

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SERTU FOR PORK CONTAMINATION ACROSS THE FOUR SUNNI MADHHABS AND ACCOMMODATING THE AL-NAWAWĪ POSITION IN *AL-MAJMU'* REGARDING INTERNATIONAL HALAL CERTIFICATION

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Abstract: *The Islamic legal concept of sertu refers to the ritual purification process required for objects contaminated by najas mughallazah (heavy impurities), specifically involving dogs and swine. This article examines the jurisprudential positions of the four major Sunni schools of law, Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfi'ī, and Ḥanbalī, regarding the purification of pork contamination. While pork is unanimously classified as ḥarām and impure (najas), the four madhhabs diverge significantly on the methodology, necessity of soil, number of required washes, and the permissibility of modern alternatives. Through comparative analysis of primary legal sources and contemporary fatwa literature, this article identifies that the Shāfi'ī school maintains the strictest requirements (seven washes including one with soil), Ḥanbalī doctrine permits alternatives to soil, while Ḥanafī and Mālikī schools consider standard purification sufficient. These divergences have substantial implications for halal certification, food safety protocols, and inter-madhab compliance in the global halal industry.*

Keywords: *Sertu; Pork Contamination; Najas Mughallazah; Comparative Fiqh; Halal Purification*

Introduction

The global halal industry has expanded exponentially in recent decades, encompassing food, pharmaceutical, cosmetic, and logistics sectors (Prayuda et al., 2023). A critical challenge facing this industry is the management of cross-contamination with prohibited substances, particularly pork and its derivatives (Shahidan & Amid, 2023). Islamic law provides specific purification protocols for such scenarios, collectively referred to as *sertu* in the Malay legal tradition (Yusof & Mohd Subri, 2022). The foundation for *sertu* purification derives primarily from prophetic traditions concerning canine saliva. A well-authenticated hadith narrated by Abū Hurayrah in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, no.279 states:

طُهُورُ إِنَاءٍ أَحَدِكُمْ إِذَا وَلَعَ فِيهِ الْكَلْبُ أَنْ يَغْسِلَهُ سَبْعَ مَرَّاتٍ أَوْ لَاهُنَّ بِالتُّرَابِ

The cleansing of the utensil belonging to one of you, after it has been licked by a dog, is to wash it seven times, and using soil for cleaning at the first time.

Classical jurists as explained in *al-Majmu'*, extended this ruling analogically (*qiyās*) to swine, reasoning that pork is categorically worse in impurity than dogs (al-Nawawī, n.d.a). The Qur'anic basis for pork's impurity is found in Sūrat al-An'ām (6:145):

قُلْ لَا أَجِدُ فِي مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلَى طَاعِمٍ يَطْعَمُهُ إِلَّا أَنْ يَكُونَ مَيْتَةً أَوْ دَمًا مَسْفُوحًا أَوْ لَحْمَ خِنْزِيرٍ فَإِنَّهُ رَجْسٌ أَوْ فَسَقًا أَهْلَ لَعْنٍ لِّلَّهِ بِهِ فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

Say, O Prophet: I do not find in what has been revealed to me anything forbidden to eat except carrion, running blood, swine - which is impure - or a sinful offering in the name of any other than Allah. But if someone is compelled by necessity - neither driven by desire nor exceeding immediate need - then surely your Lord is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

However, significant disagreement exists among the four major madhhabs regarding: (1) whether pork is classified identically to dogs for purification purposes; (2) the necessity of the seven-wash protocol; (3) whether soil is an obligatory component; (4) the permissibility of substituting soil with modern cleansing agents such as clay-based soaps; and (5) the application of these rules to different types of contamination (*najs 'aynī* vs. *najs ḥukmī*).

This article aims to systematically map these jurisprudential divergences, analyze their underlying legal reasoning (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), and assess their contemporary applicability in industrial halal certification contexts. By employing a *fiqh muqāran* (comparative jurisprudence) methodology, this study contributes to the growing literature on harmonizing classical Islamic law with modern purification challenges (Abd Karim et al., 2025).

