Proceedings of The 3rd International Conference on Science and Islamic Studies
ISSN: 3024-9058 (Online - Elektronik)
Volume: 3, 2025
Publisher: Program Pascasarjana, UIN Alauddin Makassar

RECONSTRUCTING IBN QUTAIBAH'S EPISTEMOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES IN *TAʾWĪL MUKHTALIF AL-ḤADĪTH*

Arfan[1], **Zulfahmi Alwi**[2], **Erwin Hafid**[3], **& Sitti Asiqah Usman Ali**[4]

[1,2,3,4]Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia
Correspondence Email: arifuddinarfan@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the implicit methodological principles underlying Ibn Qutaibah's interpretive approach in *Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth*. Although the work contains 109 cases of disputed reports, Ibn Qutaibah never articulates the interpretive rules that guide his resolutions, leaving a significant gap in the systematic study of early hadith reasoning. Using qualitative textual analysis and inductive synthesis, this study examines his arguments across the entire work to reconstruct the epistemological principles that consistently structure his interpretive choices. The analysis identifies four foundational principles that recur throughout the text: If a *ḥadīth* is authentic, the meaning it conveys must be true; Understanding hadith requires adherence to the *ʿurf al-shāriʿ* (the normative linguistic and conceptual usage of the Lawgiver); Context *(siyāq)* determines the intended meaning of the speaker; and *ʿAzīmah* and *rukhṣah* operate on different legal planes. These findings demonstrate that Ibn Qutaibah employed a coherent and transferable methodological framework, even if unstated, thereby offering one of the earliest models for systematic hadith interpretation.

Keywords: *Ibn qutaibah, taʾwīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth, principles, hadith interpretation*

1. INTRODUCTION

The study of *ḥadīth* interpretation occupies a central place in Islamic scholarship, yet the methodological foundations of this discipline remain largely implicit (Saputra, 2023, pp. 41–60). Although the commentary tradition (*sharḥ al-ḥadīth*) is abundant, the interpretive strategies employed within individual reports are seldom distilled into transferable principles (Royyani, Putra, & Siregar, 2023), unlike the well-developed legal maxims *(al-qawāʿid al-fiqhiyyah)* in Islamic jurisprudence (Ramadani & Tanjung, 2025). This lack of explicit methodological articulation becomes more pressing given the complexity of *ḥadīth* literature, where certain reports appear to conflict with Qurʾānic verses, other *ḥadīth*, rational considerations, or historical knowledge. These challenges highlight the need to reconstruct the epistemic principles underlying classical interpretive practice, especially in works that directly confront problematic or contested reports.

Within this landscape, Ibn Qutaibah's Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth (d. 276/889) offers an exceptional corpus for methodological reconstruction. As a formative contribution to the discourse on mukhtalif al-ḥadīth, the work predates systematic treatises in uṣūl and linguistics,

Copyright © 2025: the Author(s)

preserving early interpretive reasoning in its pre-theoretical state. Moreover, its thematic breadth—ranging from theology and law to ethics, spirituality, and social conduct—reflects Ibn Qutaibah's multidisciplinary expertise in ḥadīth, philology, history, and legal theory. His responses to 109 interpretive problems display recurring patterns of reasoning that allow for inductive synthesis into broader interpretive principles (Abu Zahw, 1958, p. 367-340).

This study aims to identify and reconstruct the underlying epistemological principles that structure Ibn Qutaibah's interpretive approach in Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth. Here, the term "epistemological principles" does not refer to abstract philosophical theories of knowledge, but to the foundational criteria through which meaning is validated, interpreted, and justified within a given scholarly tradition. In the context of Ibn Qutaibah's work, epistemological principles denote the underlying rules that determine how a ḥadīth is understood as meaningful, authoritative, and free from contradiction. They function as implicit standards guiding interpretation rather than as formally articulated theoretical doctrines.

A number of studies have examined Ibn Qutaibah and his approach to resolving problematic or contradictory ḥadīth, though their objectives and analytical orientations differ from the present study. Ghozali analyzes Ibn Qutaibah's use of textual and contextual methods in Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth, emphasizing his conviction that authentic ḥadīth cannot contradict the Qurʾān, sound reason, or established facts (Ghozali, 2014). Anas offers a biographical and intellectual portrait of Ibn Qutaibah, highlighting his scholarly stature within the second and third Islamic centuries and his multidisciplinary expertise in ḥadīth, language, history, and theology (Anas, 2021). Kurniyah and Marjuki examine the phenomenon of ikhtilāf al-ḥadīth through a descriptive analysis of Ibn Qutaibah's work, concluding that he primarily employs al-jamʿ wa al-tawfīq, nasikh–mansūkh, and tarjīḥ (Kurniyah & Marjuki, 2024). Maulida studies Ibn Qutaibah's taʾwīl method using critical discourse analysis, outlining sequential steps such as identifying reports, considering asbāb al-wurūd, and supporting interpretations with linguistic, rational, or historical evidence (Maulida, 2024). Suganda focuses on the origins of ikhtilāf al-matn and summarizes Ibn Qutaibah's contribution to resolving contradictions (Suganda, 2021). Arabic studies—such as al-Ḥaddād's work on Ibn Qutaibah's critical thought (al-Haddad, n.d.) and Ḥammūdī's examination of mukhtalif al-ḥadīth in Taʾwīl (T. H. Ibrahim, 2010)—highlight Ibn Qutaibah's rational balance, his literary style, and his defense of Sunni orthodoxy.

