

The Sunan Hadith Collection as a Methodological Instrument: A Novel Study of Its Typology, Quality, and Role in Legal Inference

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Abstract:

This research examines the strategic role of the Sunan collections in the history of hadith codification, which serve as the second source of Islamic law after the Qur'an. The Sunan works *Sunan Abi Dāwūd*, *Sunan al-Tirmiżī*, *Sunan al-Nasa'ī*, and *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, were arranged systematically according to chapters of jurisprudence. This structure makes them central references in Islamic law (*abkām*), as it facilitates scholars and jurists in locating and interpreting hadiths relevant to legal issues. The study employs a qualitative-descriptive method through library research, using both primary sources such as hadith texts and classical scholarship, as well as secondary sources from modern literature. Findings indicate that each Sunan collection has unique features in selection, classification, and reliability of narrations. *Sunan al-Nasa'ī* is known for its strict standards, mostly including authentic hadiths, while *Sunan Ibn Majah* contains a wider range of reports, including weak and even fabricated narrations. *Sunan al-Tirmiżī* provides evaluations of hadith status along with scholarly opinions, and *Sunan Abi Dāwūd* is highly regarded for its authoritative legal narrations. Collectively, the Sunan serve not only as documentation of hadith but also as methodological tools that support verification, classification, and systematic derivation of Islamic law.

Keywords: the book of Sunan; codification of hadiths; quality of hadith; Islamic law; Fiqh Method

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini berfokus pada pengkajian mendalam mengenai peran strategis kitab-kitab *Sunan* dalam sejarah kodifikasi hadis Nabi Muhammad saw, yang menempati posisi sebagai sumber hukum Islam kedua setelah al-Qur'an. Kitab-kitab *Sunan* seperti *Sunan Abi Dāwūd*, *Sunan al-Tirmiżī*, *Sunan al-Nasa'ī*, serta *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, disusun dengan mengikuti pola sistematika bab-bab fikih. Pola ini menjadikan karya-karya tersebut sangat penting dalam disiplin hukum Islam (*abkām*), sebab mempermudah para peneliti dan fuqahā' dalam melacak serta memahami hadis-hadis yang relevan dengan permasalahan hukum. Dalam penelitian ini digunakan pendekatan kualitatif-deskriptif melalui metode studi pustaka, dengan memanfaatkan sumber primer berupa teks hadis dan karya ulama klasik, serta sumber sekunder dari literatur kontemporer. Analisis menunjukkan bahwa setiap kitab *Sunan* memiliki ciri khas tersendiri dalam hal pemilihan, klasifikasi, serta kualitas riwayat. Misalnya,

Sunan al-Nasā'ī dikenal selektif dan banyak memuat hadis sahih, sementara *Sunan Ibn Mājah* menyajikan hadis dengan kualitas beragam, termasuk yang *daīf* bahkan *maudhu'*. Adapun *Sunan al-Tirmidī* menambahkan catatan status hadis serta pendapat ulama, sedangkan *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* dihargai karena memuat hadis hukum yang kuat dijadikan rujukan. Secara keseluruhan, kitab-kitab *Sunan* tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai dokumentasi hadis, melainkan juga instrumen metodologis yang menunjang proses seleksi, verifikasi, dan istinbāt hukum Islam secara sistematis.

Kata Kunci: kitab Sunan; kodifikasi hadis; kualitas hadis; hukum Islam; metode fikih

Introduction

The *ḥadīths* of the Prophet Muhammad SAW constitute the second primary source of Islamic law after the Qur'an and hold a vital position in shaping the principles of faith ('*aqīdah*), worship ('*ibādah*), social transactions (*mu'amalah*), and ethics (*akhlāq*) of the Muslim community. Consequently, the preservation of *ḥadīth* was not only carried out through oral transmission and memorization but also through a systematic process of written codification. This process developed gradually and reached its peak in the third century of the Hijri calendar with the compilation of the major *ḥadīth* collections, including the *Sunan* works.¹

The *Sunan* collections represent a significant body of work within the *ḥadīth* transmission tradition, compiled with a thematic-legal (*fiqhī*) approach. Unlike *al-Jāmi'* or *al-Musnad* collections which either encompass all aspects of Islam or are organized according to the names of the Companions, the *Sunan* works are arranged by chapters of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), making them highly practical for deriving legal rulings.² Foundational collections such as *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, *Sunan al-Tirmidī*, and *Sunan Ibn Mājah* have thus become essential references in understanding the implementation of prophetic traditions within the lived experience of the Muslim community.³

The significance of the *Sunan* collections in the codification of *ḥadīth* lies in two principal aspects. *First*, these works served as a bridge between the oral transmission of *ḥadīth* and their transformation into written documentation that was both valid and systematically organized.⁴ *Second*, the *Sunan* collections functioned as instruments for assessing the quality

¹ Muhammad Musthafa al-A'zami, *Studies in Early Hadith Literature: With a Critical Edition of Some Early Texts* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1968), 32–35.

² Jonathan A.C. Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 85–87.

³ Nur al-Dīn 'Itr, *Manhaj al-Naqd fi 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth* (Damaskus: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 215.