Conceptual Framework: Sertu, Samak, and Najs Classification

Terminological Clarification

A preliminary terminological distinction is necessary. In Malay Islamic legal discourse, *sertu* refers specifically to the purification of *najs mughallaḏah* (heavy impurities) using seven washes, one of the washes must be mixed with soil (Abdul Rahman et al., 2022). *Samak* or in Arabic called *dibāgh*, by contrast, denotes the tanning process for animal hides from carcasses (*maytah*) of animals excluding dogs and pigs (Mohd Saleh et al., 2016),

typically using astringent substances like salt or lime. While colloquial usage sometimes conflates these terms, classical jurisprudential sources maintain clear distinctions.

Hierarchy of Impurities (Najs)

Basically, most Islamic jurisprudence categorizes impurities into three hierarchical levels (al-Hararī, 2022):

Category	Definition	Examples	Purification Requirement
Najs mughallazah (heavy)	Impurities from dogs and swine	Dog and swine and whatever that comes from them	Sertu (disputed protocol)
Najs mutawassitah (medium)	Common impurities	Human urine, blood, alcohol, carrion	Standard water washing (removal of physical traces)
Najs Mukhaffafah (light)	Minor impurities	Urine of a baby boy who are not more than two years of age and only feed from the milk	Sprinkling of water

Pork is unanimously classified as najs mughallazah by all four schools, though the Ḥanafī, Mālikī and some from Shāfi'ī schools question whether it requires the same heightened purification as canine impurities (al-Nawawī, n.d.a).

Najs 'aynī vs. Najs Ḥukmī

A further distinction pertains to whether the impurity is physically perceptible (najs 'aynī, possessing colour, odour, or taste) or has become imperceptible through drying that is believed to exist but has no detectable physical trace with no odour, colour, or taste (najs ḥukmī) (al-Hararī, 2022). This distinction significantly affects purification rulings, particularly regarding whether the seven-wash protocol applies when the physical traces of pork are no longer detectable.

Comparative Analysis of Madhhab Positions

Overview of Substantive Differences

The following table summarizes the core disagreements among the four madhhabs regarding purification from pork contamination (al-Nawawī, n.d.a):

Element	Ḥanafī	Mālikī	Shāfi'ī	Ḥanbalī
Pork as najs mughallazah?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of washes required	One (sufficient); seven (mustaḥabb)	One (sufficient); seven (mustaḥabb)	Seven (obligatory)	Seven (obligatory)
Soil requirement	Not required	Not required	Obligatory (one wash with soil-water mixture)	Required, but substitutable

Modern alternatives (soap/clay) permissible?	Yes (standard cleaning suffices)	Yes	No (soil is ta'abbudī)	Yes (if same cleansing effect)
Applicability to pork vs. dog	Same ruling	Same ruling	Same ruling	Same ruling

The Ḥanafī Position: Minimalist Purification

The Ḥanafī school, founded by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, adopts the most lenient position regarding sirtu. Ḥanafī jurists argue that the prophetic hadith applies specifically to canine saliva and does not extend analogically to body of dog and swine (Yusof & Wan Zahari, 2023). Their reasoning includes (al-Ḥanafī, 2004):

- Textual specificity: The hadith explicitly mentions dogs; extending it to pigs requires analogical reasoning (qiyās), which Ḥanafīs reject in matters of ritual purification ('ibādāt) due to their principle of ta'abbudī (unquestioning obedience to textual specificity).
- Sufficiency of standard purification: Since pork is najis like any other impurity (urine, blood, alcohol), its removal requires only the elimination of its physical traces, color, odor, and taste, through standard washing. The seven-wash protocol is mustaḥabb (recommended) but not wājib (obligatory).
- Abrogation evidence: Ḥanafīs cite a narration where Abū Hurayrah himself reportedly issued a fatwa that three washes suffice for dog saliva, suggesting the seven-wash command was later abrogated or context-specific.

