al-Muhaddithat: the women scholars in Islam

MOHAMMAD AKRAM NADWI
al-Muḥaddithat:
the women scholars in Islam

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MOHAMMAD AKRAM NADWI

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Contents

PREFACE
—Acknowledgements, xxiii

List of tables, charts, maps, and illustrations

INTRODUCTION — The impact of the Book and Sunnah, 3 — The women’s authority established by the Qur’ân and Sunnah, 7 — The women’s authority established by their own actions, 13

1 THE LEGAL CONDITIONS FOR NARRATING HADITH — Testimony and narration, 17 (The difference between testimony and narration, 20) — The lawfulness of women transmitting hadith, 22 — The public authority of hadiths narrated by women, 25 (The hadith of Fâtimah bint Qays, 29; Another example: a hadith from ‘A’îthab, 32)

2 WOMEN AS SEEKERS AND STUDENTS OF HADITH — The disposition to teach women, 35 (The duty to teach, 35; Educating the children, 36; Keeping children on the Sunnah, 39; Encouraging girls and women to attend gatherings, 40; The duty to answer the women’s questions, 41; The practice of those who followed, 43) — The women’s own efforts, 46 (What the women asked about, 48; About shyness in the way of learning, 50; Women learning from the Companions, 51) — Women’s preserving of the hadith, 51 (Memorization, 52; Writing, 54; Writing marginal notes, 56; Comparison and correction, 56)

3 OCCASIONS, TRAVELS, VENUES FOR, AND KINDS OF, HADITH LEARNING — Public occasions, 58 (The hajj; hajjat al-wâdâ‘, 60) — Private occasions, 64 — Travelling, 71 (Hajj journeys, 72) —
Venues, 76 (Houses, 77; Mosques, 81; Schools, 82) — Ways of receiving hadith, 84 (Samā' (hearing), 84; al-ʿArd, 85; Ijāzah, 86; al-Munawalah, 87; al-Mukātabah, 88; al-ʿIlam, 88; al-Waṣiyyah, 88; al-Wijādah, 89; Documentation of the samā' and ijāzah, 89; Querying ijāzahs, 92) — Fāṭimah bint Sa'd al-Khayr (?525–600), 93

4 THE WOMEN’S TEACHERS — Teachers within the family circle, 98 — Teachers of the locality, 102 — Visiting teachers, 103 — Teachers in other towns, 106 — Number of teachers, 107

5 THE READING MATTER — The first three centuries, 109 — The fourth to the sixth centuries, 110 — From the seventh to the ninth centuries, 114 From later ninth to thirteenth centuries, 119 — In the fourteenth century, 121 — Kinds of the books they studied, 123 (al-Muwattā, 123; al-Jawaʾīl, 124; al-Sunan, 128; al-Masānīd, 128; al-Maʾajim and al-Mashyakhbāt, 129; al-Arbaʿūnāt, 132; al-Ajzāʾ, 132; al-Musalsalāt, 134) — The reading list of Umm Hānī bint Nūr al-Dīn al-Hūrīniyyah (d. 871), 136

6 WOMEN’S ROLE IN DIFFUSION OF ‘THE KNOWLEDGE’ — The Companions and the scholars after them, 138 — Major scholars who narrated from women, 140 — Husbands narrating from their wives, 142 — Children learning from their mothers, 144 — Children narrating from their mothers, 146 — The manners of the women scholars, 149 (Teaching unpaid; accepting small gifts, 154) — The numbers of their students, 155 — How the muhaddithīn transmitted hadith, 164 (Narration of the words, 164; Reading to the teacher, 169; Correspondence, 170; Ijāzah, 171) — Assemblies for narration and teaching, 176 (Houses, 177; Mosques, 179; Schools, 180; Other places, 182)

7 WOMEN’S HADITHS AND NARRATIONS — Women’s hadiths in the Six Books, 184 — The narrators’ eloquence, 189 — Fiqh dependent on women’s hadiths, 195 (The hadith of Subayʿah al-ʿAslamiyyah, 196; The hadith of Busrah bint ʿAṣwān, 197; The hadith of Umm ʿAtiyah, 198;
'A'shah's hadith about the wife of Rijā'ah al-Qurazy, 199) —
Women's narration of different kinds of hadith compilations, 199 (Jawāmi', 199; Sunan, 203; Masānīd, 206;
Masa'ījm and Mashyakhāt, 208; Arba‘īnāt, 209; Ajza‘, 210;
Musalsalāt, 213; Abundance of their narrations, 214) —
Collections of the women's narrations, 219 — Higher isnād through women teachers, 227

8 WOMEN AND HADITH CRITIQUE — Evaluation of narrators, 230 (Ta‘dīl of women narrators, 233; Jarh of women narrators, 234) — Evaluation of women’s hadiths, 235 — Evaluation of narrators by women, 237 (Women’s role in ta‘dīl and jarh, 237; Examples of ta‘dīl and jarh by women, 238) — Women’s role in hadith critique, 239 (Checking the hadith against the Qur’ān, 240; Checking the hadith against another, stronger hadith, 241; Checking the hadith against a sunnah of the Prophet, 242; Checking the hadith in the light of its occasion (sabab), 243; Checking a hadith against the difficulty of acting upon it, 244; Checking a hadith for misconstruction of its meaning, 244)

9 OVERVIEW BY PERIOD AND REGION — First period: 1st–2nd c. ah, 246 — Second period: 3rd–5th c. ah, 250 — The third period: 6th–9th c. ah, 255 — The fourth period: 900–1500 ah — overview by region, 264 (Hijāz, 264; Iraq, 265; al-Shām (Greater Syria), 266; Egypt, 268; Spain and Morocco, 270; The region of Khurasan and Transoxania, 271; India, 272)

10 FIQH AND ‘AMAL — The fiqh of the women scholars, 275 (Understanding the Qur’ān, 275; Understanding the hadith, 278; Women jurists, 279; Women giving fatwas, 281; Debate between men and women, 282; Reliance of the jurists on the fiqh of women, 283; The women’s holding opinions that others disputed, 284) — ‘Amal, 285

REFERENCES — The Companions and their Successors, 302 — The women scholars, 305 — The men scholars, 308 — Place names, 316
List of tables, charts, maps and illustrations*

Table 1. Different responses to ḥadīth of Fāṭimah bint Qays, 31
Table 2. Famous students of Shuhdah al-Baghdādiyyah, 156–58

Chart 1a–c. Transmission of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī to women, 125–27
Chart 2. Transmission of Musnad Ibn Ḥanbal to women, 130
Chart 3. Transmission of Muṣjam al-kabīr to women, 130
Chart 4. Transmission of Juz' Arafah to women, 211
Chart 5. Transmission of Juz' al-Anṣārī to women, 212
Chart 6. Transmission of al-Ghaylāniyyāt to women, 213
Chart 7. Transmission of Juz' Bībā to women, 221

Map 1. Study journeys of Fāṭimah bint Sa‘d al-Khayr, 94
Map 2. Islamic world. Spread of muḥaddithāt 1st–2nd c., 247
Map 3. Islamic world. Spread of muḥaddithāt 3rd–5th c., 251
Map 4. Islamic world. Spread of muḥaddithāt 6th–9th c., 256
Map 5. Islamic world. Spread of muḥaddithāt 10th–14th c., 261

Illustrations

Photo. Great Umayyad Mosque, Damascus, x
Photo. al-Jāmi‘ al-Ḥanābilah al-Muẓaffarī, Damascus, 96
Photo. Dār al-Kutub al-Zāhiriyah, Damascus, 137
MS copy. Istiḥāṣ of Muhammad ibn Qudāmah, 91
MS copy. Samā‘ of class of Zaynab bint al-Kamāl, 159–58
MS copy. Ijāzah signed by Sitt al-Katabah bint ‘Ali al-Tarrāh, 171
MS copy. Samā‘ of class of Karimah al-Zubayriyyah, 178
MS copy. Samā‘ of class of Zaynab bint Makkī al-Harrānī, 181
MS copy. Samā‘ of class of Karimah al-Zubayriyyah, 183
MS copy. Title page of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī of Sitt al-Wuzara‘, 200
MS copy. Ijāzah signed by Sitt al-Wuzara‘, 201

*Maps drawn by Dr. Alexander Kent, FBCart.S., FRGS.
Photos from the personal collection of Yahya Michot.
MSS photocopies. See text and notes on the page for sources.
Qāsim ibn Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Alī said: ‘We were at the door of Bishr ibn al-Ḥārith, he came [out] to us. We said: O Abū Naṣr, narrate ḥadīth to us. He said: Do you pay the ḥākāh [that is due] on ḥadīth? I said to him: O Abū Naṣr, is there ḥākāh [that is due] on ḥadīth? He said: Yes. When you hear ḥadīth or remembrance of God you should apply it.’

(see pp. 285–86)
Courtyard of the Great Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, where Umm al-Dardâ’ (d. 81) taught hadîth and fiqh, and ‘Ā’ishah bint ‘Abd al-Hâdî (d. 816) was appointed to the post of principal teacher of Sahîh al-Bukhârî. (Photo: Yahya Michot)
This book was conceived as a translation of the *muqaddimah* to an as yet unpublished biographical dictionary in Arabic of the women scholars of hadith in Islamic history. However, it was soon apparent that much of the original needed to be adapted, not simply translated. One reason is that this introduction to the material in the Dictionary is not accompanied by that work, and so the material in it needs to be adequately illustrated. Another reason is that the expectations of an English readership are somewhat different from an Arabic one. I know that to be so from questions put to me after talks I have given on the subject and from correspondence following announcement of this book. Those expectations oblige me to say what this book is not, which is rather an awkward way of explaining what it is.

Let me start by stating that this is not an exercise in 'women's studies'. I have no specialist knowledge of perspectives associated with that discourse. The admission of ignorance should not be taken as indifference to it. Rather, I hope that people skilled in 'women's studies' will make proper use of the material presented here. That material is, though arranged and organized, a listing; it is, by analogy with a word dictionary, much nearer to 'words' than 'sentences', and far from 'paragraphs' linked into an 'essay'. Much work needs doing on the information before anybody ventures to derive from it value-laden arguments about the past (still less, the future) role of women in Islamic society. Among the next tasks are, starting with the easiest:

*selection and composition* from the material: e.g., there are, in the Dictionary I have compiled, reams of information on at least a score of individual women that could be turned into distinct biographical studies. Of course, much labour is entailed: the little sketch of Fātimah bint Sa'd al Khayr given here (pp. 93–96 below) needed looking up half a dozen different books – but at least the Dictionary enables one to know which books to start with.
quantitative analysis: e.g., relative numbers of *mubahdithât* in different times and places, and their preferences within the material available for study. The overview in Chapter 9 lays out the main blocks of the big picture but it needs detailing.

historical and contextual background: e.g., how particular genres of *hadith* compilation developed and were transmitted — some charts provided here (necessarily scaled down) may indicate directions for such focused inquiry; how *hadith* study was affected by political events, administrative arrangements, relations between state and society, and by social and economic status; how it was documented; how it was funded (informally, or formally in the *waqf* deeds of the great madrasas/colleges).

thematically-oriented reflection: e.g., as their names show, many *mubahdithât* were daughters of men bearing the title ‘qâdi’, ‘imâm’, ‘hâfiz’ (expert, master), etc. It appears that the men most committed to the education of women, to respecting and treating them as peers in scholarship, and in the authority that derived from that status, were (as people now use this label) the most ‘conservatively’ Islamic — their intellectual genealogy traces to the *Sunnah*; not to (that other long line in Islamic scholarly effort) Aristotle.

My fear is that some readers will not wait for the necessary next phases of work to be undertaken. Vilification of Islam as a misogynist social order is so intense and pervasive that people urgently want assurance that it is not, or was not, or ‘need not’, be so. Scholarly corrective will not suffice to end that vilification since it is not based upon truth, but upon an aversion to Islam as such, perpetuating itself by seeking, and soon finding, instances of abuse of women (and other negatives like misgovernment, etc.) among Muslim communities. Similar failures in other communities are rarely associated with their religious tradition but explained by local factors. One need only compare the level of attention given in television documentary to the situation of women in Pakistan with that of women of equivalent social class in India to realize that such attention is quite particularly targeted on Muslims. In part this is because in India (to stay with that example) many middle-class younger women are beginning to see, and to project, their bodily presence in styles taken from the West, with some accents from local fashions. By contrast, most of their Muslim peers in Pakistan or India are not
doing the same — like many Muslims elsewhere they are not willing to subordinate manners derived from their religious tradition to Western tastes. The exasperation with Islamic ways for showing no consistent tendency to fade out, combined with the ancient aversion to Islam — it predates the modern European languages in which it is expressed — is the principal reason for the virulence of some feminist critique of it. Muslims, understandably, want their religion defended from that.

The feminist agenda, as understood by this outsider to it, has a practical side and a theoretical side. The former is concerned with questions of justice for women: equality in pay, access to education, employment, political representation, etc. No fair-minded person can argue with that. Justice is a virtue; Muslims have no monopoly either on the definition or practice of virtues. Rather, they are to praise the virtues in whoever has them and, within the boundaries of the lawful, compete therein. It would be hard to improve on the conciseness of this statement on the matter by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 751), greatest of many great students of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728):¹

A Shafi'i said: 'No politics (siyasa) excepting something that corresponds with the Law (shar')!' [...] If in saying ‘excepting something that corresponds with the Law (shar')’ you mean ‘which does not run against what the Law has pronounced upon’, it is correct. If [on the other hand] you mean [by that] ‘No politics except for what the Law has pronounced upon’, it is an error [...]. When the signs (amāra) of justice appear and its face is radiant, by whatever means it may be, there [you find] the Law of God and His religion. God, Praised is He, is too aware, too wise and too just to restrict the ways of justice, its signs and its marks, to a single thing, to then reject something that may be more evident than those [and] to not judge, when such a thing exists and subsists, that it is obligatory. Through the ways that He has instituted as Law, He has rather, Praised is He, made it plain that what is aimed at by Him is

¹I here quote (with italics added) the translation by Yahya MICHOT, in his discussion of sundry discourses of Ibn Taymiyyah on Muslims under non-Muslim Rule (2006), 105; the passage is from al-Turuq al-hukmiyyah (ed. S. 'Umran, Cairo, 1423/2002), 17–18.
that justice be made to rule among His servants and that people strictly practise equity. *Whatever the ways by which justice and equity obtain, they are a part of the religion and do not run against it.*

The aim of undoing injustices suffered by women (wherever they are suffered) is acceptable to Muslims. But it is entangled in the theoretical underpinning of feminist critique, which is not acceptable but which nevertheless invades Muslim minds. I hear it in the form and content of the questions put to me. The form is: if men can do X, why can’t women do X? The X could be ‘pray in a mosque’, ‘interpret the law’, ‘issue fatwas’, ‘lead prayer’, ‘travel unaccompanied’, ‘behave chastely without scarifying the head’, etc. This approach succeeds in embarrassing Muslims by framing each issue as one of equity: if men can X and women can’t, or if women must X but men needn’t, it does appear to be unfair. Now, it is not possible here to deal properly with such questioning of Islam — as I have said plainly, I am not qualified to take on ‘women’s studies’ discourse — but I do owe it to the women whose scholarly authority this book celebrates to say briefly what is necessary to distinguish their perspective. These were not feminists, neither consciously nor unconsciously. They were above all else, like the men scholars, *believers*, and they got and exercised the same authority by virtue of reasoning with the same methods from the same sources as the men, and by having at the same time, just as the men did, a reputation for *taqwā* (wariness of God), righteousness and strong intellect.

My concern is that some readers will misunderstand the resemblance, in form and content, between the questions above and those found in some of the Prophetic hadiths cited in this book — the women among the Companions say: men are mentioned in the Book, what about us? men are commanded to do this and that, while we are stuck with the children, what about us? Also, readers will find in the book abundant examples of women teaching hadith classes of men and women students in the principal mosques and colleges (when established, from the sixth century AH on); issuing fatwas; interpreting the Qur’ān; challenging the rulings of qādis; criticizing the rulers; preaching to people to reform their ways — and in all this being approved
and applauded by their peers among the men... The sheer number of examples from different periods and regions will establish that the answer to some of the 'If men can, why can’t women?' questions is 'Men can and women can too'. That is correct, and yet it is not right.

It is not right because the approach embedded in the question 'if men can, why can’t women?' is, from the Islamic perspective of the muhaddithat, misleading in itself. It leads astray by three main routes. (1) Except as an amusing irony the question is never put the other way – 'if women can X, why can’t men?' Rather, it is taken as given that the traditional domain of women is inferior: running a home, bringing up children are menial chores, unpaid in money or prestige, not a calling. So women should strive to take responsibility in the traditionally male domain of earning a living and competing for economic and political power, and the domain of family life – however important it may be – must be squeezed in somewhere somehow between the public domain commitments of the man and woman. To the extent that a social order moves towards that goal, women are freed of economic dependency, of any need to 'wait upon' men, acting as fathers or husbands (or priests or professors, etc.), telling them what to do.

I have worked through much material over a decade to compile biographical accounts of 8,000 muhaddithat. Not one of them is reported to have considered the domain of family life inferior, or neglected duties therein, or considered being a woman undesirable or inferior to being a man, or considered that, given aptitude and opportunity, she had no duties to the wider society, outside the domain of family life.

(2) The form of the question ‘if men can, why can’t women?’ gives primacy to agency as the definitive measure of the value of being human. What counts is what one can do, not what one can be; moreover, this approach defines agency in terms of challenging an established order of privilege – here, the privileges men have – so that the emotions and attitudes in play are characterized by resistance, and success is measured in terms of how many can-do items have been won over from the exclusive ownership of men. Thus, an argument may be contrived along the lines of: these
extraordinary women, the *muhaddithat*, were – perhaps unconsciously – striving from within (i.e. resisting) against an oppressive system, and they achieved as much dignity and liberty of action as the system could tolerate. (The implication is that now we can do better, go further, etc.)

This argument will not hold against the information I have presented. It will become clear from the first three chapters of this book that there is no period when men have certain privileges to speak or think or act, and then women find a way to 'invade' the men's ground. Rather, the women and men both know, *from the outset of Islam*, what their duties are: women are there teaching and interpreting the religion from the time that the duty to do so passed, with the Prophet's death, to the scholars among his Companions. Indeed, by the assessment of some later scholars, the Companions most often referred to for fatwas or *fiqh* was 'A'ishah bint Abi Bakr al-Šiddiq. From the Companions it passed to their Successors. Women are prominent among both, and among the later generations, who continued (or revived) that precedent. There is no evidence of any campaign, overt or covert, to win rights from men for women.

Undue emphasis on agency (being able to *do*) as a measure of dignity and liberty is an error of more serious import. In the believers' perspective, the best of what we do is worship and, especially, prayer. Prayer, in its immediate, outward effects in the world seems to do nothing. However, the doer of it (and only the doer) knows how he or she is measured by it – the quality of presence of will, of reflection and repentance, of the courage to stand alone and quite still on the line between fear and hope before God. Prayer builds (and tests) the stability of the qualities that Muslims have treasured most in their scholars, men or women, namely wariness (or 'piety' in relation to God) and righteousness (in relation to other people). It is in the practice and teaching of these qualities that the *muhaddithat* were engaged. Their personal authority as teachers was no doubt a function, in part, of sheer technical mastery of the material they were teaching, but it was also a function of their ability to con-
vey their conviction about it, and its effect on their character, their being.

Because of the need to set down a lot of examples of the material about the *muhaddithāt*, I have, with one exception, avoided lengthy citation of the hadiths themselves that they were teaching. The one exception is 'Ā'ishah's recollection of the incident of the *ifk*, the slander against her. It is a long story (below, p. 190–95). It ends when her husband, the Prophet, advises her, if she has done wrong to repent and God will forgive her. She knows she is innocent and so turns away from the world that will not vindicate her, saying 'there is no help but in God'. When the Revelation declares her innocent, her mother instructs her to now go to her husband. She flatly refuses: 'By God, I will not go to him.' Because she is a teenager at the time of this incident, it is tempting to read in this disobedience the accents of rebelling adolescence. But in 'Ā'ishah's mature telling of it, it is presented as the moment when her faith is perfected, when she realizes that any obedience that is not, first, obedience to God is a burden to the self, an indignity; and every obedience that is for only God is full liberty. She turns away from parents, husband, from the Prophet himself: 'By God, I will not go to him. And I will not praise except God.' The power of agency that comes from such perfected surrender to God (*islam*) is evident in her conduct when, having led a battle against Muslims – an action she sincerely (and rightly) repented – and suffered a humiliating rout, she went directly to Basrah, where people flocked to her, not as a political faction, but to learn her hadith and her *fiqh*, her understanding of Islam. The rout took nothing from her personal energy – nor from her reputation as a resource for knowledge of the religion. The all but incredible feats of mental strength and stamina, which are reported of the women scholars of the later periods, derive from the same kind and source of agency, the same achieved freedom of being.

(3) The 'If men can, why can't women' approach may also mislead readers of the material in this book for another reason. It rests on a string of unsafe assumptions: that the differences given in nature (gender is the one we are discussing), if enhanced
by law and custom, must lead to injustices necessarily; that those injustices should and can be reduced by social, legal and (since we can do) biological engineering; that such engineering is safe because the differences as given have little value in themselves, or in their connectedness with anything else.

I will not go into the familiar arguments about the negative effects of erasing the social expression of gender differences – from weakening the boundaries of personal and family life so that it is spilled into public space for the entertainment of others, to confused sexual behaviours, to impairment of the desire and drive, perhaps even the capacity, to have children. But the social experiment is only just into its second generation. So far there is not much evidence that women’s entry into the high levels of government, business, etc. has led to any change in either the goals or the operations of these activities. The women do them just as well as the men and in just the same way; which suggests that their being women is not engaged when at work. But work patterns and structures take time to alter; it is rather early to be pronouncing on the long-term costs (personal and social) that have come along with the gains in justice for women. Those gains matter greatly. Here, I want only to explain that there is another effort for justice, coming from a different grounding, from different assumptions, and its distinctiveness should not be missed.

As this book shows, women scholars acquired and exercised the same authority as men scholars. Both did so within the well-known Islamic conventions of *hijab* and of avoiding, to the extent practicable, such mixing of men and women as can lead to forbidden relationships. As Muslims understand it, *hijab* is commanded by God as law-giver, as a social expression and marking of the gender differences commanded by Him as creator. The practice of *hijab* is thus not dependent upon having reasons for it but upon its being His command. However, God as law-giver commands nothing that He as creator does not also enable, and a part of His enabling obedience is that His commands (like His creation) are intelligible, so that obedience can flow
Muslims, men and women alike, are required to control their behaviour, how they look at, and how they appear to, each other. But only of women is it required that, in public, they cover their hair, and wear an over-garment, or clothing that does not caricature their bodily form: the meaning is — the opposite of modern Western conventions — to conceal, not reveal and project, their bodily presence. The meaning is not that women should be absent or invisible, but that they be present and visible with the power of their bodies switched off. What are the benefits of this? (1) Most of the time men and women dress to look normal, not to entice one another. But dress normality for men — except for the ignominies and anxieties of early adolescence — is derived from what other men see as normal; women, even when dressing only for each other, still evaluate their look among themselves by its appeal to men. Hijab can screen women from the anxiety, at least when out in public, of being subject to and evaluated by the sexual gaze of men. (2) Hijab has an educative function: it teaches chastity to the individual, who learns by it to inhibit the need to be appealing to men, and to the society in which the need to be self-disciplined is signalled and facilitated. (3) Hijab, publicly and emphatically, marks gender differences; it therefore enables women — always assuming that they are active in the public domain — to project their being women without being sized up as objects of desire.

None of that will at all impress those whose landscape is intolerably impoverished by the absence of attractively presented women, or who need the seasoning of flirtation and associated behaviours to get through their day. Nor can it impress those who do not see hijab except in terms of its symbolizing the oppression of women, who are prevented by it from ever enjoying ‘the wind in their hair’ or ‘the sun on their bodies’. (In fact, such enjoyment is not forbidden, only the display of it to men.) Women who declare that they have chosen to wear hijab are said to have internalized their oppression, that is, they are not allowed the dignity of being believed. Yet no-one says of the
adolescent or younger girls who hurt their own bodies in order to have (or because they never can have) the right 'look': 'they have internalized an oppressive system'. Rather, these negative outcomes are said to be offset by the benefits, overall, to the fashion and entertainment industries. It would be decent to allow Muslims to say: overall, the benefits of hijab outweigh any nuisance in it.

Anyway, despite pressures, believing men and women will not, for the sake of Western tastes, abandon the commands of God and His Messenger to practice hijab. It is a part of the faith. The great shaykhahs who are the subject of this book, never doubted its obligatoriness. Nor is there the least evidence that it inhibited them from teaching men, or learning from men. Clearly, however, there are practical issues involved of how space was used, how voices were projected so questions could be taken and answered, and how students and teachers could know how the other had reacted. There is no direct discussion of these practical matters in the sources. One infers from that, that people acted in good faith and, in the particular, local conditions, made such arrangements as were necessary to convey knowledge of the religion to those who came seeking it.

Within Islamic tradition, it is generally accepted that one should guard oneself and society from whatever leads to the prohibited. Inducements to the prohibited cannot strictly be called prohibited, but one tries to behave as if they were without calling them so. It is not so well accepted that impediments to what is commanded or expressly permitted should be minimized. Certainly, the risk of sin is not a sufficient ground for preventing behaviour that is in itself lawful and does not intend or systematically induce the unlawful. There is the hadith about the man who came to the Prophet to confess that, in the marketplace of Madinah, he had kissed a woman who was just there doing her shopping. The Prophet did not order the market closed or forbid women doing lawful business in it. First, he turned away, trying not to hear the man's confession; but the man persisted. Then, after the prayer, the Prophet asked the man to confirm that he too had prayed. He did so. Then God sent down the verse (Hūd, 11. 114: Establish the prayer at the ends
of the day and approaches of the night. Surely good deeds take away bad deeds. That is a reminder for those who remember. The man asked: ‘Is this for me?’ The Prophet said: ‘For whoever takes it.’ The meaning is that it is for everyone who takes the opportunity, by prayer, to undo the attraction of sin so that it is not established in the heart and therefore can have very limited, if any, entail.

One reason we do not have more records about more of the muhaddithān is a broad interpretation of the duty of ḥijāb: so much weight is given to keeping public and private domains distinct that details about the accomplishments of the women of the household are held undisclosed. A reliable source states, for example, that Hāfiz Ibn al-Najjār (d. 643) had some 400 women teachers. Who were they? I was able to track down the names of only a few of them. Al-Qurashi (d. 775) wrote a book on Ḥanafi jurists with a section on women called Ṭabaqāt al-nisā', which he begins: ‘This is a book in which I will mention what has come to my knowledge about the women scholars among our companions [i.e. fellow-Ḥanafi jurists]. I got very little information [about them] and there is no doubt that the state of women is based on covering (ṣatr).’

The misreading or misuse of this book from a ‘women’s studies’ approach is possible because that approach has no basis in the sources of the Sunnah. Sadly, there is also a lot of Islamic scholarship – unlike that of the women whose work is recorded here – that is also weakly grounded in the Sunnah. An extreme example is the opinion that women should not be taught writing, because if they are they will write letters (presumably of some improper kind). Apart from its self-evident absurdity, and its preventing much good, this opinion is flatly contradicted by the

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1 Al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ, Mawāqīṭ al-ṣalāḥ, bāb al-ṣalāḥ kaffārāh; Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ, Tawbah, bāb qawli-ḥi ta'ālā inna l-ḥasanāt yudhhibna al-salāt; Al-Tirmidhī, Jāmi’, Tafsīr al-Qur’ān, bāb wa min surah Hūd; Ibn Mājah, Sunan, Iṣqāmat al-ṣalāḥ, bāb mā jā’a fi anna al-ṣalāta kaffārāh. 2 Al-Dhahābī, Siyar a’lām al-nubalā‘, xxiii. 133. 3 Al-Qurāshī, al-Jawābīr al-mudīyyah fi Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafīyyah, iv. 1–2.
precedent of the Companions and their Successors. I will not
labour the point: there is no need to as the book is packed with
fully referenced counter-examples to that kind of thinking.

Because of the number of names and the need to identify
people by giving most elements of the name and (if known)
date of death, it saved some space to use only Hijri dates. That
is in any case my practice in the original Arabic from which this
work is adapted. Readers who find this disorienting, may find
the table below useful. The 1st Muharram of year 1 AH corres-
dponds to 16 July 622 AD.

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Acknowledgements

The great tābi'īyyah Umm al-Dardā' said (below, p. 154) that God's
provision does not reach us as a raining down of gold or silver but
through each other. I cannot mention individually all those through
whom I have been enabled to do this work – all my teachers and
colleagues; the patient, professional staff of all the libraries I have used.
For access to precious documents, I am most grateful to Mawlānā
Muhammad Deedat, librarian at Dār al-Ulum, Bury (UK); Dār al-Kutub
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language. I thank Carla Power for making my work known through her
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for doing so much of the typing and proof-reading.

As this work is about teaching of the Sunnah of the Prophet, it is
proper always to remember the supplication: salla l-lāhu ʿaley-hi wa sallam
(God pray over him and grant him peace). I end in hope that good
comes by this book to those who brought it about and to its readers –
it may do so only if He wills, to Whom all praise and thanks are due.

Mohammad Akram
Oxford, July 2007
Introduction

It surprises people to learn that women, living under an Islamic order, could be scholars, that is, hold the authority that attaches to being knowledgeable about what Islam commands, and therefore sought after and deferred to. The typical Western view is that no social order has (or aspires to have) more ‘religion’ in it than an Islamic one, and the more ‘religion’ a society has in it, the more restricted will be the scope in that society for women to enjoy agency and authority. Behind that is the assumption that religion is ‘really’ a human construct, done mainly by men and therefore done to secure advantages for them at the expense of women. Muslims, of course, do not share this view.

One of the reasons for Muslim conviction that the Qur'an is God’s word is that it is, though expressed in the vehicle of the human language of its first audience (Arabic), free of limiting human perspectives. The Qur'an as a whole has neither narrative focus or structure: it is not the epic of an individual or a tribe, on which generations have laboured to give meaning to what the individual or tribe did or had done to them. It has no restrictive geographical focus: it does not build up or explain the charisma of a place or place-name. It does not build up or justify some particular human institution such as kingship or priesthood. It is not, on the other hand, either a random or closely connected assemblage of abstract moral or legal or philosophical principles. For believers it is a connecting of the divine will directly with a real human situation, made exemplary by that connection. It addresses the people in that situation with commands and consolation, with threat and promise, and guides them to what will better prepare their living in this world to earn contentment in the eternal life hereafter. Quite explicitly, it also gives to the
precepts and practice of the mortal on whom it was sent down a unique authority. The Qur'ān has authority, and the Messenger's Sunnah has authority by it. The divine promise is that these paired sources of guidance suffice as the framework within which the believers can order their affairs in a way that pleases their Creator. Accordingly, while Muslims have disagreed and fought over just about everything else, they have never done so about the authority of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. This book is a demonstration of women's access to that authority.

The best guidance, unassisted by Revelation, that human beings might hope for is that their law-givers establish rules as if 'from behind a veil of ignorance', as if they did not know who would benefit by such rules and who would suffer. In reality that can never happen, because human perspectives are always, even with the best of intentions, partial. In practice human law-givers always prefer their own tastes and interests, being always ready to believe that their interests are in fact to everybody's advantage in the long term - and so their laws prefer some people over others - for example, property-owners over those without property, or men over women, or the interests of their own nation over some other. There is some consolation in the fact that, through the effort of learning from experience, revision of past errors is possible.

In the Qur'ān and Sunnah Muslims believe they have a framework of guidance that is strictly impartial and sufficient because God's knowledge and mercy encompass all beings and all their pasts and futures. Any human derivation from and within that framework is subject to revision, but the framework itself is not. Accordingly, in the Islamic tradition, to say 'God says in His Book' decides the argument. Where it is not certain how the guidance of the Qur'ān is to be acted upon, Muslims look to the example of how God's Messenger acted in the same or a similar situation. The record of his example (Sunnah) is now, for all practical purposes, conveyed through a body of texts, known singly and collectively as ḥadith (lit. 'saying'). A man who becomes expert in knowledge of the ḥadith is called a muḥaddith; a woman, muḥaddithah (plural, muḥaddīthāt). Knowledge of ḥadith is deci-
sive in informing *fiqh*, understanding the guidance as (legal) rules and (social) norms; one who attains skill in *fiqh* is called *faqih* (ah). It is decisive in informing *ifta*, the responsa (fatwas) of scholars to questions the people put to them on specific matters; ‘mufti’ means one who gives fatwas. Knowledge of ḥadith is decisive also in informing *tafsīr*, interpretative commentary of the Qurʾān, since, by its own command, the Prophet’s understanding of it must be preferred over anyone else’s. Readers should understand that, in the orthodox or Sunni tradition, a Muslim is not bound by anybody else’s *fiqh* or *ifta* or *tafsīr*. The scholars in Islam dispose authority in society; they do not directly dispose power. The distinction was (and remains) of the utmost importance for their credibility and legitimacy with the people.

Women attained high rank in all spheres of knowledge of the religion, and, as this book will show, they were sought after for their *fiqh*, for their fatwas, and for *tafsīr*. Primarily, I am concerned here with their achievement and role as *muhaddithat*. In this chapter I set out, first, the overall impact of Qurʾān and Sunnah in changing attitudes to women; in the second section, I explain different dimensions of the change as instituted or urged by Qurʾān and Sunnah; in the third what the women themselves did in the formative period of Islam so that men, in a sense, had to accept that change.

**THE IMPACT OF THE BOOK AND SUNNAH**

The Qurʾān rebukes the people of the *jāhiliyyah* (the Ignorance before Islam) for their negative attitude to women (*al-Nahl*, 16. 58–59): *When news is brought to one of them of [the birth of] a girl, his face darkens, and he is chafing within! He hides himself from his folk, because of the evil he has had news of. Shall he keep it in disdain, or bury it in the dust? Ah — how evil the judgement they come to!* The costly prospect of bringing up a daughter (a son was expected to enhance a clan’s military and economic potential) perhaps explains this negative response to the birth of a girl. Burying infant girls alive was a custom among some (not all) of the Arab tribes of the time. The Qurʾān warns of retribution for this gross atrocity
on the day *When the infant buried alive shall be asked for what sin she was killed* (al-Takwir, 81. 8–9).

Human rights and duties indicated in the Qurʾān are pegged to two fundamentals that are the same for men and women – namely their being creatures and slaves of God, their Creator and Lord, and their being the issue of a single human self. God has said in the Qurʾān (al-Nisāʾ, 4. 1): *O humankind, be wary of your Lord who created you from a single self, and from it created its pair, and from the pair of them scattered many men and women. Be wary of God, through Whom you ask of one another [your rights and needs] and close kindred:* God is ever-watchful over you. And (al-Ārāf, 6. 189): *He it is Who created you from a single self, and made from it its mate, so that he might settle at rest with her. Male and female are created for the same purpose: I have not created jinn and humankind except so that they worship Me* (al-Dhāriyat, 51. 56). The Qurʾānic term ‘ābd signifies both ‘worshipper’ and ‘slave’ in relation to God. The duties owed to God, and the virtues that ensue from the effort to do them, are the same for men and women. This is affirmed in a well-known Qurʾānic verse. The verse, and the occasion of its revelation are recorded in this ḥadīth, narrated by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Shaybah:

I heard Umm Salamah, the wife of the Prophet – *salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – say: I asked the Prophet – *salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – Why are we [women] not mentioned in the Qurʾān as the men are mentioned? [...] Then I was alerted that day by his call on the pulpit. [...] At that moment I was combing my hair. I gathered up my hair and went to one of the rooms of my house; I listened hard. I heard him saying on the pulpit: O people, God says in His Book: *The muslim men and muslim women; the believing men and believing women; the men who are obedient [to God] and women who are obedient [to God]; the men who are truthful and the women who are truthful; the men who are persevering and patient and the women who are persevering and patient; the men who give alms and the women who give alms; the men who are humble and the women who are humble; the men who fast and the

1 ‘close kindred’: literally, ‘the wombs’, here understood to mean the issue thereof.
women who fast; the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard their chastity, and the men who remember God much and the women who remember God much — God has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward.¹

The burden of duties owed to God is carried individually: responsibilities in this world and the recompense hereafter are particular to each self. The diversity of human aptitudes and of the opportunities that come into particular lives must be seen in the light of God's affirmation that He does not burden any self with a responsibility that He has not also enabled it to discharge. We do not find in the orthodox Islamic tradition, therefore, any argument for an intermediate authority between human beings and God. In that tradition, all questions of how to serve God, as also of how to settle differences or disputes between people in their worldly affairs, are referred to the guidance of Qur'ān and Sunnah. Access to this guidance is not a function of belonging to a particular group (say, the tribe of Quraysh rather than some other Arab or non-Arab people), or to a particular gender (men rather than women) or to a particular social class (say, the nobility rather than slaves). It is a function strictly of knowledge of and personal adherence to Qur'ān and Sunnah.

Having 'the knowledge', and the conscientious preserving, transmitting and understanding of it, is the strong basis for the public authority that learned Muslims, men and women, were able to command. Necessarily, there were different opinions on the import of the knowledge people had, but the differences were not settled on the basis of the gender or the tribe or socio-economic class of the person who conveyed it.

An example is the hadīth of Fātimah bint Qays. She reports that when she was divorced from her husband, the Prophet did not require him to provide accommodation and expenses for her until the end of her 'iddah, the period after which she would be free to re-marry. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb rejected this hadīth; so did Zayd ibn Thābit, 'A'ishah, and other jurists. They argued that it contradicts the Qur'ān's command that men must support

¹ AL-ḤĀKIM, al-Mustadrak, ii. 416. The verse cited is al-Ahzāb, 33. 35.
divorced wives during the ‘iddah. If they had been motivated by ‘patriarchal attitudes’, they would surely have acted on the ḥadīth of Fāṭimah, since it appears to favour men. In any event (details will come in the next chapter) Fāṭimah was never stopped from narrating the ḥadīth; it was recorded in all the books; over time, for their different reasons, jurists took different positions about it. It would have been so if the same ḥadīth had been narrated by a man, say the ex-husband, rather than the ex-wife.

Another example is narrated by Sa’īd ibn al-Musayyab about ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb during the caliphate of Abū Bakr. ‘Umar divorced the mother of his son ‘Āşim, then saw her somewhere with their son and took him from her. She appealed her case to Abū Bakr. The caliph judged that ‘Āşim ibn ‘Umar remain with his mother until grown up or until she re-married. This verdict followed the Sunnah, established by the report (among others) that a woman came to the Prophet and said: ‘O Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – my womb was his vessel, my arm was his container, and my breast was his drink. And now his father claims that he is going to snatch him from me. The Prophet – salla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – said: You have more right over the child while you do not re-marry.’ Neither ‘Umar’s rank as one of the most senior of the Companions, nor his being Abū Bakr’s dearest friend, nor his argument that he had more to give the boy, swayed the judgement in his favour. Abū Bakr said: ‘O ‘Umar, the moisture of her lips is better for him than the honey in your house.’

A great many examples will be presented in the course of this book of the imāms in ḥadīth and law – called imāms because they are followed – who had women teachers and praised their learning, intelligence and piety. In so doing, they were following the lead of the Companions and their Successors – and again, many examples will come – who turned to the learned women

1 AL-BAYHAQĪ, al-Sunan al-kubrā, Nafqat, bāb al-umm tatarzawwaj wa yaskutu ḥaqqu-hā min ḥadānāt al-walad wa yantaqilu ilā jaddatih. 2 ABU DAWŪD, Sunan, Ṭalāq, bāb man aḥaqq bi-l-walad. 3 AL-MARGHINĀNĪ, al-Hidāyah, ii. 317.
of their generation for general advice, for a particular ruling, for help in interpreting and implementing the guidance of Qur'ān and Sunnah. To be sure, it was largely men who held the formal posts like qādī, but they could discharge their duties only from the authority of Qur'ān and Sunnah, to which women also could appeal. A striking case is that of 'Amrah bint 'Abd al-Rahmān, the great tābi‘iyyah (Successor), muhaddithah and faqīḥah, who intervened in a court case in Madinah to prevent a miscarriage of justice (details, p. 279–80). It is remarkable enough that she knew that the case was in progress and the circumstances of it and what sentence the qādī had passed but not yet carried out. Many famous men jurists were resident and active in the city; none of them intervened. What is astonishing is that she did intervene, and no-one questioned her right to do so. The defendant was a non-Muslim, not known to 'Amrah except as the defendant in this suit, in which she had no personal, private interest. The qādī reversed his decision and released the defendant only because he could have no argument against the authority of the hadith she was able to cite. He did not know or remember it, or simply failed to bring it to bear when reaching his judgement: once he knew the hadith, he did as a Muslim should – he acted upon it.

The distance is huge between a society in which some men held womanhood in such contempt that they could countenance burying infant daughters alive, and one in which they would defer to the authority of a woman just because she had knowledge that they did not. It is an extraordinary distance to have covered within a single generation. How was it possible?

THE WOMEN'S AUTHORITY ESTABLISHED BY THE QUR'ĀN AND SUNNAH

The short answer is that it was possible because, once they believed the Revelation to be the word of their Creator, it would have been irrational for them not to act upon its command. The Qur'ān speaks about women in general and specific terms. It does not associate womanhood with inferiority or deficiency of any sort, or any primordial sin, or any disposition to sin not
also found in men, or any disposition to induce sin in others not also found in men. It does not regard women as an appendage of men, but as distinct beings, each called individually, just as are men. The language of the Qur'an, Arabic, like many others, uses masculine forms to mean women also, unless context expressly excludes them. The grammar does not require women to be expressly included; it is all the more striking therefore when that explicit including occurs. I have quoted above verse 33.35 enumerating the virtues, distinctly for men and women. Starting with the next verse in that surah, here are a few more examples:

*It is not for a believing man or believing woman, when God and His Messenger have decided a matter [...] (al-Ahzāb, 33.36). Never will I allow to be lost the work of any of you, male or female (Āl 'Imrān, 3.195). Whoever does righteous deeds, male or female, and is a believer, him We shall enliven to a good life, and We shall pay them certainly a reward proportioned to the best of what they used to do (al-Nahl, 16.97). Whoever does righteous deeds, from among the male or the female, and he is a believer, those will enter Paradise [...] (al-Nisā', 4.124). The believing men and believing women are protecting friends (awliyā') of one another, they bid to good (al-maṣrūf), and forbid from evil (al-munkar); they establish the prayer and give the alms (zakāh) and obey God and His Messenger (al-Tawbah, 9.71).*

Of course, there is subject-matter where we would expect women to be mentioned — for example, the injunctions, ethical and legal, related to marriage and divorce; or the command to be kind to parents, where the travail of mothers is singled out (Luqman, 31.14; al-Aḥqāf, 46.15). But even where women are not the subject, the Book is concerned to include them in the call to Islam: the threat and the promise apply to them no less or more than to men.

For believers, the Book is (as I explained earlier) a direct engagement of the divine will with a real human situation, made exemplary by that engagement. Of several such occasions related to women, one of the best known is the background of the surah called al-Mujādalah, 'the disputing'. Yūsuf ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Salām narrates from Khawlah bint Thaʿlabah (wife of Aws ibn al-Sāmit the brother of ‘Ubadah ibn Sāmit) that she said:
One day my husband entered upon me. He talked to me about something and he got annoyed. So I answered him back. He said: You are to me 'as the back of my mother' [a formula of repudiation]. Then he left and sat in a gathering of his people. Then he came back to me. He wanted me, and I refrained [from him], then he pulled me by force and I struggled with him. Then I overcame him by what a weak woman can overcome [a man by] and I said: By Him in Whose hand is Khawlah's soul, never will your hand reach me until God sends down His judgement regarding my and your case. Then I came to the Messenger of God – *salla l-lāihu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – complaining to him [about] what [treatment] I had received from my husband. The Prophet – *salla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – said: He is your husband and your cousin, so be wary of God. Then God sent down [the verses, from 58. 1]: God has heard the speech of her who disputes with you concerning her husband, and complains to God. And God is hearing the exchange between you both. God is all-hearing, all-seeing. Then God's Messenger – *salla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – said: Ask him to free a slave [by way of expiation]. I said, 0 Messenger of God, he does not have any slave to free. He said: Then he should fast two continuous months. I said: O Messenger of God, he is an old and elderly person, he cannot fast. He – *salla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – said: Then he should feed sixty poor people. I said: By God, he does not own anything to feed the poor with. Then he said: We will help him with a big container of dates. I said: I will help him with another container. The Prophet – *salla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – gave that [for him] in charity. ¹

(The Qur'ānic verses not cited above (58. 2–5) go on to forbid use of the ugly formula of repudiation, and to specify the acts of expiation for the utterance of false oaths, as in the hadith.)

By calling women to Islam directly, the Book compels men to recognize them as independent moral beings. For a clear example of that, see (below, p. 289) the response of 'Umar – at this time the ruler of a mighty empire – to a public scolding by the same Khawlah bint Thaqabah, whose hadith we have just read, and how he explains his response.

¹AL-MIZZI (d. 742), *Tahdhib al-kamāl*, xxviii. 313–14.
Similarly, the Qur'ān establishes for women a distinct legal individuality, through rights of property and inheritance, and marriage contracts. The men are required to provide for their families; the women are not. Their property, including the dowry, remains theirs through the marriage, though they may choose to spend on their husbands (as in the example above) or their children, as free-will offering or charity. (This seeming inequality favouring women is balanced by the Qur'ān’s stipulation of different inheritance portions for sons and daughters: al-Nisā', 4. 7, 11). On marriage, the Qur'ān (al-Baqarah, 2. 232) declares the woman’s competence to choose: Do not obstruct them (lā ta'cjulū-hunna) from marrying their husbands, if they mutually agree in the normal way (bi-l-ma'rūf). One Khansā' bint Khidhām al-Anṣāriyyah al-Awsiyyah came before the Prophet to protest that her father had married her to someone she did not like. The Prophet annulled that marriage.1 'Ā'ishah has narrated that a young woman called on her and said: ‘My father has married me to his nephew to raise [the nephew’s] low class and I am not happy with this marriage.’ 'Ā'ishah asked her to wait until the Prophet came. When he did, the woman informed him and he sent for the father. Then, in the father’s presence he entrusted the matter to the young woman directly. She said: ‘I have now allowed what my father did. I [only] wanted to teach the women that the fathers do not own anything of the matter.’ 2

Another illustration of the legal competence of women is the right to grant refuge to a stranger or enemy, which is then binding on the community. Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Taymī narrates one such incident concerning Abū l-'Āṣ ibn al-Rabī'. This man was an unbeliever formerly married to the Prophet’s daughter, Zaynab. He and his trading caravan returning from Syria were captured in a raid by the Muslims and brought back

1 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahih, Nikāh, bāb idhā zawwaj al-rajul ibnatu-hu wa hiya kārihatun fa-nikāhu-hu mardūd. 2 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahih, Nikāh, bāb yankīḥ al-abu wa ghayru-hu al-bikr wa-l-thayyib illā bi-ridā-ha; AL-NASĀ'Ī, Sunan, Nikāh, bāb al-bikr yuqawwilū-hā abū-hā wa hiya kārihatun; IBN MĀJAH, Sunan, Nikāh, bāb man zawwaja ibnata-hu wa hiya kārihatun.
to Madinah in year 6 AH. There he made his way to Zaynab, begged refuge and she granted it. She stood at her door and called out in a loud voice: 'I have granted protection to Abū l-Āṣ ibn al-Rabī'. The Prophet confirmed that the people had heard this announcement and then he said: 'The believers are one hand against other people. The lowest of the believers can grant protection on their behalf. And we have granted protection to whoever she has granted protection to.' Later, at Zaynab's request, the goods of Abū l-Āṣ were restored to him. However, while he remained an unbeliever, he was forbidden to go near to Zaynab. He returned to Makkah and discharged his obligations with the goods, then embraced Islam and made his way back to Madinah in Muḥarram of the following year. The Prophet restored his marriage to Zaynab.

Another such incident concerns Umm Hānī, told by herself. 'I said: O Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam – the son of my mother [meaning her brother ‘Alī] claims that he is going to kill a man to whom I have granted protection, So-and-so son of Hubayrah. The Prophet – salla l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam – said: 'We have granted protection to whoever you have granted protection to, O Umm Hānī.'

That women can think and act independently in such ways is the ground upon which the final judgement of their actions is based – as is the case for men. Women can choose the wrong path as well as the right one. The Qur'ānic example of the former are the wives of the prophets Lūṭ (Lot) and Nūḥ (Noah); of the latter, the wife of Pharaoh, and the mother of the prophet Ḥādīs (Jesus) (see al-Tahrīm, 66. 10–12). Pharaoh's wife is praised for her spiritual insight, and her moral courage in refusing to be intimidated by her husband's arrogance and evil. Maryam is an example of perfect faith and purity (see Āl 'Imrān, 3. 37, 40–42). She suffers what was decreed for her of the slanders of her

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1 IBN SĀ'D, al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā, viii. 33. 2 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, Jīzah wa-l-muwaža‘ah, bāb amān al-nisā‘ wa jīwāri-hinn. MUSLIM, Sahīh, Salāh al-muṣafirin wa qaṣrī-hā...
people without any diminution of trust in God. The portrait of her is one of the most moving passages in the Qurʾān, specially the account of how she endures pain when the prophet ʿĪsā is born, and how she is comforted after that (Maryam, 19. 16–34). Another remarkable portrait is that of the Queen of Sabaʿ: she is a model of wise political leadership, intellectual curiosity and, eventually, spiritual insight (al-Naml, 27. 23–44).

Alongside the Revelation, there was the teaching and example of the Prophet. He was not teaching only the men. The women were included in the public assemblies when he preached; he also set time aside for them, separately from the men, and he dealt with their questions personally when they came to him or to his wives. A full account of this effort will come in Chapter 2. The Prophet, obedient to the Qurʾān’s command, consulted his Companions, the women as well as the men, before critical decisions. He accepted their counsel if it seemed right to him. A famous incident of this kind happened on the occasion of the truce of Hudaybiyyah agreed with the unbelievers of Makkah. After the battle of Badr, this was the most important turning-point in the formative history of Islam.

The Muslims had gone to Makkah in the expectation of doing the ḥājj, but in the end, the unbelievers refused them entry to the city. After tense negotiations, the terms of the truce agreed included the Muslims’ returning to Madinah without doing the ḥājj. This and other terms seemed to some of the Muslims humiliating and one-sided. The Prophet ordered his Companions to sacrifice their animals and shave their heads (to indicate coming out of the state of ʿibāram, the end of pilgrimage sanctity). The narrator of this ḥadith says: ‘By God, no single man from among them stood up on that [command to carry it out].’ The Prophet commanded them three times, and none stood up. He went then to his wife Umm Salamah and told her what he faced from the men. She said: ‘O Prophet of God – salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam – if you will, go out and do not utter a word to any of them until [after] you have sacrificed your camels and called your barber and he has shaved your head.’
The advice was, in essence, to act decisively and the men would follow, even if reluctantly. This is indeed what happened.¹

THE WOMEN’S AUTHORITY ESTABLISHED
BY THEIR OWN ACTIONS

The affirmation that authority in Islam derives from Qur’ān and Sunnah is what distinguishes believers from unbelievers in their faith, their deeds and their style of life. Particularly in the first years, the consequences of that affirmation were opprobrium, persecution, torture and, for some, death. Sons were separated from fathers, husbands from wives, brothers from brothers, and all were excluded to some degree from the system of tribal allegiances and protections. Since women were called to and entered the faith individually, they too faced and suffered the very same separations and vulnerability, the same aloneness, and, perhaps, being women, suffered more acutely. A well-known case is Fā’imah, the sister of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, the future caliph, then one of Islam’s most assiduous (and being ʿUmar, most competent) detractors and persecutors. He struck her violently when he found her reciting the Qur’ān in secret, but then her steadfast dignity in answer to his ill-temper led to his embracing the religion he had wanted to destroy.

Many examples will come in the chapters ahead of the women’s diligence in seeking knowledge of the religion, then recording, transmitting and implementing it. So too examples will come of their dedication to self-discipline, not for its own sake, but in order the better to embody Islam in their whole environment and instil it in the hearts of their students. The best of the believing women were no less devoted to supererogatory remembrances and prayer than the best of the believing men. They too wanted to attend the mosque for the night prayer, and they were to be permitted: Sālim ibn ʿAbdillāh narrates from his father ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar that the Prophet said: ‘When your women ask your permission to go to the

¹ Al-Bukhārī, Sahīh, Shurūṭ, bāb al-shurūṭ fi-l-jihād.
mosque in the night, give them permission.'1 The women, no less than the men, strove to memorize the Qur'ān, to have it by heart and in the heart; and again, they too took note of the look and manner of the Prophet in all that he did, and committed to memory what they could of his sayings, telling one another what they had witnessed on occasions that some had missed but others not. Details will come in the course of the book.

After the truce of Hudaybiyyah, the tide turned, to the extent that God willed, in favour of the Muslims, and against their enemies among the idolaters and the People of the Book. Makkah was conquered without bloodshed and past enemies forgiven as they gave allegiance to the Prophet and to Islam. At the time of the death of the Prophet, when Revelation ceased, all the tribes of the Arab peninsula had embraced Islam, some politically, some in a better way. The believers needed to and did take stock of the turning-points in the formative years of this religion. To a limited extent, the notion was established of seniority in Islam, of commitment to it when this was a trial, and commitment after that. At most of the critical moments women were present. Women were among those who sought refuge in Abyssinia in the first or minor hıjrəh; among the Muslims of Yathrib (later called Madinah) who gave the second ‘Pledge of ‘Aqaba’ before the great Hijrah itself. Again, women were witnesses of the time when, by divine command, the orientation of the Muslims was turned about, from Jerusalem to Makkah. Before the truce of Hudaybiyyah was agreed, and it seemed a battle would be imposed upon them, the Prophet, asked the Muslims (they were gathered by a tree), to re-affirm their allegiance to him. So decisive was this show of commitment, that ‘the allegiance of the tree’ is mentioned in the Qur'ān itself. Women took part in this also.

We can get a sense of the historical weight that some of the Companions carried from a couple of biographical notices. Ibn

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1 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Šahīh, Šalāh, bāb khurūj al-nisā‘ ilā l-masjid bi-l-layl wa-l-qhalas.
'Abd al-Barr says in his account of Rubayyi' bint Mu'awwidh: 1 ‘She is a Companion of the Prophet – salla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam – and she has narrated his hadith. And the people of Madinah have narrated hadith from her. Ahmad ibn Zuhayr says: I heard my father saying: Rubayyi' bint Mu'awwidh is from those women who did allegiance under the tree.’ Similarly, of Salma bint Qays ibn 'Amr from the clan of 'Adi ibn al-Najjār, whose kūnyah is Umm al-Mundhir, a sister of Sa'īt ibn Qays who was one of those present at the battle of Badr, Abū Nu‘aym says: ‘She was one of the maternal aunts of the Prophet, salla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam. Some say: She was a paternal aunt of the Prophet, salla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam. She prayed in the direction of both qiblāhs and she was among those women who did allegiance with the Prophet, salla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam.’ 2

The single most important event was the Hijrah from Makka to Madinah. It tested the will of the believers to quit their past bonds, to apply the faith in their hearts to the building of a way of life, a social order. That is why, later, it was recognized as the beginning of the Islamic era. Many women passed this test, some going with husbands and family, some alone, without protection. Umm Kulthūm bint 'Uqbah was from a house well-known for unbelief and enmity to the Prophet. She did the Hijrah by herself. Her brothers al-Walīd and 'Umarah tracked her until they reached Madinah the day after she did, and demanded that she be handed over to them. Umm Kulthūm said: ‘O Messenger of God, I am a woman, and you know how frail women are; if you return me to the unbelievers, they will put me on trial for my religion, and I will not be able to stand firm.’ 3 Then the famous verses of al-Mumtahanah were sent down (60. 10–13). The first of them begins: O believers! When believing women come to you as fugitives, examine them. God knows better about their faith. Then if you know them for true believers, do not send them back to the unbelievers.'

1 IBN 'ABD AL-BARR, al-Istīṣāb, ii. 731.
2 ABŪ NU‘AYM AL-ASBAHĀNĪ, Ma‘rīfāt al-ṣaḥābah, v. 248.
believers. They are not lawful for the unbelievers and the unbelievers are not lawful for them.

I do not know of another religious tradition in which women were so central, so present, so active in its formative history. It follows that they were recognized as ‘senior’ in a social order in which authority was explicitly based upon commitment to and knowledge of the religion. It cannot then be a surprise that a woman had the authority to continue to narrate a hadith that others did not recognize as one that should be acted upon – the case of the Companion Fātimah bint Qays; or that a woman could challenge the decision of a court and the decision be overturned because the hadith she had reported was decisive and clear – the case of the Successor, ‘Amrah bint ‘Abd al-Rahmān.

As a final point while reflecting on what authority women had and should have in Islam, we might remember that, after the Prophet himself, the first person to hear the first words revealed from the Book, was his wife Khadijah, who believed in him; and the first mushaf or collection of leaves on which the Qurʾān was secured in writing (that is, outside the hearts of the believers) was entrusted to the safe-keeping of his wife, Ḥafṣah bint ‘Umar. ¹

Before I turn to an exposition of how women acquired and exercised their role as muḥaddithāt, I should perhaps note that hadith is only one, though undoubtedly the most important, sphere of scholarly effort in which Muslim women excelled. This is not the place to report their varied contributions to tajwīd and tafsīr, fiqh, grammar and lexicography, poetry and other literary composition, theology, logic, philosophy, history and biography, medicine, the arts of the book and calligraphy, and many of the crafts that we recognize and admire as Islamic. However, I have provided brief notes with references, perhaps of interest to readers who want to follow them up, in an informal article available on line.²

¹Al-Bukhārī, Ṣahīḥ, Fadā’il al-Qurʾān, bāb, jamʿ al-Qurʾān.
²www.interfacepublications.com/images/pdf/AKRAM_Article2.pdf
There is no difference between men and women as regards the legal conditions for receiving and transmitting ḥadīth. If some people have a doubt about this it is because they muddle the conditions that apply to giving testimony in a legal suit with those that apply to passing on reports. While there are clear similarities between the two, there are also important differences that jurists have recognized.

A Prophetic hadith is a text which, it is claimed, includes words that the Prophet uttered or that record his unspoken response to some action or event that he witnessed. The qualifications of the person transmitting such a text are the same as those that apply to the reception and transmission of reports generally, namely truthfulness and integrity, a competent and accurate memory, and being free of prejudice or compulsion of any sort that might be presumed to distort the reporting. In respect of general qualifications like that there can be no difference between men and women. Unfortunately, people confused reporting with giving testimony; then, having wholly misunderstood the quite particular conditions under which the testimony of two women is accorded the same weight as the testimony of one man, make the false inference that women’s reporting of hadith might (or even must) be considered weaker than that of men. It is necessary therefore to explain the particular conditions of testimony (shahādah), and the differences between that and reporting or narration (riwāyah).
TESTIMONY AND NARRATION

Many people misunderstand the meaning of God's saying:

O believers, when you make one another liable (radāyantum), then put it in writing. And let a scribe write [it] between you justly (bi-l-‘adl) [...]. And call to witness two witnesses from among your men. And if two men are not [to hand], then a man and two women from those you accept as witnesses, so that if one of the two errs [in what she remembers], then one of the two may remind (tadhakkira) the other. (al-Baqarah, 2. 282)

What is meant by a liability (dayn) is not a bare lending (qarāḍ), but an arrangement whereby one party accepts an obligation to the other that must be discharged in a certain way. Often, such dealings are done in an idiom that people familiar with them become fluent in, but which outsiders do not necessarily understand fully or accurately because, between people familiar with a thing, much can be left implicit. The idiom varies between nations and regions, even between different markets in the same country. For example, how people transact business in a modern stock exchange would be quite difficult for me to follow because I am unfamiliar with it — it may even be incomprehensible. It follows that, for transactions like that, I am unlikely to be considered among ‘those you accept as witnesses’. That kind of relative disability is what is meant, and what is understood in Islamic law, by the command to get, if two men are not available, one man and two women to witness a transaction that entails a liability. There is not, in Islamic law, a general preference for the testimony of men over that of women, but there is, following the command of the Qur’ān, such a preference in the particular circumstances where men are more familiar with the

1 Shaykh Sa‘īd Ramadān Al-Būṭī reports on a visit to the New York stock exchange: ‘As I was looking at the crowd, and thinking about the great noise and hectic commotion, I was curious to find any woman busy in what the men were busy in. I could not see even one woman.’ (al-Mar‘āh bayn fi‘lhyān al-nizām al-gharbī wa laṭā‘if al-tashrī‘ al-rabbānī, 149).
idiom of the matter than women. We can be quite sure of this because the same principle applies the other way — there are particular circumstances in which the testimony of women is preferred to that of men.

The qualities of 'those you accept as witnesses' are of two kinds. Firstly, the reputation of the witness for (i) 'adālah (i.e. integrity, probity), together with an absence of any cause of bias (like enmity against one party, or family relationship with the other party); and (ii) dabt ('strong grasp', i.e. a sound and reliable memory). Secondly, the reputation of the witness for familiarity with and understanding of the matter about which the testimony is to be taken.

The testimony of one whose 'adālah is defective, or the soundness of whose memory is doubtful, is not acceptable, whether the witness is a man or woman. Similarly, a testimony against an enemy, or on behalf of a relative, is not acceptable, whether the witness is a man or a woman. If those conditions are met, the witness must then be known to have some actual contact with the kind of matter about which the testimony is being taken; this is considered essential to safe testimony. If a fair degree of such contact is not established, then the testimony of that witness will be doubted, whether the witness is a man or a woman. If people differ in their contact with the kind of matter for which they are witnessing, then preference goes to those with greater experience in it.

Evidently, in matters related to feeding, care and upbringing of children, and lineage and what is like that, the testimony of women is better informed than that of men. It is narrated from Imām ʿĀmir al-Sha'bi (d. ca. 100) that he said: ‘There are certain testimonies where only the testimony of women is allowed.' As for financial matters and business issues, and the disputes and claims that rise in them, both men and women have contact with them; but men's involvement with these issues is more than women's. If we consider the question with an eye to

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1 IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH (d. 751), al-Ṭuruq al-hukmiyyah, 152.
the everyday reality of the norms that prevail in most societies most of the time, and with the practical need to prevent and resolve disputes between people, then the Qur'anic ruling will be understood to reflect social reality wisely and fairly. The eligibility of women to give legal testimony is clearly affirmed; requiring two women to testify in lieu of one man applies in relation to trans-actions women do not normally engage in, the idioms of which they would need to make an exceptional effort to understand. In most situations, the weight of testimony is not related to the witness being a man or woman; and in some, the woman's testimony is preferred over a man's. That is the known practice of, among others, the third and fourth caliphs, Uthmān and ʿAlī, of renowned Companions like ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68) and ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar (d. 73), and, from the generations after them, of widely followed scholars such as Hasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110), Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri (d. 124), Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161), and Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150) and his students. All of them hold that the testimony of a single woman is enough in matters that normally concern women more than they do men.¹

The difference between testimony and narration

Testimony is a kind of report that can result in establishing a definite liability for one or more particular individuals. Narration (riwāyah), by contrast, is a report of information that is not the basis of a definite, particular liability. Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Bājī (d. 474) says: "The door of testimony is narrower; that is why being male and being free are considered in it."²

Imām al-Qarāfī (d. 684) says in his book al-Furūq ("the Distinctions"):

I have begun with this distinction between these two fundamentals (qaʿidah), since for eight years I had been searching to get hold of [the distinction], and was unable to do so. And I kept asking the scholars what the difference between the two is, and what the real meaning of

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each of them is, since both are a kind of reporting. [So it continued] until I studied Sharh al-Burhān of al-Māzari [d. 536, who writes]: ‘Testimony and narration are both reports; except if the report belongs to a general matter, not related to a specific individual, then it is a narration, like his saying – salla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam – ‘Actions go with [are valued by] the intentions’. [...] On the other hand, if a truthful person confirms to the judge that this individual owes to that individual one dinar, then this is binding to a definite [thing], not going beyond [the concerned parties] to anyone else. That is sheer testimony, while the former is sheer narration.’

The commentator on Musallam al-thabīt observes:

The report of a reliable pious woman will be accepted without any endorsement by a man, in contrast to testimony, because the condition of being male has come with regard to testimony by the text [of the Qurʾān]. [...] This acceptance of the report narrated by a woman alone is in line with [the practice of] the Companions, may God be pleased with them, and they are enough to be followed. They accepted the report of Barirah even before her emancipation, as they accepted the report of ‘umm al-mu’minīn’ ʿĀʾishah al-Ṣiddīqah, the report of ‘umm al-mu’minīn Umm Salamah, and of others.’

