumed by the most qualified *faqīh* in terms of scholarly competence and moral integrity [39]. In his work *Ḥukūmat-i Islāmī: Wilāyat-i Faqīh* (1970), he asserts that the authority of the *faqīh* during the period of occultation is essentially a continuation of the authority of the Prophet and the Imams in governing the affairs of the community. This idea later became the ideological foundation of the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979 and exerted wide influence on the development of Shī'ī political thought across the Muslim world [45].

At the same time, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī (1892–1981), through *al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, sought to reinforce the Qur'ānic foundations of the doctrine of *imāmah* by interpreting several verses as legitimizing the leadership of the Ahl al-Bayt. His integrative approach, which combines philosophy, 'irfān (mysticism), and tafsīr, makes his contribution highly significant in the development of modern Shī'ī thought [7]. In line with this, Vali Nasr, in *The Shī'a Revival* (2006), emphasizes that *imāmah* remains the most distinctive element differentiating Shī'ism from Sunnism, while simultaneously serving as a source of ongoing intellectual, social, and political dynamics within the contemporary Islamic world [8].

Al-Ṭūsī's Interpretation of Imāmah in the Qur'an

The concept of *imāmah* occupies a central position within al-Ṭūsī's exegetical framework in *al-Tibyān*. From the perspective of Twelver Shī'ism (*Ithnā 'Ashariyyah*), *imāmah* is not understood merely as the political leadership of the Muslim community, but as the highest religious authority that can only be held by infallible Imams (*ma'ṣūmūn*) from the lineage of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) through Imam 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Accordingly, Qur'ānic verses related to leadership, religious authority, and the status of the prophets are interpreted by al-Ṭūsī within a framework that supports the legitimacy of this doctrine. Through this approach, he seeks to demonstrate that the concept of *imāmah* is firmly grounded in the sacred text rather than being a post-Prophetic theological construction. His interpretation in *al-Tibyān* ultimately becomes one of the foundational pillars for the formulation of the doctrine of *imāmah* within Twelver Shī'ism and illustrates the close interconnection between tafsīr activity and sectarian theological articulation [46, p. 445].

Al-Ṭūsī's argument concerning *imāmah* is based on his interpretation of Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]:124, which recounts the appointment of the Prophet Ibrāhīm as an

Imam. According to him, the term *ibtīlā'* in this verse refers to a series of divine tests that Ibrāhīm had to undergo before attaining this rank. From this, al-Ṭūsī asserts that *imāmah* is a station (*maqām*) distinct from prophethood and, in certain respects, occupies a higher rank. This is because Ibrāhīm had already been a prophet before being granted the position of Imam by God [46, p. 446]. This interpretation leads him to conclude that *imāmah* requires *'iṣmah* (infallibility), namely protection from sin and error. Consequently, the phrase *lā yanālu 'ahdī al-zālimīn* is understood as a categorical affirmation that those who have committed ظلم (*ẓulm*) are excluded from the covenant of *imāmah*. Al-Ṭūsī even cites Shī'ī scholarly opinions that treat this verse as explicit evidence for the necessity of an infallible Imam [46, p. 448].

Al-Ṭūsī further develops his argument by emphasizing that *imāmah* is an independent station that cannot be equated with *nubuwwah*. According to him, God's statement to Ibrāhīm, *innī jā 'iluka lil-nāsi imāman*, indicates the conferral of a new rank granted after Ibrāhīm had already attained prophethood. This sequence serves as evidence that *imāmah* is not a component of prophethood, but rather a distinct mandate of leadership with broader social and public authority [46, p. 449]. In the same context, al-Ṭūsī also pays attention to Ibrāhīm's request that this position be extended to his descendants through the phrase *wa min dhurriyyatī*. For him, this verse suggests the importance of hereditary continuity in leadership. However, such continuity is not absolute, as God explicitly excludes wrongdoers (*ẓālimūn*) from the covenant of *imāmah*. From this, al-Ṭūsī concludes that an Imam must be a morally perfected figure, protected from sin throughout his life, and therefore worthy of direct divine appointment as a legitimate leader endowed with authority from God.