⁴ Harold Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence: Meccan Fiqh before the Classical Schools* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 97–99.

of ḥadīths through rigorous evaluation of both the chains of transmission (*isnād*) and the textual content (*matn*) by the *muḥaddithūn* (ḥadīth scholars). This reflects a mature methodological awareness within the discipline of ḥadīth criticism.⁵ Consequently, the *Sunan* works stand as important evidence of the diligence and precision with which the Muslim scholarly tradition sought to preserve the authenticity of the Prophet Muhammad's sayings.⁶

However, in contemporary academic discourse, there remains a degree of misunderstanding regarding the position of the *Sunan* collections in comparison with other canonical works such as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Many tend to regard the *Sunan* merely as supplementary texts, whereas in reality, they play a crucial role in shaping the scholarly structure of ḥadīth studies, particularly in the realm of Islamic jurisprudence.⁷ Therefore, a deeper investigation into the function, structure, and significance of the *Sunan* within the broader process of ḥadīth codification is essential and warrants further scholarly attention.⁸

Several previous studies have made significant contributions to understanding the typology of ḥadīth compilations from various methodological perspectives. One study explores in depth the characteristics of *al-Ma‘ājim* within the tradition of ḥadīth codification, emphasizing the patterns of *isnād* and *matn* classification as well as the scholarly value embedded within. The research demonstrates that *al-Ma‘ājim* serves not merely as a compilation of narrators' names but also as a reflection of a more complex system of ḥadīth categorization based on intellectual transmission networks.⁹

Another study provides a comparative analysis of the typology of *Sunan*, *Muwatta'*, and *Musannaf* collections, highlighting the differences in their organizational approaches and methods of compilation. It asserts that these three types of works represent the evolution of systematic ḥadīth writing oriented toward legal, practical, and juristic themes, thereby

⁵ Muhammad Mustafa al-A‘zami, *The History of the Qur’anic and Hadith Texts* (Riyadh: UK Islamic Academy, 2003), 85–90.

⁶ Subhi al-Salih, *Ulūm al-Ḥadīth wa Muṣṭalaḥuhu* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li al-Malāyīn, 1988), 203.

⁷ Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 99–103.

⁸ A. J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 45.

⁹ Muhammad Khudori, “Tipologi Kitab al-Ma‘ājim dalam Kodifikasi Hadis,” *Riwayah: Jurnal Studi Hadis* 6, no. 2 (2020): 173–186.

illustrating the diverse intellectual tendencies among *muḥaddithūn* in responding to the legal needs of their respective periods.¹⁰

Meanwhile, another investigation focusing on *Riyād al-Ṣāliḥīn* reveals that this collection possesses a distinctive typology compared with other ḥadīth works. The study emphasizes its classification of ethical and spiritual traditions aimed at moral cultivation, alongside a comparative discussion with *al-Tarḥīb wa al-Tarḥīb*, which serves a similar pedagogical purpose. It concludes that *Riyād al-Ṣāliḥīn* functions as a bridge between ḥadīth texts and religious praxis, demonstrating how the ethical dimensions of Islam become internalized in the moral and social life of the Muslim community.¹¹

In contrast to the aforementioned studies, this research specifically focuses on the four major *Sunan* collections: Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī, and Ibn Mājah by emphasizing typological analysis, textual quality, and their roles in the *istinbāt* (derivation) of Islamic legal rulings. Thus, this study is not merely descriptive but also offers a new methodological perspective on the position of the *Sunan* compilations within the Islamic legal tradition.

To achieve a comprehensive understanding, this study employs a descriptive-qualitative approach using content analysis of both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources consist of the four major *Sunan* collections, which historically represent a significant phase in the codification of ḥadīth: *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, and *Sunan Ibn Mājah*. These works are examined in depth to identify their structural patterns, thematic organization, and the criteria of ḥadīth authenticity applied by their respective compilers.

The secondary sources include both classical and contemporary scholarly writings, as well as relevant modern academic studies in the field of ḥadīth. The analysis of these materials aims to reinforce the interpretation of the primary data and to provide historical and methodological context for understanding the role of the *Sunan* collections in the construction of Islamic legal thought. This research is conducted through library-based

¹⁰ Moh. Jufriyadi Sholeh, “Tipologi Kitab Sunan, Muwatta’ dan Musannaf,” *el-Warqob: Jurnal Ushuluddin dan Filsafat* 2, no. 1 (2023): 45–58.

¹¹ Nur Kholis bin Kur'an, “Tipologi Kitab Riyād al-Ṣāliḥīn dalam Kodifikasi Hadis,” *al-Majalīs: Jurnal Dirasat Islamiyah* 2, no. 2 (2024): 155–167.

study, critically and systematically reviewing *ḥadīth* literature to produce valid, objective, and academically accountable conclusions.

Results and Discussion

The Sunan Hadith Collection: Definition, Types, and Characteristics

The term *Sunan* is the plural form of *Sunnah*, which in this context is synonymous with *ḥadīth*. Specifically, *Sunan* refers to a method of compiling *ḥadīth* collections based on the classification of Islamic legal rulings (*ahkām sharīyah*), such as those found in the chapters of *fiqh*. These compilations include only the sayings, actions, and approvals directly attributed to the Prophet Muhammad.¹² Epistemologically, a *Sunan* collection is characterized by its arrangement according to legal chapters, such as faith (*īmān*), purification (*tahārah*), prayer (*ṣalāh*), almsgiving (*zakāh*), and others. The majority of the narrations contained within are *marfū'* (attributed directly to the Prophet), while *marqūf* traditions (attributed to the Companions) are rarely included. Thus, the *Sunan* serves as a structured reflection of prophetic traditions within the framework of Islamic jurisprudence.¹³

