



**Riwayah : Jurnal Studi Hadis**

issn 2460-755X eissn 2502-8839

Tersedia online di: [journal.iainkudus.ac.id/index.php/riwayah](http://journal.iainkudus.ac.id/index.php/riwayah)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21043/riwayah.v1i2.34081>

## **THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF HADITH AUTHORITY: A Comparative Analysis of al-Shafi’is and al-Tusi’s Epistemological Frameworks**

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### Abstract

This study compares the methodologies for validating *āḥād ḥadīth* according to Imām al-Shāfi‘ī (Sunni) and Shaykh al-Ṭūsī (Imāmī Shī‘ī). A sociology of knowledge analysis demonstrates that the fundamental differences between the two systems are not merely technical, but rather reflect distinct social contexts and communal needs. The findings show that al-Shāfi‘ī formulated universal criteria, such as the integrity (*‘adl*) and precision (*dabt*) of transmitters, to unify a fragmented Muslim community during the Abbasid era. The system he developed functioned to centralize legal authority based on textual sources, thereby reinforcing Sunni identity as an integrated majority. In contrast, al-Ṭūsī developed a four-tier classification that associates the highest level of authority (*ṣaḥīḥ*) with Imāmī Shī‘ī transmitters, while simultaneously positioning reason (*‘aql*) as an independent evaluative filter. Al-Ṭūsī’s system served to maintain identity boundaries, safeguard doctrinal authority, and strengthen internal coherence within a minority community in the post-Occultation period. Both methodologies were subsequently institutionalized through their canonical works such as *al-Risālah* and *al-Kutub al-Arba‘ah*, thereby shaping enduring scholarly frameworks that persist until now. This study contributes by uncovering the sociological roots of epistemological differences in ḥadīth studies, demonstrating that religious knowledge authority is shaped by social dynamics such as majority integration and minority preservation.

**Keywords:** Hadith validation, al-Shāfi‘ī, Sociology of Knowledge, al-Ṭūsī.

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkomparasikan metodologi validasi hadis *āḥād* menurut Imam al-Shāfi‘ī (Sunni) dan Shaykh al-Ṭūsī (Syiah Imamiyah). Analisis sosiologi pengetahuan menunjukkan bahwa perbedaan mendasar kedua sistem bukan semata teknis, melainkan refleksi dari konteks sosial dan kebutuhan komunal yang berbeda. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa al-Shāfi‘ī merumuskan kriteria universal, seperti integritas (*‘adl*) dan ketelitian (*dabt*) periwayat, untuk menyatukan umat Muslim yang terfragmentasi di era Abbasiyah. Sistem yang dikembangkan al-Shafi‘i berfungsi memusatkan otoritas hukum berbasis teks, memperkuat identitas Sunni

sebagai mayoritas yang terintegrasi. Sebaliknya, al-Ṭūsī mengembangkan klasifikasi empat tingkat yang mengaitkan otoritas tertinggi (*ṣaḥīḥ*) dengan periwayat Syiah Imamiyah, sekaligus menempatkan nalar (*‘aql*) sebagai filter mandiri. Sistem yang dikembangkan al-Ṭūsī berfungsi menjaga batas identitas, melindungi otoritas doktrinal, dan memperkuat koherensi internal komunitas minoritas pasca okultasi Imam. Kedua metodologi tersebut kemudian terinstitusionalisasi melalui karya kanonik mereka berupa *al-Risālah* dan *al-Kutub al-Arba‘ah*, sehingga membentuk kerangka keilmuan yang bertahan hingga kini. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dengan mengungkap akar sosiologis dari perbedaan epistemologis dalam studi hadis, yakni menunjukkan bahwa otoritas pengetahuan agama dibentuk oleh dinamika sosial seperti integrasi mayoritas dan preservasi minoritas.

**Kata kunci:** Validasi Hadis, al-Shāfi‘ī, Sosiologi Pengetahuan, al-Ṭūsī.

## Introduction

Islam is a religion brought by the Prophet Muhammad and serves as a guide for Muslims to achieve prosperity in this world and the hereafter. The position of Hadith in Islam is a source of law, as scholars agree that the Qur'an and Hadith are the foundations of Islamic law (Kurniasih & Arif, 2018). As Muslims, it is impossible for us to understand the law without referring back to both of them. Islam serves as a comprehensive guide for Muslims, with the Qur'an and Hadith functioning as the foundational pillars of Islamic law. Scholars across various schools of thought agree that understanding divine law is impossible without referring to these two primary sources. However, within the historical development of Islamic jurisprudence, the Sunnite and Shi'ite mazhabs (schools of thought) emerged with distinct epistemological roots. A fundamental point of divergence between these two traditions lies in the validity and authenticity of *ahad* hadith, narrations that do not reach the level of *mutawatir* (widespread transmission). This divergence is not merely a matter of technical narration but is rooted in the very definition of authority and the theological prerequisites for legal evidence.

The research problem centers on the conflicting paradigms used to validate these solitary reports. Imam al-Shafi‘ī (d. 204 AH), a pivotal figure in Sunnite jurisprudence, established a framework that affirms the authority of *ahad* hadith as long as they meet

rigorous criteria of fairness (*'adl*) and trustworthiness (*thiqah*) among narrators. For Al-Shafi'i, a single reliable narrator is sufficient to establish a legal obligation, provided the report does not contradict a stronger evidence. In stark contrast, Shaykh al-Tusi (d. 460 AH), a monumental figure in the Shi'ite tradition, operates under an expanded definition of Sunnah that includes the sayings and actions of the 12 Infallible Imams. While Al-Tusi does not reject *ahad* hadith outright, his acceptance is conditioned upon the report's conformity with the Qur'an, rational inquiry (*'aql*), and specific strengthening indications (*qarinah*) that align with the theological principles of the Ahlul Bayt.