The theological construction of *imāmah* is further reinforced by al-Ṭūsī through his interpretation of Q.S. Āl 'Imrān [3]:61, known as the verse of *mubāhalah*. He explains that this verse was revealed when the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) confronted a Christian delegation from Najrān and was instructed by God to perform *mubāhalah* as a means of resolving the theological dispute between the two parties [47, p. 484]. For al-Ṭūsī, the most significant aspect of this event does not lie in the ritual of *mubāhalah* itself, but rather in the figures selected by the Prophet to accompany him. He emphasizes that the Prophet brought only 'Alī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn, without including any other Companions. This selection is interpreted as an indication of the exceptional status of the Ahl al-Bayt before God and His Messenger. Furthermore, the phrase *wa anfasanā* is interpreted as referring to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, signifying his elevated position to the extent that he is equated with the Prophet himself. Based on this reading, al-Ṭūsī concludes that the verse of *mubāhalah* constitutes one of the strongest Qur'ānic proofs affirming the

superiority of the Ahl al-Bayt and their legitimacy as the most rightful group to assume *imāmah* after the Prophet [47, p. 485].

Al-Ṭūsī further emphasizes that the discussion of the *imāmah* of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and the Ahl al-Bayt in his interpretation of Q.S. Āl 'Imrān [3]:61 does not stand independently, but rather forms part of a broader intellectual construction that he develops more systematically in his theological work *Kitāb al-Imāmah* [47, p. 486]. This indicates that *al-Tibyān* functions as a space for presenting Qur'ānic legitimization of the doctrine of *imāmah*, while his rational and theological arguments (*kalām*) are elaborated more extensively in separate works. In this sense, the issue of *imāmah* occupies a highly central position within al-Ṭūsī's entire intellectual architecture. Through tafsīr, he seeks to demonstrate textual foundations supporting the authority of the Ahl al-Bayt, while through *kalām* he constructs its theological justification. This integration between exegetical and theological approaches positions al-Ṭūsī as one of the most important formulators of the doctrine of *imāmah* in Twelver Shī'ism during the fifth century AH, a period marked by intense inter-sectarian theological debate.

When interpreting Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]:59 regarding the obligation to obey *ulī al-amr*, al-Ṭūsī first presents the various scholarly opinions concerning the identity of those intended by the verse. He records two dominant tendencies: one identifying *ulī al-amr* as political rulers, and another interpreting them as religious scholars [48, p. 235]. However, al-Ṭūsī rejects both interpretations. He argues that the *ulī al-amr* referred to in the verse are the infallible Imams (*a'imma ma'sūmūn*) from the Ahl al-Bayt. His basis lies in the absolute form of the command to obey, which is not accompanied by any conditions. According to him, unconditional obedience can only be directed toward figures who are protected from error and negligence. Therefore, neither ordinary rulers nor scholars can qualify as objects of absolute obedience. Within this framework, only the infallible Imam fulfills these criteria and is therefore deemed worthy of serving as the legitimate authority for the Muslim community [48, p. 236].

Al-Ṭūsī further develops his argument by asserting that *ʿiṣmah* (infallibility) is an inseparable requirement of the concept of *ulī al-amr* in Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]:59. According to him, the Qur'ānic command to obey is absolute and is not accompanied by any exception, and therefore can only be directed toward a figure who is entirely free from error and deviation [48, p. 237]. He explains that the command to refer all disputes back to God and the Messenger indicates a tightly integrated structure of authority among God, the Prophet, and *ulī al-amr*. For this reason, legitimate leadership in this verse cannot be attributed to ordinary rulers or scholars who are still capable of making mistakes. To strengthen his position, al-Ṭūsī cites reports from Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir and Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, who interpret *ulī al-amr* as the Imams from the lineage of

the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). Based on these reports, obedience to them is placed on the same level as obedience to God and His Messenger. This reading constitutes a key distinction between Twelver Shī'ī interpretation and Sunnī exegesis, which generally identifies *ulī al-amr* as political rulers or religious scholars possessing authority within society.

A more explicit articulation of the doctrine of *imāmah* appears in al-Ṭūsī's interpretation of Q.S. al-Mā'idah [5]:3, particularly in the phrase *al-yawma akmaltu lakum dīnakum wa atmamtu 'alaykum ni'matī wa raḍītu lakum al-islāma dīnan* [48, p. 428]. In his discussion of this verse, al-Ṭūsī pays close attention to the term *al-yawm* and the various reports explaining the context of its revelation. He cites narrations attributed to Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir and Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq stating that the verse of the perfection of religion (*ikmāl al-dīn*) was revealed after the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) announced the leadership of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib at the event of Ghadīr Khumm [48, p. 434–435]. Based on this interpretation, the completion of religion is not understood merely as the finalization of legal injunctions or the conclusion of revelation, but also as the establishment of a clear leadership authority for the community after the Prophet's death. Al-Ṭūsī argues that the designation of 'Alī as the Prophet's successor constitutes an essential component in the completion of the Islamic religious structure. Therefore, the verse is read as a Qur'ānic legitimization of 'Alī's *imāmah* and an affirmation that divine guidance must continue through an appointed Imam after the end of prophethood.

