

## The Reconstruction of the Transmission of *Musnad al-Imam al-Shafi'i*: An Intertextual Analysis with *al-Umm* and the Methodological Application of *Khobar al-Ahad*

Zahrotun Nisa<sup>1</sup>, Siti Khodijah<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UIN Sunang Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia; zahrotunnisa81241@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia; ummudzaki.bdg@gmail.com

Correspondence: zahrotunnisa81241@gmail.com

**Abstract:** This article examines the issue of the originality of *Musnad al-Imam al-Shafi'i* and its significance in the epistemological construction of Islamic law. Using a library research method with a qualitative-analytical approach, this study analyzes the genealogy of manuscript transmission, the intertextual relationship with *al-Umm*, and methodological validation through the *takhrij* of ahkam hadiths. The results of the analysis indicate that the *Musnad al-Shafi'i* is not an independent work (*tasnif*) by Imam al-Shafi'i, but rather a compilation (*riwayah*) constructed by a network of students, particularly Abu al-'Abbas al-A'amm. The finding of over 98% textual overlap with *al-Umm* indicates that the *Musnad* serves as a supporting corpus of hadiths that forms the argumentative foundation for Imam al-Shafi'i's legal thought. Furthermore, a *takhrij* analysis of selected hadiths demonstrates the application of strict sanad criticism criteria, wherein Imam al-Shafi'i accepted *khobar al-ahad* as a basis for sharia law. Thus, the *Musnad* is positioned as a transitional artifact from the oral tradition to the written tradition that solidifies the authority of the Shafi'i school.

**Keywords:** *Musnad al-Shafi'i*; *Textual Genealogy*; *Legal Epistemology*; *Khobar al-Ahad*

**Abstrak:** Artikel ini mengkaji problematika orisinalitas *Musnad al-Imam al-Syafi'i* dan signifikansinya dalam konstruksi epistemologi hukum Islam. Menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan (library research) dengan pendekatan kualitatif-analitis, kajian ini menganalisis genealogi transmisi naskah, hubungan intertekstual dengan *al-Umm*, serta validasi metodologis melalui *takhrij* hadis ahkam. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa *Musnad al-Syafi'i* bukanlah karya mandiri (*tasnif*) Imam al-Syafi'i, melainkan produk kompilasi (*riwayah*) yang dikonstruksi oleh jaringan murid, khususnya Abu al-'Abbas al-A'amm. Temuan overlap tekstual lebih dari 98% dengan *al-Umm* mengindikasikan bahwa *Musnad* berfungsi sebagai korpus hadis pendukung yang menjadi fondasi argumentatif bagi pemikiran hukum Imam al-Syafi'i. Lebih jauh, analisis *takhrij* terhadap hadis-hadis terpilih membuktikan penerapan kriteria kritik sanad yang ketat, di mana Imam al-Syafi'i menerima *khobar al-ahad* sebagai landasan hukum syariat. Dengan demikian, *Musnad* diposisikan sebagai artefak transisi dari tradisi lisan ke tradisi tertulis yang mengukuhkan otoritas mazhab Syafi'iyah.

**Kata Kunci:** *Musnad al-Syafi'i*; *Genealogi Teks*; *Epistemologi Hukum*, *Khobar al-Ahid*.

## Introduction

The study of Musnad al-Imam al-Shafi'i lies at the critical intersection of the history of textual transmission and the epistemology of Islamic law. Traditionally, this manuscript has been accepted as a representation of Imam al-Shafi'i's corpus of hadith (An & Aini, 2015, p. 92). However, from a critical-historical perspective, its textual status raises questions of authenticity: is it an independent work (tasnif) or merely a compilation by a network of students (riwayah)? This manuscript is not merely a collection of hadiths, but a historical artifact that documents the shift in authority from the oral to the written tradition during the 3rd century AH (Andariati, 2020, p. 163).

In the discourse on modern hadith methodology, the analysis of pre-canonical works requires a keen ability to distinguish between "material authority" and "compositional authority." In this context, Musnad al-Shafi'i is understood as a collection strongly associated with the Naisaburi traditionist, Abu al-'Abbas al-A'amm, who compiled the narrations he heard from al-Rabi' ibn Sulayman al-Muradi. This study not only traces the textual genealogy of the Musnad but also examines how hadith, as the second source of law after the Qur'an, is validated and internalized within the Shafi'i methodological framework, particularly regarding isnad (Qomarullah et al., 2024). This focus on isnad reflects the historical debate regarding the authority of hadith in the formulation of Islamic law, which provides a basis for critically examining the formulations of *usul al-fiqh*, particularly about the evidential value of *mursal* hadith (Zamzabela & Abror, 2019).