Although previous studies have examined Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth from various angles—such as Ibn Qutaibah's contextual methods, his biographical profile, his strategies for reconciling contradictory reports, and the concept of taʾwīl in his work—they remain focused on describing his solutions to individual ḥadīth problems. To date, existing studies have largely focused on Ibn Qutaibah's methods of resolving specific cases of conflicting or problematic reports. While these contributions are valuable, they do not sufficiently attempt to identify and reconstruct the broader epistemological principles that consistently guide his interpretive reasoning across the 109 cases he discusses. As a result, the underlying methodological logic of his approach has not been fully articulated or systematized in previous scholarship. This study seeks to address that gap by offering a systematic reconstruction of Ibn Qutaibah's foundational interpretive principles, enabling them to function as transferable methodological tools rather than case-bound explanations. The sections that follow describe the study's methodology and present the reconstructed principles with their analytical implications.

2. METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative, text-based design centered on a close examination of Ibn Qutaibah's *Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth*. As a work that responds to 109 objections directed at various prophetic reports, the text provides a rich field for analyzing how early scholars resolved interpretive challenges prior to the formal codification of legal theory and hadith methodology. The research therefore relies entirely on textual data, engaging in systematic reading, critical analysis, and conceptual reconstruction based on the argumentative patterns embedded in Ibn Qutaibah's discussions.

The primary material for this study consists of Ibn Qutaibah's own explanations within Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth, including his linguistic clarifications, intertextual comparisons, historical contextualizations, and strategies for resolving apparent contradictions. Each passage relevant to the interpretive process was identified through repeated close readings of the entire text. Attention was given to instances where Ibn Qutaibah explicitly states a methodological position, as well as more subtle patterns reflected in his reasoning. Supporting literature—such as other works by Ibn Qutaibah, classical treatises on mukhtalif al-ḥadīth and musykil al-āthār, and studies on early hadith interpretation—was consulted to contextualize his approach and to situate his reasoning within the broader scholarly tradition.

Data collection followed a structured textual analysis procedure. The researcher first conducted comprehensive readings of Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth to identify passages where Ibn Qutaibah engages in interpretive reasoning or responds to objections regarding specific ḥadīths. Passages containing repeated argumentative patterns, consistent linguistic explanations, or references to contextual and legal considerations were marked for further analysis. These excerpts formed the core dataset upon which the study builds its reconstruction.

Analytical procedures involved two complementary stages. At the micro level, each disputed ḥadīth case was examined independently to determine how Ibn Qutaibah understood, classified, and resolved the perceived difficulty. This stage employed content analysis, focusing on structure of argument, the interpretive tools invoked, and the assumptions that guide his reasoning. At the macro level, the researcher surveyed the entire dataset to identify recurring interpretive tendencies that extend beyond isolated cases. This inductive reading allowed patterns to emerge organically from the text and provided the basis for identifying stable methodological principles.

To strengthen the reliability of the reconstruction, the study incorporated cross-referencing with classical scholarship. Interpretive moves identified in Ibn Qutaibah were compared with discussions found in works on Arabic semantics, uṣūl al-fiqh, and early hadith commentary. This triangulation does not serve to validate Ibn Qutaibah through later scholarship, but rather to demonstrate that the interpretive tendencies identified in the text correspond to concepts that were already known—explicitly or implicitly—within the broader scholarly discourse of his time.

Throughout the analysis, particular attention was given to ensuring that reconstructed principles genuinely emerge from Ibn Qutaibah's own reasoning rather than being imposed from external theoretical frameworks. Only patterns consistently attested across multiple discussions were considered methodologically significant. The aim of the study is therefore not to provide an exhaustive inventory of every interpretive technique in the book, but to reconstruct the underlying methodological architecture that governs Ibn Qutaibah's engagement with problematic reports.

This methodological process—rooted in systematic reading, analytical classification, and inductive synthesis—allows the study to articulate a coherent framework that reflects Ibn Qutaibah's epistemological approach to hadith interpretation. The resulting reconstruction

represents a methodological portrait grounded directly in the textual evidence of Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth, supported by relevant classical scholarship, and structured in a way that enables focused analysis in the subsequent sections of the article.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Contextual Background: Structure and Analytical Orientation of *Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth*

Ibn Qutaibah's *Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth* stands as one of the earliest and most influential treatises dedicated to defending the authority of the Sunnah and reconciling reports that appear contradictory (M. Y. Ibrahim, 2006, p. 422). The work was composed in direct response to widespread accusations raised by various intellectual groups who challenged the coherence, authenticity, or rational acceptability of prophetic traditions. Against this backdrop, Ibn Qutaibah wrote his book to reaffirm the epistemic status of the Sunnah in Islam and to demonstrate that alleged inconsistencies in *ḥadīth* literature stem not from defects within the texts themselves but from misinterpretation or insufficient methodological grounding (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 61).

The treatise opens with an extended introduction in which Ibn Qutaibah critiques the methodological errors of the ahl al-raʾy (rationalists) (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 102) and ahl al-kalam (philosophers) (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 61) while simultaneously asserting the epistemic integrity of the ahl al-ḥadīth. This preface is not merely rhetorical; it functions as a conceptual frame for the entire book, articulating the intellectual tensions of his time and clarifying why a systematic defense of ḥadīth was urgently needed.