The Shi'ite *mazhab* (scholar) of thought, often considered the antithesis of the Sunnite *mazhab* (school of thought), has different historical roots, which remain a distinguishing factor between the two to this day. Fundamental beliefs in the Shi'ite tradition are based on teachings derived directly from the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet, which are considered to acknowledge the existence of this *mazhab*. One fundamental aspect in the study of hadith is the validity or authenticity of *ahad* hadith, which are hadith that do not reach the level of *mutawatir* in their transmission. Differences in views regarding the validity of *ahad* hadith occur not only within the Sunnite *mazhab*, but also between the Sunnite and Shi'ite *mazhabs*. Therefore, a comparative study of the views of two major figures from each *mazhab* of thought, namely Imam al-Shafi'i (d. 204 AH) from the Sunnite circle and Shaykh al-Tusi (d. 460 AH) from the Shi'ite circle, is important to understand how *ahad* hadith is accepted and applied in Islamic law.

Imam al-Shafi'i is known as a figure who affirmed the authority of *ahad* hadith as a source of law that can be used as evidence as long as it meets the criteria of fairness and authenticity. In his view, *ahad* hadith narrated by a *tsiqah* (trustworthy) narrator can be used as a basis for law, especially if it does not contradict stronger arguments. Conversely, Shaykh al-Tusi, a great scholar in the Shi'ite tradition, assessed hadith very differently from Sunnite scholars. According to him, hadith is everything that is attributed to the Prophet and the 12 infallible imams, because he considers that the life history of the *Ahlul Bait* is also part of the hadith (*sunnah*), and this is where the differences in views on *ahad* hadith arise.

In examining a hadith, Shi'ite figures, including Shaykh al-Tusi, have several methods and approaches. Hadith studies from a Shi'ite perspective do not only focus on collecting accounts, but also involve analyzing the *sanad*, *matan*, and their conformity with the basic principles of the Ahlul Bayt *mazhab* of thought (Amin, 2018) This approach emphasizes a rigorous verification process of the fairness, knowledge, and credibility of the narrators, as well as the important role of the imams who are believed to have the authority to preserve and interpret hadith. In addition, the Shiite scholarly tradition also includes the writing and translation of hadith, as in the book al-Kafi, as well as comparative studies of various sources of history to ensure their originality and validity. Thus, the Shiite method of hadith research is a combination of a narration approach, rational analysis, and comprehensive scientific verification (Alfani & Rochmawati, 2023)

Meanwhile, in the context of *ahad* hadith, Shaykh al-Tusi had a more critical view than his predecessors such as Shaykh al-Kulayni. He does not reject *ahad* hadiths outright, but accepts them under certain conditions, namely if the sanad is sahih, the matn does not contradict the Qur'an and reason (*'aql*), and is supported by strengthening indications (*qarinah mu'ayyidah*). This approach demonstrates an effort at rationalization in Shiite hadith studies, where hadiths are not only evaluated based on the quantity of narrators, but also on the quality of transmission and their consistency with the theological principles of *Ahlul Bait*.

Methodologically, the difference between Imam al-Shafi'i and Shaykh al-Tusi in accepting *ahad* hadith reflects two epistemological paradigms in assessing the authority of hadith. In the Sunnite *mazhab* of thought, *ahad* hadith are accepted under more flexible conditions than in Shi'ism, which tends to be more selective and prioritizes conformity with the principles of Imamah. Therefore, a comparison of these two figures is important not only to trace the roots of their methodological differences, but also to bridge the understanding between the two major traditions in Islam.

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the validity of *ahad* hadith in Islamic law through a comparative analysis between two representative scholars, namely Imam al-Shafi'i and Shaykh al-Tusi. By examining these two perspectives, this study is expected to contribute to inter-*mazhab*

scientific dialogue and enrich the scientific knowledge of hadith in the context of contemporary Islamic law.

Previous scholarship has addressed this topic from various perspectives. First, the study “*Understanding Mutawatir Hadith and Ahad Hadith*” provides a detailed explanation of the concepts, characteristics, and classifications of *mutawatir* and *ahad* hadith (Suhartawan & Hasanah, 2022). Second, “*The Validity of Hadith According to the Four Imams*” examines the authenticity of hadith from the viewpoints of the four Sunni legal imams, including Imam al-Shafi‘i; however, its discussion does not specifically concentrate on *ahad* hadith, but rather on the general criteria of hadith validity (Hamang, 2011). Third, “*Imam Shafi‘i’s Thoughts on al-Hadith and Their Implications for the Methodology of Establishing Islamic Law*” analyzes al-Shafi‘i’s conception of hadith and its methodological implications for Islamic legal theory (Rajab, 2016).

Fourth, “*The Position of Ahad Hadith According to Imam al-Shafi‘i*” focuses explicitly on Imam al-Shafi‘i’s stance regarding the authority of *ahad* hadith (Anwar, Razak, et al., 2003). Fifth, “*The Influence of Nashiruddin al-Tusi’s Thoughts on the Development of Methods for Determining the Direction of the Qibla*” explores al-Tusi’s contributions to astronomy and his integrative approach combining metaphysics, geometry, and natural philosophy; nevertheless, it does not directly address his views on hadith (Jannah & Sulthon, 2023). Sixth, “*Epistemology of Hadith from a Shi‘a Perspective*” discusses Shi‘a epistemology of hadith, emphasizing that authoritative reports are derived not only from the Prophet but also from the Twelve infallible Imams through chains of transmission (Lestari, 2019). Seventh, the Arabic study “*Hujjiyyat Khabar al-Thiqah fi al-Mawḍū‘āt ‘inda ‘Ulamā’ al-Imāmiyyah*” examines criteria of hadith authenticity among Imamiyah scholars, concluding that reports transmitted by trustworthy narrators may be considered authoritative, particularly in legal matters (al-Quraysi, 2019).