## Literature review

Previous research has touched on the codicological and methodological aspects of the Musnad but has often been limited to bibliographic descriptions without conducting an in-depth intertextual analysis in relation to *al-Umm* (Qomarullah et al., 2024). This article fills that gap by offering a reconstruction of the chain of transmission and presenting a *takhrij* analysis of *ahkam* hadiths as empirical evidence of al-Shafi'i's methodology in accepting *khabar al-ahid*. This approach is crucial given the significance of Imam al-Shafi'i as a central figure in the development of hadith science and *usul al-fiqh*, particularly regarding his views on *ahad* hadith as a legal foundation (Hakim, 2003, p. 53). Although there has been ongoing debate regarding his reliability as a narrator, Al-Shafi'i's role in establishing the validity of *ahad* hadith constitutes a fundamental contribution that shaped the methodological framework for the codification of Islamic law (Zamzabela & Abror, 2019, p. 368).

## Methods

This study employs literature review design with a qualitative-analytical approach. Primary data is sourced from the manuscripts of Musnad al-Shafi'i and al-Umm. The analytical framework used includes: (1) Historical-Codicological Analysis to trace the genealogy of manuscript transmission; (2) Intertextual Analysis to map the overlap of material between the Musnad and al-Umm; and (3) Isnad-cum-*Matan* Analysis through a controlled takhrij technique applied to three key hadiths to test the consistency of the narrations in the Kutub al-Sittah (Suriyanto, 2011).

## Results and Discussion

### Reconstruction of the Transmission Chain: The Musnad as a Product of a Network

Historical data confirms that the Musnad al-Shafi'i is not a "book" written by Imam Shafi'i himself, but rather the result of the organization of material carried out by subsequent generations of students, particularly through the lineage of al-Aṣamm. The difference between the Musnad and Shafi'i's other independent works (such as al-Risalah) lies in its fluid organizational structure. From a sociology of knowledge perspective, this manuscript reflects how early Shafi'i followers sought to systematize their teacher's authority in order to confront the challenges posed by competing schools of thought (Anam, 2022, p. 316). This structure reflects the dynamics of knowledge transmission centered on the authority of the teacher and its translation into written form by the student, which was a common practice during the early codification of hadith and fiqh (Fatki, 2012; Pervez, 2023, p. 210).

This approach is consistent with the method of interpreting the Qur'an and hadith developed by Imam al-Shafi'i, which emphasizes a hierarchy of legal sources and rigorous linguistic analysis to derive legal rulings from the sacred texts, as outlined in Kitab al-Risalah and Kitab Ahkām al-Qur'ān (Ruslan et al., 2025, p. 431). Thus, the Musnad al-Shafi'i can be viewed as the crystallization of a methodology that forms a systematic framework within the science of fiqh (Anam, 2022, p. 316). The significance of the Musnad lies in its role as a bridge between personal authority and the codification of the school of thought, enabling the preservation of Imam al-Shafi'i's thought amid the dynamic evolution of Islamic law (Aziz, 2025, p. 6663; Umar et al., 2025).

### Intertextuality in Musnad al-Umm: Stability and Variation

An analysis of the reports in the Musnad reveals a significant degree of overlap with al-Umm. This finding effectively refutes the assumption that the Musnad is an independent work separate from the corpus of fiqh. The significance of the Musnad lies precisely in its amālī (imlā') sections, which exhibit shifts in sequence and contain material not found in

the standard edition of al-Umm. This demonstrates the existence of “transmission variants” preserved outside the main corpus, offering a new dimension in understanding textual dynamics during the early centuries of Islam (Nurkumala, 2025, p. 373). These variations reflect the evolutionary process of Islamic legal texts, in which oral traditions were gradually codified into written form (Nurkumala, 2025).

This study examines how Musnad al-Shafi'i, although not a direct compilation by Imam al-Shafi'i, serves as a vital collection of hadiths for reconstructing his method of legal deduction, particularly as it relates to the use of ahad hadiths in al-Umm (Gojali & Ali, 2021, p. 42). The substantial cohesion between the Musnad and al-Umm demonstrates methodological consistency in Imam al-Shafi'i's use of hadith as the foundation of Islamic law (Qomarullah et al., 2024). This level of intertextuality underscores how the Shafi'i legal system is not based solely on the text of Al-Umm, but is enriched and validated by the corpus of hadiths in the Musnad.

### Hadith Methodology and Critique of the Ahad News

Al-Shafi'i's epistemology in the Musnad places great emphasis on the validity of the chain of transmission. The criteria of *tsiqah*, the narrator's integrity, and the continuity of the chain of transmission are absolute requirements (Qomarullah et al., 2024). Through the Musnad, one can trace how al-Shafi'i applied the principle of nasakh-mansukh and the resolution of mukhtalif al-hadith in practice in cases involving legal hadiths. This approach reinforces the role of the sunnah al-hadith as the second source of law after the Qur'an, which requires verification of the chain of transmission (*sanad*), examination of the text (*matan*), and clarity regarding the historical context (Murtadlo & Nasrulloh, 2026, p. 2279).

Imam al-Shafi'i's use of khabar al-ahad as a legal basis reflects complex methodological nuances. He accepted single-chain hadiths as *hujah syar'iyah* if they met strict chain-of-transmission criteria, even though some other scholars considered them speculative (Zani et al., 2024, p. 77). Imam Shafi'i established very strict criteria for the acceptance of khabar al-wahid, including an unbroken chain of transmission, the integrity of all the narrators, and a text that does not contradict reason or other hadiths with stronger evidence (Masbukin, 2016, p. 191). These criteria form the basis of the modern methodology of hadith chain criticism, ensuring that the Sunnah possesses a high degree of authenticity and is suitable to serve as evidence in the establishment of Islamic law (Zamzabela & Abror, 2019, p. 368).