1. Sunan Abū Dāwūd

The *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* was compiled by Sulaymān ibn al-Ash‘ath ibn Shaddād ibn ‘Amr ibn ‘Āmir al-Azdī, known as Abū Dāwūd (202–274 AH).¹⁴ He was one of the most prominent *ḥadīth* scholars of the third century Hijri and a student of leading authorities of his time. His scholarly formation was shaped through extensive travel and study in various regions. In Baghdad, he studied under Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal; in Ḥimṣ (Iraq) he learned from Ḥaywah ibn Sharīḥ; in Bahrain, from al-Shāfi‘ī ibn Ja‘far al-Nufaylī; in Syria, from Ṣafwān ibn Ṣalīḥ and Hishām ibn ‘Ammār; and in Khurāsān, from Ishāq ibn Rāhawayh. This

¹² Bambang Subandi, “TIGA KITAB SUNAN (Studi Komparatif Karakteristik Kitab Sunan Abu Dawud, Sunan Al-Tirmidhi, Dan Sunan Al-Nasā’i),” *Menara Tebuireng* 08, no. 01 (2012): 73–85.

¹³ Masfi Sya’fiatul Ummah, “Kaca Karunia Cahaya Allah Jurnal Dialogis Ilmu Ushulud,” *Sustainability (Switzerland)* 11, no. 1 (2019): 1–14, http://scioteca.caf.com/bitstream/handle/123456789/1091/RED2017-Eng-8ene.pdf?sequence=12&isAllowed=y%0Ahttp://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.regsiurbeco.2008.06.005%0Ahttps://www.researchgate.net/publication/305320484_SISTEM PEMBETUNGAN TERPUSAT STRATEGI MELESTARI.

¹⁴ Fakhrurrozi, “Studi Kitab Sunan Abi Daud,” *WARAQAT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 4, no. 1 (2019): 2.

broad intellectual network enabled Abū Dāwūd to gather a wide range of authentic traditions and develop a highly refined understanding of *ḥadīth* transmission.¹⁵

Imām Abū Dāwūd's expertise in the field of *ḥadīth* attracted scholars from various regions, and even his contemporaries were eager to attend his lessons. Among his students were Imām al-Nasā'ī, Ibrāhīm ibn Ḥamdān, Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Asynānī, Abū Ḥāmid Aḥmad al-Asbahānī, Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Najjāḥ, Abū 'Amr Aḥmad ibn 'Alī, Ishaq ibn Mūsā al-Ramlī, Imām al-Tirmiẓī, Zakariyyā ibn Yaḥyā, and others.¹⁶

In *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, the compiler divided the collection into several *books* (*faṣl*), each consisting of a number of *chapters* (*bāb*). Overall, the work contains 35 *faṣl*, 1,871 *bāb*, and 4,800 *ḥadīth*. However, according to Muḥammad Muḥyiddīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, the total reaches 5,274 *ḥadīth*. This difference arises because Abū Dāwūd sometimes repeated a *ḥadīth* in different sections to clarify legal rulings or to expand the number of transmission chains (*asānīd*).¹⁷ The opinions of scholars regarding *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* are as follows:¹⁸

- a. Ibn Mandah regarded al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, and al-Nasā'ī as among the scholars capable of distinguishing between authentic and weak *ḥadīth*. His work, arranged according to *fiqh* themes, serves as an important reference for legal evidence.¹⁹
- b. Imām al-Nawawī stated that anyone engaged in the study of *fiqh* should refer to *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, as it contains numerous legal *ḥadīth* that are both clear and concise.²⁰
- c. Al-Khaṭṭābī described *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* as a noble and unparalleled compilation of legal *ḥadīth*, widely accepted by scholars and serving as a reference for jurists of various schools in regions such as Iraq, Egypt, and the Maghrib.
- d. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah emphasized that *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* holds a high position in the Islamic world and functions as a decisive authority in resolving legal differences.

¹⁵ Muhammad Amin, "Studi Kitab Hadis Telaah Terhadap Manhaj Kitab Sunan Abu Dawud," *Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah* 1, no. 1 (2019): 155–70.

¹⁶ Fakhrurrozi, "Studi Kitab Sunan Abi Daud."

¹⁷ Ummah, "Kaca Karunia Cahaya Allah Jurnal Dialogis Ilmu Ushulud."

¹⁸ Fakhrurrozi, "Studi Kitab Sunan Abi Daud."

¹⁹ Kirin, A. B., Ismail, F., & Hassan, M. I. B. (2022). Manhaj Shaykh Nawawi Al-Banteni Dalam Mensyarakhan Hadis-Hadis Kitab Nasa'ih Al-'Ibad. *Journal of Hadith Studies*, 76–83. <https://doi.org/10.33102/johs.v7i1.174>

²⁰ Ahmad Nabil Amir, "Imam Al-Nawawi: Riwayat Ringkas Tentang Latar Pemikiran Dan Pengaruhnya," *International Journal of Humanities Technology and Civilization* 6, no. 2 (2023): 58–68, <https://doi.org/10.15282/ijhtc.v6i2.6980>.

