



Reactualization of the Concept of Balad in Friday Prayer in the Shafi'i Scholars

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Abstract: The Friday prayers in the Shafi'i Madhhab must be performed in one place within a certain area (balad) unless there is a valid shar'i necessary. This is to maintain community unity and orderly worship. However, contemporary social changes such as population growth, urbanization, territorial expansion, and the spread of mosques have challenged the classical application of the concept of balad and raised issues related to ta'addud al-jumu'ah. This study examines how the concept of balad in the Shafi'i Madhhab can be understood and applied in modern social conditions. This research aims to analyze the Shafi'i legal perspective on balad and recontextualize it in response to contemporary realities. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with content analysis from classical Shafi'i sources, including al-Umm, Raudhah al-Thalibin, Hashiyah al-Bajuri, and Ianah al-Thalibin, as well as relevant secondary literature. The results show that the Shafi'i Madhhab emphasizes the unity of Friday prayers in one balad, and that when Friday prayers are performed in several places without a valid shar'i need, only the first prayer is considered valid. However, some Shafi'i scholars, such as Ibn 'Ujayl, allow for flexibility by considering administrative boundaries, congregation capacity, and public interest (mashlahah), indicating the need for contextual interpretation without departing from the core principles of the school of thought.

Keywords: Reactualization, *Balad*, Friday prayer, Shafi'i Scholars, *ta'addud al-jumu'ah*

Introduction

The Friday prayer is a form of worship that has both spiritual and social dimensions, as it combines individual obedience with community solidarity. The Shafi'i school of thought considers one of the important conditions for the validity of Friday prayer to be the absence of another Friday prayer taking place simultaneously in the same area (balad), as stated by Imam ash-Shafi'i in al-Umm, which states that Friday prayer should not be performed in a country, even if it is large and has many mosques, except in one place only (Al-Syafi'i, 2001). This provision is based on the objective of maintaining unity among the people and centralizing weekly gatherings of Muslims in one place of worship (Al-Ramli, 1993). However, modern social realities have undergone significant changes: urban expansion, population growth, the emergence of new residential areas, and



limited mosque capacity. These conditions have meant that Friday prayers in many areas are no longer centered on a single mosque, giving rise to the issue of ta'addud al-jumu'ah and debates regarding the boundaries of balad from the perspective of the Shafi'i Madhhab.

Previous studies have mostly discussed the legal dimension of ta'addud al-jumu'ah normatively, but few have integrated it with contemporary social change. Therefore, this study occupies an important position in two respects, namely reinterpreting the concept of balad in the turats sources of the Shafi'i Madhhab, and offering a re-actualization that adheres to the basic principles of the school of thought but is responsive to social change. A number of previous studies have discussed ta'addud al-jumu'ah from normative and empirical perspectives. Ilham Darmi studied ta'addud in Gampong Peunia, West Aceh, comparing the Hanafi and Shafi'i Madhhab, and concluded that according to the Shafi'iyyah, ta'addud is only permissible out of necessity, while according to the Hanafiyyah, it is permissible in large areas (Darmi, 2019). Mohd. Noor Daud and Siti Kausar Zakaria examined the establishment of Friday prayers from the aspects of licensing, the validity of ta'addud, and implementation outside the mosque, and emphasized the role of government authorities in choosing the most beneficial opinion (Daud, Mohd Noor; Zakaria, 2024). Salman Abdul Muthalib highlighted the doubts of the people of Aceh Besar regarding the validity of Friday prayers due to a strict understanding of the requirements influenced by the authority of the dayah ulamas (Muthalib, 2020). Meanwhile, Imamul Arifin pointed out that the practice of ta'addud in Mlajah, according to the strongest opinion (mu'tamad) of the Shafi'i Madhhab, is invalid if it does not meet the requirements of one balad and 40 mustauthin congregations, even if it is driven by practical social factors (Arifin, 2017).

Although diverse, these studies generally still focus on determining the validity of ta'addud al-jumu'ah and the social response of the community, without making the concept of balad the main object of study that is conceptually reconstructed. In contrast, this study focuses on the reactivation of the concept of balad in the Shafi'i Madhhab of thought by rereading the turats literature and relating it to contemporary social changes. Thus, this study is not only normative, but also offers a more contextual and applicable conceptual framework for understanding ta'addud al-jumu'ah in modern society.

