

Between *Syarah* and *Ta'liq*: A Critical Study of The Methodology and Concistency of al-Suyuthi *al-Zahr al-Raba' 'Ala al-Mujtaba* Karya al-Suyuthi

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Abstract

Differences in how hadith scholars evaluate the quality of narrations indicate that the processes of tashih and ta'd'if are closely related to each muhaddith's critical framework. Al-Hakim al-Naysaburi (321–405 AH), through al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn, is often characterized as tasahul (lenient). However, this characterization requires examination of the relationship between his theoretical criteria and their practical application. This study analyzes al-Hakim's methodologies of hadith authentication and weakening and examines the consistency of their application in al-Mustadrak. A qualitative approach was employed through content analysis of al-Mustadrak, with Ma'rifat 'Ulum al-Hadith serving as the primary framework for identifying al-Hakim's theoretical criteria. The findings indicate that al-Hakim formulated four criteria for hadith authenticity, but only two were consistently reflected in his explicit evaluations, while hundreds of narrations were left without clear assessment. Quantitative evidence from al-Zahabi and Ibn al-Jawzi further indicates the presence of a substantial number of da'if, munkar, and even maudu' narrations. The study concludes that al-Hakim's leniency is better understood as a structural gap between his formulated criteria and their practical application, compounded by the unfinished compilation of al-Mustadrak at the time of his death.

Keywords: Manhaj Tashih, Tad'if, al-Hakim al-Naisaburi, al-Mustadrak, Hadith Criticism

Abstrak

Perbedaan penilaian ulama hadis terhadap kualitas suatu riwayat menunjukkan bahwa proses tashih dan ta'd'if tidak dapat dilepaskan dari perangkat kritik masing-masing muhaddis. Al-Hakim al-Naysaburi (321–405 H), melalui al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn, kerap dinilai bersikap tasahul (longgar), namun label ini belum cukup dijelaskan tanpa menelusuri koherensi antara kriteria teoretisnya dan penerapannya secara praktis. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis manhaj tashih dan ta'd'if al-Hakim serta menguji konsistensi penerapannya dalam al-Mustadrak. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode analisis isi terhadap al-Mustadrak sebagai sumber primer, dibaca bersama Ma'rifat 'Ulum al-Hadith sebagai kerangka kriteria al-Hakim. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa al-Hakim merumuskan empat syarat kesahihan hadis secara teoretis, tetapi hanya dua di antaranya termanifestasi konsisten dalam lafaz penilaiannya, sementara ratusan hadis dalam al-Mustadrak tidak diberi penilaian eksplisit. Data kuantitatif al-Zahabi dan Ibn al-Jawzi turut memperlihatkan proporsi hadis da'if, munkar, bahkan maudu' yang signifikan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa tasahul al-Hakim bukan cerminan kecenderungan teologis (tasyayyu') maupun kegagalan metodologis yang disengaja, melainkan konsekuensi dari kesenjangan struktural antara sistem kriteria yang dirumuskan dan proses penyusunan al-Mustadrak yang belum tuntas sebelum ia wafat.

Kata Kunci: Manhaj Tashih, Tad'if, al-Hakim al-Naisaburi, al-Mustadrak, Kritik Hadis

Introduction

The development of hadith and related disciplines is a dynamic intellectual process that has unfolded throughout the history of Islamic scholarship. This dynamism is evident not only in the processes of transmission, compilation, and codification of hadith but also in the evolution of scholars' methods for organizing, classifying, explaining, and interpreting the Prophet's hadith. The process of hadith compilation unfolded gradually through the contributions of scholars across different periods, each characterized by distinct selection criteria, organizational systems, and varying numbers of hadith. This diversity subsequently gave rise to various forms of hadith works that became an important part of the formation of the scholarly tradition of hadith.¹

The third and fourth centuries of the Hijri calendar are often regarded as crucial periods in the development of hadith codification, as this era saw the emergence of a number of hadith works that would later occupy a central position in the hadith corpus. Among these works are the books that came to be known as *al-Kutub al-Sittah* and various other hadith collections.² One work that holds a significant position in this tradition is *Sunan al-Nasa'i* by Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad ibn Shu'ayb al-Nasā'ī (d. 303 H). This work is not only one of the key sources in hadith studies but has also been the subject of scholarly analysis and commentary by scholars in subsequent periods.³

The development of the hadith tradition in subsequent periods did not stop at the production of hadith compilations. As codified hadith works became scholarly references, a need arose to explain their meaning, linguistic structure, context, content, and the various issues they contained. This need gave rise to the traditions of *syarḥ*, *ta'liq*, and *ḥāsyiyah*. These three types of works are closely related, but they do not always follow the same methodological approach. *Syarḥ* is generally aimed at providing a broader explanation of the text, whereas *ta'liq* and *ḥāsyiyah* may take the form of more

¹ Abdul-Jabbar, G. (2020). Collections. In D. W. Brown (Ed.), *The Wiley Blackwell concise companion to the hadith*. Wiley-Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118638477.ch7>

² Purba, A. (2022). Sejarah kodifikasi sunnah: Telaah historis abad III dan IV H. *Universum: Jurnal Keislaman dan Kebudayaan*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.30762/universum.v16i1.1>

³ Rahayu, S. U., & Julaiha, J. (2023). *Sunan an-Nasā'ī: Karya monumental di bidang ilmu hadis*. *As-Syifa: Journal of Islamic Studies and History*. <https://doi.org/10.35132/assyifa.v4i1.1166>

selective and concise commentaries.⁴ Therefore, a study of works that explain hadith is not sufficient if it merely identifies the work as a *syarah*; it must also examine how the author constructs a pattern of commentary on the hadith text that is the subject of the work.