- e. Ibn al-‘Arabī asserted that anyone who possesses the Qur’ān and *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* has no need for other books.²¹
- f. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī viewed *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* as sufficient for *mujtahid* scholars seeking knowledge of *ḥadīth* related to Islamic law.²²

2. Sunan al-Tirmizi

Imām al-Tirmizi, whose full name was Abū ʻIsā Muḥammad ibn ʻIsā ibn Sawrah ibn Mūsā ibn al-Ḍaḥḥāk al-Sulamī al-Bughi al-Tirmizi, was one of the most prominent scholars in the field of *ḥadīth* and played a major role in the development of classical Islamic scholarship. Although his full name reflects an honorable lineage, in *ḥadīth* literature and Islamic studies he is more commonly known as Abū ʻIsā al-Tirmizi.

As a distinguished *muḥaddith*, al-Tirmizi devoted nearly his entire life to collecting, examining, and classifying the *ḥadīths* of the Prophet Muḥammad. His deep passion for knowledge and diligence in the science of *ḥadīth* transmission led him to undertake extensive scholarly journeys, known as *riḥlah ʻilmīyyah*. In pursuit of authentic *ḥadīth* and verification from reliable transmitters, he traveled to major Islamic centers of learning of his time, such as Ḥijāz (including Makkah and Madīnah), ʻIrāq, Khurāsān, and other regions in the eastern Islamic world.

These intellectual journeys aimed not only at collecting *ḥadīths* from various narrators but also at conducting critical evaluations of both the chains of transmission (*isnād*) and the textual content (*matn*) through direct discussions with authoritative teachers and transmitters. From these extensive travels, Imām al-Tirmizi produced several monumental works, the most significant of which is *al-Jāmi'*, better known as *Sunan al-Tirmizi*. This compilation is one of the six canonical *ḥadīth* collections (*Kutub al-Sittah*) and is distinguished by its unique methodological features, including its system of classification, critical commentary on *ḥadīth* authenticity, and citation of scholarly opinions from earlier authorities.²³

During his scholarly journeys, al-Tirmizi met and studied with numerous renowned scholars, including Qutaybah ibn Saʻīd, Ishaq ibn Mūsā, Maḥmūd ibn Ghaylān, Saʻīd ibn

²¹ Fakhrurrozi, “Studi Kitab Sunan Abi Daud.”

²² Fakhrurrozi.

²³ Ummah, “Kaca Karunia Cahaya Allah Jurnal Dialogis Ilmu Ushulud.”

‘Abd al-Rahmān, Muḥammad ibn Bashshār, ‘Alī ibn Ḥujr, Aḥmad ibn Muṇī‘, Muḥammad ibn al-Muthannā, Sufyān ibn Wakī‘, and Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘il al-Bukhārī. In addition to these figures, al-Tirmiẓī also studied *ḥadīth* under the guidance of Imām al-Bukhārī, Imām Muslim, and Imām Abū Dāwūd. Among al-Tirmiẓī’s written works are *al-Jāmi‘ al-Mukhtaṣar min al-Sunan ‘an Rasūlillāh, Tawārikh, al-Ilal al-Kabīr, al-Shamā‘il, Asmā‘ al-Šaḥābah, al-Asmā‘ wa al-Kuṇā, and al-Āthār al-Mawqūfah*. However, his most famous and influential work is *al-Jāmi‘*, commonly known as *Sunan al-Tirmiẓī*.²⁴

Sunan al-Tirmiẓī employs a distinctive methodology by systematically compiling *ḥadīths* and discussing the legal opinions of earlier jurists. Al-Tirmiẓī also evaluates the quality of each *ḥadīth*, explaining its strengths and weaknesses. For instance, in *ḥadīth* number 409, he provides clarification regarding the degree of reliability and the scholarly interpretations related to it.

سَنَنُ التَّرمِذِيِّ ٤٠٩ : حَدَّثَنَا حَمْوُدُ بْنُ عَيْلَانَ حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ إِسْحَاقَ هُوَ السَّالِحِينِيُّ حَدَّثَنَا حَمَّادُ
 بْنُ سَلَمَةَ عَنْ ثَابِتِ الْبَيْنَانِيِّ عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ رَبَاحِ الْأَنْصَارِيِّ عَنْ أَبِي قَتَادَةَ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
 وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لِأَبِي بَكْرٍ مَرَرْتُ بِكَ وَأَنْتَ تَقْرَأُ وَأَنْتَ تَخْفِضُ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ فَقَالَ إِنِّي أَسْعَيْتُ مَنْ نَاجَيْتُ
 قَالَ ارْفَعْ قَلِيلًا وَقَالَ لِعُمَرَ مَرَرْتُ بِكَ وَأَنْتَ تَقْرَأُ وَأَنْتَ تَرْفَعُ صَوْتَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أُوْقِظُ الْوَسْنَانَ وَأَطْرُدُ
 الشَّيْطَانَ قَالَ اخْفِضْ قَلِيلًا قَالَ وَفِي الْبَابِ عَنْ عَائِشَةَ وَأُمِّ هَانِي وَأَنَسٍ وَأُمِّ سَلَمَةَ وَابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ قَالَ
 أَبُو عِيسَى هَذَا حَدِيثٌ غَرِيبٌ وَإِنَّمَا أَسْنَدَهُ يَحْيَى بْنُ إِسْحَاقَ عَنْ حَمَّادٍ بْنِ سَلَمَةَ وَأَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ إِنَّمَا
 رَوَوْا هَذَا الْحَدِيثَ عَنْ ثَابِتٍ عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ رَبَاحٍ مُرْسَلًا

