Tribakti Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman
Journal Website:
http://www.ejournal.uit-lirboyo.ac.id/index.php/tribakti
E-ISSN 2502-3047
P-ISSN 1411-9919
Permanent link for this document (DOI): https://doi.org/10.33367/tribakti.v37i1.7529

Hellenistic Rationality and the Formation of Sunni Legal Epistemology (800–1100 CE): A Postcolonial Methodological Inquiry

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Abstract

This study argues that the formation of Sunni Islamic legal epistemology between the eighth and eleventh centuries CE cannot be adequately understood as a passive reception of Greco-Hellenistic rational traditions. Instead, it emerged through a complex process of internal methodological negotiation within the Islamic intellectual tradition. Rather than wholesale adoption of Aristotelian or Neoplatonic modes of reasoning, Muslim jurists selectively appropriated and critically reconfigured rational tools within the normative and epistemic framework of uṣūl al-fiqh, thereby generating a distinct form of legal rationality grounded in revelation, linguistic analysis, and juristic practice. Employing a postcolonial methodological inquiry, this study challenges earlier Orientalist interpretations that reduced Islamic jurisprudence to Roman or Hellenistic precedents, arguing that such accounts overlook the autonomy and internal dynamics of Islamic legal thought. The findings highlight the active epistemic agency of Muslim scholars who, through concepts such as qiyās and ʿillah, constructed a coherent system of legal reasoning while negotiating sociopolitical contexts, textual authority, and intellectual power structures. This study concludes that Sunni legal rationality developed through creative transformation rather than derivative reception, reaffirming the methodological autonomy and intellectual originality of Islamic law within the broader history of global legal traditions.

Keywords: *Rationality, Formation of Sunni, Legal Epistemology (800–1100 CE), A Postcolonial Methodological Inquiry*

Introduction

The transformation of ideas and patterns of thought between the Greco-Hellenistic world and early Islamic intellectual traditions represents one of the most decisive phenomena in the formation of

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Article History
Received: 11 June 2025 | Revised: 1 January 2026 | Accepted: 10 January 2026 | Available online: 31 January 2026

How to Cite this Article
Sumarjoko, Karim, M.A., Hak, N. (2026). Hellenistic Rationality and the Formation of Sunni Legal Epistemology (800–1100 CE): A Postcolonial Methodological Inquiry. *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman*, 37(1), 23-44. https://doi.org/10.33367/tribakti.v37i1.7529

Sunni Islamic legal epistemology.[1] Between the eighth and eleventh centuries CE, various systems of rational and methodologically argumentative reasoning identified by postcolonial Western scholars are believed to have been rooted in Aristotelian and Neoplatonic legacies.[2] These elements were not merely adopted but were critically adapted, reworked, and creatively reformulated within the discourse of uṣūl al-fiqh. During this formative period, Muslim jurists developed a highly systematic legal theory, namely uṣūl al-fiqh, which served as the methodological foundation for deriving and establishing rulings of Islamic law. [3]

Earlier classical studies have demonstrated the processes of textual transmission and philosophical influence on the structural development of Islamic legal disciplines. The Ḥanafī school, represented for example by al-Shaybānī (d. 804 CE), is often characterized by its rational orientation (ahl al-raʾy).[4] A retrospective examination of this intellectual culture reveals a relatively flexible engagement with reason, particularly through the method of istiḥsān (juristic preference), which functioned as a legal tool to address the needs of a heterogeneous Muslim society. Moreover, the formulation of Islamic legal reasoning that proportionally relates reason to textual sources through al-qiyās (legal analogy) and the expansion of legal causality (ʿillah) as articulated in al-Shāfiʿī's al-Risālah marked a crucial phase in the classical construction of Islamic law. [5] This formative period subsequently became a primary object of study for Orientalist scholars during the era of colonialism.

However, the abstractions presented by the Orientalists did not fully explain how the construction of legal knowledge was shaped by relations of power, political dynamics, sociocultural conditions, and historiographical biases connected to the legacy of Islamic civilization. Ignaz Goldziher, Von Kremer, and Sheldon Amos attempted to link Islamic law to Roman law, arguing that Islamic jurisprudence bore traces of Roman legal influence, both at the methodological level and in certain substantive provisions. [6] However, these Orientalist abstractions also tended to overlook how legal doctrines were embedded in concrete power structures. In many Islamic countries, power tends to be concentrated in the ruling family and the political elite, a condition that significantly influences the production, interpretation, and application of Islamic law.[7]

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[1] Paul L. Heck, *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion* (London: Routledge, 2013), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315886947; George Saliba, *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance* (MIT Press, 2007); Ayman Shabana, "Science and Scientific Production in the Middle East: Past and Present," *Sociology of Islam* 8, no. 2 (Mei 2020): 151–58, https://doi.org/10.1163/22131418-00802001; Asadullah Ali Al-Andalusi, *The Rise and Decline of Scientific Productivity in the Muslim World: A Preliminary Analysis | ICR Journal*, 2 Oktober 2020, https://icrjournal.org/index.php/icr/article/view/333.

[2] A. Kevin Reinhart, "Jurisprudence," dalam *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to the Qur'ān, Second Edition*, ed. oleh Andrew Rippin dan Jawid Mojaddedi (wiley, 2017), 526–42, https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118964873.ch35; Muhammad ibn Idris Al-Shafii, *The Epistle on Legal Theory: A Translation of Al-Shafii's Risalah* (New York University Press, 2015).

[3] Shakeel Akhtar Thakur, "Islamic jurisprudence and scientific rationality: a methodological integration for contemporary challenges," *AL-AASAR Journal Quarterly Research Journal* Vol. 2, No. 3 (2025) (2025), https://doi.org/10.63878/aaj680.

[4] Oğuzhan Yildiz, "Between Criticism and Defense: The Reasons Behind the Compilation of Abū Ḥanīfa's Musnads During the 4th Century of the Hijra," *Ankara Universitesi Ilahiyat Fakultesi Dergisi* 66, no. 2 (2025): 691–711, https://doi.org/10.33227/auifd.1630603.

[5] Fati' ad-Duraini, *al-Manāhij al-Ushuliyah fi al-Ijtihad bi al-Ra'yi fi at-Tasyri' al-Islami* (Damaskus: Dar al-Kitab al-Hadis, 1975), 312.

[6] Ignac Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic theology and law* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 44.

[7] A.H. Asari Taufiqurrohman, et.al, "The Role of Islamic Law, Constitution, and Culture in Democracy in the UAE and Indonesia," *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* Volume 24, Number 1, 2024 (t.t.): 85, https://doi.org//10.15408/ajis.v24i1.33155.

The fundamental principle that religious knowledge is dynamic and continually undergoes transformation.[8] Post-colonial approaches, in contrast, open new methodological spaces for reading this syncretic process. The focus is not merely on tracing "Hellenistic" influence within Islamic law but also on interrogating modern epistemic constructions that tend to create dichotomous narratives between continuity and rupture in intellectual history. This approach enables the unveiling of epistemic negotiations, the reconstruction of legal rationality, and the active role of Muslim intellectual agents in shaping the rational architecture of uṣūl al-fiqh. This study thus emerges in response to the lack of research integrating historical-textual analysis with post-colonial theoretical frameworks in examining the manifestations of Hellenistic rationality in Sunni Islamic legal epistemology between the eighth and eleventh centuries CE. Through a post-colonial critical reading, this research aims to reveal the dynamics of epistemic negotiation and the creative intellectual processes that influenced the formation of Sunni legal rationality during this period, thereby offering a more comprehensive understanding of the development of Islamic legal epistemology within the broader landscape of global intellectual history.

