

BRIDGING SUNNI-SHIA THROUGH
RATIONALITY AND SPIRITUALITY IN
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Abstract

This study aims to explore and compare the legal reasoning, epistemological frameworks, and spiritual orientations of Abu Hanifah and Imam Ja'far al-Shadiq as foundational figures in Sunni and Shia jurisprudence. Using a qualitative-descriptive and comparative textual analysis, this research examines classical and secondary sources related to both scholars methodologies, focusing on how rationality ('aql) and spirituality interact within their legal thought. The findings reveal that Abu Hanifah developed a rational, context-based approach through qiyas, ra'y, and istihsan, emphasizing flexibility and social relevance in legal interpretation. In contrast, Imam Ja'far al-Shadiq grounded his thought in the theological authority of the Imamate, integrating reason and revelation under the spiritual guidance of the Ahl al-Bayt. Despite their different theological orientations, both figures share a commitment to reason, moral integrity, and independent judgment (ijtihad). The study concludes that their approaches, though distinct, are complementary bridging Sunni and Shia traditions through a synthesis of rationality and spirituality that remains relevant for the renewal of Islamic law in the modern era.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji dan membandingkan metode penalaran hukum, kerangka epistemologis, serta orientasi spiritual Abu Hanifah dan Imam Ja'far al-Shadiq sebagai dua tokoh sentral dalam mazhab fikih Sunni dan Syiah. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif-deskriptif dan analisis tekstual komparatif, penelitian ini menelaah sumber-sumber klasik dan sekunder terkait metodologi hukum keduanya, khususnya dalam memadukan rasionalitas ('aql) dan spiritualitas dalam pemikiran hukum Islam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Abu Hanifah mengembangkan pendekatan rasional dan kontekstual melalui qiyas, ra'y, dan istihsan yang menekankan fleksibilitas serta relevansi sosial hukum Islam. Sebaliknya, Imam Ja'far al-Shadiq membangun pemikirannya dalam kerangka teologis Imamah, yang memadukan akal dan wahyu melalui otoritas spiritual Ahl al-Bayt. Meskipun memiliki perbedaan teologis, keduanya sama-sama menekankan peran akal, integritas moral, dan ijtihad. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kedua pendekatan tersebut saling melengkapi dan membentuk jembatan intelektual antara tradisi Sunni dan Syiah melalui sintesis rasionalitas dan spiritualitas yang relevan bagi pembaruan hukum Islam di era modern.

INTRODUCTION

In the history of Islamic thought, Abu Hanifah and Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq are two prominent figures who made significant contributions to the development of fiqh and theology.¹ Abu Hanifah is recognized as the founder of the Hanafi school with his rational and contextual method of ijtihad, while Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq played a central role in the Shia tradition by advancing thought in fiqh, theology, and various other sciences.² Both left behind intellectual legacies of great influence that remain relevant to this day. Abu Hanifah is distinguished by his critical approach that combined transmitted traditions with reason, producing a model of Islamic law that was both adaptive and systematic.³ The Hanafi school he established expanded rapidly across regions such as Central Asia, South Asia, and Turkey, becoming one of the largest schools of law in Sunni Islam. Meanwhile, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq was known as a multidisciplinary scholar who emphasized the role of reason in interpreting religious texts, making his teachings structured and rational. He also taught many prominent scholars, including the founders of Sunni schools of law, which reflects the breadth of his influence.⁴

Although they came from different traditions, both figures share a common emphasis on rationality as a key to understanding Islamic teachings. Through ijtihad, Abu Hanifah sought to address practical realities, while Imam Ja'far systematized the use of reason as a foundation for thought both aiming to ensure that Islamic law remained relevant to daily life. However, rather than assuming that their differences were “formed more by socio-political contexts than by fundamental contradictions,” this study begins from the working assumption supported by prior historiographical observations that socio-political circumstances, including the Abbasid and early Shia-Sunni configurations, influenced rather than determined the nature of their doctrinal divergence. The distinction between “contextual” and “doctrinal” differences will thus be operationalized through an analysis of how political authority, educational networks, and textual transmission shaped their legal reasoning.⁵

¹ Suud Sarim Karimullah and Arif Sugitanata, “The Hanafi School of Islamic Jurisprudence Literature: A Historical Account,” *Journal of Islamic History and Manuscript* 2, no. 1 (2023): 10, <https://doi.org/10.24090/jihm.v2i1.7788>.

² Farhad Daftary et al., *The Shia World: Pathways in Tradition and Modernity* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 56.

³ Habiburrahman Rizapoor and Mohammad Rashid Rahimi, “Imam Abu Hanifah: The Vanguard of Moderation in Islamic Jurisprudence and the Global Dissemination of Moderate Islam,” *Mazhab* 22, no. 2 (2023): 231, <https://doi.org/10.21093/mj.v22i2.7088>.

⁴ Muhammad Jawad Mughniyah, *Fiqh Lima Mazhab: Ja'fari, Hanafi, Maliki, Syafi'i, Hambali* (Intensive Peace, 2015).

⁵ Muhammad Amiruddin Dardiri Et al., “Kondisi Sosial-Politik Dinasti Bani Abbasiyah Dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Pendidikan Islam,” *Jurnal Asy-Syukriyyah* 24, No. 1 (2023): 75, <https://doi.org/10.36769/Asy.V24i1.318>.