In the context of Sunan al-Nasa'i, the tradition of commentary exhibits an interesting development. Although this book is one of the major hadith works, the attention paid to its commentaries is not as intense as that given to *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.⁵ This situation subsequently gave rise to a number of works offering commentary on Sunan al-Nasa'i, including Hāsyiah al-Sindī and the work by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī known as *Zahr al-Rabī' 'alā al-Mujtabā*.⁶ It is this latter work that, in the tradition of publication and usage, later became popularly known as *Sunan al-Nasa'i bi Sharh al-Suyūṭī*. In previous research that forms the basis of this study, al-Suyūṭī himself tended to refer to his work as a *ta'liq* rather than a *syarḥ*, while the form of his commentary is indeed relatively brief and does not provide the same level of detail for all hadiths.

This issue is important because the term used to describe a work is related to how we understand the nature and methodology of that work. If al-Suyūṭī's work is referred to as a *syarḥ*, then it is necessary to explain to what extent its explanatory approach meets the characteristics of a hadith commentary. Conversely, if the work is understood as a *ta'liq*, it is necessary to explain what characteristics distinguish it from more comprehensive hadith commentaries. Thus, the issue is not merely about the work's classification but concerns how al-Suyūṭī constructs his explanatory strategy for *Sunan al-Nasa'i*, which parts of the hadiths he focuses on, what sources he uses, and whether this approach is applied consistently.

In general, the works of commentary on *Sunan al-Nasa'i* have indeed received far less attention than those on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.

⁴ Anshori, M. (2019). Ilmu *Sharḥ al-Ḥadīth*: Istilah dan konsep. *Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies*, 8(2), 166–186. <https://doi.org/10.15408/quhas.v8i2.13390>

⁵ Dzulraidi and Jalil, "Kitab-Kitab Syarah Sunan Al-Nasa'i: Satu Tinjauan Metodologi Berdasarkan Teori Ilmu Syarḥ Al-Hadith: Commentaries on Sunan Al-Nasa'i: A Methodological Review Based on the Theory of Syarḥ Al-Hadith."

⁶ HM. Suparta, "Metode Pensyarah Sunan An-Nasa'i Perbandingan Antara Imam Al-Suyuti Dan Al-Sindi," *Millah* 13, no. 2 (2014): 341–58; Dzulraidi and Jalil, "Kitab-Kitab Syarah Sunan Al-Nasa'i: Satu Tinjauan Metodologi Berdasarkan Teori Ilmu Syarḥ Al-Hadith: Commentaries on Sunan Al-Nasa'i: A Methodological Review Based on the Theory of Syarḥ Al-Hadith"; Asih Pertiwi, "Syarah Al-Mujtaba: Melacak Intertekstualitas Syarah Al-Sindi Terhadap Al-Suyuti," *Mashdar: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 1, no. 1 (June 17, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.15548/MASHDAR.V1I1.208>.

Several previous studies have indeed examined the commentaries on *Sunan al-Nasa'i* in a comparative manner. Suparta compared the commentary methods of Imam al-Suyuti and al-Sindi, finding that both employed the same tahlili ijmalī method but differed in the frequency of citing earlier scholars' opinions and their preferences regarding fiqh schools.⁷ Dzulraidi and Abdul Jalil expanded this comparison by including Dakhirah al-'Uqba as a third commentary and emphasized that methodological studies of commentaries on *Sunan al-Nasa'i* have not yet received sufficient attention within the discipline of syarh al-hadith.⁸ Nevertheless, both studies place their primary focus on inter-textual comparisons, so the internal characteristics of al-Suyuti's ta'liq including the consistency of his commentary patterns throughout the book have not been treated as a primary issue in their own right.

This discrepancy becomes even more apparent when al-Suyūṭī's work is read literally. In several sections, al-Suyūṭī provides explanations regarding the identity of the narrators, the vowel marks and meanings of terms, linguistic and rhetorical aspects, differences in the wording of narrations, and reconciles hadiths that appear to contradict one another on the surface. However, this form of commentary is not always applied uniformly across all hadiths; in certain sections, commentary is provided relatively extensively, while in other sections there are hadiths and even specific chapters and subchapters that receive no commentary at all, with no clear criteria distinguishing between hadiths that are commented on and those that are not. This pattern raises methodological questions that cannot be fully addressed merely by describing al-Suyūṭī's work as a linguistic or general commentary a more systematic reading is needed to map out the extent to which this pattern is consistently applied throughout the book.

Given these considerations, this study is not intended to repeat a general description of al-Suyūṭī's biography or merely to catalog the sources he used. This study aims to reconstruct the methodological character of *Zahr al-Rabī' 'alā al-Mujtabā* by focusing on three main issues: first, the form and character of al-Suyūṭī's ta'liq in explaining the hadiths of *Sunan al-Nasa'i*; second, what patterns, sources, and forms of explanation al-Suyūṭī employed in commenting on the hadiths; and third, to what extent these patterns were consistently

⁷ HM. Suparta, "METODE PENSYARAHAN SUNAN AN-NASA'I PERBANDINGAN ANTARA IMAM AL-SUYUTI DAN AL-SINDI," *Millah* 13, no. 2 (2014): 341–58.