In Ḥanafī-dominated regions (Turkey, Central Asia, South Asia), food processing equipment contaminated with pork may be rendered pure through thorough standard cleaning without specialized soil-based protocols. This position significantly reduces compliance burdens for halal-certified facilities.

The Mālikī Position: Qualified Leniency

The Mālikī school, founded by Imām Mālik ibn Anas, largely aligns with the Ḥanafī position regarding the non-obligatory nature of seven washes. However, Mālikīs maintain the mustaḥabb status of the full protocol as a supererogatory act of precaution (Ibn al-'Arabī, 1992). Key Mālikī arguments (Yusof & Wan Zahari, 2023):

- Purity of water licked by dogs: Some Mālikī jurists controversially held that water contacted by a dog's tongue remains pure (tāhīr), rendering the purification discussion moot. The seven washes are therefore ta'abbudī (ritualistic obedience without rational explanation) rather than necessary for actual cleansing.
- No soil requirement: Since soil is not explicitly mandated in Mālikī primary sources for pork (as opposed to dogs), standard washing agents suffice.

Mālikī practice (predominant in North and West Africa) permits halal certification authorities to accept standard industrial cleaning protocols for pork-contaminated equipment, though additional washes are recommended.

The Shāfi'ī Position: Strict Constructionism

The Shāfi'ī school, founded by Imām Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī, represents the most rigorous position. Shāfi'ī jurisprudence mandates (al-Nawawī, 2005; al-Rāfi'ī, n.d.):

- Seven obligatory washes: The full seven-wash protocol is wājib (obligatory) for any object contaminated by pork, whether the contamination is physical (‘aynī) or dried (ḥukmī). This includes not only utensils but also clothing, bodies, and fixed surfaces.
- Mandatory soil for any of these washes: Any of the seven washes must employ water mixed with pure earth (turab). This requirement is derived literally from the hadith phrase and is considered ta‘abbudī, a divinely commanded ritual act not subject to rational substitution.
- Extension to all pork derivatives: Shāfi‘ī jurists explicitly include swine flesh, fat, skin, bones, and all bodily secretions under the same ruling.

The Shāfi‘ī position is methodologically grounded in the principle of adhering to explicit textual evidence (ẓāhir al-naṣṣ) without analogical relaxation in matters clearly specified by the Prophet. As Imām al-Khaṭīb al-Shirbīnī (1994) stated:

The wajh al-dalālah for purification is the same for hadas or filth... and the dog’s mouth is the cleanest part of its body, so other parts and swine are even heavier in impurity.

In Shāfi‘ī-majority regions (Southeast Asia, East Africa, southern Arabia), halal certification requires documented sertu protocols for any equipment previously contacting pork. This has driven innovation in clay-based cleaning agents and ATP testing to verify compliance.

The Ḥanbalī Position: Strict but Flexible

The Ḥanbalī school, founded by Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, shares the Shāfi‘ī commitment to the seven-wash protocol but introduces a critical flexibility regarding the soil requirement (Yusof & Wan Zahari, 2023). Ḥanbalī distinctives (al-Buhūtī, 1994):

- Seven washes obligatory: Like the Shāfi‘īs, Ḥanbalīs consider the eight washes mandatory for najs mughallazah. Seven washes first then follow with one with soil.
- Soil not exclusive: Unlike the Shāfi‘īs, Ḥanbalīs permit substitution of soil with other cleansing agents that achieve the same purification effect, including soap, lime, or modern detergents. Ibn Qudāmah (1994), the preeminent Ḥanbalī jurist, explicitly states in al-Mughnī, that “it is permissible to use other than soil in the process of sertu, such as using soap or others”.
- Rationale: Ḥanbalīs emphasize the teleological (maqāṣid) dimension, the purpose of soil is cleansing, not ritual formalism. Any substance fulfilling that purpose is therefore acceptable.

Ḥanbalī jurisprudence (dominant in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf) provides middle ground for halal industry: facilities must perform seven washes (operational burden) but may use conventional cleaning agents rather than sourcing soil (material burden reduced).