Following the introduction, the core of Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth consists of 109 individual issues that had been raised against specific prophetic traditions (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 145). Ibn Qutaibah addresses them one by one, presenting the objection (shubhah) and then offering a detailed response. His explanations draw upon multiple interpretive resources. At the textual level, he analyzes linguistic structures, semantic nuances, and rhetorical patterns (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 258). At the intertextual level, he compares ḥadīth with other ḥadīth or with Qurʾanic discourse to demonstrate internal harmony (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 145). Contextually, he situates reports within their historical circumstances, social conventions, and pragmatic implications (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 439). To reconcile contradictions, he employs the classical tools of al-jamʿ, al-naskh, and al-tarjīḥ, demonstrating a sophisticated awareness of legal theory even before its later systematization. Across these discussions, it becomes evident that Ibn Qutaibah's defensive strategy relies primarily on his mastery of Arabic language (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 385) and early Islamic history (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 434), supported by principles that would later fall under the rubric of uṣūl al-fiqh (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 288).

Despite the analytical depth and methodological richness of the work, Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth does not present its interpretive principles in an explicit or codified manner (Abu Syuhbah, n.d., p. 455). This absence is not accidental; rather, it reflects the intellectual culture of the formative period of Islamic scholarship. Ibn Qutaibah—who died in 284 (Al-Żahabi, 1985, 13: 345)—belonged to a generation of mutaqaddim scholars whose contributions laid the foundations of many Islamic sciences. Scholars of this early era generally did not craft formal taxonomies or theoretical inventories of their methods. Instead, their methodological commitments were embedded organically within applied reasoning. Principles emerged through practice, not through declarative lists (Al-Shahri, n.d., p. 23). Accordingly, Ibn Qutaibah offers his interpretive insights in a case-by-case format, allowing the methodological structure to be inferred inductively rather than explicitly articulated (Abu Zahw, 1958, p. 378).

Another notable feature of the work is its lack of a predetermined systematic order in presenting the 109 issues. The sequence does not follow thematic, chronological, or conceptual grouping; instead, Ibn Qutaibah moves directly from one objection to the next as they had circulated in public discourse. While this structure may appear non-linear by modern standards, it reflects the disputational and responsive nature of early polemical writing, where the priority was to address accusations comprehensively rather than to organize them in a taxonomic schema.

Taken together, these characteristics situate Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth as both an apologetic defense of the Sunnah and a rich repository of interpretive reasoning. Although Ibn Qutaibah never enumerates his principles, his arguments reveal consistent epistemological tendencies. It is precisely through inductive analysis (istiqrāʾ) of these 109 discussions that the present study reconstructs his underlying interpretive framework.

Table 1. *Analytical structure used in examining the 109 disputed ḥadīth cases discussed by Ibn Qutaibah*

Component	Description
Unit of Analysis	109 disputed *ḥadīth* cases examined by Ibn Qutaibah
Analytical Lens	Textual analysis; intertextual comparison; contextual reasoning
Method of Extraction	*Inductive survey* (istiqrāʾ); *inferential derivation* (istinbāṭ)
Output	Reconstruction of Ibn Qutaibah's foundational epistemological principles (*qawāʿid fahm al-ḥadīth*)

Reconstructing Ibn Qutaibah's Principles of Hadith Interpretation

Since Ibn Qutaibah nowhere provides an explicit set of interpretive maxims, the task of identifying his methodological commitments requires a careful inductive reconstruction. His principles are not stated in the form of codified rules but emerge implicitly through his responses to specific textual problems, his linguistic analyses, and his strategies for resolving apparent contradictions. For this reason, the present study systematically examines his argumentative patterns across the work, tracing recurring forms of reasoning and extracting the underlying epistemological assumptions that guide his interpretive judgments.

To uncover this framework, the present study adopts a combined method of istiqrāʾ (inductive textual survey) and istibṭāṭ (analytical extraction) (Al-Rukā, 1414, p. 71). Through a systematic reading of the entire work, the study identifies recurring patterns of reasoning, interpretive moves, and underlying assumptions that structure Ibn Qutaibah's engagement with contested or problematic reports. This inductive reconstruction yields a substantial number of interpretive principles—far more than what can be accommodated within the scope of a single article.

For analytical focus and representativeness, the present study highlights four principles that recur most prominently and that collectively reflect the major epistemic orientations of Ibn Qutaibah's method. These principles also correspond to distinct domains of hadith interpretation—normative-theological, linguistic, contextual, and legal–methodological—thus offering a balanced view of his multidimensional approach. The four principles are:

1. If a *ḥadīth* is authentic, the meaning it conveys must be true.
2. Understanding hadith requires adherence to the *ʿurf al-shāriʿ* (the normative linguistic and conceptual usage of the Lawgiver).
3. Context (siyāq) determines the intended meaning of the speaker.
4. *ʿAzīmah* and *rukhṣah* operate on different legal planes.

These four principles were selected because they (a) recur with exceptional clarity across Ibn Qutaibah's applied analyses; (b) reflect the major epistemological domains that structure his hermeneutics—normative-theological, linguistic, contextual, and legal-theoretical; and (c) collectively represent the methodological balance that characterizes his interpretive project. While additional principles can certainly be identified in his work, these four offer a sufficiently robust and representative framework for examining the distinctive features of Ibn Qutaibah's contribution to early hadith interpretive priciples within the scope of a journal article.