To clarify the conceptual framework, the term “rationality” in this study refers to the epistemic use of reason (‘aql) in deriving legal rulings through qiyas (analogical reasoning), preference (istihsan), and consideration of objectives (maqasid al-shari‘ah), as opposed to strict textualism (zahiriyah). “Spirituality,” where relevant to Ja’far al-Sadiq’s perspective, denotes the ethical-intellectual dimension of divine knowledge that informs moral reasoning, not merely esoteric piety. This operational definition seeks to prevent the notion of convergence from remaining at the rhetorical level and instead anchors it within identifiable hermeneutical and juristic methods.

Methodologically, this research employs a comparative historical approach, concretized through textual analysis of (1) the legal opinions attributed to Abu Hanifah as preserved in *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, *al-‘Alim wa al-Muta‘allim*, and narrations transmitted by his students such as Abu Yusuf and Muhammad al-Shaybani and (2) the sayings and juridical positions ascribed to Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq as recorded in classical Shia sources such as *al-Kafi* by *al-Kulayni* and *Tuhaf al-Uqul*. The study applies criteria of textual authenticity (including isnad evaluation and doctrinal consistency) and addresses post-historical attributions by cross-referencing Sunni and Shia transmission chains.⁶

Previous studies have examined the intellectual interaction between Abu Hanifah and Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq primarily from historical or sectarian perspectives, but few have analyzed their rational methodologies comparatively. Existing works often treat their legacies within separate sectarian frames rather than as part of a shared rationalist discourse.⁷ This study, therefore, fills a gap by comparing their epistemological approaches to *istinbat al-ahkam*, highlighting methodological overlaps in their uses of reason and textual interpretation. The comparative framework is structured on three analytical levels: (1) the methodological level of ijtihad examining their techniques of legal derivation (qiyas, istihsan, ‘aql); (2) the meta-principle level analyzing their epistemological assumptions about revelation, reason, and moral value; and (3) the applied level comparing selected juridical themes within ‘ibadat and mu‘amalat.

Accordingly, this research is guided by several central questions: (1) How can the biographies of Abu Hanifah and Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq, along with their intellectual works, be critically examined to understand the foundations of their thought? (2) In what ways did their methods of legal reasoning (istinbat al-ahkam), their distinctive characteristics, and their contributions shape the development of fiqh within their respective traditions?

⁶ Safriadi Nurdin, “Pemikiran Fiqh Imam Ja’far Asshiddiq,” *Siyasah Wa Qanuniah : Jurnal Ilmiah Ma’bad Aly Randhatul Ma’arif* 1, no. 1 (2023): 6, <https://doi.org/10.61842/swq/v1i1.4>.

⁷ Lufaei Lufaei, “Harmonism The Jurisprudence Of Ja’fari And Hanafi: Historical Study And Both Legal Sources (Harmonisme Fikih Ja’fari Dan Hanafi: Kajian Historis Dan Sumber-Sumber Hukum Keduanya),” *Al-Afkar, Journal For Islamic Studies*, January 30, 2019, 236, https://doi.org/10.31943/Afkar_Journal.V3i1.48.

(3) To what extent can their ideas be bridged to demonstrate the potential for harmonization between two major schools of Islamic intellectual heritage?

For this reason, studying Abu Hanifah and Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq is essential not only to reconstruct their biographies and examine their works but also to explore the intellectual dynamics that shaped early Islamic jurisprudence. By clarifying their methodological approaches, defining key concepts such as “rationality,” and situating their thought within identifiable socio-political contexts, this research highlights points of convergence and divergence, and assesses the potential for harmonization between Sunni and Shia traditions, particularly in fiqh. By demonstrating that differences can serve as sources of enrichment rather than division, the study emphasizes the value of intellectual pluralism in strengthening Islamic law as a living system. Ultimately, it aspires to advance academic discourse on sectarian reconciliation while promoting greater unity within the Muslim community.

DISCUSSION AND RESULT

1. Biographies of Abu Hanifah and Imam Ja'far al-Shadiq and Their Works

Abu Hanifah, whose full name was al-Nu'man ibn Thabit, was born in Kufa in 699 CE/80 AH to a Persian family that had settled there after the Islamic conquests. In his early years, he engaged in the textile trade before devoting himself to the serious study of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*).⁸ Growing up in Kufa, one of the intellectual centers of Islam, he encountered many leading scholars of his time.⁹ His formal education began under Hammad ibn Abi Sulayman, a prominent jurist in Kufa who profoundly shaped his legal orientation. Abu Hanifah also interacted with several Companions of the Prophet who were still alive, such as Anas ibn Malik, which strengthened his credibility in the field of hadith.¹⁰

As the founder of the Hanafi school, Abu Hanifah was honored with the title *al-Imam al-A'zam* (The Great Imam), a recognition of his exceptional role in shaping Islamic jurisprudence.¹¹ The epithet “Abu Hanifah” is reported to have originated either from his habit of carrying ink (*hanifah*) to record knowledge, symbolizing his dedication to learning, or from the word *hanif*, meaning one inclined toward truth and righteousness,

⁸ Murni Utami et al., “Mazhab Hanafiah dan Perkembangannya: Sejarah dan Peta Pemikiran,” *Islamic Education* 1, No. 2 (2023): 24.

⁹ Muhsin Arafat et al., “Jual Beli Fasid Menurut Imam Abu Hanifah,” *SYARI'AH: Journal of Indonesian Comparative of Syari'ah Law* 4, no. 2 (2021): 190.