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463), a famed authority on the principles of hadith, explicitly confirms that point:

There is no dispute about the obligatoriness of accepting the report of those in whom are gathered all the qualities (ṣifāḥ) required in a witness of the ḥuqūq [rights of one party on another] – like being Muslim, adult, of sound mind, accurate memory, truthfulness, honesty, piety, etc. So too there is no dispute [about] the same obligatoriness [of the conditions] for narrator and witness – sound mind, awareness and memory [etc.]. Where narrator and witness differ from each other is in the obligatoriness of the witness being a free person, not parent or

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1 AL-QARAFI, K. al-Furūq, i. 74–76. 2 Lit. ‘mother of the believers’, an honorific title exclusive to the wives of the Prophet. 3 Mulla ʿAbd al-ʿĀlī al-Anṣārī (d. 1225), Fawāʾiḥ al-rahmānī (his commentary on Musallam al-thabīt of Muhibullāh ibn ʿAbd al-Shakūr [d. 1119], appended to al-Ghazālī’s al-Mustafāʾ), i. 144.
descendant [of any party regarding whom the testimony is offered], not having any relation that leads to suspicion, not a close friend, and being a male in some types of testimony, and being two in some types of testimony, and being four in some others. And all that is not considered in the narrator. For we accept the report [narrated by] a slave, a woman and a friend, etc.\(^1\)

**THE LAWFULLNESS OF WOMEN RECEIVING AND NARRATING HADITH**

The scholars are agreed that there is no difference between men and women in any type of narration, and that the two are alike in the right (and duty) to receive, hold and convey hadith. The proofs for this are overwhelming and go back to the very first occasion that Islam was preached in public. We cannot be surprised by this, given that the study of hadith is not an idle or leisure pursuit, but a means to understand the guidance of the Qurān and then implement it in personal life and in society. The lawfulness of receiving and transmitting hadith is based on the duty of all Muslims to know their religion (din) and put it into practice: neither men nor women are exempted or excluded from this duty.

The first call to Islam is reported by Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab (d. ca. 90) and Abū Salamah ibn ‘Abd al-Rahmān (d. 94) from Abū Hurayrah (d. 57), who said:

When God sent down this verse [al-Shu‘arā, 26. 214], ‘And warn your close kin’, then the Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam – stood up and said: O people of Quraysh! Look to yourselves, I shall not avail you in anything against God. O children of ‘Abd Munāf! I shall not avail you in anything against God. O ʿAbbās, son of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib! I shall not avail you in anything against God. O Ṣafiyyah [aunt of God’s Messenger]! I shall not avail you in anything against

\(^1\)AL-KHATĪB AL-BAGHDAÐI, al-Kifāyah, 94. Here he is quoting, through Muḥammad ibn ʿUbaydillāh al-MĀLIKĪ, the opinion of the qāḍī Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib.
God. O Fátimah, daughter of Muhammad! Ask me whatever you like of my wealth, but I cannot avail you in anything against God.\(^1\)

The Prophet did not exclude the women from among the kindred he was commanded to warn first. Rather, he mentioned one man by name individually (his uncle), and two women by name individually (his aunt and daughter). It is also appropriate to recall that the very first person to hear and answer the call to Islam was the Prophet’s wife, Khadijah. She strengthened his heart to carry the responsibility that God had laid upon him, and assured him of God’s favour when he was anxious that he might prove unworthy and then be forsaken. It was she who led him to a learned relative of hers (a Christian monk), who also confirmed him to be the promised and chosen Messenger.

It is widely accepted that the rules of the disciplines that make up the science of ḥadīth did not begin to be formally written down until the end of the second century AH and after. Of course, the rules were not invented then; rather, scholars expressed in a systematic way what had long been established as good or best practice. This is analogous to how native users of a language know whether a phrase or sentence is correct or not; then, a quite different expertise is needed to work out the rules (the grammar) that native users are applying when they say that a particular usage is correct or incorrect.

We must affirm that, neither in the period of formally described and prescribed rules of the science of ḥadīth, nor in the generations of practice from which those rules derive, is a ḥadīth’s being reported by a man a condition of its acceptability or its being reported by a woman a condition for its rejection. The Mu’tazilah, a sect of rationalists in the early period, were the strictest in their rules: they would not consider a ḥadīth as sound (ṣahīḥ) unless it came from two independent narrators in every generation going back to the original speaker of the text being reported. However, not even the Mu’tazilīs required that the two narrators in each generation had to be male. In mainstream

\(^1\)AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Ṣahīḥ, Taṣfīr, bāb wa-andhir ʿashirata-ka l-aqrabin.
Islam, one of the greatest experts on the principles of the science (*usul al-hadith*) is Ibn al-Salāh (d. 643). He defines a hadīth as sound if it goes back to the Prophet through a solid, well-connected chain of narrators, each characterized as ʿadl and ḍabīṭ (just and truthful, with a strong memory). He defines as ṣhādhīd (anomalous or aberrant) any report whose meaning does not fit with or corroborate other reports, of similar or related subject-matter, which are already established as sound. Ibn al-Salāh gives no weight whatever to whether a report was narrated by a male or female.1

Among specialists in the field what weighed most heavily in discussions about the soundness of particular hadīths, were the personal qualities of the narrators, male and female alike, and how well the links between the individuals in the chains of narration (*isnād*) could be verified. Naturally, some chains were preferred over others, and among the preferred those most appreciated on account of their reliability were referred to as ‘golden chains’. Yahyā ibn Maʿīn (d. 233) said: “Ubaydullāh ibn ʿUmar from Qāsim from ʿĀʾishah is a solid gold chain of narration.”2 Several chains that begin with ʿĀʾishah are consistently described as among the best. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī reports

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1 See IBN AL-SALĂH, *Muqaddimah*, 15, 26–27. Similar arguments can be found in other of the great specialists in hadīth sciences. See, for example: AL-NAWAWĪ (d. 676), *al-Taqrib* with its commentary *al-Tādrīb*, i. 300–01. IBN RUSHAYQ AL-MĀLIK (d. 632) discusses the acceptability of reports originating in a single narrator; among his examples of accepted narrators, the names of three women Companions head the list (*Lubāb al-mahṣūl fī ʿilm al-usūl*, i. 356): “They [the Companions and their successors] relied on the narration of a single person, like the narration of ʿĀʾishah, Haʾfṣah, Umm Salamah, Abū Hurayrah, Ibn ʿAbbās, Ibn ʿUmar, Abū Bakr, Uthmān and countless other people.” AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ discusses and illustrates at considerable length the qualities looked for in narrators: *al-Kifāyah*, 16–17, 52–77; he goes on to note (p. 84) that “The scholars of the early generations accepted whatever has been narrated by women.”2 AL-ḤĀKĪM, *Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-hadīth*, 69, reporting from Abū Bakr Ahmad ibn Salmān the jurist, from Jaʿfar ibn Abī Uthmān al-Ṭayālīṣī, from Yahyā ibn Maʿīn.
that Wāʾik ibn al-Jarrāḥ (d. 197) was once asked to indicate his preference among three of them: (1) Hishām ibn Ūrwah from his father Ūrwah from Āʾishah; (2) Aflāḥ ibn Ḫumayd from al-Qāsim from Āʾishah; (3) Sufyān from Mansūr from Ibrāhīm from al-Aswād from Āʾishah. He said: ‘We do not consider anyone equal to the people of our city [Kufah]. Sufyān from Mansūr from Ibrāhīm from al-Aswād from Āʾishah is more beloved to me.’ His own reason for this choice is that the narrators were based in Kufah and so he would have first-hand assurance of their quality. Also, more particularly, al-Aswād was famous for being exactingly meticulous about wording; for example, he reports from Āʾishah that

God’s Messenger — ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam — when he prayed in the night would come to his wife, then he would lie down. She did not say ‘then he would sleep’. When the muḥaddith called [to prayer] he would jump up. She did not say, ‘he would stand’. Then he would pour [water] over himself. She did not say ‘he would bathe’.1

The experts have also praised Umm Salamah for the soundness and strength of the chains of narration from her. Al-Ḥakīm reports that Aḥmad ibn Ḫanbal (d. 241), Yahyā ibn Maʿīn and ʿAlī ibn al-Madini (d. 234) gathered with a group of experts of ḥadīth and discussed the best of all good chains. ‘One of them said: The best is Shuʿb from Qatādah from Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab from Āmir the brother of Umm Salamah from Umm Salamah.2

THE PUBLIC AUTHORITY OF ḤADĪTHS NARRATED BY WOMEN

As we have seen, the soundness of a ḥadīth was not in the least affected by whether a man narrated it or a woman. The importance of the question of the soundness of ḥadīths rests on the

1 AL-KHATĪB AL-BAGHDĀDI, al-Kīfayah, 174. However, Aḥmad ibn Saʿīd al-Dārīmī (d. 253), following his teachers, preferred the first of these chains (AL-KHATĪB AL-BAGHDĀDI, al-Jāmīʿ li-akhlāq al-rāwī wa ẓādāb al-sāmiʿ, ii. 299). 2 AL-HĀKIM, Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-hadīth, 68.
tendency of the Prophet's precepts and practice to become the foundation of legal rulings and social norms. On this question also, of the public authority of ḥadīths, the great imāms of the science, make no distinction on the basis of the narrator being a man or woman. Imām al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204, as reported by Rābiʿ ibn Sulaymān) says:

Someone asked me: Define for me the least by which a proof will be affirmed on the scholars so the individual report can be proven over them. I said: The report of a single person from a single person until it reaches the Prophet — salla l-lāh ʿalay hi wa-sallam — or someone after him [e.g. a Companion]. The report of single [narrators] will not be proof until it gathers some things: that the narrator is reliable in his religion, well-known for truthfulness in his speech, [that] he [is one who] understands what he narrates, [that] he knows what can change the meaning of the ḥadīth, or is among those who transmit the hadith with its exact wording just as he heard it and does not transmit the meaning only. For if he narrates the meaning only and he is not aware of what changes the meaning, he will not know perhaps [but that] he may change lawful to unlawful. But if he narrates with exact wording then there will be no fear of [his unknowingly] changing the meaning. He should know his ḥadīth by heart if he is narrating [it] from memory. And he should preserve his writings well if he is narrating from writing [in notes or a book]. And if he shares hadith [in common] with [others] who are known for being accurate, his hadith should corroborate their hadith. He should not be a muddallis — [i.e.] narrating from those whom he has [really] met what he has not [really] heard from them — and he should not be [one who ventures to go around] narrating from the Prophet — salla l-lāh ʿalay hi wa-sallam — what goes against the hadith of people [with an established reputation as] reliable.¹

We can illustrate the point with some examples which show that women's ḥadīths were accepted (or not) as the basis of legal rulings, following the normal methods, and not because the narrators happened to be women.

Imām Mālik (d. 179) narrates from Saʿd ibn Ishāq ibn Kaʿb ibn ʿUjarah, from his paternal aunt Zaynab bint Kaʿb ibn ʿUjarah

¹AL-KHATĪB AL-BAGHDĀDI, al-Kifāyah, 23–24.
that Furay'ah bint Mālik ibn Ṣinān, sister of Ābu Sa'īd al-Khudri, told her that she came to God’s Messenger for permission to return to her parents’ family home in the quarter of Banū Khudrah. She explained that her husband had gone out in search of his slaves who had run away, until they reached the side of Qādūm, where he caught up with them and they killed him:

So I asked God’s Messenger — salla l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam — to go to my family, because my husband did not leave for me any residence that he owned, and no [means with which to defray my] expenses. God’s Messenger — salla l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam — said: Yes. She said: I moved away until when I was [still] in the room or in the Mosque he called me [back] or asked someone to call me [back]. I came back. He asked: What did you say? I repeated to him the story of my husband’s murder. Then the Prophet said: Stay in your house until the waiting period (‘iddah) passes.

She said: I stayed there for the whole waiting period, four months and ten days.

She says: When ĔUthmān ibn ‘Affān was [the caliph] he called me and asked me about that. I told him. Then he followed it and judged accordingly.¹

Ŭthmān ibn ‘Affān, one of the four rightly-guided caliphs, ruled at a time when there were many male Companions. Yet he sought knowledge from a woman, she informed him and he judged accordingly. Had the report of a woman not been considered sufficient as a proof on which to base a ruling, he would not and could not have judged according to it. That she was a woman was not considered relevant. Similarly when a report was rejected as the basis for a ruling, the narrator’s being a woman was not a relevant factor. Imām al-Shawkānī (d. 1255) says: ‘It has not been narrated from any scholar that he rejected the report of a woman on the ground of her being female. There are plenty of sunnahs accepted by the ummah and they are [based on] the narration of a single female Companion. No-one

¹ABŪ DĀWŪD (d. 275), Sunan, Talāq, bāb fī l-mutwaffa ‘an-hā tantaqil.
²AL-SHAWKĀNĪ, Nayl al-awtār, viii. 22.
who has acquired a bit of knowledge of the Sunnah can deny this.  

This is well exemplified in the case of the hadith of Fātimah bint Qays. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī reports that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭīb would not act on her report 'though she was a Muslim and on the straight path because her report was opposed to the Qurān'. 'Umar said: We are not to leave the Book of our Lord and Sunnah of our Prophet – šalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam – for the word of a woman [when] we do not know [for certain] whether she preserved [the matter fully] or not.' Now 'Umar refused to give a ruling on the basis of Fātimah's hadith for the good reason that it contradicted the Qurān. Even so, though he (and others) might have wished that she would stop narrating this hadith, he did not try to prevent her from doing so. What happened with this hadith illustrates the respect accorded to women in the society of that time, the authority they enjoyed, and strong belief in the principle that neither men or women could be prevented from acquiring and transmitting their knowledge and understanding of the religion – not even if someone of the stature of 'Umar was opposed. So, despite 'Umar's refusal to act on it and, more importantly, despite the very strong argument against it (i.e. its apparent opposition to the Qurān), people continued to record it in their books, and to discuss it.

1 AL-KHATIB AL-BAGHDADI, al-Kifūyah, 83. See also AL-TIRMIDHI, Ġami‘, Ta‘lāq, bāb mā jā‘a fi l-muṭallaqaḥ thalāthan lā suknā la-hā wa-lā nafaqah ‘[The famous Kufan jurist Mughīrah] says: I mentioned the hadith of Fātimah to Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaī, who then said that 'Umar said: We will not leave the Book of God and the Sunnah of our Prophet – šalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam – for the hadith of a woman, [about which] we do not know if she remembered or forgot [something related to it].’

2 Among those who have included Fātimah’s hadith in their books are: MĀLIK, Muwattā, Ta‘lāq, bāb mā jā‘a fi nafaqat al-muṭallaqaḥ; MUSLIM, Saḥīḥ, Ta‘lāq, bāb al-muṭallaqaḥ thalāthan lā nafaqab la-hā; ABD DAWUD, Sunan, Ta‘lāq, bāb fi nafaqat al-mabtiṭah; AL-TIRMIDHI, Šāfī‘, Nikāḥ, bāb mā jā‘a fi an lā yakhuṭubu al-rajual ‘alā khitbah akihi-hi; bāb al-rukhsah fi khrurīj al-mabtiṭah min buyt-hā fi ‘iddati-hā; bāb nafaqat al-ba‘inah; IBN MĀJAH, Sunan, Ta‘lāq, bāb al-muṭallaqaḥ thalāthan bal la-hā suknā wa-
Indeed, respect for the hadith was such that, once accepted as *sahih* by the normal conventions, some scholars and jurists felt obliged to reconcile it somehow with the Qur'ān.

**The hadith of Fātimah bint Qays**

The meaning of Fātimah’s hadith is that a divorced woman has no right of accommodation and living expenses from her former husband during the *‘iddah*, the waiting period before the end of which she cannot re-marry. Fātimah bint Qays reports that her husband Abū ‘Amr ibn Ḥafṣ divorced her finally while away from home; he sent his agent to her with some barley to provide her expenses. She did not like this. He then said: ‘By God you do not have any right upon us.’ She came to God’s Messenger, and recounted the matter to him. ‘The Prophet — *salla l-lāhū wa-sallam* — said: Your expenses are not [an obligation] on him.’

ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd, Zayd ibn Thā-bit, ʿAʾishah and other jurists among the Companions held that a divorced woman has right of accommodation and expenses, whether the divorce is final or provisional, and whether she is pregnant or not. This is the view also of later scholars and jurists — Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Abū Hanīfah and his students, and the rest of the people of Kufah. Their view is based on the following verses of the Qur'ān (*al-Talāq*, 65. 1, 6):

**O Prophet!** When you [men] divorce women, divorce them for their *‘iddah*, and count their *‘iddah* [accurately] and be wary if God, your Lord Do not force them from their homes, nor should they leave [of their own accord], except in case of blatant indecency (fāḥishah). And those are the bounds of God. [...] You [the one divorcing his wife] do not know — it may be that God will later bring about some new affair [i.e. some reconciliation or eventual re-marriage]. [...] Lodge them [divorced wives] where you dwell, according to your means, and do not be hurtful to

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*nafaqah; IBN HANBAL, Musnad, Musnad al-nisāʾ; IBN AḤBAYSH, Musannaf, Ṭalāq, bāb man qāla idhā talāqa-ha thalātha-layla la-hā nafaqah; Saʿīd ibn Maḥṣūr, Sunan, bāb mā jāʾa fi l-munākhabah; AL-TAHĀWĪ, in Sharḥ Maʿānī al-āthār, iii. 64–73; and many others with different chains of narrations.*
them so that you constrain them [forcing them to leave]. And if they are pregnant, then spend on them till they deliver their burdens. Then if they breast-feed the children for you, give them their due payment, and consult each other in the normal way (bi-l-ma‘rif). [...] 

– with further support from the hadith mentioned earlier of Furay'ah bint Mālik, in which she is required to remain in her former husband’s home during her ’iddah.

Some Companions criticized Fātimah for narrating the hadith. Ā’ishah did so,¹ and explained that the ruling for Fātimah was because of some danger for her in staying at her ex-husband’s home, with her in-laws.² Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab says: ‘Fātimah was moved from her house because of her quarrelling with her in-laws.’³ But she continued narrating the hadith, which left an impact on later jurisprudence. Some jurists tried to make it fit with the Qur’ān. They said that the verse of the Qur’ān is referring to a woman divorced provisionally, while Fātimah’s hadith is about a woman divorced finally. That is the opinion of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Ḥārīm b. Ṣa‘d b. Ṣa‘d, Ahmad b. Ḥanbal and Iṣḥāq b. Rāhwāyih.⁴ Others held that the divorcee has the right of accommodation by the Qur’ānic verse, but by Fātimah’s hadith not the right of maintenance. That is the opinion of Mālik ibn Anas, Layth ibn Sa‘d and al-Shāfī. Other jurists derived other, different rulings from the hadith of Fātimah. For a summary and more references see Table 1.

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¹ al-Qāsim narrated from Ā’ishah: ‘What is it with Fātimah? Does she not fear God in narrating this hadith?’ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, Ṭalāq, bāb man ankara dhālika ʿalā Fātimah; MUSLIM, Sahīh, Ṭalāq, bāb al-muṭallaqa thalāthan lā nafaqah la-hā. See also AL-TĀHAWĪ, Sharḥ Ma‘ānī al-‘āthār, iii. 68. ² ABO DAWUD, Sunan, Ṭalāq, bāb man ankara dhālika ʿalā Fātimah. ³ Ibid; AL-BAYHAQĪ, Sunan, Nafaqah, bāb al-maḥsūmah lā nafaqah la-hā. ⁴ AL-TIRMIDHĪ, Jami’, Ṭalāq, bāb ma ḍa‘a fi l-muṭallaqaq thalāthan la suknā la-hā wa-lā nafaqah. Hushaym narrates from Ismā‘īl ibn Abī Khalīd (‘Awn al-ma‘būd commenting on the hadith in Sunan Abī Dāwūd) that Sha‘bī said about ʿUmar’s saying he was uncertain whether Fātimah ‘remembered or forgot’ some bit of wording or of context relevant to understanding the matter: ‘A woman of Quraysh, known for her intelligence and wisdom, will forget a verdict that goes against her [interests]?!’.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>was narrated by</th>
<th>hadrīh compilations recorded in [b. = bāb]</th>
<th>juristic positions held by</th>
<th>major works recording the controversy</th>
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Table 1. The right to disagree: different juristic responses to the hadrīh of Fātimah bint Qays that an ex-husband is not obliged to provide expenses and accommodation for the divorced wife during the ʿiddah ([waiting period])
Another example: a hadith from 'Aīshah

This second example concerns a legal effect of breast-feeding. A wet-nurse is prohibited in marriage to the one who has been breast-fed by her, just as his natural mother would be, which in turn means that the restrictions on how the two meet are relaxed. 'Aīshah narrated that Sālim, the slave of Abū Ḥudhayfah, lived with him in his house. Abū Ḥudhayfah’s wife, the daughter of Suhayl, came to the Prophet and said: ‘Sālim has attained manhood and he enters in our house and I feel that my husband is not at ease about this. The Prophet — sallallahu ʿalayhi wa-sallam — said to her: Give your milk to Sālim, then you will become unlawful for him and then Abū Ḥudhayfah will be at ease.’ The daughter of Suhayl, reports that she did so and that her husband was then at ease about his being in the house.¹

On the basis of this hadith 'Aīshah held that if a woman gave her milk to an adult, it would then be as if she had been his wet-nurse, with the legal effect as explained above. She was opposed by others among the Companions, including other wives of the Prophet, and by the imāms of the later generations — Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik, al-Shāfi‘ī, Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal and others — because of the Qur’ānic verse (al-Baqarah, 2. 233):

*The mothers shall breast-feed their children for two whole years, [that is] for those [parents] who desire to complete the breast-feeding.*

Those who opposed 'Aīshah also relied on a number of hadiths. For example, the Prophet’s saying: ‘Breast-feeding is out of hunger.’² This means that only that is to be considered breast-feeding which satisfies hunger, namely in early infancy before the child turns to solid foods. When the child reaches the age when milk does not satisfy his hunger, then foster-mother relationship is not established with that child, and the

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legal effects of that relationship do not apply. Ibn Mas‘ūd has narrated something similar. Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr has narrated from the Prophet: ‘There is no breast-feeding but what enters into the intestines.’ Fātimah bint al-Mundhir has narrated from Umm Salamah that the Prophet said: ‘Only that breast-feeding forbids [marriage] which becomes a part of the intestines and happens before the age of weaning.’ After citing that hadith, al-Tirmidhī says:

Most scholars from among the Companions of the Prophet – ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam – and others hold the opinion that breast-feeding only forbids [marriage] if it is within two years [after birth] and what is after the full two years it does not forbid anything.

Abū Ubaydah ibn ‘Abdillāh ibn Zam‘ah narrated that his mother Zaynab bint Abī Salamah told him that her mother Umm Salamah, the wife of the Prophet – ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam – used to say: All wives of the Prophet – ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam – refused to allow anyone to enter upon them by that breast-feeding [which ʿA’ishah allowed] and they said to ʿA’ishah: That was a permission particular to the wife of Abū Hudhayfah, and no one can enter upon us by such breast-feeding and see us.

Despite the opposition to it, ʿA’ishah continued to narrate the hadith and be guided by it, and the jurists did not see any harm in citing it. Ibn Abī Mulaykah has reported that Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr told that hadith of ʿA’ishah to him. He adds: ‘I endured one year or about one year not narrating this hadith to anyone and I was afraid of [doing so]. Then I met Qāsim and I said to him: You narrated to me a hadith which I could not [dare to] narrate to anyone. Qāsim said: What is that? I told him. He said: You can narrate it from me that ʿA’ishah narrated it to me.’

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1 See AL-BAGHAWĪ (d. 494) Sharḥ al-Sunnah, v. 65. 2 ABŪ DĀWŪD, Sunan, Nikāh, bāb fi rādā‘at al-kabīr. 3 IBN MAJAH, Sunan, Nikāh, bāb lā rādā‘ah ba‘dā fisal. 4 AL-TIRMIDHĪ, Jāmi‘, Rada‘, bāb ma‘ dhikirā anna l-rada‘ah lā tnūharrim illā fī l-sīghar dūn al-hawlayn. 5 MUSLIM, Sahīh, Rada‘, bāb rada‘at al-kabīr. 6 Ibid.
Three important points can be drawn from the foregoing discussion: (1) In the time of the Companions the desire to understand and implement the *din* was stronger than anything else, before there was any established division by doctrine, sect or political faction. The people did not suffer from loyalties competing with loyalty to Qurʾān and Sunnah, and so they were able to differ without dividing, to disagree on particular matters without loss of mutual respect and solidarity.

(2) Where there was discussion of how to understand and implement *ḥadīth* s, the weight given to someone’s knowledge or understanding was not a function of the individual’s being a man or woman. If a broad consensus accrued around one understanding rather than another, it was not on account of so-called ‘patriarchal attitudes’. The historical evidence will not sustain the view that the learned Companions or their Successors or the jurists and scholars who were followed (i.e. imāms) after them interpreted the guidance of Qurʾān and Sunnah, consciously or unconsciously, to serve vested interests of political, economic or gender privilege.

(3) The material, on the basis of which decisions were taken and directions given about how to live by the guidance, was in the public domain: people were required to bring it and keep it in public. The seniority of some Companions, the positions of power some had risen to, the fact that some had been specially close to the Prophet by relationship of birth or marriage, did not enable them to prevent the circulation of material or of interpretations that they opposed. The greater authority some enjoyed was not mysterious or charismatic; it derived from strictly known and demonstrable qualities: breadth and depth of knowledge, intelligence and understanding, combined with firm belief, Godwariness and righteousness. From the examples given thus far, in the text or the notes, it should be clear that Muslim scholars took great pains to record as much as they could of this material, how it passed from whom to whom, who agreed with one interpretation or another, and who disagreed and why. In the next chapters we shall see how the women of the ummah were included in this scholarly activity.
Chapter 2

Women as seekers and students of ḥadīth

We have seen that the Law places no formal impediment in the way of women acquiring the knowledge to understand and practise Islam. Rather, it is a duty for them to do so, just as it is for the men. But a law, whether it permits or forbids, while it has educative force, does not suffice by itself to enable the intended outcome. Also needed, alongside the law, is a wider societal effort to establish an ethos that welcomes and enables what the law intends. In the first part of this chapter I review how women were urged, from the outset of Islam, to learn the religion, and how that example was sustained in the period that followed, by the caliphs and other rulers, by the ulema and the men and women who enjoyed authority. It was sustained also by the dedication of the women themselves to the task, to travelling in the path of knowledge, to overcoming shyness. In the second part I set out the ways in which women acquired the necessary skills to preserve ‘the knowledge’, by committing ḥadīth to memory, then to writing.

THE DISPOSITION TO TEACH WOMEN

The duty to teach

The Prophet’s primary role was not as law-giver or ruler but as a teacher of the din – law and rule were as means to that end:

He it is Who has sent among the unscriptured (ummīyyūn) a Messenger from among them, reciting to them His verses, purifying them, and teaching them the Scripture (kitāb) and the Wisdom (hikmah). And before [that] they had certainly been in manifest error. (al-Jumū’ah, 62. 2)
The duty of embodying Islam as a way of life entailed life-long sacrifice for the Messenger himself and for his household. The Qur'an alludes delicately (al-Ahzāb, 33. 28–29) to the occasion when, within that household, there was ill-feeling, perhaps reluctance to go on enduring hardship, perhaps desire for recompense in the form of present advantage or privilege. So 'the choice' was put to the wives of the Prophet – either him with hardship and the supreme recompense hereafter, or parting from him with some goods of this world. In the narration of Jābir, the Prophet first put 'the choice' to Ā'ishah, advising her not to decide hastily but to take counsel with her parent:

She said: Will I consult my parent about you, O Messenger of God? Rather, I choose God, His Messenger and the hereafter, and I ask you not to inform any of your wives about what I have said. The Prophet – salla l-lāhu 'alayhi wa-sallam – said: No-one among them will ask me but I will tell her. God has not sent me as mu'ānnit [who makes it hard for people] or as muta'amit [who lets others fall into error]. Rather, He has sent me to teach [people] and to make [the straight way] easy [for them].

We do not know what Ā'ishah had in mind in asking what she did; but we do know his motive for refusing her because he states it himself – he was bound by his primary duty as teacher to communicate to people whatever would help them to choose the right path.

**Educating the children**

The first stage of teaching is the upbringing of children. An essential condition of doing that well is to respect and love the children, girls as well as boys. It required some effort to change attitudes that had become deeply ingrained. God's Messenger said: 'God has disliked three things from you: being disobedient to mothers, burying [infant] girls alive, and the habit of taking and not giving.'  

1 MUSLIM, Sahīh, TaLāq, bāb bayān anna takhyir imra'ati-hi la yakūn talāqan illā ba'd al-nīyyah.  ĀL-TABARĀNĪ, cited in AL-HAYTHAMI (d. 807), Majma' al-zawā'id, viii. 270.
WOMEN AS STUDENTS OF HADITH 37

of the second caliph, heard a man wishing his daughters dead, perhaps because he was worried about the economic burden. Ibn Umar was angered and said: 'Is it you who provide their provision?'1 Uqbah ibn 'Amir (d. ca. 60) narrates that the Messenger of God said: 'Do not be averse to daughters. For they are precious treasures that comfort your heart.'2 Aishah narrates that he said: 'Whoever is tested with anything of these girls— they will be his screen from the Fire.'3 Anas ibn Malik narrates that the Messenger said: 'Whoever brings up two girls until they become adult, he and I will come close to one other like this' and he brought his fingers together to indicate closeness.4 Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (d. 63) narrates that he said: 'Whoever has three daughters or three sisters or two daughters or two sisters and then he is good company for them and is wary of God in regard to them, he will have paradise.'5 The Prophet's teaching was remembered by his community: Sahl ibn 'Al'am, son of the great muhaddith and jurist said: 'Whenever my father Ahmad ibn Hanbal had a daughter born to him, he would say: The prophets, upon them be peace, were the fathers of daughters. And he would say: About the daughters there has come [in the hadiths] the reward that is known.'6

The Sunnah is particular about treating sons and daughters equally. Al-Bazzar (d. 292) has cited the hadith from Anas ibn Malik that there was with the Prophet a man whose son came to him: the man kissed the boy and sat him on his lap. Then his daughter came and he sat her in front of him. 'God's Messenger— salla Allahu 'alaihi wa-sallam— said to the man: Why did you not treat them equally?'7

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1 AL-BUKHARl, al-Adab al-musnad, i. 158. 2 AL-HAYTHAMI, Majma al-zawawi'd, viii. 286. 3 AL-BUKHARl, Sahih, Zakah, baba ittaqâ l-nâr, MUSLIM, Sahih, Birr, bab sadd al-ihssân alâ l-banât. 4 MUSLIM, Sahih, Birr, bab sadd al-ihssân alâ l-banât. 5 AL-TIRMIDHI, Jama', Birr, bab mâ jâ'a fi l-nafaqah 'alâ l-banât wa-l-akhwât. 6 Muhammed Nûr ibn 'Abîd al-Ha'îfîz SUWAYD, Manhaj al-tarhibiyah al-nabawiyah li-l-tifîl, 324. 7 AL-HAYTHAMI, Majma al-zawawi'd, viii. 286–87.
The Prophet emphasized the need to fix in the hearts of the children, from as early an age as possible, a love for the din. He himself did this by engaging with them, playing with them, and involving them in his practice of it. The hadiths that record his affection for Hasan and Husayn, his grandsons, when they were infants, and how he would keep them by him even while doing the prayer, are widely known. Here it is fitting that we recall the hadiths that show the same care and concern for girls.

Khālid ibn Saʿīd narrates from his father, from Umm Khālid bint Khālid ibn Saʿīd, who had lived for a time in Abyssinia, that she said: ‘I came to God’s Messenger – salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam – with my father. I was wearing a yellow dress. The Messenger of God said: Sanah, sanah, which in the tongue of the Abyssinians meant, Nice, nice. She says: Then I started playing with the seal of prophethood on his shoulder. My father rebuked me [for that. But] the Messenger of God said: Let her be. Then he prayed for her dress to last a long time. It did last for a long time.’

Abū Qatādah (d. 54) narrates how they were sitting before the door of the Prophet, salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam, when he came out carrying his granddaughter, Umamah bint Abī l-ʿĀṣ ibn al-Rabiʿ, the daughter of his daughter Zaynab. She was then a little child. The Prophet led the prayer keeping her on his shoulder – he would set her on the ground when bowing, then put her back on his shoulder as he got up: ‘He went on doing this until he finished his prayer.’

The Prophet did not forbid women from bringing their children and nursing babies to the mosques. Rather, their being there was expected and he would shorten his prayer out of consideration for the children and for their mothers’ need to attend them. Thabit al-Bunānī narrates from Anas ibn Mālik that he said: ‘The Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa-

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1 Al-Bukhārī, Sahīh, Adab, bāb man taraka sabīyyata ghayri-hi hattā talʿaḥa bi-hi aw gabbala-hā aw maṣaḥa-hā. 2 Ibn Saʿīd (d. 230), al-Tabaqāt al-kubrā, viii. 39.
women as students of hadith

salām — would hear the cry of a child with his mother during the prayer. Then he would recite the light sūrah[s] — or [the narrator] said the short sūrah[s].\textsuperscript{31} Qatādah (d. 118) narrated, also from Anas, that he said: ‘The Messenger of God — salātullāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam — said: I enter upon the prayer meaning to make it long then I hear the crying of a baby and I lighten the prayer for [the sake of] the child’s mother’s yearning [to attend to the baby].’\textsuperscript{31}

Keeping children on the Sunnah

Parents used to train their children from an early age to adhere to the sunnahs of the Prophet. Khālid ibn Dhakwān (tābi‘ī) narrated from Rubayyī\textsuperscript{3} bint Mu‘awwidh (d. ca. 70) that she said: ‘The Prophet — salātullāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam — sent his messenger on the morning of ‘Ashūrā to the houses of the Anṣār saying: Whoever started [the day] not fasting, he should complete the day [not fasting], and whoever started [the day] fasting he should fast. She says: Then after that we used to fast that day and make our children fast that day, and make woollen toys so when any of them cried for food, we would give him [the toys]; so they would be busy with them until the time of breaking the fast.’\textsuperscript{2} Fasting on the day of ‘Ashūrā is not compulsory, but the believers were keen to encourage their children to grow in piety. As for fasting in Ramāḍān, children used to do it regularly. Umar said to someone who was not fasting in Ramāḍān: ‘Woe to you! even our children are fasting.’\textsuperscript{2}

The Prophet said: ‘That the father teaches good manners (yu‘addib) to his child is surely better for him than giving charity of a sāq in the path of God.’\textsuperscript{3}

The reason for disciplining children is to correct them, not to hurt. The aim, that the child acquire the authority to command him or herself to do what is right, cannot be realized if

\textsuperscript{1}MUSLIM, Sahih, Salah, bāb amr al-a‘immah bi-takhlīf al-salāb fi tamām.
\textsuperscript{2}AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahih, Sawm, bāb sawm al-sibyān. \textsuperscript{3}AL-TIRMIDHĪ, Jāmi‘, al-Birr wa-l-sīlah, bāb mā já‘a fi adab al-walad.
parents use words or blows in an uncontrolled way, to hurt the child or to relieve anger and frustration at being thwarted. The great jurist al-Kasānī (d. 587) says: 'The child is to be rebuked (ażzara) to teach [him] manners, not to punish; because it is in the capacity of teaching manners [that it has been permitted]. Do you not see what is narrated from the Prophet – salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam – that he said: Command your children to pray when they are seven, and strike them for that when they are ten.1

Encouraging girls and women to attend gatherings

The Prophet commanded girls and adult women, even those in a state of impurity, to attend those occasions of public assembly where knowledge of the religion would be presented. He did not recognize as an excuse that some poor women did not have a jilbāb (loose over-garment) to put on when going out. Umm ʿAtiyah al-Anṣāriyyah narrates:

The Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam – commanded us to bring them out on [ID] al-fitr and [ID] al-adhā – adult girls, adolescents, and those kept secluded (ḥuyyad dhawat al-khudur). As for those in impurity, they were to leave the prayer but attend the good and the supplication of the Muslims. I said: O Messenger of God, if someone does not have jilbāb? He said: Then her sister will lend her jilbāb to her.2

ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās, the Prophet’s cousin, narrates that, the Prophet used to command his wives and daughters to go out to attend both ʿĪds.3 They already had ample opportunity to learn from him directly; the reason he did this was to establish

1 AL-KASĀNĪ (d. 587), Badāʾiʿ al-ṣanāʾiʿ, vii. 63. 2 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, ʿabīḥ, Ḥayd, bāb shuhūd al-ḥāʾid al-ʿidayn wa daʿwat al-muslimīn. AL-BAGHAWĪ says about this hadith (Sharh al-sunnah, ii. 611): ‘It holds evidence that a woman during her monthly period should not abandon remembrance of God, places of good, and assemblies of knowledge.’ 3 IBN MAJĀH, Sunan, Abwāb iqāmat al-ṣalāh, bāb mā jāʾa fī khurūj al-nisāʿ fī l-ʿidayn.
the *sunnah* by implementing it in his own household – that was his customary way of teaching his community.

**The duty to answer the women’s questions**

It is obligatory for any teacher who follows the example of God’s Messenger that he listen attentively to the questions put to him and answer them in a way that meets the questioner’s need. Anas ibn Mālik narrates that a woman with some mental disability wanted to put some matter to the Prophet but did not want anyone else to know of it. Anas reports that the Prophet said to her: ‘O mother of so-and-so, suggest some street that you like so that I can respond to your need there.’ So he answered her question in a public space, yet privately.\(^1\) Al-Nawawī (d. 676) comments:

This hadith informs [us] of the humility of the Prophet – *salla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa-sallam* – that he would stand even with a weak-minded woman to [hear and] answer her question and solve her problem in privacy. That [way that he demonstrated] is not the forbidden [kind of] privacy with a woman stranger because this was in a thoroughfare of the people where they could see him and her, but could not hear her speaking. For her question was about a matter such as could not be revealed.\(^2\)

Generally both men and women attended the Prophet’s teaching in the mosque and other places. That is why we have many *ḥadīths* which record, through the narration of both men and women, the same *sunnahs*. However, on the occasions when men were present, the women were shy to raise matters that concerned them particularly. For such matters, a few women were able to call upon him at his house. To satisfy those who were thus left out, he was asked to set aside a day specifically for them. Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī says: ‘The women asked the Prophet

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1. *MUSLIM*, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Fadā’il*, bāb *qurb al-nabī 'alay-hi l-salām min al-nās wa tabarruki-him bi-hi.*
2. *AL-NAWAWĪ*, *Sharḥ al-Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (commenting *in loco* on the *ḥadīth* cited in the preceding note).
— *salla l-lāhu ālayhi wa-sallam* — to make a specific day for them. Then the Prophet promised them a day on which he met them and then preached to and instructed them.³

Sometimes the Prophet would teach using analogy so that the listener could grasp the reasoning supporting the ruling. For example, Ibn Ā'Abbās has narrated that a woman from the tribe of Juhaynah came to the Prophet and said:

My mother vowed to God to do ḥajj, but she was not able to do ḥajj before she died. Should I do ḥajj on her behalf? The Prophet — *salla l-lāhu ālayhi wa-sallam* — said: Yes. Consider, if your mother had a debt, would you not pay it back? So pay the debt to God. A debt to God deserves the most to be paid.¹

About certain matters, people are shy of being explicit. The Prophet would answer using delicate hints that an alert, intelligent listener could understand. It is narrated from Ā'ishah that Asmā bint Shakal asked about the bathing at the end of the menstrual period. He said:

The woman should take water and leaves of the lotus tree and clean nicely, then pour water over her head, rubbing vigorously so that she reaches to the roots of her hair. Then she should pour water over herself. Then she should take a piece of cloth perfumed with musk and clean with it. Asmā asked: How will she clean with it? The Prophet — *salla l-lāhu ālayhi wa-sallam* — said: *Subḥān al-lāh!*² You will clean with it. Then Ā'ishah said to her in a subdued voice: Follow the traces of blood.³

The practice of those who followed

With the ending of prophethood, the learned among the community, took up the duty of teaching ‘the Book and the Wisdom’ because obedience to God cannot be well established without knowledge. The scholars urged the rulers to specify days for the teaching of women on the basis of what has been narrated from Ibn Jurayj, from 'Ata that Jābir ibn ‘Abdillāh said: ‘The Prophet — salla l-lāhu 'alayhi wa-sallam — stood up on the day of 'Īd al-fitr and did the prayer. He began with the prayer, then gave the khutbah. When he finished, he came down, then [came] to the women where, while leaning on the hand of Bilāl, he [preached to them and] reminded them.’ Ibn Jurayj asked 'Ata: ‘Do you think it is incumbent on the imām that he [preach to and] remind the women? ‘Ata’ said: ‘Surely it is incumbent on them. And why do not they do that?’ He meant that it is not something special for the Prophet.

Because of the concern among conscientious Muslims to follow the Sunnah, people generally concerned themselves to educate women in it. So the women carried and transmitted knowledge, as the men did, and among them were many who, being guided themselves, were able to guide others, to open the ways to good, and close the doors to evil. Knowledge is among the very best of the acts of obedience; the most learned scholar, Umm al-Darda’ (d. 81) said: ‘I have sought worship in everything. I did not find anything more relieving to me than sitting with scholars and exchanging [knowledge] with them.’

After explaining in detail what is incumbent on guardians regarding the education of dependants, Ibn al-Jahj (d. 737) said: ‘The scholar should free himself to teach these commands (akām) to the elders and the young, male and female. God says [and then he cites the whole of the verse, cited above pp. 4–5 (al-Ahzāb, 33. 35): The muslim men and muslim women... God has prepared for them

forgiveness and a great reward]. The Prophet, *sallalla hu 'alayhi wa-sallam*, said: The women are pairs of the men. So husband and wife and male and female slave are equal in respect of their good qualities. The people of the early generation (*salaf*) were firm on this path. You will find that their children and their male and female slaves in most of their matters share in all these virtues [listed in the verse].

The biographical sources are full of examples of women whose fathers took care to teach them *hadith* and other subjects. The Companions and, after them, the Successors were most particular in this. Among the latter, for example, Sa`id ibn al-Musayyab taught all his *hadiths* to his daughter; in the next generation, Mālik ibn Anas taught his daughter the whole of his *Muwaffāj*. Later still, Abū Ḥanīfah, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and indeed some scholars in every generation, attended with care to the education of their children. A few examples:

Under the care of her father, the qādī Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Kāmil ibn Khalaf ibn Shajarāh al-Baghdādī (d. 350), student of the famous historian and Qur'ān commentator, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310), the *muḥaddithah* Amat al-Sālam, Umm al-Fāṭīm (d. 390) heard *hadiths* from Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bāshānī and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥumayd ibn al-Rabī' (both early 4th c.). Al-ʻAtīqī (d. 441) confirms this and notes: ‘Her hearing *hadith* is recorded in her father’s handwriting.’

Shaykh al-ʻIṣlām Abū l-ʻAbbās Aḥmad ibn ʻAbdillāh al-Maghribī al-Fāsī (d. 560), known as Ibn al-Ḥuṭayfah, taught his daughter the seven recitations of the Qur‘ān, the *Sahih* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim and other books of *hadith*. She wrote down a great number of *hadiths* and studied extensively with her father, yet it is recorded that somehow he never got to see her. When Shujā’, one of the narrators was asked about this, he explained that it began by chance while she was a baby: he would be busy teaching until sunset by which time she would be asleep. This

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somehow carried on until she had grown up, married and gone to her own house. Imam al-Dhahabi comments on this severely: ‘There is no praise in something like this; rather the Sunnah is the opposite of it. For the master of mankind – salla l-lâhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam – used to carry his granddaughter Umâmah, while he did the prayer.’

Another example is what has come in the preface of Kitâb al-Mu‘allimin of Ibn Sa‘înun (d. 256): ‘The pious qâdi Ísâ ibn Miskîn used to teach his daughters and granddaughters. Qâdi ‘Iyyâd [d. 544] says: ‘After the ‘asr prayer he would call his two daughters and the daughters of his brother to teach them the Qur’ân and the knowledge. The same was done before him by Asad ibn al-Furat, the conqueror of Sicily, with his daughter Ísmâ’ who attained a high degree in knowledge.’

Some scholars ensured that their daughters’ interest in Hadîth and other branches of knowledge would continue by marrying them to other scholars. For example Shaykh al-Qurra, Abu Dâwûd Sulaymân ibn Abî l-Qâsim al-Andalusi (d. 496) first taught his daughter himself, then took her to his teachers from whom she heard their Hadîths directly. When she completed her education, he married her to one of his more knowledgeable students. Ibn al-Abbâr (d. 658) says:

She narrated from her father a lot and she learnt from some of her father’s teachers. [..] And she is the one whose father married her to Ahmad ibn Mu‘ammad, a youth who read [studied] with him. [This Ahmad] was virtuous and poor, and [the Shaykh] was pleased with his manners and said to him once: Would you like that I marry my daughter to you? The young person became shy and mentioned to him an excuse that did not allow him to marry. The Shaykh married her to him, gave her jihâz [marriage portion] and took her to him.

Imâm ‘Alâ’ al-Dîn al-Samarqandi (d. 539), author of Tuhfat al-fuqahâ and other books, had a daughter famed for her beauty

and sought after by princes and the wealthy. Her father refused such offers because she was a scholar, one who had memorized his *Tuhfat al-fuqahā*. One particular student stayed with him until he became an expert in both the principles and practical details of the Law, and then wrote *Badāʾiʿ al-ṣanāʾiʿ*, a commentary on his shaykh's *Tuhfat al-fuqahā*. The latter was so pleased with the work that he married his daughter to this student, accepting the commentary as dowry. The student, who became a very famous jurist in his own right, was al-Kāsānī.1

The sources also record the scholars' attentiveness to the education of their wives. Ibn al-Ḥājj says: 'In our time there was Sīdī Abū Muḥammad. His wife read the whole Qurān with him and memorized it. Similarly she read with him the *Risālah* of Shaykh Abū Muḥammad ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (d. 386) and half of the *Muwattā* of Imām Mālik.2 Another example is the wife of Ḥāfīz Ibn Ḥajar, Uns bint Ḥarb al-Kārim ibn Ahmad al-Kārimī al-Lakhamī. Ibn Ḥajar enabled her to hear the *Musalāsal bi-l-awwalīyyah* of his own shaykh, the great muhaddith Ḥāfīz al-Ḥrāqī (d. 806); also the *Musalāsal bi-l-awwalīyyah* of Sharaf al-Dīn ibn al-Kuwayk (d. 821). Then he got *ijāzahs* for her in Syria in Dhū l-Qaʿda 798, in Mīnā in Safar 800 and again in Rabiʿ al-Akhir 800, and later on.3

THE WOMEN'S OWN EFFORTS

We have recounted some of the efforts of men to enable the teaching of women in order to illustrate how they followed the Sunnah in this regard. However, that does not mean that the women's interest in ḥadith was prompted only by the interest of their guardians or husbands. Rather, for a great number of women interest in knowledge of the din was deeply personal, without anybody prompting them or paving the way for them.

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Thābit has narrated from Anas that Abū Bakr called ʿUmar to go with him to visit Umm Ayman since the Prophet, ṣallā ʾl-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam, used to visit her. They found her crying, and asked her why, reminding her that whatever is with God is better for His Messenger. She said: I am not crying because I did not know that what is with God is better for His Messenger. Rather, I am crying because the revelation from heaven has been cut off. [Saying that as she did] she made them weep also.¹

During the Prophet's lifetime women were anxious not to miss any opportunity to learn from him. ʿAbdallāh ibn Ḥanbal has narrated from ʿAbdullāh ibn Rāfīq that he said:

Umm Salamah narrated that while she was combing her hair, she heard the Prophet – ṣallā ʾl-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam – saying on the pulpit: O people. She said to her hairdresser: Wrap my hair. She said: May I be sacrificed for you, he is only saying, ‘O people’. Umm Salamah said: I said to her: Woe to you! Are we not from the people? Then she wrapped her hair and stood in a place in her room from where she could hear the Prophet, ṣallā ʾl-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam. Umm Salamah said: Then I heard him saying: O people, while I am at the Ḥawd on the Day of Judgement you will be brought in groups. Then some of you will be taken into other ways. So I will call to you: Come along the way to me. Then a caller from behind me will cry out to me: Leave them, they changed after you. So I will say: Keep away, keep away.²

Fātīmah bint Qays (mentioned in the previous chapter), the sister of ʿAlī ibn Qays, was among the early Emigrants. Her husband was killed in the first jihād. Soon after her waiting period had ended she heard the call to prayer and went to the mosque and prayed there. She says: ‘I was in the row of the women. When the Messenger of God – ṣallā ʾl-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam – finished his prayer, he sat on the pulpit and he was smiling. Then he said: Let everyone remain in his place. Then he asked: Do you know why I have gathered you? They said: God and His Messenger know best. He said: By God, I have

¹MUSLIM, Sahih, Fadāʾil, bāb fī fadāʾil Umm Ayman, raʾdī Allāhu ʿan-hā. ²Ibid., bāb ihtibāt ḥawd nabiyyi-nā ṣallā ʾl-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam wa sīfāti-hi.
not gathered you for [any] thing you desire or for any thing that you fear. Rather, I have gathered you because Tamīm al-Dārī, who was a Christian, came, pledged allegiance and embraced Islam, and told me a story which confirms what I have been telling you about Anti-Christ.' Then Fāṭimah narrated the whole long story of Tamīm al-Dārī.\(^1\) Her dedication to learning can be gauged from the fact that, despite her recent bereavement, she hastened to the mosque when she learned that there was to be a sermon after it, then committed to memory the very long, detailed hadith subsequently recorded in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and other compilations, and confirmed in almost every detail by other narrators (see below, p. 188).

What the women asked about

We have noted that, during the Prophet’s lifetime, the women attended assemblies where men were present, and to have their particular matters dealt with they requested that a day be set aside exclusively for them. The Prophet indeed encouraged his Companions to ask him about whatever was concerning them and about any need relating to the duties and laws of the dīn. Jābīr has narrated that the Prophet said: ‘The cure of ignorance is asking.’\(^2\) He meant that for the ailment of ignorance there is no remedy other than asking and finding out. Also, God says in the Qur’ān (al-Nāḥl, 16. 43): ‘Then ask the people of remembrance if you do not know.’

The books of ḥadīth record many of the questions put by women. Some examples of that we have already seen. A few more will serve to demonstrate the range of matters that the women were concerned about:

\(^1\) MUSLIM, Ṣaḥīḥ, Fī ṭamīn wa ashrāṭ al-Sā‘āb, bāb khurā‘ī al-Dajjāl. \(^2\) AḤU D расположен, Ṭaḥārah, bāb fi l-majrūḥ yata‘ammam. \(^3\) MUSLIM, Ṣaḥīḥ, Fī ṭamīn wa ashrāṭ al-Sā‘āb, bāb al-jayṣ al-ladhi ya‘ummu al-bayt.
asked: ‘What about one who was forced’ [who did not choose to be in that army]?’ The Prophet said: ‘He will be sunk with them. Then they will be raised according to their intentions.’

Sa’id ibn al-Musayyab narrates from Khawlah bint Ḥakīm that she asked about whether the woman sees in her dream what the man sees. The Prophet, affirming it implicitly, explained to her that bathing becomes compulsory for the woman as for the man if, as a result of the dream, there is some emission.

Fāṭimah bint Abī Ḥubaysh wanted to know if, when after her regular monthly period some bleeding continued, she should leave the prayer. The Prophet distinguished regular menstrual bleeding, the duration of which varies between individuals and which prohibits from prayer, from bleeding from a vein, which must be washed away and does not affect the duty to pray.

Mujāhid (d. ca. 100) has narrated from Asmā’ bint ‘Umayr the hadith about the wedding of ʿAʾisha when there was only a bowl of milk for guests. When ʿAʾisha offered some to her guests they said they did not desire any. The Prophet said: ‘Do not combine a lie with hunger. Then [Asmā’] said: O Messenger of God, if one of us says about something that she desires, “I do not desire”, will it be counted as a lie? The Prophet said: The lie is written as a lie and the small lie is written as a small lie.

Zaynab bint Abī Salamah narrates from her mother Umm Salamah that she said: ‘I said: O Messenger of God, is there reward for me in spending on the children of Abū Salamah [my husband]. I can not leave them like that – they are my children as well. The Prophet – salla Allāhu ʿalaihi wa-sallam – said: Yes, there is a reward for you in what you spend on them.’

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About shyness in the way of learning

As we have just seen in the examples of the kinds of questions they asked, the women did not allow shyness to prevent them from seeking the knowledge that would strengthen their faith and practice and prepare them for the hereafter. Mujahid said: ‘The shy one (mustahyi) and the haughty one (mustakbir) cannot attain to knowledge.’

Hafiz Ibn Hajar has commented on that: ‘Shyness [hayy], shame] is a part of the faith. And that is the lawful [kind] that happens as respect and reverence for elders and great people, and it is praiseworthy. As for that shyness which leads to abandoning a legal matter – that is a rebuked and not a lawful shyness; rather, it is timidity and lowness, and that is what Mujahid means when he said: the shy one cannot attain knowledge.’

Thus the women Companions established the example for those after them of determined seeking after knowledge. They did not shy from asking even about what women feel shy to hear mentioned in front of men. Umm Salamah narrates that Umm Sulaym came to the Prophet and said: ‘O Messenger of God – salla l-lâhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam – God is not shy of saying the truth. Is a bath compulsory on a woman when she has a wet dream? The Prophet – salla l-lâhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam – said: [Yes.] When she sees the emission. Umm Salamah covered her face and said: O Messenger of God – salla l-lâhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam – do women have wet dreams? The Prophet – salla l-lâhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam – said: Yes. May your hand be dusty! How otherwise does [a woman’s] child become like her?’

Aishah once said: ‘How good are the women of the Anṣār! Shyness did not prevent them from acquiring understanding of their din.’

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1 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahih, ‘Ilm, bāb al-hayyā fi l-’ilm. 2 IBN HAJar, Fath al-bārī, ‘Ilm, bāb al-hayyā fi l-’ilm. 3 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahih, ‘Ilm, bāb al-hayyā fi l-’ilm. (‘May your hand be dusty’, literally rendered from the Arabic, is typically used, though it seems otherwise, to express criticism in an affectionate tone; there are similar usages in most languages.) 4 Ibid.
Women learning from the Companions

The women in the generation after the Companions, that of the Successors, put their questions to the Companions, both to the women and the men among them. Here is an example: ‘Abdullah ibn Jābir al-Ahmāsī narrates from his paternal aunt Zaynab bint al-Muhājīr that she said:

I went for ḥajj and with me was another woman. I set up my tent and I made a vow not to speak. Then a man came and stood by the door of the tent and said: al-salāmū al-ʿalaykum. My friend answered. Then he said: What is the matter with your friend? I said: She will remain silent for she has vowed not to speak. He said: Speak, for [that kind of vow] is from the practice of Jāhiliyyah. She says: I asked him, who are you, may God have mercy on you? He answered: I am a man from the Emigrants. I asked: From which group of Emigrants? He said: From the Quraysh. I said: From which Quraysh? He said: You are a big one for questions! I am Abū Bakr. I said: O caliph of the Messenger of God! We are fresh from the Jāhiliyyah, when no one us would feel security from others. God has brought to us what you see [meaning the peace and security around them]. So how long this will continue? He said: As long as your imāms remain righteous. I said: Who are the imāms? He said: Are there not among your people those nobles and leaders who are obeyed? I said: Surely. He said: Those are the imāms.¹

WOMEN’S PRESERVING OF THE ḤADĪTH

A sound ḥadīth is defined as one whose narrator has preserved it unchanged from the time he heard it until he conveyed it. Preservation entails alert listening to the words, understanding their meaning, holding that meaning, holding the wording, being firm on it with full awareness and checking it until its transmission. It is by two means: memorization and writing.

¹IBN SĀD, al-Tabaqāt al-kubra, viii. 470.
Memorization

Memorization, or preserving by heart, was the most popular form among the Companions, the Successors, the Followers, and those who came after them among the imāms and experts of ḥadīth. This is because knowledge preserved in the heart becomes part of the person, accompanies them always, almost like a mother tongue. ʿAffān ibn Muslim (d. 219) said: ‘I asked ʿUbaydullāh ibn al-Ḥasan to bring out for me the book of al-Jurayrī. He refused and said: Go to Hilāl ibn Ḥaqq; he has got it. Then he said: I have found the most directly useful (ahdār) knowledge is the one I preserved in my heart and uttered by my tongue.’ ʿAbd al-Razzaq said: ‘Any knowledge that does not “enter with its owner into the bathroom” – then do not consider it as knowledge.’ Al-ʿĀṣmāʾī (d. 217) says: ‘Any knowledge that does not “enter with me in the bathroom”, it is not knowledge.’

What is narrated about the memory of the traditionists may seem to us to be exaggerated. ʿAlī ibn Khashram narrates that he discussed with Isḥāq ibn Rāhawayh (d. 238) the report of al-Shaʿbī saying: ‘Any black that I wrote on any white – I know it by heart; and it never happened that anyone narrated a ḥadīth to me and I asked him to repeat it.’ Then Isḥāq said to me [ʿAlī ibn Khashram]: ‘Are you surprised at this, 0 Abu Ḥasan? I said: Yes. Then Isḥāq said: Then let me tell you about myself. I never wrote anything but [that by doing so] I learnt it by heart. And now it is as if I am looking at more than 70,000 ḥadīths in my book.’ He meant that he knew the ḥadīths by heart and could see them as if reading from his book.

The women memorized the ḥadīths of the Prophet as the men did. The wives of the Prophet, ʿalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam, and other women who heard him knew his sayings by heart. Some among them narrated a large number of ḥadīths, notably ʿAʾishah. Nor are these ḥadīths narrated by women short texts.

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1 AL-KHATĪB AL-BAGHDĀDI, al-jamīʿ li-akhlaq al-rawi, ii. 250. The bathroom expression is used because that is where books were never taken. 2 Ibid.
Rather, some are very lengthy. We mentioned how Fâtimah bint Qays was able to commit to memory the long hadîth of Tamîm al-Dârî after hearing it once, and for years she taught it to her students from memory. Al-Ţabarâni compiled al-Abîdîn i al-tiwa (The long hadîths), which contains several narrated by women.

Saîd ibn al-Musayyab, considered the leading Successor, was exceptionally knowledgeable of Prophetic hadîths. His daughter learnt all of them by heart. Abû Bakr ibn Abî Dâwûd (d. 316) reports that ‘Abd al-Mâlik ibn Marwân (the Umayyad caliph r. 65–86) asked for Saîd’s daughter’s hand in marriage for his son al-Walîd. Saîd refused the proposal, preferring to marry her to one of his impoverished students. He, the husband, said about her: ‘She was among the most beautiful people, and most expert of those who know the Book of God by heart, and most knowledgeable of the Sunnah of the Prophet, salla l-lâhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam, and most aware of the right of the husband.’

Abû Nu‘aym (d. 430) has narrated that ‘one morning her husband took his cloak to go out. She said: Where are you going? He said: To the assembly of Saîd to get knowledge. She said to him: Sit here, I will teach you the knowledge of Saîd.’

Similarly, Imam Mâlik’s daughter learnt all of his hadîths and memorized the whole Muvattâ, the best book of its time combining hadîth and fiqh (jurisprudence). Al-Zubayr (d. 256) says: ‘Mâlik had a daughter who knew his knowledge [the Muvattâ] by heart, and she used to be behind the door. When the reader made a mistake, she would correct him.’ Muhammad, his son, was not drawn to study and scholarship. Sometimes he would pass by with his clothes in disarray. Mâlik would say to his students: ‘Good manners are in the hand of God. This is my son and this is my daughter.’ Another Madinan who narrated extensively from Mâlik among others is ‘Abidah al-Madaniyyah. She was famed for knowing a lot of hadîths by heart Ibn al-Abbâr says: ‘She narrated a lot of hadîths.’

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1 ABû NU‘AYM, Ḥiyyat al-awliya, ii. 167–68. 2 AL-QÂDÎ TYÄD , Tartib al-madarik, i. 109–10. 3 MASHHUR, ‘Inayat al-nisâ, 75.
While these prodigious feats of memory may appear, to us, to be exaggerated, they are likely to be accurate. It is a question of will combined with training. As of this writing, there are in Damascus 35 women who know the whole Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī (including its chains of narrations) by heart. They are students of my shaykh, the excellent muḥaddith, Nūr al-Dīn Ḥatr.

**Writing**

Initially the Prophet prohibited the writing down from him of anything other than the Qurān, lest it be mixed with the Qurān. Later, he allowed the writing down of his sayings. It has been narrated from him, from ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and other Companions that they said: ‘Secure the knowledge by writing.’

Writing was rare in Arabia until, from the early days of Islam, its importance was recognized. The Companions acquired this skill, and they began in it by copying out the verses of the Qurān and the ḥadith. Women also took part in this effort. The Prophet himself instructed Shīfā bint ʿAbdullāh to teach writing to his wife Ḥafṣah. Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (d. 463) says: [Shīfā] was among the virtuous and intelligent women. The Prophet used to visit her. Similarly, ʿAṣīrah and Umm Salamah, and many other women Companions were well known for writing. The letters of ʿAṣīrah and Umm Salamah are recorded in the sources. Al-Qalqashandī (d. 821) has mentioned that a group of women knew the skill of writing, and no one from among the salaf objected to that.

The art of writing spread rapidly among women from the beginning of the second century AH onwards. The biographical dictionaries affirm that writing and the practice of calligraphy were taught from childhood, that even slave girls became proficient in it. They used to do calligraphy on shirts, flags, banners, cloaks, sleeves, turbans, bandages, headbands, pillows, handker-

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1 IBN ʿABD AL-BARR, Ḥamīṣ fi ṣāḥīḥ al-ṣīma wa ṣaḥīḥ wa ṣaḥīḥ wa ṣaḥīḥ, 91. 2 IBN HANBAL, Musnad, Musnad al-nisā, vi. 372. 3 IBN ʿABD AL-BARR, al-Iṣṭibāh fi maʿrifah al-ṣaḥāb, ii. 740. 4 al-Qalqashqandī, as cited in MASHHŪR ʿInāyat al-nisā bi-l-ḥadīth al-nabawī, 114.
chiefs, curtains, sheets, beds, sofas, cushions, crowns, the frames of windows and doors, and many other things.¹

When, in the later centuries, people relied on the major compilations of ḥadīth, which not all could memorize, writing became essential. There are many examples of women who wrote books of ḥadīth in their own hand. Here I will mention a few examples of muḥaddīthāt celebrated for their calligraphy.

Fāṭimah bint al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī al-Muḍaddib al-ʿAṭṭār (d. 480), also known by her kunyah Umm al-Faḍl and as Bint al-Aqrā’, followed the famous calligrapher Ibn al-Bawwāb (d. 413) in the art and passed it on to many. The people referred to her writing as exemplary.² Ibn al-Jawzī says: ‘Her writing was extremely beautiful; she used to write on the pattern (ṭarīqaḥ) of Ibn al-Bawwāb. The people practised under her. She was invited to write the peace treaty [with the Byzantines]. She travelled for the writing to ʿAmīd al-Mulk Abū Naṣr al-Kindī [d. 456].’³ Ibn Kathīr says: ‘She used to write the ‘mansūb’ calligraphy on the pattern of Ibn al-Bawwāb.’⁴ Al-Samā’nī says: ‘I heard Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Bāqī al-ʿAnṣārī saying: I heard Fāṭimah bint al-Aqrā’ saying: I wrote a paper for ʿAmīd al-Mulk and he gave me one thousand dinars.’⁵ Evidently she was an important figure whose art was highly regarded and valued, and she travelled in this work.

Al-Samā’nī says about ‘Fakhr al-Nisā’ Umm Muḥammad Shuhdah, daughter of the famous muḥaddīth Abū Naṣr Ḍuḥaym ibn al-Faraj al-Dinawarī (d. 574): ‘She was from among the descendants of traditionists, distinguished, eloquent, and had beautiful handwriting. She wrote on the way of Bint al-Aqrā’. In her time there was no one in Baghdad who had handwriting like her. Usually she wrote for the caliph al-Muqtasī [r. 530–55].’⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī praises her calligraphy, her goodness and works of charity.

through a long life. Al-Ṣafāḍi (d. 764) notes her extensive knowledge of hadith, her piety, God-wariness, benevolence and calls her ‘the calligrapher, the pride of womanhood, a muḥaddithah of Iraq with a high isnād.’ Her style of writing (mansūb) gained much popularity and was taken up generation after generation.

Another late example is of Fawz bint Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn Yahyā ibn ʿAlī from the descendants of al-ʿAffīf ibn Manṣūr. The vizier al-Ḥādī ibn ʿIbrāhīm says: ‘She was one of the scholars; she had a novel handwriting. Her calligraphy is well-known in the Qurʾāns and prefaces that are with us and with others also. She used to teach Arabic to her relatives among the men. Her grave is in Sanʿā at al-Mashhad al-Āḥmar near the mosque of Ibn Wahb.’