Table 2. *Framework for extracting Ibn Qutaibah's epistemological principles through inductive analysis (istiqrāʾ) and inferential reasoning (istinbāṭ)*

No.	Formulated Principle	Type of Principle	Mode of Derivation	Typical Application Context in Ibn Qutaibah's Text	Examples Used by Ibn Qutaibah
1	*If a ḥadīth is authentic, the meaning it conveys must be true*	Normative–Epistemological	Explicit (direct statement)	Defense of disputed *ḥadīth*; rebuttal of claims that meanings are false or impossible	Vision of God *ḥadīth*; "Both of His hands are right"; impurity rulings; animals labelled "fāsiq"
2	*Understanding hadith requires adherence to the ʿurf al-shāriʿ (the normative linguistic and conceptual usage of the Lawgiver)*	Linguistic (ʿurf/semantics)	Repetitive pattern	Resolving hadiths with figurative expressions; clarifying conceptual intent	"Garden of Paradise between my grave and pulpit"; "Majālis al-dhikr as gardens"; "Paradise under the shade of swords"
3	*Context (siyāq) determines the intended meaning of the speaker*	Contextual	Repetitive pattern	Reconciling apparently contradictory reports; distinguishing circumstances	*Ḥadīth* on contagion; succession of Salim; different situational rulings
4	*ʿAzīmah and rukhṣah operate on different legal planes*	Usul–Legal Methodology	Repetitive pattern	Explaining differences in legal practice under varying conditions	Delaying ẓuhr due to heat; wudu when junub; fasting while traveling

Analysis of the Reconstructed Interpretive Principles

In examining the four selected principles, this study adopts a consistent analytical procedure. Each principle is first clarified in terms of its conceptual meaning as understood within the broader tradition of Islamic scholarship, drawing briefly on parallel discussions in earlier and later works to indicate its recognized position within the classical discourse. This is followed by a textual demonstration from *Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth*, showing how the principle emerges through Ibn Qutaibah's applied reasoning and how it functions in resolving specific interpretive challenges. Through this structure, each principle is presented not only as a theoretical formulation but as an operative rule substantiated by concrete evidence from the text.

1. Principle 1: If a *ḥadīth* is authentic, the meaning it conveys must be true

By the word "true," this principle does not imply that every possible interpretation is correct, but that a soundly transmitted ḥadīth cannot convey a false meaning when properly understood within its linguistic and contextual framework. A foundational assumption underlying Ibn Qutaibah's interpretive approach is that an authentic *ḥadīth*—once established through a sound isnād and free from recognized defects—must convey a true and reliable meaning. As part of the Qur'anic-sunnic epistemic structure of Islamic law, a ṣaḥīḥ report cannot be rejected merely because it appears to conflict with rational intuition, empirical observation, or other scriptural statements (Al-Ṡunayyān, n.d., p. 131). Early authorities consistently affirmed this stance. For instance, Isḥāq b. Rāhūyah emphasized that knowingly rejecting a sound prophetic report constitutes a grave theological violation, and similar statements are found in the works of al-Suyūṭī (Ibn Ḥazm, n.d., 1: 99) and Ibn al-Wazīr (Ibn al-Wazīr, 1994, 2: 374), who classify such rejection as tantamount to denying divine guidance. Their formulations highlight not only the epistemic weight of authentic *ḥadīth* but also the seriousness of dismissing them based on personal reasoning or speculative objections.

While the rejection of an established ḥadīth constitutes theological deviance, disagreement over its meaning is treated more cautiously. The tradition distinguishes between denying the Prophet's statement itself and struggling to understand its import. If the meaning pertains to matters known definitively in religion, denying it is considered disbelief; otherwise, it remains a serious but non-heretical error. This differentiation underscores a key methodological insight: interpretive difficulty lies more frequently in human understanding than in the text itself (Al-Ṡunayyān, n.d., p. 131). As Ibn Qutaibah consistently assumes, the locus of error should be sought first in the interpreter's limited grasp, not in the transmitted report.

This principle naturally aligns with Qur'anic warning such as Q. 10:39, which criticizes those who reject revelation "because they have not encompassed its knowledge nor reached its proper interpretation." Classical scholars likewise drew attention to the gap between human judgment and revealed guidance. Abū al-Zināḍ, for example, noted that many sound prophetic teachings may contradict personal opinion, yet remain binding by virtue of their authoritative origin (Al-Bukhāri, 2001, 2: 689.). Such statements illustrate the attitude that Ibn Qutaibah adopts throughout Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth: epistemic humility before authenticated revelation.

From this premise, Ibn Qutaibah argues that intellectual or empirical obstacles to accepting a ḥadīth must be overcome through deeper inquiry rather than outright denial. If a report is authenticated, its truthfulness is guaranteed; what remains is to uncover the correct understanding Ibn Qutaibah, Ta'wīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīṡ, 1999, p. 298. This may require linguistic analysis, contextual inquiry, comparison with broader textual evidence, or consultation with more knowledgeable scholars (Al-Dārimi, 1418, 1: 355, 360, 415). Conversely, if the report is not authenticated, no legal or theological meaning may be attributed to it—even if its content appears reasonable—unless it is corroborated by other sound sources (Al-Ṡunayyān, n.d., p. 157).

This principle frames Ibn Qutaibah's larger project: many apparent contradictions or problematic reports arise not from defects in transmission but from misinterpretation, lack of contextual awareness, or inadequate linguistic and historical knowledge. Thus, for him, the task of the interpreter is not to judge the veracity of a ṣaḥīḥ report but to seek the interpretive key that reconciles it with established truths.

