



The shariah ruling on the permissibility of seafood in hanafi and shafi'i jurisprudence: A comparative study in the light of the qur'an and hadith

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a comparative analysis of the permissibility of seafood within the Hanafi and Shafi'i schools of Islamic jurisprudence. Although both schools derive their rulings from the Qur'an and Hadith, they offer divergent interpretations regarding various marine life. Whereas the Shafi'i madhab generally permits all types of seafood based on the broad textual evidence, the Hanafi school restricts permissible sea creatures chiefly to fish, relying on a more cautious and often literalist textual interpretation. By examining Qur'anic verses, Hadith evidence, the methodological underpinnings of classical jurisprudence, and the perspectives of various scholars, this study elucidates the historical and contextual basis for these legal differences. Furthermore, contemporary case studies are included to explore how these rulings affect dietary practices in Muslim communities today, thereby demonstrating the legal pluralism inherent in the Islamic juridical tradition.

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Introduction

Islamic dietary regulations have always played a central role in the everyday lives of Muslims, outlining what is considered halal (permissible) and haram (forbidden). Over the centuries, these guidelines have been subject to rigorous scholarly debate as jurists interpreted and reinterpreted scriptural texts to address the needs of different communities and contexts. A particularly intriguing area of jurisprudential discourse is the permissibility of seafood. Although the primary texts of the Qur'an and Hadith provide explicit guidelines on food, the interpretation of these texts regarding marine life has led to differing legal opinions among the various schools of thought.

The Hanafi and Shafi'i schools, two of the major madhhabs (legal schools) in Sunni Islam, illustrate this divergence. Whereas the Shafi'i madhab is generally known for its more inclusive interpretation regarding seafood, permitting almost all sea creatures, the Hanafi school adopts a more restrictive approach by limiting permissible seafood to fish. This divergence, both in legal reasoning and practical application, highlights the importance of understanding not only the textual evidence but also the jurisprudential methodologies that shape such interpretations.

Historically, Islamic jurisprudence developed in a socio-cultural context whereby jurists had to reconcile divine injunctions with the local customs and practicalities of everyday life. Food and dietary laws, being inherently tied to community survival and health, became one of the areas where a variety of interpretations emerged. In this context, the debate on seafood permissibility is particularly noteworthy for several reasons: **Diverse Natural Environments:** Muslim communities have historically inhabited diverse ecological zones from arid deserts to coastal regions. Jurisprudence had to account for local dietary practices and available resources. **Methodological Differences:** The varying approaches to interpreting the Qur'an and Hadith between the schools underscore the broader dynamics of legal plurality in Islamic law. **Contemporary Relevance:** In today's globalized world, where inter-community interactions are common, the contemporary application of these rulings influences dietary habits and even commercial practices in halal certification.

The objectives guiding this study are as follows: **Textual Analysis:** To analyze the Qur'anic verses (e.g., Surah Al-Ma'idah: 5:96 and Surah An-Nahl: 16:14) and Hadith narrations that form the foundation of the debate on the permissibility of seafood. **Comparative Jurisprudence:** To explore how the Hanafi and Shafi'i schools interpret these texts, highlighting the distinct methodological approaches. **Historical Contextualization:** To investigate how historical, cultural, and environmental factors contributed to the divergence in rulings. **Contemporary Implications:** To present case studies and examples showcasing the impact of these rulings on the dietary practices of Muslim communities in various regions of the world. **Scholarly Engagement:** To engage with both classical and contemporary scholarly literature, thus providing a comprehensive view on the subject.

Method

The research methodology adopted in this study is primarily qualitative and is based on a textual analysis of primary and secondary sources. The process of inquiry involved: **Primary Sources:** Detailed exegesis of the Qur'an and collection of Hadiths from canonical texts such as Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, and other compilations. **Secondary Sources:** A review of classical jurisprudence texts by scholars such as Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam al-Shafi'i, and subsequent commentaries; along with contemporary academic works. **Comparative Approach:** A comparative study of the opinions articulated within the Hanafi and Shafi'i traditions regarding the permissibility of seafood. **Case Study Analysis:** Examination of modern ethical and legal debates in Muslim communities across South and Southeast Asia, reflecting on how jurisprudential rulings are implemented today. This study thus provides a systematic, multi-layered examination of the subject matter, emphasizing both the historical evolution and contemporary relevance of these legal opinions.