Method

This study employs library research to investigate the relationship between Greco-Hellenistic rationality and the emergence of uṣūl al-fiqh, integrating textual analysis with contextual reading.[9] The research corpus consists of 12 primary classical texts, purposively selected to represent the formative and early consolidative phases of Sunni uṣūl al-fiqh (2nd–5th century AH). The corpus includes both core uṣūl works that explicitly formulate methodological principles and cross-disciplinary supporting texts that capture wider epistemic debates surrounding legal rationality.[10]

The study distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic data to ensure analytical clarity between the internal logic of the texts and the broader conditions of knowledge production.[11] Intrinsic data are derived from the internal structure of the corpus, including discussions of qiyās, key technical terminology (e.g., *aṣl–far', 'illah*), patterns of legal argumentation, hierarchies of evidence, and strategies of refutation. These data are extracted through *close reading* and thematic coding, using argumentative paragraphs and debate passages as the primary units of analysis, with each finding traceable to precise textual locations. Extrinsic data, by contrast, are gathered from intellectual-historical literature, ṭabaqāt works, and biographical sources to map sociopolitical dynamics, networks of intellectual transmission, and arenas of scholarly exchange that shaped the circulation of rational methods.[12]

Operationally, the study maintains two separate data matrices and applies a sequential strategy: intrinsic analysis is conducted first, followed by contextual integration at the stage of

[8] Mokhtari, "The Epistemological Reading of Religious Knowledge in the Thought of 'Abd al-Karīm Soroush," Al-Jāmi'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies Vol. 62, no. 2 (2024), pp. 409-437, doi: 10.14421/ajis.2024.622.409-437 409.

[9] Wahyudin Darmalaksana, "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Pustaka Dan Studi Lapangan," *Pre-Print Digital Library UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung*, 2020, http://digilib.uinsgd.ac.id/id/eprint/32855.

[10] Thomas Mann, *The Oxford Guide to Library Research* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

[11] Jan Aarts, "Corpus Analysis," dalam *Handbook of Pragmatics: Manual. Second Edition*, ed. oleh Jef Verschueren dan Jan-Ola Östman (John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2022), 1505–15, https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.1075/hop.m2.cor2/html.

[12] Magali Paquot dan Luke Plonsky, "Quantitative Research Methods and Study Quality in Learner Corpus Research," *International Journal of Learner Corpus Research* 3, no. 1 (Januari 2017): 61–94, https://doi.org/10.1075/ijlcr.3.1.03paq.

historical-critical interpretation. A post-colonial lens is then employed to interrogate dominant narratives—particularly Orientalist assumptions about intellectual dependency—while highlighting the epistemic negotiations through which Sunni legal theory developed its methodological autonomy.[13]

Table. Sequential strategy separate data matrix

Aspect	Intrinsic Data (Internal to Texts)	Extrinsic Data (Contextual, Outside Texts)
Operational definition	Data derived from the internal structure and argumentative content of uṣūl al-fiqh texts	Data derived from the conditions of knowledge production: history, networks, and sociopolitical dynamics
Data sources	Primary classical corpus (uṣūl works and supporting texts analyzed as methodological discourse)	Intellectual history literature, ṭabaqāt/rijāl works, biographical sources, and studies of knowledge transmission
Unit of analysis	Argumentative paragraphs, definitions, chapter structure, refutation patterns, legal examples	Historical events, political configurations, translation movement, madhhab institutionalization, teacher–student networks
Analytical focus	How texts construct legal methodology: rational reasoning, evidentiary validity, mechanisms of qiyās	Why and under what conditions methodology gained authority: historical forces, social settings, circulation of ideas
Data recorded	Definitions, rules, arguments and counter-arguments, technical terms (e.g., *aṣl–far', 'illah, qiyās, istidlāl*)	Chronology, geographic settings, actors and institutions, intellectual interactions, sociopolitical pressures
Examples of indicators	Definition of qiyās; criteria for 'illah; inferential structure; hierarchy of proofs; *naqḍ/ibrām* strategies	Ahl al-Ḥadīth vs Ahl al-Ra'y debates; effects of translation; madhhab formation; state–scholar relations
Data collection technique	*Close reading*, thematic note-taking, excerpt extraction, coding of terms and argument structures	Documentary study, biographical tracing, chronological mapping, triangulation of historical sources
Data analysis technique	Qualitative textual analysis: concept categorization, mapping argumentative logic, cross-text comparison	Historical-contextual analysis: reconstructing contexts, mapping transmission, identifying sociopolitical dynamics
Analytical output	Map of internal logic: forms of rationality, qiyās operations, mechanisms of methodological legitimation	Map of external conditions: factors enabling, shaping, or negotiating methodological authority
Role in the study's argument	Provides the main basis for explaining Sunni methodological autonomy from within the tradition	Strengthens critical reading by foregrounding epistemic negotiation and avoiding Orientalist reductionism
Validity strategy	Consistency across sections; cross-text comparison; traceable citations	Source triangulation; chronological coherence; alignment between biography and socio-historical context
Workflow sequence	Analyzed first as the interpretive foundation	Integrated later to enrich and contextualize interpretation

[13] Quentin L. Burrell dan Violet R. Cane, "The Analysis of Library Data," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society: Series A (General)* 145, no. 4 (1982): 439–63, https://doi.org/10.2307/2982096.

Result and Discussion

Result

Definition of Rationality and Its Application in Islamic Law

Rationality refers to the systematic application of logic, empirical observation, and experimental verification in the pursuit of understanding natural and social phenomena. In this framework, every knowledge claim must be supported by evidence and subjected to critical scrutiny.[14] Ibn Khaldun states, "Reason is a sound scale whose judgments are certain, yet it should not be expected to weigh matters of divine unity, the hereafter, or the essence of prophethood."[15] This statement opens an important space for Muslim legal theorists to engage in rational inquiry when interpreting Qur'anic or Prophetic texts for the purpose of deriving legal rulings. Al-Biruni, a Muslim scholar who exemplified the integration of scientific rigor and religious commitment, further articulated this synthesis. He stated, "It is proper that we illuminate ourselves with reason, benefit from experience, and then weigh all of this on the scale of the Sharīʿah."[16]

This perspective underscores that, within the Muslim intellectual tradition, scientific rationality has never been understood as being in opposition to divine law. Reason is regarded as a vital instrument that strengthens the pursuit of truth. Rational inquiry, empirical experience, and scientific methodology serve as tools to comprehend revelation and to clarify, support, and expand human understanding of the practical implementation of Islamic law. In the discipline of uṣūl al-fiqh, rationality functions as an epistemological instrument that enables a mujtahid to derive legal rulings even in cases that are not explicitly addressed in the textual sources (naṣṣ).[17] This process involves logical reasoning, analytical argumentation, and textual interpretation grounded in the foundational principles of al-Sharīʿah. Legal contextualization[18] is therefore indispensable for accommodating developments in civilization, culture, and politics, as well as their impact on Muslim societies.

Rational Reasoning as an Instrument for Legal Determination

Rational thought in the context of Islamic law constitutes part of the intellectual transformation shaped by the Hellenistic tradition of reasoning. Ancient Greece, the Arab world, and Europe developed rational, scientific, and philosophical theoretical thought systematically. Europe inherited Greek philosophy through the Roman tradition, emphasizing the harmony between reason and nature, as well as their interaction as the basis for understanding the laws of nature. Arab-Islamic thought, by contrast, is constructed upon a relationship among three principal elements: God (revelation), humanity, and nature. Al-Jabiri simplifies this relationship into two poles God and humanity thereby rendering the role of nature less significant, a condition that almost parallels the minimal role of God within the structure of Classical Greek thought.[19] This

[14] Shakeel Akhtar Thakur. "Islamic jurisprudence and scientific rationality: a methodological integration for contemporary challenges." AL-AASAR Journal Quarterly Research Journal Vol. 2, No. 3 (2025).157, DOI: https://doi.org/10.63878/aaj680,

[15] Ibn Khaldun, ʿAbd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad, *Al-Muqaddimah*, 1:64.

[16] Al-Biruni, Tahdid Nihayat al-Amakin. (Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1999), 22.

[17] Ilham Majid, et.al, "The Concept of al-ʿIlm Al-Uṣūliy: The Significance of Usul Fiqh in The Paradigm of The Unity of Sciences," *Jurnal Moderasi: the Journal of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought, and Muslim Societies*. Vol. 4. No. 1, Januari-Juni 2024 (2024): 1–9.

[18] Illy Yanti et.al, *Negotiating Sharīʿah and Customary Law: Legal Pluralism in Familial Relationships among the Suku Anak Dalam in Jambi*, Vol. 6 No. 2 (2025): Journal of Islamic Law (2025): 177, https://doi.org/10.24260/jil.v6i2.3311.