This principle appears in Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth in a direct and explicit formulation, making it one of the clearest methodological declarations Ibn Qutaibah offers. His statement emerges in response to objections raised against the famous report concerning "the vision of God (Al-Bukhāri, 2001, 1: 203; Al-Naisābūri, n.d., 2: 113)". Although widely accepted as authentic, some critics disputed its meaning. Ibn Qutaibah responds by asserting the epistemic impossibility of falsehood in a report transmitted through multiple trustworthy chains: "We maintain that this ḥadīth is authentic, and it is impossible for a report of this nature to contain falsehood, for it has been transmitted by numerous reliable narrators across many chains. If such a report could be judged erroneous merely because its meaning seems problematic, then every aspect of our religion known through transmitted reports—such as the details of prayer, zakāt, divorce rulings, and similar matters—would become invalid (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 298).

Through this argument, Ibn Qutaibah articulates a foundational linkage: the soundness of transmission entails the truthfulness of meaning. His reference to "a report of this nature" signals that this principle applies broadly to all authentically transmitted ḥadīths, not only the case under discussion. Thus, Ibn Qutaibah embeds within his polemical defense a significant epistemological commitment: authentic ḥadīths cannot yield false or impossible meanings. Difficulties arise not from the text itself but from the interpreter's limitations or contextual misunderstandings (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 298).

Ibn Qutaibah applies this principle consistently throughout Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth, particularly when addressing reports that some critics deemed problematic. His central claim is not that every sound ḥadīth is immediately easy to understand, nor that it never appears to conflict with reason or observable reality. Rather, he rejects the allegation that a sound ḥadīth could contain meanings that are intrinsically false, irrational, or devoid of benefit. For him, the difficulty lies not in the authenticity of the report, but in the interpreter's limited grasp of its intended meaning.

Beyond the example of the ḥadīth on "seeing God"—where this principle is stated explicitly—Ibn Qutaibah demonstrates its application across numerous cases. He defends the report describing that "God's two hands are both right (Ibn Khuzaimah, 1994, 1: 191)", arguing that the expression conveys a sound and purposeful meaning within the established idiom of Arabic usage and the theological vocabulary of the early Muslims Ibn Qutaibah, Ta'wīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīś, 1999, p. 304.. Similarly, in the discussion of the ḥadīth commanding one to wash their hands after waking before performing wuḍūʾ (Al-Naisābūri, n.d., 1: 160), he explains that the directive is meaningful, practical, and grounded in considerations of hygiene and ritual propriety, rather than being arbitrary or illogical (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 205). He also addresses the reports concerning "fāsiq animals (Al-Bukhāri, 2001, 3: 1204; Al-Naisābūri, n.d., 4: 17)", showing that each designation reflects real legal or ethical implications rather than empty or nonsensical classifications (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 210).

Through these examples, Ibn Qutaibah affirms that every sound ḥadīth conveys a truthful and purposeful meaning, even when such meaning is not immediately apparent. When a reader struggles to understand a particular report, the proper response is not to cast doubt on its validity but to seek clarification from those with deeper knowledge. In his view, the likelihood of misunderstanding a text far outweighs the possibility that a rigorously authenticated ḥadīth could convey something false. Thus, this principle undergirds Ibn Qutaibah's broader project: safeguarding the epistemic authority of sound prophetic reports while demonstrating that their meanings remain coherent, beneficial, and reconcilable with the larger framework of Islamic teaching.

2. Principle 2: Understanding hadith requires adherence to the ʿ*urf al-shāriʿ* (the normative linguistic and conceptual usage of the Lawgiver)

This principle asserts that the interpretation of *ḥadīth* must conform to the established linguistic and conceptual conventions used by the Sharīʿah (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1: 199, 2: 203). Terms employed by the Prophet must be understood through their normative meaning within the revelatory discourse, not through external semantic associations or speculative reinterpretations (Ibn al-Qayyim, 2019, 1: 283). Classical scholars such as Ibn Qudamah emphasized that every speaker possesses habitual patterns in their linguistic usage, and those patterns must guide interpretation. Assigning meanings foreign to the speaker's established usage introduces internal contradiction (Ibn Qudāmah, 1968, 13, p. 544) and, in the case of prophetic discourse, amounts to distorting the intent of revelation (Ibn Taimiyyah, 1999, 2: 299).

Ibn Qutaibah consistently applies this rule by steering interpretation toward the Prophet's customary idiom. Whenever a literal reading appears theologically problematic or inconsistent with other evidence, he anchors the meaning in well-attested patterns of prophetic expression. The reliability of this principle is strengthened by its longstanding recognition within early Islamic scholarship, particularly in juridical and linguistic discussions concerning the interpretation of divine speech.

The principle emerges through a repetitive pattern across Ibn Qutaibah's responses to various objections. He regularly redirects readers from physical or literal assumptions to meanings compatible with prophetic usage. The recurrence of this strategy in multiple contexts indicates that it functions as a stable methodological commitment, even though Ibn Qutaibah—typical of early scholars—does not formalize it explicitly.

This pattern appears in his treatment of several reports, such as the description of the Prophet's pulpit and the space between his grave and pulpit as "a garden among the gardens of Paradise (Al-Bukhāri, 2001, 1: 399)", and similar expressions describing "gardens of Paradise" for gatherings of remembrance (Al-Aṣbahāni, 1993, 2: 176) or "Paradise under the shade of swords (Al-Bukhāri, 2001, 3: 1037; Al-Naisābūri, n.d., 5: 143)". In each case, Ibn Qutaibah rejects any spatial or physical reading and affirms that such expressions refer to acts, places, or conditions that lead to Paradise, consistent with the Prophet's habitual figurative idiom (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 189).