¹⁰ Rizem Aizid, *Kitab Terlengkap Biografi Empat Imam Mazhab*, 1st ed. (SAUFA, 2016).

¹¹ Suud Sarim Karimullah and Arif Sugitanata, “The Hanafi School of Islamic Jurisprudence Literature: A Historical Account,” *Journal of Islamic History and Manuscript* 2, no. 1 (2023): 11, <https://doi.org/10.24090/jihm.v2i1.7788>.

reflecting his moral and spiritual integrity. His legacy extended far beyond his own era, as his legal reasoning and methodological approach laid a solid foundation for one of the most influential schools of Islamic law.¹² Under the Abbasid Caliphate, the Hanafi school experienced remarkable expansion, finding acceptance and institutional support that facilitated its spread. It became especially prominent across Central Asia and South Asia, where it was integrated into social and political life, shaping both religious practice and legal systems. In later centuries, the Hanafi school reached even greater prominence under the Ottoman Empire, where it was established as the official legal tradition, ensuring its continuity and enduring influence across the Muslim world.¹³

Abu Hanifah's thought is characterized by the use of *qiyas* (analogy), *ra'y* (rational opinion), and *ijtihad* to address issues that are not explicitly explained in the *nass* (scriptural texts). This approach made his method more flexible compared to scholars who adhered to a more textualist orientation. He passed away in Baghdad in 767 CE/150 AH, yet his intellectual legacy endures as one of the four great Sunni Imams. Among the works attributed to Abu Hanifah are *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, *al-Fiqh al-Absat*, *Wasiyyah Abu Hanifah fi al-Tawhid* (sometimes referred to simply as *Wasiyyah*), *al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim*, and *Risalah ila 'Uthman al-Batti*. Nearly all of these works have been printed or cited extensively by later scholars in their writings.¹⁴ His foremost students, such as Abu Yusuf and Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani, became distinguished Islamic scholars who systematized their teacher's doctrines, which continue to serve as the foundational basis of the Hanafi school of law to this day.¹⁵

Imam Ja'far al-Shadiq was born in Medina in 702 CE/80 AH. His full name was Abu Abdullah Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Baqir ibn Ali Zayn al-Abidin ibn Husayn ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib.¹⁶ A great-grandson of Imam Husayn and a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad through Fatimah, he was nurtured within the scholarly and spiritual environment of the Ahl al-Bayt, which profoundly shaped his intellectual formation. In

¹² Husein Muhammad, *Ulama-ulama yang Menghabiskan Hari-barinya untuk Membaca, Menulis, dan Menebarkan Cahaya Ilmu Pengetahuan* (IRCISOD, 2020), 21.

¹³ Mohammed Akram Nadwi, *Abu Hanifah: His Life, Legal Method & Legacy* (Kube Publishing Ltd, 2011).

¹⁴ Achmad Sopian, "Kitab Fiqh Al-Akbar Karya Imam Abu Hanifah," *An-Nawa: Jurnal Studi Islam* 3, No. 2 (2021): 179, <https://doi.org/10.37758/Bd1r7759>.

¹⁵ Mohd Anuar Mamat, "Ketokohan Imam Abu Hanifah Al-Nu'man (M.150h/767m) dalam Bidang Pendidikan (Scholarship of Imam Abu Hanifah Al-Nu'man In Education)," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 8, No. 2 (2013): 7.

¹⁶ Muhammad Nasir Husayni 'Ala'i, "A Biography of Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq (A). | Ebscohost," June 1, 2012, 13:45, <https://openurl.ebsco.com/contentitem/gcd:89365687?sid=Ebsco:Plink:Crawler&id=Ebsco:Gcd:89365687>.

Shia tradition, he is revered as the sixth Imam and spiritual leader, while in Sunni circles he is equally respected as a distinguished scholar.¹⁷

His intellectual contribution lies particularly in emphasizing the role of ‘aql (reason) in interpreting religious texts, making the Ja’fari school distinctively rational and spiritual. However, it is essential to differentiate between ‘aql as a theological principle linked to doctrines such as nass, ‘isma, and taqiyya which define the epistemic authority of the Imams and philosophical rationality in a universal sense. Within Ja’fari thought, rationality operates within the theological framework of Imamate, where intellect functions as a divinely guided faculty rather than mere independent reason.¹⁸

Beyond jurisprudence, Imam Ja’far was also influential in the field of mysticism. His teachings on divine unity (*tawhid*), inner purification, and the balance between the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of worship became foundational to later Sufi traditions.¹⁹ Ash-Sadiq holds a special distinction among Sufi orders.²⁰ A number of early Sufi figures are associated with him, and he is praised in Sufi literature for his profound knowledge of the *tariqat* (spiritual path). Many sayings and writings concerning spiritual advancement are attributed to him within Sufi circles. He is also regarded as the head of the Sufi lineage of saints and mystics by Sufi writers such as Abu Nu’aym al-Isfahani and ‘Attar of Nishapur.²¹

Nevertheless, while certain Sufi lineages trace elements of their esoteric doctrines to the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt, empirical evidence for direct transmission through isnad chains, early Sufi texts, or teacher-disciple networks remains limited. This study thus treats the connection between Ja’fari spirituality and Sufism as a historically plausible but textually nuanced hypothesis, warranting further empirical verification.²² Although no works authored directly by al-Sadiq have survived, several legal opinions and positions attributed to Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq, as recorded in classical Shia sources particularly *al-Kafi* by al-Kulayni and *Tuhaf al-Uqul* by Ibn Shu’bah al-Harrani reflect the theological depth

¹⁷ Ronen A. Cohen, “The Story of The Shia,” In *The Hojatiyeh Society in Iran: Ideology and Practice From The 1950s to The Present*, Ed. Ronen A. Cohen (Palgrave Macmillan Us, 2013), https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137304773_1.