Writing marginal notes

Another application of the skill of writing was the women’s scholarly annotation in the margins of the books they studied. The great man of letters al-Jāḥīz (d. 255) says: ‘Jaʿfar ibn Saʿīd the milk-brother and chamberlain (ḥājib) of Ayyūb ibn Jaʿfar told me that Jaʿfar ibn Yahyā’s Tawqīʿāt (concise writings) was mentioned to ʿAmr ibn Masʿadah. He said: I have read the tawqīʿāt of Umm Jaʿfar in the margins and at the foot [of the pages] of the books, I found them better in shortness and more encompassing in the meaning.’

Comparison and correction

The people of hadith were very strict about writing. They would accept a book only if it had been compared with the original of the shaykh from whom the book’s author says he is narrating. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādi says: ‘I asked the qāḍī Abū l-Tayyīb Ṭāhir ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Ṭabarī about one who finds [in his written

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notes a reference] to a shaykh named and described in the written [notes] but he does not [now] know him. The qādi said: It is not allowed for him to narrate that writing. The writing from which one narrates must have been compared with the original of the shaykh from whom [the narrator] is narrating.'

Hishām ibn Urwah (d. 146) recalls: 'My father would ask me: Have you written? I would say: Yes; then he would ask: Have you compared? I would say: No. Then he would say: You have not written.' Abū Muḥammad Aflah ibn Bassām says: 'I was with al-Qa'nbī and I wrote down his ḥadīth. He asked me: Have you written down. I said yes. Then he asked, have you compared? I said, no. He said, then you did not do anything.'

Women traditionists adhered to the same strict practice. The great muhaddīthah Umm al-Kirām Karīmah bint Aḥmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ḥātim al-Marwaziyyah (d. 465) is a famous narrator of Sahih al-Bukhārī. Her version of it has always been particularly popular. She compared her copy with her shaykh al-Kushmīhani's original. Later she settled in Makkah, where the people came to her from everywhere and heard the whole Sahih from her. She would not allow anyone to narrate from her unless they had compared with her original. Al-Dhahabi says: 'Whenever she narrated, she would compare with her original. She had knowledge and good understanding [combined] with goodness and worship.'

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Abū ʿl-Ghanāʾim al-Narsī says: 'Karīmah brought for me her original copy of the Sahih. I sat down in front of Karīmah and wrote down seven pages and read them with her. I wanted to compare [my copy] with her original by myself. She said: No, [I do not permit it] unless you compare it with me. Then I did comparison with her.'

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Chapter 3

Occasions, travels, venues for learning ḥadīth, and kinds of learning

This chapter begins with an account of the conditions and circumstances of the occasions, some public, others private, on which the women had an opportunity to learn the religion from the Prophet and his Companions. Next, it explains the precedents for travelling for the sake of learning ḥadīth, how those precedents were followed up in later centuries, and the different venues where the women studied. The chapter ends with a brief survey of the ways in which ḥadīths were learnt and diffused.

PUBLIC OCCASIONS

The women sometimes attended as a group. Shahr ibn Ḥawshab has narrated from Asmā' bint Yazīd that, in one such gathering, on seeing a woman who had on two gold bracelets, 'the Prophet - salla l-lāhū 'alayhī wa sallam - said to her: Would you wish God to make you wear two bracelets of fire?' Asmā' says: 'By God, I do not remember if she took them off [herself] or I took them off.' The group could include young girls: Umm 'Alī bint Abī l-Ḥakam narrates from Umayyah bint Qays Abī l-Ṣalt al-Ghifārīyyah that she came among a company of women of the Ghifār tribe to the Prophet. It was the occasion of the Khaybar campaign and the women wanted to go to the battlefield in order to tend the wounded. The Prophet permitted this, saying: 'With the

1 IBN ḤANBAL, Musnad, musnad al-nisā'.

blessing of God.’ Then, Umayyah bint Qays tells her own part of the story:

Then we set out with him. I was a young girl. He made me sit on his she-camel behind the luggage. He got off in the morning and made his camel sit down. I saw the bag had got traces of blood from me. It was the first time I had a period. Then I sat forward on the camel [to hide it] and I was embarrassed. When the Messenger of God – ṣalla łącz-bi wa sallam – saw what happened to me and the traces of blood, he said: Perhaps you have had menstrual bleeding? I said: Yes. He said: Attend to yourself. Then, take a container of water, then put salt in it, then wash the affected part of the bag, then come back.’ I did so. When God conquered Khaybar for us, the Prophet – ṣalla łąh-bi wa sallam – took [out of the booty] this necklace that you see on my neck and gave it to me and put it on my neck with his hand. By God it will never be parted from me. It remained on her neck until she died, and she made a will that it should be buried with her. Also, whenever she cleansed herself she used salt in the water and she stipulated in her will that salted water be used for the washing of her [body before burial].

This hadith demonstrates that the Prophet permitted women to accompany him at home and while travelling – in this case on a military campaign, when he was surrounded by an army of men. Also, in its account of a personal memory (and the necklace) treasured for a lifetime, it presents a striking example of how fondly the Prophet was loved by those who learnt from him. Their fondness mirrors his solicitude for them, and the tenderness with which he responded when someone came to him with a need. The respectful attentiveness that has ever since characterized the traditional attitudes of Muslim students before their teachers, male or female, is derived as much from the example of the women as from the men who attended upon and served him. Shahr ibn Hawshab has narrated from Asmā’ bint Yazid that she said: ‘I was holding the rein of ʿAḍbā’, the she-camel of the Prophet – ṣalla łąh-bi wa

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1 Ibn Sa’d, al-Tabaqat al-kubra, viii. 293.
sallam - when [verses of the] surat al-Māʾidah [were] revealed to him. Because of the heaviness of the revelation the camel's leg (ʿadud) was on the point of buckling (daqqa).

Another hadith from Asmāʾ bint Yazid illustrates how the women, when they called on the Prophet while he was with his Companions, were not inhibited from putting their questions to him.

Asmāʾ said: May my father and mother be sacrificed for you, O Messenger of God - salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam - I am a representative (wafidah) of the women to you. God has sent you as a Messenger to all men and women. So we have believed in you and your God. [Now] we women are confined to the houses and bearing your children. You men [in what has been commanded to you] have been preferred over us by the jumūʿah and [other] congregational prayers, visiting the sick, attending funerals, [doing] ḥajj after ḥajj and, more than that, the jiḥād in the path of God. When [you] men go for ḥajj or 'umrah or jiḥād, we look after your property, we weave your clothes, and bring up your children. Will we not share with you in the reward?
The Prophet - salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam - turned to his Companions with his whole face, then said: Have you heard any woman asking about her religion better than this? They said: O Messenger of God - salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam - we never thought that any woman could be guided to something like that. Then the Prophet - salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam - turned to her and said: Understand, O woman, and tell the other women behind you that [a wife's] looking after her husband, seeking his contentment and going along with his assent is equal to all that [i.e. all that the religion has commanded to the men]. [Narrator's comment:] The woman went back and her face was shining with happiness.

The ḥajj; ḥajjat al-wadaʿ

The ḥajj pilgrimage, considered from the viewpoint of its being a public occasion, differs from the daily prayers at the mosque in that it happens only once a year, and indeed for the vast

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1 IBN ḤANBAL, Musnad, musnad al-nisāʾ. 2 IBN AL-AṬHĪR (d. 630), Usd al-ghābah, vii. 17–18.
majority of believers only once a lifetime. The restrictions that apply to women's attendance at the mosque — praying in clearly separated rows and, where practicable, having different entrances to the mosque building, etc. — do not apply to the pilgrimage. By contrast with attendance at a local community mosque, in the great throngs of Makkah and Madinah during the ḥajj period, there is relatively little chance of repeat encounters between men and women of a kind that might distract them from the normal purpose of going to the mosque. Accordingly, we would expect that the women who attended the ḥajj during the lifetime of the Prophet would have heard as many ḥadīths as the men heard on the same occasion. That is indeed the case, and there is a reassuring identity in the content of what is narrated by different routes from the men and from the women.

Ḥajjat al-wadā', 'the farewell pilgrimage', so called because it was the last ḥajj to be led by the Prophet himself, was his final major address to the Muslims en masse. It was attended by a very large number of women and children, as well as the men. It is an important source of ḥadīths relating to the faith in general and to details of the rites of pilgrimage in particular. Some examples of the latter:

‘Ā'ishah narrates that Asmā' bint Ḥamīdah, the wife of Abū Bakr, while going for ḥajj, delivered beside a tree. The Prophet asked Abū Bakr to ask her to take a bath and then to put on ihram.1 From this report the jurists have derived that women, even in the state of impurity can put on ihram and the bath is a sunnah of putting on the ihram and does not mark the ending of the state of impurity. In another ḥadīth, ‘Ā'ishah said: 'I could still see stains of perfume on the head of the Messenger of God — salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam — when he was in the state of ihram.'2 Because of this ḥadīth Abū Ḥanīfah and other jurists

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1 MUSLIM, Ṣaḥīḥ, Ḥajj, bāb ihram al-nufasā' wa istihābāhī ighitsāhi-hā li-l-ihram; AL-NASAI, Sunan, Ḥajj, bāb mā taš'alu l-nufasā' 'inda l-ihram.

have held that before making the intention for hajj or 'umrah one can apply perfume, even if traces of it remain after putting on ihram. In another hadith 'A'ishah reports: 'We were in the state of ihram with the Prophet – salla l-lâhu 'alayhi wa sallam. When a stranger passed by us, we would let down our head-covering [i.e. so as to veil the face], and when [the stranger] had passed us, then we would raise it [again].'\(^1\) The jurists have inferred from this that for women in general (i.e. other than the Prophet's wives) head-coverings may be worn during the time of hajj provided they do not touch the face. Yûsuf ibn Mâhak narrated from his mother from 'A'ishah that she said: 'I said: O Messenger of God, should we not build for you a house in Minâ? He said: No, Minâ is a station of those who arrive earliest.'\(^2\) The meaning is that one cannot reserve a place for oneself at Minâ. Mughîrah ibn Ḥâkim narrated from Safiyyah bint Shaybah, from Tamlik (a woman Companion who had a house overlooking Safâ and Marwah) that she said: 'I watched the Prophet – salla l-lâhu 'alayhi wa sallam – while I was in my upper room between Safâ and Marwah and he was saying: O people! God has prescribed the sa'y [the running between Safâ and Marwah] for you, so do sa'y.'\(^3\)

The hajj was also an opportunity to get answers to more general questions, not connected to the rites of pilgrimage. A couple of examples must suffice to illustrate how the women, in spite of the press of people, managed to put their questions directly to the Prophet.

'Abdullâh ibn 'Abbâs has narrated that Fâdîl ibn 'Abbâs (who is reported to have been an exceptionally handsome boy) was sitting behind the Messenger of God during the hajj. A woman from Khath'am came and began to stare at Fâdîl, who stared back. The Prophet turned Fâdîl’s face away with his hand to

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\(^1\) ABū DĀWūD, Sunan, Manâsik, bâb fi l-muhrimah tughaffî wajha-hâ; IBN MÂJAH, Sunan, Manâsik, bâb al-muhrimah tusdîl al-thawb 'alâ wajbi-hâ.

\(^2\) ABū DĀWūD, Sunan, Manâsik, bâb tahrîm haram Makkah; IBN MÂJAH, Sunan, Manâsik, bâb al-nuzûl bi Minâ. IBN ABî 'ASIM (d. 287), al-Âhâd wa-l-mathânî, vi. 222.
prevent that. Then the woman asked: ‘O Messenger of God, God’s command to do ḥajj has become valid on my father when he is very old and cannot sit on a camel. Can I do ḥajj for him? The Prophet – salla l-lāhù ʿalay-hi wa sallam – said: Yes. And that was during ḥajjat al-wādāʾ.’ \(^1\) Jābir ibn ʿAbdillāh narrates: ‘A woman brought her child to the Prophet – salla l-lāhù ʿalay-hi wa sallam – during his ḥajj and said: O Messenger of God, is there a ḥajj for this child? He said: Yes, and you will get reward [for that].\(^2\)

It is remarkable that the women were so intent on finding out what the religion required of them and then so zealous in preserving and transmitting what they learnt. Equally remarkable is the degree of conformity between their different accounts – the minor variations serve as evidence of their truthfulness in reporting what they remembered.

Shābib ibn Gharqadah narrates from Jamrah bint Quḥāfabb that she said:

I was with ʿumm al-muʿminīn Umm Salamah during ḥajjat al-wādāʾ. Then I heard the Prophet – salla l-lāhù ʿalay-hi wa sallam – say: O my ʿummāh (ya ummatī), have I conveyed the message to you? She says: My little boy asked why is the Prophet – salla l-lāhù ʿalay-hi wa sallam – calling to his mother? She says: I said: My son, he means his ʿummāh. And he was saying: Listen! The property of each of you, your honour, your blood [i.e. life] is inviolable to you as this day is inviolable in this town in this month.\(^3\)

Rabiʿah ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥuṣayn narrated about his grandmother Sarra bint Nabhān who had been a temple priestess before embracing Islam:

She heard the Messenger of God in ḥajjat al-wādāʾ on the day that is called ‘the day of the heads’ [i.e. the day of the sacrifice] say: What is

\(^1\) AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Ṣahīh, Ḥajj, bāb waqīb al-baṣij wa fadil-hi; MUSLIM, Ṣahīh, Ḥajj, bāb al-baṣij ‘an al-ṣājīz. \(^2\) AL-TIRMIDHĪ, Ḥadīṣ, bāb ʿaṣma fi ḥajj al-sabīr, IBN MĀJAH, Sunan, Manāṣik, bāb mā jāʾa fi ḥajj al-sabīr; MUSLIM has narrated it from Ibn ʿAbbās in Ṣahīh, Ḥajj, bāb sibbat ḥajj al-sabīr. \(^3\) ABŪ NUʿAYM AŠBAHĀNĪ, Maʿrifat al-ṣāhābāh, v. 206.
this day? [The people] said: God and his Messenger know best. He said: This is the best of the days of tashriq [10 Dhu l-Hijjah]. Then he said: What is this town? They said: God and His Messenger know best. He said, al-mash'ar ar al-haram. Then he said: Listen! the blood of each of you, your properties and your honour, are inviolable in this town of yours. Listen! I do not know, perhaps I will not see you after this day, so the nearest of you must convey to the furthest of you. Listen! have I conveyed the message? They answered: Yes. Then he made his way back to Madinah where he died. 1

PRIVATE OCCASIONS

Women had an advantage over men in being able freely to visit the Prophet's wives and using this opportunity to learn. Some examples have come earlier. I give here a few more:

‘Abd al-Rahmân ibn Humayd has narrated from his father, from his mother Umm Kulthûm bint ‘Uqbah bint Sa’fân that she said: 'The Messenger of God - salla l-lâhu ‘alqy-hi wa salam - called on [us] while I was combing the hair of ‘Â’ishah. He said: Busrah, who is proposing marriage to Umm Kulthûm? I said: So-and-so and ‘Abd al-Rahmân ibn ‘Awf. He said: Then why not marry [her] to ‘Abd al-Rahmân ibn ‘Awf, for he is among the best of the Muslims and of their leaders? I said: Umm Kulthûm dislikes to marry someone who already has a wife; nor does she like to ask ‘Abd al-Rahmân [to divorce] his previous wife, for she is her cousin. Then the Prophet - salla l-lâhu ‘alqy-hi wa salam - repeated his suggestion and said: If she marries [him] she will be happy and she will rejoice [in it]. I came back and I told Umm Kulthûm. She called ‘Abd al-Rahmân, and [her relatives] Khâlid ibn Sa’âd ibn al-‘Âsh and ‘Uthmân ibn ‘Affân. These two married her to ‘Abd al-Rahmân ibn ‘Awf. 2

Zaynab, the wife of ‘Abdullâh ibn Mas‘ûd, was an artisan, able to make some income by selling the things she made. This

1 IBN ABI ‘ÂSIM, al-Âhâd wa-l-mathâni, vi. 92. 2 ABU NU’AYM ASBAHANI, Ma’rifat al-sahâbah, v. 195; AL-HAKIM, al-Mustadrak ala l-Sahihayn, iii. 350.
is an important ḥadīth narrated from her by Ḥārith ibn Amr, and worth quoting in full:

She said: The Prophet – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – gave a speech to us women in which he said: Give charity, even if it is from your jewelry, because [otherwise] you may be the most [numerous] among all the people of the Fire on the Day of Resurrection. She said: My husband ‘Abdullah was a man of light hand [i.e. of little wealth]. I said to him: Ask the Messenger of God for me – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – is it enough for my [giving] charity that I spend on my husband and on orphans under my guardianship? She said: Awe of the Prophet – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – was settled in the heart of the people; [for that reason] my husband said to me: You go and ask him. She said: Then I went out until I came to his door, where I found a woman from the Anṣār, her name was also Zaynab, and she had come to ask the same question. She says: Then Bilāl came out to us; we said to him: Ask the Messenger of God – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – for us: is it enough for our [giving] charity if we spend on our own husbands and orphans under our guardianship. She says then Bilāl went inside and said to the Prophet – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – that it is Zaynab at the door. The Prophet – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – said: Which Zaynab? Bilāl said: Zaynab, the wife of ‘Abdullah, and Zaynab, a woman from the Anṣār. They are asking you about spending on their husbands and orphans under their guardianship. Will that be enough for their [giving] charity? She says: Then Bilāl came out to us and said: The Messenger of God – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – says: For you there is double reward: the reward of [being good to family] relations and the reward of [giving] charity.¹

The circumstances of this ḥadīth are of particular interest in that they demonstrate that ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd – famous as one of the leading jurists in the early period of Islam – saw no harm in his wife’s going out for advice on a matter that he could have followed up himself. Also, the Prophet’s concern to identify the questioner is a reminder that knowing about the

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahih, Zakah, bab al-zakāh ʿalā l-izzwj wa-l-a'yām fi l-bijr; MUSLIM Sahih, Zakāh, bab faddl al-nafaqah wa-l-sadaqah ʿalā l-aqrābin wa-l-izzwj...
questioner is relevant to identifying their need precisely and making the form of the answer appropriate to their ability to understand and willingness to act upon the advice. That in turn means that he did not disdain to take an interest in the personal circumstances of his Companions. His concern for them was not formal or abstract, but warm, intimate, and that is why, or at least partly why, he was so deeply trusted and loved by them.

Anas ibn Mālik narrates from Salāmah, who looked after the Prophet’s son, Ibrāhīm, that she said:

O Messenger of God –  ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam – you convey all good news and glad tidings to the men, and do not tell women glad tidings. The Prophet –  ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam – said: Have your companions [meaning other women] sent you for this? She said: Yes, they have commanded me to ask you this question. The Prophet –  ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam – said: Will one of you not be content [to know] that when she is pregnant by her husband and he is happy with her, she gets the same reward as one who is fasting the day and praying the night in the path of God? [That] when she has labour pains, those who are in the heaven and the earth do not know what comfort has been hidden in store for [her]? [And that] when she delivers the child, for every sucking that child does, she has a good deed [added to her reckoning]? [And that] when the child causes her to wake in the night, she gets the reward [the equal of] of freeing seventy slaves in the path of God? Salāmah, do you know, who I mean by this great reward? It is for those women who are pure, righteous, obedient to their husbands and never ungrateful to them.¹

We know that the Prophet visited his Companions in their houses, that he called on his female relatives and, when there was a need for that, also on other women. Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān ibn Abī Ḥathmah has narrated that the Prophet prayed in the house of al-Shīfā on the right side as one enters. He prayed also in the house of Busra bint Ṣafwān.² On such occasions

¹Abū Nuʿaym Asbahānī, Maʿrifat al-sahābah, v. 253. ²Ibn Shabbah Al-Numayrī (d. 262), Akhbār al-madinah al-nabawīyyah, i. 74.
the women of that house were able to profit from the chance to hear his judgements, to put questions and learn from him.

‘Abdullāh ibn al-Hārith al-Hāshimi has narrated from Umm al-Faḍl that she said:

The Messenger of God – salla l-lābu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – was in my house. Then a bedouin came and said: O Messenger of God, I had a wife then I married another one. My first wife claims that she has breast-fed the second one once or twice. The Prophet – salla l-lābu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – said: One or two actions of breast-feeding do not make anyone unlawful.¹

Yazīd ibn al-Hād narrated from Hind bint al-Hārith, from Umm al-Faḍl that she said:

The Prophet – salla l-lābu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – called upon [her husband] ʿAbbās, the uncle of the Prophet, while he was ill. ʿAbbās wished to die. The Prophet – salla l-lābu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – said: O ʿAbbās, O uncle of the Messenger of God, do not wish death. For if you are a good-doer you will increase your good deeds and that will be better for you. And if you are a wrong-doer, then if you are respited, you will have a chance to ask forgiveness. So do not wish death.²

The Prophet visited al-Rubayyi' bint Mu’awwidh on the morning of her marriage. She narrates:

The Messenger of God – salla l-lābu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – called upon me on the day of my marriage and sat down on [this] spot on this bed of mine, and two girls were beating duff and singing about my fathers who were killed in the battle of Badr. In their song, they said: We have a prophet who knows what will happen tomorrow. The Prophet of God, salla l-lābu ʿalay-hi wa sallam, said: As for this bit, do not say it.³

Anas ibn Mālik narrates that the Messenger of God visited Umm Sulaym and did nafl prayer in her house and said: 'O Umm Sulaym, when you pray fard ṣalāḥ, then say subḥān al-lāh ten times, al-ḥamdu li-l-lāh ten times and al-lāhū akbar ten times. Then ask God whatever you want: for you will be answered with Yes, Yes, Yes.'¹ Anas ibn Mālik also narrates:

The Prophet – ṣallā l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam – used to visit Umm Sulaym and she would offer him something that she prepared for him. I had a brother younger than me whose kunyah was Abū 'Umayr. One day, the Prophet – ṣallā l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam – visited us and said: Why is Abū 'Umayr down-hearted? Umm Sulaym said: his sa'wah [a small bird] that he used to play with has died. The Prophet – ṣallā l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam – began to stroke his head and said [consoling him with a little rhyme]: O Abū 'Umayr, what befell nughayr [the bird]?²

The Messenger of God respected Umm Ḥarrām for his kinship with her and used to visit her home and take rest there. She was the maternal aunt of Anas ibn Mālik. He narrates:

Umm Ḥarrām bint Milḥān narrated to me that the Messenger of God – ṣallā l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam – took rest in her house once. Then he woke up and he was smiling. I said: O Messenger of God – ṣallā l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam – why are you smiling? He said: Some people of my community were shown to me riding the sea like kings on thrones. I said: O Messenger of God – ṣallā l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam – pray to God that He makes me among them. He prayed and said: You are among them. Then ʿUbadah ibn al-Ṣāmit married her and travelled with her to [join] the naval campaign. [On the way] she died after falling down from her mount.³

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¹ Ibn Saʿd, al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā, viii. 426. ² Ibid., 427; Al-Bukhārī, Sahih, Adab, bāb al-kunyah li-l-ṣabi wa qabla an yūlud li-l-rajah; Muslim, Sahih, Adab, bāb istibbāb taḥnik al-mawlūd 'inda wilaḍat-hi; Abū Dawūd, Sunan, Adab, bāb fi l-rajah yatakannā wa layya la-hu walad. ³ Al-Bukhārī, Sahih, Taʿbīr, bāb al-ruʿyah bi-l-nabār, Ibn al-ʿAthir, Usd al-ghābah, vii. 305. (The naval campaign, to Cyprus in 27 AH, took place under Muʿāwiyah’s governorship during the caliphate of ʿUthmān.)
The Night Journey of the Prophet took place when he was in the house of his cousin Umm Hānī bint Abī Ṭālib. The biographer Ibn Ishāq cites the ḥadith from her that she said:

That journey took place when the Messenger of God was in my house. He slept the night there. He prayed ḥaḍā. Then he slept and we also slept. When it was a little before the dawn he woke us up. After he did the morning prayer and we also did it with him, he said: 'Umm Hānī, I prayed with you in the night prayer as you saw in this valley. Then I came to Jerusalem and prayed there. Then he mentioned the whole story.'

With the ending of prophethood the duty to teach, for which the Prophet had prepared them, was carried by the learned ones among his Companions and those after them who emulated them in virtue and piety. Women were among these teachers but here our interest is on their efforts as students. A substantial body of information about the qualities of the Companions and their teaching relies on those efforts. In his account of Unaysah al-Nakha'īyyah, Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr says that she said about Muṣādžh’s coming to the Yemen: ‘Muṣādžh said to us: I am the messenger of the Messenger of God to you. Pray five times a day, fast the month of Ramaḍān, do the ḥajj of the House [in Makkah], those among you who can manage it. And Muṣādžh at that time was eighteen years old.'

Ismāʿīl al-Bazzār has narrated that Umm ʿAṣfī said: ‘I saw ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib wearing a red cloak like the cloaks of labourers; it had a white patch on it.’

Abū Ubaydah has narrated from Luʾluʿah, the freed slave of Umm al-Ḥakam bint ʿAmmār that she described ʿAmmār for them and said that ‘he was tall, brown... broad-shouldered, and he did not change [his] white hair [by dyeing it].’

The women visited scholars in their homes to ask them about matters of religion or guidance in it. Umm ʿAlaq narrates: ‘I called on Abū Dharr and I saw him – hair disordered, dusty;

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1 Ibn Hishām, al-Sīrah al-nabawīyyah, ii. 43–44. 2 Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, al-Iṣṭiʿāb, ii. 708. 3 Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, al-Khummūl wa-l-tawādūʿ, no. 132. 4 Ibn Sāʿīd, al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā, iii. 264.
in his hand, wool [and] he had two sticks that he was knitting with. I did not see anything in his house. So I gave him some flour and grilled flour. Then he said: As for your reward, it is upon God.\textsuperscript{1} Abû l-Šabâh has narrated from Umm Kathir bint Marqad that she said: 'I and my sister called on Anas ibn Mâlik. I said: My sister wants to ask you something, but she feels shy. He said: She should ask, for I have heard the Messenger of God say 'Seeking knowledge is a duty'. My sister said to him: I have a son who is [spending much time] playing with pigeons. He said: It is the pastime of hypocrites.'\textsuperscript{2} Bishr ibn Qâdâ narrates from Umm ʿAbdân, wife of Hîshâm ibn Hassân, that she said: 'We were staying with Muḥammad ibn Sirîn as guests. We used to hear his weeping in the night [i.e. during prayer and supplication] and his laughter in the day [as part of entertaining his guests].\textsuperscript{3} Āṣim al-Ŷâwâl narrates from Karîmah bint Sirîn that she said: 'I asked ʿAbdullâh ibn Qâdâ: I have bound myself to fast every Wednesday; and the coming Wednesday is the day of sacrifice. He said: God has commanded fulfillment of vows and the Prophet – salla l-lâhu wa salâm – has prohibited fasting on the day of sacrifice.'\textsuperscript{4} Ibn Qâdâ was indicating that she must do the fast as she had vowed to, but on another day.

Qâdâ ibn Qays narrated from his mother that she called on ʿAbdullâh ibn al-Zubayr in his house while he was praying. A snake fell from the roof onto his son Ḥâshim, and coiled itself on his stomach:\textsuperscript{5} All the people of the house cried Snake! and chased it until they killed it. But ʿAbdullâh ibn al-Zubayr continued praying. He did not turn his face and he did not hasten. He finished his prayer after the snake had already been killed. Then he said: What happened to you? Ḥâshim’s

\textsuperscript{1}Al-Dhâhabî, Siyar aṣlâm al-nubalâ, ii. 74. \textsuperscript{2}Bahshâl al-Wâsîtî (d. 292), Taʾrikh Wâsit, 70. ‘Hypocrites’ in Islamic usage means those whose religion is, by the standards of the Companions, enfeebled by other goals than doing God’s will. \textsuperscript{3}Al-Khaṭîb al-Baghdâdî, Taʾrikh Baghdâd, v. 335. \textsuperscript{4}Ibn Ḥibbân (d. 354), K. al-Thiqât, v. 343. \textsuperscript{5}Ibn ʿAsâkir, Taʾrikh Dimashq al-kabîr (al-Iṣâq al-thâlith min tarâjîm harf al-ṣayn), 413.
mother said: May God have mercy on you! If we do not, does not your son also matter to you? 'Abdullâh ibn al-Zubayr said: Woe to you! what would have been left of my prayer if I had turned away?

Hâjjâj ibn Hâßân narrates that he and his sister called on Anas ibn Mâlik. Addressing Hâjjâj, his sister al-Mughîrah said:
You, at that time were a young boy and you had two plaits in your hair. Anas ibn Mâlik passed his hand over your head and blessed you and said: Shave these two plaits or cut them off, because they are [in a distinctly] Jewish style.¹

Sometimes, following the Prophet’s example, it was the scholars who would call on the women. Hazzân ibn Sa'îd has narrated from Umm al-Šâbah that she said: 'Abû l-Dârâdâ visited us at the time of fi'tinah when we were gathered and said: Die, [so that] the rule of children does not reach you [i.e. Die, so that you do not have to live to see Muslims subjected to dynastic rule].² Ismâ'îl ibn Ubaydullâh has narrated from Kârimah bint Hâshâs al-Muzaniyyah that she said: 'I heard Abû Hurayrah in the house of Umm al-Dârâdâ saying: The Messenger of God said: Three things are [remnants from the time] of unbelief – excessive bewailing of the dead; tearing of the clothes; and accusing people about their lineage.'³

TRAVELLING

Travelling for knowledge is among the higher qualities that the Prophet encouraged: 'Whoever walks a way for seeking knowledge, God will facilitate for him a way to paradise.'⁴ It has long

¹ABU DAWUD, Sunan, Tarajjul, bâb mâ jâ’a fi l-rukhsa. Muslims are discouraged from imitating non-Muslims in matters and manners connected to the non-Muslims’ religious symbols or worship. ²AL-KHAṬṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDI, Talkhīs al-mutashabîh, i. 406. Fītinah here refers to the civil strife among the Muslims from the latter part of the rule of Úthmān through the rule of ʻAlî. ³IBN 'ASÂKIR, Ta'rîkh Dimashq, tarjîm al-nîsâ', 314. ⁴MUSLIM, Sahîh, Dhikr wa-l-du'â', bâb faḍl al-jîtîmâ' alâ tilâwat al-Qur’ân, IBN MÂJAH, Sunan, Muqaddimah, bâb faḍl al-ʻulamâ' wa-l-ḥadhîth alâ ʻalâ al-ilm.
been an established tradition among Islamic scholars, particularly among the *muhaddithūn*. Ibrāhīm ibn Adham (d. 162) said: ‘God removes the trial from this *ummah*, because of the travelling of the people of ḥadīth.’ Imām Mālik has narrated from Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd from Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab that he said: ‘I used to travel for days and nights for a single ḥadīth.’ Naṣr ibn Marzūq narrates from ʿAmr ibn Abī Salamah that he said: ‘I said to Awzāʾī: Abū ʿAmr [kunyah of Imām Awzāʾī], I have been accompanying you all the time for the last four days and I did not hear from you except thirty ḥadīths. He said: Do you consider thirty ḥadīths little in four days? Jābir ibn ʿAbdillāh travelled to Egypt [for one ḥadīth]: he bought a camel and rode it until he arrived there and asked ʿUqbah ibn ʿAmir about a single ḥadīth and came back to Madīna. And you consider thirty ḥadīths little in four days!’

It is preferred that study begins with the scholars of one’s own locality, and among them those with higher (i.e., shorter) isnāds, with fewer narrators in the chain, bringing one closer to the original source. After that, one should go to hear and study ḥadīth with teachers in other towns. ʿAlṣāmad ibn Ḥanbal commenced travelling to get a higher isnād, and gave this example: “Alqamah and al-Aswad received the ḥadīth of ʿUmar through other people, but they would not be satisfied until they travelled to ʿUmar [himself], then heard [the ḥadīth] from him [directly].”

**Hajj journeys**

Women also travelled to get the knowledge of the scholars of other towns. We showed earlier that women accompanied the men on some military campaigns and, despite the rigours of this kind of travelling, accumulated ḥadīths and *sunnaḥs* on the way. However, for obvious reasons, the major focus of Muslim travelling was, and remains, the annual pilgrimage to Makkah and Madīnah. The ḥajj quickly became established as the occasion

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for scholars from different centres of learning in the Islamic world to meet. Sometimes, students of hadith undertook hajj journeys with the primary intention of meeting the ulama. The meetings and exchanges among scholars diffused the Sunnah widely and thereby gave an enduring cohesion and solidarity to the Islamic way of life. This cultural unity was, for all practical purposes, disconnected from political power and was therefore only very briefly, and only regionally, reflected in political unity. It is important to reflect on, and properly acknowledge, the central role of women, as scholars and teachers, and as the first resource for children growing up in Islam, in preserving and sustaining, and diffusing, the Sunnah.

We have seen examples of hadiths that the women acquired during hajjat al-wadā. I give below examples of their learning, after the Prophet passed away, from his Companions and their Successors.

Al-Ḥakam ibn Jaḥl narrates from Umm al-Kirām that she said: 'There [during the hajj] I met a woman in Makkah who had a lot of servants, and she had no jewelry other than silver. I said to her: Why does no one from among your servants have any jewelry other than the silver. She said: My grandfather was with the Messenger of God – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam – and I also was with him and I had two golden earrings. The Messenger of God – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam – said: Two metals of the Fire. So no-one from our house wears any jewelry other than silver.'

Yūnus ibn Abī Ishāq narrates from his mother al-ʿAliyah bint Ayfa ʿibn Sharāhīl that she did hajj with Umm Maḥabbah. The two of them called on ʿĀʾishah, greeted her with salām, and asked her questions and heard hadiths from her. Abū Ḥiбbān narrates from his father from Maryam bint Tāriq that she told

1AL-DHAHABI (Sīyar ašālm al-nubalā), viii. 457) says: 'A large number of hadith students took journeys and their motive would not be other than meeting Sufyān ibn ʿUyaynah for his imāmah and the highness of his isnād.' 2ABU NUʿAYM AŠBAHANĪ, Marifat al-ṣaḥābah, v. 407. 3IBN SAʿD, al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā, viii. 487.
him how she, among a group of Anšārī women had called on Āʿīshah during the ḥajj and asked her about intoxicating drinks and their ingredients and containers. This is a long ḥadīth. Abū Hibbān says: ‘My father narrated this ḥadīth to me when Maryam bint Tāriq was still alive.’

Kathír ibn Ziyād narrates from Mussah al-Azdiyyah that she said: I did ḥajj, then I called on Umm Salamah. I said: O umm al-muʾminīn, Samurah ibn Jundub commands the women to do the prayer missed on account of the menstrual period. She said: No, they are not to do the missed prayer. The women used to sit [i.e. not stand to pray] for forty days on account of postnatal bleeding. The Prophet – sallā l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam – never ordered them to do the missed prayer of that time.’

Ismāʿīl ibn Abī Khālid narrated from his mother and his sister that both called on Āʿīshah during the ḥajj in Minā. ‘A woman asked her: Is it allowed for me to cover my face while I am in the state of ihram? [Āʿīshah] lifted her scarf from her chest and put it over her head. She demonstrated in this way that only the head should be covered, not the face.

In later periods also, the ḥajj served as an opportunity to meet scholars and learn from them. One example is Maryam (also known as Umm Hānī, d. 871) bint al-Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Qādi al-Qudār Taqī al-Dīn al-Hūrimiyah. She was a granddaughter of the qādī Fākhr al-Dīn Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Qayātī, and the mother of ʿAllāmah Shaykh ʿAlī al-Dīn al-Hurīmīyyah. Her maternal grandfather was specially solicitous of her education and took her to Makkah, where she studied ḥadīth with ʿAffī al-Dīn al-Našāwārī, Abū l-ʿAbbās ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭ. Shīhāb al-

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1Ibid., 488. 2ABŪ DĀWŪD, Sunan, Ṭabarāh, bāb mā jāˈa fi waqt al-nujūsā; AL-TIRMIDHĪ, Jāmiʿ, abwāb al-Ṭabarāh, bāb mā jāˈa fi kam tamkuthu al-nujūsā; IBN MĀJAH, Sunan, Ṭabarāh, bāb mā jāˈa fi l-nujūsā kam taqils; AL-DARĪMĪ, Sunan, Ṭabarāh, bāb al-maˈrāb al-hāˈid tusallī fi thawbī-hā. 3IBN SĀḤĪ, al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā, viii. 494. 4AL-SĀKHĀWI, Dawʾ al-Lāmīʿ, xii. 156.
Din Zahirah and Muhibb al-Din al-Tabari. She continued her studies in Egypt.

Women also undertook journeys that were expressly for knowledge. The famous expert of hadith, much sought after for her high isnad, Shaykhah Umm al-Kiram Karimah bint Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Hātim al-Marwaziyyah, (d. 463) travelled in the path of knowledge to Sarakhs, Isfahan, Jerusalem, and then to Makkah. Al-Dhahabi says: 'Her father was from Kushmihan then travelled with her to Jerusalem and returned with her to Makkah [...] She studied Sahih al-Bukhari with Abū l-Haytham al-Kushmiliani; she studied also with Zahir ibn Ahmad Sarakhsi and Abdullāh ibn Yusuf ibn Bāmūyah al-Asbahāni.'

Another scholar who made many journeys in the cause of knowledge of the religion is the shaykhah of high isnad Umm Abīl Karīm Fātimah bint Sa’d al-Khayr ibn Muhammad ibn Sahl al-Anṣāri al-Andalusi al-Balansi (?525–600). Her life’s work contributed greatly to consolidating and extending the knowledge of Baghdad and the Islamic east before the catastrophe brought to this region by the Mongols. She was following in the wake of other great scholars who responded to the (earlier) disruption and destruction, wrought by the Crusaders and their occupation, by carrying 'the knowledge' westwards through Syria and the Levant to Egypt. It is improbable that Fātimah, who travelled so much and so widely, did not travel to the Haramayn, but the sources do not record that she did the ḥajj. Her extraordinary toil (she was attending hadith classes from the age of four or seven) and achievement are a fitting summary of this chapter.

Following an overview of the venues where women (and men) studied hadith, the different ways in which hadiths were passed from teachers to students, and the documentation that accompanied this, I present a brief sketch of the scholarly career of Fātimah bint Sa’d al-Khayr. The map accompanying this sketch should give some sense, both of the physical effort of covering such distances at that time, and of the ‘travel networks’ among

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1 AL-DHAHABI, Siyar a’lam al-nubalā’, xviii. 233.
scholars. While the sources do not specify the route of scholars' journeys, the line of travel as shown follows well-established trade routes and so is fairly reliable – Sa'd al-Khayr, the father, was a merchant as well as a muḥaddith.

VENUES

The sources record that ḥadith classes were sometimes held in shops whose owners were scholars of ḥadith or interested in ḥadith. This practice was very popular in the early period (there are examples from Kufah, Basrah, Baghdad, Wāṣīt and Damascus), but there are also examples from later centuries. Gardens or orchards and farms were also used for ḥadith classes, but we will mention these in a later chapter. Ribāṭs, typically located on the edge of cities, functioned as retreats where people would go to deepen their knowledge and understanding, and strengthen their practice, of the religion. Ḥadith classes were a core element of the teaching and well-attended, specially in the later period. Ribāṭ Qalānīṣī (Damascus) was perhaps the most important one, where ḥadith classes were held regularly and well attended by both men and women. Shaykh Ahmad ibn ʿAlī al-Sulaimān’s ribāṭ in Damascus was also popular: Shaykhah Rabī’ah bint ʿAlī ibn Maḥfūẓ ibn Ṣaṣrā studied Ḥadīth ʿAbū ʿAmr ʿUthmān ibn Muḥammad al-Samargāndī there in 572. Khadijah bint Abī Bakr ibn Saḥmān al-Wāṣīz al-Ḥamāwī studied, in a class of twenty students, Abādīth Tālūt of Abū ʿUthmān Tālūt ibn ʿAbbād al-Sayrafi al-Bāṣrī (d. 238) with ʿAbd al-Jalīl ibn Abī Ghālib ibn Abī l-Ma’ālī al-Surayjānī in a Damascus ribāṭ in 610. Åsiyah bint Muḥam-

1 An example: Asmāʾ bint Ahmad ibn ʿAlam ibn Māmūd ibn ʿUmar al-Ḥarrānī attended a class of 17 students on K. al-Adab of Al-Bayhaqī (d. 458) with Zayn al-Dīn Ayyūb ibn Nīmāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Nīmāh al-Maqdisī in his shop in the book-sellers’ market in Damascus in 724.

2 Ribāṭ originally a ‘border stronghold or fortress’. The duty to guard the frontiers of Islam is strongly urged in several Prophetic ḥadīths; many eminent Companions served as sentries in the ribāṭs. 3 LEBER ET AL., Muʿjam al-samarāʾāt al-Dimashqīyyah, 305–06. 4 Ibid., 119, 290.
mad ibn ʿAlī al-Dimashqī al-İskāf studied Amāli Ibn Bishrān of Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Mālik ibn Muḥammad ibn Bishrān (d. 430) with %Dīya% al-Dīn ʿĪsā Abū Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Maghārī in Ribāt al-Qalānīsī in 703.¹

However, in all periods, the principal venues where women studied ḥadīth were their own or relatives’ houses, or the houses of others, and in mosques and schools.

**Houses**

Women’s study of ḥadīth began in their homes if anyone from the family or from outside would teach them there. The teachers could be men or women. Sometimes the women students would attend classes in the teachers’ houses, a practice that has lasted to our time. I give a few examples from the later periods, as found in the sources.

It is recorded that in Damascus in the year 685, the shaykhah Umm Muḥammad Āminah bint al-İmām al-Żāhīd Taqī al-Dīn Abī Ishaq ʿĪbrāhīm ibn ʿAlī ʿĀḥmad ibn Faḍl al-Weiṣīṭiyah al-Dimashqīyyah (d.740), studied at home with her father al-Fawāʾid al-Muktafazah wa-l-Fawāʾid al-Multaqatīḥ, containing the hadiths of Abū l-Fath ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿĀḥmad ibn Abī l-Fath al-Khīrāqī (d. 579), selected by Muḥammad ibn Makkī ibn Abī l-Rajāʾ ibn al-Faḍl.² In Qaṣyūn in Damascus in 718, Malikah bint al-Jamāl ibn ʿAlī studied K. al-Shukr li-1-lah taʿāla of Ibn Abī 1-Dunyā (d. 281) with her maternal grandfather Abū Bakr ibn Zayn al-Dīn Abī l-ʿAbbās ʿĀḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Dāʾīm al-Maqdīsī in his house.³ She studied, also with him and in his house, K. al-Karam wa-l-jūd wa-l-sakẖāʾ al-nūfūs of Abū Shaykh Muḥammad ibn al-Husayn al-Barjālānī (d. 238).⁴

Among those who attended classes in the houses of others is Asmāʾ bint Abī Bakr ibn Yūnus al-Dimashqīyyah (d. 691). She studied the Hadīth Quss Sāʾidah al-Jyāṭī in the narration of Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn ʿĀḥmad ibn ʿĪbrāhīm al-Muʿaddīl al-Rāzī (d. 525), with Jaʿfar ibn ʿAlī ibn Ḥibatillāh al-Hamādānī. in

¹Ibid., 142, 149. ²Ibid., 67–68, 149. ³Ibid., 57, 61. ⁴Ibid., 106–07.
the house of Ibn al-Hilāl in 635.\(^1\) Another example is ʿAdliyyah bint Abī Bakr ibn ʿĀdīdh, the grandmother of Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-ʿAqrabānī. She studied *Forty Hadiths* of Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Aslām ibn Sālim al-Kindī al-Ṭūsī (d. 242) with Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Ḥazm in the house of a fellow-student, Ismāʿīl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Sālim al-Khābbāz.\(^2\) Sometimes student and teacher were both women and the teacher’s house was the venue: for example, Khāṭūn bint ʿAbdillāh studied the sixth part of *Al-Fawāʾid al-Muntaqāh al-Gharaʾibʾan al-Shuyūkh al-Sawāʾil,* narrated by Abī Tāhir Muḥammad ibn Abīl-Raḥmān al-Mukhallīṣ, selected by Abū l-Fath ibn Abī l-Fawāris, with the aged shaykhah Umm al-Fīyān ʿAntamah bint al-Shaykh Abū l-Fath al-Mufarrīj ibn Ṭālī ibn Maslamah (d. ca. 630) in her house in Damascus in 628.\(^3\) Then again the class might be held in a house other than that of either student or teacher: for example, ʿĀminah bint Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Rājīh studied *Amāli Abī Bakr Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān ibn al-Ḥārith al-Bāghidī al-Wāṣīṭī* with Shaykhah Umm Muḥammad Ḥadiyyah bint ʿAlī ibn ʿAskar al-Baghdādī (d. 712) and Saʿd al-Dīn Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad ibn Saʿd ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Maqqīsī (d. 721) in the house of Shaykh Shams al-Dīn Abīl-Raḥmān ibn Tāj al-Dīn Abīl-Raḥmān ibn ʿUmar Ibn Ṭawād al-Maqqīsī in 710.\(^4\)

The scale of the women’s efforts with ḥadīth study in private homes may be gauged from the list transcribed below of the women who, with Ṭaqī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ṭarkhān ibn Abī l-Ḥasan al-Dimashqī, were teaching a very large class in the house in Damascus of Shaykh Muwaffaq al-Dīn in 627. The class was on some of the ḥadīths of al-Dībājī and others.\(^5\) Most of the teachers were women – it is likely, as the names show, that they were family of the house-owner. I have not transcribed the

names of the students (there are too many), but I counted among them 24 women. A copy of the document itself is on the following page.

Umm Ahmad Amínah
Umm ‘Abdillah Khadijah bt. Shaykh Abí ‘Umar b.
Qudámah
Umm Hamzah Sárah bt. Ubaydilláh b. Ahmad b.
Muhammad b. Qudámah
Muhammad b. Qudámah
Umm Ibrahim Ásiyah bt. Shujáh
Umm Muhammad Zaynab bt. Ahmad b. Ubaydullah b.
Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Qudámah
Umm ‘Abd al-Rahmán bint ‘Abd al-Rahmán b. ‘Abd al-Wáhid al-Maqdisí
Umm Muhammad Sáfiyyah and Umm Muhammad
Zaynab bt. Muhammad b. Ibrahim b. Sa’d b. ‘Abdilláh
al-Maqdisí
Umm ‘Abd al-Rahmán bt. ‘Abd al-Rahmán b. ‘Abd al-Wáhid
al-Maqdisí

Umm Sulaymán ‘Á’ishah
Umm Ahmad Sáfiyyah and
Umm Muhammad Fátimah
bt. Shaykh Muwaffaq al-Dín
b. Qudámah
Umm Ahmad Sáfiyyah bt. Ahmad b. Umar b.
Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Qudámah
Umm ‘Abdilláh Ásiyah and
Umm Muhammad Fátimah
bt. Muhammad b. Khalf b. Rajih
Umm ‘Umar Fátimah bt. ‘Abd al-Dá’im b. Ni’mah
Umm Muhammad Zaynab
and Umm Ahmad Ásiyah
bt. ‘Abd al-Wáhid b. Ahmad
b. ‘Abd al-Rahmán b.
Ismá’il b. Mansúr
Umm Ahmad Zaynab and
Umm ‘Abdilláh Fátimah bt.
Makkí b. ‘Áli al-Harrání
Umm Muhammad Sáfiyyah
and Umm Muhammad
Zaynab bt. Muhammad b.
Ibrahim b. Sa’d b. ‘Abdilláh
al-Maqdisí

Names of women teachers, extracted and transcribed from the sama‘ shown on the next page.
Samāʾ of a very large class on some of the ḥadiths of al-Dibājī and others, held in the house in Damascus of Shaykh Muwaffaq al-Dīn in 627.
Mosques

Since the beginning of Islam mosques have had a central role in the transmission of knowledge and, formally and informally, served as schools for the community. 1 The Prophet’s mosque in Madinah was the first madrasa in Muslim history. The Companions taught in the main mosques in Makkah, Madinah, Kufah, Basrah, Damascus, Jerusalem and Egypt. After them, the Successors did the same. Later Abū Ḥanīfah, his students and others scholars did likewise. Sometimes in a single mosque many teachers would hold classes, each at a different pillar of the mosque. Particularly well-known and revered teachers attracted huge numbers of students. 2

Women attended the mosques as the men attended. Hind bint Usayd ibn Hudayr al-Anṣāriyyah learnt sūrah Qāf from hearing the Prophet recite it in the prayer. Ibn Jābir and ‘Uthmān ibn Abī 1-Ātūkah say: ‘Umm al-Dardāʾ was an orphan under the guardianship of Abū l-Dardāʾ; she used to come to the mosques with Abī l-Dardāʾ in two garments [i.e. her head was not covered] and she prayed in the men’s rows, and used to sit in the circles of the teachers learning the Qurʾān, until Abū l-Dardāʾ asked her one day to join the women’s rows. 3

One of the famous mosques where women regularly attended ḥadīth classes was Jāmiʿ al-Ḥanābīlah, also known as al-Jāmiʿ al-Muẓaffarī in Ẓalihīyyah in Qāṣīyūn, Damascus. The building of the mosque started in 598. Dr. Muḥammad Mutṭīʿ al-Ḥāfidh has written a 720-page history of this mosque, 4 including in it records of the ḥadīth classes held there, with the names of

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1 This is true of all communities, mainstream and minorities; for an interesting account of the use of mosques by women of the Ibbāḍī tradition, see Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Muṭṭiʿ al-Muḥāfīdh, Taʾrīkh al-maṣābīḥ al-kabīr, 406–07, and Badriyyah bint Ḥamad al-Shaqsīyyah, al-Sīrah al-zakīyyah li-l-marʿah al-Ibbāḍiyah, 21.
2 For examples, see ʿAbd al-Khāṭīb, Usūl al-ḥadīth, 145.
3 Al-Bukhārī, al-Taʾrīkh al-ṣagīr, i. 193; Al-Dhahabi, Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ, iv. 278.
the many women who studied different compilations of hadith. Another prestigious teaching venue was the great Umayyad Mosque in Damascus: here too women students attended the same classes as men. For example: Asma' bint Aḥmad ibn ʿAlām ibn Māhmūd ibn ʿUmar al-Ḥarrānī studied, in a class of 20, al-Majālis al-khamsah of Abū Ṭāhir Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Sīlafi al-ʿAṣbahānī (d. 576) with Ismā'il ibn ʿUmar ibn Abī l-Faḍl ibn Naṣr al-Ḥamāwī ʿḌiyāʾ al-Dīn in al- Jazeera al-Amawi in 724; 1 Qaṭḫū al-Rūmiyyah studied, in a class of 43, the third part of K. al-Qadāʾ of Abū l-Ḥārith Surayj ibn Yūnus ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Shuʿayh al-Balkhī (d. 235) with four teachers – Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn al-Zakī ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Yūsuf al-Mizzī, ʿAlām al-Dīn al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Birzālī, Shams al-Dīn Muhammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ghanāʾīm al-Muḥandis and Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd al-Ghānī al-Raqīqī al- Jazeera al-Amawi in 733. 2

Another important mosque where women attended hadith classes was the Jazeera of Bayṯ al-Abbar (Syria). An example is Ruqayyah bint Dāwūd ibn ʿUmar ibn Yūsuf ibn Yahyā al-Shāfiʿī, who studied – in a class of 22 – K. al-Karam wa-l-jiid wa sakḥā al-nuṣūs of Abū Shaykh Muḥammad ibn al-Husayn al-Barjalānī (d. 238) with Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Musal-lam ibn Salmān al-Irbali, in 631. 3

Schools

Women also attended hadith classes in schools. The registers of attendance show that most such classes were attended by male and female students together, and their teachers, sometimes of the same class, were likewise both male and female.

Among the famous schools where the women attended hadith classes in large numbers was al-Madrasah al-ʿUmariyyah, founded by Shaykh Abū ʿUmar al-Maqdisi in 557 in ʿṢāliḥiyyah in Damascus. Registers of attendance at this school have been

1 Leder et al., Muʿjam al-samtāt al-Dimashqīyah, 307, 106. 2 Ibid., 93, 478. 3 Ibid., 106, 307.
compiled in the history of it by Dr. Muḥammad Muṭṭi al-Ḥāfiẓ. Among the earliest documents relates to the year 604, when the famous teacher of ḥadīth Abū Ḥāfṣ ʿUmar ibn Tabrazad taught several books of ḥadīth including Amāli al-Qādī Abī Yaʿlā al-Farrāʾ. The class was attended by Khadijah bint al-Shaykh al-ʿImād Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbd al-ʿĀdīd al-Maqdisiyyah and other women in a class of 124 students.1

Another famous Damascus school of ḥadīth was Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Nūriyyah, where the shaykhah Umm Muḥammad Āminah bint al-Imām al-Zāḥid Taqī al-Dīn Abī ʾIshāq Ibrāhīm ʿAli ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭi al-Wāsitiyyah studied K. Tuhfah ʿId al-Fitr of Zāhir ibn Ṭāhir ibn Muḥammad al-Shāḥāmī al-Muʿaddīl (d. 533) and Ḥadīth Abū Ṭāhir al-Ziyādī with ʿAli ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Dāwūd ibn al-ʿAṭṭār al-Dimashqī in 724.2


In another school, the Madrasah al-Mismāriyyah Asma bint Abī Bakr ibn Ḥamzah al-Mardawī studied, in a class of 19, Ḥadīth Bakr ibn Aḥmad al-Shirāzī, in 688 – her teacher was Zaynab bint Mackī al-Ḥarrānī (d. 688).4

In the sixth century, perhaps the most important centre in Damascus for learning ḥadīth was Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafīyyah, where, later on, renowned scholars like Abū l-Ḥajjāj al-Mīzī (d. 742) would teach. Women also attended classes there in large number. For example, Asma bint al-Imām Taqī al-Dīn

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1Ibid., 138, 289. 2Ibid., 125, 149. 3samāʿāt in Majlis al-Bīṭāqah from Amāli Ḥamzah al-Kinānī, MS Dār al-Kutub al-Zāhirīyyah, Damascus. 4LEDER et al., Muṣjam al-samāʿāt al-Dimashqīyyah, 50, 215.
Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Jābir studied in a class of 28 the *Forty Hadiths* of Ḥasan ibn Sufyān ibn ʿĀmir al-Shaybānī (d. 303), with the head of the school, Ḥāfiẓ Abū l-Ḥajjāj Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Mizzī in 741.¹

Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Diyāʾīyyah was another school of ḥadīth in Damascus. Here Shaykhah Asmāʾ bint Muhammad ibn al-Kamāl ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Maqdisīyyah studied, in a class of 34, Amāṭī al-Naqqāsh with the most famous teacher of ḥadīth at that time, Fakhr al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn ʿAlī mad al-Bukhārī in 660.²

WAYS OF RECEIVING ḤADĪTH

Ḥadīth experts distinguish eight ways of receiving a ḥadīth, with corresponding formulas that should prefix the transmission of the ḥadīth to someone else. Women made as good use of each of these eight ways as did men:

1 *Samaʾ* (hearing)

The high tradition has been to hear the ḥadīth, together with the chain of narrators connecting it to the Prophet, spoken by the teacher. About *samaʾ*, hearing the words of the teacher spoken from memory or from the teacher’s book, Ibn al-Salāḥ says: “This type is the highest of all according to the majority of the scholars. Whoever hears from the shaykh, he can say: “I heard (ṣamiʾtu) so-and-so say” or “he narrated to me (ḥadath-nî)” or “he narrated to us” or “he informed us (akhbar-nā)” or “he provided to us information (anbaʾ-ṇā)”.³ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī affirms, from this range of expressions, that “the highest expression is to say: “I heard”.⁴

When reliable books of ḥadīths were compiled, people started ‘hearing’ these books from their teachers, with the chain of authority going back to the authors of these books and from them to the Prophet. This way has continued to our time.

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¹Ibid., 64, 216. ²Ibid., 111, 216. ³IBN AL-ŠALĀḤ, Muqaddimah, 80. ⁴AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, al-Kifāyah, 283.
Whether the books are small or large, the originals of the books (manuscripts) have a chain of references, starting with copyist(s) of the particular work and ending with its author(s); most also have an appendix documenting the occasions of *sama* with a list of those who attended. It is from such documentation that one realizes how commonly women attended these occasions, and often children also.

It was a controversy among scholars whether or at what age children could be counted as having 'heard' and therefore qualified to transmit hadith. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi discusses the controversy in detail and then concludes: 'The majority of scholars hold that hearing of ḥadīth is allowed even for those who are less than this age [five]. And that is the correct opinion according to us.' Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ says: 'What the practice of the later people of ḥadīth has been established on [i.e. the general rule for them] is that they write for a five-year-old or more that “he heard” and for less than five that “he attended or he was brought [to the assembly]”’. What is proper in [this matter] is that the condition of each [individual] child be examined: if we find him above the condition of one who does not comprehend what is said, we will validate his hearing [...].’ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ then gives an example of someone who narrated what he heard when he was a child, was questioned about it, and his account of what he understood not found wanting.

‘A‘īshah was certainly what we would call a child prodigy, and so her hearing of hadiths as a young girl may be considered out of the ordinary. But the examples of young girls listening to hadith and attending assemblies for that purpose, specially in the later centuries, are plentiful.

2 *al-ʿard*

The term *al-ʿard* (literally, ‘offering’) refers to reading out the text to the teacher. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ says: ‘It is the same whether you read out, or someone else reads and you are hearing [it being

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read out], or whether you hear [it being read out] from a book or from your memory, or whether the shaykh knows by heart what is being read out to him or he does not know but is [himself] holding his original or another reliable person in the class is holding it.\(^1\) Al-Khatīb says: 'Most fiqhā' and all the imāms of the knowledge [i.e. hadith] and āthār hold that reading to the teacher is like hearing from him.\(^2\) Imāms Mālik ibn Anas and Sufyān al-Thawrī also considered the reading by the teacher or the reading to him as the same.\(^3\)

The best and most usual expression to indicate reception through 'arrj is to say: 'I read to so-and-so'; or 'it was read to so-and-so and I was hearing and he approved it'. One may also use the same expression as for samā\(^c\) on condition of proper clarification: 'He narrated to us by our reading to him' or 'he informed us by our reading to him'.\(^4\) In later periods people used 'he narrated to us' for samā\(^c\) and 'he informed us' for 'arrj. Ibn al-Šalāh cites Muḥammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tamīmī al-Jawharī as saying: 'This is the opinion of most people of hadith, whose number cannot be counted. They made "he informed us" an indicator of saying "I read to him".\(^5\)

3 Ijāzah

Ijāzah is the teacher's formal permission to someone to narrate from him all of his narrations or his writings. The ijāzah can be of several kinds. (a) The teacher gives permission to a specified person for a specified thing, with words to the effect that 'I have given you permission [to transmit] such-and-such a book or what is contained in my list'. This is the highest type of ijāzah, and the later scholars are unanimous in allowing it.\(^6\)

(b) The teacher gives permission to a specified person for an unspecified thing, meaning: 'I have permitted to you all my narrations.' The majority among traditionists and jurists allow it.\(^7\)

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\(^1\)IBN AL-ŠALĀH, Muqaddimah, 82. \(^2\)AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDI, al-Kifāyah, 259–60. \(^3\)AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, 'Ulāmā bāb mā jā'ū fi l-ilm. \(^4\)IBN AL-ŠALĀH, Muqaddimah, 83. \(^5\)Ibid. \(^6\)Ibid., 90–92. \(^7\)Ibid., 92.
(c) That the teacher gives permission without specifying who or what is permitted; something like: 'I have given permission to all Muslims, or to everyone who has lived [and so could have heard from me] within my lifetime.' This kind of ījāzah ʿammah is disputed and usually disallowed without some limiting attribute.¹

About ījāzahs in general, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī says: 'The people differ regarding ījāz of hadiths. Some of them allow it, others do not. Those who accept it are more numerous. Then, of those who accept it, some differ regarding the obligation to act upon those ḥadīths [that have reached them in this way]. The Zāhirīs and some later scholars hold that it is not obligatory to act upon the contents of these ḥadīths because they are like unconnected chains, or they are like narrations from obscure people. The majority of the scholars say that it is obligatory to act upon them.'²

4 al-Munāwalah

Munāwalah (presentation) is that the teacher hands his original or what is in its place, to the student, or the student brings the original to the teacher, who then says words to the effect: 'This is my ḥadīth or my book, so narrate it'. The condition is that the teacher transfers control, either by making the student the new owner or by lending the text to him so he can copy from it and compare with it. The majority of earlier and later people affirm that it is not allowed, for narrating ḥadīths got through munāwalah, to use 'he narrated to us' or 'he informed us', unless the terms are sufficiently defined. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ says: 'The correct and chosen opinion, on which the practice of the majority of scholars is [based] — and it is preferred by the people of piety and accuracy — is that they disallow using the expressions "he narrated to us" or "informed us" or similar to that, unconditionally. Rather, one should detail it, so he should say, "So-and-so has informed us through munāwalah or ījāzah" or like that.'³

¹Ibid. ²AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, Al-Ḵifāyah, 311. ³Ibid., 101.
5 al-Mukātabah

The term *mukātabah* means correspondence whereby the teacher transmits a written copy of his ḥadīth to the student; if combined with explicit permission to narrate the ḥadīth from him, it becomes like an *ijāzah*. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ says: ‘Many great scholars of ḥadīth like Layth ibn Sa`d and Manṣūr allow in *mukātabah* use of the expression “he narrated to us” or “he informed us”. But the preferred way is of those who say “So-and-so wrote to me”. This is the correct way and appropriate to the people of caution. Similarly if he says “he informed [us] by writing”. An early example of a woman’s using correspondence is Umm ʿAbdillāh bint Abī Ḥāshim. She wrote to the Companion, al-Nu`mān ibn Bashir (d. 65) asking him what had passed on the tongue of Zayd ibn Khārijah in his last moments of life. In effect she was asking for a report of what al-Nu`mān ibn Bashir ‘heard’, and he wrote her a detailed letter in reply.

6 al-İslām

The term *İslām* is used where the teacher informs the student that this ḥadīth or this book is his hearing or narration from so-and-so without explicitly permitting that student to narrate it further. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ says, after mentioning the difference of opinion among scholars about this: ‘The preferred opinion is what has been mentioned by many scholars of ḥadīth that narration of [ḥadīth received like] that is not allowed.’

7 al-Waṣiyyah

*Waṣiyyah* is when the shaykh by a will at the time of his death or by other writing consigns his original(s) to a specific individual. Some scholars have allowed narration on the authority of a *waṣiyyah*, but the majority, in the absence of explicit permission (i.e. an *ijāzah*) from the shaykh, do not allow it.

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8 al-Wijādah

Wijādah (literally, ‘finding’) is a person’s discovering a ḥadīth or book, recognizing its author by the handwriting, then saying: ‘I found in the handwriting of So-and-so...’ In this case he is not allowed to use the expression ‘So-and-so informed us’ unless he has an ijāzah. An example of wijādah, from the time of the Companions’ Successors, is that Hammām ibn Yaḥyā narrated that the mother of Sulaymān al-Yashkurī brought out his book, and it was read out to Thābit, Qatādah, Abū Bishr, al-Ḥasan and Muṭarrif. Then they, except for Thābit, narrated the whole of that; Thābit narrated from it only one ḥadīth. Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb al-Waddāḥ ibn Ḥāssān, where he says: ‘Amr ibn Shimar has narrated to us from Abū Ja’far Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī, from ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn, from Jābir ibn ‘Abdillāh, that when the Prophet – salla Allāhu ‘alaihi wa-sallam – sat down on the pulpit he would say...’

Documentation of the samā‘ and ijāzah

It has long been an established tradition among the scholars of ḥadīth to preserve samā‘s and ijāzahs. These documents are a precious resource. The samā‘s, typically found appended to the book or written into its margins, contain a statement of the date and venue of the assembly, the name of the person(s) keeping the record and other details; description(s) of the teacher(s), a list of those who attended with their titles, kunyabs, names and genealogy; also comments such as who and how many attended all the sessions in a course of study without missing any, those who missed something, even those who were dozing or talking in class. The reproductions should give some idea of what these samā‘s look like; they vary greatly in style, some being very formal and written in an accomplished

1 Ibid., 106. 2 AL-KHATĪB AL-BAGHDĀDI, al-Kifayah, 354. 3 Id., Taʾrikh Baghdād, xiv. 440–41.
hand, others in the style of notes squeezed in where place could be found and less easy to read.