Various reports seem to indicate different "locations" of Paradise: near Sidrat al-Muntahā, as vast as the heavens and the earth, in the seventh heaven, or—as some ḥadīth state—associated with specific places in the Prophet's Mosque. Ibn Qutaibah resolves these apparent contradictions by appealing to the Prophet's established usage. When the Prophet describes his pulpit or the space between his grave and pulpit as "a garden from the gardens of Paradise," he is not referring to a physical portion of Paradise descending into the mosque. Rather, the expression denotes an especially meritorious place whose spiritual benefit leads one toward Paradise (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 189).

This interpretation is reinforced by other prophetic statements, such as "Gather in the gardens of Paradise," interpreted as circles of remembrance, or "The one who visits the sick walks along the pathways of Paradise," meaning that the act is a cause for attaining Paradise (Al-Bagawi, 1983, 2: 339). Similarly, the statement "Paradise lies beneath the shade of swords" does not assert a literal spatial relation but indicates that striving in God's cause is a pathway to Paradise.

The same interpretive logic appears in Ibn Qutaibah's explanations of additional reports—such as descriptions of animals associated with Paradise (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 356) or

eschatological expressions concerning the Qur'an (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 375)—demonstrating the broad applicability and consistency of this principle throughout his work.

3. Principle 3: Context (*siyāq*) determines the intended meaning of the speaker

In the interpretation of scriptural texts, siyāq—the immediate and broader context of a statement—constitutes one of the most important indicators for identifying the intended meaning (Al-'Uṡaimin, 1421, p. 37; Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd, 1987, 2: 21; Izz al-Dīn, 1407, p. 159). Classical scholars repeatedly emphasized that meanings are not determined by isolated words, but by how those words function within their situational and discursive environment. Ibn al-Qayyim highlights this role of siyāq extensively, noting that context clarifies the ambiguous, determines which among multiple possible meanings is intended, excludes meanings not intended, specifies the general, restricts the absolute, and guides interpretive judgments. He states: "Context clarifies the ambiguous, determines what is intended, negates meanings not intended, specifies the general, restricts the absolute, and explains the varieties of indication. It is among the greatest indicators of the speaker's intent; whoever ignores it errs in understanding and in arguing (Ibn al-Qayyim, n.d., 4: 9)". He even added that siyāq often has the same status as a clear (sarih) word (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1996, 5: 523).

Similarly, Ibn Qudāmah affirms that siyāq in speech functions like siyāq in action: the surrounding circumstances and manner of expression fundamentally shape how a statement is to be understood (Ibn Qudāmah, 1968, 10, p. 362). Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd further cautions that the role of context must be distinguished from other indicators, such as those that restrict general expressions or identify the speaker's intent; a verse or statement occurring in a particular circumstance does not automatically mean its meaning is limited to that circumstance (Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd, 1987, 2: 21). Together, these statements show that context functions as an interpretive lens, shaping meaning even in the absence of explicit textual indicators.

This principle emerges from repeated patterns in Ibn Qutaibah's reasoning. Throughout Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth, he frequently resolves perceived contradictions by situating each report within its proper siyāq—whether linguistic, situational, or dialogical. His explanations often begin with clarifying that two seemingly conflicting reports in fact refer to different contexts, purposes, or circumstances. One formula he employs consistently is: "There is no contradiction in this; each report has its own meaning, time, and context. When each is placed in its proper place, the contradiction disappears (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 168)". This recurring pattern demonstrates that Ibn Qutaibah treated context as a stable methodological tool, not an ad hoc interpretive strategy.

Ibn Qutaibah applies this principle prominently in discussions such as: The hadith on contagion (Al-Bukhārī, 1422, 5: 2158), where he explains that different prophetic statements address different behavioral contexts, not contradictory theological positions (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 167). It is also applied in the report concerning ʿUmar's proposed appointment of Sālim as imam, where Ibn Qutaibah distinguishes between statements related to political succession and those related to ritual leadership (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 191).

In each case, the apparent opposition between texts dissolves once their respective siyāq is restored. This method reflects a broader interpretive tradition shared by major scholars such as Ibn al-Qayyim, Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd, and Ibn Qudāmah, all of whom affirm that context can carry the force of an explicit expression.

4. Principle 4: ʿ*Azīmah* and *rukhṣah* operate on different legal planes

In Islamic law, the obligations and rulings addressed to the Muslim community operate on two distinct normative levels (Ibn Qudāmah, 2002, 1: 188). The first is ʿazīmah, the original and primary ruling that represents the default legal expectation in the absence of hardship or exceptional circumstances. The second is rukhṣah, a concession granted under specific conditions as a manifestation of divine mercy and facilitation for the believers (Al-Ghazāli, 1993, p. 78).

Confusion between these two legal registers frequently underlies claims of contradiction between certain prophetic reports. What may appear as divergent rulings often reflects nothing more than the difference between the normative standard (ʿazīmah) and an authorized concession (rukhṣah). The Prophet ﷺ himself embodied this distinction: he commonly practiced ʿazīmah in his personal devotions while granting rukhṣah to his community when circumstances required ease.

Classical jurists have emphasized the importance of distinguishing these two registers. Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, Ibn Qudāmah, and al-Qarāfī, among others, repeatedly clarified that rukhṣah does not negate the validity of ʿazīmah, nor does ʿazīmah nullify the legitimacy of rukhṣah. Both operate within the divine law for different situational needs. A believer is encouraged to uphold ʿazīmah whenever reasonably possible, while availing oneself of rukhṣah in times of genuine difficulty is neither a deficiency nor a departure from piety.