¹⁸ Ja’far Subhani, *Syrah: ajaran dan Praktikanya* (Nur alhuda, 2012), 32.

¹⁹ Andre Bahrudin Et al., “Ulama Muslim Klasik Di Bidang Ilmu Agama Islam: Teologi, Fiqh, Tafsir, Hadis Dan Tasawuf,” *Pendas : Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar* 10, No. 02 (2025): 256–77, <https://doi.org/10.23969/Jp.V10i02.25177>.

²⁰ “Ja’far Al-Sadeq Iii. And Sufism,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, n.d., 356, accessed October 21, 2025, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/jafar-al-sadeq-iii-and-sufism/>.

²¹ *Wikipedia bahasa Indonesia, ensiklopedia bebas*, “Ja’far ash-Shadiq,” September 29, 2025, https://id.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ja%27far_ash-Shadiq&oldid=27897811#CITEREFLalani2006.

²² Kautsar Azhari Noer, *Warisan Agung Tasawuf: Mengenal Karya Besar Para Sufi* (Sadra Press, 2015), 9.

and legal rationalism that characterize the Ja'fari school of thought. He passed away in Medina in 765 CE/148 AH and was buried in the Baqi' cemetery alongside other members of the Ahl al-Bayt.²³

2. The Legal Reasoning Methods (*Istinbat al-Ahkam*), Characteristics, and Contributions to Fiqh of Abu Hanifah and Imam Ja'far al-Shadiq

2.1. The Legal Reasoning Methods (*Istinbat al-Ahkam*) of Abu Hanifah and Imam Ja'far al-Shadiq

In the tradition of Islamic jurisprudence, the methodology of legal reasoning (*istinbat al-ahkam*) developed by Abu Hanifah reflects a distinctive inclination towards rationality.²⁴ As recorded in *Tarikh Baghdad*, he affirmed that the Qur'an and the Sunnah constitute the primary sources of Islamic law, and thus every legal issue must ultimately be referred back to them. When the Qur'an and Sunnah did not provide an explicit ruling, Abu Hanifah relied upon the opinions of the Prophet's Companions that he deemed strongest. If a matter remained unresolved at the level of the Companions, he exercised independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) in the manner of the generation of the *tabi'in*.²⁵ This approach crystallised into the methodology of the Hanafi school, which comprises: the Qur'an, the mutawatir Sunnah, the views of the Companions, *ijma'* (consensus), *istihsan* (juristic preference), *qiyas* (analogy), and *'urf* (customary practice of the Muslim community). By combining these elements, Abu Hanifah articulated a rational and flexible framework for addressing legal issues faced by the Muslim community.²⁶

By contrast, Imam Ja'far al-Shadiq, the founder of the Ja'fari school, also placed the Qur'an at the centre of legal authority, followed by the Sunnah, *ijma'*, and reason (*'aql*). However, it should be clarified that his understanding of Qur'anic authority operates within the epistemic framework of Imamate, in which the interpretation of revelation is inseparable from the divinely guided Imams.²⁷ The association of Ja'fari

²³ Muhammad Jawad Mughniyah, *Fiqh Lima Mazhab: Ja'fari, Hanafi, Maliki, Syafi'i, Hambali*. (Intensive Peace, 2015), 13.

²⁴ Teguh Prawiro, "Bahasa Dan Akal Dalam Ijtihad Mazhab Hanafi," *Jurnal Alasma: Media Informasi Dan Komunikasi Ilmiah* 4, No. 2 (2022): 148–56.

²⁵ Muhammad Rijal Fadli, "Tinjauan Historis: Pemikiran Hukum Islam Pada Masa Tabi'in (Imam Hanafi, Imam Malik, Imam Syafi'i dan Imam Hanbali) Dalam Istinbat Al-Ahkam," *Jurnal Tamaddun: Jurnal Sejarah Dan Kebudayaan Islam* 8, No. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.24235/Tamaddun.V8i1.5848>.

²⁶ Ahmad Luqman Arshad Bin Mohd Sidik, "Kehujjahan Istihsan Sebagai Sumber Istinbat Hukum Perspektif Imam Abu Hanifah Dan Imam Syafi'i" (Skripsi, Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, 2021), 39, <https://repository.uin-suska.ac.id/54372/>.

²⁷ Angga Panca Sera, "Konsep imamah dalam kajian literatur shiah (tafsir Majma' al-bayan fi tafsir al-qur'an dan tafsir al-mthal fi tafsir kitab illah al-munzal ma'a tahdhib jadid)" (masterThesis, Sekolah Pascasarjana UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2024), 38, <https://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/83727>.

thought with concepts such as *al-Qur'an al-natiq* “the speaking Qur'an”) and *al-Qur'an al-samit* “the silent Qur'an” originates in early Imami traditions and has been discussed by modern scholars as part of the symbolic language expressing the inseparable relationship between the text and the living authority of the Imams. Therefore, the claim that Imam Ja'far “placed the Qur'an at the centre” should be understood not as a simple textual prioritization, but as a theological principle in which the Qur'an is realised through the hermeneutical mediation of the Ahl al-Bayt.²⁸