⁸Dzulraidi and Jalil, "Kitab-Kitab Syarah Sunan Al-Nasa'i: Satu Tinjauan Metodologi Berdasarkan Teori Ilmu Syarh Al-Hadith: Commentaries on Sunan Al-Nasa'i: A Methodological Review Based on the Theory of Syarh Al-Hadith."

applied and what implications this has for the work's position within the tradition of *syarḥ al-ḥadīth*.

Thus, this study aims to critically analyze the nature of al-Suyūṭī's *ta'liq* on *Sunan al-Nasa'i*, identify the patterns and sources that shape his method of explanation, and evaluate its methodological consistency. This study is expected to contribute to the field of *syarḥ al-ḥadīth* by demonstrating that hadith commentaries should not only be read based on the labels *syarah* or *hasyiyah*, but also based on the textual practices the author employs in engaging with the hadith. In this context, *Zahr al-Rabī' 'alā al-Mujtabā* can be understood not only as one of the commentaries on *Sunan al-Nasa'i*, but also as an example of a type of hadith commentary that is selective, concise, and heavily reliant on earlier exegetical traditions.

Method

This study employs a library research design with a qualitative-descriptive and analytical approach.⁹ This design was chosen because all research data are derived from written texts, specifically *Zahr al-Rabī' 'alā al-Mujtabā* by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, which serves as the primary object of study. The study is not intended to test hypotheses or measure phenomena quantitatively, but rather to identify, classify, and analyze the explanatory patterns used by al-Suyūṭī in providing *ta'liq* on the hadiths of *Sunan al-Nasa'i*. The analysis focuses on the form of commentary on the hadiths, the use of sources, linguistic aspects, explanations of the narrators, comparisons of narrations, the resolution of hadiths that appear to be textually contradictory, and al-Suyūṭī's selectivity in providing commentary on the hadiths.

The research data sources consist of primary and secondary data. The primary data is *Zahr al-Rabī' 'alā al-Mujtabā*, a work by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, which, in the edition under study, was published by *Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah* and consists of several juz. The text of *Sunan al-Nasa'i*, which serves as the material being commented on, is also used as an integral part of the primary data, as the analysis is conducted by comparing the hadith text with al-Suyūṭī's commentary on it. Primary data was chosen because the study is oriented toward a direct reconstruction of al-Suyūṭī's practice of *ta'liq*, rather than merely relying on researchers' explanations of the work. Secondary data consists of books of hadith commentary, books on *'ulūm al-ḥadīth*, books on *rijāl al-ḥadīth*, books on *gharīb al-ḥadīth*, relevant works on *'ulūm al-Qur'an*, as well as academic literature in the form of books, journal articles, and previous

⁹ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2017).

studies related to Sunan al-Nasa'i, al-Suyūṭī, the tradition of hadith commentary, and the methodology of hadith exegesis. These sources were used primarily to provide context, verify al-Suyuti's references, and situate the research findings within the development of hadith commentary studies.

Data collection was conducted through systematic documentation and textual analysis. The first stage involved identifying the sections of *Zahr al-Rabī'* that contain al-Suyūṭī's commentary on the hadiths of *Sunan al-Nasa'i*. The second stage involved cataloging the commentary units based on the nature of their explanations, including clarifications regarding the identities and variations in the names of narrators, explanations of wording and vowel marks, linguistic and rhetorical aspects, clarifications of terms with multiple possible meanings, comparisons of wordings with other narrations, the use of opinions from earlier scholars, and efforts to reconcile (*al-jam'*) narrations that appear textually contradictory. The third stage involved cataloging hadiths that did not receive commentary to identify patterns in al-Suyūṭī's selectivity in providing *ta'liq*. The collected data was then categorized based on the form of the commentary, the sources used, and the function of the commentary in relation to the hadith text.

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. In the data reduction stage, the data obtained from the text of *Zahr al-Rabī'* were selected based on their relevance to the research focus and classified into several categories of analysis. These categories include: (1) the nature and form of *ta'liq*; (2) patterns of explanation regarding the sanad and matn; (3) the use of exegetical sources and earlier hadith literature; (4) linguistic tendencies; (5) comparisons of narrations and the *al-jam'* method; and (6) the selectivity and consistency of commentary. During the data presentation stage, each category was analyzed through representative textual examples, taking into account the relationship between the hadith text and al-Suyūṭī's commentary. The analysis not only describes the content of the commentary but also interprets the functions and methodological tendencies underlying it. In the final stage, the analyzed findings are compared with the characteristics of the tradition of *syarh al-hadith* and the findings of previous research to determine the methodological position of al-Suyūṭī's work and to explain the extent to which this pattern of *ta'liq* is consistently applied.

To ensure consistency in interpretation, the analysis was conducted by taking into account the context of al-Suyuti's comments in the original text and verifying the sources he cited when necessary. In this way, this study seeks to distinguish between al-Suyuti's own opinions and those of the scholars he quotes, so that assessments regarding the nature, sources, and degree of

originality of the ta'liq are not based on assumptions but on textual evidence found in *Zahr al-Rabi' 'ala al-Mujtaba*.