This principle is reconstructed through a pattern of recurrent application in Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth. Ibn Qutaibah repeatedly resolves perceived contradictions by demonstrating that the hadith in question do not address the same normative plane: one articulates ʿazīmah, while the other articulates rukhṣah. The consistency and frequency of this explanatory pattern across multiple cases indicate that Ibn Qutaibah regarded this distinction as a stable methodological anchor in his interpretive reasoning.

Among the clearest examples are his discussions of: The hadith on delaying ẓuhr prayer during intense heat (Al-Bukhāri, 2001; Al-Naisābūri, n.d., 2: 107), the hadith regarding performing wuḍūʾ while in a state of major ritual impurity (Al-Naisābūri, n.d., 1: 170), and the hadith concerning fasting while traveling (Ibn al-A'rābī, 1997, 1: 185). In each instance, Ibn Qutaibah explains that apparent divergence is not genuine contradiction but rather reflects the coexistence of ʿazīmah-based instruction and rukhṣah-based facilitation (Ibn Qutaibah, 1999, p. 74). When each hadith is understood within its appropriate normative register, the perceived conflict disappears, and the coherence of prophetic guidance becomes evident.

4. CONCLUSION

This study set out to identify and reconstruct the epistemological principles that underlie Ibn Qutaibah's interpretive method in *Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth*. Through inductive analysis of the work's 109 discussions, the study demonstrates that Ibn Qutaibah consistently employs a set of methodological tendencies that—though never explicitly codified—form a coherent framework for resolving problematic *ḥadīth*. Four principles emerge as especially representative: the necessary truthfulness of meanings conveyed by authentic reports, adherence to the Prophet's normative linguistic usage, the determinative force of contextual cues in establishing intended meaning, and the methodological differentiation between ʿazīmah and rukhṣah in legal interpretation. Together, these principles reflect Ibn Qutaibah's multidimensional approach, balancing normative-theological certainty, linguistic precision, contextual awareness, and legal

reasoning. Their reconstruction not only clarifies the implicit logic of *Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth* but also highlights Ibn Qutaibah's contribution as an early architect of systematic hadith interpretation, offering a framework that remains deeply relevant for contemporary scholarship on fahm *al-ḥadīth*.

These reconstructed principles also hold significant implications for contemporary ḥadīth discourse. In an era marked by both rigid literalism and unrestricted reinterpretation, Ibn Qutaibah's framework offers a balanced methodological model grounded in textual authenticity, linguistic discipline, contextual awareness, and legal reasoning. By foregrounding structured interpretive criteria rather than ad hoc solutions, his approach provides valuable tools for addressing modern challenges related to contested ḥadīth without compromising epistemic rigor or textual integrity.

REFERENCES

Abu Syuhbah, M. bin M. bin S. (n.d.). *al-Wasit fi 'Ulum wa Mustalah al-Hadith*. Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabi.

Abu Zahw, M. (1958). *Al-Ḥadīṡ Wa al-Muḥaddiṡūn*. al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabi.

Al-'Uṡaimin, M. bin Ṣalih. (1421). *Al-Qawāʿid al-Muthlá fi Ṣifāt Allāh wa-Asmāʾih al-Ḥusná* (3rd ed). al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah: al-Jāmiʿah al-Islāmiyyah.

Al-Aṣbahāni, I. bin M. bin al-F. (1993). *Al-Targīb wal-Tarhīb* (1st ed.). Cairo: Dār *al-ḥadīth*.

Al-Bagawi, M. al-S. A. M. al-Ḥusain bin M. (1983). *Syarḥ al-Sunnah* (2nd ed). Damaskus – Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī.

Al-Bukhāri, A. 'Abdillāh M. bin I. (2001). *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhāri* (1st ed). Dār Ṭaūq al-Najāh.

Al-Bukhārī, M. bin I. (1422). *Sahīh al-Bukhāri* (1st ed). Dar Tauq al-Najah.

Al-Dārimi, ʿUsmān bin Saʿīd. (1418). *Naqḍ Abī Saʿīd ʿUsmān ibn Saʿīd ʿalā al-Marīsī* (1st ed). Riyāḍ: Maktabat al-Rusyd.

Al-Ghazāli, A. Ḥāmid M. bin M. (1993). *Al-Mustaṣfā fi 'Ilm al-Uṣūl* (M. ʿAbd al-Salām ʿAbd al-Shāfī, Ed.). Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.

Al-Haddad, F. O. (n.d.). *al-Fikr al-Naqdi 'inda Ibn Qutaybah*.

Al-Naisābūri, M. bin al-Ḥajjāj A. al-Ḥusain al-Q. (n.d.). *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Bairūt: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāṡ al-'Arabi.

Al-Rukā, M. (1414). *Nazariyyah al-Ta'qid al-Fiqhi* (1st ed). Maroko: al-Dar al-Baida.

Al-Shahri, M. bin Z. (n.d.). *'Ilm al-Takhrij wa Dawruhu fi Hifz al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*. al-Madinah al-Munawwarah: Majma' al-Malik Fahd li Tibaa'at al-Mushaf al-Syarif.

Al-Ṡunayyān, S. bin Ṣāliḥ. (n.d.). *Qawāʿid Fahm al-Sunnah* (2nd ed). Dār Ṭayyibah al-Ḥaḍrah.

Al-Żahabi, S. al-D. A. 'Abdillāh M. bin A. (1985). *Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalāʾ* (3rd ed.). Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risālah.

Anas, M. (2021). Ibn Qutaibah al-Dinawari dan Kontribusinya dalam Bidang Hadis. *Nabawi*, *2*(1).