Building on this body of literature, the present study seeks to provide a more focused and comparative analysis by examining the validity of *ahad* hadith in comparison between Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi‘i and Shaykh al-Ṭā‘ifah Abu Ja‘far Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tusi. “Unlike previous studies that discuss each figure independently, this research comparatively analyzes the validity of *ahad* hadith from both Sunni and Shi‘a

perspectives, thereby highlighting points of convergence and divergence between al-Shafi'i and al-Tusi.

To address this issue, the study employs a qualitative methodology centered on library research. The primary data is gathered from foundational texts, including Al-Shafi'i's *al-Risalah* and *al-Umm*, as well as Al-Tusi's *al-Istibsar Fima Ikhtilaf min al-Akhbar*. The analysis is conducted using the sociology of knowledge theory to understand how the social and theological contexts of each scholar shaped their methodological conclusions. By documenting and comparing these perspectives, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the validity of *ahad* hadith, ultimately enriching the scientific discourse on hadith within the context of contemporary Islamic law.

## Discussion

### *Ahad Hadith, Classification, and Validity*

In the classification of hadith transmission chains, the terms *ṣaḥīḥ* (sound), *ḥasan* (good), and *ḍa'īf* (weak) pertain to qualitative assessment, while the terms *mutawātir* (massively transmitted), *mashhūr* (well-known), and *āḥād* (solitary) pertain to quantitative assessment (Amin, 2018). A *mutawātir* hadith is narrated by a sufficiently large number of transmitters at every tier of its chain, from the Companions to the compilers, that, according to reason and custom, their collusion in falsehood is inconceivable (Zulkifli, 2015). A *mashhūr* hadith, by contrast, is reported by more than two narrators but does not meet the threshold for *mutawātir* (Zuhri, 2014).

Generally, an *āḥād* hadith is transmitted by a limited number of narrators insufficient to attain *mutawātir* status. This limitation may result from a small number of transmitters, their uneven distribution across tiers, or the absence of multi-sensory reporting (Zuhri, 2014). Another perspective defines *āḥād* as a hadith with an absolute solitary narrator at any point. Scholars concur that *āḥād* hadith vary in authenticity, encompassing both *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḍa'īf* categories (Anam, 2020). The *āḥād* classification is further subdivided into *gharīb* (rare), *'azīz* (scarce), and *mashhūr*.

The term ‘*azīz*’ denotes rarity. Technically, it refers to a hadith with no fewer than two narrators at every level of its chain of transmission (Zulkifli, 2015). An alternate view holds that an ‘*azīz*’ hadith is initially narrated by two transmitters within a single generation (*ṭabaqah*), even if later related by larger numbers (Suryadilaga, 2017). Consequently, an ‘*azīz*’ hadith is defined by at least two narrators per *ṭabaqah*, with the possibility of more in later tiers, without requiring numerical parity across all levels—a condition rarely satisfied in practice (Zuhri, 2014).

A *gharīb* hadith features a solitary narrator at any stage of its chain. It is categorized as either *gharīb muṭlaq* (absolutely rare), where a narrator is isolated at any *ṭabaqah* or solely at the Companion level, or *gharīb nisbī* (relatively rare), where isolation occurs in intermediate tiers despite multiple narrators among the Companions (Zuhri, 2014). Another interpretation defines *gharīb nisbī* by rarity based on specific attributes—such as a narrator’s characteristics, origin, or residence—rather than numerical isolation (Suryadilaga, 2017).

A *mashhūr* hadith is transmitted by two or more narrators without reaching *mutawātir* levels. Its classification is based not on the number of narrators but on the prominence of its text (*matn*). This fame may be recognized among hadith specialists (*muḥaddithūn*) or among scholars in specific disciplines such as jurisprudence, Sufism, or linguistics (Suryadilaga, 2017).

Regarding legal authority, *āḥād* hadith are divided into accepted (*maqbul*) - comprising *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan*- and rejected (*mardūd*), i.e., *ḍa‘īf*. Weak *āḥād* reports are generally inadmissible as evidence unless the weakness is minor and the report is supported by corroborating evidence of similar strength (Zuhri, 2014).

Sunni scholarship accepts *āḥād* hadith as legal proof and, to a degree, in matters of creed, for several reasons. First, the Companions and Successors practiced upon solitary reports with authentic chains and trustworthy (*thiqah*) narrators. Second, in Sunni legal theory, *āḥād* yields strong probability (*ẓann*), which is sufficient for legal derivation in the absence of contradictory certainty. Third, historically, many Prophetic reports were initially conveyed by few individuals; rejecting *āḥād* would thus invalidate a major portion of the Sunnah. Fourth, the sciences of chain and text criticism (*‘ilm al-jarḥ*

wa *al-ta'dīl*) provide objective verification. Fifth, scriptural evidence, such as QS al-Hujurāt [49]:6, permits accepting a report from a single just source (Idri, 2019).

In Imāmī Shī'ī tradition, hadith encompasses the utterances, actions, and approvals of the Prophet as well as the infallible Imams from the *Ahl al-Bayt*. As *ma'ṣūm* (protected from error) authorities, their pronouncements are considered direct transmissions of divine law. Therefore, an *āḥād* report is deemed authentic only if endorsed by an infallible Imam or accepted within the Imāmī scholarly community (Nikmah, 2019). This principle bases hadith validity on authoritative infallibility rather than solely on narrator probity.