Al-Ṭūsī further interprets the perfection of religion in Q.S. al-Mā'idah [5]:3 as something that goes beyond the completion of legal and legislative aspects alone. According to him, many fundamental rulings of Islamic jurisprudence had already been revealed gradually before this verse, and thus *ikmāl al-dīn* cannot be restricted to the completion of legislation [48, p. 436]. He argues that the perfection referred to in the verse is closely connected to the establishment of leadership authority for the Muslim community after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). In this framework, the phrase *wa atmamtu 'alaykum ni'matī* is understood as a declaration that the institution of the Imam represents the greatest divine blessing bestowed upon the Muslim community. Al-Ṭūsī explains that the prophetic mission cannot achieve its full objective without a figure who preserves, explains, and authentically transmits the teachings of the Prophet. Consequently, *imāmah* is positioned not as a matter of political expediency, but as an integral component of the religious structure that ensures the continuity of divine guidance. Through this reading, al-Ṭūsī presents *imāmah* as the essential link that completes the prophetic mission and guarantees the ongoing authority of divine guidance within the life of the Muslim community.

Among the verses most frequently employed as foundational evidence for the doctrine of *imāmah* in *al-Tibyān* is Q.S. al-Mā'idah [5]:55, known as *āyat al-wilāyah*. This verse states that the *walī* of the believers is Allah, His Messenger, and those believers who establish الصلاة and give alms while in a state of bowing (*rukū'*) [48, p. 558]. Al-Ṭūsī devotes considerable attention to this verse, as he regards it as containing the most explicit Qur'ānic legitimization of the status of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. He affirms that numerous reports from both Shī'ī and ḥadīth scholars state that the verse was revealed when 'Alī gave his ring to a poor person while performing *rukū'* in prayer. This event is interpreted not merely as an act of personal generosity, but as a divine indication marking his position as the leader of the community after the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). On this basis, al-Ṭūsī concludes that *āyat al-wilāyah* constitutes one of the strongest Qur'ānic proofs affirming the *imāmah* of Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, leaving no room for doubt regarding his legitimacy as a leader within Twelver Shī'ī thought [48, p. 559].

In his interpretation of verses related to the Ahl al-Bayt, al-Ṭūsī employs Q.S. al-Aḥzāb [33]:33 and Q.S. al-Shūrā [42]:23 as key components in the construction of *imāmah* theology. Regarding the verse of purification (*āyat al-taṭhīr*), *innamā yurīdu Allāh li-yudhhibā 'ankum al-rijsa ahl al-bayt wa yuṭahhirakum taṭhīrā*, he asserts that its referents are restricted to the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn [49, p. 336–337]. To support this view, al-Ṭūsī refers to the ḥadīth al-kisā', which narrates that the Prophet gathered these five figures under a cloak and prayed to God to purify them from all forms of impurity and sin [49, p. 339]. According to him, this purification is not merely a marker of spiritual honor, but an indication of *'iṣmah*, a fundamental prerequisite for *imāmah*. Since religious leadership requires an authority free from error, the Ahl al-Bayt who are granted divine purification are therefore considered the most deserving of holding the office of *imāmah* [49, p. 340]. Meanwhile, in his interpretation of Q.S. al-Shūrā [42]:23, al-Ṭūsī understands the phrase *al-mawaddah fī al-qurbā* as a divine command to love and honor the Ahl al-Bayt, which simultaneously affirms their elevated religious status within the Muslim community [50, p. 158].