Ghozali, A. M. (2014). Metodologi Pemahaman Kontekstual Hadis Ibn Qutaibah dalam Ta'wīl Mukhtalaf al-Ḥadīṡ. *KALAM*, *8*(1), 119–140.

Ibn al-A'rābī, A. S. A. bin M. bin Z. (1997). *Muʿjam Ibn al-A'rābī* (1st ed). Saudi Arabia: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī.

Ibn al-Qayyim, S. al-D. M. bin A. B. (n.d.). *Badāi' al-Fawā'id*. Bayrūt, Lubnān: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī.

Ibn al-Qayyim, S. al-D. M. bin A. B. (1996). *Zād al-Maʿād fi Hady Khair al-'Ibād* (al-Ṭabʿah; S. al-Arnāʾūṭ & ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Arnāʾūṭ, Eds.). Bayrūt: Muʾassasat al-Risālah.

Ibn al-Qayyim, S. al-D. M. bin A. B. (2019). *A'lām al-Muwaqqi'īn 'an Rabb al-'Ālamīn* (al-Ṭabʿah).

Dār ʿAṭāʾāt al-ʿIlm Dār Ibn Ḥazm.
Ibn al-Wazīr, M. bin I. al-Q. A. ʿAbd A. (1994). *Al-ʿAwāṣim wal-Qawāṣim fi al-ab Ḍʿan Sunnah Abī al-Qāsim* (Cet. III; S. al-Arnaʾūṭ, Ed.). Bayrūt: Muʾassasah al-Risālah.
Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd, T. al-D. M. bin ʾAli. (1987). *Iḥkām al-Aḥkām Syarḥ ʿUmdah al-Aḥkām* (Revised Ed). Cairo: Dār ʿĀlam al-Kutub, Beirut.
Ibn Ḥazm, A. M. ʿAlī bin A. bin S. (n.d.). *Al-Iḥkām fi Uṣūl al-Aḥkām* (A. M. Shākir, Ed.). Bayrūt: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah.
Ibn Khuzaimah, A. B. M. bin I. al-S. al-N. (1994). *Kitāb al-Tauḥīd* (5th ed). al-Riyāḍ, al-Suʻūdiyyah: Maktabah al-Rusyd.
Ibn Qudāmah, A. M. M. al-D. ʻAbdullāh bin A. al-M. al-Ḥanbali. (1968). *al-Mugni*. al-Qāhirah: Maktabah al-Qāhirah.
Ibn Qudāmah, A. M. M. al-D. ʻAbdullāh bin A. al-M. al-Ḥanbali. (2002). *Rauḍah al-Nāẓir wa Jannah al-Munāẓir* (2nd ed). Muassasah al-Rayyān.
Ibn Qutaibah, A. M. ʻAbdullāh bin M. bin Q. A.-D. (1999). *Taʻwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīṡ* (2nd ed). Muassasah al-Isyrāq.
Ibn Taimiyyah, T. al-D. A. al-ʻAbbās A. bin ʻAbd al-Ḥalīm al-Ḥarrāni. (1999). *Al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ li-Man Baddala Dīn al-Masīḥ* (al-Ṭabʿah). al-Mamlakah al-ʿArabiyyah al-Suʿūdiyyah: Dār al-ʻĀṣimah.
Ibrahim, M. Y. (2006). *Tariq al-Hidayah: Mabadi' wa Muqaddimat 'Ilm al-Tawhid 'inda Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* (2nd ed). Huquq al-Tab' Mahfuzah li al-Mu'allif.
Ibrahim, T. H. (2010). *Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīṡ wa Mushkiluh wa Asnafuh `inda Ibn Qutaybah wa Manhajuh fi Daf' al-Ikhtilaf wa al-Ishkāl fi Kitabih Ta'wil Mukhtalif al-Hadith*.
Izz al-Dīn, A. M. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz bin ʿAbd al-S. bin A. al-Q. al-S. A.-D. (1407). *Al-Imām fi Bayān Adillah al-Aḥkām* (1st ed). Bairūt: Dār al-Basyāir.
Kurniyah, K., & Marjuki, M. (2024). Ibn Qutaibah's Approach to Reconciling Contradictory Hadis: A Study of Ta'wil Mukhtalif al-Hadith. *Al-Afham: Journal of Islamic Studies*, *1*(1), 90–108. Retrieved from https://jurnal.stikkendal.ac.id/index.php/Alafham/article/view/252
Maulida, F. (2024). *Metode Ta'wil dalam Pemahaman Hadis (Studi Kitab Ta'wil Mukhtalif Hadis Ibn Qutaibah Al-Dinawari)*.
Ramadani, N., & Tanjung, D. (2025). *Qawaid Fiqhiyyah Sejak Masa Pembentukan Hingga Masa Islam Kontemporer*. *07*(1), 533–544.
Royyani, M., Putra, A., & Siregar, A. (2023). *Jurnal Dirosah Islamiyah Sejarah dan Metoda Syarah Hadis Jurnal Dirosah Islamiyah*. *5*, 348–356. https://doi.org/10.17467/jdi.v5i2.3244
Saputra, D. (2023). Fiqhul Hadis: Sejarah dan Perkembangannya dalam Kajian Hadis. *Al-Akmal: Jurnal Studi Islam*, *2*(2), 41–49.
Suganda, B. (2021). Kontroversi Ikhtilaful Matan Hadis Menurut Ibn Qutaibah dalam Kitab Ta'wil Mukhtalif Hadis. *Journal of Hadith Studies*, *4*(2), 64–75. https://doi.org/10.32506/johs.v4i2-01