Imāmī scholars do not categorically reject *āḥād* hadith but employ stricter criteria than Sunni counterparts. Epistemologically, they distinguish between *mutawātir* reports, which produce certainty (*qat'ī*), and *āḥād* reports, which yield probability (*ẓannī*) (Tangngareng, 2016). Consequently, *āḥād* cannot establish matters of doctrine but may inform practical law under specific conditions: the narrator must be reliable by Shī'ī biographical standards; the report must not contradict the Qur'ān or an Imam's teaching; and it must have been accepted by preceding Imāmī jurists.

Al-'Allāmah al-Hillī in *Ma'ārij al-Uṣūl* states that *āḥād* hadith from just and reliable narrators constitute legal evidence, while al-Ṭūsī in *al-'Uddah fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* emphasizes the reinforcement of communal acceptance. Thus, the Imāmī school recognizes *āḥād* hadith within the domain of practical jurisprudence, contingent upon chain integrity and Imāmī authority, but denies it probative force in theology, where certain knowledge is required (al-Ṭūsī, 1417 H).

## *Many Perspectives on Ahad Hadith*

### *1. Muhammad Ibn Idris al-Shafi'i Biography and His View on Ahad Hadith*

Imam al-Shafi'i (Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi'i) was born in Gaza in 150 AH. A descendant of the Prophet's lineage through 'Abdi Manaf, he passed away in 204 AH at the age of 54 (al-Baihaqi, n.d.). He was married to Hamdah bint Nafi', a descendant of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, with whom he had two sons, Abu 'Uthman Muhammad and Abu al-

Hasan Muhammad. From another marriage, he had two daughters, Fatimah and Zainab (al-Baihaqi, n.d.).

At the age of two, al-Shafi‘i moved to Mecca, where he immersed himself in learning from an early age. He reportedly held that true enjoyment in life lay in “knowledge and archery,” the latter of which he mastered alongside his scholarly pursuits. Described as tall, dignified, and eloquent, he was known for his upright character and gentle treatment of others (al-Baihaqi, n.d.).

His intellectual gifts were evident early: he had memorized the Qur’an by age seven and, according to some sources, Imam Malik’s *Muwatta’* by age ten. His growing reputation attracted students from across the Muslim world, including Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who studied under him both in Baghdad and Egypt (al-Razi, 2017).

Al-Shafi‘i studied with nineteen prominent scholars across several regions: five in Mecca (including Sufyan ibn ‘Uyaynah and Muslim ibn Khalid al-Zanji), six in Medina (among them Malik ibn Anas), four in Yemen, and four in Iraq (including Waki‘ ibn al-Jarrah). Notably, he studied ḥadīth with the Mu‘tazilī scholar Ibrahim ibn Abi Yahya al-Aslami, though this did not influence his own creed, as he engaged only with the transmission of reports, not theological doctrine (al-Razi, 2017).

His students became leading scholars in their own right. In Iraq, they included Ahmad ibn Hanbal, al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Sha‘bah, and al-Za‘farani. In Egypt, his circle included al-Muzanni, al-Rabi‘ ibn Sulaiman, Harmalah ibn Yahya, and Yunus ibn ‘Abd al-A‘la, among others (al-Razi, 2017).

Al-Shafi‘i began his studies in ḥadīth under Sufyan ibn ‘Uyaynah in Mecca and pursued fiqh under the Meccan mufti Muslim ibn Khalid al-Zanji. He later travelled to Medina to further his education. Recognized for his mastery of Prophetic tradition and legal reasoning, he earned the epithet *Nāṣir al-Sunnah* (“Defender of the Sunnah”), a title reportedly conferred by scholars in Iraq and Khurasan in acknowledgement of his rigorous defence of ḥadīth through decisive evidence (al-Razi, 2017). Imam Nawawi later affirmed that this title reflected al-Shafi‘i’s profound command of ḥadīth and related sciences, a view echoed by numerous traditionists of his time.

Imam al-Shafi'i (d. 204/820) established foundational principles governing the use of *āḥād* (solitary) ḥadīth as legal proof. While concurring with general standards of authenticity, requiring an unbroken chain (*ittisāl al-sanad*), upright and precise narrators (*'adl wa ḍabt*), and the absence of anomalies (*shudhūdh*) or hidden defects (*'illah*), he articulated specific conditions under which an *āḥād* report could be accepted.

For al-Shafi'i, an *āḥād* ḥadīth is one transmitted by one or several narrators without reaching the level of *mutawātir*. An example he cites is the well-known report:

حدثنا عبد الله بن محمد الجعفي قال: حدثنا أبو عامر العقدي قال: حدثنا سليمان بن بلال قال: حدثني عبد الله بن دينار عن أبي صالح، عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه عن النبي قال: الإيمان بضع وستون شعبة، والحياء شعبة من الإيمان.

*He narrated to us: 'Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Ju'fi, he said: He narrated to us: Abu 'Amir al-'Aqadi, he said: He narrated to us: Sulaiman ibn Bilal, he said: 'Abdullah ibn Dinar narrated to me, from Abu Ṣaliḥ, from Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, from the Prophet, peace be upon him, who said: "Faith consists of more than sixty branches, and modesty is one of the branches of faith."*

Al-Shafi'i's conditions for accepting an *āḥād* ḥadīth are as follows:

1. The narrator must be trustworthy (*thiqah*) and all transmitters in the chain must meet this standard from beginning to end.
2. The narrator must comprehend what he narrates and understands the meaning of the ḥadīth, particularly if transmitted narratively (*bi'l-ma'nā*).
3. The narrator must have accurately memorized the ḥadīth, whether transmitted orally or in written form.
4. The narration must not contradict a report conveyed by a more reliable authority; contradiction suggests a weakness in the narrator's retention or accuracy.
5. The narrator must not be a *mudallis*, one who obscures his sources by omitting an intermediary or attributing a report to a direct teacher from whom he did not directly hear it.