[19] Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri, *Takwinu al-Aql al-Arabi* (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahdah al-Arabiyyah, 2009), 28-29.

comparison highlights a fundamental difference between the cosmological rationality of Greek-European thought and the theological rationality of Arab-Islamic thought. Similar to the use of causal reasoning in natural philosophy, causality is understood as a fundamental principle for explaining why events occur in the natural world. Every physical phenomenon is assumed not to occur randomly, but rather due to a particular cause (causa). Classical causal reasoning was systematized by Aristotle through the formulation of the Four Causes: first, the causa materialis, referring to the material composition of an object (such as wood or metal); second, the causa formalis, which concerns the form or structure that makes a thing what it is; third, the causa efficientis, the efficient cause or agent that brings about change; and fourth, the causa finalis, the final purpose or ultimate end of an entity. While originally devised as a systematic framework for analyzing natural phenomena, this concept of causality was later adapted in Islamic legal theory in the form commonly referred to as causa legis, namely the legal cause or effective rationale underlying the establishment of a ruling.

The term "causa legis" is not found in classical works of fiqh or uṣūl al-fiqh. However, in al-Shāfiʿī's al-Risālah, the expression sabīl al-ḥaqq appears. [20] This term may be viewed as open to multiple interpretations, thereby allowing various conceptual possibilities including the notion of "causality," even though the term itself originates from Hellenistic thought. Given that causality provides a coherent analytical framework, it can be correlated with what al-Shāfiʿī identifies as the ʿillah of a legal ruling. [21] An example can be seen in determining the permissibility or prohibition of consuming dog meat. In the textual sources (al-naṣṣ), whether the Qur'an or Hadith, there is no explicit text (naṣṣ ṣarīḥ) that directly prohibits or permits the consumption of dog meat. However, the prohibition of consuming pork (laḥm al-khinzīr) is mentioned in four surahs, namely; al-Baqarah 2:173, al-Anʿām 6:145, al-Naḥl 16:115, and al-Mā'idah 5:3.

Allah explicitly prohibits pork in the Qur'an, yet no explicit prohibition is mentioned regarding dog meat. This raises the question of whether dog meat should be considered lawful or unlawful. Conversely, in a hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah, the saliva of a dog is described as impure, whereas no explicit textual evidence states that the saliva of a pig is impure. This leads to two related legal questions: What is the ruling on consuming dog meat, and what is the ruling concerning the impurity of pig saliva? Such issues require what al-Shāfiʿī refers to as "sabīl al-ḥaqq" in formulating legal determinations. According to the method of qiyās, "pork" serves as the al-aṣl (original case), and the textual prohibition concerning it represents the al-ḥukm (established ruling). Dog meat, on the other hand, constitutes the al-farʿ (new case). The cause (causality) or the underlying rationale that links the aṣl (pork) to the farʿ (dog meat) is what al-Shāfiʿī describes as sabīl al-ḥaqq, commonly known in later terminology as the ʿillah (effective legal cause) prohibition.

According to Sāmī al-Nashshār, the logical framework employed by the Uṣūliyyūn, such as al-Shāfiʿī, is a mode of reasoning grounded in the theory of the ʿillah the hidden causal factor within a legal ruling that serves as the basis of inference in their intellectual system. [22]The application of qiyās (analogical reasoning) can only be undertaken by those with sufficient

[20] Muhammad as-Syafi'i, Ar-Risalah (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2009), 413.
[21] Syafi'i, Ar-Risalah, 414.
[22] Nashshār, 'Alī Sāmī al-. Manāhij al-Baḥth 'inda Mufakkirī al-Islām. Dar an-Nahdlah al-Arabiyah, 1984., 100-129.

knowledge; it is impermissible for the ignorant to engage in qiyās because they lack an understanding of the conceptual architecture underlying the cases being compared. [23]

The development of Islamic jurisprudence through this model became a fundamental component of uṣūl al-fiqh, the discipline that forms the basis for legal derivation. In another sense, uṣūl al-fiqh may be described as the philosophy of Islamic law due to its methodological nature. Moreover, uṣūl al-fiqh—particularly al-Shāfiʿī's al-Risālah, the first treatise to articulate a systematic hierarchy of legal evidences—places the Qur'an at the highest level of authority, followed by the Sunnah, consensus (ijmāʿ), and finally analogical reasoning (qiyās). Al-Shāfiʿī emphasizes that no one qualified to serve as a judge or mufti may issue rulings or legal opinions except on the basis of definitive evidence. Such evidences include the Qur'an, the Sunnah, what the scholars have unanimously agreed upon without dispute (ijmāʿ), or qiyās derived from these sources. He maintains that it is impermissible to rule or issue fatwas based on istiḥsān (personal preference) in any matter. [24] A jurist of the Muʿtazilī tradition, al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 1025 CE), adopted a more rationalist stance on qiyās. [25]According to him, the ʿillah (effective cause) inherently produces legal consequences even in the absence of explicit scriptural indication. His view suggests a strong affirmation of reason as an autonomous source of legal justification. Beyond qiyās, other rational methods of legal reasoning also developed, such as istiḥsān in the Ḥanafī school. [26] In another example of legal determination, Abū Yūsuf applied rational analysis in determining liability in a case involving the digging of a well that resulted in harm to another person.

> "Whoever hires a worker to dig a well on a public road used by the Muslim community without the permission of the authority (walī al-amr), and then someone falls into it and dies, then according to qiyās (legal analogy), the liability for the blood money (diyah) should fall upon the worker. However, this analogy is set aside because workers generally do not know the legal regulations in force. Therefore, the liability is assigned to the ʿāqilah, namely the extended family of the person who hired the worker."[27]

In the Abbasid period, sharīʿa played a significant role in shaping Islamic cosmopolitanism. [28]Within this intellectually plural milieu, the method of istiḥsān emerged as a rational mode of legal reasoning in classical Islamic law, particularly in Baghdad (Persia). Istiḥsān linguistically means to consider something good.[29] In fact, istiḥsān prioritizes rational considerations over textual authority when there are compelling reasons beyond the literal text. [30] In Kūfah, the Aṣḥāb al-Ra'y[31] regarded

[23] Al-Nashshār, *Manāhij*, 496.

[24] Asy-Syafi'i, *al-Um* Juz 7, 492.

[25] Al-Qadli Abu Husain Abd al-Jabbar, *al-Mughni fi Abwābi at-Tauhidi wa Adli wa Zaratu al-Tsaqafah wa al-Irsyād al-Qaumi*, 285.

[26] In Arabic literature, etymologically, *istihsān* means "to consider something better in a hissiological or conceptual sense." This method demonstrates the rationality of "the existence of something better," or is interpreted as "seeking something better" based on rational considerations.

[27] *Abu Yusuf, Kitab al-Kharaj. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1985)* , 160-161.

[28] Muhamad Ali, "Indonesian Post-Orientalist Study of Islam," *Studia Islamika, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2025*, advance online publication, 2025, 48–49, https://doi.org/10.36712/sdi.v32i1.45297.

[29] Nofiardi dan Muhammad Irfan Helmy, "Istiḥsān-Based Waqf in The Carotai Tradition in Tanang River Community, Agam District, West Sumatera," *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* Volume 24, Number 2, 2024 (t.t.): 371, https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v24i2.37582. https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v24i2.37582

[30] Qaftan Abdurrahman Ad-Duri, *Manāhij al-Fuqahā fi Istinbāṭ al-Aḥkām wa Asbāb Ikhtilafihim* (Beirut: Kitab, 2015), 41–43.