Sunan al-Tirmiẓī, ḥadīth No. 409: “*Mahmūd ibn Ghaylān narrated to us, saying: Yahyā ibn Ishāq, known as al-Šalāḥīnī, narrated to us, saying: Hammād ibn Salamah narrated to us, from Thābit al-Bunānī, from ‘Abdullah ibn Rabāḥ al-Anṣārī, from Abū Qatādah (RA), that the Prophet SAW said to Abū Bakr (RA): I passed by you while you were reciting (the Qur'an) and you lowered your voice.’ Abū Bakr replied, ‘Indeed, I was making it heard by the One to whom I was supplicating.’ The Prophet SAW then said, ‘Raise your voice slightly.’ Then he said to Umar (RA): I passed by you while you were reciting and you raised your voice.’ Umar replied, ‘Indeed, I was waking those who were asleep and driving away the devils.’ The Prophet SAW said, ‘Lower your voice slightly.’” The narrator added: “In this chapter, there are also reports from ‘A’ishah, Umm Hāni’, Anas, Umm Salamah, and Ibn ‘Abbās.” Abū Ḥāfiẓ (al-Tirmiẓī) commented: “This *ḥadīth* is *gharib* (singularly transmitted); the only one who connected it as *musnad* (with a continuous chain up to the Prophet) is Yahyā ibn Ishāq, from Hammād ibn*

²⁴ Naila Farah, “Mengenal Kitab-Kitab Hadis,” *Dijat Al-Afkār* 2, no. 1 (2014): 28–59.

*Salamah. Most narrators, however, transmit this *ḥadīth* from Thābit, from ‘Abdullāh ibn Rabāḥ, as *mursal* (with a missing link). ”*

The *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* is notable for the detailed and transparent manner in which it presents the quality of its hadiths. The majority of the hadiths in this collection are classified as *ḥasan* in various grades, while only a small portion are deemed *sahīḥ* or *da’īf*. Al-Tirmidhi’s meticulous classification and evaluation of hadiths represent a major contribution to the development of *muṣṭalah al-ḥadīth* (the science of hadith terminology). His work enriches the intellectual heritage of hadith criticism in the Islamic tradition, offering not only narrations but also systematic analysis of their chains of transmission, the reliability of transmitters, and the strength of the reports. Thus, *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* stands not merely as a compilation of legal traditions, but as a scholarly reflection of critical and methodological rigor in hadith transmission.²⁵

3. Sunan al-Nasā’ī

Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān Aḥmad ibn Shu‘ayb ibn ‘Alī ibn Sinān ibn Baḥr al-Khurāsānī al-Nasā’ī, commonly known as al-Nasā’ī, was one of the eminent scholars of hadith. He was born in 215 AH in the city of Nasā’ in Khurasan (modern-day Turkmenistan) and passed away on 13 Ṣafar 303 AH at the age of approximately 88.²⁶ Al-Nasā’ī, titled *Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān*, was widely recognized among hadith scholars for his profound knowledge, asceticism, and dignified presence. Historical accounts describe him as handsome, fair-skinned with a reddish hue (*ahyad asyqar*), and possessing a commanding appearance.

Ibn Khallikan notes that al-Nasā’ī had a strong personality, extensive knowledge, and exceptional caution in transmitting hadiths. From an early age, he showed a deep commitment to the pursuit of hadith scholarship, traveling widely across the Islamic world—to Hijaz, Iraq, Sham, and Egypt to study with leading hadith transmitters and collect authentic reports. Egypt eventually became the center of his scholarly activity. There, he devoted himself to teaching, writing, and disseminating hadith. His choice to settle in Egypt

²⁵ Muslim M Akib, “Ijtihad Imam Tirmizi Dalam Menentukan Kriteria Hadis Hasan,” *Realita* 5, no. 02 (2007): 16–37, <http://repository.iainkediri.ac.id/id/eprint/263>.

²⁶ M Ihtirozun Ni, “AYYĀM AL-BĪDH SYAR’I AND ASTRONOMY PERSPECTIVE (BETWEEN FASTING MOMENTUM AND SCIENTIFIC 2 ثلث : ضياءً مُّللَّاً اسْخَوْ ، وَرَشْ ”, no. 2 (n.d.).

was strategic, as it was then one of the foremost intellectual centers of the Islamic world, bustling with scholars and students from diverse regions.²⁷

In Egypt, al-Nasā'ī attained a distinguished position in both scholarly and public life. He was deeply respected for his vast knowledge, his meticulous scrutiny of hadith chains of transmission (*isnād*) and texts (*matn*), and his expertise in distinguishing between *sahīh*, *hasan*, and *da'if* traditions. Many scholars considered him one of the most precise and critical hadith scholars, even stricter in evaluating transmitters than Imām Muslim and Abū Dāwūd. His most celebrated works are *al-Sunan al-Kubrā* and *al-Sunan al-Ṣugbrā*, the latter also known as *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, both of which are part of the *Kutub al-Sittah*, the six canonical hadith collections in Sunni Islam. In compiling his works, al-Nasā'ī employed a highly rigorous methodology, carefully selecting and assessing the reliability of each transmission and the integrity of each chain.²⁸

Due to his precision and caution, some scholars regarded *Sunan al-Nasā'ī* as containing narrations of higher quality than those in other *sunan* collections. Nevertheless, the work was not without criticism. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, for example, argued that not all the hadiths in *Sunan al-Ṣugbrā* are *sahīh*; he identified about ten *maṇḍū'* (fabricated) hadiths within it. This critique reflects the ongoing scholarly engagement and rigorous evaluation that characterize the tradition of hadith studies.²⁹