Unlike some contemporary scholars, al-Shafi'i did not require that a ḥadīth be widely known (*mashhūr*), conform to the practice of the people of Medina, or align

with *qiyās* (analogical reasoning). For him, a continuous and sound chain of transmission was sufficient (Suhartawan & Hasanah, 2022).

Al-Shafi‘i’s systematic methodology, particularly articulated in *al-Risālah*, profoundly shaped Sunni jurisprudence by consolidating *āḥād* ḥadīth as a valid source of law, provided rigorous conditions of authenticity were met (Sholahuddin Zamzabela, 2019). In his view, *āḥād* reports that meet these criteria may be used in matters of worship (*‘ibādāt*) and transactions (*mu‘āmalāt*), though they are not admissible in matters of core creed (*‘aqīdah*), which require evidence yielding certainty.

This stance contrasts with that of Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767), who imposed additional conditions for accepting an *āḥād* ḥadīth: it must not contradict the apparent meaning of the Qur’an, a more widely transmitted (*mashhūr*) ḥadīth on the same issue, *qiyās*, or general legal principles, especially if the narrator was not a recognized jurist. It also must not pertain to matters of public concern known to have been addressed by the Companions, nor contradict their reported actions or legal opinions (Zuhri, 2014).

## 2. *Abu Ja‘far Muhammad bin al-Hasan bin Ali bin al Hasan al-Tusi Biography and His View on Hadith*

Within the tradition of Islamic scholarship, certain figures have played a foundational role in shaping the trajectory of Islamic thought across multiple disciplines, particularly in the field of ḥadīth studies. One such eminent scholar of the fourth Islamic century was the Shi‘i authority Shaykh al-Ṭā‘ifah Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī. Born in Khurasan during the month of Ramaḍān in 385 AH, al-Ṭūsī emerged from an intellectually vibrant environment that nurtured his scholarly development from an early age (al-Ṭūsī, 1407). Under the guidance of prominent scholars, he demonstrated exceptional intellectual capacity and perseverance in mastering various branches of Islamic knowledge. His active engagement within the scholarly milieu of his time reflects his significant contribution to the advancement of Islamic thought, particularly in *tafsīr*, *fiqh*, *kalām*, and ḥadīth. Moreover, al-Ṭūsī was widely recognized for his commitment to religious instruction, pedagogy, and authorship, leaving a lasting scholarly legacy (al-Ṭūsī, 1407).

Al-Ṭūsī pursued knowledge through extensive scholarly travels, studying a wide range of religious disciplines. His initial education was conducted under the supervision of his father, Wajīh al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, a respected Imāmī Shi‘ī scholar who provided him with a strong foundation in Sharī‘a, particularly through engagement with the works of al-Murtaḍā. In addition to his father, al-Ṭūsī studied under several scholars within his family network, including his paternal uncle Nāṣir al-Dīn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ḥamzah al-Ṭūsī and his maternal uncle Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Shī‘ī, both of whom were influential figures in the Imāmī scholarly tradition and played a significant role in shaping his intellectual orientation (al-Ṭūsī, 1380).

Although the al-Ṭūsī family adhered firmly to Imāmī Shi‘ī doctrine, his father encouraged intellectual openness by urging him to engage with diverse schools of thought and to examine the perspectives of scholars from different madhāhib and sectarian backgrounds. This inclusive intellectual stance is often attributed to the influence of Tāj al-Dīn al-Shahrastānī, the teacher of al-Ṭūsī’s uncle, who was known for his nuanced and, at times, esoteric intellectual inclinations (al-Ṭūsī, 1380). Such openness significantly contributed to al-Ṭūsī’s analytical and critical approach, enabling him to transcend rigid doctrinal boundaries while engaging constructively with a wide spectrum of scholarly traditions.

In his pursuit of advanced knowledge, al-Ṭūsī studied at various madrasahs, with a particular focus on ḥadīth and *uṣūl al-fiqh*. The culmination of his intellectual journey occurred when he settled in Baghdad, then the epicenter of Islamic scholarship. There, he studied under leading authorities in ḥadīth and *fiqh*, immersing himself in the study of major ḥadīth collections and refining his critical methodology in *sanad* and *matn* analysis. This formative period played a decisive role in shaping his scholarly approach to ḥadīth criticism.

In 411 AH, al-Ṭūsī received formal authorization (*ijāzah*) to transmit ḥadīth from renowned scholars, including ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Jīd al-Qummī and other prominent *muḥaddithūn*. His expertise in *sanad* and *matn* criticism eventually positioned him as a leading instructor for subsequent generations of scholars in the field of ḥadīth. Known for his piety, intellectual rigor, and moral integrity, al-Ṭūsī earned widespread trust as a religious authority (al-Ṭūsī, 1407). During the leadership of Shaykh

al-Murtaḍā (d. 436 AH), al-Ṭūsī maintained a close scholarly relationship with him and benefited directly from his mentorship. Following al-Murtaḍā's death, al-Ṭūsī assumed the position of supreme marja' iyyah within the Imāmī Shi'ī tradition, a role that affirmed his established scholarly authority.