### Hadith *Takhrij* Case Study

To demonstrate the authority of the Musnad in the integration of hadith and fiqh, a

takhrij was conducted on three fundamental hadiths:

*First*, The Hadith on Seawater (Huwa al-ṭahūru mā'uhu). This hadith has broad support among scholars and is considered authentic (Nurliana, 2017, p. 145). Criticism of the chain of transmission is a crucial element in determining the credibility of a hadith as a basis for legal rulings (Mustang & Abubakar, 2025, p. 111). Imam al-Shafi'i's acceptance of this hadith even though it is a khabar al-āḥad indicates that his criteria were based not only on the number of narrators, but also on the strength of the isnad and the consistency of the *matan* with the principles of Islamic law (Tajrid, 2021, p. 74). Al-Shafi'i's methodology for verifying hadith involves a comprehensive analysis of the isnad, *matan*, and consistency with other Islamic legal texts (Chodir, 2020, p. 45; Sabli et al., 2025, p. 93).

*Second*, the Hadith of the Two Qullas (*Idzā kāna al-mā'u qullatayn*). This Hadith is a cornerstone of Shafi'i fiqh regarding purification (Akastangga, 2020, p. 49; Koçer, 2024, p. 18). Although the validity of its text is often debated in hadith scholarship, the authenticity of its chain of transmission has been confirmed through various chains of transmission (R et al., 2025, p. 111). However, some contemporary scholars, such as al-Albani, have identified weaknesses in some of the chains of transmission for similar hadiths, particularly those involving additions (*ziyadat*) in the text (Sebri & Shamsudin, 2025, p. 12). Nevertheless, the consensus of the scholars regarding the legal substance contained in the Hadith of the Two Qullas lends it strong external validity (Abdurrohman & Mubarak, 2025, p. 147).

*Third*, The Hadith on Touching the Genitals (*Man massa dzakarahu falyatawadda'*). Transmitted through the chain of Busrah bint Shafwan, this hadith has a sound chain of transmission and confirms the principle of a strong chain of narration (Purwanto & Umar, 2023, p. 86). A careful *takhrij* study of this hadith will reveal in detail how Imam al-Shafi'i applied the criteria for verifying hadiths in establishing legal rulings, especially when faced with hadiths that appear to be contradictory (*mukhtalif*) at first glance (Chodir, 2020, p. 45; Hanifa et al., 2022, p. 187). This comparative approach is essential for understanding the methodological nuances of Shafi'i's approach to selecting and prioritizing hadiths.

### Implications for the Study of History

This research implies a paradigm shift in how the Musnad manuscript is viewed; it should not be seen as a static text, but rather as a "living document" that represents a transitional phase from an oral tradition to a standardized textual tradition. This manuscript serves as evidence of how the early academic community (the Shafi'i school) preserved the collective memory of their teachers through a rigorous yet dynamic process of transmission (Sabli et al., 2025, p. 93). The study of the isnad and *matan* is essential not only for the internal validation of hadiths, but also for reconstructing their historical

context and legal applications (Sebri & Shamsudin, 2025, p. 12). This is consistent with the classical approach to hadith criticism, which emphasizes the quality of the isnad through the reliability of the narrators (*tsiqah*) and the consistency of the *matan* (Sholihin, 2017).

The focus of this manuscript is limited to aspects of historical transmission and several case studies of *takhrij*. Future research is encouraged to explore a comparison of the al-Aṣamm version of the Musnad manuscript with manuscript fragments from other chains of Shafi'i's students to map broader textual variations. The development of a multidimensional analytical framework that integrates codicology, philology, and comparative hadith criticism will be crucial for uncovering the historical and theological layers of the Musnad al-Shafi'i corpus (Suriyanto, 2011).

### Conclusion

Based on textual and intertextual genealogical analysis, it can be concluded that the Musnad al-Imam al-Shafi'i is a product of transmission constructed by a network of students particularly Abu al-'Abbas al-Aṣamm rather than an independent work (*tasnif*) by Imam al-Shafi'i in the modern sense. The finding of a high degree of textual similarity with al-Umm confirms the function of the Musnad as a supporting hadith corpus that supplies normative material for the systematization of law in al-Umm. Although its status is that of a compilation (*riwayah*), the hadith content within it reflects al-Shafi'i's rigorous epistemology regarding the validation of isnads. The acceptance of *khobar al-āḥadas* as a legal basis, as evidenced in the *takhrij* analysis of *ahkam* hadiths, demonstrates Imam al-Shafi'i's methodological consistency in establishing the Sunnah as an authoritative source of law. Thus, the Musnad al-Shafi'i plays a vital role as an epistemological bridge that solidifies the authority of the Shafi'i school in the history of Islamic law.

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