Within the framework of Ja'fari legal methodology as explained by Hossein Modarressi, the written text of the Qur'an is viewed as *mujmal* (general and in need of further elaboration). Consequently, *ta'wil* authentic interpretation must be sought through the Imams, who are regarded as *ma'sum* (infallible) and divinely guided inheritors of the Prophet's authority. Modarressi emphasizes that the authority of the Imams is not merely spiritual but also epistemological, as they constitute the legitimate source for understanding both the legal and theological dimensions of revelation.²⁹ Nevertheless, Modarressi notes that the Ja'fari tradition does not deny the role of reason (*'aql*) as a source of law. Reason is recognized as an essential tool for comprehending the principles of the Shari'a and for conducting *istinbat al-ahkam* (derivation of legal rulings), provided it operates within the framework of divine revelation and Imam authority. Thus, the Ja'fari legal system harmonizes the esoteric and rational dimensions of law, where *naql* (authoritative transmission) and *'aql* (rational reasoning) coexist in a hierarchical.³⁰

From the above, it becomes evident that both Abu Hanifah and Imam Ja'far al-Shadiq grounded their legal thought in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, yet developed distinct methodologies shaped by their theological and socio-historical contexts. Abu Hanifah prioritised rational tools such as *qiyas*, *ra'y*, and *istihsan*, whereas Imam Ja'far emphasised the inner meanings of scripture and the authoritative role of the Imams. These differences should not be read as oppositional but as reflecting divergent epistemologies one rooted in juristic rationalism, the other in divinely guided interpretation each contributing to the richness of the Islamic legal tradition.³¹

²⁸ Dani Muhtada, “Ja'far Al-Sadiq dan Paradigma Hukum Mazhab Ja'fari,” *Al-Ahkam*, April 25, 2015, 76, <https://doi.org/10.21580/Ahkam.2015.1.25.194>.

²⁹ Hossein Modarressi, *An Introduction to Shi'i Law: A Bibliographical Study*, 1. publ. (Ithaca Press, 1984), 14.

³⁰ Modarressi, *An Introduction to Shi'i Law*, 33.

³¹ Firda Noor Safitri Et al., “Titik Temu Dari Sebuah Perbedaan: Analisis Perbedaan Mazhab-Mazhab Fiqh,” *Islamic Education* 1, No. 1 (2023): 38.

2.2. Characteristics of Islamic Legal Thought in Abu Hanifah and Imam Ja'far al-Shadiq

The development of Abu Hanifah's legal thought cannot be separated from the socio-intellectual context of Kufah, a city geographically distant from Madinah, the primary centre of hadith transmission. Unlike Madinah, which was rich in authentic prophetic traditions, Kufah faced both limited access to sound narrations and the proliferation of fabricated reports. This condition compelled Abu Hanifah to exercise great caution in accepting hadith as a legal source. He only accepted narrations transmitted through mutawatir chains or through reports that had gained collective acceptance ('amal ahl al-Kufa).³² Reports of solitary transmission (*ahad*) were accepted only when supported by the consensus of the Companions and when they did not conflict with the general principles of the Shari'ah. Such methodological selectivity often misunderstood as skepticism was actually an effort to ensure epistemic reliability. This led Abu Hanifah to rely extensively on *ra'y* (considered opinion) and *qiyas* (analogy) to address new legal problems, particularly those arising from the complex social realities of Kufa, which had been influenced by Persian culture and a relatively advanced level of civilisation compared to the Hijaz. Hence, the Hanafi school is characterised by rationalism, selectivity in the use of hadith, and contextual *ijtihad*.³³

In contrast, the legal characteristics of Imam Ja'far al-Shadiq are rooted in the authority of the Ahl al-Bayt and in the universally acknowledged sources of law namely the Qur'an, the Sunnah, *ijma'*, and reason (*'aql*). Nevertheless, there are distinctive features that differentiate the Ja'fari school from Sunni traditions. *First*, regarding *qiyas*, it would be inaccurate to describe the Ja'fari school as "rejecting" analogy in an absolute sense. Rather, classical Imami sources critique speculative forms of *qiyas* not grounded in transmitted evidence or sound rational principles.³⁴ Modern scholarship has shown that Ja'fari jurists instead employ *'aql* a structured form of reason recognized within Imami epistemology as a means of deriving law. The difference, therefore, lies not in the total denial of analogy, but in the epistemic authority that justifies its use.³⁵ *Second*, in hadith transmission, the Imamiyah emphasise the *golden chain* (*silsilat al-dhahab*), traced through the Ahl al-Bayt, although they also accept narrations from non-Shia transmitters

³² Ilham Wahyudi, *Empat Imam Mazhab yang Mempengaruhi Dunia: Kisah Hidup Inspiratif Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, Imam Syafi'i, dan Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal* (LAKSANA, 2022), 10.

³³ Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford University Press, 1967), 64, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb00936.0001.001>.

³⁴ Robert Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbari Shia School* (BRILL, 2007), 102.