To get an *ijāzah* a common practice was to circulate a formal letter of request or *istid'āt*. Below, I give partial translation of two *samā's* mentioning the shaykhah, Umm Muhammad Aminah bint Ibrāhīm al-Wāṣītiyyah; in one, she is recorded as *attending*, the other as *hearing*. She was born in about 664.¹

She attended, when she was three years old, a class on *Forty Hadiths of 'Abd al-Khāliq ibn Zāhir ibn Tāhir al-Shāhīmī* (d. 549), compiled by 'Alī al-Shahrastānī, with the shaykh, Badr al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ Umar ibn Muhammad ibn Abī Sa'd ibn Aḥmad al-Kīrmānī al-Naysābūrī, who heard the book from Abū Bakr al-Qāsim ibn Abī Sa'd al-Ṣaffār, in al-Jāmī of al-Muẓaffarī in Mt. Qāṣyūn on Saturday 25 Ṣafar 667 with the reading of Najm al-Dīn Mūsā ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Yahyā al-Shaqrāwī, and he gave her permission.²

She heard *Juz* Ḥanbal ibn Iṣḥāq from her father Abū Iṣḥāq Ibrāhīm ibn 'Alī Aḥmad ibn Fadl al-Wāṣītī, by his hearing from al-Shaykh Abū 'Abdillāh Muhammad ibn Abī l-Barākāt ibn Abī l-Sa'ādār al-Harīmī, by his narration from Abū 'Shākir Yahyā ibn Yūsuf al-Saqlāṭūnī, by his hearing from Abū l-Ḥasan ibn Shādhān al-Baghdādī al-Bazzāz, from Abū 'Amr Uthmān ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Sammāk, from Abū 'Alī Ḥanbal ibn Iṣḥāq al-Shaybānī. That was on Sunday 17 Jumādā al-Ūlā 673 at the house of the shaykh in Mt. Qāṣyūn in Damascus.²

In both translations above, the names of others attending the class are omitted. Next, translation of an *istid'āt* and *ijāzah* document (see photocopy on the next page):³

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

It is requested from the favour of the master of the people of ḥadīth, — may God increase their number — to grant *ijāzah* to the *jaqīh* Abū 'Umar Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Qudāmah, for his

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son 'Abdullah, his daughter Zaynab, the son of his son Ahmad ibn Umar, for Muhammad ibn Khafaf ibn Râjîh ibn Bilal ibn Isâ, for his son Abî l-Path Ahmad, daughter of Asiyyah, and for their mother Aminah bint Muhammed ibn Muhammed ibn Qudûmah, for all the hadiths that they received by hearing and then received by jiâzah, and the rest of what is allowed for them to narrate, without them [the shaykhs, giving permission and] being responsible for whatever invalidates the jiâzah. May they continue doing service [to the people]. Written in the last ten [days] of Safar in 579. And praise is due to God alone, and His Mercy on Muhammad the Prophet and His peace.

I have given them jiâzah, may God guide them to His obedience, in all that they asked jiâzah for, after avoiding what can weaken an jiâzah. May God guide us and them to what pleases Him. Written by Muhammad ibn Hamzah ibn Muhammad ibn Abî l-Saqîr on 24 Safar, 579 in Damascus, while praising God, Glorified is He, and praying for mercy and peace on our master Muhammad, his family and his Companions.

Like that I [too] say [that] I have given them -- may God increase their number, and guide them [to] what pleases Him in this world and the next world -- permission for all my masâmi'ât and jiâzât on the way of the salaf, may God have mercy on them. It is written by Barâkât ibn Ibrahim ibn Tâhir ibn Barâkât al-Khushû'î al-Qurashi. That was on Wednesday 12 Rabî' al-Âkhir 579.
Querying *ijāzahs*

The scholars discussed and queried *ijāzahs* both assiduously and responsibly. They did not allow narration unless the *ijāzah* was confirmed. Here is an example:

The great scholar of ḥadīth Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Yaʿmūrī ibn Sayyid al-Nās [d. 734] was asked: Who gave *ijāzah* to Ruqayyah bint Ismāʿīl ibn al-Anmāṭī [d. 676]?

Then he answered: As for Ruqayyah bint Ismāʿīl al-Anmāṭī, I have got some *ijāzahs* with her father’s handwriting in the year 612 and around that [year]. In none of these *ijāzahs*, is she mentioned. Rather in those *ijāzahs* are mentioned her brother Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Anmāṭī, our Shaykh and his sister Zaynab. There are *ijāzahs* of the year 614 where she [i.e. Ruqayyah] is mentioned. That means she was born around that time. And I have seen in the handwriting of ʿĪsā al-Anmāṭī [so] that I do not have any doubt of it:

‘It is requested from the masters, the imāms, to grant *ijāzah* for the people for whom the *ijāzah* is requested in the page opposite to this, and for Ruqayyah bint Ismāʿīl ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Anmāṭī. Everyone narrates all that is valid from their narration and words, and for them is the reward.’

It was dated at the end of Jumāda al-Ūlā year 614, and similarly, they grant *ijāzah* to ʿĀṣīf and Jumūṣah, both brothers and slaves of Ibn al-Anmāṭī with the group, whatever has been asked for, according to the conditions of *ijāzah*. May God benefit all thereby. Amen. Below that is:

‘I gave them *ijāzah*, may God guide them, to narrate what they have asked with the condition of its validity. Written by ʿAbd al-Ṣamad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Faḍl al-Anṣārī.’

Below that is:

Like that says Muḥammad ibn Ḥibatullāḥ, ibn Muḥammad ibn Muʿamml al-Shirāzī on 26 Muḥarram year 615 in Damascus.

Then Abū l-Faṭḥ ibn Sayyid al-Nās records other *ijāzahs* for Ruqayyah with full documentation and dates to make it clear that she had *ijāzah* from those shaykhs.¹

FĀTIMAH BINT SA'D AL-KHAYR (?525–600)

Fātimah’s father, Sa’d al-Khayr, was himself a scholar. One of his eminent students, al-Samʿānī (author of al-Ansāb), describes him as muḥaddith, faqīh, and righteous. He travelled from his home-city of Valencia, at the western end of the Islamic world, all the way to China. The reason for his migration is not given. It is most probable that as Muslim power in Spain waned further, Christian rulers were emboldened to make life for their Muslim subjects increasingly intolerable and for learned, pious Muslims impossible. Al-Samʿānī¹ says that Sa’d al-Khayr faced much hardship, crossed many seas and, through trade, attained considerable wealth. He studied with many teachers in Baghdad, Isfahan, Hamadan and other places. He had several daughters (then, much later, a son) and was most particular about their attending hadīth classes, travelling with them extensively and repeatedly to different teachers. He also taught them himself.

Fātimah’s year of birth is given as 525; 522 is more likely.² The place is given only as ‘in China’, i.e. east of Kashghar. She began very young: a sama‘ records her hearing al-Daraqutnī’s K al-Duʿāfā al-matrūkīn in Dhū l-Qa‘dah 529; a sama‘ at the end of a copy of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī’s al-Jāmī‘ li-akhlāq al-rāwī wa adāb al-samī‘ records her hearing it in Rabī‘ al-Awwal and Rabī‘ al-‘Akhīr 529. Al-Mundhiri notes that Sa’d al-Khayr took her several times to the same teachers to consolidate her knowledge.³

In Isfahan she studied with Fātimah al-Jūzdāniyyah, main narrator in her time of the compilations of al-Ṭabarānī. Fātimah Sa’d al-Khayr heard from her all of Mu‘jam al-kabīr (printed now in 37 volumes) and Mu‘jam al-saghīr (2 volumes).

¹ AL-SAMʿĀNĪ, al-Ansāb, in loco ‘al-balansī’. ² IBN NUQṬAH, al-Taqyīd, 409. ³ AL-MUNDHIRI, Takmilah, ii. 15.
The study journeys of Fatimah bint Sa'd al-Khayr
In Baghdad, where it appears she was settled for a time, among her principal teachers were Abū l-Qāsim Ḥibatullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥusayn, main narrator of Ibn Hanbal’s Musnad, Abū l-Qāsim Zāhir ibn Ṭāhir al-Shaḥhāmī, Abū Ghālib Ahmad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Bannā’, and others travelling to the capital. The list of the books she mastered would be long indeed. After marriage, she moved with her husband to Damascus and from there to Cairo.¹ Much of her teaching career was based in those two cities, and many scholars travelled there expressly to study with her.

Fāṭimah married Zayn al-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ʿIbrāhīm ibn Najā, one of her father’s students who clearly impressed. He was born in Damascus in 508, and described as pious, noble, high-minded, of praiseworthy character, exceptionally eloquent. He was called al-Wāʿīq for his fame as a preacher, and al-Raʾīs for the social standing he enjoyed through relations with the Ayyubid court: he served as secretary for Nūr al-Dīn. The historian Abū Shāma records that he was held in high esteem by both Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyubī (famous for recovering Jerusalem) and his successor. Yet, despite the great wealth that had come to him, al-Dhahabī reports that Ibn Najā, died so poor that his friends paid for his shroud.² There is no account of how he unburdened himself of so vast a fortune. Perhaps he was very generous in giving it away and successfully concealed the fact. He died in 599, a year before Fāṭimah.

Al-Dhahabī says: ‘She saw much honour and wealth.’ Yet, neither father, nor husband, nor Fāṭimah herself appear to have been distracted by that wealth into any indiscipline or indolence. To the end of her life, she remained active in diffusing her vast body of knowledge. Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl, later famed as Khaṭīb Mardā, carried to his home city her teaching of Musnad Abī Yaʿlā,³ Hadīth al-Khiraqī,⁴ Ziyāḍat Amālī ʿImām Mālik,⁵ and

¹ AL-DHAHABI, Ta’rikh al-ʾIslām (sub anno 591–600), 461. ² Id., Siyar aʿlām al-nubala’, xxi. 393–96. ³ IBN ḤAJAR, al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas, i. 482–83. ⁴ Ibid., i. 263. ⁵ Ibid., ii. 114.
other works. Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Azzūn read with her al-Ṭabarānī’s Muṣjam al-kabīr, as did Diya’ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, who carried it to Damascus. ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abd al-Wāḥid ibn ‘Allāq studied with her Haddīth al-Qudūrī, Fawā’id Abū Nasr, and Juz‘ al-Ghīrī. His home-city was in Egypt. Her knowledge of haddīth passed to Tinnūs in Egypt through Abū l-Qāsim ibn Ḥusayn al-Qurashi al-Tinnīsī; to Hamadan through the jurist Abū Muḥammad Ishaq ibn Muḥammad al-Hamadānī; through Abū l-Ḥasan ibn al-Qāsim al-Jītī to Jīt (near Nablus). It is not practical to try to list here all her students or all the places they came from and returned to with her teaching. The entry for Fāṭimah bint Sa‘d al-Khayr in the Dictionary that I have compiled of the Muḥaddīḥat runs to 20 pages.

She died in Cairo in the year 600, at the age of 78. She was buried below the mountain called Muqatta‘am.

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Courtyard, al-Jāmi‘ al-Ḥanābilah al-Muẓaffari, Damascus. (Photo: Yahya Michot)

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1 Ibid. 2 Ibid., ii. 383-84. 3 Ibid., i. 322. 4 Ibid., i. 329. 5 Ibid., ii. 212. 6 AL-MUNDHIRI, Takmilah, ii. 50. 7 Ibid., iii. 283. 8 Ibid., ii. 14.
The women's teachers

The women were not restricted to learning from only other women. It appears rather that they studied with whoever they had the opportunity to study with. The minimum required of women in looking for teachers is well set out by Ibn al-Jawzī. He says:

The woman has [the same] duty as the man; so it is [incumbent] upon her to learn about her duties and obligations until she is firm and sure how to perform them. If she has a father or brother, or husband or any blood relation who can teach her the obligations of the religion and instruct her in how to do her duties, that will suffice her. If there is no one there [among close family] she must ask others [outside the family] and learn from them. If she is able to find a woman who can teach her, she will learn from her. If not, she will learn from the old and elderly men without privacy: and she will suffice with what is necessary [for her to know]. [After that] whenever any new situation arises about her religion she should ask and not be shy; for God does not shy from the truth.¹

For women who desired to go further or to specialize, it was permitted to study with younger teachers if the teaching was done in an open way, within the Shari'ah bounds. Typically, the women would begin with the knowledgeable women or men of the household, then continue with local teachers outside the family circle, and then to such teachers as might be visiting the locality, and finally teachers in other towns and cities. Some details follow in the examples below. The examples have been

¹IBN AL-JAWZĪ (d. 597), *Aḥkām al-nisāʾ*, 131.
chosen principally to demonstrate that this practice was consistent in all periods and in different regions.

TEACHERS WITHIN THE FAMILY CIRCLE

From the outset women learnt ḥadīth from their mothers – the Companions taught their daughters, who were their Successors. ‘Abd Rabbih ibn al-Ḥakam has narrated from the daughter of Ruqayqah from her mother that she said: ‘When the Prophet – salla-l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam – came seeking victory at Ta‘if, he came to me [...]’\(^1\) and then she mentioned the whole ḥadīth. Hubābah bint ‘Ajlān also got ḥadīth from her mother. She has narrated from Hubābah bint ‘Ajlān from her mother, Umm Ḥaṣf, from Ṣafiyyah bint Jarīr, from Umm Ḥakim bint Waddā' that she said: ‘I heard the Messenger of God – salla-l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam – saying: The prayer of a father passes the curtain’,\(^2\) meaning that it reaches God directly, without being mediated or impeded. Similarly, in later centuries women learnt from their mothers: Altī bint Naṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad learnt ḥadīth from her mother, the great muḥaddithah, Umm Muḥammad ‘Ā‘ishah bint Sayf al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn ʿĪsā al-Ḥanāfī (d. 793). One of the ḥadīth works that she studied with her was Fawā'id of Abū Ahmad al-Ḥākim (d. 378) in Muḥarram 793 in the Madrasah al-Khatūnīyyah al-Burānīyyah.\(^3\)

Among women from the earlier period who studied with their fathers are: Buhaysah al-Fuzārīyyah (tabi‘īyah), who narrated from her father from the Prophet;\(^4\) Jabalah bint Muṣaffah al-‘Āmirīyyah (tabi‘īyyah), who narrated from her father from ‘Alī;\(^5\) and Ḥafṣah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq.\(^6\) In the later centuries: Hind bint Ja‘far ibn ‘Abd al-Razzāq (5th c.)

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studied with her father;\textsuperscript{1} Umm Salamah Āminah studied with her father, Abū Saʿīd ʿHasan ibn ʾIshāq ibn Bulbul al-Naysābūrī (d. 348),\textsuperscript{2} Wara\textsuperscript{2} studied with her father ʿAbdillāh ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Khallāl (5th c.),\textsuperscript{3} Luʾluʾah studied the whole al-ʿArbaʿīn ḥadīth min al-musūwāt mustakhrqah ʿan thiqāt al-rwāt of Ḥāfiz Ibn ʿAsākir, with her famous father, Shaykh ʿImād al-Dīn ibn ʿAsākir al-Dimashqī in 718,\textsuperscript{4} Amat al-Raḥīm al-Yūnīniyyah (d. 739) studied the women’s ḥadīth from Muṣnad of ʿAbd al-Hamīd ibn Ḥanbal with her father, the great muḥaddith and jurist Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Yūnīni (8th c.);\textsuperscript{5} in India the great scholar of ḥadīth and fiqh, Khadijah al-Dīhlawīyyah (early 14th c.) studied ḥadīth and other subjects with her father, Ḥāfiz Muḥammad ʾIshāq al-Dīhlawī (d. 1262).

There are women who received knowledge of ḥadīth from their grandmothers. For example, Āminah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Laylā narrated from her grandmother Umm Laylā that she said: ‘We pledged allegiance to the Prophet – ṣalla-l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam.’\textsuperscript{6} The muḥaddithah and jurist Fāṭimah bint al-Mundhir ibn al-Zubayr got many ḥadīths from her grandmother ʿAsmā\textsuperscript{2} bint Abī Bakr, which she then passed on to her students.\textsuperscript{7} A later muḥaddithah, ʿAsmā\textsuperscript{2} bint Abī Bakr ibn Hamzah al-Mardāwī studied Ḥadīth Abū Bakr ibn ʾAbd al-Shīrāzī with her grandmother, Zaynab bint Makkī ibn ʿAlī ibn Kāmil al-Harrānī (the teacher of al-Mīzzi, Ibn Taymiyyah and al-Dhahabī) in Madrasah al-Mismariyyah in Jumādah al-Ulā 688.\textsuperscript{8} She also studied other books with her.\textsuperscript{9} Umm al-Khāyr bint ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Ẓāhirah al-Qurashi studied Nuskhah Abī Muḥāwiyyah, Nuskhah Bakrāʾ bint ʾIṣa and al-Ḥasābī of al-Baghawī

\textsuperscript{1} IBN ʿAṢĀKIR, Taʾrīkh Dimashq, (tarājim al-nisāʾ) 436. \textsuperscript{2} See the account of al-Ḥasan ibn ʾIshāq ibn Bulbul in IBN AL-ʿADĪM, Baghyat al-talah, 2295–98. \textsuperscript{3} AL-DHĀHABI, Taʾrīkh al-ʾIslām (sub anno 561–70), 402. \textsuperscript{4} See IBN ʿAṢĀKIR, al-ʿArbaʿīn ḥadīth min al-musūwāt mustakhrqah ʿan al-rwāt, 228. \textsuperscript{5} AL-DHĀHABI MAʾJAM al-shayāḥ, i. 189. \textsuperscript{6} IBN ḤIBBĀN, K. al-Thiqāt, iv. 63. \textsuperscript{7} Ibid., v. 301. \textsuperscript{8} See LEDER et al., Muʾjam al-samāʿ at al-Dimashqīyyah, 50, 215. \textsuperscript{9} See ibid., 139, 215.
(d. 494) with her maternal grandmother, Umm al-Hasan bint Aḥmad ibn Qāsim al-Harāzī in Makkah in 762.¹

Among the women who received ḥadīth from their grandfathers is Munyah bint Ubayd ibn Abī Barazah al-Aslāmī. Umm al-Aswad has narrated from Munyah bint ‘Ubayd that she narrated from her grandfather Abū Barazah that he said: ‘The Messenger of God – sallalla-hu wa-sallam – said: Whoever consoles a woman who has lost her child, God will grant him a cloak to wear in paradise.’² Umm Abān Hind bint al-Wāziʿ ibn Zārīʿ also received ḥadīth from her grandfather, the Companion, Zārīʿ ibn Āmir al-ʿAbdi.³ Duḥaybah and Saḥiyah, daughters of ‘Ulaybah al-ʿAnbarīyyah, got ḥadīth from their grandfather Ḥarmalah ibn ʿAbdillāh al-ʿAnbarī, a Companion, and also from their father’s grandmother, Qaylah bint Makhramah, another Companion.⁴ Sitt al-ʿArab bint Muhammād ibn Fakhr al-Dīn al-Bukhārī (d. 690) studied a lot of books of ḥadīth with her grandfather Abū l-Ḥasan Fakhr al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn al-Bukhārī (d. 767, a teacher of al-Mizzī and Ibn Taymiyyah). Among the books she studied with him are: the ʿṢābiʿ Muslim, al-Sunan al-kubra of al-Bayhaqī and Fawaʾid Sammīyāh.⁵

Marriage did not stop women from continuing their study of the Sunnah. Indeed, some of them turned to their husbands to improve their store of knowledge (examples of husbands learning from wives will come in a later chapter). Buqayrah, wife of the great Companion Šalāmān al-Fārīṣi received and narrated ḥadīth from him.⁶ So also did Ĵumānah bint al-Musayyab ibn Najabah, wife of the Companion Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān.⁷ Similarly, Zaynab bint Kaʿb ibn ʿUjrāh, wife of the famous scholar among the Companions, Abū ʿṢādiq al-Khudrī, received ḥadīth from him, copiously recorded in the major


Women received hadith also from other members of the family and household – brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles, on the father’s or the mother’s side – and slaves received hadith from their masters or mistresses. The great muḥaddithah and jurist, Umm Ḥudhayl Ḥafṣah bint Ṣirīn, sister of the renowned Muḥammad ibn Ṣirīn, received hadith from her master Anas ibn Mālik. Hishām ibn Ḥassān from Iyās ibn Muʿāwiyyah saying: ‘I did not meet anyone whom I can prefer over Ḥafṣah’. He was asked: ‘What about Ḥasan al-Ḫāṣrī and Muḥammad ibn Ṣirīn?’ He said: ‘As for me I do not prefer anyone over her. She learnt the Qurʾān by heart when she was twelve years old.’ Though born a slave, Ḥafṣah bint Ṣirīn made the best of the opportunity presented to her and became one of the most important scholars of her time. Some considered her superior to Ḥasan al-Ḫāṣrī. Her hadiths from her master are in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. For

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example, Āsim narrates from her from Anas that the Prophet said: ‘Plague is martyrdom for every Muslim.’

TEACHERS OF THE LOCALITY

After learning within the near circle, the women would study with other teachers in their town. Again, the example was set by the first generations of Muslims: the Successors in Madinah narrated from the Companions, including wives of the Prophet. Similarly, in every city where the Muslims settled, the women received knowledge of the Sunnah from the scholars in that locality. The first three centuries are full of examples, but here I will mention examples from the later centuries:

Jumuaḥ bint Ahmad ibn Muḥammad al-Mahmiyyah of Nishapur received the ḥadīth from the teachers of her town. Shaykhah Asmā bint Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Dimashqiyyah (d. 595) studied hadīth with the judge of her home town Abū l-Mufaḍḍal Yaḥyā ibn ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Qurashi and Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn Ḥamzah al-Sulami. Umm al-Raja’ Zubaydah bint Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad of Isfahan studied hadīth with the teachers of her town, Abū l-Ḥusayn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Dhakwānī, Abū ʿAbdillāh al-Qāsim ibn al-Faḍl al-Thaqafī and Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar ibn Aḥmad al-Simsār.


\[^{1}\text{AL-BUKHĀRĪ, } \text{Ṣahīḥ, Tibb, bāb mā yudhkaru fi al-tā’īn.} \]
\[^{2}\text{AL-SAYRAFĪNĪ (d. 641), } \text{al-Muntakhab min kitāb al-Siyāq li ta’rīkh Nayyābūr, } 183.\]
\[^{3}\text{AL-MUNDIRĪ, } \text{al-Takmilah li-wafayāt al-naqlah, i. } 314.\]
\[^{4}\text{AL-SAMʿĀNĪ, } \text{al-Muntakhab min Muʾjam al-shayyāk, iii. 1883.}\]

VISITING TEACHERS

Women also received hadīth from teachers visiting their towns. As before, the practice has the best precedent. On her way back from the Battle of the Camel, ʿAʾishah stayed as the guest of Ṣafiyyah bint al-Ḥārith al-ʿAbdārī in the house of ʿAbdullāh ibn Khalaf in Basrah. Here Ṣafiyyah and other women of Basrah crowded round her to learn the Sunnah from her, and to put many questions of law, which she answered, and which are all well documented in the compilations of hadīth. Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī, narrated from Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn that ʿAʾishah came down as a guest to Ṣafiyyah Umm Tālahāh al-Talahāt. On seeing Ṣafiyyah’s daughters ʿAʾishah said: ‘The Prophet – sala l-lāhū ʿalay-hi wa-sallam – entered and in my room there was a girl. The Prophet – sala l-lāhū ʿalay-hi wa-sallam – gave me a piece of material he had and asked me to make it into two pieces, and give one piece to this girl and give the other piece to the girl who is in the house of Umm Salamah, because they seem to be

1 AL-DHĀHABI, Taʿrīkh al-Īslām, (sub anno 571–580) 146. 2 Their names can be found in MUTIʿ AL-ḤĀFIZ, al-Jāmiʿ al-Muqaffārī, 462. 3 TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FĀṢĪ, Dhayl al-taqyīd, ii. 381.
adults.\(^1\) ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Ubayd, the muḥaddīḥ of the mosque of Jurdān, narrated from ‘Udaysah bint Uhbān that he said: ‘When ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālīb came here to Basrah, he called on my father, and said: O Abū Muslim, are you not going to help me against these people? My father said: Yes I am. Then he called his slave-girl and said: O girl, bring [me] my sword. She brought it. Then he drew out a hand-span of it—there it was, a wooden sword. Then he said: My friend and your cousin [i.e. the Prophet] took from me this covenant that when there is fitnah among Muslims, then make a sword from wood. Now if you want I can come with you. [ʿAlī] said: No. I do not need you and your sword.'\(^2\) Similarly, when Abū Hurayrah came to Damascus and stayed as a guest in the house of Abū l-Dardā', the women used the chance to learn from him. Ismā’īl ibn ‘Ubaydillāh has narrated from Karīmah bint al-Ḥashās al-Muzaniyyah that she said: ‘Abū Hurayrah narrated to us when we were in the house of Umm al-Dardā' that he heard the Messenger of God—ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam—narrating from his Lord that He said: I am with My slave as long as he remembers Me and his lips move with remembrance of Me.'\(^3\)

The most important and highest chain to Șaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī is one that goes through the great muḥaddīḥ Abū ʿAbdullāh al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Mubārak al-Zabīdī. His place of residence was Baghdad. When once he visited Damascus the people crowded to him to read the Șaḥīḥ with him. The class was arranged in al-Jāmi' al-Muẓaffarī, beginning at the end of Shawwāl 630 and concluding on 10 Dhū l-Qaʿdah of the same year. The whole Șaḥīḥ was read to al-Zabīdī in 22 sessions, and the class was attended by the most eminent scholars and jurists. The last surviving person to narrate from al-Zabīdī after attending these sessions was Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Abī Ṭālīb al-Ḥajjār, by

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\(^1\) ABŪ DĀWŪD, Sunan, Șalāḥ, bāb al-mar'ah tuṣallī bi-ghayr khimār. \(^2\) IBN MĀJAH, Sunan, Fitan, bāb al-Tathbit ji fitnah. \(^3\) AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Șaḥīḥ, Taqwīd, bāb qawl Allāh—lā tuburtīk bi-bi lisanak; IBN HAJAR, Fath al-bārī, xiii. 611; AL-MIZZĪ, Tahdhib al-kamāl, xxxv. 292–93.
whom the chain of narration to the *Sahih* was much shortened for those after him because he lived such a long life. Women also benefited from this precious opportunity and attended the same sessions on the *Sahih*, and in great numbers. Among them were Khadijah bint Muhammed ibn Sa'd ibn 'Abdillah al-Maqdisiyyah (d. 701), and the long-lived Shaykhah Zaynab bint Sulayman ibn Ibrâhim ibn Raḥmān al-Isārdi (d. 705). Ibn Hajar confirms this in his account of her: ‘She heard the *Sahih* from Abū 'Abdillah al-Husayn ibn al-Mubârak al-Zabîdî.’ Shaykhah Umm al-Khayr Fâtimah bint Ibrâhim ibn Maḥmûd al-Bata'i-hiyyah also attended and al-Dhahabi confirms it: ‘She heard the *Sahih* from al-Zabîdî.’

The long-lived shaykhah Umm al-Ḥasan Fâtimah bint 'Abd al-Raḥmân ibn 'Amr al-Fârâ only attended two sessions and narrated them. Al-Dhahabi says of Hadiyyah bint 'Ali ibn 'Asâkir al-Baghdâdî: ‘She attended the class of al-Zabîdî.’ Another shaykhah, one well known for her higher isnâd, Sitt al-Wuzara bint 'Umar ibn Asâd ibn al-Munajjâ al-Tanûkhiyyah also attended. Taqī al-Dîn al-Fâsi says of her: ‘She studied with Husayn ibn al-Mubârak al-Zabîdî, al-Sâhîh in al-Jâmi‘ al-Muzaffârî and also *Musnad al-Shâfi‘i*.’ Ibn Hajar says in his account of 'Ā'ishah bint Muhammed ibn 'Abd al-Hâdî al-Maqdisiyyah: ‘She was the last person who narrated *Sahih al-Bukhârî* with high isnâd by her hearing [it]; and it is a wonderful coincidence that Sitt al-Wuzara was the last woman in the world among all those who narrated from al-Zabîdî and she died in 716, while this 'Ā'ishah is similar to her in dying in 816 and she had above [Sitt al-Wuzara] this quality that even from among the men who heard from al-Hajjâr, the colleague of Sitt al-Wuzara, none remained in the world other than herself. Between the death of 'Ā'ishah and Sitt
al-Wuzaratā the difference is exactly one hundred years.⁷ In the thirteenth century Umm al-Faḍl Naḍžah bint ʿAbū I-ʿizz Ahmad ibn Yūṣuf al-Shanwānī studied with Ḥāfiz Muḥammad al-Murtada al-Zabīdi Thulāthiyāt of al-Bukhārī — i.e. those hadiths with only three narrators before al-Bukhārī — and Arbaʿiyn of al-Nawawī in 1189 in the house of her father.¹

TEACHERS IN OTHER TOWNS

Women also got hadiths from teachers of other towns, either by travelling to them, or by correspondence, or by request of ījāzahs. Among those who travelled in the path of knowledge, the Kufan muḥaddithah Jasrah bint Dajājah al-ʿAmiriyyah, got ḥadith in Madīnah from ʿAlī ibn Abī Tālib, ʿAṣḥah and Umm Salamah, and from Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī.² Muḥammad ibn al-Sāʿīb ibn Barakah narrated from his mother that she said: ‘I did ṭawāf of the House in a group of women from Banū al-Mughirah in the company of ʿAṣḥah. The women mentioned Ḥāsān ibn Thābit and attacked him [for his part in the slander about ʿAṣḥah]. ʿAṣḥah reminded [them of] Ḥāsān’s poetic verses in praise of the Prophet — salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam — and said: I hope that God will enter him into paradise because of [it].³

In later centuries ʿAlīma bint ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Qazwīnī studied ḥadīth with Abū l-Ḥusayn Abī Ḥamīd ibn ʿAlī al-Jawhari al-Mawṣili in Tripoli, and with Abū Muḥammad Ṭāhir ibn Naṣr al-Asfijabī and the qādī Abū l-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn Abī Ḥamīd ibn ʿIsā al-Saʿdī in Egypt. She settled in Sur.⁴ Jumāmah bint Abī Ḥamīd ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḫubaydullāh al-Mahmīyyah of Nishapur (d. ca. 396), having studied with the teachers of her town, did ḥajj and heard from various teachers on the way.⁵ Al-Sulāmī says: ‘I heard her say: In Baghdad I called upon Shaykh Abū l-Ḥusayn

¹ See samaʿāt at the end of Juzz fi-hi Thulāthiyāt AL-BUKHĀRĪ. ² AL-MIZZĪ, Tahdhīb al-kamāl, xxxv. 143. ³ See AL-DHĀHABI, Siyar aḥlām al-mubādā, ii. 515. ⁴ AL-SUYUTĪ (d. 911), al-Minjam fi l-muʿjam, 95–97, 85. ⁵ AL-SAYRAFĪNĪ, al-Muntakhab min kitāb al-Siyāq li-l-Taʾrīkh Naysābūr, 183.
al-Khudrī, and he asked me: Who did you ‘accompany’ [i.e. study with for a long time]? I said: I ‘accompanied’ al-Nasrābādī. Then he asked me: What do you remember of his sayings? I said: I heard him say: Whoever’s connection (nisbah) is correct, his knowledge is perfect. On that al-Khudrī [being impressed by what he heard] remained silent. When I came back al-Nasrābādī was pleased and said: That is how it should be for anyone who calls upon a shaykh.1 This woman scholar travelled continually to learn from different teachers in different places.

Where the women could not travel to the scholars they would resort to correspondence with them. For example Fāṭima, also called Sutaytah, daughter of the qādir Kamāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Shīrīn al-Hanafi, used to write letters to scholars. When Ḥāfiz al-Sakhāwī’s brother died, she wrote to him to console him.2

The women got ijāzhahs from the scholars of other towns. For example Ālīshah bint ‘Umar ibn Rushayd al-Fihri of Sabta in Morocco received ijāzhahs from a lot of scholars in Egypt, Makkah, Madinah and Syria. Another example is Āsiyah bint Jārullāh ibn Ṣalih al-Shaybānī (d. 873): the large number of scholars who gave her ijāzhahs are listed by al-Suyūṭī (d. 911): there are 105 names in his list, from different towns and places.3

NUMBER OF TEACHERS

Among the narrators of ḥadīth there are those who had no more than one or two teachers. About such narrators a genre of writing developed among the people of ḥadīth called ‘al-wulādan wa-‘l-matharu’. At the end of the most famous of these compilations, al-Āhād wa-‘l-mathānī of Abū Bakr ibn Abī Āsim (d. 287), are mentioned those women who have narrated only one or two ḥadīths.

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1 AL-SULAMĪ (d. 412), Dhikr al-niswah al-muta‘abbidāt, 423. The term of genealogy (nisbah) is here used metaphorically to indicate the spiritual connection between master and disciple. 2 AL-SAKHĀWI, al-Daw‘ al-lāmi‘, xii. 111. 3 AL-SUYŪṬI, al-Minjam fi l-mu‘jam, 95–97, 85.
However, many women received ḥadiths from a great many narrators, most famously ʿAishah who, as well as narrating directly from the Prophet himself, also narrated from Ḥamzah ibn ʿAmr al-Aslamī, Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqās, Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, her father Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, Judāmah bint Wahb al-Asadiyyah, and Fāṭimah, the daughter of the Prophet. The Successor, Umm al-Dādārānī narrated from her husband Abū l-Dārāb, Salmān al-Fārisī, Kaʿb ibn ʿAṣim al-Aswārī, ʿAishah, Abū Ḥurayrah, Faḍālah ibn Ubayd al- Ansārī. In later centuries, the renowned muḥaddithah Shuhdah received ḥadith from Tīrād ibn Muḥammad al-Zaynābī, Ibn Ṭalḥah al-Nīʿālī, Abū l-Ḥasan ibn Ayyūb, Abū l-Khaṭṭāb ibn al-Baṭrīj, Ṭīmān ibn ʿAbd al-Qādir ibn Ťūṣūf, Ḥasan ibn Salmān al-Daqqāq, Thābit Bundār, Abū Yāsir Aḥmād, ʿAbd al-Walīh ibn Ilūwan al-Shaybānī, Jaʿfar al-Sarrāj Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad ibn Ḥarīsah, Manṣūr ibn Ḥayd al-Naysābūrī, Abū l-Barakāt Ḥamīd ibn ʿAbdillah al-Wakīl, Abū Ḥahlīb al-Baqqillānī and many others.

As for women who received ijāzahs, the lists of the teachers of some of them are, as I mentioned just above, very long indeed. For example ʿĀsiyā bint Muḥammad al-Īrbīlī received ijāzahs of over two hundred teachers, both male and female. Among those teachers are: the Shaykhah Umm Muḥammad Zaynāb¯ bint Ahmad ibn ʿUmar ibn Shukr al-Maqdisī, ʿAbd al-Ḥāfīz ibn al-Shaykh Ḥadhrān al-Maqdisī, Muḥammad ibn Ḥibatullah al-Shirāzī, ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-Munṣīm ibn ʿUmar al-Qawwās, ʿAli ibn Ahmad ibn Abī l-Fāhim, Umm Muḥammad Sitt al-ʿArab bint al-Shaykh Tāj al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn ʿUmar al-Sulaimānī, Umm ʿĪbrāhīm Fāṭimah bint ʿĪbrāhīm al-Baʾlabakkiyyah, the long-lived imam Kamāl al-Dīn Humām ibn Muḥammad al-Hanāfī, Umm Muḥammad Zaynāb bint al-Kamāl, and Amāt al-ʿAzīz Khadijah bint Yūsuf ibn Ghunaymāh.
What women studied varied from one place to another, even between schools in the same city, and it varied between periods. It is therefore difficult to present a satisfactory overview of it. Nevertheless, it may still be useful to attempt a general sketch, and mention those elements of a formal curriculum in the later centuries that were stable across many parts of the Islamic world. After that, in the concluding section of this chapter, I survey the kinds of hadith books that became and remained popular.

THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES

Women's education in pre-Islamic Arabia was, aside from the traditional household skills, mostly oral, confined to poetry, fine speech and horsemanship, with writing skills among them very rare. As Islam became established, the scope of their education and culture widened rapidly. They learnt the Qur'ān by heart, with some also studying variants among the known recitations; they acquired the hadith of the Prophet and understanding of the religion through the Sunnah. Some were so proficient, and so devoted to the din, that they became jurists and muftis. They were also trained in writing and speaking, and the different modes of eloquence.

In the first three centuries, there was no established, formal programme of Islamic education for either men or women. However, we can derive from the general culture of that time that what students began with was language, with the aim of skill in different styles of expression. Arabic grammar, in the strict sense of the term, developed from the second century on. However, an awareness of the need to know grammar in order
to avoid errors in understanding the commands of God and the teaching of His Messenger is traditionally dated to the caliphate of 'Ali ibn Abî Tâlib. According to the renowned man of letters al-Mubarrid (d. 285), awareness of the need to think about grammar may have arisen because of a woman. He said: 'Al-Mâzînî narrated to us that the cause of the foundation of grammar was that the daughter of Abû l-Aswad [d. 69] once said to her father mā ashadda al-harrā? [What is the most violent of heat? instead of mā ashadda al-harrâ! How violent the heat is! So] he said: Pebbles in the hot earth. She said: I meant to express my shock at the heat. Then he said: Have people begun to make mistakes [like that]? Then he told 'Alî about that; [and then 'Alî] dictated to him some basic rules that were later expanded by Abû l-Aswad.’¹

After or alongside acquiring language skills, the girls would turn their attention to the Qur'ân, learning how to recite and memorize it, and understand its meaning. Only then would they start learning hadîths by memorizing and then narrating them. Those with more aptitude would go on to learn how to think about the 'scholarly apparatus' of the hadîths – their occasions and their narrators – how to distinguish among narrators and chains of narrators, and learn the sunnâhs that derive from the hadîth and how to implement them.

THE FOURTH TO THE SIXTH CENTURIES

Systemization of the curriculum, beginning in the fourth, developed in the fifth century under the guiding hand of the great vizier Niẓâm al-Mulk Qiwâm al-Dîn Abû 'Alî al-Hasan ibn 'Alî ibn Ishaq al-Tûsî (408–84). A shrewd and far-sighted administrator, and himself interested in knowledge, he established scholarships and grants for students and founded large colleges in Baghdad, Nishapur and Tus. He also founded many madrasas, notably in Marw, Herat, Balkh, and Basrah. Philosophy, theology (kalâm), logic, and practical sciences like mathe-

¹AL-DHAHABÎ, Siyar a'lam al-nubalâ', iv. 83.
matics, medicine and engineering were part of the curriculum of the ‘Nizāmī’ colleges and schools, and these subjects spread to other schools albeit taught at an elementary level.

From my study of biographies of the women scholars of this period I can affirm that girls usually began their studies with Arabic language and developed reading, speaking and writing skills. At the same time they would learn the Qurʾān, reciting and memorizing it. Some learnt the whole of it by heart at a remarkably early age. One example of that is Fātimah bint ʿAlī ibn Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar al-Tawūsiyyah al-Ḥusayniyyah (5th c.), who had memorized the Qurʾān before she was nine years old. Later, she learnt hadīth with her father (d. 464).¹

Grammar must have been part of the syllabus since the second-third century, though the earliest reference that I have found to a woman’s expertise in it is from the fourth. It comes in the account of Maryam bint Jahsh, wife of the great Yemeni scholar Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Abī l-Fawāris al-Ḥamdānī (4th c.). It is an illustration of her knowledge and her acuteness of mind that she was able subtly to resolve a difficult point for her husband. He had been engaged in debate with some adherents of the Murjiʿī heresy. These are people who held that faith in the heart – even if undisclosed, regardless of what one utters with one’s tongue, regardless of any deeds that one does with one’s limbs – suffices to secure salvation. ʿAlī alluded to the verse in surat al-ʾAʿrāf (6. 40), quoting the end of it: ‘Indeed those who belie Our signs (āyāt) and disdain them – for them the gates of the heavens will not be opened, nor will they enter the Garden, until the camel passes through the eye of the needle.’ The Murjiʿī who was debating said: ‘This is easy for God, with His power, if He wills, He passes the camel through the eye of the needle.’ When ʿAlī returned home his mind was still preoccupied, and he was sleepless because of the Murjiʿī’s retort. Maryam asked him what the matter was. After he had explained it, she said: ‘In the verse of the Qurʾān the camel is the subject [of the verb], not

¹See ʿUmar Rīdā KAHHĀLAH (d. 1407), ʿĀlām al-nisāʾ, iv. 86.
object.' Her husband now understood what he could have said in answer to the Murjīʿ, was content and slept. Early next morning he went to his companions and told them what should render the Murjīʿs speechless. 1

The biographers’ account of Amat al-Wāḥid bint al-Ḥusayn ibn Muhammad al-Ḍabbi al-Mahāmili (d. 377) sheds light on the syllabus from the beginning of the fourth century. Al-Dāraqūṭnī says: ‘She memorized the Qurʾān, and learnt fiqh according to the madhhab of Imām al-Shāfiʿī, inheritance law and its mathematical calculation, dawr, grammar and other sciences.’ 2 Also, al-Dhahābī says: ‘She narrated from her father, from Ismāʿīl al-Warrāq, ʿAbd al-Ghāfir ibn Salamah, and memorized the Qurʾān and studied the fiqh according to the madhhab of Imām al-Shāfiʿī, inheritance law, dawr, and Arabic language and grammar, and other Islamic sciences.’ 3

In this period, study of Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī became widespread among men and women. The most famous woman of the fourth century to hear the whole Sahīḥ directly from her teacher – Abū l-Haytham al-Kushmīhani (d. 389) – was the great scholar, Shaykhah Umm al-Kirām Kārimah bint ʿAbīmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥātim al-Mawḍūziz, (d. 463). 4 Also in this period the Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī was introduced into Spain. ʿAmmā biškwal (d. 578) says: ‘I have seen her samaʿ in the originals of her father in his handwriting; and she came with him to Spain.’ 5

Women also studied the Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī, even engrossing themselves in mustakhrqat of it – the narration of its texts by a

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1 See Leder et al., Muʿjam al-nisāʾ al-Yamanīyyāt, 177. 2 Al-Khāṭīb Al-Baghḍādī, Taʾrīkh al-Baghdād, xiv, 443. Al-Jurjānī (d. 816; al-Taʾrījāt, 76) defines dawr as a kind of argumentation in which each proposition is dependent upon the next in a circular chain. 3 Al-Dhahābī Taʾrīkh al-Islām (sub anno 351–80), 607. 4 Al-Dhahābī Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ, xviii. 223. 5 Ibn Bishkwāl (d. 578), K. al-Ṣilab, ii. 696. 6 Ibid.
different route with higher isnād. The renowned scholar Fātimah bint al-Ustādh Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī al-Daqqāq (d. 480), wife of Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, heard the whole Sahih Abī ʿAbdāband (mustakhrad of Sahih Muslim) and later transmitted it. Ibn Ḥajar, in the account of his teacher Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Takritī says, after mentioning his isnād for Sahih Abī ʿAbdāband then to ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn al-Ḥafīẓ Abī Saʿd ibn al-Samʿānī: ‘He heard it from Abū l-Barākāt al-Fuʿrāwī, who heard it from Fātimah bint ʿAlī al-Daqqāq, who heard it from Abū Nuʿaym ʿAbd al-Ḥasan al-Isfrayīnī, who heard it from Abū ʿAbdāband.2

Some women took an interest in hadith books written on specific topics. For example, Fātimah bint ʿAḥmad ibn al-Ḏalīl al-ʿAnāzī studied Kitāb al-Ṣalāh of Abū Nuʿaym al-Ḏalīl ibn Dukayn with Shaykh Abū Bakr al-ʿArrāf Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn ʿAḥmad ibn Shādhān in 431.3 Others specialized in sub-disciplines of the sciences of the Qurʾān and Sunnah. For example, Umm Saʿd Asmāʾ bint ʿAḥmad ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn ʿAḥmad al-Bahrānīyyah (5th c.) specialized in the science of nāṣikh (abrogating) and mansūkḥ (abrogated). Ibn Ḥajar narrated K. al-Nāṣikh wa-l-mansūkḥ of ʿAta ʿAlī al-Khurasānī (d. 135) from ʿAḥmad ibn Abī Bakr from Sulaymān ibn Ḥamzah, from Jaʿfar ibn ʿĀli from Abū Tāhir al-Silāfī from Asmāʾ bint ʿAḥmad al-Bahrānīyyah, with her isnād to the author.4

Taṣawwuf became very popular in this period in many parts of the Islamic world and books on different aspects of the ascetic life were widely studied. Shaykhah Umm al-Dalāl Amat al-Rahmān bint Abī l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Wāḥid ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Junayd (d. 487) studied K. al-Tafarrud wa-l-ʿuzdah of Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn al-ʿAjrūrī with Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Muḥammad ibn Bishrān.5 One consequence of the

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1See IBN NUQTAH, al-Taqyīd, 497; AL-DHAHABI Siyar aš-šārīf al-muballāh, xviii. 479. 2 IBN ḤAJAR, al-Majmaʾ al-Muʿassas, ii. 481. 3 See the samāʿāt in ABū NUʿAYM al-Ḏalīl IBN DUKAYN, K. al-Ṣalāḥ, 51. 4 IBN ḤAJAR, al-Muʿjam al-mufahras, 113. 5 IBN ḤAJAR, al-Majmaʾ al-Muʿassas, i. 573–74.
emphasis on asceticism was deepened regard for preaching and the writings of those famous for affecting sermons. The long-lived Khadijah bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Wāʾiz al-Shāhjahānīyyah (376–460) studied Amālī of Abū l-Husayn ibn Samʿūn al-Wāʾiz with its author. 1 ʿAʾishah bint Ḥasan ibn Ibrāhīm al-Wāʾizah (d. 460) wrote down the Amālī of Ibn Mandah, receiving the work directly from him. 2

Also in this period, interest in the ‘Forty Ḥadiths’ genre blossomed. It is recorded in the account of Umm al-ʿAlāʾ, the grand-daughter of Shaykh Abū 1-Ṭayyib ʿAbd al-Razzāq ibn Shammah that she attended the reading of the Forty Ḥadiths of Abū Bakr ibn Muqrī (d. 381) with her grandfather in 455.  3

As for poetry and literature, there is the example of Ishrāq al-Suwaydāʾ (ca. 450), the slave of Abū l-Muṭarrīf ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Ghalbūn al-Qurṭūbī, from Valencia in Spain. She studied Arabic grammar, language and literature and became so expert in ʿarūḍ (prosody) that she was called al-ʿArūḍīyyah. She also learnt by heart and lectured on two important works on literature: al-Kāmil of Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Mubarrid and Amālī of Abū ʿAlī al-Qālī. 4 Another woman, the daughter of Sharīf al-Raḍī learnt the Nahj al-balāghah from her uncle. Ibn al-Ikhwah al-Baghdādī (d. 548) narrated the book from her. 5

FROM THE SEVENTH TO THE NINTH CENTURIES

The education of women did not change much in this period, though it became more organized. The early emphasis on the language and grammar remained, with students memorizing concise works on the subject: for example, Nuḍār bint al-Shaykh Abī Ḥayyān (d. 730) learnt by heart an elementary text on grammar. 6

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Commitment to memorizing the Qur’ān and understanding it also continued. Some learnt it at an early age – like Sharaf al-Ashraf bint ʿAlī ibn Mūsā al-Ṭāwūsiyyah al-Hasanīyyah, who memorized the whole Qur’ān, when she was twelve; others did so much later in life – like Umm al-Hasan Karīmah bint Ahmad ibn ʿAlī al-Abīwardī (d. 555), who memorized parts of the Qur’ān and recited them regularly, as well as studying the ḥadīth sciences. Some women made a particular study of the seven recitations, like Umm al-ʿIzz bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Ghalib al-ʿAbdārī al-Dānī (d. 617). Some of them learnt books of ṭajwīd. In 786 Ḥusn bint Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Saʿdiyyah al-Makkiyyah (d. 842) learnt part of al-Shāfiʿīyyah and another work on the subject. There are other women who specialized in some sciences of the Qur’ān. ʿAṭīyah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAḥmad ibn al-Zujoj studied with her teachers Gharāṣib al-Qur’ān of Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn ʿAzīz al-Sijīstānī (d. 330), and Faḍāʾil al-Qur’ān of Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Ayyūb al-Bajālī (3rd c.). The long-lived shaykhah, famed for her higher ʿismād, Dawʾ al-Ṣabāḥ ʿAjibah al-Bāqdāriyyah al-Baghdādiyyah (d. 647) learnt Faḍāʾil al-Qur’ān of al-Bajālī from Abū ʿIḥās ʿAbd al-Qaṭīf al-Bajālī with an ʿismād to its author. She studied K. Akhbār ḥamalat al-Qur’ān of Abū Bakr al-ʿAjurrī (d. 360) with Abū ʿIḥās Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Bāqī by his ʿismād to its author; and Mushkil al-Qur’ān al-Qāṣīm of Muḥyi l-Sunnah al-Baghawī with Ḥāfīz Abū Mūṣā al-Madīnī, who got it from the author.

Summaries of fiqh were popular in the syllabus: among the Ḥanafīs, Muhāṭṣar al-Qudūrī; among the Mālikīs, al-Risālah al-Qāṭīf; among the Shāfīʿīs, Muhāṭṣar al-Muẓāmī. Al-Dhahābī has

1 KAAHĪLAA, Aʿlām al-nisāʾ, ii. 292. 2 AL-SAMʿĀNĪ, al-Muntakhab min Muʿjam al-shaykhūb, iii. 1918. 3 AL-DHAAHĪB says: ‘She was well versed in the seven readings.’ Taʿriḥ al-Islām (sub anns 611−20), 328. 4 IBN FAHD, Muʿjam al-shaykhūb, 310; al-Durr al-kamin, 1411. 5 KAAHĪLAA, Aʿlām al-nisāʾ, iii. 158. 6 Ibid. 7 Sirāj al-Dīn AL-QAZWĪNĪ, Mushaykhāb, MS, 48. 8 Ibid., 83. 9 Ibid., 95.
recorded that *Mukhtasar al-Muzani* was among those useful books given as dowry to the bride at the wedding. Some specialized in works of *fiqh* written by and for experts. Fāṭimah al-Samarqandiyyah (6th c.) memorized all of *Tuḥfat al-fuqahāʾ.* Others studied specific topics in *fiqh*—for example Shaykhah Umm Muḥammad Khadijah bint Abī ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad al-Ḥarrāniyyah (d. 634) studied *K. al-Amwāl* of al-ʿAzdi with her father.

As for the ‘Six Books’, the principal compilations of *ḥadīth*, the examples of women’s interest in them will be given under a separate heading. Some were interested in other sound works of *ḥadīth* also, those less popularly known. Khadijah bint Shams al-Ḍīn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn ʿAbād ibn al-Dāʾim studied *Sahih Ibn Hibbān* with Muḥammad ibn ʿAbād ibn Abī l-Hayyāʾ ibn al-Zarrād al-Ḥarīrī. Umm al-Ḥayā Ḥāfṣah bint Abī ʿAbdillāh ʿAbād ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Ḍāʾīl, ʿAbdillāh ʿAbād ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn al-Baghdādiyyah al-ʿAzajīyyah (d. 612) learnt *Ṣahīfah* of Hammām ibn Mūnabbīh (d. 131) from Abū l-Faqīl Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Urmawi with his sanad to the Companion Abū Hurayrah. The long-lived shaykhah of high isnād Tajannī bint ʿAbdillah al-Wabbāniyyah (d. 575) learnt Ḥadīth al-Mukharrānī wa-l-Marwāz and Amārī al-Mahāmili with ʿUṣayn ibn ʿAbād ibn al-Baghdādiyyah al-ʿAzajīyyah. ʿHusayn ibn ʿAbād ibn Talhah al-Nīʿālī, and Juzʿ Hilāl with ʿArrād ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbī al-Zaynābī, who got it from its author. Umm al-Khayr Ḥalīmah bint al-Ḥāfīz ibn ʿAsākir studied Juzʿ Ali ibn Muḥammad al-Himyārī with her father in 541. Ḥadīths narrated principally through women were a special interest. Sitt al-ʿArab bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAli ibn al-Bukhārī (d. 767) studied *Faqāḥ il-Fāṭimah* of Abū Ḥāfīṣ ʿUmar ibn Shāḥīn with her grandfather. Sitt al-Ṣāmāʾ bint Khalīl ibn ʿAbī Naṣr studied 41 ḥadīths from *Musnad al-nisāʾ al-sahābiyyat* with Yūsūf ibn Abī al-Ḥāḍī in 808. "Aʾishah bint Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkāshī

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studied with her father his book *al-İsăbah* fi-mă istadrakat Ā'ishah ṣalā l-saḥābah in 794.

From the sixth century onwards, women are found learning books written on the principles of ḥadith and narrators of ḥadith. Shaykhah ʿAzīzah bint ʿAbī ʾl-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn al-Ṭarrāḥ (d. 600) received the whole of *al-Kīfāyah fi qawānīn al-riwāyah* of Abū Bakhir al-Khaṭīb (d. 463) from her grandfather, who narrated it directly from the author. Khadijah bint ʿUmar ibn Abī Bakhir studied *K al-Ta ᛪ ikh* of Yahyā ibn ʿAbd Allāh ʿAbbāsī b. Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn 652. Fāṭimah bint Al-Mubārak studied *Ta ᛪ ikh al-kaḫīr* of ʿImām al-Bukhārī in 503 with Ḥāfiẓ Abū l-Ǧunan al-Nāṣirī. The long-lived Shaykhah Zaynab bint Makki al-Ḥarrāniyyah (d. 688) studied *K. al-Nasab* of Zubayr ibn Bakkar with ʿUmar ibn Ṭabrizad. ʿLūlā bint Al-Mubārak al-Baghdādiyyah (d. 532) studied *K. Gharib al-ṣāḥībah* of Abū Sulaymān al-Khattābī with ʿAbū Ḥāfiz al-Samʿānī b. ʿAbd al-Ghafir al-Faṭrī. The great scholar and expert in Qurʿānic reading, ʿUmm al-Khayr Fāṭimah bint Abī ʾl-Ḥasan ʿAllī ibn al-Muḍaffar al-Baghdaṭīyyah (d. 532) studied *K. Gharib al-ṣāḥībah* of Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī with Abū l-Ḥusayn ʿAbd al-Ǧaḥir al-Fārisī. ʿUmm al-Ḥusn Kamāl bint al-Ḥaḍīr Abī Muḥammad Abīdillāh ibn Ahmad ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Samarqandī (d. 558) studied *Ta ᛪ ikh al-

Another focus of study was biography of the Prophet and the story of his battles. Shaykhah ʿAbd Allāh al-Ṣabāḥ ʿAḥibah al-Baqdariyyah studied al-Shamā’īd of al-Tirmidhī with al-Qāsim ibn al-Faḍl ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAwd and Rajāʾ ibn Ḥāmid ibn Rajāʾ al-Maʿdīnī. 5 Umm al-Ḥanāʾ Asmā’ bint ʿAbī Bakr al-ʿUthmānī al-Murāghī studied al-Shibā’ 6 and al-Burdah with al-ʿIzz ibn Jamāl in 767. 6 ʿAḥmad Khadijah bint Muḥammad ibn Khalaf ibn Ṣaḥḥāʾ al-Maʿṣūmī studied the whole Maghāzī of al-Wāqidī in 603. 7 Interest in the battles of the Prophet led to interest in the history of later conquests. The famous eighth century scholar Zahrah bint al-Muḥaddith Kamāl al-Dīn ʿUmar ibn Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbī Bakr al-Khutānī al-Ḥanāfī studied K. Futūḥ Misr wa-l-Maghrib of Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn ʿAbd al-Hakam al-Mīṣrī (d. 257) with Kamāl al-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Shujāʾ al-Mīṣrī. 8

Interest in theology also continued: Zaynab bint ʿUmar al-Kindī (d. 699) learnt K. al-Tawḥīd of Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Iṣḥāq ibn Khuzaymah (d. 311) with Abū Rawḥ ʿAbd al-Muʿīzz

ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥarāwī, with his sanad going back to Ibn Khuzaymah. Ibn Ẓāhīr al-Bāqḍāriyyah received K. al-Tawḥīd of Ibn Mandah (d. 395) from Ḥasan ibn ʿAbbās al-Rustamī, Masʿūd ibn Ḥasan al-Thaqafī and Abū l-Khayr ibn al-Baghbān, all three from ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Mandah from his father, its author. She also studied Dalāʾīl al-Nubuwwah of Ibn Mandah (d. 395) from Ḥasan ibn ʿAbbās al-Rustamī, Masʿūd ibn al-Ẓāhīr al-Thaqafī and Abu ʿl-Khayr ibn al-Baghban, all three from ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Mandah from his father, its author. She also studied Dalāʾīl al-Nubuwwah of Ibn Mandah (d. 395) from Ḥasan ibn ʿAbbās al-Rustamī, Masʿūd ibn al-Ẓāhīr al-Thaqafī and Abu ʿl-Khayr ibn al-Baghban, all three from ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Mandah from his father, its author. She also studied Dalāʾīl al-Nubuwwah of Ibn Mandah (d. 395) from Ḥasan ibn ʿAbbās al-Rustamī, Masʿūd ibn al-Ẓāhīr al-Thaqafī and Abu ʿl-Khayr ibn al-Baghban, all three from ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Mandah from his father, its author. She also studied Dalāʾīl al-Nubuwwah of Ibn Mandah (d. 395) from Ḥasan ibn ʿAbbās al-Rustamī, Masʿūd ibn al-Ẓāhīr al-Thaqafī and Abu ʿl-Khayr ibn al-Baghban, all three from ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Mandah from his father, its author.

FROM LATER NINTH TO THIRTEENTH CENTURIES

From the later ninth–tenth century on, there was a decline in ḥadith scholarship across the Islamic world. The numbers of men and women engaged in it decreased and so did their reading material. Nevertheless, primary education remained more or less the same, with Arabic grammar as the starting point. Some students memorized concise works on grammar. Umm al-Ḥayā' Umāmah bint Qāḍī al-Quḍāt Athīr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Shaḥnah al-Ḥanafi (d. 939) knew by heart some of Muḥbat al-ʿrāb and other books.

Besides grammar, interest in the Qurʾān remained strong. Būrān bint Muḥammad Athīr al-Dīn (d. 938) read the Qurʾān, studied books and copied them. The emperor Awrangzēb ʿAlamgīr (d. 1113) paid Maryam al-Kашmirīyyah 30,000 gold dinars after his daughter Zayb al-Nīsā memorized the Qurʾān with her. Zayb al-Nīsā also learnt writing and different styles of calligraphy, and she studied ḥadith and fiqh according to the syllabus of that time. The syllabus for women was then the same as the men’s, and included Arabic grammar, mathematics, logic, philosophy and other sciences. That was not the case in India only: an example from Yemen in the same period is Zaynab

1. Ibn Ḥajar, al-Muṣjam al-muṣharas, 52. 2Ibid., al-Majma al-muṣassas, i. 517. 3Ibid., ii. 38, 39. 4Ibid., 43. 5Ibn al-Hanbali (d. 971), Durr al-ḥibab fi taʿrikh aʿyān Ḥalab, i. 338. 6Ibid., 403. 7Abd al-Ḥayy al-Ḥasanī (d. 1341), Nuṣḥat al-khawaṭīr, vi. 99–100.
bint Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Muṣʿayyadī (d. 1114), who studied grammar, logic, theology, fiqh, astrology, astronomy, literature and other sciences. Jahān Āra Begum bint al-Suṭṭān Shāhjāhān (d. 1092) studied the art of Qur’ānic recitation and tajwīd with Sitt Khānum, learnt calligraphy, Persian and became expert in composition, poetry, household management and other skills.


Some women did go further in ḥadīth study. Amat al-Khāliq bint Zayn al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Latif al-Qāhirī (d. 902) studied in 816 with Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī some parts of Fawāʾid of Tammām al-Rāzī (d. 414), large parts of the Sirāb of Ibn Hishām, Musnad Ahmad [ibn Ḥanbal], al-Ghaylāniyyāt and other books of ḥadīth. She received ijāzahs from many scholars. She also studied Mashyakhbāh of Ibn al-Bukhārī and al-ʿUṣūm al-ṣaghīr of al-Ṭabarānī. In 857 Aymālik bint Aḥmad studied with Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Hilāl al-Azdī K. al-Tawwābīn of Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāmah (d. 620). Bāy Khatūn bint Ibrāhīm al-Halabiyyah (d. 942) studied Minhāj of al-Nawawī and part of ʿĪbāy ʿulūm al-dīn with Zayn al-Dīn al-Shammāḵ. Bulbul bint ʿAbdillāh al-Rūmiyyah studied with her master, Shaykh Yusuf ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥādī the Forty Hadīths of Abū Bakr ibn al-Muqṭār in

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Besides general and specialized study of ḥadīth, women also studied sīrah and kālam. For example, in 906 ʿĀ’ishah bint Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī al-Kinānī read Sīrah of Ibn Hīshām and Dalā’il al-nuḥwawwah with Ḥāfīz Yūsuf ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥādī.⁸

IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

The Qurʾān continued to be the foundation of the syllabus in this century as before. Khadijah bint Aḥmad ibn ʿAzzūz al-Fāsiyyah (d. 1323) knew the Qurʾān by heart and read it with different readings, with Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan Jāmbūrī.⁹ After that the women would study the common syllabus, comprising language and rational and traditional sciences. The long-lived muḥaddithah Amatullāh bint ʿAbd al-Ghānī al-Dihlawiyah (d. 1357) studied

the Qurʾān, grammar, Arabic literature, and Ḥanafi fiqh with her father, then devoted herself to hadith, reading the Six Books with him many times, and other more specialized works including ḥadīth and musalsalāt. Amatullah ʿĀʾishah bint ʿAbd al-Hayy al-Ḥasaniyyah (d. 1396) memorized much of the Qurʾān, and received her primary education, from her uncle Sayyid ʿAzīz al-Raḥmān al-Nadwī and her mother, Khayr al-Nisāʾ. She went on to study a large number of books.

Khadijah bint ʿAḥmad ibn Jandān (d. 1344) studied with her grandmother elementary fiqh and what is necessary for women (e.g. rules about purification and prayer), and with her father Mukhtasar al-Safinah and other works.

Some of them specialized in ḥadīth and studied the Six Books and others. Shams al-Nisāʾ bint ʿAmīr Ḥasan al-Sahsawānī (d. 1308) studied the Qurʾān with tajwīd, then learnt calligraphy, Arabic grammar, tafsīr, Mishkat al- ṭasbīḥ, then the Six Books, with her father. Ṣāliḥah bint ʿInāyat Rasūl al-ʿAbbāsī al-Chirayyākūtī (d. 1318) studied with her father all the books of the syllabus and accompanied him longer until she became expert in both rational and traditional sciences. Fāṭimah bint Sālim (d. 1339) of Java learnt reading and writing from her father and studied al-Minhaj al-mukhtasar of Bā Faḍl and al-Ajrūniyyah with him. She studied Sahīth al-Bukhārī with Zubayr ibn Qāsim Bā Raqabah, and Ṣawā’il al-Ajlūnī with Sayyid ʿAḥmad ibn Zaynī Dāhlān. The great scholar Lihāz al-Nisāʾ bint Ṣābir Ḥusayn al-Sahsawānī (d. 1309) learnt calligraphy from her father, then studied Arabic grammar. She studied Bulugh al-maram and some books of Sahīth and Sunnah with Mawlānā Muḥammad Bashīr al-Sahsawānī (14th c.), then other ḥadīth books with Shaykh Ḥusayn ibn Muḥsin al-Anṣārī (d. 1327).

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Some women also became interested in the study of books of *taṣawwuf*. Masʿadah bint Aḥmad ibn Ḥādī ibn Aḥmad al-Haddār, for example, was well-known for her study of books like *Iḥyāʿ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* of al-Ghazālī (d. 505), *Awārif al-maʿārif* of al-Suhrawardī (d. 632), and for having memorized *Forty Ḥadīths* of al-Nabhānī (d. 1350).

THE KINDS OF THE BOOKS THEY STUDIED

In this section, I try to describe briefly, with examples, the kinds of ḥadīth works the women studied, beginning with the Muwaṭṭā of Imām Mālik b. Anas. There is not enough space here to show with examples how intensive and extensive the reading material that some of the women studied was. The quantity is remarkable, even astonishing, and far exceeds what many ḥadīth scholars of our time would consider ‘a lot’. To allow readers to get some sense of the scale, I have set out the list of the reading (with her teachers’ names) of Umm Hānī bint Nūr al-Dīn al-Hūriniyyah (d. 871): it will be found at the end of this chapter.