The purpose of this study is to explain the concept of balad in the implementation of Friday prayers according to the Shafi'i Madhhab, and to analyze the re-actualization of this concept in the modern social context. This study is important because the concept of balad is key in determining the validity of Friday prayers, especially in the matter of ta'addud al-jumu'ah according to the Shafi'i madhhab. In practice, this concept is often understood rigidly and textually, giving rise to various problems, such as doubts about the validity of Friday prayers, the repetition of the Zuhr prayer after Friday, and debates about the distance between mosques and the number of worshippers. On the other hand, modern social changes such as population growth, urbanization, territorial expansion, and the large number of mosques in one area require a more contextual understanding of the concept of balad. Without re-actualization, this concept has the potential to cause difficulties in society, even though the original purpose of the Sharia is to provide convenience and benefit, not difficulties for Muslims. Therefore, this research is important to show that in the Shafi'i Madhhab of thought, there is room for adjusting the understanding of the law without deviating from its basic

principles. The re-actualization of the concept of balad is expected to bridge the gap between classical fiqh and modern social realities, as well as serve as a reference in addressing the issue of ta'addud al-jumu'ah in a more proportional and applicable manner.

Method

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with content analysis. Primary data was obtained through a literature review of the Shafi'i madhhab of thought, including: al-Umm, Raudhah ath-Thalibin, Hasyiyah al-Baijuri, I'anah ath-Thalibin, al-Mu'tamad, as well as several books on sharah and hasiyah related to Friday prayers and the concept of balad. Secondary data came from books, journal articles, and contemporary research relevant to social change and the practice of Friday prayer. The stages of analysis include identifying the concept of balad and the provisions of ta'addud al-jumu'ah in turats literature, mapping the arguments of Shafi'i scholars regarding territorial boundaries and the basis for the permissibility of multiple Friday prayers, and reinterpreting these concepts in a modern social context through a legal re-actualization approach.

Result and Discussion

The Concepts of Balad, Jemaah Unity, and the Regulations of Ta'addud al-Jumu'ah in the Shafi'i Madhhab

The concepts of balad, jemaah unity, and the regulations of ta'addud al-jumu'ah in the Shafi'i Madhhab. This statement indicates that the size of the area and the number of mosques do not automatically justify the implementation of Friday prayers in many places. The main consideration is not the quantity of places of worship, but rather the preservation of the unity of the congregation within a community. In other words, the prohibition of ta'addud al-jumu'ah serves as a legal instrument to prevent social fragmentation and keep the community gathered within a single organized collective structure. Some scholars of sharh interpret miṣr or balad to mean an area that is socially considered a single community. In Hasyiyah al-Baijuri, it is stated that (Al-Baijuri, 2016):

المراد بالمصر ما تعارفه الناس بلدا واحدا واجتمعت كلمتهم فيه

"What is meant by miṣr (city) is what humans understand as the same region/city, and within it they are united under one authority/unity."

This definition emphasizes that a balad is measured not only by geographical maps, but also by the social perception of the community regarding their collective identity. As long as an area is still understood as a social unit, has one religious authority, and one system of community interaction, then that area is still treated as one balad. Thus, balad has a strong sociological dimension, because it is determined by social relations, community agreements, and the integration of religious life. This assertion shows that the social dimension, namely the unity of authority, space for interaction, and solidarity of the congregation, is the basis for the establishment of law. Therefore, the prohibition of ta'addud al-jumu'ah is not based solely on location, but on the purpose of Jam' al-kalimah (unity of the people) and the preservation of the collective meaning of Friday prayers. Jam' al-kalimah in this context does not only mean gathering physically, but also uniting the vision, religious orientation, and moral awareness of the ummah. Friday prayer becomes a strategic medium for conveying normative messages, strengthening

social solidarity, and building cohesion between individuals and communities (Miftahuddin et.al., 2024). If Friday prayers are divided without any shar'ī (Islamic law) justification, the symbolic and social functions of this worship will weaken, and could even potentially cause fragmentation of religious identity within the community.