Results and Discussion

Theoretical Framework

A robust theoretical framework is necessary to understand the various factors that have shaped Muslim dietary laws, particularly in relation to seafood. In classical Islamic jurisprudence, the methodology employed by scholars is governed by a strict set of interpretative principles and recognized sources of law.

Sources of Islamic Law

Islamic law (Shariah) fundamentally relies on four sources:

The Qur'an:

Regarded as the uncreated word of God, the Qur'an is the ultimate authority in Islamic law. Verses such as “...أَجَلٌ لَّكُمْ صَيِّدُ الْبَحْرِ” (Surah Al-Ma'idah, 5:96) provide the foundational directives regarding dietary laws.

The Sunnah (Hadith):

The recorded sayings, actions, and tacit approvals of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) constitute the second pillar. Hadith collections offer contextual and practical

applications of Qur'anic injunctions. For example, the narration “هو الطهور ماؤه الحل ميتته” has been pivotal in shaping juristic opinions on seafood.

Ijma' (Consensus):

The consensus of Islamic scholars over time is also a key source. Ijma' reflects the collective and evolving understanding of the Muslim ummah regarding specific legal issues.

Qiyas (Analogical Reasoning):

This process involves analogizing new situations with those explicitly mentioned in the primary texts. Scholars use qiyas to extend and extrapolate rulings to areas not directly addressed by scripture.

Each of these sources plays a critical role in establishing the legal rulings on dietary matters. The interpretation of these sources, however, is subject to varying methodologies between different madhhabs, leading to differing conclusions on issues such as seafood permissibility.

Principles of Legal Interpretation

The science of *usul al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence) provides a systematic framework for interpreting Islamic texts. Key principles include: Linguistic Analysis: Scholars analyze the Arabic language used in the Qur'an and Hadith to elucidate meanings. This includes examining lexical nuances, syntax, and the historical context in which the text was revealed (Kamali, 2008). Contextual Consideration: Understanding the circumstances of revelation (*asbab al-nuzul*) is crucial. The socio-political and cultural contexts often influence how texts are interpreted. The permissibility of seafood, for instance, may have been influenced by coastal communities' reliance on marine resources (Hallaq, 2009). Legal Maxims: Maxims such as “certainty is not overruled by doubt” (اليقين لا يُلغى بالشك) guide jurists in distinguishing between clear and ambiguous texts. This maxim is particularly important for the conservative interpretations found in Hanafi thought. Abrogation (Naskh): Some verses or rulings may have been superseded by later revelations. Determining which texts are abrogatory involves complex hermeneutics and has a bearing on how rulings are applied, especially when contradictory texts need reconciliation (Rahman, 1982). Comparative Analysis: The process of comparing different texts and their interpretations across madhhabs is essential. This comparative approach not only sheds light on historical legal debates but also highlights the dynamic nature of Islamic jurisprudence (Saeed, 2006). By applying these interpretative principles, the differences between the Hanafi and Shafi'i schools, especially regarding seafood rulings, come into sharper focus. The following sections provide an extensive textual analysis of the relevant Qur'anic verses and Hadith narrations.

Textual Analysis of Qur'anic Evidence

The Qur'an provides several fundamental texts that serve as the basis for the debate on seafood permissibility. This section focuses on two key verses and examines them in light of both schools' interpretative methods.

Analysis of Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:96)

The verse from Surah Al-Ma'idah reads as follows:

“أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَحْرِ وَطَعَامُهُ مَتَاعًا لَكُمْ وَلِلسَّيَّارَةِ”

“Lawful to you is game from the sea and its food as provision for you and for the travelers” (Qur'an 5:96).