Despite his eminent status, al-Ṭūsī faced opposition and criticism from certain circles, challenges that persisted into the era of Shaykh Ibn Idrīs. Although Ibn Idrīs expressed critical disagreements with some of al-Ṭūsī's views, he nonetheless upheld al-Ṭūsī's scholarly standing, exemplifying the dynamic and critical nature of Islamic intellectual discourse. Notwithstanding such debates, the majority of scholars continued to recognize al-Ṭūsī's authority, as reflected in later assessments by figures such as al-Ḥillī, who referred to him as Shaykh al-Imāmiyyah, acknowledging his leadership in ḥadīth, *fiqh*, and *uṣūl*. Other scholars likewise emphasized his pivotal role in the formulation and development of Islamic methodological thought, particularly in theology and jurisprudence.

Al-Ṭūsī's scholarly influence was further reinforced by his extensive network of teachers and students. His intellectual pursuits encompassed not only *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, *kalām*, and *uṣūl al-fiqh*, but also ḥadīth studies, through which he acquired authoritative sanad chains from leading muḥaddithūn, as documented in *Mustadrakah 'alā al-Wasā'il*, vol. 3. Among his most notable teachers in ḥadīth were Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413 AH), Shaykh Ḥusayn ibn 'Ubayd Allāh al-Ghaḍā'irī (d. 411 AH), Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Bazzāzī (Ibn 'Abdūn, d. 423 AH), and Ibn Abī Jīd al-Qummī (d. 408 AH), among others (al-Ṭabrisī, n.d.). Likewise, al-Ṭūsī mentored numerous prominent scholars and jurists. Notable among his students were Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan ibn al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, Ismā'īl ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Qummī, Ishāq ibn Muḥammad al-Qummī, and Ādam ibn Yūnus al-Nisfī, as recorded by al-Mīrzā Muḥammad Bāqir al-Khwānsārī in *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt fī Aḥwāl al-'Ulamā' wa al-Sādāt*, vol. 6 (al-Khwānsārī, n.d.).

In Shi'ite epistemology, hadith is defined as the recorded speech, actions, or tacit approvals of the Prophet Muhammad and the twelve infallible Imams (*al-A'immaḥ al-Ma'ṣumīn*). This definition establishes hadith as the secondary source of Sharia, following the Qur'an (Lestari, 2019). Central to this tradition is the belief in the *infallibility* (*ma'ṣūm*) of the Twelve Imams, from Ali bin Abi Talib to Muhammad al-Mahdi, who are

regarded as the spiritual and legal successors to the Prophet. This doctrinal stance is primarily anchored in the *Hadith al-Thaqalayn*, a *mutawatir* (consecutive) narration in which the Prophet commands the faithful to hold fast to the "two weighty burdens": the Book of Allah and his *Ahl al-Bayt* (al-Naisaburi, 1990). For Shi'ite scholars, this narration serves as the ontological basis for the necessity of an Imam in every generation to preserve the purity of divine law.

The authoritative corpus of Shi'ite hadith is centered on the *al-Kutub al-Arba'ah* (The Four Books), which serve as the fundamental reference for jurisprudence and theology. These include *Al-Kafi* by al-Kulayni (d. 940 AD), *Man La Yahduruhu al-Faqih* by Shaykh al-Ṣaduq (d. 991 AD), and the two monumental works by Shaykh al-Tusi (d. 1068 AD): *Tahdhib al-Aḥkam* and *Al-Istibṣar*. Al-Tusi's contributions are particularly significant for their systematization of Islamic law through a comparative and analytical lens (al-Thabrasi, n.d.).

Shaykh al-Tusi introduced a sophisticated taxonomical framework for hadith, bifurcating reports into *mutawatir* and *ghairu mutawatir* (ahad). While *mutawatir* hadith yield certain knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-yaqini*), al-Tusi posits that *ahad* hadith, despite being conjectural, remain valid as a basis for legal practice (*al-ʿamal*). He further refined the *ahad* category into a four-fold classification (al-Tusi, 1380):

1. *Sahih* (Authentic): Narrations characterized by an uninterrupted chain (*isnad*) of fair (*ʿadl*) and trustworthy (*tsiqah*) Imami narrators, culminating in an infallible Imam.
2. *Hasan* (Good): Reports with an unbroken chain to an Imam where the narrators are generally praised (*mamduḥ*), though specific evidence of their absolute fairness is absent.
3. *Muwaththaq* (Reliable): Hadiths narrated by reliable individuals who do not belong to the Imami school, yet are specifically declared trustworthy by Imami authorities.
4. *Da'if* (Weak): Reports failing to meet the aforementioned criteria due to flaws in the transmission chain or the text (*matn*) itself (Azkar, 2016).

A defining feature of al-Tusi's methodology is the synthesis of narrational authority and rationalism. He asserts that reports attributed to the Infallible Imams, particularly Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, carry an authority equivalent to Prophetic hadith, as the Imams are viewed as the legitimate heirs of prophetic knowledge (al-Tusi, 1417). For example, in *Tahdhib al-Aḥkam*, al-Tusi cites narrations from Imam al-Sadiq (often referred to as Abu Abdillah) to establish domestic legal boundaries, such as the financial agency of women within the household (al-Tusi, 1385).

Furthermore, al-Tusi adopted an analytical approach that transcended mere *isnad* criticism. He advocated for a rational filter; if a hadith contradicts common sense (*'aql*) or the definitive (*qath'i*) principles of the Sharia, it must be rejected or reinterpreted. This structured and critical methodology succeeded in establishing a rigorous standard for hadith validity, ensuring that the Shi'ite tradition remained both doctrinally distinct and intellectually coherent. Al-Tusi's frameworks continue to serve as the primary reference for contemporary Shi'ite hadith studies and legal derivation.