[31] The mention of Ashāb al-Ra'y is the experts in jurisprudence who are attributed to Abu Hanifah such as al-Qadi Abu Yusuf, al-Qadi Zufar ibn Hudhail, Hasan Ibn Ziyad, al-Qadi Abu Muthi' and Bisri al-Marasi. Al-Syahrastani, *Al-Milal wa an-Nihāl* (Beirut: Dar Al Kutub al Ilmiyah, 2007), 219 –21.

as rationalist jurists developed the intellectual framework associated with Abū Ḥanīfah. According to Watt, the claim regarding Abū Ḥanīfah's rationalism is connected to the influence of individuals raised within the Hellenistic intellectual tradition of Iraq who later embraced Islam. Although this influence is difficult to document with certainty, it is known that many prominent scholars of the early ʿAbbāsid period were sons of newly converted Muslims (muʿallaf). When these scholars entered Islam, it was logically natural for them to apply rational inquiry to the field of law. [32] Rationalist legal thought developed in Iraq beginning with Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī and continued through Abū Ḥanīfah, who is regarded as the founder of the ahl al-ra'y school. [33] Beyond intellectual inheritance, structural factors also shaped this development, particularly the region's role as a site of conflict between Shīʿī and Khārijī groups. [34] Moreover, an important factor in the rise of rational jurisprudence in Iraq was the community's inheritance of the intellectual traditions of Persian thinkers.

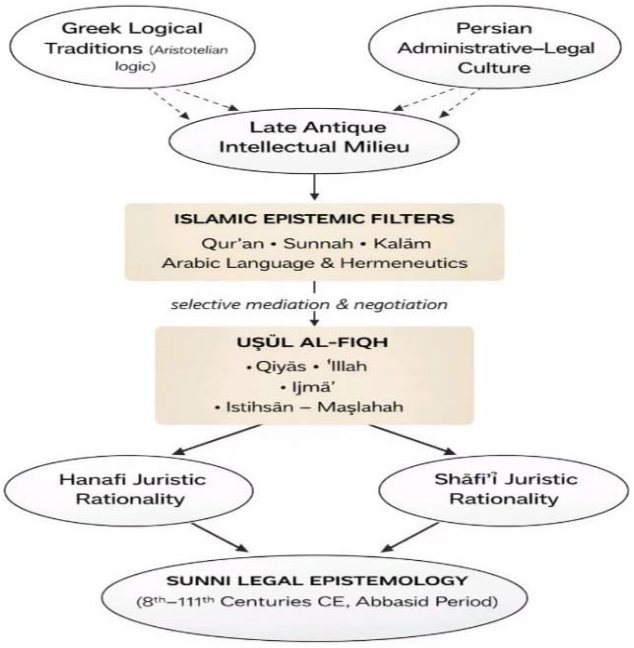

Figure 1. Matrix of Islamic Legal Rationality

Figure 1 conceptualizes the formation of Sunni legal epistemology as a mediated and internally structured intellectual process rather than a linear transmission of foreign rationalities. Greek logical traditions and Persian legal-administrative cultures are situated as broader Late Antique intellectual milieus that shaped the historical context of early Islamic thought without functioning as direct epistemic sources. These external influences were selectively filtered through Islamic epistemic foundations—namely the Qur'an, Sunnah, kalām, and Arabic hermeneutics—and subsequently reorganized within the methodological architecture of uṣūl al-fiqh as the primary locus of epistemic mediation. Through this internal process, distinct Hanafi and Shāfiʿī juristic rationalities emerged and eventually crystallized into a coherent Sunni legal epistemology during the Abbasid period (8th–11th centuries CE).

[32] Hudlory Bek, *Tarikh al-Tasyri' al-Islamy* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, 1995), 79.
[33] Watt, *Islamic philosophy,* 42.
[34] Khairuddin, "Filosofis Fikih Rasional dalam Islam." Al-Fikra: Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman 7, No. 2, Juli-Desember (2008). 270, http://dx.doi.org/10.24014/af.v7i2.3793.

Discussion

Transformation from Kalam Postulates to Law

The early generation of Islamic theologians (ahl al-kalām) and jurists, notably Abu Hanifah (d. 767 CE) and his companions, were renowned for their intellectual reasoning. Abu Hanifah formulated a method of legal reasoning known as istihsān (juridical preference). In contrast, al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204 AH / 820 CE), in his seminal work al-Risālah, articulated the concept of al-qiyās (legal analogy). [35] This foundational work of uṣūl al-fiqh (principles of Islamic jurisprudence) paid close attention not only to what constitutes and delimits legal knowledge but also to how such knowledge is acquired, justified, and validated.

Legal analogy bears resemblance to Greek syllogism, which functions centrally within formal logic—translated into Arabic as al-qiyās al-manṭiqī to correspond to the Classical Greek term syllogismos. [36] Al-Shāfiʿī stands out as a major contributor to Islamic legal thought by promoting ijtihād (independent reasoning) based on legal analogy or systematic examination of causa legis. Analogy, according to him, is a method of discovering legal rulings through logical reasoning (taʿlīl) grounded in nāṣṣ (scriptural text).[37] Al-Shāfiʿī explained that al-qiyās is the sole method of ijtihād, [38] applying systematic logic to connect subsidiary cases (farʿ) to principal rulings (aṣl) determined by scriptural texts, based on a permanent underlying cause (ʿillah). The method of analogy came to be widely accepted among Sunni legal schools

Following the same epistemological framework, the Muʿtazilite scholar al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 1025 CE) employed qiyās in a more rationalistic manner. According to him, the ʿillah (effective cause) inherently entails a legal consequence, even in the absence of explicit scriptural evidence (sharʿ). [39] This marks a fundamental distinction between the qiyās of the Shāfiʿī school—which requires a direct relation to scriptural sources (nāṣṣ)—and the qiyās of the Muʿtazilites, which does not necessitate such a connection. Unfortunately, the Muʿtazilite school of jurisprudence did not develop significantly, and its legal methodology remains rare and seldom cited by later scholars. The methodological divergence between the Sunni and Muʿtazilite schools ultimately reflects their differing philosophical attitudes toward the sources of knowledge.[40]

A prominent jurist of the Shāfiʿī school, al-Ghazālī, in his work al-Mustaṣfā, replaced the theological (kalāmī) postulates with those derived entirely from the burhānī system of knowledge—that is, Greek logic.[41] Hellenistic thought, particularly from renowned Greek philosophers, became an essential component in understanding legal texts, such as the logical system of Aristotle. [42]

The Aristotelian Logical Discourse as an Interpretive Tool for Legal Texts

Debates surrounding logic are inseparable from issues related to speculative theology. Bisri Ibn Matta (d. 940 CE) asserted that logic is a necessary instrument for all scholarly activities and should be regarded as a skill or technique. At times, it is also classified as a ʿilm (a formal science),

[35] Muhammad as-Syafi'i, *Ar-Risalah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2009), 413.
[36] Rosenthal, *Knowledge,* 232–33.
[37] Watt, *Islamic Philosophy,*. 56.
[38] Muhammad as-Syafi'i, *Ar-Risalah*, 413.
[39] Al-Qadli Abu Husain Abd al-Jabbar, *Al-Mughni fi Abwabi at-tauhidi wa Adli wa Zaratu al-tsaqafah wa al-Irsyad al-Qaumi*, t.t., 285.
[40] Rosenthal, *Knowledge,* 232–33.
[41] Al-Ghazzāli, *Al-Mustaṣfa min 'Ilm al-Usül*, 9–19.
[42] Al-Ghazzāli, Al-Mustaṣfa min 'Ilm al-Usül,, 72–76.

as it produces certain and reliable knowledge. Logic offers justification and a system of classification for scientific disciplines and the broader intellectual culture. [43] Accordingly, some scholars of kalām adopted it as an instrument for mastering theology. [44] Logic is a method of reasoning that employs systematic, structured, and precise exposition based on causal relationships. Aristotle termed this method Analytica, more widely known as logic (syllogismos), which refers to a structured form of reasoning used to derive conclusions about particular cases from general premises. [45]

Aristotle formulated a syllogistic structure consisting of a major premise and a minor premise, from which a valid conclusion is drawn. For instance, in the syllogism: "The world changes; everything that changes is contingent; therefore, the world is contingent," the statement "The world changes" functions as the major premise, while "Everything that changes is contingent" is the minor premise. The resulting conclusion "The world is contingent"—is the essential outcome of the logical sequence.