**al-Muwaṭṭā**

The Muwaṭṭā of Imām Mālik (d. 179) is the first major book combining ḥadīth and ḥaqīq. It has been widely accepted by the community in all parts of the Islamic world; many have memorized it – among them, notably, Fāṭimah, the daughter of Imām Mālik, and Imām al-Shāfī. Shuhdah al-Baghdādiyyah (d. 574) studied the whole of it; 2 Ḍāw al-Ṣabāh Ajibah al-Bāqḍāriyyah studied it in the narration of al-Qaʾnabī from Yaḥyā ibn Thābit (d. 566); 3 Khadijah (d. 873) bint Nūr al-Dīn ʿAlī al-Anṣārī from Egypt studied it in the narration of Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā, with al-Qizz ibn Abī l-Yumn al-Kuwayk. 4

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Jawāmiʿ (plural of jāmiʿ), refers to the comprehensive compilations of hadith that contain all the needed divisions of hadith: belief, 'ibādah, transactions, contracts, ḥusn, manners, tafsir, siyar, history, fitan, manāqib etc. The most famous such compilations are three of the Six Books: namely, al-Jāmiʿ al-Saḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, al-Jāmiʿ al-Saḥīḥ of Muslim, and al-Jāmiʿ of al-Tirmidhī.

As I noted earlier, the women's interest in Sahih al-Bukhārī began in the fourth century and has been sustained throughout the centuries. The number of women who studied it is huge. I have given some examples; here is another: the great shaykhah of Isfahan, Umm al-Bahā' Fātimah bint Abī l-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn Abī Saʿd al-Aṣbahānī (d. 539) studied it with Saʿīd al-ʿAyyār. Some women studied only a part of the book: for example, Aminah bint al-Muʿāyyad Abī Bakr ibn al-ʿAṣim (7th c.), who read it with Abū l-Waqt al-Sijīzī. Interest in Sahih Muslim was only a little less. The renowned Nishapurī scholar, Umm al-Khayr Fātimah bint Abī ʿHasan ʿAlī (d. 532) studied it with its most famous teacher of her time, Abū l-Ḥusayn ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī. Interest in the Jāmiʿ of al-Tirmidhī blossomed much later. The list of all its women students would be very long. One of them was Zaynab bint Makkī (d. 688), who read it with ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Taḥraṣad. On the following pages, three linked charts show the transmission of Sahih al-Bukhārī to women up to 816. There were thousands who heard this very difficult book from its author. In later times people naturally went to the longest-lived of the most competent narrators in order to get the highest isnād. The most sought-after narrator from al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn Maṭar al-Firabī, lived around 65 years after the imām's death. Chart 1a goes through him; Charts 1b and 1c start with him.

1 AL-DHAHABI, al-ʿIbar, ii. 457. 2 IBN FAHD, al-Durr al-kamin, ii. 399. 3 AL-SAMĀʾĪ, al-Taḥbīr, ii. 256. 4 TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FASĪ, Dhayl al-taqyid, ii. 372.
Chart 1a. Transmission of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* to women from Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī (d. 256, Samarqand) to ʿAḥishah bint ʿAbd al-Ḥādī (d. 816)

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<tr>
<th>Muhammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, d. 256, Samarqand</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ḥāmīd ibn Shākir al-Nasawi, d. ca. 290, Nasr</td>
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<tr>
<td>ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥāfiz, Madīnah, 615</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ḥāfiz ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn al-Jawzi, d. 597</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jawharib bint ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn al-Jawzi, Baghdad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAlī al-Jayyārī, d. 498, Andalus</td>
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<tr>
<td>ʿAbdullāh ibn Muḥammad al-Bihili</td>
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<td>ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Dhāḥī</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jāfar ibn ʿAli al-Hamdānī, d. 636</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zaynab bint Ahmad ibn Suhayr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jawārīyāb bint Ahmad al-Yakhtārīyāb, d. 783</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rūqayyah bint Yarsāb al-Sāḥibīyāb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abū Taḥāh Mansūr ibn Muḥammad al-Bazdawi, d. 329</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ahmad ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abū al-ʿAbbās Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad al-Mustaghfīr</td>
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<td>al-Ḥasan ibn Ahmad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abū Muṣṣā Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr al-Madīnā</td>
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<tr>
<td>al-Nāṣib ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Hanbali, d. 634</td>
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<td>Amāṣṭūlāb bint al-Nāṣib, d. 679</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥādī al-Maqdīsī</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sulaymān ibn Hamzhā ibn Abī ʿUmar, Damascus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fāṭimah bint al-Manṣūrāb, d. 803</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muḥammad ibn Yusuf ibn Masʿūd al-Firāzī, d. 320, Fīnzāb</td>
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<tr>
<td>ʿAbū Ḥamīd al-Neʿaymī</td>
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<td>Abū ʿUmar al-Mulayhī</td>
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<td>Khalīf ibn ʿAṭāʾ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abū Rawḥ al-Harawi, d. 618</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sitt al-Umarāʾ bint Abī Naṣr, d. 689</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rūqayyah bint ʿAbdullāh al-Anṭāṣf</td>
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Chart 1b. Transmission of Sahih al-Bukhari to women from Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari (d. 256, Samarqand) to `A'ishah bint `Abd al-Hadi (d. 816)

Muhammad ibn Yusuf ibn Masar al-Firazi, d. 320, Firazi
- Abu `Ali Muhammad ibn `Umar ibn Shabbaysh
  - `A'zid ibn Ahmad al-Ayyur, d. 457
    - Muhammad ibn al-Paql al-Furqawi, d. 530
    - Safiyah bint `Abd al-Karim al-Nu`ayburiyyah, d. 603
    - Zaynab bint Ibrahim al-Qayyi, d. 610
  - `A'ishah bint Abu Nasr al-Ashabusi, Isfahan
  - Farisamah bint Muhammad, d. 539, Baghdad
  - Muhammad ibn Isma'il-Farisi
    - al-Mu'ayyad al-Tusi, d. 617
    - Kut al-Anab bint Yabiyah, d. 684
    - `Abd Allarun (the grandmother of al-Birzali)
    - Zaynab bint `Abd al-Rahman, d. 615
    - Zaynab bint Mansur al-Marwaniryyah, d. 695
- Abu `Ishak Ibrahim ibn Ahmad al-Mustamsi
  - Haiq al-Dharr al-Harawi
    - Khadijah al-Shanqishah, Andalus
    - Isha ibn Abi Dharr al-Harawi
      - `Ali ibn Humayd al-Tashbulusi
        - `Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Harmi al-Makkhi, d. 645
        - Zaynab bint Ahmad al-Tabi, Makkah
        - Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr al-Tabi, d. 722
          - Fadima bint Ahmad al-Haruzi, d. 783, Makkah
- Abu al-Haytham Muhammad ibn Makki al-Kushmihanani, d. 389
  - Haiq al-Dharr al-Harawi
    - Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Hafsi
      - Wajih al-Din Thahir al-Shahbani
        - Zaynab bint `Abd al-Rahman, d. 615
        - Asma bint Zayn al-Umari, d. 680
      - Karimah al-Mawzoomah, d. 463, Makkah
    - Abu al-Khayr ibn Abi Ilmri
      - Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Rahman al-Kushmihanani, Kushtah
        - Sharifah bint Ahmad al-Nasawi, Nasa
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<tr>
<th>Chart 1c. Transmission of Ṣabīḥ al-Bukhārī to women from Muḥammad ibn Isma‘īl al-Bukhārī (d. 256, Samarkand) to ʿĀ‘ishah bint ʿAbd al-Hādī (d. 816)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn Maṣṣar al-Firābī, d. 320, Firābā</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Rūzbah, d. 633</td>
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<td>ʿAfīfah bint Abī Ṭūrman</td>
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<td>ʿNār Sittā bint Saʿd al-Dīn</td>
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<td>Karīmah bint Abī al-Wahḥāb al-Zaḥrayrīyyah, d. 641, Damascūs</td>
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<td>Ahmad ibn Abī Tālīb al-Hājīzar, d. 730, Damascūs</td>
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al-Sunan

The Sunan, like the Jawāmi', are compilations of hadiths by topic arranged according to the divisions of fiqh – like tābārah, ṣalāh, ḥaḍāth, ḥaḥj etc. – but are restricted to Prophetic hadith only, and exclude tafsīr, history and other topics covered in the Jawāmi'.

Of many book compiled on this pattern, three make up the Six Books: Sunan of Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d. 275), Ahmad ibn Shu‘ayb al-Nasa’ī (d. 303), of Muḥammad ibn Yazīd ibn Mājah al-Qazwīnī (d. 273). Of almost equally high repute are: Sunan of ‘Alī ibn Umar al-Dāraqūṭnī (d. 385) and Sunan al-kabīr of Abū Bakr Ahmad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (d. 485). Many women studied these Sunan. One example for each must suffice:

Zaynāb bint Makkī al-Harrānī (d. 688) studied Sunan Abū Dāwūd with ʿUmar ibn Ṭabarzad.1 ʿAminah bint Taqī al-Dīn lbrāhīm al-Wāṣīṭī (d. 740) studied with her father Sunan al-Nasa’ī in the narration of Ibn al-Sunni.2 Ṣafīyyah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Farrā’ (d. 699) studied Sunan Ibn Mājah with Imām Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāmah.3 Fātimah bint Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Muqaddam studied Sunan al-Dāraqūṭnī.4 Sitt Quraysh Fātimah bint Taqī al-Dīn ibn Fahd (d. 879) studied Sunan al-kabīr of al-Bayhaqī with Nūr al-Dīn ibn Salāmah.5

al-Masānīd

Masānīd (pl. of musnad) refers to compilations of hadith arranged by names of Companions and others who narrated them, rather than by topic. This reflects increasing interest in the scholarly references that come with the hadith texts, rather than their relevance for the different divisions of fiqh. Among the famous masānīd are: the Musnads of Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150), al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204), al-Humāydi (d. 219), Musaddad ibn Musharhad (d. 228), ʿAbd ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241), of ʿAbd ibn Ḥumayd (d. 249), and Abū Ya‘lā al-Mawṣūlī (d. 307). Again, just one example for each:

1TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FĀSI, Dhayl al-taqyid, ii. 372. 2Ibid., 359–60. 3Ibid., 379. 4KĀḤIĀLĀH, Aʾlām al-nisā, iv. 135. 5AL-SUYUTĪ, al-Minjam fi-l-muḥjam, 123.
Dawʾ al-Ṣabāḥ Ajibah (d. 647) learnt Musnad Abī Ḥanīfah, in the version of Abī Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaṣqūb al-Ḥārithi, from Abū l-Khayr Muḥammad ibn Ṭabīb ibn ʿUmar al-Bāghbān;¹ she studied Musnad al-Shāfiʿī with Abū Zurʿah Ťāhir ibn Muḥammad al-Maqdisi (d. 566),² and Musnad al-Humaydī with two teachers: Abū ʿAbdullāh al-Naṣr al-Dajājī and Abū l-Maʿālī Ṭabīb al-Bājīsraʾī;³ Umm al-Ḥayā Zuhrah bint Muḥammad al-Abnāʾī (d. 633) studied Musnad Musaddad ibn Musāwarad with Yaḥyā ibn Thābit ibn Bundār.⁴ Zaynab bint Makki (d. 688) studied Musnad Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal with Ḥanbal ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Ruṣāfī.⁵ Aṣmāʾ bint Ibrāhīm ibn Sufyān ibn Mandāb al-Ṣabīḥāniyya (d. 630) studied Musnad ʿAbd ibn Ḥumayd with Abū l-Waqṭ ʿAbd al-Awwal ibn ʿIsā al-Ḥarawī.⁶ Fatimah bint Saʿd al-Khayr (d. 600) studied Musnad Abī Yaʿlā with Zāhir ibn Ťāhir.⁷ (For the names of other women who studied the Musnad of Ibn Ḥanbal, see Chart 2 on the next page.)

al-Maʿājim and al-Mashyakhāt

Maʿājim (pl. of muʾjam): a compilation in which the ḥadīths are arranged according to the names of the Companions or other narrators or of the cities that they were most associated with. Mashyakhāt (pl. of mashyakhah): an arrangement of hadiths by the shaykhs or teachers of those ḥadīths. Fāṭimah bint ʿAbdillāh al-Jūzdānīyya (d. 524) studied al-Ṭabarānī’s al-Muʿjam al-kabīr and al-Muʿjam al-saqbīr with their most famous narrator, Ibn Rūḍhāh.⁸ Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥāḍī studied al-Muʿjam al-aʿwāṣa of al-Ṭabarānī with Abū Naṣr ibn al-Shīrāzī.⁹

(See Chart 3 on the next page.)

¹ IBN ḤĀJAR, al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassis, i. 482–83. ² TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FASI, Dhayl al-taqyīd, ii. 383. ³ AL-QAZWINĪ, Mashyakhah, MS, 44. ⁴ TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FASI, Dhayl al-taqyīd, ii. 366. ⁵ Ibid., ii. 372. ⁶ Ibid., ii. 357. ⁷ IBN ḤĀJAR, al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas, i. 482–83. ⁸ AL-DHABABI, Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ, x. 505. ⁹ IBN ḤĀJAR, al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas, ii. 375.


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studied the *Mashyakbah* of Abū Ṭalib al-ʿUshārī with Ibn Ṭabarazad.  

*al-ʿArbaʿūnāt*  
The term refers to compilations of ‘forty ḥadīths’. There are many of these selected by different scholars around themes or topics or narrators. I mention here a few of the more popular:

Asmāʾ bint Abī Bakr ibn al-Khallāl (d. 691) studied *al-ʿArbaʿūn* of Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Aslam al-Kindī al-Ṭūsī (d. 242) with Abū l-ʿAqlaʾ Jaʿfar ibn ʿAlī ibn Ḥibatullāh al-Ḥamadhānī in 635.  


Umm al-Bahāʾ Fātimah bint Abī l-ʿAqlaʾ Muḥammad al-Baghdādi (d. 539) received *al-ʿArbaʿūn* of al-Jawzaqī Muḥammad ibn Ṭabdillāh (d. 388) from Abū Ṭuthmān Saʿīd ibn Abī Saʿīd al-ʿAyyān al-Ṣūfī.  


Later, Imām Nawawī’s *al-ʿArbaʿūn* became the most popular. Sutaytah bint al-Zayn Abī ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad (d. 879) studied it with her father in 792.  

*al-ʿAjzāʾ*  
*Ajzāʾ* (plural of *juzʿ*) meaning component section of something, here referring to the ḥadīths of just one person or ḥadīths collected on just one topic. The number of *ajzāʾ* grew to thousands. From the beginning of the fourth century onward women had great interest in studying them. Again, just a few examples must suffice.

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3 DIYAʾ AL-DIN AL-MAQDISI, *Ṭabbat al-mamāʿāt*, 78.  
6 AL-SAKHAWĪ, *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʾ*, xii. 60.


al-Musalsalat

The term musalsal refers to a hadith around the narration of which there is some particular association that the tradition has deemed worthy of preserving, along with the hadith itself. An example would be the Prophet's shaking someone's hand just before he said what the hadith records, or giving them a date and water, etc.; then, each time that this hadith is passed on the teacher will shake the student's hand, or give out a date and water, etc. Much charm and pleasure is added to the teaching and learning of hadiths by these associations, and remembering one's lessons is facilitated by them. There are many hadiths narrated as musalsalat.

al-Musalsal bi-l-'awwaliyyah. This is the hadith of 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As that the Prophet salla l-lāhu 'ala-yhi wa-sallam said: 'Those who show mercy, the Most Merciful bestows mercy upon them. Show mercy to those who are in the earth, the One who is in heaven will have mercy upon you.' It is narrated from Ibn 'Uyaynah, who narrated it from 'Amr ibn Dinar, from Abu Qabūs, from his master 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As. His student 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Bishr al-Hakam heard it from him as his first hadith; then it became a tradition that students would hear this as their first hadith from their teachers. It has continued to this day. There are many women who received this hadith. Here are some examples: Ḥasanah bint Muḥammad ibn Kāmil

al-Hasaniyyah (d. 765) heard it from al-Tawzarī through the isnād of Ibn al-Samarqandi.1 Umm al-Hasan bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAḇd al-Muḥsin al-Makhzūmī heard this ḥadīth with her sister Ṣafiyyah from al-Ṣarīf Abū l-Khayr ibn Abī ʿAbdillāh al-Makhzūmī in 742.2 Khadijah bint Abī Bakr ibn ʿAlī known as Bint al-Kūrī (d. 803) heard it from Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Harrānī.3 Zaynab bint Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū l-ʿAbbād ʿAbḥād Ṭimād ibn Zahirah al-Qurashi (d. 863) heard it from the qāḍī Zayn al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Murāghī.4 Ghazāl Umm ʿAbd al-Latif al-Nūbiyyah (d. 802) heard it from its famous narrator al-Maydūmī (d. 754).5

Some traditionists compiled the musalsalāt they received from their teachers as books, which made it easier to study and transmit them. Women also heard some of these books of musalsalāt with their teachers. Sitt al-ʿArab bint Muḥammad ibn Fakhr al-Dīn al-Bukhārī (d. 767) heard Musalsalāt al-Ibrāhīmī from her grandfather.6 Umm Kulthūm ʿĀʾishah bint Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Murshidī (d. 846) heard Musalsal al-ʿAlāʾī from Majd al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī.7 Fātimah bint al-Munajjā heard Nuzhat al-hussāf of Abū Mūsā al-Madīnī from Ṭaqī al-Dīn Sulaymān ibn Ḥamzah.8 Shuhdah al-Baghdādiyyah studied al-Musāfahāt of al-Barqānī.9 Umm Muḥammad Sitt al-Kull ʿĀsiyah bint Jarullah Muḥammad al-Makki studied Musalsal bi-l-aqwāliyyah and Musalsal li-khatm l-duʾāʾ with Sharaf al-Dīn Abū l-Qāsim al-Rāfīʾī.10

The reading list of Umm Hani Bint Nor Al-Din Al-Huriniyyah (d. 871)

She studied:


• Juq'2 from Fawa'id Abi Qasim 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Ubaydillah al-Harifi 
• Juq'3 with Manam Hamzah b. Habib al-Zayyati min hadith Ibn Ghalibin 

1 AL-SUYUTI, al-Mu'jam fi l-mu'jam, 101–03.


with Muḥībb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. al-Raḍī Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarī: Musalsalat al-Dībājī


(Photo: Yahya Michot)
Chapter 6

Women's role in diffusion of ‘the knowledge’

The women who had knowledge of the religion transmitted that knowledge to men as well as women. Indeed, given that the majority of students of hadith were men, we would expect the majority of the women’s students to have been men. Their numbers varied in different periods, but in some periods were very high: for example, al-Dhahabi in his account of Ḥāfiz Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd ibn al-Najjār (d. 643) reports from Ibn al-Sā`ātī that ‘[Ibn al-Najjār’s] teachers included 3000 men and 400 women.’ 1 It should suffice as evidence of the authority of women in preserving and transmitting the Sunnah of God’s Messenger that some of the greatest of his Companions and, after them, some of the greatest imāms and jurists in the history of Islamic scholarship relied on women teachers.

THE COMPANIONS AND THE SCHOLARS AFTER THEM

Among the Companions who narrated from ʿA’ishah are: her father, Abū Bakr; ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb; ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar; Abū Hurayrah; Abū Mūsā al-Aṣḥārī; ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās; Rabiʿah ibn ʿAmr al-Jurashi; al-Sā`īb ibn Yazīd; ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ; Zayd ibn Khālid al-Juhāni; ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿĀmir ibn Rabiʿah; ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Hārith ibn Nawfal and others. In addition, in the major compilations of hadith, there are over 300 narrators from ʿA’ishah: al-Mizzī has listed them, in alphabetical order,

1 AL-DHAHABI, Siyār aʿlām al-nubalāʾ, xxiii. 133.

The Companions narrated also from women other than the wives of the Prophet. 'Alī ibn Abī Tālīb, a prominent figure of knowledge among the Companions narrated from Maymūnah, a slave of the Prophet. From Durrah bint Abī Lahab, 'Alī narrated that she said that the Messenger of God, salla l-lāhu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: 'No living person should be given hurt through [criticism of] a dead person.' The Umayyad caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz narrated: 'The righteous woman, Khawlah bint Ḥakīm, the wife of 'Uthmān ibn Māz'ūn narrated that the Messenger of God - salla l-lāhu 'alayhi wa sallam - came out holding in his arms the two sons of his daughter saying: 'By God, you cause [one to be] undisciplined (tuḥabbilīnā), cowardly (tuḥabbinū-
nā) and miserly (tubakhkhili-na); and [yet also] you are indeed as a flower of Paradise. The great tābi‘ī scholar Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab also narrated from Khawlah bint Ḥakīm. Āmir al-Sha’bī narrated from Rāyiḍah bint Kārāmah.


We find the same practice in the succeeding centuries. Imām ʿAlī ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241), Abū Ibrāhīm al-Tarjumānī (d. 236), Muḥammad ibn al-Ṣabbāh al-Jarjarāṭ (d. 240), Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Harawī (d. 244) and ʿAlī ibn Muslim al-Ṭūsī (d. 253) narrated from Umm ʿUmar bint Ḥassān ibn Zayd al-Ṭahqāfī.

Hafiz Ibn 'Asakir (d. 571) narrated from over 80 women, and dedicated a whole book to biographical accounts of them. His colleague Abu Salih al-Samansi (d. 562) wrote down accounts of 69 women from whom he heard hadith directly or who wrote ijazahs to him. Hafiz Abi Tahir al-Silafi (d. 576) studied hadith with tens of women scholars, Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 597) narrated from three, and Hafiz 'Abd al-Ghani al-Maqdisi (d. 600) narrated from 'a number'.

In the seventh century, Ibn al-Athir (d. 630), Ibn al-Salah (d. 643), and al-Diyafa al-Maqdisi (d. 643), all narrated from several women teachers. Hafiz al-Mundhiri (d. 656) narrated from a large number of women and provided accounts of them in al-Takmilah li waqayat al-naqalah, and Muhibb al-Tabar (d. 694) also narrated from 'a number' of women.

Imam Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728), probably the greatest thinker and jurist of his time, received hadith from a number of women and included some hadiths from them in his Forty Hadiths. He expressed very high esteem for their knowledge, understanding and intelligence, as well as their righteousness and piety, and he praised some of them fulsomely for their efforts in preaching and reform. Similarly, the following imams studied with women: Ibn Jamahah (d. 733); Ibn Sayyid al-Nas (d. 734); Abu l-Hajjaj al-Mizzi (d. 742) narrated from some of them in his Tahdhib al-kamal; Imam al-Dhahabi (d. 748) narrated from them in Mu'jam al-shuyukh, Ta'rikh al-Islam, and Siyar al-a'lam al-nubalal; Imam Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751); Hafiz al-'Alarri (d. 761); Taj al-Din al-Subki (d. 771) narrated from them and provided accounts of them in his Mu'jam al-shuyukh; likewise: Hafiz Ibn Kathir (d. 774); al-

1 Ibid., 443.
Zarkashi (d. 794); Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī (d. 795); al-Bulqīnī (d. 805); Ḥāfiz Abū l-Fadl al-Īraqī (d. 806); Ḥāfiz Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī (d. 807); Ḥāfiz Wāli al-Dīn al-Īraqī (d. 826). Ḥāfiz Taqī al-Dīn al-Fāsī (d. 832) mentioned some women teachers in his Dhayl al-Taqyīd and other books; Ibn al-Jazārī (d. 833) mentioned some of them in his Taʾrīkh; Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī (d. 852) mentioned them in his Muʿjam and gave accounts of them in al-Durar al-kāminah and Inbāʿ al-ghumr; Najm al-Dīn Ibn Fahd (d. 885) provided accounts of her women teachers in his Muʿjam; so too Ḥāfiz Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhawī (d. 902) in al-Dawʾ al-lāmiʿ; and Ḥāfiz Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī narrated from them and wrote biographical notices on them in his Muʿjam and other books.

HUSBANDS NARRATING FROM THEIR WIVES

Some of the muḥaddithāt attained such eminence in the knowledge that it is unsurprising to find their husbands becoming their students and referring to them for the solution of different scholarly and juristic issues. Hishām ibn Saʿīd narrated that he called on Muʿadh ibn Ḥabīb al-Juḥānī: Muʿadh asked his wife: When should the child pray? She said: A man from our people mentioned from the Prophet - salla ʾl-lāhu ʿalā ʾthā bi-wa ʾl-sallam - that he was asked about that and he said: When [the child] knows his right from his left, command him to pray.1 Karīmah bint al-Miqdād ibn al-Aswad al-Kindīyyah (ṭabiʿyyah) is another example of a woman whose husband Ḥabīb ibn Wahb ibn Zamʿah narrated from her.2 Iṣḥāq ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Abī Ṭalḥah narrated from his wife Umm Yahyā ῾Humaydah bint Ubayy ibn Rifaʿah al-ʾAnsārīyyah al-Zuraqīyyah.3

Fāṭimah bint al-Mundhir ibn al-Zubayr ibn ʾĀwām is considered one of the great scholars and jurists among the

1 ABŪ DĀWŪD, Sunan, Ṣalāḥ, bāb matāʾ yuʾmaru al-ghulām bi-l-salāḥ. 2 IBN ḤAJAR, Taḥdhib al-tahdhib, xii. 475. 3 AL-MIZZĪ, Taḥdhib al-kamāl, xxxv. 159.
Successors to the Companions. She knew a lot of ḥadīths, mostly through her grandmother Asmā`. Great imāms narrated from her including Muḥammad ibn Ishaq, the author of the famous Sīrah. Most of her ḥadīths that are found in all the major compilations are through her husband Hishām ibn Urwah ibn al-Zubayr, one of the teachers of Imāms Abū Ḥanīfa, Mālik, Shuʿbah, Sufyān al-Thawrī and others. I will mention here a few examples of her ḥadīths narrated by her husband. Hishām narrated from his wife Fāṭimah from her grandmother Asmā` that she said: ‘A woman came to the Messenger of God – ʿalla l-lāhu c̱ay-hi wa sallam – and said: ‘O Messenger of God – ʿalla l-lāhu c̱ay-hi wa sallam – I have a daughter who is a bride: she has a disease (ḥashbāb) that has thinned her hair. Can I join [another’s hair] to it? The Messenger of God – ʿalla l-lāhu c̱ay-hi wa sallam – said: The curse of God is on the one who joins [another’s hair in this way] and the one who asks for [this].’ (This ḥadīth is narrated by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Nasaʾī and Ibn Mājah.1) Hishām says: ‘Fāṭimah narrated to me from Asmā` that she said: ‘We ate meat of one of our horses in the time of the Prophet, ʿalla l-lāhu c̱ay-hi wa sallam.’ Hishām narrated from Fāṭimah from Asmā` that she said: ‘The Messenger of God – ʿalla l-lāhu c̱ay-hi wa sallam – said to me: Give [of your wealth], spend [from it] and pay out; do not cling to it, otherwise God will hold it over you; do not count [it] otherwise God will count [it] over you.’ Hishām also narrated from her the long ḥadīth, found in the

Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Abi Ahmad al-Samarqandi (d. 540) the author of *Tabqat al-Fuqahā*¹, was herself a great scholar and jurist, and renowned for it. She was married to 'Ala al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn Mas‘ūd al-Kāsānī, the author of *Badā‘i‘ al-sanā‘a‘*². Ibn al-'Adim says: ‘My father narrated that she used to quote the Ḥanafi madhhab (doctrine) very well. Her husband al-Kāsānī sometimes had some doubts and erred in the [issuing of a] fatwa; then she would tell him the correct opinion and explain the reason for [his] mistake.’² An example from the ninth century is Fatimah hint Yal-qiyā. Al-Shawkāni (d. 1255) says about her: ‘She was famous for her knowledge. She had debates with her father on several juristic issues. He father the imām confirmed that Fatimah applies *ijtihad* in deriving rulings. This indicates that she was prominent in the knowledge for the imām would not say something like that except for one who deserved it.’³ Her father married her to al-Muṭahhar ibn Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān ibn Muḥammad (d. 879), who referred to her in the judgement of difficult juristic issues. Whenever a complicated issue was brought to him and to his students he would go to his wife and seek the solution from her. His students would then say: ‘This is not from you. This is from behind the curtain.’⁴

**CHILDREN LEARNING FROM THEIR MOTHERS**

We know from biographies of many of the great scholars in Islam that an important factor in the success they had in combining piety, righteousness and knowledge was the foundation in education they had been given by their mothers. The practice

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of introducing children to the ways of the religion at a young age was, as we saw in an earlier chapter, encouraged by the Prophet himself. Accordingly, mothers were motivated to bring children to the assemblies of learning, and to the mosques. Some of the children who came must have been very young indeed. Â‘Aishah has narrated that the children were brought to the Messenger of God, then he would bless them and do *tahānik* (the ceremony of softening up a date, then putting a piece of it in the newborn’s mouth). On one occasion when a baby soiled his clothes with urine, the Prophet simply called for water, which was poured over the affected part.¹ The women’s being in the mosques with children was certainly not forbidden. On the contrary, as we saw earlier, the Prophet was aware of it and if, during the prayer, he heard a baby cry, he would shorten the recitation in order to relieve the mother of distress and distraction.²

The following incident, reported by Abū Burdah ibn Abī Mūsā al-Ashʿarī, sheds light on how mothers would impress the *sunnahs* on their children’s minds. In this instance, the mother gets Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī to explain to their son something that he had had the opportunity to explain but failed to do so:

I was with my father Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī in the house of Umm al-Faḍl. She sneezed [and said *al-hamdū li-llāh*], then my father said to her: May God be merciful to you. Then I sneezed and he did not say it to me. When I came to my mother I told her [what happened]. When Abū Mūsā came home she said to him: My son sneezed in your presence and you did not pray for him and a woman sneezed and you prayed for her. He said: Your son sneezed and he did not praise God so I did not pray for him; whereas she sneezed and she praised God, so I prayed for her. I have heard the Messenger of God – *salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam* – say: When someone sneezes in your presence, and he praises God, then pray for him, and if he does not praise Him, then do not pray for him. She said: You are right. You are right.³

Sometimes, the children were taught by explicit precept. For example, Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah narrates from Ibn al-Munkadir that he said: ‘My mother said to me: O my son, do not joke to excess with the children, otherwise they will treat you lightly.’

At other times, the teaching was by allusion: Āsim ibn ‘Alī has narrated: ‘‘Abdullāh ibn Bakr ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Muzanī narrated to us saying: My mother told me that [my] father has vowed that whenever he heard two people disputing about destiny he would stand and pray two raka‘āt.

However, the best thing mothers could teach their children was the responsibility to be active in seeking the knowledge for themselves by attending on those who had it, for that is the basis of the established tradition among the people of hadith, to travel in search of the higher isnād, of greater nearness to the original. ‘Affān narrates from Shu‘bah that he said: ‘My mother said to me: There is a woman here narrating hadiths from ‘Ā‘ishah. Go and learn hadiths from her. Then I went to her and received hadiths from her. The name of that woman was Shumaysah Umm Salamah.’

CHILDREN NARRATING FROM THEIR MOTHERS

In this next hadith four women Companions are narrating from each other, two of them wives of the Prophet and two of them their daughters. Urwah ibn al-Zubayr narrated from Zaynab bint Abī Salamah, from Ḥabībah bint Umm Ḥabibah, from her mother from Zaynab bint Ja‘sh that she said: ‘The Messenger of God – sallā l-lāhū ‘alay-hi wa sallam – woke up, his face red, and said: ‘There is no god but God! Destruction is [coming] for the Arabs from an evil that is near. Today, there has opened in the wall of Gog and Magog [a breach] like this – and he indicated a circle [with his fingers]. She says: I said: O Messenger of God – sallā l-lāhū ‘alay-hi wa sallam – will we be destroyed when righteous

1 AL-WASHSHA‘, al-Zarf wa-l-zurqf, 54. 2 ABU NU‘AYM AL-ASBAHĀNĪ, Ḥilyat awlīyā‘, ii. 256. 3 BAHSHAL, Ta’rikh Wāsīt, 109.
people are among us? He said: Yes, when the evil becomes pre­ponderant. 1

Yaḥyā ibn Bashīr ibn Khallād narrated from his mother that she called upon Muḥammad ibn Kaḥb al-Qurāzī and heard him say: ‘Abū Hurayrah narrated to me: The Messenger of God –ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – said: Make the imām [stand] in the middle [of the rows in prayer] and fill the gaps [in the rows]. 2

ʿAbd Rabbīḥ ibn al-Ḥakam al-Thaqafī al-Ṭāʾīfī narrated from his mother Bint Ruqayqah who narrated ḥadīth from her mother. 3

ʿĀmir al-Shaḥbī narrated from Yaḥyā ibn Ṭalḥah, from his mother Suʿdā al-Murriyyah that she said: ʿUmar passed by Ṭalḥah after the death of the Messenger of God –ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – and said to him: Why are you so down-hearted? Do you dislike the rule of your cousin [i.e. Abū Bakr]? He said: No. Rather, [it is because] I heard the Messenger of God –ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – say: I know a word, no one utters it at the time of his death, but that word will be a light for his book of deeds; his body and soul will get comfort at the time of death. I did not ask him before he passed away. [ʿUmar] said: I know that word; it is the word that he wanted his uncle [Abū Ṭālib] to utter. Had he known anything better than that for his salvation he would have required him [to utter it].” 4

Sufyān ibn ʿUayyānah narrated from Ibn al-Munkadīrī, from Ibn Rumaythah, from his mother that she said: I called upon ʿĀʾishah. She prayed eight rakʿahs at the time of forenoon. My mother asked her: Tell me from the Messenger of God –ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – anything [that he said] about this prayer.

She said: I will not tell you anything about it from the Messenger of God – *salla l-lāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*. But if my father could be brought back to life on the condition that I quite [doing these *rakʿahs*], I would not quit [them].

`Abdullāh ibn `Awf narrated from al-Hasan from his mother, from Umm Salamah that she said: 'I will not forget the incident [during the preparations for the battle] of the Trench when the Prophet – *salla l-lāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* – was giving [the people] milk, and his chest-hair was dusty and he was saying: The good is the good of the hereafter, so [may God] forgive the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn.'

`Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn `Abd al-Wāḥid narrated saying: Umm Janūb bint Numaylah narrated to me from her mother Suwaydah bint Jābir, from her mother `Uqaylah bint Asmar ibn Muṭārris from her father Asmar ibn Muṭārris that he said: 'I came to the Prophet and I pledged allegiance to him, then he said: Whoever comes to any water, where no Muslim has come before him, then it is his.'

Kathīr ibn Farqad narrated from `Abdullāh ibn Mālik ibn Ḥudhayfah, from his mother al-`Āliyah bint Subay that she said: 'I had sheep on Mt Uḥud, some of which died. Then I called on Maymūnah, the wife of the Prophet – *salla l-lāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* – and I mentioned that to her. Maymūnah said to me: If you had taken their hides, you could have made use of them. [al-`Āliyah] said: Is it allowed (*bāḥā*)? She said: Some people from Quraysh passed by the Messenger of God – *salla l-lāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* – pulling a [dead] goat of theirs [behind them] as [one pulls] a donkey. The Messenger of God – *salla l-lāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* – said to them: If you had taken its hide! They said: It is dead. The Messenger of God – *salla l-lāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* – said: Tanning will purify [its hide].

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Among the Successors of the Companions, 'Amrah bint 'Abd al-Rahmān was renowned as a jurist and as a narrator. Among those who narrated from her was her son Abū l-Rijāl Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Anṣārī, a number of whose narrations of ḥadīth are recorded by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Nasā'ī and Ibn Mājah.¹

THE MANNERS OF THE WOMEN SCHOLARS

The sources that record the work of the muḥaddithāt of later centuries do not provide much detail as to their manners, how they did their work. They are described not specifically but generally as pious, virtuous, deeply learned, intelligent, generous with their time and their wealth, and despite teaching for most of the day, of astonishing patience and forbearance. Also, about some of them, their rank in the field of ḥadīth is mentioned – either in the form of a title such as musnidah, or by quoting the judgements about them of famous students. By contrast, the scholars from the generation of the Companions and their Successors were far more present in the social space – they had to be for their knowledge to be passed on to many when they themselves were (relatively to the students) few in number. More specific accounts of their qualities are mentioned in the sources than is the case for the women teachers after them, who modelled their manners and character on theirs.

The study of ḥadīth texts and their chains of authority has many technical elements, suited to those with an academic bent. That said, the Sunnah which that scholarship is meant to serve is not an academic pursuit but a way of living. The scholars of ḥadīth, men and women, were aware that, as well as responsibility for accurately preserving and transmitting the knowledge that was with them, they carried a responsibility to transmit to their students the best manners in thought, speech and action. They had to be mindful that they were passing on what had reached them of the teaching of God’s Messenger, not what

¹ Al-Mīzī, Tadhbid al-kamāl, xxxv. 242.
might suit or serve a political or sectarian bias, nor what might improve their standing in this world. The best of the scholars were content with moral authority and kept clear of the temptations and burdens of political power. Insofar as women were further from those temptations, they were able to preserve a virtually flawless record for integrity and truthfulness in their reporting and in their personal conduct.

An excellent model of the virtues of the muḥaddithat is the tābiʿiyah Umm al-Dardā. Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Ablah narrates that a man came to her and told her that a certain individual had criticized her before the caliph, ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān. She said: ‘If we are rebuked for something that is not found in us, then very often we are also praised for something that is not in us.’ It is wonderful how gently she criticizes the one who sought to bring her into the caliph’s disfavour, without needing to say she has no awe or dread of the caliph’s rank and power. In fact, ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān used to attend her class in Damascus to learn the fiqh from her, and he sat as one among her other students. Also, Ismā‘īl ibn Ḫubdillāh has reported: ‘‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān was sitting in the Rock [of Jerusalem] and Umm al-Dardā was sitting with him [teaching]. When the adhān of maghrib was called, he stood up and she stood up leaning on ‘‘Abd al-Malik [and so they remained] until he entered the mosque with her. Then she sat with the women and ‘‘Abd al-Malik went forward to lead the prayer.’

Umm al-Dardā commanded such respect because she had achieved the humility that comes through taqwā, wariness of God. ‘Awn ibn ‘Abdillāh narrates: ‘We used to come to [the assembly of] Umm al-Dardā and remember God there.’ She was, in addition to teaching, famously relentless in devotions. Yūnūs ibn Maysarah reports: ‘The women used to worship with Umm al-Dardā and when they became weak from standing they

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1 IBN ‘ASĀKIR, Ta’rīkh madīnat Dimashq, Tarājim al-nisā‘, 432. 2 IBN KATHĪR, al-Bidāyah wa-t-nihāyah, sub anno 82. 3 AL-DHĀHABI, Sīyar a‘lām al-nubalā‘, iv. 279. 4 Ibid., iv. 278.
would lean on ropes.'

Intensity of worship is also reported of other women teachers: Hāfiz al-Silafi narrates from Abū l-Rijāl Fityān ibn Naṣrullāh al-Azādī that he said: 'The mother of my children [i.e. my wife] narrated to me that she saw Khadijah bint al-Faqīh Ābī l-Abbās al-Rāzī many times praying the whole night and not sleeping except when overcome by sleep.'

The teachers' work was a sacrifice on the path of God, and they attended to their students' needs with the same care as a mother does her children. Uthmān ibn Ḥayyān (d. 105) says: 'We ate food with Umm al-Dardā' and we omitted to praise God. She said: O my children, do not omit to season your food with remembrance of God. Eating and praising God is better than eating and being silent.' Ābd Rabbih ibn Sulaymān ibn Āmayr ibn Zaytūn reports that 'Umm al-Dardā' would write the wisdom that she taught me on my slate — we guess that he was then too young to have learnt to write himself. He also reports that she would say to him: 'Learn the wisdom when you are little [young], then you will implement it when you grow up.'

Sulaym ibn Āmīr says: 'I set out intending [a journey to] Jerusalem. I passed by [the home of] Umm al-Dardā'. She gave me [something] to drink and she gave me a dirham. This spirit of generosity, giving of their wealth as well as time, is a consistent and stable characteristic of the mubaddithat. Mūsā ibn Ābdillāh says: 'Āisah bint Ṭalāh narrated to us and said [that] the people used to come to [umm al-mumīnīn Āisah] from every city. They would write letters from their cities. I would sit before Āisah [and say]: Khālah [aunt], this is a letter from so-and-so and a gift from him. Then Āisah would say to me: My child, answer him and reward him. If you do not have anything to reward [him with], I will give you [something]. Then she would give me [something for him].’

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1 Ibid. 2 ABŪ TĀHIR, Mu‘jam al-safar, 83. 3 IBN ĀSĀKIR, Ta‘rikh madīnat Dimashq, Tarājim al-nisā‘, 433. 4 Ibid., 428. 5 Ibid., 433. 6 ABŪ ZUR‘ĀH AL-DIMASHQĪ, al-Ta‘rikh i. 333. 7 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, al-Adab al-mufrad, bāb al-kitābah ilā l-nisā‘ wa jawābi-hinn.
Some of the women were so engrossed in teaching that they devoted their whole day to it, holding extended sessions almost without rest. One muhaddithah renowned for stamina through all-day sessions of teaching was Sitt al-Wazarāʾ bint ʿUmar ibn al-Munajjā (d. 716). She was popular in Damascus for teaching al-Bukhārī’s Sahih, then invited to Cairo where she taught it in the great mosque and other venues, her lessons being attended by notable men of the city, including its scholars. She lived beyond the age of ninety and was still teaching on the last day of that long life. Al-Dhahabi (a student) says of her: ‘She was steadfast, patient for long sessions of teaching.’ The reason for such prolonged sessions was that students had often travelled great distances and wished to hear and read many hadiths in large compilations and in the shortest period. That needed exceptional endurance on the part of the teachers as, often, the students attended in large numbers. Al-Dhahabi says about another of his women teachers, Zaynab bint al-Kamāl (d. 740): ‘She was devout, pious and generous, she narrated a lot of books. The students crowded round her, and read to her large books. She was of fine character, patient. Very often they would read to her most of the day, she was noble and kind.’ Ibn Rāfīʾ (d. 774) says about her: ‘She taught big books, and she was easy in teaching, loved the people of hadith, [and she was] kind and noble.’

ʿAwn ibn ʿAbdillāh reports about Umm al-Dardāʾ that he once asked her: ‘Have we wearied you? She said: You [pl.] weary me? I have sought worship in everything. I did not find anything more relieving to me than sitting with scholars and exchanging [knowledge] with them.’ Revising with students was necessary to establish the knowledge securely in their minds and hearts.

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1 IBN HAJAR, al-Durar al-kāminah, ii. 129. 2 IBN KATHIR, al-Bidāyah wa-l-nihayah, sub anno 79. 3 AL-DHAHABI, Muḥam al-shuyūkḥ, i. 292. 4 AL-DHAHABI, al-Juzʿ al-majqūd min Siyar al-ʿālam al-mubalaʾ, 421. 5 IBN HAJAR, al-Durar al-kāminah, ii. 117. 6 IBN RĀFĪʾ, al-Wafayāt, i. 318. 7 AL-MIZZI, Tahdhib al-kamāl, xxxv. 355.
Al-Dhahabī says about his teacher, Zaynab bint 'Abd al-Rahmān (d. 704), that she was particularly good in revising.¹

Sometimes, as a break from the serious work of studying hadith, the muhaddithāt would narrate interesting stories to relax their students. Sitt al-Fuqahā' al-Ḥamawīyah (d. 720) used to do this.² There is precedent for it in the accounts we have of the Companions, who might sometimes joke with their students. 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn al-Aswad narrates: 'My father used to send me to 'A‘īshah and [as a child] I used to go to her [i.e. beyond the curtain]. When I became adult, I came to her and called to her from behind the curtain: O umm al-muminin, when does the bath becomes compulsory? She said: So, you have done it, O Luka! And [in answer to the question] when the private parts conjoin.'³

If the students erred, they would sometimes correct them with gentle admonition, sometimes with severity, according to the need. Yazid ibn al-Asamm narrates: 'I and a nephew of hers welcomed 'A‘īshah when she came [back] from Makkah. We had jumped into a garden of Madinah and picked its fruits. She was told about that. She turned to her nephew, rebuking him; then, she scolded me and said: Do you not know that God has brought you up in the house of his Prophet – salla l-lāhu 'alayhi wa sallam? By God, Maymūnah has left [i.e. died] and now your rope has been thrown on your shoulder [so you are without a guardian and must guide yourself]. Listen! Among us she was among those most wary of God and most caring for her blood relatives.'⁴ An example of appropriate severity is this response by Umm al-Dardā' to a serious failure of manners in one of her students. It is reported by Ibn Abī Zakariyyā al-Khuzā'i: 'We went out on a journey with Umm al-Dardā'. Then a man joined our company. Umm al-Dardā' asked him: What is preventing you from reciting [the Qur'ān] and remembering God as your companions [are doing]? He said: I have [memorized] only one

¹ Al-Dhahabī, Mu‘jam al-shuyūkh, i. 258. ² Ibid., i. 290. ³ AL-DHAHABI, Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā‘, v. 11. ⁴ Ibid., ii. 243–44.
sûrah of the Qur'ân, and I have repeated it so often that I have let it go. She said: Is the Qur'ân let go? I will not keep company with you – either you go ahead of us or come after us. The man mounted his camel and left.\(^1\) Ismâ‘îl ibn ‘Ubaydillâh narrates: ‘Umm al-Dardâ’ said to me: O Ismâ‘îl, how can one sleep if he has 10,000 under his pillow? Ismâ‘îl said to her: Rather, how can one sleep if he does not have 10,000 under his pillow! She said: Subhân al-lâh! I see you will be tried (tubtalâ) by [fortune in] this world.’ And Ismâ‘îl was indeed tested by getting fortune in this world.\(^2\) Zayd ibn Aslam narrates that ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwân, the caliph, once invited Umm al-Dardâ’ and she was a guest in his house. One night, he got up in the night and called his servant, who came a little late. ‘Abd al-Malik cursed him. ‘In the morning Umm al-Dardâ’ said to him: I heard you last night cursing your servant. I have heard Abû l-Dardâ’ say that the Messenger of God – salla l-lîahu ‘alâq-hi wa sallam – said: The cursers will not be intercessors or witnesses on the Day of Resurrection.\(^3\)

*Teaching unpaid; accepting small gifts*

Most of the women taught without asking for or taking payment. However, they would accept from their students what they, unasked, could give as a gift. ‘Uthmân ibn ‘AAbbâb reports from Umm al-Dardâ’ that she said: ‘One of them will say “O God, provide for me”. But he knows that God does not rain gold or silver over him. Rather, He provides people through each other. So whoever is given something he should accept [that]. If one is rich he should give to the needy, and if one is poor he should use that for his need.’\(^4\) Iblâhîm ibn Abî ‘Ablàb says: ‘I saw Umm al-Dardâ’ in Jerusalem sitting among poor women. A man came and distributed some money among them. He gave Umm al-Dardâ’ a fals [a copper]. She said to her servant: Buy camel meat

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\(^1\) IBN ‘ASÂKIR, Ta’rîkh maddînàt Dimashq, Tarâjîm al-nîsâ’, 431. \(^2\) Ibid., xxxix. 452. \(^3\) Ibid., Tarâjîm al-nîsâ’ 435. \(^4\) AL-DHÂHABÎ, Siyar ‘alâ‘îm al-nubalâ’, iv. 279.
with it. She said: Is not that money sadaqah? Umm al-Dardā' said: It came to us unasked.¹ The sources record many instances of muhaddithat who were needy, and when their students came to know of that, they would help them to the extent possible for them. Al-Sakhāwī says in his account of his teacher ʿĀʾishah bint al-Zayn (d. 880): ‘She became very poor, so much so that she stayed in the ribāt of Umm al-Zaynī ibn Muzhir for a time, and she accepted a little from her students. About his teacher Sārah bint ʿUmar al-Ḥamawīyyah (d. 855), he says: ‘She narrated a lot of hadith; the ināms [of hadith] heard from her; and [in terms of volume] I studied with her what is beyond description. She was righteous, with little wealth; that is why we used to help her. She was marked by intelligence, good taste, love of the students, patience in [her] teaching.’²

THE NUMBERS OF THEIR STUDENTS

Among the women scholars there were those who had a small number of students, and those who had a huge number. The huge number of narrators from umm al-muʾminin ʿĀʾishah have already been mentioned. To illustrate the scale, from the later period, I have listed (see Table 2, below) the names of those of the students of Shuhdah bint Abī Naṣr Abī Standard Abī al-Faraj al-Baghdādiyyah (d. 574)³ who were, or who later became, famous as scholars, jurists, qaḍīs, and ascetics.⁴ After that, to show how heavily attended some of the muhaddithat’s classes could be, I present a copy of, and then a transcription of the names of the students given on the attendance record (sama') of a class, of which the most famous teacher out of 14 teachers was Zaynab bint al-Kamāl (d. 740). The class took place on 1st Rajab 718 in the Jāmiʿ al-Muẓaffarī, Qāsyūn, Damascus. She was teaching Juzʾ Intikhāb al-Tabarānī li ibni-hi Abī Dharr ʿalā ibn Fāris, which

¹ IBN ASĀKIR, Taʾrikh madinat Dimashq, Tarājim al-nisāʾ, 430. ² AL-SAKHWĪ, al-Dawʾ al-lāmiʿ, xii. 52. ³ AL-DHABAḤI, Taʾrikh al-ʾIslām (sub anno 571–580), 146. ⁴ Accounts of Shuhdah’s students can be looked up in loco in AL-MUNDIRI, al-Takmilah li-wafayat al-naqalah.
she heard from Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Dā'im, who heard it from Yahyā al-Thaiqfī, who narrated it from Abū 'Alī ibn al-Haddād, who narrated it from Abū Nuʿaym al-Aṣbahānī, who narrated it from its author, al-Ṭabarānī. Only a few women attended this class; their names are shown in italic.

Table 2. Famous students of Shuhdah bint Abī Naṣr

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of student (d., place)</th>
<th>[other places associated with]</th>
<th>place(s) mainly associated with</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abū Ismā'īl Ibrāhīm ibn 'Abd al-Wāhid al-Maqdisī al-Dimashqī (d. 614, Damascus)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Damascus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaykh Ibrāhīm ibn al-Muẓaffar al-Baghdādī (d. 622, Mosul)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mosul, Sinjar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Ma‘ālī Abūl-Hāmid ibn Umar al-Nahrawānī (d. 629, Baghdad)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-'Abbās Abūl-Hāmid ibn Ya‘qūb al-Māristānī al-Sūfī (d. 639, Baghdad)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Muḥammad Ismā‘īl ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Azajī al-Māmūnī</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Muḥammad Ismā‘īl ibn 'Alī al-Jauhari (d. 631, Baghdad)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaykh Abū l-Fāḍl Iyās ibn Jāmi‘ al-Irbīlī al-Shurūṭī (d. 601, Irbil)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Irbil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū 'Abdillāh al-Ḥusayn ibn Umar al-Mawṣūlī (d. 622, Mosul)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mosul, Irbil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Tāhir al-Khaṭīl ibn Abūl-Ḥāmid al-Ṣaṣṣarī (d. 633, Sarsar)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Baghdad, Sarsar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Ahmad Dāwūd ibn 'Alī al-Ḥammāmī</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abū l-Ma‘ālī Sa‘īd ibn 'Alī al-Baghdādī al-Wā‘īz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abū Muḥammad Thālah al-Ṣaḥḥī al-Ḥanbalī (d. 593, al-Ṣaḥḥ)</td>
<td>al-Ṣaḥḥ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Bakr ʿAbdullāh ibn Ahmad al-Tahhān (d. 623, Baghdad)</td>
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<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Ja‘far ʿAbdullāh ibn Naṣrullah al-Ḥāshimī (d. 622, Baghdad)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Fāṭḥ ʿAbdullāh ibn Abī Ghālib al-Sāmarrī (d. 636, Baghdad)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Qāsim al-Diyā‘ ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad al-Qurashi (d. 616, Cairo)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cairo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Bakr ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Maḥfūz al-Hanbalī (d. 630, Baghdad)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Faraj ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Najm al-Anṣārī (d. 634, Damascus)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Damascus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn ʿAbd al-Raqqāq ibn ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlī (d. 606, Baghdad)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Dulaḥ al-Baghdādī (d. 637, Baghdad)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Place</td>
<td></td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Ṭālib ʿAbd al-Latīf ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Qubbayū (d. 641, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-Muwaqqat Abū Muhammad ʿAbd al-Latīf ibn Yusuf al-Mawsili (d. 629, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad, Damascus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Manṣūr ʿAbd al-Malik ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Sukaynah (d. 602, Qanā, Egypt)</td>
<td>Baghdad, Makkah, Madinah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Bakr ʿUbaydullāh ibn ʿAlī al-Baghdādī</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAlī Muṣlih ibn ʿAlī al-Naghūbī (d. 622, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAlī Maʿṣūm ʿUbaydullāh ibn ʿAlī al-Mubārak al-Azāj (d. 619, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAlī Futūḥ ʿUthmān ibn Abī Naṣr al-Baghdādī al-Maṣūdi (d. 636, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAlī Qāsim ʿAlī ibn Afdal al-Ḥashimī (d. 625, Makkah)</td>
<td>Basrah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAlī Hasan ʿAlī al-Tūnīsīnī al-Mālikī (d. 599, Saʿd, Egypt)</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAlī Hasan ʿAlī ibn ʿAlī al-Ḥāfīz ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Jawzī (d. 630, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAlī Hasan ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Sulamī (d. 602, Hims) [Damascus]</td>
<td>Baghdad, Egypt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAlī Hasan ʿAlī ibn Nābir al-Azājī (d. 618, Rās al-ʿAyn)</td>
<td>Rās al-ʿAyn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn Bundār al-Dimashqī (d. 600, Cairo)</td>
<td>Egypt, Damascus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qaysīr ibn Kumushkhīn (d. 607, Tustar)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Farghānī (d. 623, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAlī Marāqib Muḥammad ibn Ahmad al-Tālīqānī (d. 623, Damascus) [Egypt]</td>
<td>Qazwīn, Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAlī Hasan Muḥammad ibn Ahmad al-Baghdādī</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ahmad al-Tālīqānī (d. 614, Rome) [Irbi]</td>
<td>Qazwīn, Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAlī Maʿṣūm Muḥammad ibn Ahmad al-Jīlī al-Baghdādī (d. 627, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Bakr ibn Masʿūd al-Baghdādī al-Bayyū (d. 593)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAlī Hasan Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Yūsufī (d. 640, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad ibn ʿUthmān al-Zabīdī (d. 608, Kaysh Island)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAlī Barakāt Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Anṣārī (d. 600, Asyūt)</td>
<td>Asyūt, Mosul</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAbdillah Muhammad ibn ʿImad al-Ḥarrānī (d. 632, Alexandria)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAbdillah Muhammad ibn ʿUmar al-Zaffarī (d. 627, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAbdillah Muhammad ibn Abī ʿAbdillah al-Nawqānī (d. 637, Cairo)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAbdillah Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Jaʿfar al-Baṣrī (d. 629, Basrah)</td>
<td>Basrah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhammad ibn Yahyā al-Baghdādī (d. 639, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAṣālīr Naṣr ibn ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Jili (d. 633, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAbdillah Muhammad al-Dāḥīrī (d. 634, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAlī ʿAbdallāh Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Muṣāllam al-Baghdādī (d. 607, Cairo)</td>
<td>Cairo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAṣālīr Naṣr ibn ʿAbd al-Muṣāllam al-Baghdādī (d. 630, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhammad ibn Yahyā ibn Abī-l-Wafāʾ al-Mārdīnī (d. 620, Mardin)</td>
<td>Mardin, Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAṣālīr Naṣr ibn Rayhān ibn Mālik al-Anbārī (d. 622, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAlī ʿAbdallāh Yusuf ibn ʿUmar al-Baqillānī (d. 628, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Muḥammad Yūnus ibn ʿAlī al-Qaṭṭān (d. 630, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continuation of samāʿ of the class of Zavnab bint al-Kamāl
SMa' of the class of Zaynab bint al-Kamal (d. 740), teaching ḥalq
Intikhab al-Taharani li bni-hi Abu Dharr 'ala ibn Fariis in Jami' al-
Mugaffari, Qasyun, Damascus, 1 Rajab 718. Continues on previous
page.
The document shown on the previous page begins by stating the title of the book taught; then follow the names of the 14 shaykhs and shaykhahs taking the class, including Zaynab bint al-Kamal; their isnad to the author; the names of the students who attended the whole session; those who attended only a part of it; the place and date of the class.

Partial transcription of the sama of the class of Zaynab bint al-Kamal (d. 740), teaching Intikhab al-Tabarani li ibn-hi Abi Dharr 'ala ibn Farih in Jami' al-Muza'assari, Qasyun, Damascus, 1 Rajab 718. (The names of the few women students in this class are in italic.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Student (Date of Death if Known; Place Associated With)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muhammad ibn Sa'd al-Din Abu Muhammad Yahya ibn Muhammad ibn Sa'd ibn 'Abdillah al-Maqdisi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaykh Muwaffaq al-Din 'Ali ibn 'Abd al-Hamid ibn 'Ali ibn 'Abd al-Farran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abu 'Abdillah Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Hamid ibn 'Ali ibn 'Abd al-Farran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamil al-Din Abdullah ibn Ya'qub ibn Sayyidihim al-Iskandari (d. 754; Alexandria)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahammad ibn al-Shaykh Abu 'Abdillah Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Hamid ibn Tammam ibn 'Abd al-Farran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abu 'Abdillah Muhammad ibn Ibrabim ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Baqa al-Baghdadi (d. 759; Damascus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abu 'Abdillah Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Hamid ibn 'Abdillah ibn 'Abd al-Hamid ibn Muhammed ibn 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Ayyash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibrabim ibn 'Abd al-Hamid ibn 'Abd al-Izz Umar ibn 'Abd al-Hamid ibn Umar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abu 'Abdillah Muhammad ibn Ibrabim ibn Muhammad al-Mulaqqin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Umar ibn 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Ayyash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ismail ibn Sultan ibn Ghanam al-Khabbaz the grandson of Nasrullah ibn 'Ayyash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibrabim ibn Umar ibn 'Atiq al-Najim ibn 'Abbas al-'Ajjar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'Ali ibn Nāṣir ibn 'Abdillāh ibn al-Khabbāz al-Nassāj
Abdullāh Aybak 'Ātīq ibn Sab' al-Majāni
Umar ibn Ḥamzah ibn Yūnūs ibn Ḥamzah al-Irbili al-ʿAdawī (d. 782; Safad)
Umar ibn Saʿd ibn ' Awsajah al-Maʿdhīrī
Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn ʿAbd al-Muḥsin
Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĀḥmad ibn al-Nāṣīḥ ʿAbd al-Raḥmān
ibn ʿAyyāsh
ʿĀḥmad ibn ʿAbdillāh
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Shaykh ʿĪzz al-Dīn Ibrāhīm
ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn al-Shaykh Abī ʿUmar
Uthmān ibn ʿAṭīyyah ibn ʿAbd al-Wāḥid
al-Sharīf Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAli ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muẓaffar al-Ḥusaynī (d. 776; Damascus)
Umar ibn ʿĀḥmad ibn ʿUmār ibn Musallam al-Kattānī (d. 777; Damascus)
Muḥammad ibn ʿĀḥmad ibn Naṣrullāḥ ibn Ḥasan
Umar ibn al-ʿImād ibn ʿĀḥmad ibn Uqbah
Muḥammad ibn al-ʿImād ibn ʿĀḥmad ibn Uqbah
Muḥammad ibn ʿUṭayl ibn ʿAbd al-Muḥṣīn
Yahyā ibn ʿUṭayl ibn ʿAbd al-Muḥṣīn
Ibrāhīm ibn Shiḥl ibn Ḥamdān al-Ḥamāl al-ʿAyūṭī al-Samīmān
ʿĀḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĪzz al-Dīn Aybak al-Turaykī
Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĪzz al-Dīn Aybak al-Turaykī
Ibrāhīm ibn Ḥasan ibn ʿĀḥmad
ʿĀḥmad ibn Ḥasan ibn ʿAṭīyyah al-Jammāṭī
Muḥammad ibn Naṣr ibn ṫānṣūr
ʿAli ibn al-Ḥājj Yūṣuf ibn Muḥammad al-Tannūrī
ʿAli ibn ʿUmar ibn Shiḥl al-Fiqāṭī
ʿĀḥmad ibn ʿUmār ibn Shiḥl al-Fiqāṭī
ʿĀḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlwān
Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh, relative of al-Ṣāʿīn al-Ḥanāfi al-Turkmānī
Umar ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh
ʿĀḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĪzz
Rāfīʿ ibn Rikāb ibn Rikāb al-Ṣarghānī
al-Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ṯalīmān ibn Muḥammad al-Maʿmārī al-
Nuʿmānī
ʿĀḥmad ibn ʿAle ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān
ʿAli ibn al-ʿĪzz
Zayn al-Dīn ʿUmar ibn ʿUthmān ibn Sālim ibn Khalaf al-Maqdīsī
Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĀḥmad ibn
Kāmil al-Maqdisī
Muḥammad ibn ʿĀḥmad ibn al-Faqrī al-Ikhmīmī
ʿAbd al-Salām ibn ʿĀlī ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Muta'ayyīsh
Ḥusayn ibn Aqṣḥ ibn Ṣhardāh al-Kurdi
Muḥammad ibn ʿĀlam al-Dīn al-Khayyāt
ʿĀlī ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm
ʿUmar ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh
Muḥammad ibn al-Muḥibb ʿAbdillāh al-Maqdisī
his sister Khadijah
her mother Dunyā bint Yamān ibn Masʿūd ibn ʿAmīn
Muḥammad
Ibrāhīm
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān
Zaynāb, brothers and sister of Muḥibb ʿAbdullāh al-Maqdisī
Zaynāb and Muḥammad descendants of their brother
their mother Fāṭimah bint Muḥibb ibn al-Muḥibb
al-Imām ʿAmin al-Dīn Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĀḥmad al-Wānī (d. 735; Damascus)
his son ʿAbdullāh
Bahāʾ al-Dīn ʿAbdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Khalīl al-Makkī
Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAbdullāh ibn Yaʿqūb ibn Sayyidīhīm al-Iskandari (d. 754; Damascus)
his children Muḥammad, ʿĀḥmad and ʿAʾīshah
Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn ʿĀḥmad ibn Rushayq al-Misrī al-Mālikī
his daughter ʿAʾīshah
Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Naṣrullāh ibn Abī-l-ʿIzz al-Zaynī
his son Muḥammad
ʿUmar and Khadijah descendants of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥāfīẓ
Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mīzī
their aunt Zaynāb
ʿAbdullāh Aybak ʿAtīq ibn Sabʿ al-Majānīn
ʿĀlī ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥāzim ibn ʿĀbd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī
Ibrāhīm ibn Sulaymān ibn Abī-l-Ḥasan al-Dayrquānūnī
Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Mannāʿ al-Tikritī
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Dāwūd ibn al-Khaḍir al-Taḥhān
Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Muḥsīn ibn Ṣamīr al-Khayyāt al-Dallī
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣāliḥī
Muḥammad ibn ʿĀḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Qayīm al-Qaṭṭān
ʿUmar and ʿĀḥmad sons of ʿĀḥmad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn
WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE

Tarkhan with their father
Muhammed and Ahmad sons of Shams al-Din ibn Tarkhan
their slave Aydmar
Muhammed ibn Ibrahim ibn Muhammed ibn Salamah al-Khayyat
Raslan ibn Ahmad ibn al-Muwaffaq Ismail al-Dhababi (d. 796; Damascus)
Ibrahim ibn Sulayman ibn 'Abd al-Rahim ibn 'Abd al-Razzaq ibn
Abi-l-'Abbâs al-'Attâr
'Abdullâh ibn Muhammed ibn Ni'mah ibn Sâlim al-Nâbulsi
Taqi al-Din Ahmad ibn al-'Alam ibn Mahmûd ibn Umar al-Harrání
(d. 742; Damascus)
his children Khadijah and Muhammed
their grandmother Zaynab bint 'Ali ibn Isrâ'il al-Kinâni
Sharaf al-Dîn Muhammed ibn Ahmad ibn al-Imâm Zayn al-Dîn Abî
Bakr ibn Yusuf ibn Abî Bakr al-Mizzî
'Uthmân ibn al-Zayn 'Umar ibn Muhammed ibn Bayân
Ibrahim ibn 'Abd al-'Azîz ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammed al-Mawshîlî al-
Khabbâz
his daughter Zâbidah
'Abd al-Rahîm ibn 'Abdillâh ibn Salâmân al-Jammâ'îli
his son 'Abd al-Qâdir
al-Hâjj 'Uthmân ibn Khalaf ibn Isâ al-Hârâ'îjî
his son 'Abd al-Rahmân
al-Šârim Muhammed ibn 'Ali ibn 'Umar ibn Muslim al-Kinâni
his brother Hasan
their cousins Ahmad and Muhammed, sons of 'Uthmân
Salâmah ibn 'Âmir ibn Najwân al-Fuzâri
Fayyâd ibn Fayyâd ibn 'Abd al-'Azîz al-Funduqî
'Ali ibn Abî Bakr ibn 'Abd al-Ghanî al-Šumâdî
Ahmad ibn al-Zayn ibn al-Shihâb al-Šalbûnî
Muhammed ibn 'Umar ibn Ahmad ibn Ya'qûb al-Ma'arrî
'Abd al-Rahmân and Ahmad sons of Shaykh Ibrahim ibn 'Ali ibn
Muhammed ibn Baqâ al-Mulaqquin
Muhammed ibn Shams al-Dîn Muhammed ibn Abî Bakr ibn 'Abd al-
Dâ'im
Ahmad ibn Muhammed ibn Ghâzi ibn 'Ali ibn Bashîr al-Turkmânî
Muhammed ibn Ahmad ibn Mâni' al-Baytar
Abû l-Thanâ ibn Mûsâ ibn 'Abd al-Jalîl al-Furâwî
his son Muhammed
'Abd al-Ghiffâr ibn Muhammed ibn 'Abd al-Ghiffâr
'Abd al-Šamîl
We saw in an earlier chapter that the women as students got hadîth and knowledge of the Sunnah through the same ways as men. This is also true of how, as teachers, they passed it on.