Al-Ṭūsī's argumentative construction of *imāmah* reaches its most complete formulation when he connects the aforementioned verses with Q.S. al-Mā'idah [5]:67, known as *āyat al-tablīgh*. According to him, the command *yā ayyuhā al-rasūl balligh mā unzila ilayka min rabbika* does not refer to the general transmission of revelation, but specifically to the Prophet's obligation to announce the leadership of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib to the Muslim community [48, p. 587]. He interprets the emphatic tone of the verse as an indication of the central importance of *imāmah* within the prophetic mission as a whole. By linking the verse of proclamation to

the event of Ghadīr Khumm, and connecting it with the verses of Ibrāhīm's *imāmah*, *mubālahah*, *ulī al-amr*, *ikmāl al-dīn*, *wilāyah*, *taṭhīr*, and *mawaddah*, he constructs an interrelated network of Qur'ānic arguments that reinforce one another. Within this framework, *imāmah* is not presented as a doctrine emerging from post-Prophetic political contestation, but as part of a divinely ordained design established across multiple Qur'ānic passages [48, p. 588]. Through the integration of linguistic analysis, Ahl al-Bayt traditions, and *kalām* reasoning, al-Ṭūsī transforms *al-Tibyān* into one of the most influential exegetical works in the Twelver Shī'ī tradition, while simultaneously establishing a foundational framework for Qur'ān-based formulations of the doctrine of *imāmah*.

From al-Ṭūsī's Imāmah to Modern Wilāyat al-Faqīh: A Continuity Mechanism

This study reads the continuity between al-Ṭūsī's classical exegesis and modern *wilāyat al-faqīh* through Talal Asad's concept of Islam as a *discursive tradition*, a discourse in which scholars relate their arguments to a founding textual authority while continuously reinterpreting it across changing historical conditions [22]. Al-Ṭūsī wrote at a formative stage of this discourse, when Twelver scholars were actively negotiating how textual interpretation could sustain religious authority following the Occultation of the Twelfth Imām [51]. His exegesis of verses such as al-Mā'idah [5]:55 constructs *imāmah* as divinely sanctioned leadership vested in the infallible Imāms, integrating *naql* and *'aql* to render this claim textually demonstrable. Framed this way, al-Ṭūsī produces a stable reference point that later jurists, writing under different historical circumstances, could still meaningfully invoke.

This reference point was extended, not reinvented, across successive generations. Later Imāmī jurists gradually broadened the deputized authority of the *faqīh* from narrowly judicial and custodial functions toward socio-political guardianship, a shift that reached explicit formulation in Naraqi's early nineteenth-century treatise *'Awā'id al-Ayyām* [52]. Vaezi identifies Naraqi as the first Imāmī jurist to argue for the *faqīh*'s comprehensive authority on rational as well as scriptural grounds [11], and Matsunaga's independent study in *Orient* corroborates this account, noting that Khomeini himself explicitly acknowledged Naraqi's precedent in his own writings, more than a century before the 1979 Revolution [53]. Two independent lines of international scholarship thus converge on the same conclusion: the al-Ṭūsī-Khomeini relationship is a documented discursive elaboration across identifiable jurists, not an unproven assumption spanning a millennium.

Read against this framework, the Sunnī *khilāfah* offers a brief point of contrast rather than a fully weighted comparison. Where *wilāyat al-faqīh*

developed through discursive elaboration of a scripturally grounded, divinely sanctioned *imāmah*, *khilāfah* developed around contractual selection (*ikhtiyār*) and communal consultation (*shūrā*), locating legitimacy in communal assent rather than exegetical appointment [12]. Rosenthal's classical study of medieval Islamic political thought situates this Sunnī emphasis on *ikhtiyār* and *shūrā* within the broader juristic tradition, confirming that the divergence is structural rather than incidental. The two traditions thus diverge not only in political form but in the discursive logic each uses to ground authority in its founding texts, an observation offered here as a contextual note rather than a fully weighted comparison.

This discursive trajectory carries concrete institutional consequences in contemporary Iran. Following the 1979 Revolution, Khomeini's doctrine of *wilāyat al-faqīh* was embedded directly into the Iranian constitution, most explicitly in Article 5, which vests supreme authority in a just and pious jurist during the Occultation, and Article 110, which enumerates the Supreme Leader's powers over the armed forces, judiciary appointments, and general policy direction. Arjomand's institutional analysis of Iran's post-revolutionary state-building shows how this constitutional arrangement translated Naraqī's earlier jurisprudential claim of comprehensive juristic guardianship into functioning organs of government, including the Guardian Council and the Assembly of Experts, both tasked with supervising the Supreme Leader's exercise of authority [54]. What began as an exegetical argument in *al-Tibyān* and a jurisprudential elaboration in *ʿAwāʿid al-Ayyām* thus materialized as an enduring constitutional architecture still governing Iran today.