Syllogism became a central topic of discourse among early Muslim thinkers, such as in the well-known debate between Bisri ibn Matta (d. 940 CE) and Abū Saʿīd al-Sīrāfī (d. 979 CE). Bisri advocated for the superiority of philosophy and kalām, highlighting the core reasons why Greek philosophy posed challenges for the majority of Muslims. [46] Al-Sīrāfī, in response, criticized Bisri's Aristotelian conception of the relationship between logic and language. He argued that logic should not be seen primarily as a method of reasoning, but rather as a way of speaking correctly. [47]

On the other hand, syllogistic reasoning has contributed significantly to the development of Islamic law, serving as a tool in the formulation of legal rulings. One example is the prohibition of certain types of beverages that are analogized and linked to khamr (intoxicants). This can be demonstrated through scientific reasoning in interpreting the ḥadīth of the Prophet Muhammad, which states, "Every intoxicant is khamr, and every khamr is forbidden." [48]

This ḥadīth presents two premises—major and minor—which necessitate a logical conclusion. The statement "kullu muskirin khamrun" ("every intoxicant is khamr") serves as the major premise, while "wa kullu khamrin ḥarāmun" ("and every khamr is forbidden") serves as the minor premise. Thus, employing syllogistic reasoning leads to the conclusion: "kullu muskirin ḥarāmun", that is, "everything that intoxicates is prohibited." In this regard, the brilliant exegete Ibn ʿAbbās, when interpreting the term al-khamr in Sūrat al-Māʾidah (5:90), explained it with the expression:

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Khamr encompasses all intoxicating beverages.[49] Substances resembling khamr that are encountered within society require legal judgment. Therefore, any intoxicating drink- whether derived from staple foods, fruits, or vegetables- that contains intoxicating elements is to be equated with khamr. Legal reasoning that incorporates syllogistic logic facilitates jurists in interpreting and

[43] Rosenthal, *Knowledge*, 195.
[44] Rosenthal, *Knowledge*, 210–211.
[45] Muhammad Hatta. Alam Pikiran Yunani. Jakarta: Tintamas, 2018, 121–22.
[46] Oliver Leaman, An Introduction to Medieval Islamic Philosophy. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.eaman, *An Introduction.,* 11.
[47] Leaman, An Introduction *,* 11.
[48] Ibn Hajar, *Bulugh al-Maram min Adilat al-Ahkam* (t.t.), 265.
[49] Muhammad Ali al-Shabuni, *Shafwatu Tafasir: Tafsir lil Qur'ani al-Adzim, Jami'i baina al-Ma'tsur wa al-Manqul* (Mesir: Dar al-Hadis, t.t.), 255–56.

deriving rulings from foundational sources. The validity of such conclusions remains firmly grounded in the textual content of the major and minor premises. However, this line of discourse was not unanimously accepted among Muslim scholars. Islamic intellectual history is marked by a tension between the acceptance of cultural ambiguity and the pursuit of legal certainty- an attitude quite distinct from modern Western thought, which tends to reject ambiguity and is driven by an obsession with absolute truth. [50]

In the modern period, ʿAlī Sāmī al-Naṣṣār similarly rejected Greek syllogistic logic, aiming instead to recover the epistemology of the classical mutakallimūn and fuqahāʾ as a form of pure Arab reasoning. [51]Nonetheless, the historical reality is that the development of Islamic law evolved—whether directly in Baghdad or indirectly in the pre-Islamic era—within a cultural context shaped by Hellenistic influences, ultimately integrated into the broader Mediterranean and Mesopotamian intellectual heritage. A like Al-Mustashfā min ʿIlm al-Uṣūl represents one of the pinnacle works of the classical Islamic legal-theoretical tradition, explicitly demonstrating the integration between philosophical logic and the methodology of Islamic law. Prior to the composition of al-Mustashfā, al-Ghazālī, in the introduction to al-Maqāṣid al-Falāsifa, outlined his first work on logic and presented the Greek sciences. He divided these sciences into four categories: mathematics, metaphysics (ilāhiyyāt), logic (manṭiqiyyāt), and the natural sciences (ṭabīʿiyyāt). According to Sāmī al-Nashshār, early scholars of uṣūl al-fiqh did not accept Aristotelian logic. Instead, they employed a form of reasoning that was substantively different from Aristotelian structures. The uṣūliyyūn maintained this position up until the fourth Islamic century. Thus, the early fifth century Hijri marks a watershed in the history of Islamic intellectual thought—distinguishing two distinct phases: a period during which Muslims did not intermingle religious sciences with Greek logic and philosophy, and a subsequent period in which such integration began to take shape. [52]

In the introduction to al-Mustashfā, al-Ghazālī underscores the significance of Greek logic, viewing it as an indispensable tool for correct reasoning and for avoiding erroneous thought. He asserts that anyone who does not master logic cannot be trusted in matters of knowledge. With the exception of Ibn Taymiyyah, the majority of Muslim scholars affirm that al-Ghazālī's position on logic remained consistent. According to him, most of the content of logical theory follows sound methodological principles (ṣawāb), and instances of error within it are exceedingly rare. The divergence between Greek logic and the approach of the ahl al-ḥaqq (proponents of truth) lies solely in terminology and modes of expression (al-iṣṭilāḥāt wa-l-irādāt), not in meaning or objective. The purpose of logic, he argues, is to refine methods of inference (istidlālāt), a need shared by all intellectual traditions. [53] For al-Ghazālī, the structure and conditions of reasoning in fiqh are fundamentally identical to those employed in the rational sciences; the only difference lies in the sources of their premises. This indicates that the logical form of legal reasoning does not differ from that of rational inquiry—only the substance of their arguments does. Consequently, logic extends across all theoretical disciplines, whether purely rational or jurisprudential in nature.[54] Nevertheless, al-Ghazālī cautions that the study of logic is neither a

[50] Thomas Bauer, *A Culture of Ambiguity: An Alternative History of Islam*, trans. oleh Hinrich Biesterfeldt and Tricia Tunstall (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), 213.

[51] 'Alī Sāmī al-Nashshār, *Manahij al-Baḥth 'inda Mufakkiri al-Islām* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar an-Nahdlah al-Arabiyah), 10–11.

[52] Al-Nassyār, *Manāhij*, 166.

[53] Al-Nassyār, *Manāhij,* 166-167.

[54] Al-Ghazali, *Mi 'yar al- 'Ilmi* (Kairo: Dar al-Ma 'arif, n.d.), 26.

component of uṣūl al-fiqh nor one of its foundational premises.[55] Abid al-Jābirī observes that historical evidence compels the conclusion that only three civilizations-Ancient Greece, the Arabs, and Europe—cultivated systematic theoretical, rational, scientific, and philosophical thought. Rational thought, when practiced methodically, occupies the highest level of intellectual rigor, surpassing mere intuitive reasoning.[56] Both ʿAlī al-Sāmī al-Nashshār and Abid al-Jābirī advance these critiques while remaining firmly rooted in the epistemic foundations of the Arab-Islamic intellectual tradition—maintaining an insider perspective.

The Cultural Dynamics of Hellenism in Islamic Law

Analogy (qiyās) is a method of legal discovery based on logical reasoning (taʿlīl) rooted in scriptural texts (naṣṣ). Al-Shāfiʿī (d. 820 CE) explained that analogy is the sole method of ijtihād in the formulation of legal rulings.[57] This method constitutes a systematic logical reasoning that links (ilhāq) secondary cases (farʿ) to the original case (aṣl) whose legal ruling is established by a text, based on a permanent operative cause (ʿillah). Numerous legal issues are resolved through analogy, particularly when there is no explicit mention in the Qur'an or Sunnah. Such analogical reasoning can only be employed by individuals with proper knowledge; it is impermissible for the ignorant to perform qiyās, as they lack an understanding of the systematic thinking required to compare and assess legal cases.[58] According to al-Naṣṣār, the logic of the uṣūliyyūn-such as al-Shāfiʿī-is a method of reasoning based on a theory of ʿillah, the hidden cause embedded in legal rulings, which serves as the proof within a rational system of legal reasoning.[59]

The methodological framework in the formulation of Islamic law during the early Abbasid period was inseparable from the diverse scholarly attitudes toward philosophy and logic- some scholars embraced them, while others rejected their use. Although both istihsān and qiyās are grounded in rational reasoning, they differ in their scale of application and legal orientation. For instance, in the case of selling unripe fruit: according to qiyās, such a transaction is invalid because the fruit does not yet fully belong to the buyer. However, employing istihsān, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ruled that the sale is permissible due to the risk that the fruit may spoil if not sold before ripening. This legal judgment is rooted in considerations of public welfare (maṣlaḥah) and ethical reasoning to achieve benefit and prevent harm- assessments derived through rational deliberation. Al-Shahrastānī cites Abū Ḥanīfah as saying: "We know that this is the reasoning of the intellect; it is preferable according to our principles. Whoever chooses otherwise is entitled to his view, and we are entitled to ours on the matter."[60]The majority of Iraqi jurists relied heavily on reason in legal formulation and fatwā issuance,[61] especially in matters not explicitly addressed in the primary texts (naṣṣ), or in cases requiring interpretive expansion of meaning.