Narration of the words

The highest way of hadîth transmission is by the teacher’s speaking the words to the student. It is important to emphasize this lest people should suppose that the women teaching hadîth were less particular, less scholarly, about wording or that, since they were women, they conveyed the words at some remove, so
that their students did not directly hear them speak. As always, the precedent is established during the generation of the Companions. I will begin therefore with examples where it is explicit that the students heard the hadiths spoken to them, because variants are recorded, or because the words as spoken are interpreted to clarify the meaning, or because someone’s saying particular words is questioned in order to clarify and confirm it.

Nafi’ narrated from Ṣafiyyah bint Abī Ubayd that

She heard Ḥafṣah bint ‘Umar, the wife of the Prophet – salla l-lāḥu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – say that the Messenger of God – salla l-lāḥu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – said: ‘It is not allowed for any woman who believes in God and the Last Day’ or he said ‘in God and His Messenger’ – salla l-lāḥu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – to be in mourning for a deceased for more than three days except for a husband.¹

Nafi’ narrated from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar that he said:

Ḥafṣah narrated to me, and this is about a time when no one would enter upon him [salla l-lāḥu ‘alay-hi wa sallam], that he used to pray two rak’abs when the dawn broke. She meant [when] the Prophet – salla l-lāḥu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – and the caller would call for the prayer.²

‘Abdullāh ibn Abī Sa’īd al-Muzanī says:

Ḥafṣah bint ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb narrated to me saying: The Messenger of God – salla l-lāḥu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – once had a garment [placed] over his thighs. Abū Bakr sought permission [to enter], and he allowed him while in the same state. Then ‘Umar came with the same happening, then other Companions came, while he was in the same state.

Then 'Uthmān came, sought permission and he permitted him then he took his garment and put it on [fully]. They talked for a while then they left. I said: O Messenger of God – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam – Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Alī, and your other Companions came and you remained in your state [without changing it]. When ‘Uthmān came you dressed [fully]. He said: Should I not be shy from one from whom the [very] angels would be shy? 

Ṣālim ibn ‘Abdillāh ibn ‘Umar narrated from Abū l-Jarrāh that Umm Ḥabibāh narrated to him saying:

I heard the Messenger of God – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam – say: Had it not been a hardship to my community (ummah), I would have commanded them to clean their teeth at the time of every prayer when they do wudu’.  

Zuhrī narrated from ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn that Ṣafiyyah, the wife of the Prophet, narrated to him:

I came to the Prophet – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam – and spoke to him when he was in i’tikāf in the mosque. He stood up with me and took me to my house. On the way, two people from the Anṣār met him. She says: When they saw the Messenger of God – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam – they felt shyness and stepped back. He said: Come forward; this is Ṣafiyyah, my wife. They said: We seek refuge in God, Glorified is He. He said – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam: I am not saying that you harboured a bad thought, but I know that the satan runs through the body like the blood.

Qatādah narrates:

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Abdullāh ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Nawfal narrated to me from ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās that Muḥāwiya prayed ʿāṣr then Ibn al-Zubayr stood up and prayed after it. Muḥāwiya said: ʿO Ibn ʿAbbās, what are these two rakʿahs? [Ibn ʿAbbās] said: It is an innovation and its doer is an innovator. When Ibn al-Zubayr turned [to them] he said: What did you say? They said: We were speaking about this and that. Ibn al-Zubayr said: I did not do an innovation. Rather, my maternal aunt (khulah) ʿĀʾishah narrated [that] to me. Then Muḥāwiya sent someone to ask ʿĀʾishah. She said: He is right; that is what Umm Salamah narrated to me. Then Muḥāwiya sent someone to Umm Salamah [informing her] that ʿĀʾishah has narrated from you such-and-such. She said: She is right. One day the Messenger of God—ṣallallahu ʿalayhi wa sallam—came and he prayed after the ʿāṣr. I stood up behind him and prayed. When he finished, he said: What is the matter with you? I said: I saw you, O Prophet of God, praying, so I prayed with you. He said, one of my zakāḥ-collectors came so I had been preoccupied [with him].

Shaʿbi says:

Whenever Masrūq narrated from ʿumm al-muminīn ʿĀʾishah, he would [begin by] saying: ‘Narrated to me the truthful woman, the daughter of the truthful man, the one declared innocent by God, the beloved of the beloved of God’.

As for the Companions among the women other than the Prophet’s wives, Kulayb said:

The step-daughter of the Prophet—ṣallallahu ʿalayhi wa sallam—, whose name is Zaynab, narrated to me. I asked her: Tell me whether the Prophet—ṣallallahu ʿalayhi wa sallam— was from among [the descendants of] Mudar? She said: Then who else was he from, other than Mudar? He was from among the descendants of Nāḍr ibn Kinānah.

About the famous long ḥadīth about the Antichrist, one version of which is narrated by Fāṭimah bint Qays, Āmir al-

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1 IBN MĀJAH, Sunan, Ṣalāḥ, bāb fi man ṣafathu al-rakʿatān baʿda l-zubr.
2 IBN SĀD, al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā, viii. 64. 3 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, al-Taʾrīkh al-saghir, i. 12.
Sha'bi says the following, noting minor variants in the different tellings of it that are known to him:

I met al-Muḥriz ibn Abī Hurayrah and I narrated to him the ḥadīth of Fāṭimah bint Qays. He said: I testify of my father [Abū Hurayrah] that he narrated to me as Fāṭimah bint Qays narrated to you. He said that the Messenger of God—ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam—said [the Anti-christ] is in the direction of the east.

Then I met Qāsim ibn Muḥammad and I mentioned to him the ḥadīth of Fāṭimah. He said I testify of ʻĀ‘ishah that she narrated to me as Fāṭimah narrated to you, except that she said: ‘both the sanctuaries of Makkah and Madinah are forbidden to him’.¹

Sufyān ibn ʻUyaynah narrated that:

ʻUbaydullāh ibn Abī Yazīd narrated to us saying that his father told him saying: I became a guest of Umm Ayyūb, whose guest was the Messenger of God—ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam. Then she narrated to me this ḥadīth that they made special food for the Prophet—ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam—in which there were some of these vegetables [onions or garlic]. They brought the food to him. He did not like it and said to his Companions: Eat, for I am not like you. I fear lest I annoy my companion—meaning the angel [of the revelation, Gabriel].²

That precedent that we have just illustrated continued to be followed through all succeeding periods. The scholars heard the ḥadīths directly from their teachers, spoken by them. Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar, while listing the works that he studied with Khadijah bint Ibrāhim al-Bahlakkiyyah, notes: ‘...and the Musnad of Musaddad: if not by hearing, from al-Qāsim ibn Muẓaffar, with his ijāzah from ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz ibn Dulaf and Zuhrah bin Muḥammad ibn Ḥādir, with ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz’s hearing it from Shuhdah.’³ It is

clear here that ‘Abd al-‘Azîz heard the Musnad of Musaddad directly from Shuhdah, one of its renowned narrators. Ibn Ḥajar has stated that Ḥabîb ibn Maḥmûd ibn al-Khayyîr heard Amâlî Abî Bakr Ahmad al-Najjâd from Shuhdah;¹ and that Naṣr ibn ‘Abd al-Razzâq ibn ‘Abd al-Qâdir, ‘Abd al-‘Azîz ibn Dîlûf, Muḥammad ibn Abî l-Badr ibn Fîryân and Ḥabîb ibn Maḥmûd ibn al-Khayyîr and others heard Mâshîyakhb Shuhdah from Shuhdah herself.²

Reading to the teacher

Next in rank, after hearing the text spoken by the shaykh or shaykhah themselves, is reading it to them. In later centuries, when there were more books and more copyists, this way gained in popularity. Ibn al-Jawzî says in the account of Karîmuh al-Marwaziyyah that imâms like al-Khatîb al-Baghîdî, Ibn al-Muṭṭâlib, al-Samî‘ânî, and Abû Ṭâlib al-Zaynabî read to her.³ Al-Samî‘ânî has stated that al-Khatîb read the whole of Sahîh al-Bukhârî to Karîmuh al-Marwaziyyah in five days.⁴ Similarly Abû l-Waqî ‘Abd al-Awwal ibn ‘Īsâ ibn Shu‘ayb al-Harawî read the Juz’ Bihî bint ‘Abd al-‘Yamad al-Harithamiyyah with her.⁵ Al-Dhaḥabî says in the account of Sitt al-Wuzârah bint al-Munajjâ: ‘I read to her Sahîh al-Bukhârî and Musnad al-Shâfi‘i;’⁶ Muḥammad al-Wâni read to her Thulâthiyât al-Bukhârî, Kitâb al-Tawhid from Sahîh al-Bukhârî, then the whole of the Sahîh, then the fifth part of Fawâ’id ‘Abd al-Rahmân ibn ‘Umar ibn Naṣr al-Dimashqî, a juz’ containing 12 hadîths from Musnad al-Shâfi‘i, three sections from the Amâlî of al-Khatîb al-Baghîdî.⁷ Similarly, readings to her were attended by Ḥabîd ibn Abî Bakr ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥâdî,⁸ Abû Hurayrah ibn al-Dhahabî,⁹ ‘Alî ibn Muḥammad ibn Abî l-Majd al-Dimashqî,¹⁰ Fâtimah bint Muḥammad ibn al-Munajjâ al-

Tanūkhiyyah,\textsuperscript{12} Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Saḥḥ al-Dīn al-Zaftawī,\textsuperscript{2} ʿAbdillāh ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Nāṣīḥ al-Ḥanbali,\textsuperscript{3} Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Ahmad al-Ṣāmiṭ,\textsuperscript{4} Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar, ibn Muḥammad al-Shafīʿī.\textsuperscript{5} A very large number of people read to Zaynab bint al-Kamāl.\textsuperscript{6} Ḥāfīz Ibn Ḥajar says in the account of Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī: ‘I read to her many books and ḥadīth in Šāliḥiyyah.’\textsuperscript{7} Taqī al-Dīn al-Fāsī also read many books with her.\textsuperscript{8}

\textbf{Correspondence}

Students also received ḥadīth from the muḥaddithāt by writing to them. An early example is scholars writing to Subay'ah al-Anṣāriyyah about her ḥadīth. ʿĀmīr al-Sha'bī narrates that Masrūq and ʿAmr ibn ʿUtbah wrote to Subay'ah bint al-Ḥarith asking her about her case. She wrote back and explained the circumstances — that she had delivered at 25 days after the death of her husband, and with that ended her ʿiddah; then, Abū l-Sanābīl ibn Ba’kak had come by and told her that she had rushed, that she should have waited for the later of the two dates, in this case the full four months and ten days of the known period of ʿiddah. She had become concerned that she had made a mistake: ‘Then I came to the Prophet and I asked him to pray for my forgiveness. He said: Why is that? I told him. He said: If you find a suitable husband then marry him.’\textsuperscript{9}

Correspondence with women for the purpose of establishing knowledge of their ḥadīth is well established in Islam. Ḥāfīz ʿAbd al-ʿAzīm al-Mundhīrī wrote to a large number of women scholars, whom he has mentioned in \textit{al-Takmilah li-wafayiit al-nuqalāhh}. Another example is Sayyidah bint Mūsā al-Mārāṇiyyah (d. 695). She left Syria for Egypt and al-Dhahabī was unable to receive

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}Ibid., ii. 389.
\item \textsuperscript{2}Ibid., ii. 469.
\item \textsuperscript{3}Ibid., ii. 594.
\item \textsuperscript{4}Ibid., ii. 646.
\item \textsuperscript{5}Ibid., ii. 651.
\item \textsuperscript{6}AL-DHAHABI, \textit{al-Juz} al-maJīid min Shīyar a'īm al-nubalāh, 546.
\item \textsuperscript{7}IBN ḤAJAR, \textit{Inbāʾ al-Ghnīwī}, iv. 314.
\item \textsuperscript{8}TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FĀSĪ, \textit{Dhayl al-taqyid}, ii. 390–91.
\item \textsuperscript{9}IBN MĀJAH, \textit{Sunan}, Ṭalāq, b. inqīdāb ʿiddati al-mutawaffī ʿanbāʾ sawju-hā, wa ghayrbā bi wadī al-ḥaml.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
hadith directly from her. He much regretted missing the opportunity, and then he received her hadith from her through correspondence.¹

Ijazah

I explained earlier that ijazah was an accepted form of receiving and transmitting hadith and knowledge of the Sunnah, and was very popular in the later centuries. The mubaddithat gave ijazah both verbally and in writing. Below is an ijazah from Sitt al-Katabah bint ‘Alī ibn Yahyā ibn ‘Alī al-Ṭarrāḥ:

¹ Al-Dhahabi, Muḥam al-Shufūkh, i. 294.
The document requesting *ijāzah*, the *istikdāʿ*, would often be circulated to different teachers, who would record their *ijāzah* on that document. Sometimes the *istikdāʿ* is addressed to a single shaykh or shaykhah. In the document copy showing on the previous page, the request is from one Muḥammad ibn Khalaf ibn Rājiḥ for himself and his children, male and female and for their mother. The shaykhah responding writes: ‘I have given *ijāzah* for what they have asked.’ Then, following the word ‘written’ is her signature: ‘Sitt al-Katabah bint ʿAlī ibn Yahyā ibn ʿAlī ʿAl-Tarrah.’

It was more typical, just as it was more practical, for the *istikdāʿ* to be circulated to many from many. The teachers would then register the names of several people within the document, for whom the *ijāzah* was valid. At times such *ijāzahs* included a very long list of students’ names. For example, the shaykhah Umm Muḥammad Zaynab bint Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar al-Maqdisiyah (d. 720) gave *ijāzah* in an *istikdāʿ*, written down in Damascus in 694, which names the following persons – the grouping of names, here indicated by a separating line not in the original, is of some interest –:


the great *muhaddith* ʿAlam al-Dīn Abū ʿl-Qāsim b. Bahāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. Muḥammad al-Birzālī, his father’s slave Bulbul b. ʿAbdullāh

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WOMENS’ ROLE IN THE DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE

Muḥammad and Zāhidah, both children of ʿAlī b. ʿIbrāhīm al-Khabbāz, Muḥammad Ṭāmid and Fāṭimah, children of Shāmah

Fakhr al-Dīn ʿUmar b. al-Ḥajj Yūṣuf b. Ṭālib al-Irbīlī, his sisters

Dayfah, Khadijah and Sitt al-Nasab: Khadijah’s children Muḥammad, Ṭālim and Mulūk children of al-Ḥajj al-Irbīlī; Dayfah’s children Muḥammad Sitt al-Jami' and Āsiyāh children of Muḥammad al-Irbīlī

Muḥammad and Fāṭimah children of Shāraf al-Dīn ʿAlī b. ʿAbdullāh al-Sirāj

Abū l-ʿAbbās ʿĀhid b. Mużaffar b. Muḥammad al-Nabulsi

Abū Bakr b. ʿĀhid b. ʿUmar al-Khabbāz


ʿAbd al-Rahlīm b. Yūṣuf b. ʿAbd al-Rahlīm b. Yūṣuf al-Mizzī


Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Māzdānī al-Khayyāt, his mother Āminah bint ʿĀhid b. Naṣrullāh b. ʿUmar b. al-Riḥāb al-Shāghūrī

ʿAbd al-Rahlīm b. ʿĀhid b. ʿAbd al-Rahlīm al-Munajjā

ʿĀli and Abū Bakr sons of Salāh al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿĀli al-Shahrāzūrī


ʾĀhid b. ʿAbd al-Barr b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Razīn al-Ḥamāwī al-Shāfīʿī

Muḥammad b. ʿĀhid b. Ismāʿīl b. ʿĀhid b. ʿIbrāhīm al-Shārāʾīḥī


Muḥammad b. Yahyā b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Rahlīm b. al-Quwayrah al-Ḥanāfī al-Sulamī

Muḥammad b. ʿĀli b. ʿAbdullāḥ, guardian Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Zāhiriyah

Muḥammad b. ʿĀli b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Anṣārī al-Zajjāj and his sisters living [at time of writing]

Marwān b. ʿAbd al-Rahlīm b. Marwān al-Najjār

Muḥammad b. ʿUmar b. Yūnus al-Najjār

Muḥammad b. ʿĀhid b. ʿUmar

Muḥammad b. ʿĀhid b. Yūnus, Muḥammad b. ʿĪdīq b. ʿĀli b. ʿAbd al-Jabbār, his sister Dayfah and her sisters living [at time of writing]
174 AL-MUHADDITHAT

Muhammad b. Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Jabbār
Ahmad b. Dāwūd b. ʿAlī al-Dimashqī
Muhammad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbdillāh
Muhammad and ʿAlī sons of ʿĪzz al-Dīn Aybak b. ʿAbdullāh al-Rushaydī al-Salīḥī
Ahmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Tājīr
Muhammad b. Ghāzī b. Muḥammad
Hasan b. Ibrāhīm al-Daqqāq
ʿAlī b. ʿUmar b. ʿUmar
Muhammad b. Yūsuf b. Āmīr al-Tadmūrī
Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Mawsīlī, his sister on his mother's side
Muḥammad b. Aqūsh b. ʿAbdullāh al-Qabāqībī
Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd b. ʿAbd al-Rahīm al-Muḥaddith and his existing brothers, their cousin Muḥammad b. Ahmad b. ʿAbd al-Rahīm, his brothers and sisters living [at time of writing]
ʿAlī b. al-Shuʿaīb ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Rahīm and his brother, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Rahīm b. ʿUmar al-Halābī
Muhammad b. Mūjaḥīd b. Muḥammad al-Ṣahrāwī,
Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Muḥammad al-Ṣahrāwī
Uzbīk b. ʿAbdullāh slave of ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Zāhirī
Muhammad, Ahmad and ʿAlī, children of Dāwūd b. Khuzaymah al-Khābbāz
Muhammad and ʿAlī sons of Yaqẓān b. Ghazwān al-Daqqāq al-Samṭī
Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Samṭī al-Khābbāz
Ahmad b. Muḥammad b. Ahmad
Ahmad b. Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad al-Daqqāq
Muhammad and ʿAlī sons of Nāṣīr b. Ṣalīḥ al-Shawī
Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Sharaf al-Daqqāq
Mūsā and Muḥammad sons of Ahmad b. Muḥammad
Muhammad and ʿAlī sons of Mūsā al-Humaydī
Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Muḥammad al-Humaydī
Abū Bakr b. Ahmad b. Muḥammad al-Daqqāq
ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Ḥarbī, Yūsuf b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Tājīr
Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Ālī al-Naṣṣāj
WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE

Aḥmad b. Ṭāhir b. Ahmad al-Sammān
Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Maqdisī
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAlī al-Fāmī
Aḥmad b. Maṣṭūq b. Ahmad al-Ḥammānī
ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Ahmad al-Khayyāt
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-ʿAṭṭār
Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al- Ṣassāj
Ibrāhīm b. Ṣhāra ḍ b. Yaʿqūb al-Dimashqī
Mānsūr b. Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān Fākhūrī
Aḥmad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Jāmūs
ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. ʿAlī al-Tahāwī
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Qāṭṭān
Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Dimashqī
Muḥammad b. Mahmūd b. Aḥmad al-Dimashqī
Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Muqīb b. Abī l-Futūḥ al-Ḥarīrī
ʿAlī b. Ḥasan b. ʿAbdullāh al-Jammāl
ʿUmar b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al- Ṣassāj
Aḥmad and Ḥasan sons of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Mawṣūlī al-Jundi
ʿUmar b. Ḥasan b. al-Shihāb Aḥmad al-Khashshāb
Ibrāhīm b. Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm al-Tayyāh
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad
Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad b. Thumālah b. Minhāl al-Muṭādīd
al-Izz ʿUmar b. ʿAbdullāh b. Habīb al-Tājīr
Yūsuf b. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Tammām al-Dimashqī al-Muʿaddhdhīn
Fakhr al-Dīn Abū ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmīn al-Dīn Muḥammad
b. Abū Bakr al-Dimashqī, his sister Fāṭimah
Muḥammad and Naṣrullāh sons of Kamāl al-Dīn ʿAlī b. al-Qalānīsī, their sister Zāhida
Muḥammad b. Badr al-Dīn Luʿūb b. ʿAbdullāh al-Mubārizī, his sister Aʾīshah
ʿUmar, ʿAlī and Fāṭimah, children of al-Hājī Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. ʿUthmān al-Dimashqī al-Anṣārī
Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. Muqīrī
Fāṭimah bint al-Jamāl Yūsuf b. Yaʿqūb al-Ghumārī al-Mālikī, her sister on her mother's side Zaynab bint Sirāj b. Muḥammad b. Ṣafūd al-
Mash'arānī

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Muhandis, his sons ʿAbd al-Rahmān and ʿAbdullāh


Muḥammad and Amat al-Rahmān, children of Shaykh ʿAffī al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAbdillāh b. al-Husayn al-Irbilī al-Shāftī,


Muḥammad b. Shāraf al-Dīn Muḥammad


Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Ghālib al-Anṣārī


Muḥammad b. Shāraf al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Fuzārī


Muḥammad and ʿAbdullāh, sons of Abū Bakr b. al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad b. al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil Abī ʿAlī


ASSEMBLIES FOR NARRATION AND TEACHING

The women organized their assemblies for teaching and narrating ḥadīth in their houses or the houses of others, in mosques,

³Majmūʿah al-Ijāzāt, MS in the Madrasah al-Diyāʾiyyah, Qāṣyūn.
WOMENS' ROLE IN THE DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE

Madrasas and other places, like ribāṭs (retreats) and orchards or gardens, wherever was easy and convenient for the purpose. I have not found any evidence that the Companions or the jurists and traditionists of later centuries put any hindrance in the way of women's teaching. To the contrary, their assemblies were well attended by jurists and great scholars.

Houses

Umm al-mu'minīn 'Ā'ishah taught in her own house, and in Basrah in the house of 'Abdullāh ibn Khalaf where she was a guest of Ṣafiyyyah bint al-Ḥārith ibn Ṭālḥah ibn Abī Ṭalḥah al-ʿAbdārī. Similarly, others among the wives of the Prophet, and the Companions taught in private houses. That tradition has continued until our day. Among the muḥaddithūn of the sixth century Fāṭimah bint 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn taught at her home. Ibn 'Aṣākir attended her classes and narrated from her. Before citing the ḥadīth, he says: 'Umm Abīḥā Fāṭimah bint 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn narrated to us in her house while I was reading to her.' The Ḥāfiz Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī says: 'I heard the first, second and third [parts] from Fawā'id al-Ḥājj with Umm al-Fakhr Jumu'ah bint Abī Sa'd Raja' ibn Abī Naṣr al-Ḥusayn ibn Sālim al-Asbāhāniyyah on Wednesday the 4th or 5th Ṣafar 599 at her house in Isfahan.'

Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn Muḥammad al-Birzālī says: 'I read the sixth part of al-Fawā'id al-Muntaqaḥ al-gharaib 'an al-shuyūkh al-ʿAwālī al-ma'rūf bi-l-Mukhballisyyāt, with the righteous shaykhah Umm al-Fīyān Ḥantamah bint al-Shaykh Abī l-Fath al-Mufarrij ibn 'Alī ibn Maslamah in her house in Damascus on Tuesday 18 Jumādā al-Ūlā 630.' It is recorded in the account of Zaynab bint al-ʿAlam Ahmad ibn Kāmil ibn Umar al-Maqdisī (d. 687) that Ibn Rushayd received ḥadīth from her in her house in Qāsyūn

in 684. Ibn Rushayd says in his account of Zaynab bint Muwaffaq al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Latīf al-Lughwī: ‘I read to her a jāz from the Ḥadith Abī Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn al-Husayn ibn Dīzīl al-Hamadhānī in the house of Umm al-Faḍl in Cairo on Monday 29 Rajab 684.2

Ḥadith ‘Abd al-Wāḥab al-Kilābī was read to Zaynab bint ‘Abdillāh ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Maqdīsīyyah at her house in Damascus on Thursday 23 Shaʿbān 718.3 Fada’il al-Madīnāt of Abū Saʿīd al-Muḥaḍḍal ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Jundī al-Yāmānī (d. 308) was read to Umm Aḥmad Khadijah bint Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Dāʾīm al-Maqdīsī (d. 685) in her brother’s house on Wednesday 12 Rābīʿ al-Ākhir 683. Ḥadith Hībatullāh al-Akṣānī was read to Zaynab bint Ismāʿīl ibn al-Khāṭbāz in the house of Aḥmad ibn Saʿīd ibn Umar al-Ṣūfī—one of the students—on Thursday 24 Jumādā al-Ākhirah 744.5

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1 Ibn al-Qāḍī, Durratu al-Hijjāl, i. 278. 2 Ibn al-Rushayd al-Sabṭī, Miṣr al-ṣaybāb, iii. 319. 3 Leder et al., Muṣjam al-samāʿat al-Dimashqīyāh, 95, 316. 4 Abū Saʿīd al-Muḥaḍḍal, Fada’il al-Madīnāt, 55. 5 Leder et al., Muṣjam al-samāʿat al-Dimashqīyāh, 120, 312.
The document copied above is a *sama’* for the book *Haddith Luwayn*. It names the teacher as ‘the Shaykhah, the righteous, the authentic (al-asilah) Umm al-Fadil Karimah bint al-Amiin ‘Abd al-Wahhab ibn ‘Ali bint al-Khadir al-Zubayriyyah. Then follows her *isnad* to the author of the book, the list of names of the men and women who attended, and the date and location of the class: Tuesday 17 Rabi‘ al-Awwal, 629 ‘in her house in Damascus’.

**Mosques**

The women also held their classes in the mosques. Umm al-Darda’i is well known for teaching in the mosques of Damascus and Jerusalem. Her classes were attended by male and female jurists and traditionists as we noted earlier, even the caliph, ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwân was a regular participant. Another example is of the righteous Shaykhah Umm al-Khayr Fatimah bint Ibrahim ibn Mul;ammad ibn Jawhar al-Bakabakk al-Batil:U (d. 711). Al-Dhahabi says in his account of her: ‘She heard *Sa‘i~ Muhammad ibn Sa‘i~ al-Bukhari from Ibn al-Zab1d1, *Sa‘i~ Muslim from Abu 1-Thana) Mal;Jmud ibn al-I:Ia~Id, and also studied with Abu 1-Qasim ibn Rawa~ah. She lived a long life and narrated a lot.’ Al-Dhahabi says: ‘My son, al-Subkl, Siraj al-Din ibn al-Kuwayk, al-Taq1 ibn Abil-I:Iasan and a great number [of others] studied *hadith* with her.’ She taught *hadith* in the mosque of the Prophet in Madinah. Ibn Rushayd says: ‘She came in the Syrian caravan as visitor and pilgrim. I met her in the mosque of the Prophet — *salla l-lahu ‘alay-hi wa salam* — and *hadith* were read to her while she was leaning on the side of the wall of the grave of the Prophet — *salla l-lahu ‘alay-hi wa salam* — in front of his head. She wrote *ijazah* with her own hand for me and for others. There too Ibn Rushayd records

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1 *LEDER et al., Mu’jam al-sama’at al-Dimashqiyyah*, 402. MS 3803 fol. 35.
that he read some ḥadīths with Fāṭimah. It is not possible that Fāṭimah bint Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad could have taught at a spot so revered by the whole community unless she enjoyed its respect and trust in the highest degree. How great an honour for her!

In Damascus the women used to teach in several mosques, like al-Jāmī al-Muẓaffarī (Jāmī al-Ḥanābilah) and Jāmī Banū Umayyah. Ḥāfīz Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn Dimashqī says in his note on ʿAḥshah bint ʿAbd al-Ḥādī (d. 816): ‘She was appointed to the post of teacher of ḥadīth in the grand mosque of Banū Umayyah.’

Schools

The women scholars also taught in the schools, where their classes where attended by both male and female students of ḥadīth. The records are plentiful and unambiguous about this. Majlis al-Bīṯāqah of Abū l-Qāsim Ḥamzah ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Kīnānī (d. 357) was read to Zaynab bint al-Kamāl and Ḥabibah bint al-Zayn in al-Madrasah al-Ḍiyāriyyah on Thursday 28 Ṣafar 733. 2 Ḥadīth of Bakr ibn ʿAmr ibn ʿAlī al-Shīrāzī was read to Zaynab bint Makki al-Ḥarrānī in al-Madrasah al-Mīṣmāriyyah in Damascus in 688 in a class of 19 students. 3 K. al-Fītan of Ḥanbal ibn ʿIshāq al-Shaybānī (d. 273) was read to Sitt al-Ahl ibn ʿAlwān (d.703) in the Madrasat al-Ḥanābilah in Damascus on Saturday 16 Ṛābi 1-Awwal 699 in a class of 16 students. 4 Fawaʾid Abī ʻAmr al-Ḥakīm was read to ʿAḥshah bint Sayf al-Dīn Abī Bakr ibn Qawālījī on Tuesday, 4 Muḥarram 793, in al-Madrasah al-Khāṭūniyyah. 5

Below is a copy of a legible, beautifully written *sama* for a class on *Hadith Abī l-Husayn al-Kībāb*.¹ The teacher is ‘the shaykha, the righteous, the woman of high *ismād*, the long-lived’ Umm ʿĀḥmad Zaynab bint Makkī ibn ʿAlī ibn Kāmil al-Ḥarrānī.

¹ *Leder et al., Muṣjam al-samāʿāt al-Dimashqīyāb*, 463. MS 3818 fol. 171.⁴
She was one of the teachers of al-Mizzi, of Ibn Taymiyyah, al-Dhahabi, al-Birzâli, and other famous scholars of that time. The document continues with her isnād to the author of the book, then lists the names of the men and women who attended. It says that the class included five sessions on Amâli al-Jawhari. The date given is: Friday, 10 Jumâdâ al-Âkhirah, 688; the venue: al-Madrasa al-Mismâriyyah in Damascus. The note in the margin names someone who had been omitted from the register, and another person has signed to verify the addition of that name.

Other places

The sources also record that women taught hadîth in ribâts and gardens. For example, Ḥadîth of Abû Qâsim ‘Uthmân ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Samarqandi (d. 345) was read to Zaynab bint al-Kamâl in Ribât Ibn al-Qalânisî in Qâsyûn on Tuesday, 1 Dhu l-Ḥijjah 743, in a class attended by 31 students.2 Ḥadîth of Abû ‘Alî al-Ḥasan ibn Ahmad ibn Ibrâhîm ibn Shâdhân (d. 426) was read to Zaynab bint al-Khaṭîb Muḥibb al-Dîn al-Ḥarastânî in Ribât Baldaq in Damascus in 722.4 Karâmât al-Awliyâ3 of al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Khallal was read to Sitt al-Fuqahâ’4 al-Wâsiṭiyyah in a ribât in Qâsyûn in 723.5 Muṣnad Abdillâh ibn ‘Umar was read to the great shaykhah and famous muḥaddithah of Syria Karîmah bint ʿAbd al-Wahhâb al-Zubayriyyah (d. 641) in her garden in 639.6 Karâmât al-Awliyâ3 was read to Zaynab bint al-Kamâl in the garden of Amin al-Dîn al-Wâni in the land of al-Arzah in 728.7 Ḥadîth Luwayn of Abû

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1 These ribâts were retreats for study and religious reflection, usually located outside major cities; they should not be confused with frontier strongholds and fortresses for which the same name is used.2 Muṭṭi Ḥaṭîf, Muṣjam al-samâʾât al-Dimashqiyyah, 110, 312. 3 See samâʾât at the end of, Ḫaṭa’i Ḥanbâli. 4 Leder et al., Muṣjam al-samâʾât al-Dimashqiyyah, 60, 315. 5 Ibid., 41, 319. 6 Ibid., 69, 482. 7 Ibid., 41, 311.
Ja'far Mūhammad ibn Sulaymān al-Miṣṣīṣī (d. 245) was read to Umm al-Fadl bint al-Amīn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Khaḍīr al-Zubayriyyah, in the garden in al-Mayṭūr of Bayt Lahyā in 633. The copy, show on the next page, of the sāmāʾ for this class records, in the usual way, the name of the shaykhah, her isnād to the book’s author, and the names of the men and women who attended. It records also that, when asked, the shaykhah gave her ijtīḥād verbally to those who attended. The date and place are given as Wednesday, 19 Jumādā al-Ūlā, 633, ‘in her garden in Mayṭūr in the land of Bayt Lahyā’.

1 Leder et al., Muṣjam al-sāmāʾāt al-Dimashqīyyah, 402. MS 3803 fol. 35*.
Chapter 7

Women’s ḥadīths and narrations

In this chapter, I present some of the Prophetic ḥadīths narrated by the women Companions, the number of them recorded in the Six Books, those narrated by women only, and then those ḥadīths of women that are relied upon in fiqh. Thereafter I discuss the women’s role in the narration and diffusion of the major kinds of ḥadīth compilations. The chapter ends with a survey of works specialized in the narrations of women and some discussion of the interest of scholars in women’s ḥadīths and narrations.

WOMEN’S ḤADĪTHS IN THE SIX BOOKS

The Six Books do not comprehend all Prophetic ḥadīths, nor all the men and women narrators of them. Nevertheless, these books have received a degree of acceptance no other works of ḥadīth have received, so it makes sense in this introductory work to focus on them. The women narrators whose ḥadīths are recorded in the Six Books are Companions, their Successors, then others to the end of the second century.

The dictionary of muḥaddithāt that I have compiled has accounts of about 2,000 women Companions; the ḥadīths of 130 are recorded in the Six Books. Some of them have only one or two ḥadīths and some hundreds. Imām al-Bukhārī has 31 Companions in his Sahīḥ, Muslim 56, Abū Dāwūd 75, al-Tirmidhī 46, al-Nasaʾī 65, and Ibn Mājah 60. The number of narrators among the Companions’ Successors and others after them up to the second century is about 1200, of whom 130 get a place in the Six Books. The total number of women’s ḥadīths in the Six Books is 2,764 ḥadīths, of which 2,539 are from Companions.
The matter of those hadiths varies as it does in the hadiths narrated by men. Some are common to both men and women narrators, some narrated exclusively by either men or women. A brief overview follows of women’s hadiths under the different topics. This survey excludes Ā’ishah’s hadiths, partly because they are well known, partly because some of them will come in the chapters on hadith critique and fiqh. The hadiths narrated exclusively by women are discussed under a separate heading.

On imān (faith), several well-known hadiths are narrated by women. An example was quoted earlier (see above, p. [number]) from Su’dā al-Murriyyah narrated by her son Yahyā ibn Talḥah.

On tahārah (purification), women are sole narrators of the rites related to matters exclusive to women. However, they have also narrated much else on the topic. Particularly famous is the hadith of al-Rubayyi’ bint Mu‘awwidh describing the Prophet’s wudu’. Scholars travelled from far and wide to hear this hadith from her. ‘Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Aqīl ibn Abī Ṭālib reports saying: ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn [Zayn al-‘Abīdīn] sent me to al-Rubayyi’ bint Mu‘awwidh to ask her about the ablution of the Prophet, ṣalāt l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam. She described [it] in detail, then she said to him: Your cousin [‘Abdullāh] Ibn ‘Abbās also came to me and asked me about the description of the ablution of the Prophet, ṣalāt l-lābu ‘alay-bi wa sallam.[1]’ Both ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās, a Companion and cousin of the Prophet, renowned for his knowledge and fiqh, and ‘Alī Zayn al-‘Abīdīn, a great scholar among the Successors and the grandson of ‘Alī and Fātimah, referred to this woman for knowledge about the Prophet’s wudu’.

On salāh (the rite of prayer) women have narrated hadiths on different aspects of it. I mention here only a hadith on prayer on the occasion of eclipse of the sun narrated by Hishām ibn

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1 ABŪ DĀWŪD, Sunan, Ṭahārah, bāb ṣifat wudū’ al-nabī ṣalāt l-lābu ‘alay-bi wa sallam; AL-TIRMIDHĪ, Jāmi’, Ṭahārah, bāb mā jā’a annahu yābdā’u bi mu’akhkhar al-ra’is; IBN MAIĀH, Sunan, Ṭahārah, bāb al-rajul yasta’inu ‘alā wudū’i-hi fa-yāsunba ‘alay-bi.
Urwaḥ from his wife Fāṭimah, from her grandmother Asmā’ bint Abī Bakr: ‘Once there was an eclipse of the sun in the time of the Messenger of God—ṣallā l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam. I entered to [where] ’A’yishah [was praying] and said: Why are the people praying? She indicated with her head to the sky, and I said: Is it a sign? She [indicated]: Yes. [...]’ Afterwards, she described the prayer in detail.¹

On ḥanāẓah (funeral rites), there is a ḥadīth narrated by three generations of women—Umm Īsā al-Jazzār from Umm Ja’far bint Muḥammad ibn Ja’far ibn Abī Ṭālīb, from her grandmother Asmā’ bint ʿUmays:

I got up in the morning the day [my husband] Ja’far and his companions suffered. The Messenger of God—ṣallā l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam—came to me. I had tanned forty hides and had made flour dough, and I had taken my sons, and washed their faces and oiled them. The Messenger of God—ṣallā l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam—called on me and said: O Asmā’, where are the sons of Ja’far? I brought them to him, and he embraced them and smelled them, then he got tears in his eyes and wept. I said: O Messenger of God—ṣallā l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam—perhaps some news has come to you about Ja’far? He said: Yes. He was slain today. She says: I stood up crying, and the women gathered to me. She says: The Messenger of God—ṣallā l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam—started to say: O Asmā’, do not say any wrong thing, and do not beat your breast. She says: Then the Messenger of God—ṣallā l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam—went until he called on his daughter Fāṭimah, and she was crying out: O uncle! The Messenger of God—ṣallā l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam—said: On someone like Ja’far one who would weep should weep. Then he said: Make food for the family of Ja’far for they are preoccupied.²

On Shayām (fasting), there are a number of ḥadīths from women. Abū Ayyūb has narrated that on one Friday when the Prophet called on his wife Juwayriyah bint al-Ḥārith he found

¹Abū Dukhrān, ʿA’lam al-Iḥrār, bāb man lam yatwadda ʾillā min al-ghabsy al-muthqil; Muslim, ʿĀḥid, ʿĀḥid, bāb ma ʿurida ʿalā l-nabi ṣallā l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam fi ṣalāt al-kusūf. ²Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz bāb ma jāʾa fi l-ṭaʾām yubṣathu ilā abl al-mayyit.
her fasting: ‘The Prophet –ṣalālahi wa sallam – said to her: Did you fast yesterday? She said: No. Then he said: Do you mean to fast tomorrow? She said: No. The Prophet –ṣalālahi wa sallam – said: Then break your fast.’ From this the scholars have derived that supererogatory fasting on the day of congregation alone, the day when people will be visiting and mixing with one another, is disapproved.

On zakāh and charity, there are many hadiths from the women. One enjoining charity is narrated by Muḥammad ibn ‘Amr ibn al-Ḥarith ibn Abī Dirār from his aunt ‘Amrah bint al-Ḥarith ibn Abī Dirār: “The Messenger of God –ṣalālahi wa sallam – said: For sure, the world is green and sweet. Whoever gets anything from it in a lawful way, he will be blessed therein. How many a one there is engaging unlawfully in the wealth of God and His Messenger! For him, there is the Fire.”

On ḥajj: some of the hadiths narrated by women related to the rites of the pilgrimage were given earlier. Another example: from Manṣūr ibn ‘Abd al- Раḥmān from his mother Ṣafiyyah bint Shaybah, from Asmā’ bint Abī Bakr: ‘We left in the state of ḫurūṣ. The Prophet –ṣalālahi wa sallam – said: Whoever has ḫady [sacrificial animal] he should continue in ḫūrūṣ, and whoever does not have ḫady, he should come out of ḫūrūṣ. She says: I did not have ḫady, so I became ḫalāl [to my husband], and my husband Zubayr had ḫady, he did not become ḫalāl [to me ...]. She says: Then I put on my [nice] clothes and came out of ḫūrūṣ; then I came to Zubayr, so he said: Stand away from me. She says: I said [to him]: Are you afraid I will jump on you?!’

Some examples of hadiths narrated by women related to food, clothing, business, imārah and jihād were given earlier. So also on nikāb and ʿulūq (marriage and divorce), and on this topic:

1 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, Sawm, bāb ʿawm ʿawm al-ṣumūʿab. 2 ABŪ NUʿAYM AṢBAHĀNĪ, Maʿrifat al-saḥābāh, v. 277. 3 MUSLIM, Sahīh, Ḥajj, bāb mā yajzamu man ʿaṭa bi-l-bayt wa saʿā min al-baqāʾ ʿalā al-ḥizr wa tark al-tahallūk; AL-NASAĪ, Sunan, Manāṣik, bāb mā yafʿalu man ʿalalla bi-l-ʿumrah wa ḥabā; IBN MĀJAH, Sunan, Manāṣik, bāb fasāḥ al-ḥ constitutes the natural text.
others are discussed in the next chapter. On *mirāṯ* (inheritance), there is the ḥadīth of Umm Saʿd referred to by Dāwūd ibn al-Ḥusayn: ‘I used to read the Qurʾān to Umm Saʿd bint al-Rabīʿ, and then she mentioned a ḥadīth related to inheritance.’

On *fitan* (sing. *fitnāḥ*: trials and tribulations, civil strife), there are several ḥadīths narrated by women Companions. Asmāʿ bint Yazīd al-ʾAnsārīyyah narrated the long ḥadīth of the Antichrist and the events leading to it; Fāṭimah bint Qays narrated the famous long ḥadīth of ʿAmīm al-Dārī containing the account of Ḫassāṣah and the Antichrist. And there is the ḥadīth from *umma l-muʿminīn* Ḥafṣah, narrated by ʿAbdullāh ibn ʾAṣwān, that she said: ‘I heard the Messenger of God – *sallā l-lāhū ʿalayhi wa salām* – say: An army will head towards this house [the Kaʿbah] to invade it. When they reach Baydāʾ, the middle of the army will sink [into the earth] then the front part will cry out to the rear part. And none will be saved except the [one] survivor who brings news [of it].’

There are a great many ḥadīths from the women on death, the punishment of the grave, and conditions of the Day of Judgment, the Garden and the Fire. Ibn Abī Mulaykāh narrated from Asmāʿ bint Abī Bakr that the Messenger of God said: ‘I will be at the ḥawād (Pool) looking for those from among you coming to drink from it. Some people will be taken away from me. I will say: My Lord, they are from me and from my *umma*. [The angel] will say: You do not know what they did after you; they continued turning back on their heels.’

On the Hijrah, battles, supplications, good manners, and *ḥib al-nabi*, the medicine of the Prophet, there are a number of narrations through women. So too, there are many on *shamāʿil*, his good qualities and appearance. On the virtues of the Com-

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companions, Sudaysah narrates from Hafṣah that she said: ‘The Messenger of God – ﷺ ﷼ ﷼ – said: The devil never encountered ʿUmar after he embraced Islam but [that] he [the devil] fell on his face.’

THE NARRATORS’ ELOQUENCE

The qualities of eloquence in the women’s narrations have been much remarked, namely narrative fluency, aptness of diction, pertinence and directness – neither ornamenting nor straying from the important matter – concision, and the ease in rhythm of speech that comes from understanding, even mastery, of details that are loaded with meaning for those who have the mind or heart to reflect. It is hardly possible to illustrate these qualities in detail at a remove from the original language, and I will not try to do so. However it is possible, even in translation, to get a sense of the more general elements of rhetorical skill.

Consider, for example, in the ḥadith of Asmā’ bint ʿUmayr (cited in the previous section) about the day she receives news of her husband’s death, the weight of emotion that is behind her mentioning that ‘I got up in the morning the day Ja‘far and his companions suffered.’ Her stating this at all is a way of affirming that she did not complain that here was another day of anxious uncertainty. Instead she deliberately lists her routine labours of the day, before the Prophet came – her persevering, patient effort matching that of the men on the distant battlefield of Mu’tah. Her narrative (so affecting because in the form of direct speech) emphasizes two things: the tenderness with which the Prophet, being family and friend, feels and conveys the news, and his not neglecting, even at that moment, his duty to teach – in this instance to reform the excesses of the wailing of the Jāhiliyyah which indicates resentment and refusal of what God has caused to pass. In the later part of the narrative, we find the same balance: his feeling grief, and his allowing the kind of

\[\text{References:} \] 
\[\text{1} \] Muslim, Sahih, Talâq, bâb wujûb al-ihdâd fi ’iddati al-wafâh wa tahrîmih fi ghayr dhâlik illâ thalâthata ayyâm.
expression of it that is a true acceptance of what God has caused to pass, which he combines with teaching another reform of custom. On the basis of this ḥadīth, among practising Muslims ever since, entertaining those who come to share the grief of bereavement is not a responsibility of the bereaved family but of their friends. Aṣmāʾ's ḥadīth also records how the Prophet's teaching is practised by himself, the reform promulgated by being implemented in his own family. Then, who would not be willing to follow a man whose teaching them was an expression of his love for them, and vice versa?

As a second example, I cite below, a section of the ḥadīth of Āʾishah about 'the slander' (ifk). It is much too long to quote in its entirety. Āʾishah was without doubt what we would now call a child prodigy. At the time of the incident itself she will have been in her middle teens. At the time she reports it, she is an established figure with very formidable powers of intellect and speech and well aware of her capacity, and her responsibility, to inform and guide the community. Her narration weaves together details of social, historical and legal import with her emotions at the time seen through her mature understanding of how, as a believer, she stands in relation to God and to His Messenger. The intensity of her feelings at the time is not diminished but, in her re-telling, those feelings are restrained by the realization that through this crisis she was led to a direct experience of her absolute need of God and dependence on Him. That is the meaning, when relief finally comes, of her explicit refusal to go to her husband, as her mother tells her to do: 'By God, I will not go to him. And I will not praise except God'.

The parts of the ḥadīth not quoted below tell us much – when certain verses of the Qurʾān were revealed; the customs that had changed in the period between the incident and the telling of it; how the Anṣār, the Muslims local to Madinah, were not yet sufficiently united by Islam to overcome tribal and clan loyalties; how the slander was deliberately encouraged by a faction in Madinah. For that faction, Islam in Madinah was a political ascendancy that had to some degree displaced or diminished theirs, so their allegiance to Islam was nothing more than a waiting to see which way the wind would blow. However, the
true believers also listened to the slander and, not knowing what to do, were confounded by it and discussing it. Because so much anguish was imposed upon the Prophet himself and his household, the incident served to bring home to the believers the sheer destructiveness of slanderous gossip and the gravity of the sin of indulging in it. Only a few affirmed Ā'ishah's innocence; most remained uncommitted, perhaps because that is how they understood the Prophet's behaviour. But he could not have declared her innocent without feeding the malice of the slanderers — he knew before Ā'ishah did that in this crisis there was no help but from God. She reports with impeccable fairness what people said, without disguising her feelings about them at that time. Particularly touching is her report that her loving and loved husband asks after her during her illness in a coldly formal way, 'How is that [condition] of yours?'; also the moment when, after turning to her parents in the vain hope that they will say she is innocent, her indignation so overpowers her she forgets the name of the prophet Ya'qūb and invents for him the kunyah 'Abū Yūsuf'.

The highest of the many virtues of this ḥadīth is its demonstration that the Revelation, the Qur'ān, was a grace from God only; it could not be called down because of any deserving or needing of it as human beings understand their deserving or being needy. The Book was, for its first audience, a connecting of the divine will directly with a real historical situation, made for ever exemplary by that connection. Yet, its authority and its sending down remained transcendent because both are from God. Only when the transcendence of God is perfectly understood is human prayer perfected; and human need when it has fully grasped that no help is possible except by grace of God is prayer. Ā'ishah's report of the ifk comprehends all those aspects of the believer's relationship to God and His Book. It shows that a heart filled with faith is not therefore empty of the concerns of this world; it is, instead, much better equipped to deal with them without losing either dignity or direction. Ā'ishah distinguishes with a fierce severity between God and His Messenger; it is God has saved her and Him she praises, none else.
She draws out, in the form of narrative and speech, the moment when she realizes for herself the absolute aloneness of each being before its Creator and its need to be reliant on His being all-just and all-merciful. That quality of reliance upon God is the source from which flow true human agency and dignity.

Where could this understanding have come, if not from God's Messenger, whose complete conveyance of the message is thus also affirmed by this hadith?

'As'ishah is the daughter of Abū Bakr, the first khālīfah. His faith was of a quality subtly different from that of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who succeeded as the second khālīfah. Of 'Umar it can rightly be said that if, after exercising reason and conscience and the wisdom he had got by experience, he reached a decision only to learn that the Prophet in a comparable case had decided otherwise, he immediately abandoned his way for the Prophet's way and adhered to it with full adherence; indeed, if need be, he would command others to adhere to it also. Of Abū Bakr, it can rightly be said that his faith was more supple in style, as if ready-conformed to the Prophet's way, so that the need to revise his decision seems never to have arisen. 'As'ishah's faith, despite her independence of mind and temperament, was between the two, perhaps a little closer to her father's style than 'Umar's. When 'Umar was assassinated it is she who, for his love of God's Messenger, consented to his request to be buried beside the Prophet, a place she had thought to reserve for herself.

Excluding the sections that I have alluded to summarily above, here is her hadith:

[... ] After we returned to Madinah, I became ill for a month. The people were spreading the fabricated sayings of the slanderers while I was unaware of anything of all that, but it raised my doubts during my illness that I was not seeing the same sweetness (lutf) [of manner] from God's Messenger as I used to see from him when I became ill. He would only come, say salām and say, 'How is that [condition] of yours? (kayfa ū-kum?)' and leave. That raised my doubts, but I did not sense the evil till I went out while I was [still] weak from the illness. I went out with Umm Mistaḥ [...]

[She] told me the slander of the people of ifk. So I heaped illness upon my illness, and when I reached my home, God's Messenger came to
me, and after greeting me, said: How is that [condition] of yours? I said to him: Do you allow me to go to my parents? For I wanted to be sure about the news through them. God's Messenger allowed me [to go to my parents].

I said to my mother: Mother, what are the people talking about? She said: My daughter, make light of it. For, by God, there has hardly ever been a charming woman who loves her husband and is beloved of him and who has other wives but that they will do a lot against her. ['A'ishah] says: Then I said: Subhan al-läh! Are the people really talking in this way?

She says: I wept the whole night till dawn. My tears did not stop and my eyes did not know a particle of sleep. Then in the morning too, I continued weeping.

When the divine inspiration was delayed, God's Messenger called 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and Usâmah ibn Zayd to ask and consult them about separating from his household [sc. his wife, 'A'ishah].

She says: As for Usâmah ibn Zayd, he said what he knew of the innocence of [the Prophet's] household, and what he had in his heart [of respect] for them. Usâmah said: It is your household and we do not know anything except good about them. As for 'Ali [ibn Abi Talib], he said: O God's Messenger! God does not constrain you — women other than her are abundant. Yet, ask the maid-servant who will tell you the truth. On that God's Messenger called Barirah and said: O Barirah! Did you ever see anything that aroused your suspicion? Barirah said to him: By Him Who has sent you with the Truth, I have never seen anything in her that I would conceal except that she is a young girl who falls asleep, leaving her family's dough unattended so that the domestic goats come and eat it.

So, on that day, God's Messenger got up on the pulpit and complained about 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy before his Companions, saying: O Muslims! Who will relieve me of that man who has hurt me with his evil speaking about my household? By God, I know nothing except good about my household. And they have blamed a man about whom I know nothing except good. And he never entered my home except with me. Sa'd ibn Mu'adh, [one] of the Banû 'Abd al-Ashhal got up and said: O God's Messenger! I will relieve you of him. If he is from the tribe of Aws, then I will cut off his head. And if he is from our brothers [i.e. the Khazraj], then command us, and we will carry out your command. On that, a man from the Khazraj got up [...] the two tribes of Aws
and Khazraj got so worked up that they were about to fight [even] while God's Messenger was standing on the pulpit. God's Messenger continued calming them till they became silent and so did he. All that day I continued weeping, my tears never ceasing, and I did not get a grain of sleep. In the morning my parents were with me and I wept for two nights and a day with my tears never ceasing and I could never sleep, until I thought that the weeping would burst my liver. So, while my parents were sitting with me and I was crying, an Anṣārī woman asked me to grant her admittance. I allowed her to come in, and she sat down and started crying with me. While we were in this state, God's Messenger came, greeted us and sat down. He had never sat with me since what was said about the matter was said. A month had passed and no divine inspiration came to him about my case. God's Messenger recited tashahhud when he sat down, and then said: 'Amma ba'd 0 'Nishah, I have been informed so-and-so about you. If you are innocent, then God will soon reveal your innocence, and if you have committed a sin, then repent to God and ask Him for forgiveness, for when a slave confesses his sins and asks God for forgiveness, God accepts his repentance. When God's Messenger had finished his speaking, my tears ceased flowing completely so that I no longer felt a single teardrop flowing. I said to my father: Answer God's Messenger on my behalf as to what he has said. My father said: By God, I do not know what to say to God's Messenger. Then I said to my mother: Answer God's Messenger on my behalf as to what he has said. She said: By God, I do not know what to say to God's Messenger. Although I was a young girl and had not read much of the Qur'ān, I said: By God! I know for sure that you heard this speech so that it has become planted in your hearts and you have taken it as a truth. Now if I tell you that I am innocent, you will not believe me. But if I admit a matter to you, and God knows that I am innocent of it, you will surely believe me. By God! I find no similitude for me and you except that of Abū Yusuf [i.e. Ya'qūb, 'alayhi al-salām] when he said: Then [there is no recourse but] fitting patience! God it is Whose help is sought [12. 18]. Then I turned to the other side and lay on my bed. And God knew then that I was innocent and I hoped that God would reveal my innocence. But, by God, I never thought that God would reveal about my case divine inspiration that would be recited [forever] as I considered myself too unworthy to be talked of by God with
something of my concern. Rather, I hoped that God's Messenger might have a dream in which God would prove my innocence.

But, by God, God's Messenger did not move from his seat and none of the household moved, until it was sent down upon him. So there overtook him the same hard condition that used to overtake him. The sweat was dropping from his body like pearls though it was a wintry day and that was because of the weighty statement that was being revealed to him. When that state of God's Messenger was over, he got up smiling, and the first word he said was: O 'Ā'ishah! God has declared your innocence! Then my mother said to me: Get up and go to him. I said: By God, I will not go to him, and I will not praise except God, Great and Glorious is He.

So God revealed the ten verses Surely those who spread the slander are a faction among you... [24.11–20]. God revealed those verses to declare my innocence. [...]¹

FIQH DEPENDENT ON WOMEN'S ḤADĪTHS

As I mentioned, there are some hadiths that do not have any source, or any reliable source, other than women. A number of them have been the only basis for legal rulings. From the time of the Companions, jurists and scholars never hesitated to refer to women for the knowledge in their keeping. One example, which will be discussed more fully in Chapter 10, is the hadith of Barirah. She was a slave emancipated by 'Ā'ishah, the story of which provided many good points for discussions among jurists. The great Mālikī scholar Abū l-Ḥusayn ibn Zarqūn even compiled a book about it, called Fiqh hadith Barirah.² Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī says: 'Some imāms have collected the useful points of this hadith, which exceeded three hundred points. I have summarized this [discussion] in Fath al-bārī.'³

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, Maghāzī, bāb ḥadīth al-ifk. ² See AL-DHAHABI, Siyar a'lam al-nubalā', xxii. 311. ³ IBN ḤAJAR, al-Isābah fi tamyīz al-sababah, iv. 252.
The ḥadīth of Subay'ah al-Aslamiyyah

God has commanded in His Book that the waiting period for a widow, before she can re-marry, is four months and ten days; he has also commanded that for a pregnant widow the waiting period is until she delivers her child. Some jurists considered that four months ten days should be the minimum, even if a pregnant widow delivered before that. Subay'ah al-Aslamiyyah narrated that a few days after the death of her husband, she delivered her child, and asked the Prophet, who allowed her to re-marry. ʿUthmān, the third caliph, asked Subay'ah to confirm what she narrated and then judged according to her report. Sulaymān ibn Yasār has narrated that Abū Salamah ibn ʿAbd al-Rahmān and ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās had gathered with Abū Hurayrah and were discussing the waiting period for a pregnant widow. Ibn ʿAbbās thought her waiting period is the longer of the two periods. Abū Salamah thought that the waiting period ends with the end of the pregnancy. They continued to disagree. Abū Hurayrah said: 'I am with my nephew [Abū Salamah]. Then they sent Kurayb, the mawla of Ibn ʿAbbās, to Umm Salamah to ask her. She told them about the incident of Subay'ah and the Prophet's permitting her to re-marry after she had delivered her child. Ibn ʿAwn narrated from Ibn Sīrīn that he said: 'I was sitting in Kufah in a big gathering of Anṣār. Among them was ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Abī Laylā. They mentioned the story of Subay'ah. I mentioned ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUtbah ibn Masʿūd's saying '[the waiting period] is until she delivers. Ibn Abī Laylā said: But his uncle [i.e. ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd] does not say that. I raised my voice and said, I would be foolhardy if I lied about ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUtbah who is [not far away] in another corner of Kufah.' Imām al-Tirmidhī says after quoting Subay'ah's ḥadīth: 'The practice on this, according to the majority of the people of knowledge from among the Companions

of the Prophet and others, is that the pregnant woman when her husband dies, as soon as she delivers the child, it is allowed for her to [re-]marry. It is the opinion of Sufyān al-Thawrī, al-Shāfi‘ī, Aḥmad [ibn Ḥanbal] and Ishāq [ibn Rāhawayh]. Some people of the knowledge from among the Companions and others say that her waiting period is the later of the two dates. But the first opinion is more correct.1 Imām al-Nawawī says about this ḥadith in his commentary on Sahih Muslim: ‘The majority of scholars from early and late generations have held to this ḥadith.’

The ḥadīth of Busrah bint Šafwān
Zuhri narrated from ‘Abdullāh ibn Abī Bakr ibn Ḥazm al-Anṣārī that he heard ‘Urwah ibn al-Zubayr say: ‘Marwān, while he was governor of Madinah, mentioned that if a man touches his sexual organ, he must repeat his wudū’. I opposed Marwān and said it does not break the ablution. Marwān said: Busrah bint Šafwān has narrated to me that she heard the Messenger of God – sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam – say: If one touches his sexual organ, he should do ablution. I went on disputing with Marwān until he called a man from among his guards and sent him to Busrah to ask her about her ḥadīth. Busrah’s answer was the same as what Marwān had narrated to me from her.2 Imām al-Tirmidhi says after quoting Busrah’s ḥadīth:

It is the opinion of a number of people from among the Companions of the Prophet – sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam – and [their] Successors. It is the opinion of Imām Awzā‘ī, al-Shāfi‘ī, Aḥmad [ibn Ḥanbal] and Ishāq [ibn Rāhawayh]. Muḥammad [al-Bukhārī] says: The most sound thing on this subject is the ḥadīth of Busrah. Imām al-Shāfi‘ī says: ‘Busrah bint Šafwān narrated this ḥadīth in the city of Emigrants and Helpers and they were in big number, and no one opposed her.

Rather, it has come to our knowledge that some scholars after receiving her hadith returned to it and gave fatwa according to it. Among them was Urwah ibn al-Zubayr. He rejected [the opinion] that ablution can be affected by touching the organ. When he learnt Busrah’s hadith he left his opinion and ruled according to [that]. Abdullâh ibn Umar heard her narrate this hadith and after that he continued, until he died, doing ablution after touching. And this [agreeing to differ on details] is the way of the people of jurisprudence and knowledge.'

The hadith of Umm Atiyyah

This hadith about the washing of the deceased is considered to be the principal source on the topic. It became very famous. Bukhari mentions or cites it many times in his Sahih, deriving many rulings from it. When Umm Atiyyah moved to Basrah and settled there, a group from among the Companions and Successors heard this hadith on how to wash the dead from her. Qatadah has narrated that Ibn Sirin learnt washing the dead from Umm Atiyyah, and Ibn Abd al-Barr records that Ibn Sirin, among all the Successors, was the most knowledgeable about washing the dead. Imâm al-Tirmidhi says after quoting the hadith: ‘Umm Atiyyah’s hadith is a sound and good hadith, and the practice is upon it according to the people of knowledge.’ Ibn al-Mundhir says: ‘Among the hadiths of washing there is nothing higher than the hadith of Umm Atiyyah, and the imams have relied on it.’

1 AL-BAYHAQI, Ma'rifat al-sunan wa al-athar, i. 255. 2 AL-BUKHâRÎ, Sahih, Janâ'îzî, bâb ghâsi al-mâyit wa wudî‘îhi bi-alma? wa al-sîdr; MUSLIM, Sahih, Janâ'îzî, bâb ghâsi al-mâyit; ABU DAWÚD, Sunan, Janâ'îzî, bâb kayfa ghâsi al-mâyit; AL-TIRMIDHI, Jâmi', Janâ'îzî, bâb mâ jâ’ a fi ghâsi al-mâyit; AL-NASÂ'î, Mujtâbû, Janâ'îzî, bâb ghâsi al-mâyit bi al-mâ? wa al-sîdr; IBN MÂJAH, Sunan, Janâ'îzî, bâb mâ jâ’ a fi ghâsi al-mâyit. 3 AL-MIZZÎ, Tahdhib al-kamâl, xxxv. 316. 4 ABU DAWÚD, Sunan, Janâ'îzî, bâb kayfa ghâsi al-mâyit. 5 AL-TIRMIDHI, Jâmi', Janâ'îzî, bâb mâ jâ’ a fi ghâsi al-mâyit. 6 AL-TIRMIDHI, Jâmi', Janâ'îzî, bâb mâ jâ’ a fi ghâsi al-mâyit. 7 IBN HAJAR, Fath al-bâri, iii. 163. 8 AL-TIRMIDHI, Jâmi', Janâ'îzî, bâb mâ jâ’ a fi ghâsi al-mâyit. 7 IBN HAJAR, Fath al-bâri, iii. 164.
'A'ishah’s hadith about the wife of Rifa'ah al-Qurazi

According to the Qur’an if a woman has been divorced three times (i.e. divorced irrevocably) by her husband, she cannot be remarried to him unless she marries someone else. 'A'ishah narrated that the divorced wife of Rifa'ah al-Qurazi married another man, then wanted to go back to Rifa'ah. The Prophet said that she could not do so unless she had had relations with her present husband.1 That condition – that the later marriage must be consummated – is not mentioned in the Qur’an but, on the basis of this hadith, is generally accepted by the jurists and scholars. Imám al-Tirmidhí says: ‘'A'ishah’s hadith is good and sound, and the practice, [according] to all the people of knowledge from among the Companions of the Prophet – salla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – and others, is on this’, and then he clarifies the condition about consummation.2

WOMEN'S NARRATION OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF HADITH COMPILATIONS

The major kinds of hadith compilations – jawāmi', sunan, masānīd, ma‘ajīm, arba‘ināt, ajzā2 and musalsalāt – were described in the account of women as students and their reading material. Here I review their role in the diffusion of these books.