Result and Discussion

Profile of Al-Hakim al-Suyuthi: Intellectual Foundations and The Views of Scholars

Al-Suyuthi's full name is al-Ḥafīẓ Jalāl al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl 'Abd al-Raḥmān bin Kamāl Abū Bakr bin Muhammad bin Sābiq al -Dīn bin Fakhr 'Uthmān bin Nāzir al-Ḥammām al-Khuḍairī al-Asyūṭī al-Ṭulūnī al-Miṣrī al-Syāfi'ī. This series of names is not merely genealogical information, but contains a number of important clues regarding his scholarly identity.¹⁰ The nisbah al-Asyūṭī refers to his birthplace, Asyut, a city west of the Nile River in the Egyptian highlands, where he was born in 849 AH/1445 CE. Meanwhile, the nisbah al-Khuḍairī reveals a more distant history of his family's migration; his grandfather was originally from the Khuḍayr region of Baghdad and was forced to flee to Asyut due to the Mongol invasions. This dual lineage indicates that al-Suyuthi inherited a multifaceted intellectual background, a blend of the scholarly traditions of Baghdad (the center of classical Islamic scholarship) and the scholarly environment of Egypt during his time. The final lineage, al-Shafi'ī, established his affiliation with the Shafi'ī school of jurisprudence from the very beginning, a detail that would later prove relevant when evaluating the school's tendencies evident in his exegetical works.

Al-Suyuthi was born and raised in a family of scholars, and he spent most of his life in that scholarly environment; in fact, he devoted the last 22 years of his life specifically to writing. The scope of his scholarly network was extraordinary for a scholar of his time: Azami notes that his list of teachers included nearly all the leading scholars of his era, numbering about 150 people, including several female teachers.¹¹ This extensive scholarly network shaped al-Suyuthi's distinctive approach; he did not build his thought from scratch but rather absorbed and synthesized knowledge from various authoritative sources of his time.

This approach became clearly evident in his productivity. Al-Suyuthi was known as an exceptionally prolific scholar, having authored around 600 works

¹⁰ Ikhwan, M. (2009). Kitab al-Muzhir of Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti: A critical edition and translation of section twenty on Islamic terms. *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 47(2), 377-410.

¹¹ Al-A'zamī, M. M. (1977). *Studies in hadith methodology and literature*. American Trust Publications.

some consisting of just one or two-page treatises, while others spanned multiple volumes. However, this productivity was not without methodological controversy.¹² His primary activity was summarizing the works of earlier scholars, a practice that earned him the enmity of some contemporary scholars who accused him of plagiarizing material from earlier works. Rasyid Riḍā (d. 1935), for example, ironically dubbed him *khāṭib al-layl* (the nighttime firewood gatherer), an expression meaning someone who collects everything without being able to distinguish what is valuable from what is not.¹³

This point is not merely a biographical note that can be overlooked, but rather a key to understanding the methodological character of the book *Zahr al-Rabā' 'ala al-Mujtabā*, which is the subject of this study. Al-Suyuthi's reputation as an author who tended to summarize and compile previous works rather than develop original ideas aligns with the findings regarding the methodology and systematics of this commentary, in which al-Suyuthi is noted to rely heavily on references such as *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, *al-Kawākib al-Durārī*, and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi Syarḥ al-Nawawī*. In other words, the methodological tendency criticized by his contemporaries even during his lifetime was not an anomaly unique to this work, but rather a consistent pattern throughout his intellectual career. This finding reinforces the argument that the lack of originality in the commentary on *Sunan al-Nasa'i* is not merely a problem specific to a single work, but rather a reflection of al-Suyuthi's writing style in general an observation that, unfortunately, is not explicitly stated in the original text.

Al-Suyuthi's productivity spanned various Islamic disciplines. In the field of *Tafsīr*/'Ulūm al-Qur'ān, he wrote approximately 73 books. In the field of *hadith*/'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth, his works are also quite numerous, including *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr* (containing 10,010 *hadiths*, completed in 907 AH), *Tadrib al-Rāwī*, and *Zahr al-Rabā' 'ala al-Mujtabā*, which is more commonly known as *Sunan al-Nasa'i bi Syarḥ al-Suyuthi*.¹⁴ He passed away in 911 AH in Cairo, Egypt.¹⁵

¹² Ica Fauziah Husnaini, "TAFSIR AD-DURR AL-MANTSUR FI TAFSIR AL-MA'TSUR KARYA IMAM AS-SUYUTHI (Studi Deskriptif Atas Metodologi Hingga Aspek Pendekatakan Interpretasi)," *Mafatih* 1, no. 1 (September 25, 2021): 37–45, <https://doi.org/10.24260/MAFATIH.V1I1.394>.

¹³ Rasyid Ridha, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Hakim Basim Tafsir Al-Manar* (Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Almiyah, 1999), 471.

¹⁴ Afifi Nurafifah, "Hadis-Hadis Daif Puasa Ramadan Dalam Tafsir Al-Dur Al-Manthuri Karya Al-Suyuthi," *Diya Al-Afkar: Jurnal Studi Al-Quran Dan Al-Hadis* 5, no. 2 (December 1, 2017): 261–298, <https://doi.org/10.24235/SQH.V5I02.4342>.

¹⁵ Siti Nur Rafiza et al., "Memahami Karakteristik Ayat-Ayat Makkiyah Dan Madaniyyah Dalam Perspektif Ahli Tafsir (Al-Zarkasyi, Jalaluddin Al-Suyuthi Dan Manna Al-

This data has methodological implications that need to be emphasized: if al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr (907 AH) and Zuhri al-Rabā' were both compiled toward the end of his life (he died in 911 AH), then this commentary on Sunan al-Nasa'i is most likely a product of the final years of his career. This is relevant for addressing a question not discussed in the original text: whether the methodological limitations and inconsistencies in the commentary are related to al-Suyuthi's age or time constraints toward the end of his life, rather than merely deliberate methodological choices? This is an open question that should be noted as a limitation of the study in the article's conclusion, since the available biographical data is insufficient to confirm the answer, though it is worth mentioning as a direction for further research.