The Arabic term “صَيْدُ الْبَحْرِ” (*saydu al-baḥri*) literally translates to “the game of the sea,” which for some scholars is understood in a narrow sense as referring specifically to fish. In contrast, “طَعَامُهُ” (*ṭa'āmuḥu*) can be understood more broadly as “its food” or “the food produced by it,” implying inclusivity of all edible matter of the sea.

Shafi'i Interpretation: Shafi'i jurists argue that the wording of the verse is general and does not introduce any explicit limitations regarding the types of sea creatures permitted. They posit that the verse was revealed in a context where the bounties of the sea were collectively regarded as a sign of divine provision. Therefore, they conclude that all types of marine life fall under the category of *halal*, unless there is clear evidence to the contrary. For example, Imam

al-Shafi'i's commentaries frequently highlight that the absence of a restrictive qualifier implies comprehensive permissibility (Al-Shafi'i, 1995).

Hanafi Interpretation: In contrast, Hanafi scholars, following the cautious principle of *al-ʿaql al-rāfiq* (the elevated intellect that avoids doubtful scenarios), maintain that the permissibility of seafood should be understood in a more limited sense. They reference additional linguistic nuance and contextual evidence that suggests that only certain types of sea creatures—specifically fish—are to be regarded as lawful. For instance, the Hanafi jurist Abu Yusuf (d. 798 CE) argued that the term “game” in this context (صَيْدٌ) implies creatures captured in motion, which, by natural observation and the application of *qiyas*, are predominantly represented by fish (Al-Najjar, 2010).

Several classical and modern scholars have contributed to this debate. According to Kamali (2008), the general permissibility in the Shafi'i view is consistent with the Qur'anic spirit of ease and mercy. On the other hand, Hallaq (2009) points to the Hanafi reliance on subsidiary evidences from Hadith and local practice that lean towards a more restricted interpretation. In regions historically influenced by Shafi'i legal thought, such as Yemen and parts of the Indian Ocean rim, diverse seafood including shellfish, cephalopods, and crustaceans are commonly accepted as *halal*. Conversely, in areas following Hanafi jurisprudence, such as parts of South Asia, the consumption is often restricted to what is categorized as fish, with other marine creatures frequently being treated with caution.

Analysis of Surah An-Nahl (16:14)

Another pivotal verse is found in Surah An-Nahl, which states:

“وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لَكُمْ لَتَكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا”

“And it is He who subjected the sea for you to eat from it tender meat” (Qur'an 16:14).

The phrase “لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا” (*lahman tariyyan*) literally means “tender meat” or “soft flesh.” The adjective “طَرِيًّا” carries connotations of delicacy and palatability, serving as an affirmation of the sea's provision. The spectrum of interpretation, however, circles around whether this delicacy refers exclusively to fish or might also include other sea creatures like shellfish or cephalopods.

Shafi'i Perspective: Jurists in the Shafi'i tradition emphasize the general and positive tone of the verse, which they read as a divine endorsement of the bounty of the sea in its entirety. They argue that the verse underlines the miraculous nature of marine provision and, by extension, calls on believers to trust in the permissibility as a sign of divine generosity (Al-Shafi'i, 1995). This interpretation is consolidated by the absence of any qualifying language that would exclude certain types of sea life.

Hanafi Perspective: The Hanafi school, while acknowledging the verse's celebration of the sea's bounty, argues that in conjunction with other texts, the term “tender meat” should be narrowly defined. They maintain that the phrase “dead meat” mentioned in Hadith literature (discussed in the next section) must be uniformly applied to restrict the permissibility. In addition, classical Hanafi texts cite contextual usage in pre-Islamic Arabia and early Islamic jurisprudence that associated “tender meat” with fish rather than all marine animals (Al-Najjar, 2010).

Comparative Commentary: The conflicting interpretations of these verses reveal the underlying conceptual differences between the schools. The Shafi'i approach, based on a broader contextual and linguistic reading, views the texts in a holistic manner emphasizing divine mercy and bounty. The Hanafi approach, meanwhile, employs a more precise, evidential method by weighing subsidiary texts and local observations that lean toward a conservative application.