Jawāmi'

The most popular of the jawāmi' is the Sahih of al-Bukhārî. Karimah al-Marwaziyyah (d. 461) was a famous narrator of it, whose version has been continually handed on by scholars ever since. Among those who studied the Sahih with her was the renowned traditionist and historian al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī.3

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1 Al-Bukhārī, Sahih, Talāq, bāb man jawwaza al-talāq al-thalāth. 2 Al-Tirmidhī, Jāmi', Nikāh, bāb fi man yuttaliqu inmi‘ata-hu thalāthan fa yattawju-hā ākhar fa yuttaliqu-hā qabla an yadkhula bi-hā. 3 See Al-Dhahabi, Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā', xviii. 277.
Ornamented title page of *Sahih al-Bukhari* written in the hand of Ḥāfiz Ahmad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Ḥūrī (d. 733). Under the main title it is stated that this is the narration of al-Fīrābī, and then follows the *isnād* of Sitt al-Wuzara to him.\(^1\)

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Hāfiz Ibn Ḥajar narrated Karīmah’s version from his shaykh ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar al-Hindī al-Ḥallāwī, who studied it with Muḥammad ibn Ghālī ibn Najm al-Dimyāṭī, who studied it with al-Muʿīn Ahmad ibn ʿAlī ibn Yūsuf al-Dimashqī, who studied it with Abū l-Qāsim al-Būṣiri, with his well known isnād to Karīmah. Ibn Ḥajar also studied it with his shaykh, Hāfiz Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī, who studied it with Abū ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Rahīm ibn Ḥabīl, with his isnād to Karīmah. The famous narrator of the Sahīḥ of the sixth century is Umm al-Bahāʾ Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad al-Baghdādī (d. 539). Hāfiz Ibn Ḥajar says in the account of Aḥmad ibn Khalīl ibn Kaykūl al-ṣalāḥī, ‘Among his eminent narrations is the Sahīḥ, which he studied with Ghānim ibn Ahmad al-Juṣūfī, who narrated it from Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad al-Baghdādī.’ Another and equally famous narrator of the Sahīḥ is the righteous shaykhah and musnīdah of her time Sitt al-Wuzaraʿ bint ʿUmar ibn Saʿd ibn al-Munajjā al-Tanūkhiyyah (d. 716) who taught the whole book many times in Damascus and Egypt. Among her students were: the qāḍī of Madinah ʿAbd al-Rahīm ibn Razūn al-Ḥamawī, Shaykh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Jaʿfarī, Ḥanāfī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Thanāʾ al-Hīrāmī al-Miṣrī, ʿImād al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Qurashī al-Isnāṭī, Shaykh Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Husayn al-Dahrūṭī, Muḥammad ibn Khalīl ibn Yarbak al-


The last woman who narrated Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī with very high isnād was ʿĀʾishah bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥādī al-Maqdisīyyah.2 Many famous scholars like Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar, Ḥāfiz Ibn ṹāṣīr al-Ḍīn al-Dimashqī and Taqī al-Ḍīn al-Fāsī studied the whole book from her.

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim has also been widely taught by the muḥaddithāt. Umm al-Khayr Fāṭimah bint Abī l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn al-Muẓaffar ibn Ḥasan ibn Zaʿbal al-Baghdādiyyah (d. 532) of Nishapur was a famous teacher of this book. Another popular teacher of it was Zaynab bint Umar ibn Kindī (d. 699). Muḥammad ibn Qawālij, a teacher of Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī studied the whole of it with her. She narrated it from al-Muʿayyad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Ṭūsī, who narrated it from Faqīḥ al-Ḥaram Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl al-Furāwī, from Abū l-Ḥusayn ʿAbd al-Ğāfīr ibn Ḥusayn al-Fārīsī, from Abū Aḥmād Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā ibn ʿAmmūyah al-Julūdī, from Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Sufyān, from its author Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj. (It is characteristic of the meticulousness of the scholars in this discipline that it is recorded that the Ibrāhīm

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last mentioned did not hear some parts of three of the books in Muslim's compilation from Muslim himself, namely Ḥaǧj, Wāsāyā and ʿImārah. Among the teachers of the book in the eighth century was Ṣafīyyah bint ʿAḥmad ibn Qudāmah (d. 714) and in the ninth, ʿAḥishah bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥādī (d. 816), who narrated it with full hearing from Sharaf al-Ḍīn ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Ḥasan, from Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥādī, from Muhammad ibn ʿAlī al-Ḥarrānī.2

One of the famous teachers of Jāmiʿ of al-Tirmidhī was Khadījah bint ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd ibn Ghashm ibn Muḥammad al-Mardawī (d.734). Before her Zaynāb bint Makkī taught this book several times. Ḥāfīz Ibn Ḥajar says in the account of his teacher Ṣafīyyah ibn al-Ḥasan al-Iskandarānī: ‘He heard Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī in [his] old age from al-ʿUrđī, who heard it from Zaynāb bint Makkī.’3 Al-Tirmidhī’s Shama’il was also popular among women. Zaynāb bint al-Kamāl narrated it from ʿAjībah bint Abī Bakr al-Baqdāriyyah, who narrated it from al-Qāṣīm ibn al-Ḍaḍl ibn ʿAbd al-Wāḥid and Rajāʾ ibn Hamīd ibn Raṣūl ibn Ṭarāʾīnī, who narrating from al-Qāṣīm ibn al-Ḥamīd al-Khuzāʿī, who narrating from al-Haytham ibn Kulaib, who narrated it from its author, Imām al-Tirmidhī.4

Sunan

The version of Imām Mālik’s Muwatta7 most popular among Mālikis and others has been that of Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā al-Laythī. Women have narrated this and the less popular versions. For example, Shuhdah (d. 574) transmitted the version of al-Qaʾnābī. Al-Dhahabī says in his account of Imām Abī Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Dulaf (d. 637): He heard Muwatta3 of Mālik, version of al-Qaʾnābī, from Shuhdah.5 The version of Suwayd ibn Saʿīd seems to have enjoyed more popularity among the muḥaddithūn. For example, Zaynāb bint al-Kamāl narrated it from Ḍawʾ al-

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Ṣabāḥ ʿAjibah al-Baqdāriyyah, who heard the whole of it from Abū l-Husayn ʿAbd al-Haqq ibn ʿAbd al-Khāliq ibn Yusuf, from Abū Saʿd Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Asadī with his sanad. Then it was read to Zaynab bint al-Kamāl in 726 in al-Jāmiʿ al-Muzaffarī in Qāsyūn. 1

ʿAjibah al-Baqdāriyyah narrated Sunan of Abū Dāwūd from al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAbd al-Rustamī, who narrated from Abū ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-Tustarī and Abū Maṣūr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn Shukrawayh, both heard it from Qādī Abū ʿUmar al-Ḥāshimī, who heard it from Abū ʿAlī al-Luʿluʾī, who narrated it from Abū Dāwūd. 2 Taqī al-Dīn al-Fāsī says in the account of Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAshār al-Ḥalābī: He studied some part of Sunan of Abū Dāwūd with Fātimah bint al-Malik al-Muṣīn Aḥmad ibn al-Sūlṭān Saḥīḥ al-Dīn Yusuf ibn Ayyūb. 3 Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar read a part of this Sunan with Maryam bint Aḥmad al-Asadiyyah, who heard it from al-Dabūsī, who narrated it from Ibn al-Muqayyar, who narrated it from al-Faḍl ibn Sahl al-Isfrayīnī, who narrated it from al-Khāṭīb al-Baghdādī, who narrated it from Abū ʿUmar al-Qāsim ibn Jaʿfar ibn ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Ḥāshimī, who narrated from Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAmr al-Luʿluʾī, who narrated it from Abū Dāwūd. 4 A particularly famous narrator of Sunan Abū Dāwūd is Zaynab bint al-Kamāl. 5 Many scholars up to the present have been narrating it through Zaynab’s chain of narration.

Zaynab bint al-Kamāl also narrated the bigger version of Sunan al-Naṣaḥ. 6 The smaller Sunan of al-Naṣaḥ was taught by Aḥmān bint Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn al-Wāsīṭī, 7 with the isnad of al-Qubayṭī from Abū Zurʿah Tāhir ibn Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir, who heard it from al-Dūnī, who heard it from Abū Naṣr Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Kassār, who narrated it from Abū Bakr

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Ahmad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Sunnī, who narrated from al-Nasāʿī.  

Sitt al-Fuqahāʾ bint Ibrāhīm al-Wāsīṭīyyah (d. 726) narrated Sunan of Ibn Mājah.  

Imām al-Dhahabī says: ‘She narrated an abundance of ḥadīths, and the students heard from her Sunan of Ibn Mājah and other things.’  

al-Dhahabī also says: ‘I read to her for my son ‘Abd al-Rahmān.’  

Sunan of al-Dārimī has higher isnāds than even al-Bukhārī. Some scholars included it in the Six Books in place of Ibn Mājah, and it was very popular among the muhaddithūn. Ḥāfīz Ibn Nāṣīr al-Dīn narrated the Thūlāthiyyāt of Imām al-Dārimī from Umm ‘Abdullāh Zaynab bint Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm ibn Taymiyyah al-Ḥarrānī, who narrated it from Abū ʿAbdās Ahmad ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Ḥajjār who narrated it from Abū l-Munajjā with its well known sanad.  


Ḥāfīz Ibn Ḥajar studied part of Sunan al-Dāraqqūṭnī with ʿĀshīḥah bint al-Najm Abī Bakr al-Bālisīyyah.  

Sitt al-ʿArab bint Muḥammad ibn al-Bukhārī (d. 767) narrated al-Sunan al-kabīr of al-Bayhaqī.
**Masāniḍ**

Zaynab bint al-Kamāl narrated *Musnad Abū Hanīfah* (in the version of Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Ḥārithī) from, who narrated it from Abū l-Khayr Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Ǧāḥiṣ ibn al-Bāghbān, who narrated it from Abū ʿAmr ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Mandāḥ, who narrated it from his father.¹

Sitt al-Wuzaraḥ bint ʿUmar al-Ṭānūkhīyyah and Zaynab bint Sulaymān al-Īsārdī narrated *Musnad Imām al-Ḥāfīz* with full hearing from Ibn al-Zabīdī, who narrated it from Abū Zurʿah.²


Zaynab bint Makki was a famous teacher of *Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*. She narrated it with full hearing from Abū ʿAlī Ḥanbal ibn ʿAbdillāḥ, who heard it from Abū l-Qāsim Ḥibatullāḥ ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Shaybānī, who heard it from Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Mudhhib al-Baghdādī, who heard it from Abū Bakr al-Qaṭīfī, who heard it from ʿAbdullāḥ ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, who heard it with his father, the author, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal.⁵

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Abū l-Fath ibn Sayyid al-Nās read *Musnad Abū ibn Ḥumayd* with Umm Muḥammad Zaynab bint ʿĀḥmad ibn Shukr al-Maq-disiyyah who studied it with Abū l-Munajjā ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar al-Lattī, who studied it with Abū l-Waqt al-Sijzī, who studied it with Abū l-Ḥasan al-Dāwūdī, who studied it with Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿĀḥmad ibn Ḥammūyah, who studied it with Ibrāhīm ibn Khuzaym al-Shāshī, who studied it with Abū ibn Ḥumayd.

Fāṭimah bint Saʿd al-Khayr (d. 600) narrated *Musnad Abū Yaʿlā*. Ḥāfīz Ibn Ḥajar studied this *Musnad* with Abū Bakr ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Qudāmah al-Farāḍī, who studied it with al-ʿImād Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Raḍī and ʿĀḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Zabdānī, both narrating from Muḥammad ibn ʿIsmāʿīl al-Khaṭīb, who heard it from Fāṭimah bint Saʿd al-Khayr, who narrated it from Zāhir ibn Tāhir, who narrated it from Abū Saʿd al-Kanjārūdḥī, who narrated it from Abū ʿAmr ibn Hāmān from Abū Yaʿlā himself.


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Ma’ājim and Maszyakhāt

Fāṭimah al-Juṣṭānīyyah (d. 524) narrated both the small and large Mu’jam of al-Ṭabarānī. Most scholars narrate these two Mu’jams through her. Ḥāfīz Diyyā’ al-Dīn al-Maqdisi says: ‘I read the small Mu’jam of al-Ṭabarānī with Āṣād ibn Abī l-Futuh ibn Rawh, who studied it with Fāṭimah, who studied it with Ibn Rūdhah, who studied it with al-Ṭabarānī.’ According to al-Diyā’, Āṣād also narrated the large Mu’jam of al-Ṭabarānī from Fāṭimah. Among her students, Fāṭimah bint Sa’īd al-Khayr was also particularly famous for teaching of these two Mu’jams. Ḥāfīz Ibn Ḥajar studied the middle-sized Mu’jam of al-Ṭabarānī with Šabdullah ibn Ūmar al-Ḫallāwī who narrated it from Zaynab bint al-Kamāl, who narrated it from Yūsuf ibn Khalīl, who narrated it from Khalīl ibn Baḍr al-Rārānī, who narrated it from Abū ‘Ali al-Ḫaddād, who narrated it from Abū Nuṣaym who narrated it from al-Ṭabarānī.

Āṣīshah bint Ma’mar narrated Mu’jam Abū Ya’lā. Ḥāfīz Diyyā’ al-Maqdisi says: ‘I studied Mu’jam Abū Ya’lā with Āṣīshah bint Ma’mar, who narrated it from Sa’īd al-Ṣayrafi, who narrated it from Abū Naṣr al-Kisā’, who narrated it from Ibn al-Muqri, who narrated it from the author.’

Shuhdah narrated Mu’jam of al-Ismā’īlī from Abū Maṣūr Muḥammad ibn al-Ḫusayn ibn al-Ḫarīthah, who studied it with Abū Bakr al-Barqānī, who narrated it from al-Ismā’īlī.

Shuhdah also narrated Maszyakhah of Ibn Shāḏān. Ḥāfīz Ibn Ḥajar read Maszyakhah of Ibn ‘Abd al-Dā’īm with Fāṭimah and Ḥabibah, daughters of Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Abdillah ibn Abī Ūmar; both of them heard it from Ibn ‘Abd al-Dā’īm. Zaynab bint al-Kamāl narrated Maszyakhah of Shuhdah. Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī says: ‘I studied with Zaynab, Maszyakhah of Shuhdah,

with Zaynab's narration from Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Khayyir, Muḥammad ibn Muqbil, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm ibn al-Sayyidī and al-Ağharr ibn Faḍā'il ibn al-'Ulayyiq, all of them heard it from Shuhdah.1 Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar narrated Mashayakhāb of Ḥāṭib Mardā from Umm Aḥmad Tātār bint al-Ṣāz Muḥammad al-Tanūkhiyyah, who narrated it from Zaynab bint al-Kāmāl, who narrated from Ḥāṭib Mardā.2

Arbaʿūnāt

Fākhirah al-Baghdādiyyah (6th century) narrated Forty ḥadīths of al-Nasawī. Ḥāfiz Dīyāʾ al-Maqdisī says: 'I read Forty ḥadīths of Ḥasan ibn Sufyān al-Nasawī with Muʿayyad ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī, who narrated it from Fākhirah al-Baghdādiyyah, who narrated it from ‘Abd al-Ghāfīr, who narrated it from Ibn Ḥamdān, from Ḥasan ibn Sufyān. Muḥīb ibn Hilālah mentions that he has seen the record of al-Ṭūsī’s hearing from Fākhirah.3 Umm ʿAmr Hafṣah bint Muḥammad ibn Abī Zayd Ḥamākā narrated Forty ḥadīths of Ibn al-Muqri from Ḥusayn ibn Ṭabīṣ al-Makki, and his cousin Bakhtyār ibn Muḥammad, both of whom narrated it from ‘Abd al-Razzāq ibn Ṭabarī ibn Mūsā ibn Shammah al-Tāṣīr, who narrated it from its author Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAli ibn ʿĀṣim ibn al-Muqri.4 Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar read Forty ḥadīths of Muḥammad ibn Muṣlim al-Ṭūsī with ʿUmar ibn Muḥammad al-Balīsī, who narrated it from Zaynab bint al-Kāmāl who narrated it from ʿAṣāhab bint Muḥammad, who narrated it from Muṣūd ibn al-Ḥasan, who narrated it from ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĪṣāq, who narrated it from Zāhir ibn Aḥmad al-Sarakhṣī, who heard 35 ḥadīths of it from Muḥammad ibn Wāḥīd, who heard all of it from Muḥammad ibn Aslam.5 Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar mentioned al-Arbaʿūnāt

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al-buldâniyyah al-mukbarrajah min al-Mu'jam al-asghir li-l-Ṭabarânî by al-Dhahabî and said: 'I read it with Abû l-ʿAbbâs Aḥmad ibn ʿĀli ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq, who studied it with Ḥâfiz Abû l-Ḥajjâj al-Mîzzi, who heard it from Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Muʾmin al-Ṣūrî and Zaynab bint Makkî, who both narrated it from al-Asʿad ibn Saʿîd ibn Rawh and ʿĀʾishah bint Maʿmar, both narrated from Fāṭimah al-Jûzdâniyyah, who narrated it from Fāṭimah al-Jûzdâniyyah, who narrated from Ibn Rûḍah, who narrated from al-Ṭabarânî.\(^1\)

\(\text{Ajżā}^2\)

Some \(\text{ajżā}\) (sing. \(\text{juz}^3\)) became very popular among the people of Ḥadîth because of their high isnâd, like ʾṢâhîfah Hammâm ibn Munabbîh, \(\text{jur}^3\) al-ʾAnṣârî, \(\text{jur}^3\) ibn ʿArafaḥ and Ghaṭāniyyât. These \(\text{ajżâ}\) were taught and learnt by women extensively. Ḥâfizah bint Mulâʾûb al-ʾAzajiyâh narrated ʾṢâhîfah Hammâm ibn Munabbîh. Shaykh Abû Ḥâfiz Sirâj al-Dîn ʿUmar ibn ʿAlî al-Qazwînî read it with Abû ʿAbdillâh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Muqri al-ʾAzajî, who read it with Ḥâfizah bint Mulâʾûb in 608. She narrated it from Abû l-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Urmawî, who narrated it from Abû l-Ghanâʾîm ʿAbd al-Šâmid ibn Abî l-Qâsim al-Hâshimi by reading it with him in 465, who studied it with Imâm Abû l-Ḥasan al-Dâraquṭnî in 385, who studied it with Qâḍî Abû ʿUmar Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-ʾAzdî in Safar 319, who narrated it from Ḥâsan ibn Abî l-Rabit, who narrated it from ʿAbd al-Razzâq ibn Hammâm, who narrated it from Maʿmar ibn Râshîd, who narrated it from Hammâm ibn Munabbîh, who said: 'This is what Abû Hurayrah narrated to us from the Messenger of God.'\(^2\)

Shuhdâh narrated \(\text{jur}^3\) Ibn ʿArafaḥ. Ḥâfiz Ibn Ḥajar studied it with Abû Bakr ibn ʾIbrâhîm ibn Qudâmah al-Farâʾîdî with his isnâd to Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karîm ibn al-Sayyîdî, who

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Chart 4. Transmission of Fātīmah bint Khālid to women from Hassan ibn ‘Arifah (d. 257) to Zaynab bint Ismā‘īl al-Khālidī (d. 749)
heard it from 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abd al-Muthannā who heard it from Shuhdah, who heard it from Tirād ibn Muḥammad al-Zaynabī, Ḥusayn ibn 'Abd al-Muthanna ibn Ṭalhah, Abū Sa‘d ibn Khushaysh and Ibn Bayān, with the isnād to Ibn ʿArāfah.1

Zaynab bint Makki (d. 688) narrated Juz' al-Anfārī. Ḥafiẓ Ibn Hājār says in the account of Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Sa‘d al-Dīn: ‘I have seen the record of his studying of Juz' al-Anfārī with Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Ayyūb ibn Manṣūr al-Maqdisī, who studied it with Zaynab bint Makki who heard it from Ibn Ṭabrazad, with his sanad.’2

Chart 5. Transmission of Juz’ al-Anfārī to women from Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Anfārī (d. 215) to Zāḥidah bint Abī Bakr al-Ṭabārāwī (d. 749)

Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Anfārī, d. 215, Basrah
—is heard from Abū Muslim Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Kajjī, d. 292, Baghdad
—is heard from ʿAbdullāh ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ayyūb ibn Māsī, d. 369, Baghdad
—Abū Ḥasan Ṭabrazad, d. 607, Baghdad

Zaynab bint al-ʿAlam Ahmad ibn Kāmil al-Maqdisī (d. 687) narrated al-Ḡaylānīyyaṭ.1 Tajanj al-Wahbānīyyah (d. 575) narrated Ḥadīth al-Mukhtarrami wa-l-Marwazi,2 ʿAmāli al-Mahāmili.3 Juzʾ Hilāl ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥaffūrī,4 K. al-Ṣamāʿ of Ibn Abī l-Dunyāʾ5 and other ajzāʾ.6 ʿAzīzah bint ʿAlī (d. 600) narrated Nasḵhah Tālūt.7 Karimah bint ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Qurashiyyah (d. 641) narrated Juzʾ Luwayn,7 and ʿAʾishah bint ʿAlī ibn ʿUmar al-Ṣināḥiyyah (d. 739) narrated Juzʾ al-Biṭāqah.8

Chart 6. Transmission of al-Ḡaylānīyyaṭ to women from Abū Bakr al-Ṣaḥḥāṭ (d. 354) to Zaynab bint Makki (d. 688)

Abū Bakr al-Ṣaḥḥāṭ, d. 354
   ─ Fāṭimah bint Hilāl al-Kārīf
      ─ Abū Ṭalīb ibn Ghaylān, d. 440
         ─ Zaynab bint al-ʿAqraʾ, d. 493, Baghdad
         ─ Shujāʾ ibn Fāris al-Dhuhali, d. 507, Baghdad
         ─ Nūr al-ʿĀyn bint Abī Bakr, d. 587, Baghdad
         ─ Hibatullāh al-Shaybānī, d. 525, Baghdad
         ─ Zaynab bint Abī al-Wahhāb, d. 588, Baghdad
         ─ Dāʾir al-Sabīh bint al-Mubārak, d. 585, Baghdad
         ─ Abī al-Wahhāb ibn Sukaynah, d. 607, Baghdad
         ─ ʿAṣiyah bint Ahmad ibn Abī al-Dāʾīm, d. 687, Damascus
         ─ Ḥabībah bint Abī ʿUmar, d. 674, Damascus
         ─ Abī Bakr al-Ṣaḥḥāṭ, d. 687, Damascus
         ─ Abī Bakr al-Ṣaḥḥāṭ, d. 687, Damascus
         ─ Zaynab bint Abī Bakr al-Ṣaḥḥāṭ, d. 687, Damascus
         ─ Sitt al-ʿĀrāb bint Yaḥyā, d. 684, Damascus
         ─ ʿAṣiyah bint ʿImād al-Dīn, d. 683, Damascus
         ─ Zaynab bint Makki, d. 688, Damascus

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1Ibid., ii. 261. 2Ibid., 19–20. 3Ibid., ii. 234. 4Ibid., ii. 346. 5Ibid., ii. 497. 6Ibid., ii. 54. 7Muḥammad IBN JABIR WADI ASH, al-Barnames, 240. 8IBN HAJAR, al-Majmaʾ al-muʾassas, i. 124–25.
Musalsalāt

As I mentioned earlier, musalsalāt are many, and some are compiled, so we find the narrators of most of these musalsalāt also narrated the major compilations of them. For example, Hind bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Urmawī heard Musalsāt al-Ibrāhīmī from Sitt al-ʿArab bint Muḥammad ibn al-Fakhr, who narrated it from her grandfather, who narrated it from Abū l-Yumn al-Kindī, who narrated it from Sibt al-Khayyāt, who narrated it from its author. 

Al-Musalsāt bi-l-awwaliyyah is the most widely transmitted of all, and indeed scholars to this day narrate it to their students as their first hadith. Great numbers of women narrated it; it will suffice by way of example to mention just those women from whom Ḥāfīz Ibn Ḥajar received it. They are: Sārah bint Taqī al-Dīn al-Subki,2 Sūmlak bint al-Fakhr ʿUthmān ibn Ghānim al-Jafarīyyah;3 Maryam al-Adhraʿiyah, and Ghazāl the slave of al-Qalqashandī.4

Besides Al-Musalsāt bi-l-awwaliyyah, women also narrated others such as Musalsāt bi-qirāʿt sūrat al-Ṣaff, Musalsāt bi-l-samāʾ, Musalsāt bi-l-awwadāyyn. Amatullāh al-Dihlawīyyah (d. 1357) even narrated Musalsāt bi qabāl al-liḥyāh. In this musalsal, every narrator says certain words while holding his beard. Her student, Shaykh Yāsīn al-Fādānī, narrated that he heard this musalsal from her while she was holding her chin.

Abundance of their narrations

Some of the women, like Shuhdah al-Kātibah, ʿAjībah al-Bāqirdāriyyah, Zaynab bint al-Kamāl, Fāṭimah bint al-Munajjā, and Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī and her sister Aʿīshah, taught and narrated a huge number of small and large books. As an example, below is a list of the books taught and narrated by Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad ibn al-Munajjā (d. 803):

1Jbid., iii. 360. 2IBN ḤAJAR, al-Muʾjam al-muḥbaras, 162. 3IBN ḤAJAR, al-Majmaʿ al-muʿtassas, i. 617. 4IBN ḤAJAR, al-Muʾjam al-muḥbaras, 221–22.
WOMENS’ HADITHS AND NARRATIONS

Sahih al-Bukhari
al-Mu'jam al-`ali li-l-Hafs al-Hanbali
Mu'jam al-Taqi Sulayman b. Hamzah b. Abi 'Umar
Mashyakhah Abi Hafs Siraj al-Din 'Umar b. Abd al-Rahman b. al-Husayn
b. Yahya b. 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Qibabi
K. al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah tahdhib Ibn Hisam min al-Sirah al-kubra li-Ibn
Ishq
Juz' fi-hi sittah majalis min amali Abi Bakr Muhammad b. Sulayman b. al-
Harith al-Baghindi al-Wasti
K. al-awadi li-Abi Bakr b. Abi Shaybah
K. al-at'imab li-Uthman b. Sa'id al-Darimi
K. al-qada' wa al-shuhud li-l-Naqqash
K. Fadai'ii al-Sababah takbraji Abi 'Ali al-Baradan min hadith Abi l-Fawaris
Tirad b. Muhammad al-Zaynabii
K. Fadai'ii al-Imam al-Shafi'i li-Ibn Shakir al-Qattan
Juz' from the Hadith of al-Naqqash, narration of Abi Mu'ti' from him
K. al-karam wa-l-jiid li-l-Barjalani
Hadith al-Husayn b. Muhammad b. 'Ubayd al-Askari
K. birr al-wilayatin li-l-Bukhari
K. dhamm al-liwat li-l-Haytham b. Khalaf al-Duri
K. Fadai'ii Malik b. Anas
K. Fadil al-ramy li-l-Qarrab
K. al-Qana'ah li Abi l-'Abbás Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Masriq
K. al-Faraid al-mustakbrayah min hadith Sufyan b. Sa'id al-Thawri
K. al-Khiddab li-Abi Bakr Ahmad b. 'Amr b. Abi 'Asim
K. al-'Uzrah wa-l-insrad li-Abi Bakr b. Abi l-Dunya
K. Dhamm al-malahi li-Ibn Abi l-Dunya
K. al-'ilm li-Yusuf b. Ya'qub al-Qadi
K. al-Qanah li-Abi Bakr b. Abi l-Dunya
al-Mu'jam al-kabir li-Abi l-Qasim al-Tabarani
K. al-Du'ada' li-Abi l-Qasim al-Tabarani
K. Amthul al-hadith li-l-Ramahuruzfi
K. al-Mudarrab li-lbni Abi l-Dunya
K. al-l'tikaf li-Abi l-Hasan al-Hammami
K. al-Ishrah li-Abi l-Qasim al-Tabarani
K. al-Hadaya li Abi Ishq Ibrahim b. Ishq al-Harbi
K. al-murabah li-l-Darrab
K. al-'ilm li-Abi Bakr Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Sa'id al-Marwazfi
K. Fadai'ii al-Qur'an li-lbni al-Durays
K. al-Bukā’i li-Ja‘far b. Muḥammad b. al-Mustaṣaf al-Firaqī
K. al-Manāsik li-l-Ṭabarānī
Hadīth al-Mukhallīs takhrīj Abī l-Fath b. Abī l-Fawāris
Mashyakhab Ya‘qūb b. Sufyān
Hadīth Abī Bakr b. Khallād
Hadīth ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Alī al-Sufunī
Musnad Sa‘d b. Abī Waqqās of Ahmad b. Ibrāhim al-Dawraqī
‘Awālī ‘Abd al-Razzāq
K. al-Ṣalāḥ from Mṣannaf ‘Abd al-Razzāq
Hadīth Abī Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh b. Abī al-Rahmān al-Uthmānī
Fawā’id al-Zuhayr b. Bakkār
Hadīth Ahmad b. Ṣāliḥ al-Miṣrī
Hadīth ‘Alī b. Ḥarb
Intikbāh al-Silāfī ʿalā al-Sarrāj
Amālī al-Maḥāmīlī min riwāyat al-ʿAsbahānīyyīn
Hadīth Abī ʿAmr Uthmān b. Ahmad b. al-Sammāk
Hadīth Abī Ja‘far b. al-Munādī
Fawā’id Abī ʿAmr b. Hamdān
al-Jawāhir wa-l-laḥālī fi al-abdāl wa-l-ʿawālī li-Abī l-Qāsim b. ʿAsākir
al-Safinah al-Baghdādīyyah
Hadīth Ḥājīb b. Ahmad al-Tūsī
ʿAwālī al-Layth b. Sa‘d
Hadīth Abī Muḥammad b. Sa‘d
Amālī Abī Mušīr
Abdāl al-Ḥāfīz al-Diyāfī
Hadīth ʿAlī b. Abī l-Ja‘d
Hadīth Abī l-Hasan ʿAlī b. Ahmad b. ʿUmar al-Hammāmī
Amālī Abī l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Malik b. Muḥammad b. Bishrān
al-Thaqafīyyāt
Hadīth Abī Ja‘far Muḥammad b. ʿAmr b. al-Bakhtārī
Amālī Ibn al-Jarrāb
Hadīth al-Khurāsānī
Hadīth Ḥanbal b. Isḥāq al-Shaybānī
Hadīth Abī Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh b. ʿAlī al-ʿAbnūsī
Amālī al-Bāghīndī
Musnad Ahmad b. Manṣūr al-Baghawī
Hadīth ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Baghawī ʿan Abī Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām
Hadīth Abī ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad b. Makhlāḍ
WOMENS’ HADITHS AND NARRATIONS

Hadith Abī l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Aswārī

Hadith Mutayyan

Abālī Abī l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Yāḥyā b. ʿAbdkiyāb

Fawāʾid Abī Bakr Muḥammad b. ʿAbdillāh b. al-Ḥusayn al-Asbāhānī

Hadīth Abī Yaʿlā Abīmad b. ʿAlī b. al-Muthannā

Juzʾ Kākū

Hadīth Abī Nuʿaym

al-Muntakhab min ḥadīth Abī Kurayb Muḥammad b. al-ʿAlī b. Kurayb

Hadīth Abī l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Zayd b. ʿAlī b. Shabrāyār

ʿAwālī Abī l-Shaykh al-Asbāhānī

ʿAbīlī Shaykh al-Asbāhānī

ʿAbīlī Tābir Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ziyādī

al-Ḥadīth al-lafiʿa ʿAbīlī Shāhīfā fī-ḥā Mašīk fīl-Muwaṭṭā li-Abī l-Ḥasan al-

Dāraquṭnī

Hadīth Abī ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī

Arbaʿūna ḥadīthan min riwāyat Abī l-Fath ʿAbd al-Wabbaḥ b. Muḥammad

b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sābīnī

al-Makbār wa-l-ḥikāyāt wa-l-nawādir min riwāyah Daʿlaj b. Aḥmad

Hadīth Abī ʿAlī b. al-Ṣawwāf

ʿAwālī Karīmah bint ʿAbd al-Wabbaḥ al-Zubayrīyāt

al-Kanjarūbahiyāt

Fawāʾid Zābir b. Aḥmad al-Sarakhsi

Fawāʾid Sammūyah

ʿAbīlī Abī Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shirāzī

Ḥal Abī Ahmad al-ʿAskarī li al-Silāfī

Ḥadīth Abī Muḥammad Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbdillāh b. Muḥammad al-Kajjī

K. al-Fīṭan of Abī Muḥammad Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbdillāh b. Muḥammad al-Kajjī

K. al-Abāʾīn of Ibn Sāḥibūyah

Ḥadīth Asmāʾ bint Aḥmad b. ʿAbdillāh al-Bahrāniyyāh

Ḥadīth Muḥammad b. Juḥādāh

Ḥadīth Qutaybah b. ʿAṣid

Ḥadīth Abī l-Qāsim ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Naysābūrī (Ibn ʿUlāyyik)

al-Muntaqā min ʿawālī Ibrāḥīm b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Shirāzī

Ḥadīth Māmūn b. Ḥārūn

Ḥadīth Abī Bakr b. al-Muqri


ʿAbdillāh b. Aʿlam, Abīmad b. Uḥmān al-Admī

Ḥadīth al-Ḍabb li-Abī l-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī

Ḥadīth Abīmad b. ʿAbd al-Ghaффār b. Ushtah
Majālis Abī l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥurāfī
Musnad Kaʿb b. Mālik wa-Abī Ayyūb al-Anṣārī min Musnad Abī ʿAmr ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Kūfī
Hadhīth Ibn Abī Ḥanīfah
K. al-Intiṣār li-ʿImām al-Anṣārī li-Abī l-Fadl Muḥammad b. ʿAbī ʿAbd al-Maqdisī
Hadhīth Suḥayl al-Thawrī wa ʿAbdullāh al- Ḥusayn al-Maʿṣūmī wa ʿAbdullāh al-Anṣārī wa ʿAbdullāh al-Qazwīnī wa Ḥanīfah wa Abī Ḥanīfah wa jamāʿah min al-muqillin of al-Bakrāʿi
K. al-Tafsīr ʿan Suḥayl b. ʿAbī Ṣaʿd al-Rāzī
Hadhīth Abī Bakr Muḥammad b. ʿAbī ʿAli Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥanāfī
Hadhīth Nāfis Abī Nuʿaym al-Qārī
Hāl al-ʿAbbās li-Abī ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Saʿīdī
Hadhīth Abī Bakr b. Kuẓaymah (Fawāʾid al-fawāʾid)
Amāli Abī l-Qāsim ʿĪsā b. ʿAbī ʿĪsā b. Abī al-Jarrāb
Hadhīth Abī ʿIṣāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbī Thābit
Hadhīth Abī ʿUmar ʿAbdullāh b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Waḥbāb
Gharāʾib Suḥayl b. ʿAbī Bakr
Musnad Raqaḥah b. Misqalāh li-Abī l-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī
Maṣjadi Ṣafwān b. ʿAbī al-Qāsim al-Hanbālī
Nuzhat al-Ḥuffaz Abī Mūsā al-Madīnī
Hadhīth al-ʿĀṭarūdī ʿan Abī Nuʿaym al-ʿAshbānī
Hadhīth al-Dīyāʾ min Shuyūkhī-ḥi
al-Dhahīl ʿalā āḥādīth al-ʿĀṭarūdī
Hadhīth Abī Sāḥib Abī Ṣaʿīd b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbdullāh b. Ziyād al-Qaṭṭān
Hadhīth al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-ʿAshyāb
K. Turq man kadhaba ʿalayya ʿan Abī Muḥammad b. ʿAbī Rāzih
Hadhīth Ibn ʿAbī Maʿrūf ʿan shuyūkhī-ḥi
K. Turq man kadhaba ʿalayya ʿān al-Ṭabarānī
K. al-ʿArbaʿī bi-ittibāʿ al-Sunna al-Ḥaṣīf al-Dīyāʾ
Maṣāʿib ʿabāb al-hadīth li-Ḥaṣīf al-Dīyāʾ
K. al-Ṭibb al-nabawī li-Ḥaṣīf al-Dīyāʾ
Ṭurq hadīth al-hawd li-Ḥaṣīf al-Dīyāʾ
Faḍl al-ʿAshr wa-］uḍhīyyah li-Ḥaṣīf al-Dīyāʾ
WOMENS’ HADITHS AND NARRATIONS

The hadiths and narrations of many of the women scholars have been compiled separately. I list below a selection, with the briefest of notes, from the more famous of those compilations, making some effort to pick from different periods:

Musnad ʿAʾishah, ʿAʾishah, the wife of the Prophet, salla l-ḥālu ʿalayhi wa sallam, narrated from him a lot of hadiths. In Musnad of ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī, Fihris al-Jahiiris, ii. 615–17, 937.

K. al-Nahy ʿan sabb al-ṣāḥib li-Ḥāfīz al-Diyā?
ʿAwaḥi l-ṣāmānīd li-Ḥāfīz al-Diyā?
al-Ruwaḥ ʿam muslim li-Ḥāfīz al-Diyā?
Muwatṣaqqat Sulaymān b. Harb li-Ḥāfīz al-Diyā?
Muwatṣaqqat Rawḥ b. Ubūdah li-Ḥāfīz al-Diyā?
Muwatṣaqqat ʿAbdullāh b. Yazīd al-Muqīrī li-Ḥāfīz al-Diyā?
Muntaqāb min ʿawāfī ʿAbdullāh b. Bakr wa ʿAbdullāh b. Numaṭr wa Abī ʿabd al-Raḥmān al-Muqīrī
Muntaqāb min ʿawāfī Sāʿid b. Mansūr
ʿAwāfī Abī ʿĀsim al-Dāhāk b. Makhlād
ʿAwāfī Sulaymān b. Dāwūd al-Ḥāšhimī
ʿAwāfī Abī Nuṭaym al-Fadl b. Dukayn
Muntaqāb min al-Ruwaḥ ʿan al-bukhārī
Muntaqāb min faḍāʾīl al-shām
Faḍāʾīl al-Qurʾān li-Ḥāfīz al-Diyā?
K. Dhikr al-ḥurūf wa al-ṣaww li-Ḥāfīz al-Diyā?
K. al-Tibb al-nabawi li-Ḥāfīz al-Diyā?
Ṭuruq hadīth al-ḥawāl al-nabawī li-Ḥāfīz al-Diyā?
ar-Ruwaḥ ʿan Muslim li-Ḥāfīz al-Diyā?
K. al-Baqʿīh li-Ḥāfīz al-Diyā?
Muntaqāb min K. al-Ikhtisās fī aḥwāl al-mawqīf wa al-iqṭisās li-Ḥāfīz al-Diyā?
al-Abdāl al-ʿawāl li-Ḥāfīz al-Diyā?1

COLLECTIONS OF THE WOMEN’S NARRATIONS

Abū Dāwūd collected those hadiths of Ḥārāmah which are narrated by Hishām ibn Urwah from his father from Ḥārāmah in a juz’ called Musnad Ḥārāmah. The book does not include all ḥadiths of Ḥārāmah nor all the narrations of Hishām ibn Urwah from his father from Ḥārāmah. Only a single manuscript of it, in an unremarkable hand and with some marginal annotations, is known; it is held in al-Maktabah al-Zāhiriyah in Damascus. However, it does record many sani‘at of great scholars like al-Diyā al-Maqdisī, Ibn al-Bannā’, Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhawī and others. The manuscript has been edited by Abū l-Ghaffār Abū l-Haqq Ḥusayn al-Balūshī; it was published in 1405 [1985] by Maktabat al-Aqṣā from Kuwait.

al-Iṣṭi‘āb li-ma istadrakathu Ṣafīmah ‘alā l-ṣahābah. Besides narrating a lot of ḥadiths and giving fatwas, Ṣafīmah critiqued the narrations and opinions of many Companions. Imām Abū Maṣūr Abū al-Muhṣin ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Shāhi al-Baghdādi (d. 489) compiled her critique in a juz’. Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar has mentioned this juz’ and narrated it.

Iṣṭi‘āb Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911) summarized al-Zarkashī’s work and named it Ayn al-Iṣābah fi istidriik Ṣafīmah ‘alā al-ṣahābah. It was published in 1396 [1976] from Azamgarh, India as an appendix to Sirah Ṣafīmah by S. Sulaymān Nadwī. This edition of 1976 unfortunately has many mistakes. I have benefited from all three of these books, added to them and compiled a more comprehensive work under the title al-Iṣṭi‘āb li-ma istadrakathu Ṣafīmah ‘alā al-ṣahābah.

Musnad Fāṭimah. Ḥāfiz Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī collected all ḥadiths of Fāṭimah, and those hadiths that refer to her virtues in a juz’ named Musnad Fāṭimah al-Zahrā’; Ṣafīmah ha wa-mā wa-randa fī faḍli-hā. It has 184 ḥadiths in all in no particular order, with 28 Prophetic ḥadiths, and al-Suyūṭī did not write a preface or annotate the work.

This is a juz’ of ḥadiths related to the great and long-lived shaykhah, Umm al-Faḍl, Umm ʿIzzā Bibā bint Abū al-Ṣamad al-

1 Ibn ʿHajar, al-Muʾjam al-mufharas, 59.
Harthamiyyah al-Harawiyyah (d. 474). It was published, edited by 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Fariwāt, by Dār al-Khulaṣa li al-Kitāb al-İslami, Kuwait in 1406. Its one hundred pages contain 119 hadiths. The editor’s introduction has a biographical account of Bībī, with the names of her teachers and her famous students. It is a very high jauz. Al-Dhahabi says: ‘She has a jauz which is known by her name.’ 1 Ibn Rushayd al-Sabt narrated it with his isnād to her. 2 Hāfiz Ibn Hajar read it twice with his shaykhs Ibrāhīm ibn Ahmad al-Tanūkhi, 3 with his shaykh Ahmad ibn Abī Bakr ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī, 4 and with Abū Hurayrah ibn al-Dhahabi. 5

1 AL-DHAHABI, al-‘lbar, ii. 336. 2 Ibn Rushayd al-Sabt, Miṣr al-sayyab, v. 223. 3 IBN HAJAR, al-Majma' al-mu'annas, i. 119. 4 Ibid., i. 272. 5 Ibid., i. 152.
Mashyakhah Shuhdah. This Mashyakhah of Shuhdah bint Abī Naṣr Ahmad ibn al-Faraj al-Baghdādī al-Ibrī (d. 574) was compiled in her lifetime by her student ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Māhmūd ibn al-Mubārak ibn al-Akhḍar (524–611). Most of its 114 narrations are Prophetic hadiths. In this work, Shuhdah has narrated from 27 of her shaykhīn. Dr. Rafaat Fawzī ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib edited it from a MS of 26 folios in the library of Kaprili in Turkey. It was published from Cairo in 1415 [1994]. It is a well-known mashyakhah. Al-Dhahābī says in his account of her: ‘She had a mashyakhah which we have learnt.’ 2 Ḥāfīẓ Ibn Ḥajar read it with Ibrāhīm al-Tanūkhī, who read it with Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Ḥajjār, Ḥāfīẓ Abū l-Ḥajjāj al-Mīzzi, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Fakhr and Muḥīb ʿAbdullāh ibn Ahmad ibn al-Muḥīb with their isnāds. 3

Mashyakhah Khadijah. This Mashyakhah of Khadijah bint al-Qādī al-Anjāb Abū l-Makārim al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿAlī al-Maqdisī (d. 618) was compiled by Ḥāfīẓ Zakī al-Dīn al-Mundhīrī and read to her. 4

Mashyakhah Karīmah. This Mashyakhah of the great Syrian shaykhah Umm al-Faḍl Karīmah bint Abī Muhammad ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Qurashiyyah al-Zubayriyyah (d. 641) was compiled by Ḥāfīz Abū ʿAbdillāh al-Bīrzāli in eight ajza. 5 Al-Dhāhābī studied it. 6 Karīmah also has a juz containing her hadiths of high isnād, which Ibn Ḥajar studied with Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad al-Dimashqīyyah. 7 There is mention in the sources of a third juz containing Ḥādīth musawwah wa musafahāt wa muwāsagāt wa abdāl wa ahādīth awāl. 8

Mashyakhah ʿAjībah. About this Mashyakhah of the great and long-lived shaykhah, Dawʾ al-Ṣabāh ʿAjībah bint Abī Bakr al-Bāqḍāriyyah (d. 643), al-Dhāhābī says: ‘She was unique in the world and her Mashy-

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1 See al-Jāmiʿ al-Muṣaffari, 509–12. 2 AL-DHAHABI, Siyar aṣ-lam al-nubalāʾ, xx. 542. 3 IBN HAJAR, al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas, i. 144–45. 4 AL-MUNDHIRI, al-Tahmilah, iii. 42. 5 Id., Taʾrikh al--Islām (sub anno 641–650), 94. 6 Id., Siyar aṣ-lam al-nubalāʾ, xxiii. 93. 7 IBN HAJAR, al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas, ii. 418. 8 See MUTʿAL-HĀFIZ, al-Jāmiʿ al-Muṣaffari, 337.
akhab was in ten ajzā'.


Mashyakhah Sayyidah al-Mārānīyyah. This is the Mashyakhah of Sayyidah bint Mūsā ibn ʿUthmān ibn Dirbās al-Mārānīyyah (d. 695). Ḥāfīz Ibn Ḥajar read the second part of it with Zayn al-Dīn al-Ṭrāqī and Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī. ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Katṭānī also narrated it.

Mashyakhah Wajīhah al-Ṣaʿīdiyyah. ʿAbd al-Jalīl al-Kattani narrated this Mashyakhah of Wajīhah bint Mūsā ibn Izz al-Dīn al-Ṣulami al-Dimashqiyyah (d. 735) has been extensively narrated by the scholars.

Mashyakhah Sayyidah bint ʿAbd al-Haqq al-Kattani (d. 1382) also narrated it.
al-Rahîm ibn ʿAbd al-Wâhid ibn Ahâmad al-Maqdisî (d.740). Ibn Hajar says: ‘I read Mashyakhah Zaynab bint al-Kamâl with ʿUmar ibn Muḥammad al-Bâlîsî in two huge juz3, compiled by Muḥammad ibn Yahyâ ibn Saʿd.’ Zaynab also has a Mashyakhah al-mashaʿîkh, which Ḥâfiẓ ʿAbd al-Ḥâyy al-Kattânî has narrated with his sanad to Ḥâfiẓ Ibn Hajar, who narrated it from Umm Muḥammad Âs bint Ahâmad ibn Ḥassân, who narrated it from Zaynab herself.3 She also has a juz containing a selection of ḥadîths, about which Ḥâfiẓ al-Ḥâyy al-Kattânî says: ‘I have a juz of ḥadîths of Umm ʿAbdillâh Zaynab bint al-Kamâl, compiled by Ḥâfiẓ Alam al-Dîn al-Bîrzâlî, it contains 31 ḥadîths, and there are some records of hearing by imâms in it.4 Another book of hers, Muwâjaqât ʿâliyâ, compiled by al-Bîrzâlî, is referred to by Ibn Ḥajar, who says in his account of his Shaykh Ibrâhîm ibn Muḥammad ibn Abî Bakr al-Ṣâlihî: ‘I read with him the second ten from Muwâjaqât Zaynab bint al-Kamâl, compiled by al-Bîrzâlî.’5 Ibn Hajar read the whole Muwâjaqât Zaynab with Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Bâlî al-Ḥanbâlî,6 Khadijah bint Abî Bakr al-Kûrî,7 ʿAlî ibn Ghâzî ibn ʿAlî al-Ṣâliḥî al-Kûrî,8 ʿUmar ibn Muḥammad al-Bâlîsî,9 Muḥammad ibn Maḥmûd al-Sînsâr,10 and parts of it with ʿAbd al-Qâdîr al-Urmâwî11 and ʿUmar ibn Muḥammad al-Maqdisî.12 Mashyakhah Fâṭimah bint Ibrâhîm al-Maqdisîyyâb. Ḥâfiẓ ʿAbd al-Ḥâyy al-Kattânî narrated this Mashyakhab of Fâṭimah bint Ibrâhîm ibn ʿAbdillâh ibn al-Shaykh Abî ʿUmar al-Maqdisiyyâb (d. 747) with his sanad to Ḥâfiẓ Ibn Hajar, who narrated it from Muḥammad ibn Ibrâhîm al-Urmâwî, who narrated it from Fâṭimah herself.13 Mashyakhah Zaynab bint al-Khabbâz. Ibn Hajar narrated this Mashyakhab of Umm ʿAbdillâh Zaynab bint Najm al-Dîn Ismâʿîl ibn Ibrâhîm al-Khabbâz (d.749) from his shaykh ʿUthmân ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿUthmân al-Karkî, who heard it from Zaynab.14 ʿAbd al-Ḥâyy al-Kattânî narrated it with his sanad to Ḥâfiẓ Ibn Hajar.15

1 AL-KATTANI, Fihris al-fabarîs, ii. 653. 2 IBN HAJAR, al-Majmaʿ al-muwassas, ii. 347. 3 AL-KATTANI, Fihris al-fabarîs, ii. 644. 4 Ibid., ii. 460. 5 IBN HAJAR, al-Majmaʿ al-Muwassas, i. 237. 6 Ibid., i. 566. 7 Ibid., i. 588. 8 Ibid., ii. 270. 9 Ibid., ii. 347. 10 Ibid., ii. 544. 11 Ibid., ii. 232. 12 Ibid., ii. 322. 13 AL-KATTANI, Fihris al-fabarîs, ii. 654. 14 IBN HAJAR, al-Muṣjam al-mujharas, 208. 15 See AL-KATTANI, Fihris al-fabarîs, ii. 654.

*Muyam Maryam al-Adhra'iyyah*. This *Muyam* of Maryam bint Al-Bâmid ibn Mulânammad ibn Ibrâhim al-Adhra'iyyah (d. 805) was compiled by Hâfiz Ibn Hajar in one volume.¹

*Mashyakhah Hasana al-Tabariyyah*. Hafiz 'Abd al-Hayy al-Kattâni narrated this *Mashyakhah* of Hasnah bint Abî l-Yumn Muhammad ibn al-Shihâb Ahmad al-Tabari al-Makkiyyah (d. 808) with his *sanad* to Hâfiz Ibn Hajar, who narrated it from her.²

*Mashyakhah A'sibah bint Ibn 'Abd al-Hâdi'. 'Abd al-Hayy al-Kattâni has mentioned this *Mashyakhah*, and narrated it with his *isnaads* to Zakariyyâ al-Ansârî, Jalâl al-Dîn Suyûti and al-Kâmîl ibn Hâmzah, all of them from Taqî al-Dîn ibn Fahd, al-Kâmîl Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Zayn, both directly from her.³

*Mashyakhah 'A'ishah bint Ibn 'Abd al-Hâdi'. This is the *Mashyakhah* of Umm al-Hasan Fatimah bint Khalil ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Kinâni (d. 838). Hafiz Ibn Hajar compiled it and joined with the *mashyakhah* of another of his teachers and called it al-*Mashyakhah al-Bâsimah li-l-Qibâbi wa Fatimah*. This *Mashyakhah* is mentioned by Hâfiz al-Sakhawi,⁴ al-Najm ibn Fahd⁵ and others. Hâfiz 'Abd al-Hayy al-Kattâni has narrated it with *isnâd* to Ibn Hajar, and mentioned that he has a manuscript of half of it, which is a copy of a version corrected by Hâfiz al-Sakhawi.⁶ Dâr al-Farîrî in Damascus published it in 1422 [2002] edited by Dr. Muhammad Mu'ti al-Hafiz from a single copy available in the library of Berlin. That copy, written in Cairo in 865, is in the hand of Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Qâdir al-Nâbûsî, a student of Hâfiz Ibn Hajar. In it there are altogether 166

shaykhs mentioned. Among them 52 are common to both Qibābī and Fāṭimah, 84 Qibābī's alone and 30 Fāṭimah's alone; so all Shaykhs of al-Qibābī are 136 and all Shaykhs of Fāṭimah are 82.¹

Mashyakhah ʿĀʾishah bint al-ʿAlāʾ al-Ḥanbālī. This is the Mashyakhah of ʿĀʾishah bint al-ʿAlāʾ ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥanbālī (d. 840). Zayn al-Dīn Rīḍwān compiled a juz‘, starting with al-Musalsal bi-1-awwaliyyah, of her higher ḥadiths in which the number of narrators between herself and the Prophet is nine or ten.² Najm al-Dīn ibn Fahd says: 'Shaykh Rīḍwān compiled forty of her ḥadiths which she narrated.'³

Mashyakhah Zaynab bint al-ʿAlī. This Mashyakhah of Zaynab bint ʿAbdillāh al-Yafi (d. 846) was compiled by Najm al-Dīn ibn Fahd. Al-Kattānī referred to it by the title al-Fawāʾid al-Hāshi- miyyah, and narrated it through his isnād to Ibn Tūlūn, who narrated it from Muḥammad ibn Abī 1-Ṣidq, who narrated it from her.⁴ Najm al-Dīn ibn Fahd also compiled her higher ḥadiths under the explanatory title, Aḥādīth tusṣāʿiyyat al-ismād wa ushāriyyat al-ismād.⁵ Al-Kattānī has narrated it with his isnād to Abū 1-Baqāʾ Muḥammad ibn al-Imād al-ʿUmārī, who narrated it from Ibn Fahd, who narrated it from Zaynab herself.⁶

Mashyakhah Asmāʿ al-Mahrāniyyah. This is the Mashyakhah of Asmāʿ bint ʿAbdillāh ibn Muḥammad al-Mahrāniyyah al-Dimashqiyyah (d. 867). It was compiled by Shihāb al-Dīn Abī Khalīl al-Laḥūdī al-Dimashqī.⁷ Najm al-Dīn ibn Fahd has mentioned the work by a different title, al-Fath al-asmāʿ al-rabbānī fi Mashyakhah Asmāʿ bint al-Mahrānī.⁸ Ḥāfīz ʿAbd al-Ḥāyī al-Kattānī narrated it with his sanad to Shams al-Dīn ibn Tūlūn, who narrated it from Yūsuf ibn Ḥasan ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥādī, who narrated from Asmāʿ herself.⁹

al-Arbāʿīn of Umm Kirām Uns bint ʿAbd al-Karīm. This is the collection of Umm al-Karīm ibn Muḥammad al-Lakhamī, the wife (d. 867) of Ḥāfīz Ibn Ḥajar, compiled by Ḥāfīz al-Sakhawī, who read it to her.¹⁰

Mashyakhah Zāhida bint al-Zāhirī. This is the Mashyakhah of Zāhida bint Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Zāhirī, compiled by al-Muqātilī. 1 She heard ḥadīth from Ibrāhīm ibn Khalīl, and got ijāzahs from Ibn al-Junayzī, al-Shāwī, Ibn al-Ḥubāb and others.

Ḥumaydah’s hadith writings. Ḥumaydah bint Muḥammad Sharīf ibn Shams al-Dīn al-ʿAṣbahāniyyah (d. 1087) became known for her ḥadīth writings: Among those writings are her marginal notes on al-Iṣṭibdār of Shaykh al-Ṭūsī: These notes were well received by scholars and they referred to them. 2 She also compiled a book on the narrators of ḥadīth known by the title Rijāl Ḥumaydah. 3

Khunāthah’s Notes. Khunāthah bint Bakkār ibn ʿAlī al-Maqāfiri (d. 1159) wrote marginal notes on al-Iṣabah fi tamyīz al-sahabah of Ibn Hajar. 4

Mashyakhah al-Sitt Fāṭimah. The full title of this Mashyakhah is al-Fahāris al-qīyimah fī asānid al-Sitt Fāṭimah. Shaykh Muḥammad Yāsīn al-Fādānī (d. 1410) narrated it from Muḥammad ibn Arshad ibn Saʿd, who narrated it from Sitt Fāṭimah herself. 5

HIGHER ISNĀD THROUGH WOMEN TEACHERS

Ḥadīth scholars did not distinguish between men and women teachers as being more or less worthy for being men or women. They paid the same attention to preserving accurately the wording of ḥadīths narrated by women as to those narrated by men. In the later period interest in seeking out women scholars is a part of the effort to get higher isnāds. If a woman shaykhah outlived all the men in her generation, she would attract a lot of students, who would come to study with her in order to make their isnād higher. Seeking higher isnād is a well-established tradition among the people of ḥadīth. Al-Ḥākim cites examples of the Companions travelling for higher isnāds, and he calls doing so a sunnah. 5

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An isnād's being high is of three kinds. Firstly, assuming the isnād is sound (meaning each link is authenticated and the links unbroken), it is a measure of proximity to the Prophet, salla l-lāhu ʻalayhi wa sallam. All the hadiths in Sahih al-Bukhārī are sahih (sound). Between al-Bukhārī and the Prophet there are usually five or six people, sometimes more, sometimes fewer. However, there are 22 hadiths in the book where there are only three people between al-Bukhārī and the Prophet. These are the highest isnāds in the Sahih. One of them is: Makkī ibn Ib īhīm ʿYazīd ibn Abī Ubayd ʿSalamah ibn al-Akwa’. In the later centuries, there are many hadiths which the scholars narrate through women teachers because doing so shortens the isnād. For example, the tenth-century scholar Abū l-Fāth al-Iskandārī, narrated the Prophetic hadith ‘None from those who pledged allegiance under the tree will enter the Fire’ through the two isnāds below:


ʿĀʾishah bint ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī was the last surviving student of al-Hajjār; accordingly the isnād through her is a degree higher for Abū l-Fāth al-Iskandārī than the other.

Secondly, there is highness of isnād indicating proximity to one of those accepted by the ummah as an imām (one to be followed) in the field. In our time, if scholars narrate the Sahih of al-Bukhārī through ʿĀʾishah al-Maqdisiyyah (d. 816), then between them and Imām al-Bukhārī there will be one less narrator than through any other isnād. Similarly, if scholars narrate a hadith from Imām al-Ṭabarānī through Fātimah al-Jūzdāniyyah (d. 525),
there will be at least one narrator less than through any other isnād. Her isnād for the ḥadīths of Imām al-Ṭabarānī is the highest in the world.

Thirdly, there is highness of isnād for ḥadīths recorded in different compilations, such as the Six Books and other famous works. Thus a particular ḥadīth through Imām al-Bukhārī is not necessarily narrated by him with the highest isnād possible. This comparative highness is divided further into sub-kinds, details of which can be found in the standard works of uṣūl al-ḥadīth.

Here, a single illustrative example must suffice. Ḥāfiz Abū l-Faḍl al-Ḥarqī (d. 805) narrates a ḥadīth with three isnāds, one through al-Bukhārī, one through Muslim, and this one:

\[\text{Sitt al-Arab bint Muhammad ibn } \text{Alī al-Maqdisi} \Leftarrow \text{Abū l-Ḥasan Alī ibn al-Bukhārī} \Leftarrow \text{Abū Ja'far al-Ṣaydānī} \Leftarrow \text{Fatimah al-Juzdāniyyah} \Leftarrow \text{Abū Bakr ibn Rūdah} \Leftarrow \text{Abū l-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī} \Leftarrow \text{Abū Muslim al-Kishshī} \Leftarrow \text{Abū ʿĀšim} \Leftarrow \text{Yazīd ibn Abī Ubayd} \Leftarrow \text{Salamah ibn al-Akwā}^6.\]

The third one, with the two women narrators in it, is, al-Ḥarqī says, one degree higher compared to the one through al-Bukhārī, and two degrees higher compared to the one through Muslim.¹

Women and ḥadīth critique

In the foregoing I have demonstrated that the muḥaddithāt were much sought after for their knowledge and piety. Here I outline some formal aspects of evaluation of women narrators within the discipline of ḥar (invalidating) and taʻdīl (validating) the competence of an individuals to transmit reports or testimony. After that, I present what is known with certainty about the women’s contribution to ḥadīth critique.

EVALUATION OF NARRATORS

The duty to assay or evaluate narrators is founded primarily on God’s command (al-Ḥujurāt, 49. 6): O believers, if an evil-doer (fāsiq) comes to you with news, then verify it (fa-tabayyana) lest you injure a people in ignorance. However, in the very same sūrah, God forbids excessive suspiciousness (kathīran min al-zann) and He describes backbiting (criticizing people behind their backs) in the strongest terms as abhorrent as would be eating a human corpse. (al-Ḥujurāt, 49. 12.)

Muhammad ibn Sīrīn, the great scholar among the Successors of the Companions, said: ‘The knowledge is religion, so be careful about those from whom you are taking your religion.’\(^1\) Imām al-Nawāwī said: ‘Ḥar and taʻdīl are made lawful for the protection of the religion.’\(^2\) Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī has discussed the controversy at some length:

Some people [...] have criticized the commenting by the experts among our imāms and the people of knowledge from our ancestors

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\(^1\)MUSLIM, Sabīḥ, Muqaddimah. \(^2\)AL-NAWĀWĪ, al-Taqrib (with commentary al-Taḍrib), ii. 298.
that so-and-so narrator is weak, and that so-and-so is not reliable, and whatever is similar to that, and they consider that as backbiting those about whom these comments are made if that fault [really] is found in them, and as slander if that fault is not found in them. Their ḥadīth [that they base this opinion on] is the ḥadīth of Abū Hurayrah that the Messenger of God – ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alayhī wa sallam – was asked: What is backbiting? He said: To mention about your brother what he dislikes. The person asked: What if what I say [really] is in my brother? The Prophet – ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alayhī wa sallam – said: If what you say is in your brother, then you have backbited him, and if it is not in him, then you have slandered him. What they say is not valid: for the people of knowledge are unanimous that a report should not be accepted except from an intelligent, truthful person who can be trusted in what he says. In that there is evidence of permissibility of jarḥ of the one who is not truthful in his narration. Also the sunnah of the Prophet – ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alayhī wa sallam – has come clearly attesting to what we have stated, and opposing the opinion of these who differ from us.¹

Al-Khaṭīb then cites the ḥadīth of the woman who came to the Messenger to consult him about two men who had proposed marriage to her.

She said: Muʿāwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān and Abū Jahm have proposed to me. The Messenger of God – ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alayhī wa sallam – said: As for Abū Jahm, he never takes his stick from his neck, and as for Muʿāwiyah, he is a poor one and has no wealth. Marry Usāmah ibn Zayd.’ In this ḥadīth there is permissibility of jarḥ of the weak for a good cause. [...] The backbiting that is forbidden is that where one mentions the faults of his brother in order to lower him and to humiliate him.²

From the earliest period, a group of Companions, their Successors and those after them commented on the qualities of the narrators of ḥadīth. Shuʿbah, known as ‘the commander of the faithful’ in ḥadīth, was the first to develop the practice as a distinct discipline. Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān and others got this knowledge from him, and from Yaḥyā, it came to Yaḥyā ibn

¹ AL-KHATĪB AL-BAGHDĀDI, al-Kifāyah, 38. ²Ibid., 39–40.
Ma‘īn, ‘Ali ibn al-Madīnī and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. From them it came to al-Bukhārī, Abū Zur‘ah al-Rāzī, Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī and Muslim, and so on. Abū Bakr ibn Kallād said to Yaḥyā ibn Sa‘īd al-Qaṭṭān: ‘Don’t you fear that these people whose ḥadīth you have left will be claimants against you before God? Yaḥyā said: ‘If they are claimants against me, it is better than the Messenger of God – ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam – being a claimant against me, saying: Why did you not push away lying from my ḥadīth?\(^1\)

On balance, the need to prevent inaccuracies and fabrications from entering knowledge of the Sunnah prevailed over the unwillingness to say about someone what could hurt their feelings or their reputation. It suffices for our purpose here to summarize Ibn Ḥajar’s classification of narrators into twelve ‘grades’ – six positive, six negative – which has been widely accepted by the community:

I. The Companions, who are accepted as narrators on the authority of the Qur’ān’s praising their quality as believers.

II. The narrators who have been consistently described as ʿawthāq al-nās term ‘the most reliable of people’ or ṭhīqah ṭhīqah ‘reliable reliable’ or with terms meaning ‘reliable’ and ‘expert’ (ḥafīz).

III. The narrators who have been described at least once with words of high praise like ṭhīqah or mutqīn (‘accurate’) or ṭhabt (‘firm’) or ʿadl (‘just’).

IV. The narrators whose quality has been indicated by saying of them, ʿādīq (‘very truthful’) or lā ba‘ṣa bi-hi (‘no harm in [taking from] him’).

V. The narrators whose quality is marginally less than IV, described as ʿādīq sqyyi (‘very truthful with sound memory’).

VI. The narrators who narrate few ḥadīths, and no reason is known for turning away from those ḥadīths, and are described as maqḥūl (‘accepted’).

VII. The narrators from whom more than one person has narrated, but whose reliability is not explicitly confirmed, described as mastūr (‘hidden’), or majhūl al-hāl (‘whose condition is unknown’).

\(^1\) AL-SUYŪṬĪ, Tadrīb al-rāwī, ii. 299.
VIII. The narrators whose reliability is not affirmed by one whose affirmation matters, and who have pointed to as *da'if* ('weak').

IX. The narrators from whom only one person has narrated, and whose reliability has not been affirmed at all; described as *majhūl* ('unknown').

X. The narrators whose reliability is not affirmed at all, and about whom something negative is known; described as *matrīk* ('left') or *sāqiṭ* ('fallen') or *wāḥī al-ḥadīth* ('weak in ḥadīth').

XI. Narrators who have been accused of lying.

XII. Narrators about whom lying or fabricating is established, either by their confession or otherwise (*mutābanbīl kadhīb*).

**Ta'dīl of women narrators**

The expert assayers of ḥadīth have placed women narrators in all six positive grades, starting with the highest degree of reliability, namely the Companions, among them the wives and daughters of the Prophet. Several women are among those of the next rank (II), for example the great jurist *tābi'īyyah* 'Amrah bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān. About her, al-Dhahabī said: 'She was a scholar, jurist, proof, and holder of abundance of knowledge'; 2 Yahyā ibn Ma‘īn said: ‘reliable and proof’. 3 Another example is *‘A*īshah bint Ṭalḥah, about whom Yahyā ibn Ma‘īn said: ‘reliable and proof’. 4 And there are many others of this rank from the early and the later generations.