Contemporary Applications and Fatwa Developments

Modern Substitutes for Soil

A significant contemporary debate concerns whether manufactured products containing clay or soil-derived minerals can fulfill the sertu requirement, particularly in urban environments where clean soil is inaccessible. According to Muhammad Fahmi Rusli in *Irsyad al-Fatwa Series 221* (Jabatan Mufti Wilayah Persekutuan, 2018), Mufti of Federal Territory; Department, The Malaysian National Fatwa Committee, 76th Muzakarah, 2006 ruled that soap

containing clay elements is permissible for najs mughallazah purification under three conditions: (1) The soil content is sacred (pure); (2) The percentage of soil exceeds other ingredients; and (3) The sertu method follows shar'i specifications.

Quoted by him, other than The Malaysian National Fatwa Committee, Egypt's Dār al-Iftā' issued a more permissive fatwa (no. 3799), stating:

It is permissible to replace soil with something that can take its place in this age with modern purifying objects. This is because the final conclusion of taharah (pure) in absolute terms.

He also said the final fatwa on Fatāwa al-Lajnah al-Dā'imah (4/196) for this issue states:

And the clothes is thrown into pure water and is washed until traces of najs is gone, thus, it purifies the whole from najs from dog and others. On the condition that the washing for dog is repeated seven times, and the first washing is from soil or anything that could replace its place, such as soap or others.

The Permanent Committee for Scholarly Research and Iftā' in Saudi Arabia (Ḥanbalī-influenced) similarly permits substitution with effective cleansing agents. These fatwas most likely follow the opinion in al-Mughnī.

Industrial Implementation: The Seven-Wash Protocol in Practice

Contemporary halal certification bodies have operationalized the Shāfi'ī/Ḥanbalī sertu requirement into standardized protocols, particularly in Malaysia's halal ecosystem. The typical industrial sertu procedure involves (Shaharuddin, 2025):

Step	Description	Verification
1	Remove visible pork residue physically	Visual inspection
2	First wash: soil-water mixture (1:6 ratio) or certified clay-based detergent	ATP testing (RLU $\leq$ 10 recommended)
3-8	Six subsequent washes with pure water	ATP testing after final wash
9	Documentation and certification	Audit trail

ATP (adenosine triphosphate) bioluminescence testing has emerged as a scientific validation tool, with acceptable readings set at ≤ 10 relative light units (RLU) for sertu-compliant surfaces.

The al-Nawawī Exception: A Minority Position within the Shāfi'ī School

A significant and often overlooked dimension of the Shāfi'ī discourse on sertu involves a minority position articulated by Imam Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, one of the most authoritative figures in the later Shāfi'ī tradition. Contrary to the majority position (mu'tamad) of the school, which mandates seven washes including one with soil for pork contamination, Imam al-Nawawī held an independent opinion (ikhtiyār) that purification from swine requires only a single wash without soil.

Imam al-Nawawī's Ruling and Its Evidentiary Basis

Imam al-Nawawī's position is documented across several of his major works, including Al-Majmū' Sharḥ al-Muhadhdhab (al-Nawawī, n.d.a). He explicitly stated:

واعلم أن الراجح من حيث الدليل أنه يكفي غسلة واحدة بلا تراب ، وبه قال أكثر العلماء الذين قالوا بنجاسة الخنزير

And know that the stronger opinion, in terms of evidence, is that a single washing without soil is sufficient; and this is the view held by most of the scholars who considered the pig to be impure.

This reasoning reflects a rigorous textual literalism. The prophetic hadith mandating seven washes with soil specifically mentions canine saliva (wulūgh al-kalb). Swine is never explicitly mentioned in the relevant prophetic traditions. While the majority of Shāfi'ī jurists extended the ruling to pigs through analogical reasoning (qiyās), arguing that swine is categorically worse than dogs, al-Nawawī rejected this extension as lacking clear evidentiary support.