According to Rahman (1982), understanding the delicate interplay between text and context is essential to grasping Islamic dietary laws. Contemporary analysis by Saeed (2006) has further emphasized how these interpretative differences reflect broader debates on legal reforms within Islamic jurisprudence.

Textual Analysis of Hadith Evidence

Hadith literature is central to Islamic jurisprudence. In the discourse surrounding seafood, several narrations provide key insights that have been interpreted differently by the Hanafi and Shafi'i schools.

General Permissibility Hadith

One widely cited hadith is found in Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, wherein the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have stated:

"هو الطهور، ماؤه الحل، ميتته"

"Its water is pure and its dead are lawful."

Shafi'i Approach: Shafi'i scholars tend to interpret "ميتته" (maytatu-hu, "its dead") in the broadest sense. They assert that since the sea produces a variety of dead creatures, this hadith serves as an explicit declaration of the general permissibility of all sea creatures. The emphasis on purity and lawfulness reinforces the idea that marine life, regardless of its form, is a gift from Allah meant for consumption. This interpretation is supported by classical commentaries that stress the miraculous nature of the sea's bounty (Al-Shafi'i, 1995).

Hanafi Approach: In contrast, Hanafi jurists argue that the hadith should be read in the context of other relevant narrations and practice. They contend that "ميتته" should be interpreted to precisely mean those sea creatures that are typically considered fish. The Hanafi methodology, which is rooted in a more literal interpretation tied to the overall context of Prophet Muhammad's dietary instructions, emphasizes caution in matters of doubtful permissibility (Al-Najjar, 2010). This perspective is reinforced by supplementary narrations that specifically mention fish alongside other exceptions, thereby implying that the general statement was contextual and not intended as a blanket rule.

Theological and Jurisprudential Implications: This divergence in interpretation highlights how subtleties in language can lead to significantly different legal rulings. The Shafi'i reliance on the implicit generality of the statement contrasts with the Hanafi emphasis on explicit textual corroboration. Scholarly debate often centers on whether the hadith's wording should be considered in isolation or in conjunction with other textual evidence (Kamali, 2008).

Specific Rulings Hadith

Another significant narration which has influenced the discourse on seafood permissibility is:

"أُجِلَّتْ لَنَا مِيتَتَانِ: السَّمَكُ وَالْجَرَادُ"

"Two kinds of dead meat have been made lawful for us: fish and locusts."

Hanafi Perspective: The Hanafi school uses this hadith to argue persuasively in favor of a narrow interpretation. In their view, the explicit mention of fish rather than a general category of sea animals implies that the term "seafood" should be narrowly limited. This hadith is often cited in Hanafi texts to support the notion that only those creatures whose permissibility has been unequivocally declared (i.e., fish) should be consumed. This interpretation is bolstered by the earlier emphasis on the caution of "avoiding doubtful matters" (Al-Najjar, 2010).

Shafi'i Perspective: Although the Shafi'i school recognizes the hadith, they argue that it does not preclude the general permissibility established by other evidences. Shafi'i scholars contend that the mention of locusts in this narration merely serves as an example of the types of creatures whose consumption is exceptionally validated under particular circumstances. Hence, it should not be taken to categorically exclude other marine life from being lawful, especially when broader textual evidence exists (Al-Shafi'i, 1995).

Comparative Analysis of Hadith Evidence: The divergence in the interpretation of these hadiths mirrors the broader methodological differences between the two schools. While the Hanafi approach is characterized by its exclusionary reading, emphasizing specificity and a cautious attitude toward doubtful matters, the Shafi'i approach leans towards a more inclusive interpretation that prioritizes the general spirit of divine benevolence.

Kamali (2008) notes that the careful weighing of narrative chains and contextual readings plays an essential role in accepting or limiting a hadith's scope. Rahman (1982) and

Saeed (2006) have likewise commented on how the evolution of textual analysis in Islamic jurisprudence reflects changing contexts of interpretation and practice over generations.

Methodological Divergences in Jurisprudence

The differences in seafood rulings between the Hanafi and Shafi'i madhhabs illustrate broader methodological divergences in Islamic legal theory. This section elaborates on the distinctive analytical frameworks that govern each school's approach.