Assessed on institutional realization rather than doctrinal appeal, the two trajectories show a marked asymmetry in the modern period. *Wilāyat al-faqīh* has functioned continuously as the operative governing framework of a functioning state since 1979; AlDosari's institutional analysis confirms that its core office, the Supreme Leader, remained the system's structural anchor even amid persistent elite power struggles [55]. This durability was tested directly in 2026, when Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei was killed in a joint US–Israeli strike, yet the office was filled through constitutional succession rather than institutional collapse. *Khilāfah*, by contrast, has not been re-established as a comparable governing institution since the Ottoman caliphate's abolition in 1924; Hassan's transregional study documents how it instead persisted primarily as an object of memory and aspiration [56]. This asymmetry describes institutional outcome, not doctrinal validity, and should not be read as evidence that one framework is inherently superior.

Conclusion

Overall, the study of al-Ṭūsī's *Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* shows that its exegetical style is not merely textual and rational, but also deeply infused with theological content that reflects the doctrinal construction of Shī'ism. Al-Ṭūsī successfully builds a framework of interpretation that affirms the position of the Ahl al-Bayt as the central axis of communal leadership. This tafsir simultaneously demonstrates the intellectual dynamics of early Islam, in which discourses on religious and political authority are closely intertwined within the interpretation of Qur'anic verses. *Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* is therefore not merely an expository work on the sacred text, but also an ideological representation that reveals the relationship between theology, exegesis, and socio-political praxis within the classical Islamic scholarly tradition. In later periods, al-Ṭūsī's concept of imāmah was developed a process of intellectual transformation that gave rise to the doctrine of wilāyat al-faqīh. It is this concept of wilāyat al-faqīh that enabled the Shī'ī Iranian state to establish itself amid global civilizational tensions.

This study's findings carry distinct implications across three domains. Theoretically, they demonstrate that a classical exegesis can function as a stable discursive reference point sustaining doctrinal authority across centuries, extending Asad's concept of discursive tradition into the specific domain of Qur'anic hermeneutics. Historically, they refine existing accounts of Shī'ī political thought by identifying al-Ṭūsī's exegetical construction of imāmah, rather than only later jurisprudential treatises, as an early anchor point in the discourse that eventually produced wilāyat al-faqīh. Politically and socially, they suggest that contemporary debates over clerical authority in Iran are not merely modern ideological disputes but extensions of an exegetical argument first articulated in the eleventh century, a genealogy with direct relevance for how the doctrine's religious legitimacy continues to be contested both within and outside Iran today.

This study is subject to four limitations. First, it relies exclusively on library-based textual research rather than empirical fieldwork, meaning its conclusions describe doctrinal construction rather than lived religious or political practice. Second, its primary textual analysis centers on al-*Tibyān* alone rather than surveying al-Ṭūsī's broader corpus, which may contain further relevant material. Third, the link between al-Ṭūsī's exegesis and modern Iranian politics rests on intellectual-historical continuity established through secondary sources rather than newly uncovered primary documentation, leaving room for more direct textual verification at each intermediate stage of the genealogy. Fourth, the discussion of khilāfah remains a contextual reflection rather than an equally weighted comparative analysis, since it draws on established secondary

scholarship rather than an independent exegetical reading of Sunnī primary sources.

These limitations point toward four directions for future research. First, comparative studies could examine al-Ṭūsī's construction of imāmah alongside other classical Shī'ī exegetes to determine whether his approach is representative or distinctive within the broader exegetical tradition. Second, a fully weighted comparative study of imāmah and khilāfah, grounded in the primary exegetical and juristic sources of both traditions rather than a brief contextual reading, would substantiate the comparative claims this study can only sketch. Third, future work could extend the discursive-tradition genealogy traced here by directly examining primary texts from the intermediate jurists between al-Ṭūsī and Naraqī, rather than relying on existing secondary syntheses. Fourth, empirical research examining how wilāyat al-faqīh is understood and contested among contemporary Iranian clerics and citizens would test whether this study's textual genealogy still resonates in lived religious and political practice.

Author Contributions

Hafid Syaifuddin Fatah: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Project administration. **Jullul Wara:** Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Investigation. **Hisam Sidqi:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Investigation.

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