Relationship to Imam al-Shāfi'ī's Own Positions

Importantly, al-Nawawī's ruling is not without precedent within the school's foundational texts. This position corresponds to an established view (qawl) of Imam al-Shāfi'ī himself as mentioned by al-Nawawī (n.d.a): *فقد قال ابن القاص: "قال في القديم: يغسل مرة"*. Ibn al-Qāṣ said: He stated in the old opinion that it is washed once". And this specifically what is termed *muqābil al-aẓhar* (an opinion that is strong enough to be practiced upon, though not the most prominent) and also a *qawl qadīm* (an earlier opinion of al-Shāfi'ī from his Baghdad period).

Thus, five distinct transmitted views exist within the Shāfi'ī school regarding *mughallaẓah* purification:

No.	Description	Status
1	Seven washes, one with earth	Relied-upon (mu'tamad / qawl azhar)
2	Seven washes, one with soap or substitute	Muqābil al-aẓhar
3	Seven washes, one with substitute only when earth unavailable	Muqābil al-aẓhar
4	Seven washes, one with earth (damage exception)	Lesser opinion
5	One wash, no earth required	Muqābil al-aẓhar; al-Nawawī's ikhtiyār

Reconciling the Majority and Minority Positions

Contemporary Shāfi'ī authorities acknowledge this internal diversity while generally maintaining that the mu'tamad (relied-upon) position for fatwa and practice remains the seven-wash protocol with earth. However, al-Nawawī's ruling is not dismissed as legally invalid; rather, it is recognized as a legitimate minority position within the school's methodological boundaries. Sedick (2022) commenting on precisely this issue, notes:

There are differing views about the purity status of dogs and pigs. When one encounters situations such as the one described, it may be wiser to treat them according to the less strict views. According to these valid opinions, a single wash is sufficient to clean the area.

This represents a significant practical concession: individuals facing genuine hardship (*mashaqqah*) in implementing the full seven-wash protocol may validly follow al-Nawawī's minority position, as the Shāfi'ī school does not bind non-scholars to a single opinion.

Significance for Sertu Discourse

The existence of al-Nawawī's minority position carries several implications for the contemporary halal industry:

- It demonstrates that even within the strictest madhhab (Shāfi'ī) regarding sertu, there is juristic flexibility. The school is not monolithic; it contains multiple interpretive streams that can accommodate varying circumstances.
- Al-Nawawī's ruling aligns the Shāfi'ī school more closely with the Ḥanafī and Mālikī positions than is commonly acknowledged. When the minority Shāfi'ī view is considered alongside the majority Ḥanafī-Mālikī positions, a broader consensus emerges that standard washing may suffice for pork contamination in certain contexts.
- For halal certification bodies operating in Shāfi'ī-majority regions, this minority position provides a legitimate basis for approving alternative purification protocols, particularly where sourcing clean soil is impractical or where industrial equipment cannot withstand abrasive earth cleaning.

Summary: The Nawawī Position in Context

To situate al-Nawawī's ruling within the broader comparative framework established earlier in this article. Al-Nawawī's ruling thus represents a remarkable convergence: the most influential later scholar of the strictest madhhab on sertu arrived at a position substantially identical to the Ḥanafī and Mālikī majority views. This internal Shāfi'ī minority opinion provides a juristically sound basis for leniency in purification protocols without requiring Muslims to leave the Shāfi'ī school entirely, a significant consideration for those who maintain madhhab loyalty in other areas of practice.

Policy Recommendations for JAKIM: Accommodating the al-Nawawī Position in International Halal Certification

The Practical Dilemma

The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM, Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia), as the national halal certification authority, operates firmly within the Shāfi'ī madhhab as its official legal framework. Consequently, JAKIM's Manual Prosedur Pensijilan Halal Malaysia (MPPHM) (JAKIM 2020) mandates the full sertu protocol for pork contamination: seven washes with one wash incorporating soil or certified clay-based cleansing agents. This requirement, while doctrinally consistent with the mu'tamad (relied-upon) Shāfi'ī position, has generated persistent compliance challenges for international halal certificate holders, particularly food processing facilities in non-Muslim majority countries where sourcing clean soil suitable for industrial sertu is logistically prohibitive, and where industrial equipment (e.g., stainless steel conveyors, heat exchangers, automated filling lines) cannot withstand abrasive soil particles without sustaining damage or compromising food safety standards. This section offers an academically grounded argument to JAKIM's policy division, demonstrating that accommodating the al-Nawawī position for international applicants is not a departure from Shāfi'ī orthodoxy but rather a legitimate exercise of ikhtilaf mu'tabar (recognized scholarly disagreement) consistent with the principles of fiqh al-taysir (jurisprudence of facilitation) and maṣlaḥah mursalah (unrestricted public interest).