Hanafi Methodology

The Hanafi school is well known for its cautious and methodical approach to jurisprudence. Key features of the Hanafi methodology include:

Literal Interpretation and Compactness: Hanafi scholars tend to give more weight to the explicit wording of the texts. When it comes to determining the permissibility of seafood, the careful analysis of terms, such as "صَيْدُ الْبَحْرِ" and "مَيْتَتُهُ", leads to a narrow delineation. The view that only fish and, in exceptional cases, locusts and certain invertebrates are permitted is grounded in a desire to avoid madhkhul al-shubuhah (matters of uncertainty) (Al-Najjar, 2010).

Cautious Jurisprudence: A core Hanafi legal maxim is that "الْيَقِينُ لَا يُلْغَى بِالشَّكِّ" (certainty is not overruled by doubt). This principle is applied to avoid incorporating potentially condemned items into what is considered halal. Consequently, since there is some textual ambiguity regarding non-fish sea creatures, the Hanafi school opts for restriction rather than inclusion.

This cautious approach is reflective of a broader vision of safeguarding communal well-being by erring on the side of legal certainty (Hallaq, 2009).

Reliance on Additional Evidences: Hanafi jurists often integrate supplementary evidences from various Hadiths, consensus (ijma'), and historical rulings that affirm the narrow interpretation. They also consider local practices and the cumulative experience of early Islamic jurists, which further reinforces the limited application of permissible marine life. This methodology, which incorporates analogical reasoning (qiyas) and juridical preference (istihsan) selectively, is designed to ensure that food consumption remains unequivocally halal.

Shafi'i Methodology

The Shafi'i school is characterized by a more direct reading of the scriptural texts, emphasizing the apparent meaning without unnecessarily imposing additional restrictions.

Emphasis on the Apparent Meaning: Shafi'i jurists give primary importance to the plain meaning of the Qur'anic verses and Hadith narrations. In the case of seafood, the general wording in texts like Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:96) is taken to imply comprehensive permissibility. By resisting over-interpretation, the Shafi'i approach upholds that, in the absence of explicit prohibition, all seafood is permissible.

Contextual Flexibility: The Shafi'i methodology is more responsive to contextual and linguistic nuances. Rather than submitting to a strictly literal interpretation that might inadvertently restrict the application of divine mercy, Shafi'i scholars advocate for an approach that recognizes the diversity of marine ecosystems and the varying needs of Muslim communities. This approach is well encapsulated in the Shafi'i penchant for drawing on ijma' (scholarly consensus) to include permissible practices that benefit the community (Al-Shafi'i, 1995).

Legal Ease and Flexibility: The Shafi'i school, by emphasizing the generality of scriptural commands, aligns with the broader Islamic legal principle that the law should promote ease (يسر). This inclination is particularly visible in dietary laws, where facilitatory rulings are preferred over burdensome restrictions. Kamali (2008) notes that the Shafi'i position is often justified by the need to accommodate diverse cultural practices and ensure that the law does not become a source of hardship.

The methodological divide between the Hanafi and Shafi'i schools in handling Islamic texts illustrates a broader tension in jurisprudential theory: the balance between caution and permissiveness. Whereas the Hanafi method is predisposed to adopt a narrow interpretation in order to circumvent uncertainty, the Shafi'i approach embraces the open-ended, generous

spirit of the primary texts. This divergence is not merely academic, it has practical consequences on what foods are routinely consumed in different Muslim communities.

Case Studies and Contemporary Practices

While the historical and textual debates have long been settled in scholarly circles, the practical implications of these differences continue to emerge in the modern world. This section examines how the divergent rulings on seafood impact contemporary Muslim communities by analyzing case studies from two major regions.

The Impact on Dietary Habits in South Asia

Background and Juridical Influence: South Asia, particularly India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, is predominantly influenced by Hanafi jurisprudence. In these regions, the interpretation that only fish is truly permissible has influenced both individual dietary habits and commercial practices. Many households strictly consume fish as the sole representative of marine life, while other sea creatures such as shellfish and cephalopods are approached with caution or entirely avoided.