³⁵ Amir Reza Kusuma, "Comparative Study of Ijtihad Methods Between Ahlussunnah and Syiah," *Tasfiah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, Ahead of Print, April 9, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.21111/Tasfiah.V6i1.6837>.

provided that they are reliable.³⁶ This principle affirms that credibility, rather than sectarian affiliation, determines the validity of a report. *Third*, the Imamiyah tradition has kept the gate of *ijtihad* open to the present day, which allows its jurisprudence to remain adaptive to the changing demands of time.³⁷

Accordingly, the legal thought of Abu Hanifah and Imam Ja'far al-Shadiq both reflect dynamic responses to the intellectual and social challenges of their respective contexts. Abu Hanifah represents a rational and contextual approach grounded in critical engagement with hadith, whereas Imam Ja'far embodies a model of jurisprudence that emphasises the authority of the Ahl al-Bayt, the role of reason, and the continuity of *ijtihad*.³⁸ Together, their approaches demonstrate that Islamic law is not static, but rather the result of a dialectical process between text, reason, and social reality.

2.3. Contributions to Fiqh in the Hanafi and Ja'fari Schools

The Hanafi school, formulated by Imam Abu Hanifah, offered significant contributions to the development of Islamic jurisprudence. For instance, his position on zakat for gold and silver ornaments is recorded in al-Kasani, Bada'i al-Sana'i, where he emphasized equity and social welfare.³⁹ The school is also characterized by its emphasis on ease and flexibility in religious observance and daily practices, as reflected in rulings concerning prayer orientation (qiblah).⁴⁰ coercion in marriage (nikah al-ikrah).⁴¹ and the management of public wealth (amwal al-dawlah). These examples illustrate a jurisprudence attentive to moral and social dimensions of law.⁴²

³⁶ Nafiuddin Nafiuddin and Mohammad Holis, "Kemaksuman Imam Perspektif Syiah Imamiyah," *Waratsah : Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman Dan Sosiolinguistik* 8, No. 2 (2022): 21–40, <https://doi.org/10.21202/Waratsah.V8i2.48>.

³⁷ A. Zaim Rabbani Azza, "Konsep Imamah dalam Tafsir Suni Syiah (Studi Komparasi Kitab Tafsir Mafatih Al-Ghaib Dan Al-Mizan Fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an)" (Diploma, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Madura, 2024), https://doi.org/10.252520zaim%252520rabbani%252520azza_20384011021_Daftar%252520pustaka_ilmu%252520al-Qur%252527an%252520dan%252520tafsir..Pdf.

³⁸ Rifki Rufaida And Tutik Hamidah, "Ushul Fiqh Perspektif Syi'ah," *Kabillah : Journal of Social Community* 6, No. 2 (2021): 187–206, <https://doi.org/10.35127/Kabillah.V6i2.142>.

³⁹ Siti Noor Ain Aziz et al., "Narrative Study of Zakat Gold Jewelry (Al-Huli): Gold Mixing Issue: Kajian Naratif Zakat Emas Perhiasan (Al-Huli): Isu Percampuran Emas," *Al-Qanati: International Journal of Islamic Studies* 34, no. 01 (2025): 220.

⁴⁰ Irwansyahlubis et al., "Metode Ijtihad Imam Abu Hanifah dan Imam Malik," *Jurnal Cerdas Hukum* 1, No. 1 (2022): 95.

⁴¹ Rasyidah Rasyidah, "Hukum Pernikahan Tanpa Wali Perbandingan Pemikiran Hukum Imam Abu Hanifah dan Kompilasi Hukum Islam" (Masters, Iain Parepare, 2024), 71, <https://repository.iainpare.ac.id/Id/Eprint/5939/>.

⁴² Abdurrohman Kasdi, "Metode Ijtihad dan Karakteristik Fiqih Abu Hanifah," *Yudisia* 5, No. 2 (2014): 224.

By contrast, the Ja'fari school, rooted in the thought of Imam Ja'far al-Shadiq, presents distinctive contributions to Islamic law. *First*, it stipulates that prostration in prayer must be performed only on earth or natural vegetation, rendering invalid any prostration on wool, leather, or similar materials.⁴³ *Second*, cleansing with stones (*istinja'*) is permitted only after defecation, while urination requires the use of water. *Third*, in ablution, wiping the head is valid only with the remaining moisture on the hands after washing the arms, not with freshly taken water.⁴⁴ *Fourth*, a man who commits adultery with a married woman is permanently forbidden from marrying her, even if she later divorces.⁴⁵ *Fifth*, the school permits (temporary marriage) *mut'ah* under specific conditions.⁴⁶

Taken together, the Hanafi and Ja'fari schools represent complementary yet distinctive approaches to jurisprudence. Abu Hanifah underscored rationality, flexibility, and social welfare, while Imam Ja'far emphasised the authority of the Imams, rigorous legal stipulations, and spirituality.⁴⁷ Their contributions illustrate not opposition, but interpretive plurality (*ta'addud al-manhaj*) a dynamic engagement between revelation, reason, and historical circumstance that continues to shape the diversity of Islamic law.

3. The bridging of ideas between Abu Hanifah and Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq

The bridging of ideas between Abu Hanifah and Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq represents an important reflection of the intellectual diversity that characterized the formative period of Islamic civilization. Although they emerged from different traditions Abu Hanifah as the founder of the Hanafi school within Sunni Islam.⁴⁸ And Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq as the sixth Imam in Shia Islam and the initiator of the Ja'fari school their thought demonstrates significant points of convergence.⁴⁹ These parallels are particularly evident

⁴³ Najam Haider, *The Origins of the Shia: Identity, Ritual, and Sacred Space in Eighth-Century KuFa* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 142.