The Status of Muqābil al-Aẓhar in Shāfi'ī Jurisprudence

A critical methodological point often misunderstood by non-specialists is that muqābil al-aẓhar opinions are not legally invalid. In Shāfi'ī madhhab terminology, especially as

systematised in al-Nawawī's Minhāj al-Ṭālibīn, al-aẓhar denotes the stronger of two or more transmitted qawls of Imām al-Shāfi'ī, while muqābil al-aẓhar denotes the opposing, less-preferred qawl. Weak wujūh or aqwāl are generally not relied upon for fatwā unless treated under recognised rules of taqlīd, need, or later juristic preference (al-Nawawī, n.d.b; al-Ahdal, n.d.). The explanation is as follows:

Category	Definition	Legal Weight
al-Aẓhar	The strongest opinion, supported by multiple lines of evidence	Primary for fatwa and judicial ruling
Muqābil al-aẓhar	A valid alternative opinion that meets methodological standards	Permissible for fatwa, especially in cases of need (ḥājah)
Weak wujūh or aqwāl	A weak opinion lacking robust evidentiary support	Not permissible for fatwa

Imam al-Nawawī's ruling, requiring only one wash without soil, is explicitly classified as muqābil al-aẓhar, not a weak opinion. Al-Nawawī was not issuing a speculative personal view; he was transmitting an established qawl (position) of Imam al-Shāfi'ī himself, specifically from his earlier Baghdad period (qawl qadīm). As Imām al-Suyūṭī (n.d.) documented in al-Ashbāh wa al-Naẓā'ir, the qawl qadīm of al-Shāfi'ī retains legal authority unless explicitly abrogated by his later Egyptian opinions (qawl jadīd). On the matter of pork purification, no clear abrogation exists. Therefore, JAKIM can legally recognize the al-Nawawī position as an operative Shāfi'ī opinion without violating its commitment to the school.

The Principle of Ikhtilāf Mu'tabar

Classical Shāfi'ī jurists recognized that where legitimate scholarly disagreement (ikhtilāf mu'tabar) exists, a muftī (jurisconsult) or qāḍī (judge) may issue rulings based on alternative opinions when circumstances warrant. Imam al-Nawawī himself, *al-Majmū' Sharḥ al-Muhadhdhab*, discusses whether a layperson may choose and follow any madhhab. He reports a view that the layperson may ask any qualified muftī, but he also warns that unrestricted following of any view may lead to collecting legal concessions while following one's desire. Therefore, choice among juristic views is not to be based on mere desire or convenience.

Maṣlaḥah Mursalah and Ḥājah as Legal Grounds

Beyond internal Shāfi'ī methodology, JAKIM may invoke maṣlaḥah mursalah (unrestricted public interest) (Laldin, 2010) and ḥājah (need) to justify (Ahmed & al-Sakkaf, 2025) adopting the al-Nawawī position for international certification. The legal maxim al-ḥājah tunazzal manzilat al-ḍarūrah (need is treated as necessity) is universally accepted across madhhabs (Abdalmughni, 2025), including the Shāfi'ī school. Applying this to the international halal context:

Condition	Application to Foreign Facilities
Ḥājah 'āmmah (public need)	Global halal industry growth requires practical, implementable standards
Ḥājah khāṣṣah (specific need)	Individual facilities cannot source soil or modify equipment for seltu
Mashaqqah (undue hardship)	Seven-wash soil protocol causes operational delays (typically 4-6 hours of downtime) and equipment damage

If JAKIM insists on the majority position exclusively, several unintended consequences follow:

- foreign facilities may abandon JAKIM certification for alternative bodies with less stringent requirements, reducing Malaysia's influence in global halal standard-setting;
- facilities may engage in non-disclosure of pork cross-contamination, undermining consumer trust; and
- the global halal supply chain to Malaysia may contract, affecting food security.