Halal Certification and Market Practices: In South Asia, regulatory bodies that oversee halal certification have often adhered to conservative interpretations. As a result, food products containing shrimp, crab, or mollusks sometimes face disputes regarding their halal status. This has led to differences in halal certification standards, with some certifying agencies adhering strictly to Hanafi guidelines.

Surveys and ethnographic studies (e.g., Ahmed, 2015) indicate that in areas where Hanafi jurisprudence is predominant, community members often express a preference for fish, citing religious injunctions and historical precedent. Religious sermons and cultural texts reinforce this perspective, which can lead to local skepticism towards other types of seafood. Contemporary jurists in South Asia have begun to reexamine these traditional positions in light of modern food safety standards, ecological availability, and globalization. Nonetheless, the entrenched views rooted in centuries of Hanafi tradition continue to shape public opinion. Studies by Rahman (2017) suggest a gradual, though cautious, shift as some scholars advocate for reinterpreting traditional texts in a modern context, albeit without fully abandoning established Hanafi principles.

The Ruling's Application in Southeast Asia

Contrasting with the Hanafi-dominated South Asia, many Southeast Asian Muslim communities such as those in Indonesia and Malaysia, follow the Shafi'i madhhab. The implications are clear: a broader interpretation regarding seafood permissibility has led to an inclusive approach toward marine life. **Culinary Traditions:** In Indonesia and Malaysia, a wide variety of seafood is commonplace on the dining table. Fish, squid, octopus, shrimp, and even certain crustaceans are routinely prepared and celebrated as halal. This culinary diversity reflects the Shafi'i legal opinion that accords all creatures from the sea a status of permissibility. **Regulatory Standards:** Local halal certification bodies incorporate these expansive interpretations, allowing a wide range of seafood products to carry the halal label. Contemporary legal frameworks, supported by modern fatwas (Islamic legal opinions), continue to affirm the Shafi'i stance, reinforcing its credibility among the general population.

Recent works by scholars such as Hassan (2018) and Lim (2019) highlight the dynamic interaction between classical juristic positions and modern consumer demands. For instance, debates on sustainable fishing practices and marine conservation have led some scholars to call for a reexamination of traditional rulings. However, the prevailing opinion remains rooted in the extensive permissibility articulated by proponents of the Shafi'i school.

Scholarly Perspectives: Historical and Modern

A thorough understanding of the issue necessitates an examination of both classical scholars and modern commentators, whose works demonstrate the evolution of legal thought regarding seafood permissibility. Historically, jurists such as Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam al-Shafi'i laid the groundwork for subsequent debates on dietary laws. Their respective methodologies have had lasting impacts on how communities measure permissibility in ambiguous matters.

Imam Abu Hanifa (d. 767 CE):

His jurisprudential approach, characterized by cautious interpretation and reliance on qiyas, was instrumental in formulating the Hanafi position. Abu Hanifa's emphasis on avoiding doubtful matters (الورع) contributed to the conservative views on seafood, which practically limited lawful consumption to fish and a few specific exceptions (Al-Najjar, 2010).

Imam al-Shafi'i (d. 820 CE):

In contrast, Imam al-Shafi'i's methodology prioritized the apparent and general meaning of the texts. His commentaries assert that when the Qur'an celebrates the bounty of the sea without delineating boundaries, believers are to regard it as pure and lawful. Al-Shafi'i's reliance on direct textual interpretation set the stage for a more inclusive stance toward marine life (Al-Shafi'i, 1995).

Commentators and jurists such as Ibn Hazm and Al-Ghazali have also addressed these issues. Ibn Hazm's reliance on literal interpretations further supports the Shafi'i view, while Al-Ghazali's works reflect a balanced approach that occasionally leans toward caution similar to the Hanafi perspective (Ibn Hazm, 1992; Al-Ghazali, 2001).

Modern Interpretations and Debates

Contemporary scholars have revisited classical interpretations in the light of modern contexts. Issues such as environmental ethics, food safety, and the pressures of globalization have spurred reexaminations of long-held positions.