⁴⁴ Gusti Muhammad Rizky and Salman Zulfahmi, "Komparasi Metodologis Penerimaan Riwayat antara Sunni dan Syiah: Studi Analisis Riwayat Al-Mash 'Ala Al-Khuffain antara Sunni dan Syiah," *As-Sunnah: Jurnal Kajian Hadis* 1, No. 1 (2025): 1–18.

⁴⁵ Nim: 97352914 Sibyanaii, "Zina dan Hak Waris Menurut Syi'ah Imamiyah" (Skripsi, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2002), <https://Digilib.Uin-Suka.Ac.Id/Id/Eprint/36507/>.

⁴⁶ Doni Azhari et al., "Navigating Pluralism in Islamic Jurisprudence: A Comparative Analysis of Mut'ah Marriage in Ja'fari and Sunni Schools of Thought," *Kawanua International Journal of Multicultural Studies* 5, no. 1 (2024): 107, <https://doi.org/10.30984/kijms.v5i1.1005>.

⁴⁷ Rizapoor And Rahimi, "Imam Abu Hanifah."

⁴⁸ Meirison Meirison and Testru Hendra, "Supporting Factors for the Spread of the Hanafi School Throughout the World," *Muqaranah* 6, No. 2 (2022): 86. <https://doi.org/10.19109/Muqaranah.V6i2.14193>.

⁴⁹ Ali Mohammadi and Mahboobeh Morshedien, "The Features of the Shia from The Perspective of Imam Al-Sadiq," *Message of Thaqalayn* 70, No. 18 (2017): 80.

in their methodological approaches, spiritual outlook, and legal orientation, all of which were aimed at addressing the needs of their respective societies. The resonance between their ideas illustrates that doctrinal differences did not obstruct intellectual dialogue; rather, such diversity became a foundation for enriching the broader corpus of Islamic thought in an inclusive and transformative manner.⁵⁰

One of the most striking commonalities is their emphasis on the use of reason ('aql) and ijtihad as essential tools in the interpretation of Islamic law. Abu Hanifah underscored the necessity of ijtihad grounded in the Qur'an and Hadith, while also employing qiyas (analogical reasoning), istihsan (juristic preference), and to a certain extent considerations of maslahah (public benefit) to respond to issues not explicitly addressed in the sacred texts. However, it should be noted that the systematic concept of maslahah was not yet fully developed as a distinct juristic principle in Abu Hanifah's time; later scholars such as al-Ghazali and al-Shatibi provided its formal theoretical structure. Hence, the term here is used in a descriptive sense rather than anachronistically implying a developed doctrine. This method highlights the flexibility of his thought in adapting to changing legal and social contexts, granting a central role to human rationality.⁵¹ Conversely, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq also emphasized the significance of reason, though within a more spiritual-theological framework. For him, reason is a divine gift designed to facilitate deeper understanding of Islam, yet its use is circumscribed by the authoritative teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt. Thus, while both figures affirmed the epistemological role of reason, they differed in the scope and orientation of its application.⁵²

Their loyalty to the primary sources of Islam the Qur'an and Hadith further demonstrates the harmony in their approaches. Abu Hanifah recognized the authority of Hadith but applied stringent criteria in their acceptance, preferring to rely only on narrations that were sound and consistent with the Qur'an and foundational principles of Islam. In situations where Hadith proved insufficient, he turned to qiyas and ra'y

⁵⁰ Lufaei Lufaei, "Harmonism The Jurisprudence of Ja'fari and Hanafi: Historical Study and Both Legal Sources (Harmonisme Fikih Ja'fari dan Hanafi: Kajian Historis dan Sumber-Sumber Hukum Keduanya)," *Al-Afkar, Journal For Islamic Studies*, January 30, 2019, 244. https://doi.org/10.31943/Afkar_Journal.V3i1.48.

⁵¹ Humaira Jahangir, "Maqasid Al-Shari'ah in Classical Fiqh Literature: A Historical Approach," *Islamic Research Journal* 3, no. 02 (2025): 19.

⁵² Lufaei Lufaei, "Harmonism The Jurisprudence of Ja'fari and Hanafi: Historical Study And Both Legal Sources (Harmonisme Fikih Ja'fari dan Hanafi: Kajian Historis dan Sumber-Sumber Hukum Keduanya)," *Al-Afkar, Journal for Islamic Studies*, January 30, 2019, 236. https://doi.org/10.31943/Afkar_Journal.V3i1.48.

(independent reasoning) to address legal gaps.⁵³ Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, by contrast, placed particular emphasis on Hadith transmitted through the Ahl al-Bayt, viewing them as the most authoritative lens for understanding the Prophet's teachings, as the family of the Prophet was believed to inherit direct knowledge from him.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, he too allowed space for rational deliberation in cases where explicit texts were absent. These methodological differences, rather than creating irreconcilable divisions, enriched the interpretative tradition of Islamic law while preserving fidelity to its foundational sources.⁵⁵

Beyond legal methodology, their thought converged in the domain of spirituality. Although Abu Hanifah is primarily remembered for his contributions to jurisprudence, he did not disregard the spiritual dimension of religious practice. Several early Sufi sources mention figures such as Dawud al-ta'i and Fudayl ibn 'Iyad as students influenced by Abu Hanifah's teachings. These connections suggest that Abu Hanifah's emphasis on ethical integrity and moral sincerity informed the formative ethos of early Sufism. This underscores his conviction that Islamic law must reflect inner morality and spiritual integrity.⁵⁶ Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, meanwhile, played an even more pronounced role in shaping Islamic spirituality. His teachings, which emphasized purification of the heart, deep communion with God, and the esoteric meanings embedded within the Shari'a, profoundly influenced the development of Sufism. Thus, both scholars established that Islamic law was not merely a normative framework but also a vehicle for cultivating the inner life and the pursuit of human perfection (*al-insan al-kamil*).⁵⁷