A follower of al-Shāfiʿī, al-Ghazālī, in his seminal work al-Mustaṣfā, opened the space for the systematic development of uṣūl al-fiqh by incorporating Aristotelian logic (manṭiq). This work is

[55] Abū Hamid al-Ghazāli, *Al-Mustasfa min 'Ilm al-Usül* (Kairo: Syirkah at-Tiba'ah al-Fanniyyah al-Muttahidah, 1971), 19.
[56] al-Jabiri, *Takwinu al-Aql al-Arabi*..., 16–18.
[57] Muhammad as-Syafi'i, *Ar-Risalah*, 413.
[58] Leaman, *An Introduction*, 11–12.
[59] Al-Nashshār, *Manāhij*, 100-129.
[60] Al-Syahratsani, *Al-Milal,* 221.
[61] Asy-Syafi'i, *al-Um*., Jilid I, 11.

not merely a legal treatise but also an epistemological text. Al-Ghazālī sought to integrate bayānī and burhānī epistemologies, especially by applying logic within the field of uṣūl al-fiqh while separating it from metaphysical speculation. [62] He classified the sources of Islamic law into four: the Qur'an, the Sunnah, ijmāʿ (consensus), and reason (ʿaql). In al-Mustaṣfā, al-Ghazālī stated that the most noble form of knowledge is that which combines reason and revelation in a balanced manner. [63] In his work Miʿyār al-ʿIlm, al-Ghazālī extensively discusses logic and provides examples of the application of various forms of syllogistic reasoning to jurisprudential problems. [64] He explicitly asserted that legal reasoning does not differ from rational sciences except in terms of the premises used. The Miʿyār al-ʿIlm offers a clear exposition of rational argumentation in legal matters, demonstrating how different types of syllogisms can be applied in the process of fiqh reasoning.

An Analysis of Hellenism in the Epistemology of Islamic Law

Ignaz Goldziher linked Islamic law to Roman law. According to him, Islamic jurisprudence bears undeniable traces of Roman legal influence, both in its methodology and in certain specific provisions. [65] Unfortunately, conclusive evidence is lacking, as his claim merely suggests that Roman law, once implemented in the region of Greater Syria (al-Shām), later became local custom.[66] The practice of Islamic law in al-Shām- then the heart of the Umayyad Caliphate- continued into the legal practices of the Abbasid period, albeit with differing cultural inheritances. The Abbasid intellectual landscape was more profoundly shaped by the legacies of Hellenistic civilization. According to Abū Yūsuf, prior to the advent of Islam, Iraq had been under both Roman and Persian control, each with their own military presence and administrative systems. The Euphrates River, he noted, was under Roman jurisdiction, while Nisibis and the territories extending eastward to the Tigris River fell under Persian dominion. [67] As historical evidence presented by Rolf Strootman indicates, the Sasanian, Roman, Byzantine, and Arab worlds were all historically interconnected with the legacy of Macedonian Hellenism.[68] Thus, the cultural spheres mentioned by Abū Yūsuf were in fact key regions that underwent profound Hellenization.

The Abbasid Caliphate ruled over a diverse Muslim society in which Islam functioned as an integrative force between religion, politics, and social life, giving rise to complex theological and legal challenges that demanded resolution.[69] However, the prevailing methodology at the time was largely bayānī, relying on linguistic play in interpreting the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. Clearly, the Muslim community was experiencing a methodological crisis in constructing theological or legal arguments. On the other hand, the Qur'ān, though it addresses legal matters, does so less extensively compared to its overall content, [70] while the number and complexity of emerging issues were increasing, demanding solutions. Ultimately, the effort to investigate these texts in search of legal rulings

[62] Al-Ghazali, *Al-Mustaṣfa*, 26.
[63] Al-Ghazali, *Al-Mustaṣfa.,* 9.
[64] Al-Ghazali, *Mi 'yar*, 60.
[65] Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic theology and law*, 44.
[66] Al-Jabiri, *Takwinu al-Aql al-Arabi*, 96.
[67] Abu Yusuf, *Al-Kharaj* 39.
[68] Strootman, "Hellenistic., 52.
[69] A.H. Asari Taufiqurrohman et.al., "The Role of Islamic Law, Constitution, and Culture in Democracy in the UAE and Indonesia," 89.
[70] Al-Munawwar, "Al-Qawaid al-Fiqiyyah dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam," 96.

became a gradual process. A text was not only analyzed linguistically, semantically, and logically, but also through the introduction of additional tools as the foundation for arguments or accurate reasoning systems. The search for legal rulings eventually expanded through the use of pure rational reasoning, known as burhānī. This breakthrough, drawing on the intellectual tools of disciplines outside of Islam-namely, philosophy and logic rooted in Hellenistic thought-marked a significant shift.

According to al-Shāfiʿī, the development of rationality was a result of the Muslim encounter with Greek culture and knowledge. al-Shāfiʿī is reported to have sharply commented, "People have become ignorant and are quarreling not because they have abandoned the Arabic tongue and taken up the tongue of Aristotle."[71] Based on this, al-Shāfiʿī did not deny the existence of philosophy as part of the intellectual process of the Muslim community.

On the other hand, al-Shāfiʿī had thoroughly studied the components and rational thought of the Arabs, and there is no doubt that the foundations of his methodology were accepted by linguists and theologians (mutakallimūn) who adapted them to their respective fields. It is not surprising that al-Ashʿarī also used numerous analogies to counter the arguments of the Muʿtazilite figures.[72] The unity of the methodology of qiyās in Arab-Islamic sciences had to be imposed by the unity of the theme of nash. According to him, analogy is a method for discovering legal rulings through the rational power of taʿlīl based on nash.[73] The legal analogy formulated by al-Shāfiʿī is considered a major contribution to Islamic legal thought.[74] The concept of al-Qiyās, although not part of Aristotelian logic, became the gateway for the Shāfiʿī school to accommodate logic or causality as a part of the epistemology of law.

Reinterpreting Islamic Legal Thought in the Post-Colonial Era

A postcolonial reinterpretation of Islamic legal thought begins by challenging the diffusionist assumption that Sunni legal epistemology between 800 and 1100 CE was primarily shaped by Hellenistic rationality. Orientalist scholarship often framed Islamic law as a derivative system whose rational structures were borrowed from Greek philosophy, especially Aristotelian logic. Within this narrative, Islamic jurisprudence appears as an imitative tradition that merely rearticulated an already-complete epistemology from outside its own civilizational resources. Such a framing not only simplifies the complexity of Islamic intellectual history, but also functions as a historiographical mechanism that denies Islamic law its epistemic agency.[75]

Classical Western scholars such as Goldziher and Von Kremer represent this tendency by treating Islamic legal reasoning as dependent on Greek models at both the methodological and substantive levels. Yet from a postcolonial perspective, these claims should be understood not simply as historical descriptions, but as part of an epistemic regime that privileges European genealogies of reason while marginalizing non-Western intellectual autonomy. Influence, in this discourse, becomes a rhetorical shortcut: it serves to explain Islamic complexity by attributing it to external origins, rather