Modern jurists like Hasan (2018) and Lim (2019) argue that the broader reading of the texts as advocated by the Shafi'i school aligns with the spirit of ease (taysir) in Islamic law. They suggest that the diversity of marine life in today's global ecosystem necessitates a flexible approach that remains faithful to the original texts while addressing modern concerns.

Food Safety and Sustainability: Scholars such as Ahmed (2015) have also examined how food safety standards affect the permissibility of different types of seafood. While the Hanafi caution remains significant, these modern analyses frequently advocate for a balanced approach that upholds tradition while accommodating modern regulatory frameworks.

Interdisciplinary Perspectives: Recent interdisciplinary research combining Islamic jurisprudence with modern marine biology and environmental science, such as that by Rahman (2017), has further enriched the debate. These works stress that the Qur'anic and Hadith evidences, when understood in their broader contexts, offer a robust framework for sustainable and responsible food consumption.

A survey of contemporary academic journals such as the Journal of Islamic Studies and Islamic Law and Society reveals an active debate. Some papers argue for a reformed Hanafi perspective, appealing to historical flexibility in Islamic law (e.g., Saeed, 2006), while others reinforce the Shafi'i inclusive position by underscoring the prophetic tradition's emphasis on divine bounty (Kamali, 2008). In summary, the scholarly literature demonstrates that the classical opinions laid a robust foundation for the diverging interpretations. Modern scholarship is actively engaged in reconciling traditional methodologies with contemporary realities. The interplay between literalism and context remains the epicenter of the debate on seafood permissibility.

Conclusion

The divergent rulings on seafood permissibility between the Hanafi and Shafi'i schools not only underscore the richness of Islamic jurisprudence but also reflect the dynamic nature of legal interpretation. This comprehensive study has shown that A close analysis of key Qur'anic verses such as Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:96) and Surah An-Nahl (16:14) reveals that the language used supports both a broad and narrow interpretation. The Shafi'i interpretation, emphasizing general permissibility, aligns with the overarching theme of divine mercy and ease. In contrast, the Hanafi method, committed to mitigating uncertainty, narrows the scope to predominantly fish. The Hadith evidence provides further support for the divergent views. Whereas the narration "هو الطهور، ماؤه الحل، ميتته" is taken in a general sense by the Shafi'is, the Hanafi reliance on additional narrations such as "أُجِلَّتْ لَنَا مَيْتَتَانِ: السَّمَكُ وَالْجَرَادُ" reinforces a

restricted approach. This contrast underscores the importance of methodological rigor alongside textual examination. The Hanafi school's cautious method—with its emphasis on the explicit and the use of analogical reasoning (*qiyas*) stands in stark contrast to the Shafi'i school's broader, more contextual reading that prioritizes the plain meaning of the texts. This methodological divergence is reflective of a deeper epistemological debate within Islamic jurisprudence regarding how best to balance tradition with contemporary exigencies. In modern contexts, these classical discussions have pragmatic implications. Case studies from South Asia and Southeast Asia illustrate that communities following different jurisprudential traditions exhibit distinct culinary practices regarding seafood. While Hanafi-dominated regions tend to limit consumption to fish, Shafi'i regions enjoy a diverse array of marine life as part of their cultural heritage, with contemporary debates often reflecting evolving understandings of food safety, sustainability, and global trade. Historical and modern scholars alike have contributed to the evolution of this debate. While classical scholars laid the groundwork with their rigorous textual exegesis, contemporary academics are reinterpreting these evidence bases in light of modern challenges. This ongoing dialogue is a testament to the enduring flexibility and occasional tension within Islamic legal thought. In conclusion, the legal diversity regarding seafood permissibility is emblematic of broader trends in Islamic jurisprudence. It reveals that what might appear as a simple dietary rule is, in fact, a complex interplay of textual evidence, historical context, and methodological preferences. This study thus contributes to a better understanding of legal pluralism within Islam and emphasizes that Islamic law, even in its most quotidian applications, remains a vibrant and continually evolving discipline.

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