Shaykh al-Tusi is distinguished in Islamic intellectual history for his profound ability to integrate hadith scholarship with the principles of *usul al-fiqh* (legal theory). He emphasized that the interpretation of hadith must be informed by the *maqasid al-sharia* (higher objectives of Sharia), ensuring that legal derivations are not merely textualist but contextually grounded. By bridging the gap between narration and legal philosophy, al-Tusi contributed to a more systematic and adaptive methodology for *istinbat* (legal deduction), allowing Islamic law to respond dynamically to social change and evolving human needs.

The scholarly authority of Shaykh al-Tusi transcends sectarian boundaries; while he remains a cornerstone of Shi'ite thought, his intellectual rigor has consistently attracted the attention of Sunnite scholars. He is widely regarded as a master of both *riwayah* (the science of transmission) and *dirayah* (the science of critical understanding). This dual expertise established him as the preeminent authority on hadith within his school of thought, as he moved beyond the rote collection of accounts toward a rationalist founder-approach to hadith criticism. By linking *hadith* understanding with the foundational principles of *usul*, he pioneered a comprehensive scientific methodology that remains a point of reference for researchers of Islamic history and law today.

Al-Tusi's enduring legacy is primarily immortalized in two of the four foundational pillars of Shi'ite hadith literature: *Tahdhib al-Ahkam* and *Al-Istibsar*. The former, *Tahdhib al-Ahkam*, serves as an expansive manual of Islamic law derived from hadith, while the latter, *Al-Istibsar*, is a specialized work dedicated to resolving seemingly contradictory narrations (*mukhtalif al-hadith*). Through these works, al-Tusi provided a method for harmonizing divergent reports, thereby strengthening the scientific and theological foundations of the Imamiyah tradition and providing a structured framework for legal analysis that continues to influence the development of contemporary Islamic jurisprudence.

Table 1: Comparison of Hadith Paradigms between Sunnite and Shi'ite Traditions

Feature	Sunnite Paradigm (Imam al-Shafi'i)	Shi'ite Paradigm (Shaykh al-Tusi)
Definition of Sunnah	Words, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad.	Words, actions, and approvals of the Prophet and the 12 Infallible Imams.
Primary Categories	3 Categories: <i>Sahih</i> , <i>Hasan</i> , <i>Da'if</i> .	4 Categories: <i>Sahih</i> , <i>Hasan</i> , <i>Muwaththaq</i> , <i>Da'if</i> .
Validation Criteria	Focus on <i>Thiqah</i> (trustworthiness) and <i>'Adl</i> (fairness) regardless of school.	Focus on <i>'Ismah</i> (infallibility of the source) and <i>Imami</i> affiliation of narrators.
Role of Reason ('Aql)	Used in <i>Matn</i> (text) analysis to ensure it doesn't contradict the Qur'an.	Central role; used as an epistemological filter to reject narrations that defy logic.
Status of Ahad Hadith	Accepted as <i>Hujjah</i> (proof) for both Law and certain aspects of Creed.	Accepted as <i>Hujjah</i> for Practical Law ( <i>Amaliyah</i> ), but rejected for Theology ( <i>Aqidah</i> ).
Key Source Texts	<i>Kutub al-Sittah</i> (e.g., <i>Sahih Bukhari</i> , <i>Sahih Muslim</i> ).	<i>Al-Kutub al-Arba'ah</i> (e.g., <i>Al-Kafi</i> , <i>Tahdhib al-Ahkam</i> ).

*Similarities and Differences in the Validity of Ahad Hadith According to Imam Al-Shafi'i and Shaykh al-Tusi*

The classification of hadith validity above is very different from that of Sunnite Islam, but there are also differences within Shi'ism, one of whose leading figures is Sayyid Muhyi al-Din al-Tusi. The comparison between the arguments put forward by these two scholars is presented in the table below:

Table 2: Comparison of *Ahad* Hadith Validity between al-Safi'I and al-Tusi

N1	Imam al-Shafi'i	Shaykh al-Tusi
1	Al-Shafi'i permits <i>Ahad</i> hadith to be used as evidence as long as the quality of the hadith meets all the requirements of a <i>sahih</i> hadith.	Al-Thusi divides <i>Ahad</i> hadith into four categories: <i>Sahih</i> , <i>Hasan</i> , <i>Muwaththaq</i> , and <i>Dhaif</i> .
22	In matters of fundamental religion and law, as long as they have undergone very strict selection and are all <i>sahih</i> and <i>marfu'</i> , they can be applied in practice in matters of worship and <i>muamalah</i> , but not in matters of faith.	Hadith authority originating from Imam Maksum, in the Shi'a <i>mazhab</i> of thought, hadith narrated by the Imams Maksum is considered to have high authority, even almost equivalent to the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad.
3 3	Al-Shafi'i established several conditions regarding the acceptance of <i>ahad</i> hadith, namely that the narrator in <i>ahad</i> hadith must be <i>thiqah</i> (trustworthy), the narrator must truly understand the meaning of the hadith, the narrator must be	If a hadith contradicts the principles of common sense or <i>qath'i</i> (definite) Islamic law, then the hadith must be rejected or interpreted in a way that is more logical.

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dhabit (reliable), the *matn* (text) of the hadith narrated must not contradict other narrators who are more *thiqah*, and the narrator must not be a *mudallis* (one who distorts the meaning of the hadith).

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The comparative analysis of Imam al-Shafi'i's and Shaykh al-Tusi's frameworks demonstrates their profound and lasting influence on the development of Islamic law in contemporary Sunni and Shi'i contexts. Within the Sunni tradition, al-Shafi'i's validation of *āḥād* hadith—contingent upon rigorous *sanad* and *matn* criteria—established a flexible, text-based mechanism for legal derivation. This principle has empowered modern *mujtahidīn* and fatwa councils to utilize solitary reports as a basis for legislation in novel domains such as Islamic finance, bioethics, and family law, thereby ensuring the dynamism and adaptability of Sunni jurisprudence while remaining anchored in textual sources and aligned with the higher objectives of the Shari'ah (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*).