4. Sunan Ibn Mājah

The *Sunan Ibn Mājah* was compiled by Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Yazīd ibn Mājah al-Qazwīnī (209–273 AH / 824–887 CE), a prominent scholar from Qazwīn, Persia (modern-day Iran).³⁰ This work completes the corpus of the six canonical Sunni ḥadīth collections known as the *Kutub al-Sittah*, alongside *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, *Sahīh Muslim*, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, *Sunan al-Tirmidī*, and *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*. The inclusion of *Sunan Ibn Mājah* in this canon was not initially uncontested; earlier scholars such as al-Nasā'ī himself had considered *al-Muwattī'* by Mālik ibn Anas to be the sixth canonical work. However, as ḥadīth criticism

²⁷ Burhanuddin Al-butary, Gita Ayu Pratama, and Muhammad Zauki Hafiezh, "Siklus Peradaban" 7, no. 1 (2022): 49–58.

²⁸ Moh Jazuli, "Mengenal Al-Nasā'ī Dan Sunan-Nya," *At-Tahdīb: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Muamalah* 4, no. 1 (2016): 136–49, <http://ejurnal.kopertais4.or.id/mataraman/index.php/tahdib/article/view/2358>.

²⁹ Nurkhaliyah Siregar, "Kitab Sunan An-Nasa'ī (Biografi, Sistematika, Dan Penilaian Ulama)," *Jurnal Hikmah* 15, no. 1 (2018): 55–62.

³⁰ Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, 64.

evolved in later centuries, particularly from the fifth Islamic century onward, Ibn Mājah's work gained wide recognition for its contribution of unique narrations (*zawā'iḍ*) not found in the other five collections.³¹

The total number of narrations in *Sunan Ibn Mājah* is approximately 4,000, including around 1,300 *zawā'iḍ*, reports absent from the other *Kutub al-Khamsah* (the five collections).³² Its contents represent a broad spectrum of authenticity, encompassing *sahīh*, *ḥasan*, *da‘īf*, and even a few *maṇḍū‘* (fabricated) *ḥadīths*. Due to this diversity, classical critics such as Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī and al-Dhahabī observed that Ibn Mājah's standards for transmitter reliability were relatively more lenient than those of his contemporaries, such as Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasā'i.³³ Nonetheless, the work retains great scholarly value, enriching the *ḥadīth* corpus and offering insight into the complex methodological approaches to *ḥadīth* selection during the codification era.

Beyond its legal significance as a supplementary source of *fiqh al-ahkām* (juridical rulings), *Sunan Ibn Mājah* illustrates the geographical and intellectual expansion of *ḥadīth* scholarship. It demonstrates how scholars from eastern regions of the Islamic world contributed substantially to a discipline once dominated by scholars of the Hijaz and Iraq. In this way, *Sunan Ibn Mājah* not only completes the *Kutub al-Sittah* quantitatively but also broadens the epistemological and cultural scope of Sunni *ḥadīth* tradition.³⁴

Background of the Compilation of the *Sunan Ḥadīth* Collections

The background behind the compilation of the *Sunan* *ḥadīth* collections, including *Sunan al-Nasā'i*, is rooted in the intellectual and historical needs of the Muslim community to collect, codify, and disseminate the sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad SAW. This effort reflects a conscious attempt to preserve Islamic teachings in an authentic, structured, and academically verifiable form. First, the need to collect *ḥadīth*. After the Prophet's passing, most *ḥadīths* circulated orally. Over time, scholars became concerned that these narrations

³¹ Al-A‘zami, *Studies in Early Hadith Literature*, 107-108.

³² Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrib al-Rāwī fī Sharḥ Taqrīb al-Nawawī*, ed. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ‘Abd al-Laṭīf (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1996), Vol. 1, 137.

³³ Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Nuzhat al-Naẓar fī Tawḍīḥ Nukhbat al-Fikar* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyyāt al-Azhariyyah, 1984), 97.

³⁴ Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 45-46.

might be lost or distorted.³⁵ To safeguard their authenticity, scholars undertook systematic efforts to compile the *ḥadīths* in written form, ensuring their preservation and transmission to future generations.

Second, the development of *ḥadīth* sciences. During the 2nd and 3rd centuries AH, the discipline of *ḥadīth* studies flourished, marked by extensive *rīḥlah ʿilmīyyah*, scholarly journeys across the Islamic world to collect *ḥadīths* from reliable transmitters. The compilation of *Sunan* works emerged as part of this intellectual evolution, organizing *ḥadīths* thematically into chapters on worship (*‘ibādah*), transactions (*mu‘āmalah*), and ethics (*akhlāq*). *Third*, the importance of Islamic jurisprudence. Since *ḥadīths* constitute the second primary source of Islamic law after the Qur'an, there was a need for accessible compilations to guide *fūqahā'* (jurists).³⁶ The *Sunan* collections were designed with a legal orientation, providing structured and systematic references for deriving rulings and understanding religious practices.