Al-Suyuthi's reputation among contemporary scholars and subsequent generations was not uniform; rather, it was divided between recognition of the breadth of his knowledge and criticism of certain claims and his writing practices. It is important to highlight this polarization of views because it is directly related to the issue of originality, which is one of the critical findings in the study of his commentary on *Sunan al-Nasa'i*.

Recognition as an encyclopedic scholar. Al-Suyuthi is widely recognized as an *'ālim mawsū'ī* an encyclopedic scholar who mastered nearly every branch of Islamic scholarship of his time (tafsir, hadith, fiqh, nahwu, ma'ani, and bayan).¹⁶ This recognition is by no means an exaggeration, given his prolific output of hundreds of works across various disciplines, as outlined in the previous section. Even today, his works continue to be studied and serve as references in various fields of Islamic scholarship.

The Controversy Over the Claim of Being a "*Mujtahid Mutlaq*." One of the greatest sources of controversy is al-Suyuthi's claim that he had attained the rank of "*mujtahid mutlaq*" a status of ijtihad granted to someone who has met the criteria for ijtihad and is capable of deriving legal rulings directly from their sources.¹⁷ This claim caused unease among his contemporary scholars, who feared that such a claim indicated a deviation from the established views of the Shafi'i school of thought. Al-Suyuthi himself sought to allay these concerns by emphasizing that the status of *mujtahid mutlaq* he referred to was

Qaththan)," *Al-Munqidz: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman* 11, no. 2 (July 1, 2023): 82–95, <https://doi.org/10.52802/AL-MUNQIDZ.V11I2.550>.

¹⁶ Safari Daud, "Potret Jalaluddin Al-Suyuti Sebagai Seorang Sejarawan," *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 16, no. 2 (June 13, 2016): 41–74, <https://doi.org/10.24042/AJSK.V16I2.1119>.

¹⁷ Aditiawarman Adnan, "SOSOK DAN RANAH IJTIHAD," *Jurnal AL-AHKAM* 12, no. 1 (June 30, 2021): 119–158, <https://doi.org/10.15548/ALAHKAM.V12I1.2919>.

ghayr mustaqil (not independent); he was merely equating his scholarly ability with that of the imams of the schools of thought, without intending to establish a new school. Nevertheless, this claim remains a sensitive issue because, conventionally, the determination of one's status as a mujtahid should come from the recognition of other scholars, not from a self-declaration.¹⁸

The Plagiarism Controversy with al-Sakhawi. A controversy more directly relevant to al-Suyuthi's working methods in compiling his works was his feud with al-Sakhawi (d. 902 H.), one of his own students. Al-Sakhawi openly accused al-Suyuthi of frequently committing plagiarism, stating that much of the content in al-Suyuthi's books was not his own original work but was taken from the works of earlier scholars without adequate attribution. In addition to al-Sakhawi, a number of other scholars also had disagreements with al-Suyuthi, including al-Burhān al-Karkī (d. 853 AH), Shams al-Jujirī, and Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad bin Muḥammad al-Qaṣṭalānī (d. 923 AH). In response to this rivalry, al-Syaukānī an absolute mujtahid of the next generation noted in *al-Badr al-Ṭālī* that mutual insults among contemporary scholars do not necessarily undermine the credibility of either party's narrations, as such judgments are prone to being influenced solely by personal rivalries.¹⁹

This plagiarism controversy is directly relevant to the findings in the "Methodology and Structure" section of the book *Zuhr al-Rabā' 'ala al-Mujtabā'*, which indicate that al-Suyuthi relied heavily on sources such as *Fath al-Bārī*, al-Kawākib al-Durārī, and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi Syarḥ al-Nawawī, without adding much original thought. Thus, the accusation of a lack of originality leveled against al-Suyuthi is not an issue arising specifically from an analysis of this book, but rather a pattern that had already been recognized by his own contemporaries, particularly al-Sakhawi, who was, in fact, his student. This finding reinforces the validity of the study's conclusion that the near absence of original thought by al-Suyuthi in his commentary is not a unique weakness of this work, but rather a consistent feature of al-Suyuthi's writing style a style that has been a subject of debate among scholars since his lifetime.

Methodology and Structure of The Book *Zahra al-Raba' al-Mujtaba*

Although the book *Zuhra al-Raba' 'ala Mujtaba* is more widely known as a *syarḥ*, the author himself consistently refers to it as a *ta'liq* a distinction in

¹⁸ Ahwan Fanani, "Al-Suyutī Dan Kontroversi Strata Ijtihād: Telaah Atas Klaim Mujtahid Mutlaq Al-Suyutī Dan Landasan Normatifnya," *ISLAMICA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 2, no. 2 (January 22, 2014): 109, <https://doi.org/10.15642/ISLAMICA.2008.2.2.109-123>.