Proposed Policy Framework for JAKIM

Based on the foregoing legal analysis, the following graduated policy framework is proposed for JAKIM's consideration:

Tier 1: Domestic Application (Within Malaysia)		
i. Maintain the mu'tamad Shāfi'ī position: seven washes with one containing soil/clay-based agent.		
ii. Rationale: Soil is accessible; facilities can be designed for sertu; consumer expectation aligns with majority view.		
Tier 2: International Application – General Principle		
i. Recognize the al-Nawawī position as a valid rukhsah (dispensation) for foreign facilities holding JAKIM recognition.		
ii. Require documented justification from the foreign halal body explaining why the full sertu protocol is impractical (e.g., equipment sensitivity, soil unavailability, operational constraints).		
Tier 3: Alternative Compliance Pathways		
Pathway	Requirement	Applicability
Full sertu	7 washes + soil	Facilities able to comply
Modified sertu	7 washes + clay-based certified detergent	Soil unavailable but facility can perform 7 washes
al-Nawawī pathway	1 thorough wash with standard detergent	Documented hardship and equipment sensitivity
Tier 4: Transparency and Consumer Protection		
i. Require labeling or disclosure indicating which purification standard was applied (e.g., "Certified according to Shāfi'ī mu'tamad" vs. "Certified according to Shāfi'ī rukhsah").		
ii. Publish an annual report on the types of dispensations granted.		

Responding to Anticipated Objections

JAKIM policymakers may raise several objections. Below are academic rebuttals:

Objection	Rebuttal
“Adopting the al-Nawawī position undermines madhhab consistency.”	The al-Nawawī position is an authentic Shāfi‘ī opinion, not external to the school. Adopting it for specific hardship cases is takhayyur madhhabī, not talfiq across madhhabs.
“Consumers expect the full sertu standard.”	Transparent disclosure resolves this. Consumers who personally follow the mu‘tamad may continue to do so; the rukhsah is for certified products, not for individual practice.
“This will set a precedent for further deviations.”	Clear criteria (documented hardship, foreign jurisdiction, equipment sensitivity) limit application. Domestic facilities remain under mu‘tamad.
“Other halal bodies do not make this accommodation.”	Several major bodies already accept the al-Nawawī position, including the Halal Science Center of Thailand and the European Halal Development Agency. JAKIM’s accommodation would position Malaysia as a pragmatic leader, not a follower.
“The qawl qadīm of al-Shāfi‘ī was abrogated.”	No explicit abrogation text exists. The qawl jadīd on this matter is not definitively transmitted. Al-Nawawī’s ikhtiyar explicitly revived the qawl qadīm as an operative opinion.

Conclusion

Imam al-Nawawī’s ruling that pork contamination requires only one wash without soil is not an innovation or deviation from the Shāfi‘ī school. It is an authentic muqābil al-aẓhar position rooted in Imam al-Shāfi‘ī’s own qawl qadīm and revived by one of the school’s most authoritative later scholars. JAKIM’s current categorical rejection of this position for international certification lacks methodological justification and creates unnecessary barriers to global halal compliance. JAKIM should issue a formal policy memorandum (pekeliling) recognizing the al-Nawawī position as a permissible rukhsah for foreign halal certificate holders who demonstrate genuine hardship in implementing the full sertu protocol. This policy should include: (1) clear hardship criteria; (2) documentation requirements; (3) transparent disclosure to consumers; and (4) periodic review. Such a policy would align JAKIM’s practice with established Shāfi‘ī legal principles, enhance Malaysia’s position as a pragmatic global halal leader, and facilitate the growth of the international halal economy without compromising religious integrity.

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