[71] 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud, *At-Tauhid al-Khalish, au al-Islam wa al-'Aql* (Kairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Hadisah, n.d.), 47.
[72] Al-Asy'ari, *Al-Ibanah 'an,* 124.
[73] Watt, *Islamic Philosophy,*. 56.
[74] Watt, Islamic Philosophy , 56-57.
[75] Carol G. Thomas dkk., "Hellenism in Islam," dalam *Paths from Ancient Greece* (Brill, 1988), 76–91, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004676077_007; Gerhard Endress, "The Cycle of Knowledge: Intellectual Traditions and Encyclopædias of the Rational Sciences in Arabic Islamic Hellenism," dalam *Organizing Knowledge* (Brill, 2006), 103–33, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047408345_009.

than by acknowledging the internal capacity of Islamic sciences to generate legal rationality through their own debates, constraints, and conceptual innovations.[76]

In contrast, postcolonial Muslim thinkers, most notably ʿAlī Sāmī al-Nashshār, argue that Sunni legal epistemology emerged primarily from indigenous Islamic disciplines, especially kalām and uṣūl al-fiqh, rather than from speculative philosophy (*falsafa*). In this account, Islamic rationality is not grounded in philosophical skepticism or autonomous reason, but in a theistic epistemology that disciplines reason through revelation and ethical normativity.[77] Al-Nashshār's critique of Aristotelian logic thus does not reject rational inquiry; instead, it exposes how "universal logic" often masks cultural and epistemic hierarchies, while ignoring the distinctive rational practices already embedded within the Islamic tradition.[78]

This embedded rationality becomes visible in the way key legal concepts were formulated from within Islamic methodological debates. The development of qiyās, ʿillah, ijmāʿ, and istiḥsān should not be read as mechanical adaptations of Greek syllogism, but as part of an internal epistemic architecture shaped by the interplay of revelation, linguistic analysis, communal practice, and scholarly authority.[79] In other words, Sunni legal reasoning did not emerge as abstract rationality detached from religious commitments; it emerged as a rationality that is socially and normatively situated, designed to regulate legal meaning within a revelatory framework while responding to new problems in expanding Muslim societies.[80]

Within this setting, early jurists such as Abū Ḥanīfah and his circle cultivated rational tools like istiḥsān to address emergent legal issues through ethical and welfare-oriented judgment. Istiḥsān illustrates that rationality in Islamic law was never merely formal reasoning; it was closely tied to the pursuit of benefit and the prevention of harm, reflecting a jurisprudence attentive to lived realities[81]. This trajectory complicates modern stereotypes that equate Islamic legal thought with rigid textualism, since the earliest juristic reasoning often reveals a dynamic engagement with social consequence and moral purpose.

The Shāfiʿī project, especially in *al-Risālah*, represents a different but equally significant epistemic move: the systematization of qiyās as a controlled method of inference grounded in naṣṣ. Postcolonially, this development should be seen as an act of methodological consolidation and boundary-making rather than a shift toward imported Greek rationalism. Qiyās links a subsidiary case (*farʿ*) to an established ruling (*aṣl*) through an operative cause (*ʿillah*), yet it remains constrained by the authority of revelation.[82] The point is not that qiyās resembles syllogism in form, but that its legitimacy is secured through a scriptural economy of truth, making it a disciplined extension of textual authority rather than an autonomous philosophical method.

[76] Muhammad Khalid Masud, *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates* (Edinburgh University Press, 2009); Nasar Meer, "Islamophobia and postcolonialism: continuity, Orientalism and Muslim consciousness," *Patterns of Prejudice* 48, no. 5 (Oktober 2014): 500–515, https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2014.966960.

[77] ?Ali? Sa?mi? Nashsha?r, *Nash "at Al-Fikr Al-Falsafi Fi Al-Islam"* (Dar Al-Ma'arif, 1954).

[78] 'Ali Sami Al Nashar, "Manāhij al Bahth 'and Mufakkiri al Islām wa Iktishāf al Manhaj al 'Ilmi fi al 'Alim al Islāmi," *Beirut: Dar al Nahda al 'Arabiya*, 1984.

[79] Nath Aldalala'a dan Geoffrey P. Nash, "Coming out for Islam? Critical Muslim responses to postcolonialism in theory and writing," dalam *Islam and Postcolonial Discourse* (Routledge, 2017).

[80] Iza R. Hussin, *The Politics of Islamic Law: Local Elites, Colonial Authority, and the Making of the Muslim State* (University of Chicago Press, 2021), https://doi.org/10.7208/9780226323480.

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

[82] Shaista Jabeen, "Imam Al-Shafi'i: The Founder of Islamic Law," *AL-HIDAYAH* 6, no. 1 (Juni 2024): 35–41, https://doi.org/10.52700/alhidayah.v6i1.82; Kecia Ali, *Imam Shafi'i: Scholar and Saint* (Simon and Schuster, 2011).

A further illustration of internal epistemic pluralism can be seen in the Muʿtazilite trajectory, particularly in the reasoning of al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār. In Muʿtazilite epistemology, the *ʿillah* can entail legal consequences more strongly through rational necessity, even without direct textual anchoring. However, a postcolonial framework avoids presenting this as a simplistic hierarchy of "rationalist Muʿtazila" versus "textualist Sunnism." Instead, it interprets the divergence as a contest between competing regimes of legal authority and epistemic legitimacy, shaped by broader dynamics of orthodoxy formation, institutional support, and the politics of scholarly dominance.[83]

Debates around Aristotelian logic in Islamic intellectual history further confirm that logic was never a neutral import, but a contested resource. Disputes such as the one involving Bisrī ibn Mattā[84] and Abū Saʿīd al-Sīrāfī[85] reveal that scholars were negotiating not only the validity of certain reasoning techniques, but the deeper issue of epistemic sovereignty: whether knowledge must be organized around trans-cultural logical universals or grounded in linguistic and interpretive practices that reflect the internal logic of Islamic sciences.[86] When syllogistic structures appear in jurisprudential argumentation, they function primarily as techniques for organizing inference, while the normative legitimacy of conclusions remains dependent on revealed premises and juristic authority.[87] This confirms the postcolonial insight that shared forms do not erase epistemic difference.

The pivotal role of al-Ghazālī in *al-Mustaṣfa* marks a critical moment in the selective integration of logic into uṣūl al-fiqh, especially by the fifth/eleventh century. Yet even here, the incorporation of Aristotelian elements does not signal a transformation of Islamic epistemic sources; rather, logic is positioned as a technical instrument to discipline reasoning and avoid error. Al-Ghazālī's framework emphasizes that legal reasoning and rational sciences share inferential structures but differ in the premises they employ, meaning that logic refines method without redefining the normative authority of revelation, consensus, or juristic practice.[88] This is best understood as the Islamization of logical technique, not the Hellenization of Islamic law.

Taken together, these trajectories demonstrate that Sunni legal epistemology between 800 and 1100 CE cannot be adequately explained as a mere adoption of Hellenistic rationality. The formative consolidation of uṣūl al-fiqh took place within a dense arena of internal debates—between jurists and theologians, between competing regional and madhhab networks, and between differing conceptions of epistemic authority—where legal reasoning was not simply "borrowed" but *produced* through systematic acts of selection, validation, and exclusion. Rationality in this context was never allowed to operate as an autonomous philosophical regime. Instead, it was cultivated as a disciplined instrument whose legitimacy depended on its ability to function under revelatory authority (naṣṣ) and to remain accountable to the ethical aims of the law.[89]

[83] Tariq Jaffer, "The Muʿtazila on Covenantal Theology: A Study of Individualist Approaches," *Oriens* 49, no. 1–2 (September 2021): 131–71, https://doi.org/10.1163/18778372-12340002; Yohanan Friedmann dan Christoph Markschies, *Rationalization in Religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2018).

[84] Cecilia Martini Bonadeo, "Abū Bishr Mattā Ibn Yūnus," dalam *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy* (Springer, Dordrecht, 2011), 13–14, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-9729-4_7.

[85] F. Krenkow, "Sīrāfī," dalam *Encyclopaedia of Islam First Edition Online* (Brill), https://doi.org/10.1163/2214-871X_ei1_SIM_5443.

[86] Joep Lameer, *Al-Fārābī and Aristotelian Syllogistics: Greek Theory and Islamic Practice* (BRILL, 1994).