Consequently, if more than one Friday prayer is performed without a recognized shar'ī necessity, then the first one is valid, while the rest must be replaced with the zuhur prayer, as stated in some sharah books (Al-Nawawī, 2005):

وتبطل الجمعة الثانية إن لم تدع إليها حاجة معتبرة شرعاً وتلزمهم الظهر

“The second Friday prayer is invalid if there is no need that is considered valid according to Islamic law, and those who perform it are required to perform the Zuhr prayer”.

This regulation shows that the law is not only normative and textual in nature, but also preventive against potential divisions within the congregation. The cancellation of the second Friday serves as a social control mechanism so that the congregation does not fragment into small, separate groups without clear sharia reasons. Thus, fiqh law here functions as an instrument for maintaining religious social order. This affirmation shows the orientation of the law towards jam' al-kalimah and the control of potential divisions within the congregation. From this perspective, the prohibition of ta'addud al-jumu'ah cannot be understood merely as a technical restriction on worship, but rather as an effort to maintain the social integrity of the community. It places unity as a fundamental value that must be protected by law, while emphasizing that worship has a social dimension that is no less important than its ritual dimension.

In the literature of the Shafi'ī Madhhab, such as Raudhah ath-Thalibin, I'anah ath-Thalibin, al-Majmu', and al-Mu'tamad, this regulation is positioned as a mechanism to maintain order in worship, prevent fragmentation of the congregation, and ensure that sermons continue to function as a medium for moral education and social awareness, as stated by Wahbah al-Zuhayli (2011):

ومقصد الشريعة في الجمعة اجتماع المسلمين على إمام واحد وسماعهم للخطبة الجامعة لما فيه من توحيد الكلمة وتقوية الرابطة بينهم

“The purpose of Sharia law in (establishing) Friday prayers is to bring Muslims together under one imam and listen to a sermon that unites them, because in it there is unity of words (unity of the people) and strengthening of the bonds between them.”

This statement makes it clear that the Friday sermon is not merely a complement to worship, but rather the core of the social function of Friday itself. The sermon serves as a means of shaping collective consciousness, transmitting moral values, and reinforcing communal identity. Therefore, the concentration of Friday in one large congregation allows the message of the sermon to have a broader and more effective social reach. Thus, the basic position of the madhhab is not merely normative-textual, but has a strong social rationality in building community cohesion.

The Flexibility of the Concept of Balad in the Madhhab Shafi'i

The development of thought in the Shafi'i Madhhab shows that there is room for interpretation of the definition of balad, especially when social realities change, so that some fuqaha consider it necessary to take into account the spatial-social context of society in the application of law. This shows that although the basic principles of the Shafi'i Madhhab emphasize the unity of the congregation and the centralization of Friday prayers, the scholars do not rule out the possibility of exceptions arising from the objective conditions of society. In other words, the concept of balad is dynamic in its application, while remaining firm in its basic principles. This dynamic reflects the character of Shafi'i fiqh, which is not rigid but responsive to changes in social reality as long as it remains within the corridor of maqashid al-syari'ah. Among the scholars who provide a more contextual view is Ibn 'Ujail, who allows Friday prayers to be held in more than one place if there are clear conditions of necessity and administrative boundaries between regions, as quoted by Al-Malibari (Al-Malibari, 2004):

ويجوز تعدد الجمعة إذا تباعدت المحال أو ضاق المسجد عن أهله وكانت لكل ناحية خطة وإدارة معتبرة

"More than one Friday prayer may be held if the locations are far apart, or if the mosque cannot accommodate all worshippers, and each area has a recognized administrative and management jurisdiction."

This opinion emphasizes that the benchmark for the permissibility of ta'addud is not the subjective desires of the community, but the existence of a real collective need that can be justified in sharia terms. The great distance between regions, the limited capacity of mosques, and the existence of independent administrative structures are indicators that one region has a different social character from another. In this context, each region is considered worthy of being treated as a separate balad unit. This view does not present a change in principle, but provides room for exceptions in situations that present real difficulties for the congregation.