Ultimately, the intellectual relationship between Abu Hanifah and Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq illustrates that sectarian differences need not obstruct mutual respect and scholarly exchange.⁵⁸ Their contributions collectively demonstrate that Islamic law can remain both principled and adaptive: Abu Hanifah advanced rational legal innovation, while

⁵³ Umar Bin Azlan And Helimy Bin Aris, "The Importance of Analyzing The Status of Hadith Narrators Based on The Discipline of Al-Jarh Wa Al-Ta'dil with A Focus on The Narration of Abu Hanifah," *Journal of Hadith Studies*, June 1, 2024, 110–20, <https://doi.org/10.33102/Johs.V9i1.292>.

⁵⁴ Ahiel Ahdi Besari, "Studi Komparatif Ilmu Hadits Dalam Mazhab Sunni Dan Syi'ah," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 4, No. 01 (2025), <https://jurnal.amalinsani.org/index.php/penais/article/view/17>.

⁵⁵ Herman Herman et al., "Suni dan Syiah (Titik Perbedaan dan Perseteruan)," *Edu Sociata (Jurnal Pendidikan Sosiologi)* 7, No. 1 (2024): 551–59, <https://doi.org/10.33627/Es.V7i1.2046>.

⁵⁶ Christopher Melchert, "The Transition from Asceticism to Mysticism at the Middle of the Ninth Century C.E.," *Studia Islamica*, no. 83 (1996): 55, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1595736>.

⁵⁷ Budi Handoyo, "Eco Sufism: Pemikiran Amran Waly dan Ibnu Arabi dalam Menjawab Isu Lingkungan Hidup di Indonesia," *Tadabbur: Jurnal Peradaban Islam* 7, no. 2 (2025): 141, <https://doi.org/10.22373/tadabbur.v7i2.877>.

⁵⁸ Ali Muhtarom, "Titik Temu Sunni–Syiah: Studi Pendekatan Komparatif Dalam Pemahaman Islam Mazhab Sunni Syiah," *Saintifika Islamica: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman* 2, No. 02 (2015): 61.

Imam Ja'far prioritized spiritual depth and the authority of the Ahl al-Bayt. Yet, both shared a common vision preserving the integrity of Islam while ensuring its relevance across time. Their intellectual harmony thus transcends sectarian boundaries, symbolizing Islam's universality and its openness to diverse interpretations grounded in fidelity to its core sources.⁵⁹

CLOSSING

From the overall discussion, it can be concluded that the legal thought of Abu Hanifah and Imam Ja'far al-Shadiq represents two distinct yet complementary epistemological models within the corpus of Islamic jurisprudence. Abu Hanifah embodies a rational and contextual approach grounded in the principle of legal flexibility through the use of qiyas (analogical reasoning), ra'y (considered opinion), and istihsan (juristic preference) in response to the complex social dynamics of Kufa. Meanwhile, Imam Ja'far al-Shadiq emphasizes the spiritual and theological dimensions of law within the framework of Imamate, wherein the sources of law are understood integrally through divine revelation and the authority of the Ahl al-Bayt. These two approaches demonstrate that rationality and spirituality need not be viewed as opposites, but rather as complementary axes that mutually enrich and strengthen Islamic law, making it dynamic, contextual, and rooted in faith-based moral values.

A key finding of this study is the presence of a bridge between the two major Islamic traditions Sunni and Shia manifested in their shared emphasis on the centrality of intellect ('aql), ijtihad, and moral integrity as essential tools for understanding Islamic law. Although they arose from different theological frameworks, both Abu Hanifah and Imam Ja'far al-Shadiq sought to preserve the authenticity of Islamic teachings while responding to the intellectual and social challenges of their times. Thus, their thought not only reflects the methodological plurality within Islam but also reveals an integrative potential that can serve as a foundation for cross-sectarian dialogue and the development of a more inclusive Islamic legal tradition.

Theoretically, this research affirms that legal rationalism and spiritual legalism are not separate entities but two interdependent dimensions that balance one another. Rationality ensures that Islamic law remains relevant to social realities, while spirituality preserves its ethical purity and divine orientation. As illustrated by Abu Hanifah and Imam Ja'far al-Shadiq, these dimensions must operate in harmony to realize a legal system that is both just and spiritually conscious.

⁵⁹ Musolli and Ismail Marzuki, "Moderasi Islam: Membangun Sunni-Syiah Yang Harmoni," *Al-Qadim - Jurnal Tafsir Dan Ilmu Tafsir* 1, no. 1 (2024): 14, <https://ejournal.nurulqadim.ac.id/index.php/jtit/article/view/5>.

As a recommendation, future studies should focus on exploring the intertextual relationship between classical Hanafi and Ja'fari sources, particularly in the fields of *usul al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence) and Islamic legal ethics. Comparative and empirical research is also needed to further examine the integration of rationality and spirituality in the context of modern Islamic legal thought. Moreover, the relevance of synthesizing the ideas of Abu Hanifah and Imam Ja'far al-Shadiq should be further investigated in reconstructing an Islamic legal system that promotes social justice, respects juridical pluralism, and upholds universal human values.

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