¹⁹ Jalal al-Din Al-Suyutī, *Tarikh Khulafa* (Daulah Qathar, 2013).

terminology that, as mentioned in the introduction, is not merely a matter of nomenclature but indicates a different character and depth of explanation. Al-Suyuthi himself titled his work *Zahra al-Rabā' 'ala al-Mujtabā*.²⁰ His motivation for compiling it stemmed from the fact that, among the *al-kutub al-ḥadīth al-khamsah*, only *Sunan al-Nasa'i* had not received either a *syarḥ* or a *ta'līq* in the 600 years since its compilation.²¹ This work also serves as the fifth volume in al-Suyuthi's major project to comment on the *al-Kuttub al-Sittah*, as he had previously authored commentaries on *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, and *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*.²² Azami notes that one reason for the scarcity of commentaries on *Sunan al-Nasa'i* is the scholars' limited attention to this book compared to other major hadith collections a relevant observation given the research gap outlined in the introduction.²³

Al-Suyuti begins his exposition with an introduction that includes a qualitative classification of the hadith material in *Sunan al-Nasa'i*, followed by an explanation of the criteria for hadith authenticity upheld by al-Nasa'i, compared to the criteria of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, along with comments and opinions from scholars regarding the book.

1. Methods and Approaches

Borrowing the terminology commonly used to evaluate works of exegesis, no single term can be found that precisely describes the method of this book. Because its explanations are very brief, this book cannot be called *taḥlīlī* in the sense of providing lengthy commentary and comprehensive explanations; it is more accurate to say that its explanations align with the structure of the book being expounded. To a certain extent, al-Suyuthi also employs the *muqāran* method, which is evident in several passages where he identifies differences in the text of a hadith found in other works that he deems important to highlight.²⁴

²⁰ HM Suparta, "Metode Pensyarahen Sunan An-Nasa'i Perbandingan Antara Imam Al-Suyuti Dan Al-Sindi."

²¹ Jalal al-Din Al-Suyūṭī, *Sunan Al-Nasa'i Bi Syarah Al-Suyuthi* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'arif, n.d.).

²² HM Suparta, "Metode Pensyarahen Sunan An-Nasa'i Perbandingan Antara Imam Al-Suyuti Dan Al-Sindi."

²³ Mustafa Muhammad Azami, *Studies in Hadith Methodolgy and Literature* (Indianapolis: Islamic Teaching Centre, 1977), 114..

²⁴ Ali, I. K. (2023). Metode kritik hadis Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī. *AL ISNAD: Journal of Indonesian Hadith Studies*, 4(1), 1–37. <https://jurnal.idaqui.ac.id/index.php/al-isnad/article/view/220>

Given al-Suyuthi's tendency to analyze linguistic patterns in the text of hadiths that he considers worthy of explanation, this work can be described as having a *lugawī* (linguistic) character. There are strong indications that al-Suyuthi was still inspired by the same approach he applied in compiling *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, or that the objective nature of the hadith text itself necessitated an explanation of its linguistic aspects. This indication becomes even clearer in a number of hadiths that are explained only in terms of their vowel marks and several possible readings, supplemented by a brief etymological explanation of the hadith's meaning.

2. Methods of Commentary

Unlike other books of hadith commentary, particularly commentaries on the *al-kutub al-sab'ah*, al-Suyuti commented on *Sunan al-Nasa'i* without adhering to a fixed pattern. Nevertheless, a number of working methods that he consistently employed can be identified. First, al-Suyuti explains the hadiths according to the order and structure found in *Sunan al-Nasa'i*, although not all hadiths are explained; interestingly, even though the book being explained labels each section with "chapters" and "subchapters," al-Suyuti does not at all explain the relevance of these titles to the accompanying hadiths. Second, he lists the names of the narrators who transmitted the hadith being commented on, including possible variations in the narrators' names, *laqab*, and *kunyah*, without specifying their years of birth or death; furthermore, if the same narrator appears again in the next hadith, the explanation is not repeated.²⁵

Third, in several sections there are similarities to the approach used in *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, namely, specifying the vowel marks (*harakat*) of a phrase or clause in the hadith text without further elaborating on the possible differences in meaning that may arise from those variations in vowel marks. Fourth, although it does not generally emphasize a linguistic approach, in some hadith texts containing aspects of *balāghah*, al-Suyuthi explains them by citing the opinions of linguistic experts; for example, when commenting on the hadith about a person who misses the *Asr* prayer, he cites the opinion of Ibn 'Abd al-Salām that the hadith's intent is to emphasize the gravity of the sin, rather than the literal meaning of the word *ḥabīṭa* (invalidated).²⁶

Fifth, al-Suyuti explains the meaning of hadith text that may have multiple interpretations by citing the opinions of earlier scholars, and occasionally affirms his own view on those opinions—for example, in the hadith regarding dipping one's hands into the *wudu'* vessel after waking up,

²⁵ Al-Suyūṭī, *Sunan Al-Nasa'i Bi Syarah Al-Suyuthi*, 1-3.

²⁶ Al-Suyūṭī, *Sunan Al-Nasa'i Bi Syarah Al-Suyuthi*, 1-3.

where he cites Ibn Hajar's view in *Fatḥh al-Bārī* while also adding his own explanation regarding the difference in meaning of the word *wuḍū'* depending on whether it is pronounced with a *fatḥhah* or a *ḍammah*.²⁷ Sixth, in a number of hadiths, al-Suyuti confirms the narration he is commenting on by mentioning possible variations in the text found in other narrations that support his explanation, such as the addition of narrations from Imam Muslim and Imam Ahmad in several hadiths regarding night prayer and the number of *rak'ahs* in prayer. Seventh, in certain cases where hadiths appear to be in textual contradiction (*ta'āruḍ*), al-Suyuti employs *al-jam'u* (reconciliation) for example, when reconciling the hadith regarding the first deed to be accounted for (prayer) with the hadith concerning the first matter to be judged among people (murder) by explaining that the two do not negate one another because they pertain to different dimensions: the rights of Allah and the rights of fellow human beings.²⁸