In some explanations by sharh scholars, this flexibility is based on the principle رفع الحرج (eliminating difficulties) and considerations of the welfare of the congregation, as long as the implementation of Friday remains authoritatively consolidated and does not cause structural divisions within the congregation, as per the rules (Az-Zarqa, 1989):

المشقة تجلب التيسير

"Difficulties will bring ease."

This rule is an important foundation for understanding the flexibility of the concept of balad. The difficulty referred to is not merely individual discomfort, but collective difficulties that affect the smooth running of worship, the orderliness of the congregation, and the achievement of the social objectives of Friday prayers. If the concentration of Friday prayers in one mosque causes congestion among congregants, unreasonable travel distances, or a loss of solemnity in worship, then these conditions fall under the category of mashaqqah, which warrants a legal solution. This argument shifts the focus from the "physical unity of the mosque" to "social system unity," so that the unity of the ummah is understood in the context of religious coordination, simultaneous implementation, and community identity unity.

This approach means that unity among the faithful is no longer understood narrowly as gathering in one building, but rather as the integration of an organized socio-religious system. As long as the congregation remains within a single framework of authority, a single religious vision, and a single social identity, the goal of Jam' al-kalimah remains achieved, even if Friday prayers are held in more than one place. The factors recognized by scholars as the basis for necessity (ḥājah mu'tabarāh) include: (1) the expansion of the city and the separation of residential areas; (2) the limited capacity of the main mosque, which is unable to accommodate the entire congregation; and (3) considerations of distance, access, and the safety of congregants who live far from the city center (Al-Nawawī, 2005). These factors indicate that the size of the balad in practice cannot be separated from the demographic and geographical realities of society. Increasingly sprawling cities with high population densities necessitate adjustments to the application of the law so as not to cause excessive difficulties. Thus, the concept of balad becomes relative to the surrounding social conditions, without losing its normative basis..

Thus, the concept of balad has undergone an expansion of meaning, from merely a physical unit of space to a social-administrative unit supported by social structures and the coordination of religious authorities. This expansion of meaning shows that the Shafi'i Madhhab has the internal capacity to adapt to changing times. Balad is no longer understood only as "a city" in the classical sense, but as a social community that has administrative independence, a unified system of worship, and coordination of religious authorities (Nasution, 2017). This is what serves as the conceptual bridge between classical fiqh and modern social reality.

Reactualization of the Concept of Balad in the Modern Social Context

The modern social context is characterized by urbanization, administrative expansion, population mobility, and an increase in the number and capacity of mosques, which in many cases has given rise to a collective need for Friday prayers to be held at more than one location. Research findings show that in a number of areas, the concentration of Friday prayers in one mosque causes real difficulties, ranging from the accumulation of worshippers, long travel distances, to the decline in the effectiveness of Friday sermons as a vehicle for socio-religious education. Therefore, the re-actualization of the concept of balad is necessary as a form of methodological adjustment that remains based on the basic principles of the madhhab.

This phenomenon shows that the social reality of modern society is no longer identical to the structure of cities in classical times, when the distance between settlements was relatively close, the population was limited, and the administrative system had not yet developed in a complex manner. In the current context, one administrative area often covers a very large area with high population density and diverse mobility patterns. If the concept of balad continues to be understood literally as a physical entity that must be gathered in one mosque, then the objective of Sharia law to provide convenience has the potential to be neglected. The re-actualization of the concept of balad, therefore, is not an attempt to change the law, but rather to adjust the way the object of the law is understood so that it remains relevant to social reality. Within the framework of the Shafi'i Madhhab, this re-actualization serves to maintain continuity between the normative principles of fiqh and the real needs of society, so that the law remains alive and functional in every space and time.