[87] R. M. Frank, review of *Review of Aristotle and the Arabs, The Aristotelian Tradition in Islam*, oleh F. E. Peters, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 90, no. 4 (1970): 556–59, https://doi.org/10.2307/598842.

[88] Wa Sharhuhu Abdul Ali Mohammad Bin Nizamud Deen Al Ansari Abu Hamid Mohammad Bin Mohammad Bin Mohammad Al Gizali, *Al Mustasfa Min Ilmul Usool* (1325), http://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.432464.

[89] Peter Adamson, *Philosophy and Jurisprudence in the Islamic World* (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2019).

The postcolonial significance of this conclusion lies in its challenge to the implicit hierarchy embedded in Orientalist historiography. When scholars frame Islamic law as a derivative extension of Aristotle's logical system, they often assume that rationality has a single civilizational origin and that its appearance elsewhere must indicate dependence. Such accounts treat *formal resemblance* as if it automatically proves *intellectual genealogy*. Yet the Sunni trajectory shows a different pattern: rational forms were frequently mobilized within an Islamic epistemic horizon where scriptural meaning, linguistic analysis, communal authority, and normative purpose remained central. The claim of Greek dominance, therefore, is better understood as a historiographical projection shaped by Orientalist epistemic bias—an interpretive habit that explains Islamic complexity primarily through external origins, while reducing internal Islamic debates into secondary footnotes.

In the Sunni legal tradition, rationality emerged not by replacing revelation but by being regulated through it. Uṣūl al-fiqh developed conceptual tools such as *qiyās, ʿillah, ijmāʿ, and istiḥsān* as mechanisms to manage legal expansion in response to new cases, without dissolving the normative boundaries that anchored law in Qur'an and Sunnah. This process indicates that Sunni epistemology was primarily concerned with producing reliable pathways of inference rather than celebrating reason as an end in itself. The question was not whether rationality should be used, but how it could be *domesticated*, constrained, and justified within a theistic framework that demands accountability to divine speech and moral order.

The internal negotiations that produced Sunni uṣūl al-fiqh also reveal that Islamic epistemology was never monolithic. Different schools contested the scope of analogy, the status of causality, the limits of interpretive extension, and the authority of linguistic versus rational demonstration. Yet even in disagreement, these traditions shared a common commitment: epistemic claims in law must be tethered to legitimate sources and must remain defensible within the economy of scholarly authority. In this sense, rationality was simultaneously cultivated and contested—because it was useful for legal problem-solving, but also potentially dangerous if it threatened to loosen the boundaries of revelation. The growth of methodological rigor in uṣūl al-fiqh reflects precisely this tension: a tradition seeking to benefit from rational tools while preventing them from becoming epistemically sovereign.

Figure 2. Postcolonial framework for reinterpreting Sunni legal epistemology, 800–1100 CE

Figure 2. Postcolonial framework for reinterpreting Sunni legal epistemology, 800–1100 CE visualizes this argument as a structured movement from Orientalist genealogies of reason toward a postcolonial reconstruction centered on epistemic autonomy. The diagram highlights three key dynamics: the critique of "influence" as a Eurocentric explanatory shortcut; the recovery of indigenous foundations in kalām and uṣūl al-fiqh; and the final synthesis that treats interactions with Greek logic as selective integration rather than wholesale adoption. More importantly, the figure shows that the formation of Sunni legal reasoning is best understood as a process of *boundary-making*: jurists did not merely inherit rationality, but actively negotiated its legitimacy by deciding where it begins, how far it may extend, and when it must be restrained.

This postcolonial reconstruction aligns with ʿAlī Sāmī al-Nashshār's insistence that Sunni legal rationality grew out of internal Islamic disciplines rather than speculative philosophy. Al-Nashshār's critique is not simply an apologetic defense of Islamic originality; it is an epistemological argument that Sunni reasoning is grounded in a distinct metaphysical commitment—namely, that the world is intelligible under divine governance and that knowledge is ultimately oriented toward normative obedience. Within this worldview, logic cannot become an autonomous foundation; it is permitted to function only as an instrument that sharpens inference while remaining subordinate to revealed sources.[90] This is why, even when formal logical structures appear in legal discourse, they do not reorganize the hierarchy of authority in Islamic law.

The same insistence on recovering internal epistemic logics resonates with critiques advanced by al-Jābirī, who calls attention to how historical narratives often import explanatory hierarchies that misrecognize Arab-Islamic rationality. Postcolonially, this becomes a methodological demand: instead of explaining Islamic legal thought by measuring it against external canons of reason, one must reconstruct how the tradition itself defined rationality, validated methods, and structured intellectual

[90] Al Nashar, "Manāhij al Bahth 'and Mufakkiri al Islām wa Iktishāf al Manhaj al 'Ilmi fi al 'Alim al Islāmi."

authority.[91] This approach does not deny historical interaction with Hellenistic knowledge; rather, it reorients the question from "Who influenced whom?" to "How did Islamic scholars transform available resources into a coherent normative system?" Interaction becomes intelligible not as dependence but as a site of agency.

Accordingly, the historical presence of Hellenistic knowledge should be reframed as a form of creative transformation in which the Islamic tradition preserved and strengthened its intellectual autonomy. Logic, where adopted, functioned as a *technical discipline* intended to discipline reasoning, reduce fallacy, and sharpen legal argumentation—not as a philosophical foundation that redefined the sources of law. The decisive feature of Sunni uṣūl al-fiqh is therefore not its proximity to Greek syllogism, but its ability to construct a stable epistemology that integrates reason while safeguarding the primacy of revelation, communal authority, and ethical purpose.

In this sense, Sunni uṣūl al-fiqh represents not an echo of external rationality but a sophisticated epistemological project that actively negotiated the boundaries of reason, text, and authority within a distinctly Islamic horizon of meaning. Its intellectual history demonstrates how a tradition can engage with foreign forms of knowledge without surrendering its normative center, and how methodological autonomy is achieved not through isolation but through disciplined critique, selective appropriation, and reconstruction. A postcolonial reading therefore restores Sunni legal epistemology to its proper status: not as an imitative aftermath of Hellenism, but as an original mode of rational governance grounded in revelation and sustained by scholarly contestation.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the formation of Sunni legal epistemology between 800 and 1100 CE cannot be adequately explained as a mere adoption of Hellenistic rationality. Rather, it was the result of a complex process of internal methodological negotiation within the Islamic intellectual tradition. Ali Sami al-Nashshār argues that the foundations of Sunni legal reasoning developed primarily through the indigenous Islamic disciplines of kalām and uṣūl al-fiqh, rather than through the direct influence of Greek philosophy. In this context, juristic reasoning—particularly qiyās as systematized by al-Shāfiʿī—emerged from an internal logical structure grounded in the concept of ʿillah, reflecting a form of rationality embedded within revelation and normative practice. While Aristotelian logic did not initially constitute a foundational framework for Islamic legal reasoning, its selective incorporation became more visible by the fifth/eleventh century, most notably through al-Ghazālī's synthesis in al-Mustaṣfā. This incorporation, however, did not alter the epistemic sources of Islamic law. Instead, logic was elevated to the status of a universal methodological instrument intended to discipline reasoning, not to redefine the normative authority of revelation, consensus, or juristic practice. As such, logic functioned as a technical tool rather than as an autonomous epistemological foundation. Sunni legal epistemology thus emerged not through passive reception of Hellenistic rationality, but through a process of creative transformation that preserved the intellectual autonomy of the Islamic tradition. As emphasized by al-Nashshār and further articulated by al-Jābirī, this trajectory underscores the necessity of a postcolonial reading of Islamic intellectual history—one that resists reductionist

[91] Mogamat Nasief Adams, *A Postcolonial Critique of Modernist Approaches to Maqāṣid Al-Sharī`ah* (University of Johannesburg, 2019), https://ujcontent.uj.ac.za/esploro/outputs/graduate/A-postcolonial-critique-of-modernist-approaches/999914907691.

narratives of derivation and instead recognizes Islamic legal thought as a tradition that constructs its own rationality through critique, selection, and methodological reconstruction.

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