3. Refrence Works

In compiling his commentary, al-Suyuti drew heavily on earlier works of hadith commentary. Among the most frequently cited sources were *Fatḥh al-Bārī* by al-'Asqalānī (d. 852 H.), *al-Kawākib al-Durārī fī Syarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* by al-Kirmānī (d. 786 H.), and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi Syarḥ al-Nawawī* by al-Nawawī (631–676 H.). In addition to these three works, al-Suyuti also drew upon other hadith collections, including the *al-Kutub al-Sab'ah* as well as *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Khuzaymah* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Hibbān*, particularly to highlight possible variations in the text of hadiths that support his commentary, as well as secondary hadith works such as *al-Nihāyah fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth wa al-Athar*. In his discussion of legal verses, he occasionally quotes the opinions of al-Qurṭubī, Ibn al-'Arabī, and Qāḍī 'Iyād.²⁹

This pattern of citation reinforces the picture already discussed in the first section regarding al-Suyuthi's writing style: his work relies heavily on established authoritative sources, consistent with his reputation as an author who compiles and summarizes rather than develops original ideas.

4. Approach to Fiqh Issues

Although the book being commented on is a *Sunan* whose structure is organized according to *fiqh* topics and whose content is largely closely related to *fiqh* it lacks the in-depth analysis and discussion typically found in commentaries on other *Sunan*, such as 'Awn al-Ma'būd and Bazl al-Majhūd

²⁷ Al-Suyūṭī, *Sunan Al-Nasa'i Bi Syarah Al-Suyuthi*, 1-3.

²⁸ Al-Suyūṭī, *Sunan Al-Nasa'i Bi Syarah Al-Suyuthi*, 1-3.

²⁹ Rahayu and Julaiha, "Sunan An-Nasā'i: Karya Monumental Di Bidang Ilmu Hadis."

(both commentaries on *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*),³⁰ or *Tuḥfat al-Aḥwadhī* and *Ārīḍat al-Aḥwadhī* (both commentaries on *Sunan al-Tirmidzī*).³¹ Due to its very brief treatment of the material in *Sunan al-Nasa'i*, there is no comprehensive description of *masā'il al-fiqhiyah* (issues of Islamic jurisprudence), nor is the author's inclination toward a particular school of jurisprudence explicitly stated. There is an impression that al-Suyuti tends to avoid lengthy discussions of issues that are potentially controversial.

Nevertheless, an analysis of Juz I reveals that in several places, Suyuthi implicitly shows a bias Suyuti toward the Shafi'i school of thought, although he does not contrast this opinion with the views of scholars from other schools—for example, in the hadith regarding washing one's hands three times after waking up, where he cites al-Shafi'i's opinion in al-Buwaiṭī regarding the consequences if one fails to wash one's hands as recommended. However, from this example, it cannot be concluded that this commentary was composed as a form of legitimization of the Shafi'i school, since there is not a single explanation either explicit or implicit that indicates the derivation of legal rulings; thus, this book cannot be said to be of a fiqh nature, even though the text being commented on is a *sunan*.

5. Topics Related to Ulum al-Hadith and Ulum al-Qur'an

Al-Suyuti is widely recognized in the field of hadith scholarship as a prolific scholar, and several of his works in the field of Ulum al-Hadith serve as important references in hadith studies. However, in this commentary, there is no consistent application of the principles of Ulum al-Hadith to the hadith being explained; the depth of his scholarship in this field is evident only in the introduction. A similar pattern applies to the aspect of Ulum al-Qur'an: al-Suyuthi appears to avoid lengthy discussions on this topic, as seen when explaining the hadith regarding the revelation of the Qur'an in seven letters (*aḥruf*), which is explained only very briefly by referring to his more comprehensive discussion in the book *al-Itqān*.³² This situation underscores that its form as a *ta'līq* does indeed limit the scope of al-Suyuthi's exposition and explanation, so that a number of issues that should have received in-depth discussion are not explained at all.

6. Analysis of The Book: Its Strengths and Limitations

³⁰ R. Rasyad, "Tinjauan Kitab Syarah Sunan Abi Dawud 'Bazdl Al-Majhud Fi Halli Aby Dawud,'" *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu'ashirah* 15, no. 2 (December 31, 2018): 143, <https://doi.org/10.22373/JIM.V15I2.5291>.

³¹ Masrukhin Muhsin, *Studi 'Ilal Hadis* (Serang: A- Empat, 2019), 20-22.

³² Al-Suyūṭī, *Sunan Al-Nasa'i Bi Syarah Al-Suyuthi*, 152.

Judging by its writing style, analytical techniques, and language, this hadith commentary gives the impression of being very simple, practical, and easy to understand, especially for beginners interested in hadith studies. The references used as the basis for its compilation are also well-established sources among scholars of hadith and related disciplines.