Fourth, methodology of *ḥadīth* selection. Compilers of *Sunan*, such as Imām al-Nasā'ī, applied rigorous methodological standards in selecting narrations. Only those deemed *sahīh* (authentic) or *ḥasan* (sound), with strong chains of transmission, were included. This reflects the maturity of critical scholarship within the Islamic intellectual tradition. *Fifth*, education and the dissemination of knowledge. The *Sunan* collections also served as educational tools for Muslims, enabling them to study the Prophet's teachings systematically and apply them in daily life. Thus, the writing of the *Sunan* collections was not merely a scholarly endeavor but also a means of transmitting and perpetuating Islamic knowledge across generations.³⁷

The Quality of *Ḥadīth* in the *Sunan* Collections

By definition, the *Sunan* are *ḥadīth* compilations arranged according to chapters of Islamic jurisprudence, such as faith (*īmān*), purification (*tahārah*), prayer (*ṣalāh*), and almsgiving (*zakāt*). Most of the narrations contained therein are *marfū'* (directly traced to the

³⁵ Fabio Vicini, "The Presence of the Prophet in Early Modern and Contemporary Islam," *The Presence of the Prophet in Early Modern and Contemporary Islam*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004522626>.

³⁶ Alkadri, "Dinamika Keilmuan Hadis Dalam," *Borneo: Journal Of Islamic Studies* 3, no. 1 (2022): 62–74.

³⁷ Dr. Abdullah saleh Sulaiman alhejji Dr. Abdullah saleh Sulaiman alhejji, "The Hadiths That Abu Dawood Mentioned in His Sunan Followed Them That The," *Journal of King Abdulaziz University Arts And Humanities* 30, no. 4 (2022): 275–94, <https://doi.org/10.4197/art.30-4.12>.

Prophet SAW), while *mawquf* ḥadīths (attributed only to the Companions) are rare.³⁸ Despite sharing similar organizational structures, the quality of ḥadīths in each *Sunan* collection varies considerably:

1. *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* includes *sahīh*, *ḥasan*, and *da’if* narrations, as the author prioritized legal relevance over absolute authenticity.
2. *Sunan al-Nasā’i* applies a stricter standard of verification, with most of its narrations classified as *sahīh* and very few *da’if*.
3. *Sunan Ibn Mājah* presents a wider spectrum of narrations, ranging from *sahīh* and *ḥasan* to *da’if* and even a small number of *mawdū‘* (fabricated) reports.
4. *Sunan al-Tirmidī* stands out for its critical annotations; Imām al-Tirmidī explicitly classified each ḥadīth (*sahīh*, *ḥasan*, *da’if*) and cited the differing opinions of jurists regarding its application.

Thus, the *Sunan* collections not only serve as repositories of legal ḥadīths but also as reflections of the intellectual diversity within ḥadīth criticism.

The Significance of the *Sunan* Collections

The *Sunan* works hold a central position in Islamic scholarship, particularly in jurisprudence, exegesis, and the formation of legal theory. Their thematic organization and legal focus render them indispensable references for scholars and students alike. Their primary functions include:

1. Primary Sources of Islamic Law – The *Sunan* serve as key legal references used by jurists for deriving rulings and formulating Islamic jurisprudence.³⁹
2. Systematic Framework for Legal Study – Their chapter-based arrangement facilitates easy access for researchers and students to locate ḥadīths on specific legal issues.⁴⁰
3. Critical Evaluation and Classification of ḥadīths – By including *sahīh*, *ḥasan*, and *da’if* narrations along with critical commentary, the *Sunan* collections aid readers in assessing the reliability of each ḥadīth.

³⁸ Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad’s Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, 62.

³⁹ Dr. Abdullah saleh Sulaiman alhejji.

⁴⁰ Islamic Studies et al., “PENDAHULUAN Al- Qur “ an Dan Hadis Menempati Posisi Yang Pertama Dan Kedua Bagi Sumber Ajaran Islam . Hadis Adalah Penjelas Al- Qur “ an . Hadis Termasuk Kedalam Wahyu Allah Swt ., Yang Maknanya Langsung Dari Allah , Sedangkan Al- Qur “ an Adalah Wahyu Ya” 3, no. 2 (2024).

4. Authoritative References for Jurists and Scholars – Particularly *Sunan al-Nasā'i*, known for its methodological rigor, significantly contributes to the development of ḥadīth and legal sciences.⁴¹
5. Strengthening Religious Practice – Containing ḥadīths on ritual worship and social conduct, the *Sunan* serve as practical guides for Muslims to follow the Prophet's teachings faithfully.

The Role of the *Sunan* Collections in *Istinbāt al-Ḥukm* (Legal Derivation)

The *Sunan* collections occupy a central place in the methodology of *istinbāt al-ḥukm*, the derivation of Islamic legal rulings from the *ḥadīth* corpus. They provide jurists with systematically arranged materials that directly connect the Prophet's traditions to practical jurisprudence.

1. Primary Sources for *Fiqh al-Āḥkām*

The *Sunan* were organized according to *fiqh* chapters, such as *ṭahārah* (purification), *ṣalāh* (prayer), *zakāh* (almsgiving), *mu'amalāt* (transactions), *nikāḥ* (marriage), and *jināyāt* (criminal law), allowing *fuqāḥa'* to easily reference prophetic traditions related to each legal topic. In this way, they serve as primary sources for *fiqh al-āḥkām* and provide a direct link between *ḥadīth* and juristic reasoning.⁴²

2. Providers of ḥadīth Classification

In legal derivation, the authenticity of a *ḥadīth* (*sahīḥ*, *ḥasan*, or *da'iyy*) determines its legal authority (*hujjah*). The *Sunan* play a pivotal role in this evaluative process. For instance, Abū Dāwūd clarified that he included certain *da'iyy* narrations if they had legal relevance and were not fabricated. Such transparency allows jurists to assess each report's probative value in legal argumentation.⁴³

3. Complementing the Corpus of Legal ḥadīths

⁴¹ Hasan Su'aidi, "Mengenal Kitab Sunan Al-Tirmidzi (Kitab Hadits Hasan)," *Religia* 13, no. 1 (2017): 123–37, <https://doi.org/10.28918/religia.v13i1.178>.