The re-actualization offered by this study is based on three methodological principles: (1) clear administrative boundaries as an indicator of social unit independence; (2) the capacity of the mosque and the density of the congregation, so that the implementation of Friday prayers at another location is considered a recognized shar'ī ḥājah; and (3) social benefit and order in worship, while maintaining coordination with local religious authorities. First, administrative boundaries are seen as a modern representation of the concept of balad, because they contain a structure of authority, a system of worship management, and a collective awareness of the community as a single community. When an area has a local government, independent mosque administrators, and its own religious coordination system, then socially it fulfills the characteristics of a separate balad unit. Second, the capacity of the mosque and the density of the congregation are objective indicators of the existence of ḥājah. If a mosque is no longer able to accommodate the entire congregation properly, resulting in excessive crowding, loss of solemnity, or even safety risks, then holding Friday prayers in another place is no longer seen as a form of deviation, but as a shar'ī solution aimed at eliminating difficulties (Ramadani et.al, 2025). Third, social welfare and orderly worship are the main orientations of re-actualization. Ta'addud al-jumu'ah can only be justified if it strengthens the orderliness of worship and does not give rise to social fragmentation. Therefore, coordination with local religious authorities is an important condition so that the implementation of Friday prayers in several places remains within an integrated religious system. This principle is in line with the rule (Al-Judai', 1997):

تغيير الأحكام بتغيير الزمان والمكان

“The laws may change with the changing times and places”.

This principle emphasizes that changes do not occur in the substance of the law, but in the manner of its implementation (Darma et.al., 2023). In the context of balad, what changes is not the principle of community unity, but rather the concrete form in which that unity is realized in accordance with the social conditions of the community. Therefore, changes in the social context necessitate changes in the way the boundaries of balad are understood so that the objectives of the law can still be achieved. In other writings, the word al-ahkam uses al-mashalih, as in the book *Tasynif al-Masami'* by al-Zarkasyi. This shows that the main axis of legal change in Islam is public interest. As long as the re-actualization of the concept of balad is able to maintain the public interest, eliminate difficulties, and preserve the social function of Friday prayers, then it is fully within the corridor of maqashid al-sharia. Within this framework, ta'addud al-jumu'ah is understood not as a violation of the provisions of the madhhab, but as a measured application of the maqashidiyyah principle, namely maintaining convenience, eliminating difficulties, and preserving the social function of Friday prayers.

Ta'addud is no longer positioned as a legal anomaly, but as an adaptive mechanism born out of an awareness of changes in social structures. It has become a means of preserving the essence of Friday as a unifying collective worship, rather than merely a ritual trapped within classical spatial boundaries. This analysis concludes that the re-actualization of the concept of balad presents an adaptive form of legal application, maintaining the continuity of the Shafi'i fiqh tradition while providing answers to modern social changes without abandoning the normative principles of the school. Thus, this study affirms that the Shafi'i

madhhab has the methodological capacity to respond to changing times (Suryantoro, 2025) without losing its scientific identity. The reactivation of the concept of balad actually shows the vitality of the school of thought in responding to the challenges of modernity, while proving that classical fiqh is not static, but dynamic and contextual when read with the right maqashidiyyah approach (Masyhuri and Khunaini (2024).

Conclusion

This study confirms that the centralization of Friday prayers in one place in one balad is the basic position of the Shafi'i Madhhab, which aims to maintain the unity of the congregation and the social-spiritual function of the sermon. However, a critical reading of the turats literature and contemporary social realities shows that rigid implementation has the potential to create new difficulties, such as congregation crowding, limited access, and reduced effectiveness of the sermon, thus requiring flexibility that remains within the corridor of the school's methodology. Within this framework, the adjustment of the concept of balad is understood as an exception based on real hājah, bound by administrative boundaries, and under the coordination of religious authorities. This flexibility is not intended to relax the law, but rather to maintain the basic objectives of the Sharia: to provide convenience, prevent difficulties, and ensure that Friday prayers remain valid, effective, and not burdensome for the people amid changes in population distribution and community mobility. Thus, a neighborhood association (RW) or hamlet with an adequate social-administrative structure and population can be regarded as a separate balad in the implementation of Friday prayers according to the Shafi'i Madhhab. This formulation is a form of contemporary ijtiḥad based on classical texts, social realities, and the application of maqashid al-Sharia through valid qiyas, so that the Shafi'i Madhhab remains alive, contextual, and provides solutions that bring peace to the community.

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