However, a closer examination reveals that al-Suyuti's consistency in providing commentary lasts only for the first 60 pages or so, where all the hadiths in that section are thoroughly discussed, both in terms of the narrators and the content of the hadith text. As the text progresses, the intensity of his commentary diminishes, as evidenced by a number of hadiths that are not commented on at all; in fact, there are several chapters and subsections where the hadiths are not addressed at all, such as in the subsection on *ghusl al-yadayn*, the chapter on *ṣifat al-wuḍū'*, *'adad ghusl al-yadayn*, the chapter on *ḥadd al-ghusl*, the chapter on *ṣifat maṣḥ al-ra's*, and *'adad maṣḥ al-udhunayn*.³³ Upon examining these uncommented hadiths, no clear criteria for distinguishing between those that were commented on and those that were not whether in terms of theme or the significance of their content—were found. In fact, proportionally, the parts of *Sunan al-Nasa'i* that are not annotated appear to be far more numerous than those annotated by al-Suyuti. As a result, a number of important issues concerning the chain of transmission (sanad), the text of the hadith, legal implications, and aspects of Uloom al-Qur'an and Uloom al-Hadith related to these hadiths are often overlooked.

Conclusion

This study finds that *Zahr al-Rabā' 'ala al-Mujtabā* strictly speaking cannot be fully categorized as a hadith commentary in the full sense of the term, as acknowledged by al-Suyuthi himself, who refers to it as a *ta'līq*. This characteristic is reflected in its extremely concise explanations, its lack of adherence to a standard systematic pattern, and its tendency toward a *lugawī* style a style that appears to be inspired by al-Suyuthi's writing style in *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*. This finding also aligns with the biographical portrait of al-Suyuthi as a prolific writer who was, however, frequently criticized by his contemporary scholars including al-Sakhawī for his tendency to summarize and compile earlier works rather than develop original ideas. Thus, the nature of the *ta'līq* in this book is not merely a standalone methodological choice, but is consistent with al-Suyuthi's general writing style throughout his career.

³³ Al-Suyūṭī, *Sunan Al-Nasa'i Bi Syarah Al-Suyuthi*, 69-73.

Regarding the second issue, this study identifies seven steps that al-Suyuthi consistently followed in his commentary, ranging from explaining the identity of the narrators, confirming the text of the hadith, citing the opinions of linguistic experts on aspects of *balaghah*, to his efforts at *al-jam'u* reconciling hadiths that appear to contradict one another textually. In terms of sources, al-Suyuthi relied heavily on established references such as *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, *al-Kawākib al-Durārī*, and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi Syarḥ al-Nawawī*, rather than developing independent analysis. This pattern of referencing reinforces the finding that al-Suyuthi's original thought is almost entirely absent from this book, and at the same time explains why this book cannot be classified as a work of *fiqh*, even though the text being commented on is a *sunan* rich in *fiqh* content since not a single explanation explicitly or implicitly demonstrates the derivation of legal rulings.

Regarding the third issue, this study found fairly significant methodological inconsistencies in the application of this commentary style. Al-Suyuthi's consistency in providing commentary lasts only for the first 60 pages or so of the entire book; thereafter, the intensity of the commentary declines sharply, and some chapters and subsections are not addressed at all, with no clear criteria distinguishing between hadiths that are commented on and those that are not. Consequently, the position of this book within the tradition of hadith commentary should be understood not as a comprehensive and systematic representation of commentary, but rather as a selective, concise form of commentary, and heavily reliant on the preceding tradition of commentary a characteristic that, as indicated by the biographical analysis, is likely also related to the period of its composition, which is estimated to have taken place toward the end of al-Suyuthi's intellectual career.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of *syarḥ al-ḥadīth* by demonstrating that works of hadith exegesis cannot be adequately evaluated based solely on the labels attached to them—whether they are called *syarah*, *ta'liq* or *hasyiyah* but must be examined through the actual textual practices employed by the author in engaging with the *matn* and *sanad* of the hadith. This study also highlights the methodological relevance of reading a religious work contextually alongside the author's biography and intellectual reputation; in this case, al-Suyuthi's working methods in his commentary turned out to be consistent with his broader authorial style, so that the finding regarding the lack of originality does not stand alone as a specific weakness of a single work, but rather reflects a pattern that had already been recognized even by his contemporary scholars. Methodologically, this study demonstrates that an approach combining document analysis and content analysis of the

primary text of the commentary, combined with biographical research and the views of scholars regarding the author, yields a richer interpretation than an approach focused solely on describing the book's content.

Nevertheless, this study has a number of limitations that must be honestly acknowledged. First, the analysis conducted covers only Juz I of the book's eight juz, so generalizing the findings particularly regarding the pattern of decreasing commentary intensity after the first 60 pages still requires further verification of the subsequent juz to determine whether this pattern holds consistently throughout the book or varies in other sections. Second, the hypothesis regarding the connection between methodological inconsistencies and the period of the book's composition toward the end of al-Suyuthi's life remains speculative and is not yet supported by sufficiently strong biographical data to be confirmed; this hypothesis requires further investigation into the chronology of al-Suyuthi's works in greater detail. Third, this study has not yet conducted a direct and systematic comparison between al-Suyuthi's method and al-Sindi's method in commenting on the same book, even though both are included in a single published edition that is the subject of this study a comparison that has been carried out by other researchers and could enrich our understanding of the distinctiveness of al-Suyuthi's method from a comparative perspective.

Given these limitations, further research is recommended to expand the scope of analysis to all eight juz of the book in order to test the consistency of the findings in this study, conduct a more systematic comparative study between *Ta'liq al-Suyuti* and the *hasyiyah al-Sindi* using a more explicit theoretical framework of *'ilm sharh al-hadith*, and to trace the chronology of the composition of al-Suyuthi's works in the field of hadith to test the hypothesis regarding the influence of the period of composition on the depth and consistency of his commentary.

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