⁴² Abdul Wahab Syakhrani, "Kitab-Kitab Hadist Sesudah Abad Ke 3 H," *MUSHAF JOURNAL: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 2, no. 1 (2022): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.54443/mushaf.v2i1.15>.

⁴³ Umar bin Azlan and Helimy bin Aris, "Kepentingan Menganalisis Status Perawi Hadis Dengan Neraca Ilmu Al-Jarh Wa Al-Ta'dil: Tumpuan Terhadap Status Periwayatan Abu Hanifah," *Journal Of Hadith Studies* 9, no. 1 (2024): 110–20, <https://doi.org/10.33102/johs.v9i1.292>.

The *Sunan* also complete the broader *hadīth* corpus used in Islamic law. *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* and *Sunan al-Tirmidī* became key references for Shāfi‘ī and Ḥanbālī jurists, while *Sunan al-Nasā‘ī* is often cited for its rigor and high standard of authenticity. *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, meanwhile, supplements the collection with unique narrations not found in the other *Sunan*, making it invaluable for comparative legal studies.⁴⁴

4. Instruments for *Tarjīh*

The *Sunan* provide rich material for *tarjīh*—the juristic process of preferring one *hadīth* over another when apparent contradictions exist. Scholars weigh factors such as chain reliability (*isnād*) and textual consistency (*matn*) to determine which report aligns best with the *maqāṣid al-shari‘ah* (higher objectives of Islamic law). For example, differing reports on *qunūt al-ṣubḥ* (the dawn supplication) invite juristic comparison, demonstrating the *Sunan*’s critical role as the textual foundation for interpretive balance.⁴⁵

5. Bridging Ḥadīth and Practical Fiqh

Finally, the *Sunan* collections function as epistemological bridges between prophetic narration and juristic reasoning. *Sunan al-Tirmidī*, in particular, stands out for not only grading *hadīths* but also citing juristic opinions (*ikhtilaf al-fuqahā‘*) and indicating the stronger view. This methodological integration assists scholars in understanding both the text and its application, linking the Prophet’s guidance with the lived jurisprudence of the early Muslim community.⁴⁶

Conclusions

The *Sunan* hadith collections are compilations arranged according to the chapters of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), such as *īmān* (faith), *ṭahārah* (purification), *ṣalāh* (prayer), and *zakāh* (almsgiving). These collections primarily contain *marfū‘* hadiths—those attributed directly to the Prophet Muḥammad, while *mawquf* hadiths, which are limited to the sayings

⁴⁴ Rahmat Dani and Dea Jihanna Ilmi, “Klasifikasi Hadis Ditinjau Dari Segi Kuantitas Dan Kualitas Sanad,” *Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan Islam* 1 (2024): 113–25, <https://doi.org/10.58561/jkpi.v3i2.127>.

⁴⁵ Mannan, N. A. (2023). Implikasi Metode Tarjih dalam Menyikapi Hadis-Hadis Kontradiktif. *El-Sunnah: Journal of Hadith and Religious Studies*, 1(2), 144–161.

⁴⁶ Anam, W., & Sulaeman, M. (2023). Exploring Hadith Hasan: A Fresh Perspective al-Jami‘al-Sahih al-Sunan al-Tirmidzi. *Diriyah: Jurnal Study Ilmu Hadis*, 8(1), 55–72.

or actions of the Companions, are relatively rare. Consequently, any hadith collection organized in accordance with the thematic structure of *fiqh* is classified as a *Sunan*.

The authenticity and quality of the hadiths contained in the *Sunan* vary from one collection to another, depending on the compiler's methodology and criteria. *Sunan Abi Dāwūd* includes a considerable number of *sahīh* (authentic), *ḥasan* (good), and *da'īf* (weak) hadiths, reflecting the compiler's focus on legal relevance. *Sunan al-Nasā'i*, by contrast, is recognized for its rigorous standards of selection, with most of its hadiths being of high reliability. *Sunan Ibn Mājah* exhibits a wide range of hadith quality, encompassing *sahīh*, *ḥasan*, *da'īf*, and even *ma'ḍū'* (fabricated) narrations. Meanwhile, *Sunan al-Tirmidī* stands out for its analytical nature, providing explicit grading of hadiths (*sahīh*, *ḥasan*, *da'īf*) and offering comparative commentary among juristic opinions, making it more interpretively complex.

The *Sunan* collections play several crucial roles in Islamic scholarship. They serve as primary sources for Islamic legal rulings (*ahkām*), offer a systematic organization that facilitates the study of *fiqh*, and contribute to the assessment and classification of hadith authenticity. Moreover, they act as essential references for jurists and scholars, enrich the disciplines of hadith and Islamic law, and reinforce the practical implementation of Islamic rituals and ethics. Thus, the *Sunan* collections not only preserve prophetic traditions but also bridge the textual heritage of hadith with the living practice of Islamic jurisprudence.

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