Conversely, in the Shi'i tradition, Shaykh al-Tusi's more circumspect approach imposes stricter conditions for the acceptance of *āḥād* reports, requiring that they originate from or be validated by an infallible Imam (*ma'ṣūm*) and withstand rational scrutiny (*'aql*). This methodology prioritizes doctrinal consistency and hierarchical authority, grounding legal validity not only in transmission integrity but also in the epistemic and spiritual authority of the Imams. Consequently, contemporary Shi'i *ijtihād* tends to be more cautious, systematic, and rationally oriented, resulting in a stable and coherent body of law that is, however, comparatively less open to rapid legal reform than its Sunni counterpart.

### *The Social Construction of Hadith Authority: A Sociological Analysis of al-Shafi'i's and al-Tusi's Frameworks*

From the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, the methodological frameworks developed by Imam al-Shafi'i and Shaykh al-Tusi regarding the validity of

*ahad* hadith represent more than just abstract epistemological systems; they are intellectual constructions deeply embedded in their socio-historical contexts, collective needs, and the dynamics of power within which they operated. Al-Shafi'i's thought emerged during the formative period of the Abbasid Caliphate, when the Muslim community faced fragmentation of religious authority due to methodological differences between regional schools of hadith and rationalist thought. His strict criteria, emphasizing an unbroken chain of transmission (*sanad*), the moral integrity of narrators (*'adl*), and precision in memorization (*dabt*), functioned as a unifying mechanism that transcended localized practices (such as the *'amal ahl al-Madinah*) and established a universal basis of knowledge acceptable across the Islamic polity. By instituting a structured and replicable standard of verification, al-Shafi'i not only constructed a hadith epistemology but also solidified the foundation for a cohesive Sunni identity within an increasingly centralized state structure.

Conversely, al-Tusi's classification system evolved within the context of the Twelver Shi'a community, which existed as a political and theological minority, especially following the Occultation (*Ghaybah*) of the Twelfth Imam. His four-tiered typology, *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan*, *muwaththaq*, and *ḍa'īf*, which required Imami affiliation for narrators to attain the highest grade (*ṣaḥīḥ*), reflects a sociological strategy of maintaining communal boundaries. This requirement acted as a filtering mechanism that protected doctrinal authority from external narrative influences while reinforcing the legitimacy of religious leadership derived from the infallible Imams. At the same time, the creation of the *muwaththaq* category, which accepts narrations from non-Imami transmitters deemed personally trustworthy (*thiqah*), demonstrates a pragmatic flexibility in accommodating external knowledge without compromising doctrinal purity. His synthesis of chain criticism (*sanad*) and rational filtering (*'aql*) further reflects an effort to assert the intellectual standing of Shi'ism within an Islamic civilization increasingly shaped by philosophical and rational theological discourse.

Furthermore, both systems underwent a process of institutionalization that transformed them from personal ideas into socially objective realities, internalized by their respective communities. Through canonical works such as *al-Risālah* for al-Shafi'i and *al-Kutub al-Arba'ah* (including *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām* and *al-Istibṣār*) for al-Tusi, their methodological frameworks were reified into normative standards governing not only

how scholars evaluate hadith, but also how communities perceive religious authority. In the Sunni tradition, al-Shafi‘ī’s method encouraged the centralization of authority around expertise in transmission sciences that could be universally studied and verified, thereby shaping a scholarly habitus oriented toward procedural consensus. In the Shi‘a tradition, al-Tusi’s system reinforced a hierarchical authority structure centered on the continuous transmission of knowledge from the Imams, while establishing a highly selective and cautious mechanism for *ijtihad*.

Thus, the fundamental differences between the two paradigms can be understood as reflections of distinct social functions: al-Shafi‘ī’s framework served an integrative and unifying purpose within a majority society constructing a universal legal system, whereas al-Tusi’s system served a defensive and demarcative role aimed at preserving identity, doctrinal coherence, and religious authority within a minority community. Both represent sociologically astute responses to the challenges of knowledge authority in their respective eras, and the enduring influence of their frameworks to this day attests to their success in constructing religious realities that are not only theoretically coherent, but also socially meaningful and enduring.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this comparative analysis reveals that the divergent frameworks for validating *āḥād* (solitary) hadith established by Imam al-Shafi‘ī and Shaykh al-Ṭūsī are not merely technical or jurisprudential in nature, but are fundamentally shaped by distinct theological doctrines, social contexts, and communal needs. Al-Shafi‘ī’s rigorously structured yet relatively inclusive methodology, which emphasizes the moral integrity and reliability of narrators irrespective of their school affiliation, served to unify the Sunni community under a universal, text-centered legal system during a period of political centralization and intellectual fragmentation. In contrast, al-Ṭūsī’s more restrictive and theologically bound system, which ties the highest grade of authenticity (*ṣaḥīḥ*) to Imāmī Shi‘ī transmitters and grants rational inquiry (*‘aql*) a co-equal role alongside transmission, functioned as a mechanism for boundary maintenance, doctrinal preservation, and intellectual legitimization for a minority community in the post-Occultation era. Both systems successfully institutionalized their criteria through canonical works, thereby constructing enduring religious realities that continue to define

legal reasoning, authority, and identity within their respective traditions to this day. Ultimately, their methodologies underscore how the validation of religious knowledge is inextricably linked to the sociological imperatives of community formation, cohesion, and survival.

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