Among many women narrators ranked III by most experts is Ḥafṣah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq. Al-‘Īlī (d. 261) said about her: ‘a reliable *tābi’īyyah*’; 5 about Fātimah bint al-Mundhir, he said: ‘a reliable *tābi’īyyah* from Madinah’; 6 about Ṣafiyah bint Abī ‘Ubayd al-Thaqafīyyah, he said: ‘a reliable jurist of Madinah’; 7 about both Diqrah bint Ghiilib al-Baṣriyyah 8 and Qamīr bint ‘Amm al-Kūfiyyah, 9 he said: ‘reliable *tābi’īyyah*’.

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Among those women narrators ranked by most experts as IV, V, and VI are: 'Umaynah bint Anas ibn Mālik, Ḥabibah bint Maysarah ibn Abi Khuthaym, Ḥasnah bint Mu‘āwiyyah ibn Sulaymān al-Ṣārīmiyyah, Khayrah, the mother of al-Ḥasan al-ಛsī, and many others.

Jarḥ of women narrators

Grades VII–XII are grades of negative valuation or jarḥ. The least of those (VII) includes those whose quality as narrators is not known. Among the examples of this rank is Bahīyyah, the mawllah of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq. Her ḥadīth is in Sunan of Abū Dāwūd; Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar said: ‘She is not known.’

Some women have been put in the VIIIth category by mistake and the mistake later rectified. An example is Ṣ Affairs bint Sa‘d ibn Abī Waqqās. Al-Khaṭīb narrates from Mālik: ‘I asked her about some ḥadiths; then I did not like to take anything from her because of her weakness.’ According to the ḥadīth experts, this narration from Mālik must be wrong because Mālik has himself narrated from her— in his Sunan, as Ḥāfiz Abū Zur‘ah al-ยายqi pointed out. Ibn Hibbān has confirmed her reliability and al-Bukhārī has narrated her ḥadīth. Al-ṬJāli says about her: ‘She is a reliable tabī‘iyah.’ Al-Ṣafādī said: ‘She is among the reliable ones.’

Among the women narrators at the rank indicated by the epithet ‘unknown’ (IX), is Unaysah. Ṣafwān ibn Sulaymān narrated from her and she narrated from Umm Sa‘d bint Murrah al-Fihī. Al-Bukhārī has quoted her ḥadīth in al-Adab al-mufrad. Ibn Ḥajar said about her: ‘She is not known.’ Būnānah bint Yazīd al-ṢAbshamiyyah who narrated from Ṣ Affairs and ʿĀṣim al-Aḥsawal narrated from her. Ḥāfiz says about her: ‘She is not

known.' Again, some were put in this category wrongly, and the mistake corrected by later scholars. An example is al-ʿĀliyāh bint Ayfā, the wife of Abū Ishāq al-Šabīʿi and the mother of Yūnūs ibn Abī Ishāq. About her, al-Dāraquṭnī said: ‘She is obscure’; Ibn Ḥazm said: ‘Nobody knows who she is’; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr said: ‘She is obscure.’ However, Ibn Ḥibbān named her among the ‘reliable’ tābiʿyyat. Ibn al-Jawzī said: ‘They say: al-ʿĀliyāh is an obscure woman, so her report cannot be accepted. We say: rather, she is a woman of great position, well-known.’ Ibn al-Turkmānī (d. 750) says: ‘al-ʿĀliyāh is well-known, her husband and her son have both narrated from her and both are expert in ḥadīth. Her ḥadīth is accepted by al-Thawrī, al-Awzaʿi, Abū Iḥnafah, Mālik and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal.’

An example of the rank of those narrators whose ḥadīths are ‘left’ (X) is Ḥakkāmah bint Uthmān ibn Dīnār. Ibn Ḥibbān, al-Uqaylī, and al-Dhahabī have criticized her ḥadīth.

As for the two lowest ranks (XI, XII), of narrators accused of fabricating ḥadīth, or whose fabrication is known, there is not a single woman among them. Al-Dhahabī says: ‘I did not know among the women anyone who has been accused [of lying] or whose ḥadīth has been left [for that].’

**EVALUATION OF WOMEN’S ḤADĪTHS**

Women’s ḥadīths are described by the experts according to the same categories as men’s, as sahiḥ (sound), hasan (good) and daʿīf (weak), although they are preferred over the men’s in that women are not known to have narrated any fabricated ḥadīths.

There are a great number of ḥadīths narrated by women alone; the traditionists have accepted them and jurists have acted upon them. Examples were given earlier. Here is another

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example: al-Hākim narrated from Ḥāshāyah that the Messenger of God — salla llāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam — called on her and she had a curtain [hanging] which had some pictures on it. The colour of his face changed. Then he took the curtain and tore it with his hand and then said: The worst people being punished on the Day of Resurrection are those who copy the creation of God.’ Al-Hākim said: ‘This is a saḥīḥ sunnah.’¹

The experts have, in many cases, preferred hadiths narrated by women over those narrated by men, because the former have stronger īsmāds and are further from containing mistakes. Al-Hākim narrated from Anas ibn Mālik that the Messenger of God — salla llāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam — was riding a horse, fell from it and his right side was injured. Then he led one of the prayers while sitting and we also prayed behind him sitting. After he finished the prayer, he said: The imām is made to be followed; when he prays standing then pray standing, when he bows, then bow, and when he rises then rise [...] and when he prays sitting then pray together sitting.”² However, Ḥāshāyah narrated that the Messenger of God in his last illness prayed sitting and Abū Bakr followed him standing. Al-Hākim confirms that the hadith experts have preferred Ḥāshāyah’s narration over that of Anas because Ḥāshāyah’s has the support of other narrators.³

Scholars traced some discrepancies or contradictions found with some narrations by women not to the women who originally narrated them but to later narrators. There are many examples of that; here is one:

Wahh ibn Jarīr narrated from Shu‘bah, from al-Hākam, from Ibrāhīm, from al-Aswad, from Ĥāshāyah that she said: ‘When the Messenger of God — salla llāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam — was in [a state of] major ritual impurity, and he had to eat or sleep, he would do ablution (wudū’).’⁴ This hadith is opposed by another hadith narrated by Abū Ĥāsim from Sufyān al-Thawrī, from Abū Ishāq, from al-Aswad, from Ĥāshāyah that she said: ‘The

¹ Al-Hākim, Ma‘rīfah ‘alām al-hadīth, 160. ² Ibid., 156. ³ Ibid., 156–57. ⁴ Ibid., 155.
Messenger of God — خالد b. خالد — would sleep while in [a state of] major impurity without touching any water.' Al-Hākim says after looking through different isnāds for these ḥadīths: ‘All these isnāds are sound, and the two reports oppose each other. The reports of the people of Madinah and Kufah agree on ablution, and the reports through Abū Ishāq oppose them.'1 So this mistake in Ā’ishah’s ḥadīth is not from her: rather it is from some later narrators.

EVALUATION OF NARRATORS BY WOMEN

Women also made their contribution to the evaluation of ḥadīths and critique of narrators. What has been narrated from them in this regard is little, but it is significant that the experts of ḥadīth and fiqh have accepted it as valid. Before giving some examples, I will discuss the lawfulness of women doing ta’dīl and jarb.

Women’s role in ta’dīl and jarb

Most scholars hold that ta’dīl and jarb by women is permissible. The reasoning of those opposed to this view is that women do not have enough information about people to pass judgement. However, this argument is useless, for if there not enough information to base ta’dīl and jarb on, then it is disallowed anyway, whether done by a man or woman. Imām al-Ghazālī affirms in al-Mustasfī the permissibility of women’s ta’dīl and jarb, and he compares it with their narration of ḥadīth. Imām al-Nawawī also affirms it.2 Qaḍī Abū ‘Alī al-Walīd al-Bāji (d. 474) says that ‘taqrīb and ta’dīl of narrators of ḥadīth by women is valid.'3 The people of ḥadīth argue for this from the incident of the slander against Ā’ishah when the Prophet called on the maidservant Barirah to inform him about her and took account of what she told him. Qaḍī Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib says: ‘If it is

1Ibid., 156. 2AL-NAWAĪ, al-Taqrīb with its commentary al-Tadrib, i. 321. 3Abū l-Walīd Al-Bāji, Ḥikam al-fusūl fī ahkām al-usūl, i. 376.
said: Do you hold it obligatory to accept ta’āḍi by the woman who knows what ta’āḍi and jarḥ mean? The answer is: Yes. There is nothing that prevents from accepting that, neither any consensus nor anything else. Had there been any text or consensus then we would not have allowed it [...].¹ Khaṭīb al-Baghdādi says: 'When it is affirmed that the report of the righteous woman is accepted, and that is the consensus of the early generation, then it is also obligatory that the ta’āḍi of the narrators by women should be accepted, so the taqzīiyah by women, which means reporting the quality of the reporter and witness, will be – as regards necessitating action upon it – the same as the report by women.'²

Examples of ta’āḍi and jarḥ by women

'Amrāh bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān narrates that it was reported to ʿĀʾishah that ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar says: 'The deceased person is punished for the wailing of the living over him.' ʿĀʾishah said: 'May God forgive Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [the kunyah of ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar]; he did not lie but he forgot or made a mistake. The true story is that the Messenger of God – ʿalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – passed by a deceased Jewish woman and said: They are wailing over her and she is being punished in her grave.'³ It is clear that ʿĀʾishah has in this instance questioned Ibn ʿUmar's preserving of knowledge (dafter).

Another example of that is when it was reported to ʿĀʾishah that Abū Hurayrah said: 'The Messenger of God – ʿalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – said: Shuʾm [ill-omen] is in three things, in the house, the woman and the horse.' ʿĀʾishah said: 'Abū Hurayrah did not preserve [the whole of the matter]. He entered while the Messenger of God – ʿalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – was saying: May God fight the Jews [for] they say there is shuʾm in

¹ AL-KHATĪB AL-BAGHDĀDI, al-Kifāyah, 98. ² Ibid. ³ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, Jānāʾir, bab qawl al-nabi ʿalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam yuʿaddhabu al-mayyit bi baʾd bukāʾ ahli-hi ʿalay-h; MUSLIM, Sahīh, Jānāʾir, bab al-mayyit yaʿaddhabu bi bukāʾ ahli-hi ʿalay-h.
three things, the house, the woman, and the horse. Abū Hurayrah heard the end of the ḥadīth and did not hear the beginning of the ḥadīth.¹

Ya'la al-Taymī narrated: ‘I entered Makkah three days after 'Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr was killed, while his body was hanging on the cross. His mother came. She was a tall, blind lady. She said to Ḥajjāj [wanting her son’s body taken down]: Has the time not come for this rider to dismount? He said: The hypocrite? She said: By God, he was not a hypocrite. Rather he was a ṣawwām [one who fasts much], a qawwām [one who stands much in prayer, and] an obedient [one]. He said: Go back, old woman! You have lost sense because of old age. She said: No, by God, I have not lost my sense. For I heard the Messenger of God - salla l-lāhū wa sallam - say: In the tribe of Thaqif there will be a liar and a destroyer. As for the liar, we have seen him - she meant Mukhtār - and as for the destroyer, that is you.’²

Ibn ʿAmmār narrated that Wākī was asked about Umm Dāwūd al-Wābishiyyah. He said: ‘She was a woman with an intelligent heart.’ And Yahyā ibn Saʿīd was asked about her; he said: ‘A man asked her about Shurayh. She said: He was like your mother.’³ In this report, Yahyā ibn Saʿīd, one of the imāms of ʿarḥ is quoting Umm Dāwūd al-Wābishiyyah about a narrator (Shurayh). Shuʿbāh narrates that his mother asked Hishām ibn Ḥassān: ‘Who does Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar narrate from? He said: From Abū Hurayrah and Ibn ʿUmar. Then she said: Ibn ʿUmar did hear ḥadīth from them.’⁴

WOMEN’S ROLE IN ḤADĪTH CRITIQUE

The methodology of ḥadīth critique reached full development in the second–third century. Most of its principles relate to the

critical study of *ismāds*, a sophisticated and difficult discipline entailing cross-checking the narrators in order to verify who met and studied what with whom, when and where. A part of that effort of critique was concerned with verifying the actual text of the ḥadīth, alongside the labour of deriving instruction or guidance from it. Among the Companions, Āʾishah is a famous practitioner of this art. While no formal or systematic statement of key principles of critique is attributed to Āʾishah, it is quite clear that those principles derive from her exemplary practice. Six are illustrated below:

**Checking the ḥadīth against the Qurʾān**

Āʾishah consistently applied the principle, later formulated and agreed upon by all jurists and traditionist, that if a ḥadīth is contradicted by a Qurʾānic verse, and there is no way of reconciling them, then the ḥadīth will be ‘left’. For example, ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās used to say: ‘The Prophet – salla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – saw [i.e. actually set eyes on] his Lord twice.’ Masrūq says that he asked Āʾishah:

*O umm al-muminin, did Muḥammad see his Lord?*  
She said: What you have said has made my hair stand on end for fear! Where are you from [i.e. where is your grasp of] three things! Whoever tells you that, he is a liar. Whoever tells [you] that Muhammad saw his Lord, he is a liar. Then she recited [al-ʾAn`ām, 6. 104]: No seeing [faculties] can encompass Him, and He encompasses all seeing [faculties]. And [al-Shūra, 42. 51]: It is not for any human that God should speak to him unless by revelation or from behind a veil. Whoever tells you that he knew what is in [store for] tomorrow, he has lied. Then she recited [Luqāmān, 31. 34]: No soul knows what it will earn tomorrow. And whoever tells you that he concealed something, he has lied. Then she recited [al-Mā`idah, 5. 67]: O Messenger, proclaim that which has been sent down to you from your Lord. Rather, he saw [the angel of the Revelation] Jibrīl in his form twice.¹

¹AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Ṣahīh, Tafṣīr, bāb tafṣīr sūrat al-Najm.
up on the qalib of Badr [the ditch in which the unbelievers were buried] and said [to the dead]: Have you found there what your Lord had promised? Then he said: They are hearing what I am saying to them.’ When this hadith was mentioned to Ḥaḍīth Ā’ishah, she said: ‘Rather, the Prophet — salla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam — said: They know that what I am saying is true. Then she recited [al-Naml, 27. 80]: Indeed you cannot make the dead bear.¹

Checking the hadith against another, stronger hadith

Another key principle derived from the practice of Ḥaḍīth Ā’ishah is that if a hadith goes against one stronger and more firmly established than it, then the weaker hadith will be ‘left’, not acted upon. Ubayd ibn Rifa’ah al-Anṣārī says:

We were in an assembly where Zayd ibn Thābit also was. Then [the people there] discussed the bath after [sexual] emission. [Zayd ibn Thābit] said: If someone has intercourse and did not ejaculate, he has only to wash his private parts and do ablution like the ablution for the prayer. Somebody from that assembly stood up and came to Umar and told him that. Umar said to the man: Go yourself and bring him to me, so that you can be witness against him. The man went and brought him. There with Umar were sitting some Companions of the Messenger of God — salla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam — among them, ʿAlī ibn Abī Tālib and Muʿādh ibn Jabal. Umar said to Zayd [ibn Thābit]: O enemy of yourself, do you give a fatwa like that? Zayd said: By God, I have not invented it. Rather, I have heard it from my uncles like Rifa’ah ibn Rāfī and Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī. Then Umar asked those Companions who were there with him and said to them: What do you say? They differed. Umar said: O slaves of God, you differ, while you are the elect of those who took part in [the battle of] Badr! Then ʿAlī said to him: Send someone to the wives of the Prophet — salla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam — for they will be aware of there being something like that. Umar sent to Hafṣah and asked her. She said: I have no knowledge of that. They sent someone to Ḥaḍīth Ā’ishah. She said: When the circumcised part has passed the other circumcised part, then the bath is obligatory. Then Umar said: If I [come to] know

¹AL-BUKHĀRĪ, ṢaḥīḥMaghāzī, bāb qatl Abī Jabl.
anyone doing that and [after so doing] he does not have a bath, I will give him a lesson.¹

Checking the hadith against a sunnah of the Prophet

Sālim narrates from his father ʿAbdullāh ibn Umar that he said: I heard ʿUmar say: 'When [in the ĥajj] you have done the stoning [and sacrificed] and shaved, then everything becomes permissible for you except women and perfume.' Sālim continues: 'Āʾishah said: Everything except women. I put perfume on the Messenger on that occasion'. Then Sālim comments: 'The sunnah of God's Messenger – ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – is more worthy to be followed.'²

Abū Bakr ibn ʿAbd al-Rahmān said: 'I heard Abū Hurayrah giving a sermon and he said in his sermon: Whoever has got up at the time of dawn in the state of major impurity, then he should not fast. I [Abū Bakr ibn ʿAbd al-Rahmān] mentioned that to ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn al-Ḥarthī, who mentioned it to his father; he did not accept it. Then I and ʿAbd al-Rahmān went and called upon ʿĀʾishah and Umm Salamah and we asked about that. ʿĀʾishah said the Prophet – ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – used to get up in the morning in the state of major impurity and he used to fast.'³

Qāsim ibn Muḥammad narrates that ʿĀʾishah was informed that Abū Hurayrah was saying: 'The passing of a woman in front of person praying invalidates the prayer.' She said: 'The Messenger of God – ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – would pray, and my leg would be in front of him, then he would turn it away and I would draw it back.'⁴

Checking the hadith in the light of its occasion (sahab)

Urwah ibn al-Zubayr narrates that it came to the knowledge of ʿĀʾishah that Abū Hurayrah was saying: 'The Messenger of God—ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam—said: Being content with a whip in the path of God, is better to me than freeing an illegitimate child. And that the Messenger of God—ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam—said: The illegitimate child is the worst of the three [father, mother, child]; and the dead person is punished for the wailing of the living.' ʿĀʾishah said:

God have mercy on Abū Hurayrah, he did not listen properly, so he did not answer properly. As for his saying, 'Being content with a whip in the path of God is better to me than freeing an illegitimate child': Now, when the verse [al-Baʿad, 90. 11-13] was revealed But he has not attempted the steep ascent. And what will make you know what the steep ascent is? It is the freeing of a neck [from the yoke of slavery], it was said to him: O Messenger of God—ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam. We do not have anything to free, unless it be that some of us have slave-girls who serve us and work for us [and] we could ask them to do adultery and then have some children whom we could free. Then the Messenger of God—ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam: Being content with a whip in the path of God is better to me than commanding adultery and then freeing an illegitimate child. [Then] as for his saying that 'an illegitimate child is worst of the three', the hadith was not like that. A hypocrite used to cause hurt to the Messenger of God—ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam—so he said: Who will defend me from him? Someone said: O Messenger of God—ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam—besides that [he does as you say] he is an illegitimate one. Then he said: He is the worst of the three, and God says [al-Anṣām, 6.164]: And no bearer of burden bears the burden of another. [Then] as for his saying that the deceased is punished for the wailing of the living, so the hadith is not like that. Rather, the Messenger of God—ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam—passed by a Jew who had died and the people of his family were wailing over him. Then he said: They are crying over him and he is being punished. God says [al-Baqarah, 2.286]: God does not burden a self beyond its capacity.¹

¹AL-ḤĀKIM, al-Mustadrak, ii. 234.
Checking a hadith against the difficulty of acting upon it

‘Ubayd ibn ‘Umār narrates that it came to the knowledge of ‘A’īshah that ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr was commanding women, when they bathed, to unravel their plaits. She said: ‘Alas! why does he not command them to shave their heads?’

Yahyā ibn ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Ḥāṭib narrates from Abū Hurayrah that he said: ‘Whoever washes a deceased, he should bathe, and whoever carries [the body] should do ablution.’ When it came to the knowledge of ‘A’īshah, she said: ‘Are the dead Muslims impure?! What harm is there in carrying wood?!’

Checking a hadith for misconstruction of its meaning

Abū Salamah narrates that when death approached Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī, he called for new clothes and put them on. In doing so he was acting on what he remembered the Prophet as saying: ‘I heard the Messenger of God – sallā l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – say: The dead person will be raised in those clothes in which he dies.’ When this came to the attention of ‘A’īshah, she criticized it and said: ‘God have mercy on Abū Sa‘īd! The Prophet – sallā l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – meant the [garment of] actions on which a man dies. For the Prophet – sallā l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – said: People will be resurrected, barefoot, naked, uncircumcised.’

Chapter 9

Overview by period and region

At no time in Islamic history including the present, and in no part of the Islamic world, past or present, has study of ḥadīth been considered among Muslims themselves as either redundant or obsolete. To the contrary, the relevance and utility of ḥadīth for teaching the believers how to embody the guidance of Islam in their transactions with God and with each other have always been securely fixed at the deepest level of their commitment as believers. That said, active engagement in the study and teaching of ḥadīth has varied in scope and volume in different times and places. In particular, the numbers of women engaged in the receiving and diffusing of ḥadīth, though not localized to a particular period or region, has varied markedly — at least if judged by the material that I have compiled on the muḥaddithat. Interestingly, the change by period and region in the numbers of men engaged in ḥadīth study does mostly, but does not always, correspond to the change in the numbers of women.

Variation in the quality or level of attention that a particular body of knowledge receives is normal; to some degree it can be observed in all branches of knowledge, all arts and crafts and patterns of industry and commerce, and in every civilization. It is a function of how, in a particular setting, interest in a body of knowledge is motivated, how costs and rewards for engaging with it are perceived, where it fits within broader conceptions of the purposes that education is supposed to serve in the community providing it. I try in this chapter to give a sense of the general outline of when and where ḥadīth study and teaching among the women intensified, declined, revived. The outline is what the material, in gross qualitative terms, suggests to me at this very early stage of studying the material. I offer only very
tentative explanations for the bigger shifts recorded. It will not be possible to offer more secure explanations until the biographical accounts and mentions of women scholars and students can be analysed systematically, and then set alongside relevant information about the socio-economic and legal and political conditions in which the work with ḥadith was done.

The divisions by region are self-explanatory. As for time periods, the material seems to me to fall into four main phases:

1st–2nd c. AH. In this period women narrators of ḥadith are both many and conspicuous. The ḥadiths of women Companions and Successors are widely circulated, and recorded in the precursors of the Six Books and other major collections.

2nd–5th c. AH. This is a relatively weak period for women narrators but a peak period for men scholars and students of ḥadith. The Six Books and major specialist studies are written at this time. The third century is the weakest for women scholars, their numbers recovering gradually through the fourth and fifth centuries.

6th–9th c. AH. After the time of the women Companions, this is the brightest period in the history of the muḥaddithāt. From the sixth century, their numbers grow rapidly, peaking in the eighth, beginning to go down in the ninth.

10th–15th c. AH. The period of clear scholarly decline among Muslims in all Islamic sciences including ḥadith. The decline is not particular to women; it includes men too.

FIRST PERIOD: 1st–2nd c. AH

This is considered the best, the normative, period of Islam. It is the period of the Companions – men and women who learnt the religion from the Prophet himself – of their Successors, many of whom accompanied the Companions in long years of apprenticeship; and of those who followed the Successors and who, by the end of this period, had formalized the practice of their teachers into a strict and solid scholarly discipline.

The ḥadiths of the women of this period are recorded in the major compilations of ḥadith. Among the Companions, the
Map 2. Islamic world. Spread of mubaddithat 1st–2nd c.
most important and most famous figure in the ḥadīth and fiqh is Āʾishah. She narrated 2,210 ḥadīths. 297 of those ḥadīths are in the Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim; 174 are found in both, with 54 in al-Bukhārī and 69 in Muslim not recorded in the other. In sheer abundance of ḥadīths, in the Six Books, she is second only to Abū Hurayrah. The total of her ḥadīths in the Six Books is 2,081, of Abū Hurayrah’s 3,370. In knowledge of the religion Āʾishah was a point of reference for the Companions; Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī said: ‘Whenever any matter became difficult for us, the Companions of the Prophet – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayh wa sallam – then we asked Āʾishah about it: we found she had got knowledge of that.’

Next to Āʾishah in abundance of ḥadīths is Umm Salamah. Altogether she has 378 ḥadīths, of which al-Bukhārī and Muslim both record 13, while al-Bukhārī has another 3 and Muslim 13. Among other women Companions who narrated a lot of ḥadīths are: Ašmāʾ bint Yazīd ibn al-Sakan who narrated 81; ʿumm al-muʾminin Maymūnah, who narrated 76; ʿumm al-muʾminin Ḥafṣah, who narrated 60; and Ašmāʾ bint Umays, who also narrated 60 ḥadīths.

Among the most famous women narrators in the generation of the Successors is Āʾmah bint ʿAbd al-Rahmān. In the Six Books and other major collections, her ḥadīths are plentiful. She grew up in the house of Āʾishah and learnt a lot of ḥadīths from her and others. ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz said: ‘No one is now [living] who has more knowledge of Āʾishah’s ḥadīth than Āʾmah’, and he benefited much by her counsel. Al-Zuhārī said: ‘Qāsim ibn Muḥammad said to me: I see, my boy, that you are greedy for knowledge. Should I not inform you of the vessel of knowledge? Go and stick to Āʾmah, for she was under the guardianship of Āʾishah.’ Al-Zuhārī said: ‘Then I came to her and I found her an ocean; its water never goes.’

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1 AL-DHAHABI, Ṣiyār aʿlām al-nubalāʾ, ii. 139. 2 IBN HAJAR, Ṭabḥīb al-ṭabḥīb, xii. 463. 3 AL-DHAHABI, Ṣiyār aʿlām al-nubalāʾ, ii. 210. 4 IBN SAʿD, al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā, ii. 387. 5 AL-DHAHABI, Ṣiyār aʿlām al-nubalāʾ, iv. 508.
Another expert of this period is the great muhaddithah of Basrah, Ḥafṣah bint Sīrīn, the sister of the renowned scholar Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn. Her ḥadīths too are found in all major compilations. Iyās ibn Muʿāwiyyah relied on her in preference even to Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn. Al-Ṣafadī says: ‘She was unique in her time: jurist, truthful, virtuous and of great rank.’

Another expert of this period is the great scholar of Syria, Umm al-Dardā’, whose ḥadīths are also abundant in the sources. Al-Dhahabi praises her for her juristic knowledge and intelligence and for her devotion to worship. Ibn Kathīr said: ‘She was a tābi‘īyyah, devout, scholar and jurist. Men studied with her and learnt fiqh from her in her teaching places on the north side of the [Umayyad] Mosque, and ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān when he was caliph used to sit in her circle with other students.’

Among many examples of well-known women scholars of the second century, after the tābi‘īyyat, are Umm al-Aswad al-Khuza‘īyyah and ʿUbaydah bint Ṣābīl al-Hijāzīyyah. Umm al-Aswad narrated ḥadīth from Munyah bint ʿUbayd al-Aslamiyyah and Umm Nā‘īlah al-Khuza‘īyyah. ʿAḥmad ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Yūnus, ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn ʿAmr al-Bajayli, Muḥsin ibn Ibrāhīm al-Azādī and Yūnus ibn Muḥammad al-Mu‘addib narrated from her. Al-Ṭiḥāfi said: ‘She was a reliable Kufan narrator.’ ʿUbaydah bint Ṣābīl narrated from ʿAṭīshah bint Sa‘d ibn Abī Waqqās. Among her students were ʿIshāq ibn Muḥammad al-Farawī, al-Khaṣīb ibn Nāṣīh, Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Waqīdī and Ma‘n ibn ʿĪsā al-Qazzāz.

It is clearly noticeable that, in terms of narrating ḥadīth, the time of the women Companions is the most shining period. This continued much the same into the time of their Successors. However, in the generation of those after the Successors, there are far fewer women whose ḥadīths are recorded in the famous

1 AL-MIZZĪ, Tahdhib al-kamāl, xxxv. 152. 2 AL-SAFADĪ, al-Wāṣī bi-l-wafayāt, xiii. 106. 3 AL-DHAHABI, Tadhkirat al-huffaz 53. 4 IBN KATHĪR, al-Bidāyāt wa-l-nihāyāt, sub anno 82. 5 IBN HAJAR, Tahdhib al-tahdhib, xii. 486. 6 Ibid. 7 AL-MIZZĪ, Tahdhib al-kamāl, xxxv. 239.
compilations. The most likely reason for this is that the men’s interest in hadith was becoming very strong and they were travelling extensively to collect hadiths from every city and in as short a time as possible – travelling then was arduous. So, when they were compiling hadiths, they recorded from the women of their generation only the hadiths that they could not get from men scholars, whom it was easier to find and find out about. This trend became still more pronounced in the next period.

SECOND PERIOD: 3rd–5th c. AH

This is the so-called ‘golden period’ of hadith study, when the major genres of hadith compilation and the major compilations are put together and circulated. It is also the period when travelling for ‘the knowledge’ is at its peak. In the beginning of the second century there are scholars of the rank of al-Zuhri (d. 124) in Madinah, ‘Amr ibn Dinār (d. 123) in Makkah, Qatādah and Yahyā ibn Abī Kathīr in Basrah, Abū Ishāq al-Sabīrī and al-Ā‘mash in Kufah; at the end of the century Mālik in Madinah, Ibn ‘Uyaynah in Makkah, Shu‘bah in Basrah, Sufyān al-Thawrī in Kufah. By the beginning of the third century all the major centres of hadith – in Kufah, Basrah, Baghdad, the Haramayn, Syria and Egypt – are dominated by the male scholars. Women appear to be so far absent from the circles of hadith teachers that we do not find a single woman named among the long list of the teachers of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, Nasa’ī and Ibn Mājah, the authors of the Six Books. Before this period, by contrast, we find women named among the teachers of Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik, Sufyān al-Thawrī and Shu‘bah. So, what might explain this abrupt absence of women teachers?

We need to differentiate between receiving ‘the knowledge’ and transmitting it. As for the former, women continued to study hadith, and there is no indication that people paid less attention to the education of their daughters. It will be remembered that Mālik’s daughter Fāṭimah memorized the whole of his Muwattā and became a narrator of hadith, while his son did not.
The crucial difference appears to be the increased importance at this time of travelling between different teachers and different towns, and collecting the hadîth of every major centre of learning in the Islamic world. Women cannot have had the same facility to undertake long, arduous journeys in the path of knowledge or to absent themselves from their duties to family. With some exceptions, their hadîth were mostly acquired from their family and the scholars in the near locality.

Also, the travelling students are coming from outer regions into the heartlands of Islam — each of the authors of the Six Books is an example. In their places of origin hadîth scholarship, especially among women, is not yet established. So we cannot imagine them narrating from the women of their family or of their home towns. Then, on arriving in the heartlands of Islam, they have a very limited time in which to acquire as many hadîths as possible before moving on: naturally they would be inclined to sit with those teachers who have themselves travelled extensively and collected large numbers of hadîths. Also, being strangers, they can have had only limited, if any, knowledge of the women scholars active in the town they are passing through and only limited, if any, access to them. Finally, it will be very rare by the third century that a woman has knowledge of hadîths that have not been already circulated and can be heard reliably narrated by men, to whom the visiting students do have access.

That said, those scholars who had access to the muḥaddithât in the heartlands of Islam did narrate from them and so their names, as also their hadîths, have survived. For example, in Madinah: ʿImām Shams al-Dīn al-Jazārī (d. 813) narrates with his iṣnaḍ to Bakr ibn Ahmad al-Qaṣrī, who narrated from Fāṭimah bint ʿAlī ibn Mūsā al-Ridā (3rd century) from Fāṭimah, Zaynab and Umm Kulthūm, all three daughters of Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar (3rd c.), who narrated from Fāṭimah bint Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq (2nd c.) that she said: Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī [2nd c.] narrated to me, saying: Fāṭimah bint ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn [1st c.] narrated to me saying that Fāṭimah and Sukaynah, daughters of Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī narrated to me from Umm Kulthūm bint
Fātimah bint al-Nabī — *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* — saying: Have you forgotten the Prophet’s word to ʿAli: You are to me as Ḥārūn was to Mūsā.\(^1\) Also in Madinah: ʿĀʾishah bint al-Zubayr ibn Hishām ibn ʿUrwa, whose ḥadīths have been recorded by Qāḍi Abū ʿAbdillāh al-Mahāmili.\(^2\) In Baghdad in this period, Ṣayyānah wife of Ṭahmāb ibn Ḥanbal, and his slave Ḥūsaib, both received ḥadīth from him.\(^3\) In Kufah there was Fātimah bint al-Zayyāt. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī has narrated her ḥadīth.\(^4\) In Kufah there was Fātimah bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Sharīk, whose ḥadīths were recorded by Ḥāfs ʿUmar ibn Shāhīn.\(^5\) In Basrah, the ḥadīths of Ghufayrah bint Wāqīd were recorded by Ibn Ḥibbān.\(^6\) In Wāṣit, there was Fātimah bint Iṣḥāq ibn Wāḥib ibn ʿAllāf al-Wāsīṭ; her ḥadīths were recorded by Imām Ṭabarānī.\(^7\) In Syria, there was Umm ʿAbd Allāh al-Jarrānī, whose ḥadīths were recorded by al-Khāṭīb al-Baghdādī.\(^8\)

Near the end of the third century ḥadīth activity started to decline, a trend that continued until the fifth. Perhaps the fourth century is the weakest for ḥadīth activity among women. In this century Baghdad is the major centre of muḥaddithât. One of the famous ones among them is Amāt al-Wāḥid bint al-Ḥusayn ibn Iṣmāʿīl al-Mahāmili (d. 377). Al-Dāraquṭnī says: ‘She learnt ḥadīth from her father, Iṣmāʿīl ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Wārqaq, ʿAbd al-Ghāfīr ibn Sallām al-Ḥīmṣī, Abū l-Ḥasan al-Miṣrī, ʿAmīn al-Ḥāshimī and others. She memorized the Qurʾān and learnt fiqh according to imām al-Shāfiʿī’s school and other sciences.’\(^9\) Another example is Fātimah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jarrānīyah (d. 312), who was born in Baghdad,

then brought to Egypt where people studied hadith with her.\(^1\) Another examples is Amat al-Salām bint al-Qādi Abī Bakr (d. 390); the names of a number of her students\(^2\) are found in al-Khaṭīb.\(^3\)

An important feature of this century is that we begin to find muḥaddīthāt in Khurasan and Transoxania. Their numbers continued to grow in this part of the world until it was destroyed by the Mongols at the beginning of the seventh century. Among the famous traditionists of this area in the fourth century were: Umm Salamah ʿĀminah bint Abī Saʿīd al-Ḥasan ibn Ishāq ibn Bulbul al-Naysabūrī,\(^4\) Jumūḥah bint Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Maḥmiyyah from Nishapur (who also taught hadith in Baghdad),\(^5\) and Umm ʿAbdillāh Zaynab bint ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭijliyyah, who taught hadith in Jurjan in 347.\(^6\)

Toward the end of the fourth century we find the first records of people bringing young children, even infants, to the hadith classes. Those who heard hadith before they were five were expected to report their hearing by using the formula ‘we attended the hearing’ rather than ‘we heard’. However, some scholars did not approve even this. Al-Dhahabī says in his account of Abū ʿl-Qāsim ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Ḥāfīẓ Abī Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Khallāl (385–470), brought by his father to hear hadith from Abū Ḥafs al-Kattānī: ‘His hearing from al-Kattānī was when he was in his fifth year. From this time [...] the system went upside down. Rather, ijāzah is better in strength than [this] attendance, for whoever heard hadith just attending [a class] without understanding, he did not receive anything. The one who has got ijāzah has got something. Yes if, along with the attendance, there is a permission from the shaykh, that is better.’\(^7\)

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\(^1\)Ibid., 441. \(^2\)AL-DHAHABI, Taʾrīkh al-islām (sub anno 381–400), 195. \(^3\)AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDI, Taʾrīkh Baghdad, xiv. 443. \(^4\)See ‘Hasan bin Ishāq ibn Bulbul’ in IBN AL-ʿADIM, Bughyat al-ṭalab, 2295–98. \(^5\)AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDI, Taʾrīkh Baghdad, xiv. 444. \(^6\)AL-SAHMĪ, Taʾrīkh Jurjān, 506. \(^7\)See AL-DHAHABĪ, Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ, xviii. 369.
In the fifth century, women from non-Arab countries excelled the Arabs in the field of teaching and narrating hadith. For example, in Nishapur Fāṭimah bint Abī ʿAlī al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī al-Daqqāq (d. 480) taught major books of hadiths including the Musnad of Abū ʿAwāmah.\(^1\) Al-Samānī says: 'She was the pride of the women of her time, no one similar to her has been seen in her good character; she was a scholar of the Book of God and virtuous.'\(^2\) In Isfahan, there was ʿĀʾishah bint Ḥasan ibn Ibrāhīm al-Warkāniyyah al-ʿAšbahāniyyah (d. 460). She taught hadith regularly. Ibn al-Samānī says: 'I asked Ḥāfiz Ismāʿīl about her. He said: She is a righteous woman scholar; she gives sermons to the women; she wrote down Amāli of Ibn Mandah from him. She is the first person from whom I got hadith. My father sent me to study with her. And she was an ascetic.'\(^3\) In Herat, there was Bībā bint ʿAbd al-Ṣamad al-Ḥarthāniyyah (d. 477). Al-Samānī says: 'She was a righteous and pure woman' and 'The people who learnt hadith from her cannot be counted.'\(^4\) In Marw there was Karīmah bint ʿAbbād ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥāṭīm al-Marwazīyyah (d. 465) who taught Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī many times.\(^5\) About her al-Samānī wondered if anyone had seen her like among women.\(^6\)

THE THIRD PERIOD: 6th–9th c. AH

In this period the Islamic world suffered two catastrophes the like of which it had never experienced before and has not experienced since then until our own time: the destruction of Jerusalem and parts of Palestine by Crusaders, and the Mongols' destruction of major parts of the eastern Muslim world, including Baghdad and the ʿAbbāsid caliphate.

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\(^1\) Ibn Nuqṭah, al-Taqyīd, 497.  
\(^2\) Al-Dhahabī, Taʾrīkh al-islām (sub anno 471–480), 296.  
\(^3\) See Al-Dhahabī, Siyar aṭ-ṭābiʿīn al-nubalā, xviii. 302.  
\(^4\) Ibid., 404.  
\(^5\) Ibid., 233.  
\(^6\) Ibid., 234.
Yet, in spite of the destruction suffered during it, this period is characterized by a revival of hadith sciences, after a long period when fiqh had been more dominant. This revival is also reflected in the women's role in study and teaching of hadith. Indeed, except for the time of the women Companions, this period is the best for the women's advancement in, and major contribution to, hadith. The comment by al-Dhahabi quoted earlier refers to this time: in his biographical account of Imām Ḥāfiz Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Muḥāmmed ibn al-Najjār (578–643), he writes: 'Ibn al-Sāʿāti says: Among his teachers were three thousand men and four hundred women.'

How could so great a disaster as the loss of Jerusalem and major defeats in Central Asia and Mesopotamia coincide with the rise of interest in hadith? The answer is that great catastrophes can shake people up, individually and collectively, enable them to re-think their commitments, to either save or forever lose their way of life. The terrible events the Muslims had to endure led them to return to their tradition and strive to rescue their religion and reform their society. For Muslims, the only reform that is sound Islamically is the one that strives to guide people by the Sunnah of God's Messenger, ʿalla ʿlāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam. This explanation is supported by the fact that the revival began with the scholars of Jerusalem and the people of Syria – they were the ones most directly affected by the political and military disaster of the Crusades. Ibn Asākir al-Dimashqī and the family of Ibn Qudāmah, who left Jerusalem as the Crusaders occupied it, settled in Damascus. Here they revived the hadith sciences; then, others of the same mind later joined them from elsewhere in Syria. Their women also participated in this great effort to consolidate and revive 'the knowledge'.

When the renewed quest for the knowledge first began, the major centres of hadith were not in Damascus or Cairo. Rather, people in quest of the knowledge had to travel to Baghdad or, further east, to Isfahan. In Baghdad there were a large number

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1Ibid., xxiii. 133.
of female traditionists to whom the people travelled. The most important among them was Shuhdah bint al-Ibrī (d. 574) and Tajanni bint ʿAbdillāh al-Wahbāniyyah (d. 575). All the major traditionists of the time studied with them. In Isfahan the most important shaykhah at this time was Fāṭimah bint ʿAbdillāh al-Jūzdāniyyah (d. 524), considered one of the most outstanding figures in the whole history of hadith. It is her student Fāṭimah bint Saʿd al-Khayr (d. 600) who diffused hadith in Damascus and then in Cairo. By the end of this century, hadith sciences had strengthened greatly in Damascus so that it was becoming established as a major centre. Among the women teachers of hadith of this period was ʿAminah bint Muhammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Ṭāhir ibn al-Rār al-Dimashqīyyah (d. 595). She studied hadith with her grandfather, the qādi Abū l-Mufaḍḍal Yahyā ibn ʿAlī al-Qurasḥī and Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn Ḥamzah. Her father obtained for her a copy of Sunan of Abū Dāwūd, and she read part of it with ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn Ḥamzah.1 Qādi Muḥyī l-Dīn Abū l-Maʿālī ibn al-Zakī, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qūṣī and others studied with her. She also endowed a ribāṭ in Damascus.2

That Ibn al-Najjār studied hadith with four hundred women teachers during this period is not the only record we have of their activity. Ḥāfiz Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571) received hadith from more than 80 women. His colleague and a famous traditionist Abū Saʿd al-Samʿānī (d. 562) has provided accounts of 69 of his shaykhas. Abū Ṭāhir al-Silāfī (d. 576) studied with a score of women teachers. Even Ibn al-Jawzī, a famous scholar and great preacher who never travelled, has narrated from three women.

The seventh century began with the cataclysm of the Mongol devastation. Chinggiz Khan began his campaign against the Khwarizmshah in 616. His hordes destroyed Bukhara, Samarqand, Hamadan, Zinjan, Qazwin, Marv, and Nishapur. Under his grandson Hulagu they entered Baghdad and laid waste to the city, all its treasures, including its libraries, and massacred its

1 Ibn ʿAsākir, Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq, Tarājim al-nisāʿ, 49. 2 Al-Dhahabī, Taʾrīkh al-Īslām (sub anno 591–600), 180.
people. Then they headed to Aleppo and did the same. They occupied Damascus in Jumādā al-Ūlā 658. On their march to Egypt they suffered their first major defeat in ‘Ayn Jālūt in Ramaḍān 658. Then the Mamlūk sūltān Baybars turned the tide of war decisively in the Muslims’ favour and forced the Mongols to flee Syria, although they remained on its borders and the danger of incursions and looting raids persisted.

The consequences of the Mongols’ invasion were severe. The centres of scholarship of Samarqand, Bukhara, Nishapur and Baghdad were utterly devastated, and they never regained their importance as centres of ḥadith study and teaching. It is a mercy that just before that disaster, Syria and Egypt had become established as major focal points for Islamic scholarship.

The Mamlūk rule over Egypt and Syria endured from 648 to 923. During this period scholarly life became more dynamic, and many grand colleges and mosques were built in the Mamlūk domains. The revival of ḥadith had begun in Syria, before it took hold in Egypt, when (as I noted earlier) the family, friends and followers of Shaykh ʿAlāʾ ibn Muḥammad ibn Qudāmah left Palestine in 551 and settled in Qāṣīyūn in Damascus. Here Shaykh Abū Umar Muḥammad ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī built al-Madrasah al-Ṣumārīyyah in 555. Some years later, in 599, Jāmīʿ al-Ḥanābilah was built there. Both were very important centres for ḥadith science. The first centre dedicated expressly for the study of ḥadith was Dār al-Ḥadith al-Nūriyyah in Damascus in 559 founded by the sūltān Nūr al-Dīn al-Shāhīd. Al-Malik al-Kāmil al-Ayyūbī built Dār al-Ḥadith al-Kāmilīyyah in 622 in Cairo and his brother al-Malik al-Ashraf built two more centres for ḥadith study in Damascus. These institutions proved to be vital resources for the community in Syria and Egypt, in the seventh century and subsequently. They always included women teachers and women students, most of whose names are preserved in the records of samaʿāt attached to the ḥadith books.

In my biographical dictionary of the muḥaddithāt, five volumes are devoted to the women of the seventh century, and six volumes each for the eighth and ninth centuries. As well as
Syria and Egypt, hadīth scholarship among women also grew in the cities of the Haramayn. Perhaps some 90% of the entries in the dictionary for the seventh to ninth centuries are for the women of Syria, Egypt, and the Haramayn.

**THE FOURTH PERIOD: 900–1500 AH**

This period is one of decline, so that a single volume of the biographical dictionary suffices for each century. The decline is not confined to women, nor only to the study of hadīth. Rather, it is a general phenomenon affecting men as well as women, and all branches of the Islamic sciences.

Among the most prominent women teachers of hadīth in this period were: Umm al-Khayr Amat al-Khašiq al-Dimashqīyyah (d. 902). Al-Suyūṭī says about her: ‘By her death people fell one rank in hadīth; for she was the last person who narrated from ʻĀʾishah bint ʻAbd al-Haḍī, who was the last student of al-Hajjār.’¹ Another important figure is ʻĀʾishah bint Muḥammad ibn Abī Umar al-Ḥanbaliyyah (d. 906). Ibn Ṭūlūn says about her: ‘She studied hadīth with a group of people including Abū Bakr ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn, with whom she studied al-Majlis al-Awwal of his ʻAmālī, which contains al-Musalsal bi-l-awwalīyyah and a commentary on it. Ibn Ṭūlūn studied with her.’² Another famous figure is Shaykhah of Zabīd, ʻAšmāʿ bint Kamāl al-Dīn Mūsā al-Ḍajāʿī (d. 904). Al-ʻAydrūsī says about her: ‘She was righteous; a devout; reciter of the Qurʾān; she used to read tafsīr and books of hadīth, and taught women, gave sermons to them, and taught them self-discipline. Her words had an impact on the heart. Sometimes she wrote letters of commendation to the sultan, qāḍī and amīr; her recommendations were accepted and not rejected.’³

Map 5. Islamic world. Spread of *mājaddīthāt* 10th–14th c.
Another figure was Zaynab bint Muhammad al-Ghazzī (d. 980). Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī says: ‘She read with her father, and studied a lot with her brother (my father). She read with him Tanqīḥ al-Lubāb, and part of al-Minhāj. She copied for him many books in her own hand.’ He goes on to praise her knowledge and uniqueness.¹

Among the muḥaddīthât of the eleventh century are: the great Makkan scholar, holder of high isnād, Zayn al-Sharaf bint al-Imām ‘Abd al-Qādīr ibn Muhammad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Mukarram al-Ṭabarī (d. 1083). Her students included the musnadīs of her time, Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (who revived ḥadīth in the Hijaz in this period), Ḥāfiz of Hijaz ‘Abdullāh ibn Sālim al-Bāṣrī.² Another important figure was her sister Mubārakah (d. 1075). She taught major ḥadīth works such as Ṣāḥīḥ al-Bukhrā and al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ of al-Suyūṭī.³ Her student Ḥasan al-‘Ujaymī has recorded a long list of the ḥadīth works that he studied with her.⁴

Another important figure is the long-lived Shaykhah of Madīnah, holder of high isnād and jurist, Fāṭimah bint Shukrullāh ibn Asadullāh al-Kūrānīyyah.⁵ Her students included Abū Iṣḥāq al-Sibā‘ī (d. 1155) who studied with her a lot of books of ḥadīth in 1081 in her house in Madīnah.⁶

Among the women of the twelfth century is the famous muḥaddīthah and jurist of Makkah Quraysh al-Ṭabarīyyah (d. 1107). Fālīḥ al-Zāhirī has counted her among the seven famous traditionists of the Hijaz responsible for the revival of ḥadīth in later centuries. Quraysh al-Ṭabarīyyah was perhaps the most important female figure in the history of ḥadīth from the tenth century to our time. She had the highest isnād in her generation and deserves a whole research to be done on her.

In the thirteenth century the great mubaddithah of Delhi, from a family of hadith scholars, Amat al-Ghafur bint Ishaq al-Dihlawi studied with her father, who was the best scholar of hadith at that time. She acquired high authority in both hadith and fiqh. When her husband, himself a great scholar, faced any difficulty in hadith or fiqh he consulted her and benefited from her.1 Other important figures were Rahmah bint al-Jinān al-Miknāsiyyah, who learnt many hadiths by heart from the Six Books,2 and Fāṭimah bint Ḥamad al-Fudaylī (d. 1247). This Fāṭimah was an expert of tafsīr, hadith, fiqh and usūl. She had studied many books of hadith and received many Musalsalāt. Many famous scholars of Makkah studied with her and praised her piety and righteousness, devotion and asceticism, and for her writing of many books in beautiful calligraphy.3

In the fourteenth century the most important expert of hadith was Amatullāh bint al-Imām ‘Abd al-Ghāni al-Dihlawiyah (d. 1357) in Madinah. She studied with her father, many times over, all the Six Books, as well as many ajāzāʔ and ihabats.4 She also received from him all the Musalsalāt. Her father took a lot of interest in her education and obtained high ijāzahs for her from the leading traditionists of that time.5 At her home in Madinah, she taught Qudurī as well as books of hadith.6 Her students included the major scholars of the time, like ‘Umar al-Mahrasī (d. 1368), Āḥmad al-Ghumārī and Muḥammad Yaṣīn al-Fāḍānī (d. 1410).

1 See AL-HASANĪ, Nuzhat al-khawātir, vii. 93. 2KAHHĀLAH, Ālām al-nisāʔ, i. 445. 3See IBN AL-HUMAYD, al-Suhb al-wāḥilah, iii. 1227. 4Notebooks containing details of one’s narrations or teachers. 5AL-KATTĀNĪ, Fihrist al-fāburīs, ii. 1115. 6Muḥammad ʿAshīq Ilāhī AL-BARNAI, al-Anaqqid al-ghāliyyah min al-asānīd al-ʿaliyya, 176.
OVERVIEW BY REGION

Ḥijāz

The centres of ḥadith scholarship in the Ḥijāz were the cities of the Ḥaramayn, Makkah and Madinah. Madinah was the first centre for ḥadith scholarship in the world for the good reason that the Companions were based there. Students travelled to Madinah from Iraq and Syria in order to learn the Sunnah from the Companions, men and women. Madinah remained an active locus of ḥadith study until the end of the second century. After that only a small number of muḥaddithūn were based there until the ninth century, when the revival of ḥadith scholarship started in Madinah and continued until the fourteenth century. The traditionists, including women, who visited Madinah as part of their ḥajj or ‘umrah journeys, also sometimes taught ḥadith there. The most important muḥaddithah from among the outsiders was Fāṭimah al-Bataiyyah, who came there from Syria. She taught in the mosque of the Prophet, salla l-lāhū ʿalayhi wa sallam, and great scholars studied with her. Among the last major traditionists in Madinah were the just mentioned Amatul-lāh bint ʿAbd al-Ghānī al-Dihlawiyyah (d. 1357) and Fāṭimah Shams Jahān al-Jarkasiyyah, the wife of Shaykh al-Islām ʿĀrif al-Turkī. Among those who studied with her were scholars such as Ḥāfiz ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm al-Kattani (d. 1382) and Umar Ḥamdān al-Māhrūsī (d. 1368).¹

Because of ḥajj, Makkah always had some ḥadith teachers. In the first centuries, ḥadith was a little weak there among the women. Perhaps the most famous muḥaddithah to teach there was Karīmah al-Marwaziyyah in the fifth century. She taught the whole Sahih al-Bukhari there many times. Hādith scholarship became stronger in Makkah in the eighth century and women traditionists continued to turn up there until the fourteenth century. Perhaps the last woman traditionist in Makkah was the

¹AL-KATTANI, Fihris al-fābris, ii. 724.
pious and righteous shaykhah, Āminah bint Ḥabīb Muḥammad ibn Ḥusayn al-Ḥibashī (d. 1342). She studied ḥadīth with her father, the mufti of Makkah, and her husband Imām ‘Alawi ibn ʿAlīmad al-Saqqāf.¹

Iraq

Basrah evolved in the first century as the second centre after Madinah for ḥadīth scholarship among women. It was strengthened there by the stay of ʿĀʾishah, as I mentioned earlier. The ḥadīths narrated from that time are recorded in all the major compilations. It was further enhanced by the migration there of the famous Companion and great jurist, Umm ʿAtiyah al-Ansāriyyah. A number of the Companions and important Successors in Basrah received the knowledge from her.² Baqī ibn Makhlad has recorded forty of her ḥadīths in his Musnad.³

Among the famous mughaddithat of the generation of the Successors were Ḥafṣah bint Sirin, who diffused much knowledge in Basrah. There also was Muʿādhah al-ʿAdawiyyah, wife of Ṣilah ibn Ashyam. Ḥadīth activity remained strong among the women of Basrah until the end of the second century. After that I did not find any record in the sources of an important mughaddithah based there.

For the women, the most important centre of ḥadīth after Basrah has been Kufah. Among the traditionist Companions who settled there are: Zaynab bint Abī Muḥāwiyyah al-Thaqafiyyah the wife of ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd, Salāmah bint Ḥurr al-Fuzāriyyah,⁴ Jamrah bint ʿAbdillāh al-Yarbūṣīyyah al-Tamimiyyah,⁵ Fāṭimah bint al-Yamān,⁶ Qutaylah bint Sayf al-Anṣāriyyah,⁷ Māriyah,⁸ the servant of the Prophet, Umm Yāsir al-Anṣāriyyah,⁹

iyah,\textsuperscript{1} and Jasrah bint Dajajah al-Kufiyyah, whose being a Companion is disputed.\textsuperscript{2} She narrated hadith from Abū Dharr, ‘Ali, ʿAishah and Umm Salamah; al-Ḥijjī has confirmed her reliability.\textsuperscript{3} The most important Companion who travelled and diffused knowledge there was Fāṭimah bint Qays.\textsuperscript{4} Among the Successors in Kufah the most important woman narrator was Qamīr bint ʿAmr al-Kufiyyah, wife of the famous scholar Masrūq ibn al-Ajda.\textsuperscript{5} Hādith scholarship remained active among the women of Kufah until the end of the second century.

From the beginning of the third century, Baghdad emerged as the main centre of women’s hadith scholarship. The most important figure there was Umm ʿUmar bint Abī l-Ghuṣn Ḥassān ibn Zayd al-Ṭhaqafiyah, who narrated from her father, and from her husband Saʿīd ibn Yahyā ibn Qays. Abū Ibrāhīm al-Tarjumānī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Muḥammad ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ al-Jarjarāʾī, Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Ḥarawi and ʿAlī ibn Muslim al-Ṭusi are among those who narrated from her.\textsuperscript{6} Also figures of significance in this century were the women of the house of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, the sisters of Bishr al-Ḥāfi and others. For hadith scholarship among women the greatest centre remained Baghdad until the end of the sixth century. The last of the major women scholars to teach hadith there extensively were Shuhdah al-Kātibah (d. 574) and Tajanni al-Wahbāniyyah (d. 575). After the Mongols’ devastation of Baghdad in the seventh century, its shining history as a centre of hadith scholarship, whether for men or for women, ended and has never been recovered.

\textit{al-Shām (Greater Syria)}

Hādith scholarship was established in Syria also in the first century. At that time the excellent muḥaddithah and jurist Umm al-Darda\textsuperscript{2} taught hadith and ḥāfa in her house and also in the mosques of Damascus and Jerusalem. Fāṭimah bint ʿAbd al-
Malik ibn Marwân, wife of the righteous caliph ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzîz, was also an active ḥadîth narrator in Damascus at the end of the first century, as affirmed by the famous historian, Abû Zûrîḥah al-Dimashqî. After the generation of the Successors, ḥadîth scholarship among women in Syria lessened; the sources do not record any major Syrian muhaddîthah until the end of the fifth century. The sixth witnessed a revival on a scale without parallel anywhere in the Islamic world in any period of its history. In the seventh, Syria became the most important centre of ḥadîth scholarship for both men and women. That continued throughout the eighth and ninth centuries. After the tenth it declined, as elsewhere in the Islamic world.

The quality and scale of interest of Syrian traditionists in major compilations of ḥadîth and small ajzâ', whether learning and hearing them or teaching and transmitting them is quite extraordinary. Here in this period we find women learning ḥadîth and teaching it in al-Madrasah al-ʿUmariyyah and other colleges, in the grand Umayyad mosque, the Jâmiʿ al-Muẓaffarî and other mosques; in ribâts, in gardens and private houses. Sometimes the classes of these women were attended by hundreds of both men and women.

Some of these Syrian women teachers are distinguished by having the highest isnâd. The one who narrated the whole Sahîh al-Bukhârî with the highest isnâd among men or women was ʿAishah bint ibn ʿAbd al-Hâdî (d. 816) from Damascus, the last student of al-Hajjâr in the world. Before her, by a century, was Sitt al-Wuzârâ' al-Tanûkhiyyah (d. 716), the last student of Jâlûsîn ibn al-Mubârak al-Zabîlî and Abu ʿl-Munajjâ Ibn al-Lattî among all the women of the world. And there was Zaynab bint al-Kamâl (d. 740) who outdid men and women alike in the sheer abundance of her teaching of both major books and small ajzâ'.

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1 Ibn ʿAsâkir, Taʾrîkh madinat Dimashq, Tarâjim al-nisâ', 291.
Egypt

hadith scholarship first came to Egypt also in the first century. Perhaps the best woman scholar to come to Egypt was the righteous and noble Nafisah bint Amir al-Mu'minin al-Hasan ibn Zayd ibn al-Hasan ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib al-Alawiyah al-Hasaniyyah (d. 208). Ibn Kathir says: 'She was a wealthy lady, did a lot of favours to the people, especially those paralysed, those with severe illness, and to all other ill people. She was a devout, ascetic, and of abundant virtue. When Imam al-Shafi'i arrived in Egypt, she did good to him, and sometimes Shafi'i led her in prayers in Ramaḍān.'

Al-Ya'fi says: 'It is narrated that when Imam Shafi'i came to Egypt, he called upon her and heard hadith from her, and when he died, his funeral was carried to her and she prayed over him in her house.'

Ibn al-'Imad says: 'Her connections: al-Shafi'i receiving hadith from her and being carried to her house after [his] death are the greatest [signs] of her merits. This could not have been without her popularity, fame, honour and respect among the people.'

In Egypt in the fourth century there was the mother of Hasan ibn 'Ali al-Sadafi, Umm Habib Safwah (d. 379). Al-Dhahabí says: 'She had a lot of hadith. Her father was a hadith, his son and her sisters also. She taught hadith.'

But hadith science was really activated among the women of Egypt when Fatimah bint Sa'd al-Khayr (d. 600) emigrated there. Al-Dhahabí says in his account of her: 'She married Ibn Najâ al-Wâfiz who brought her to Damascus, then settled with her in Egypt. The Egyptians learnt much from her.' After Fatimah, there was Taqiyyah bint Abi l-Hasan 'Ali ibn 'Abdillâh al-Qurashi, (d. 606) who learned hadith from her father and got ijazah from a group of scholars including Abû l-Hajjâj Yûsuf ibn 'Abdillâh ibn al-Tufayl, al-Allâmâh Abû 'Abdillâh Muham-

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1 IBN KATHIR, al-Bidâyah wa al-nihâyah, sub anno 208. 2 AL-YAIFI, Mir'at al-jinân, ii. 43. 3 IBN AL-'IMAD, Shadharat al-Dhabab, ii. 21. 4 IBN HAJAR, al-Isâbah fi tamyiz al-sahabab, iv. 267. 5 AL-DHABAHI, Ta'rikh al-Islâm (sub anno 591–600), 469.

Hâfîz Abû Zur'ah al-InRange studied with her all the above-listed books, which she taught many times.

In the ninth century, there were many women teachers of Hâfîz Ibn Hajar. Hâfîz al-Sakhawî and Hâfîz al-Suyûrî had women teachers, among them Sârah bint Taqî al-Dîn al-Subkî (d. 805), who taught many, including Ibn Hajar. Among other muhaddithat there was Maryam bint Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Adhrâ'î (d. 805), the last student of al-Wânî and al-Dabûsî; Ibn Hajar studied a great number of books with her. Sârah bint 'Umar ibn Jamâ'î al-Kinâni (d. 855) narrated a lot of ḥadîth and great experts studied extensively with her. Al-Sakhawî studied with her so many books and ḥadîths that he could not enumerate them all; he says: ‘She was righteous, poor; that is why we helped her. She had intelligence, and accuracy in teaching ḥadîth, and patience for long sessions. With her death, people of Egypt fell one degree.’

Juwayriyah bint al-Hâfîz 'Abd al-Râhîm al-InRange (d. 863) studied ḥadîth with her father; heard the ḥadîth al-Musalsal bi-tawwaliyyah, Juz' al-Ghadâ'irî, some parts of Amâli of Ibn al-Husayn, part of 'Ushariyyât of her father with Nûr al-Dîn al-Haythami, and some parts of Mu'jam al-Dabûsî with Taqî al-Dîn ibn Jamâ'ah. She got ijâzahs from a very large number of people.

Experts of ḥadîth including al-Sakhawî studied with her.

Spain and Morocco

Ḥadîth became popular in this part of the world in the second century, especially after the arrival of students of Imâm Mâlik, and then Baqî ibn Makhlad. Here too there were women who studied Sahîh al-Bukhârî with Abû Dharr. Among the most well-known traditionists of Spain was Umm al-Ḥassân bint Abî Liwâ'

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1 Ibn al-InRange, al-Dhayl 'alâ l-Ibar, ii. 513. 2 Ibn Hajar, al-Durar al-kâminah, i. 544. 3 Ibn Hajar, Inbâ' al-ghumr, v. 102; Al-Sakhawî, al-Dawâ' al-lâmi', xii. 52. 4 Ibn Hajar, al-Durar al-kâminah, iv. 88. 5 Al-Sakhawî, al-Dawâ' al-lâmi', xii. 52. 6 Al-Najm ibn Fâhîd, Mu'jâm al-shuyukh, 401–02. 7 Al-Sakhawî, al-Dawâ' al-lâmi', xii. 18.
Sulaymān ibn Aṣbagh al-Miknāsī from Córdoba, who narrated ḥadīth from Baqi ibn Makhlad, studied with him, accompanied him, and herself read to him *K. al-Duhūr*.

Another early narrator was Aʾšā bint Asad ibn al-Furāt, who studied with her father, a student of Abū Ḥanīfah and Mālik ibn Anas. She was well known for the narration of ḥadīth and *fiqh* according to the *madhhab* of Abū Ḥanīfah. Her upbringing was exemplary: in the company of her father, she attended the assemblies of knowledge and participated in the questions and discussion. Another famous *muhaddithah* was Khadijah bint al-Imām Saḥnūn. She first received knowledge from her father and then went on to teach and give fatwas. Her father consulted her in important matters: when the post of judge was offered to him, he accepted it only after consulting her.

Later on, after Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (d. 462), *fiqh* became more dominant in Spain and North African countries. Later on, Ḥāfiz Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar al-Kattānī and ʿAbd al-Ḥāyy al-Kattānī revived the science of ḥadīth there and then many women became eminent in that field.

**The region of Khurasan and Transoxania**

The science of ḥadīth first appeared in Khurasan and Transoxania in the second century, and became very strong in the third, the period of the authors of the Six Books and many others. The sources record the involvement of women of this region in ḥadīth scholarship from the end of the third century, then its growth through the fourth and fifth centuries until, in the field of ḥadīth studies, the women of this region leave the women of the rest of the Islamic world far behind. In the fifth century there were women of the calibre of Karīmah al-Marwaziyyah, famous teacher of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, and Bibā bint ʿAbd al-Ṣamad al-Harwiyyah. In the sixth, Fātimah al-Jūzdāniyyah was distinguished for her narration of *al-Muʿjam al-ṣaghīr* and *al-Muʿjam al-

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kabir of al-Ṭabarānī. Scholars travelled from every part of the Islamic world in order to study hadith with her.

The fifth and sixth centuries are the peak of hadith activity among the women of this region. When the Mongols destroyed its major cities, the hadith scholarship in them was destroyed too, and has not yet returned to this region.

India

Hadith scholarship entered Sind and the western part of India in the second century, but failed to penetrate inside mainland India until very late. Some efforts in the field were made in India in the ninth–tenth century when hadith scholarship was already experiencing decline in most parts of the Islamic world. In this period in India the activity of scholars of hadith was confined to reading and writing commentaries on some books until Ahmad ibn ʿAbd al-Rahim al-Dihlawi, better known as Shāh Waliullāh (d. 1176), breathed new spirit into the discipline as it was practised in India. Largely because of his efforts India became a centre for the revival of hadith scholarship.

However, only a small number of women excelled in this field in India, most of them in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Important among them were women of the family of Shāh Waliullāh and those of the family of Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1034). Among others, there were: Shams al-Nisā bint Amir Hasan al-Sahsawānī (d. 1308) and Ṣāliḥah bint Ināyat Rasūl al-Chirayākotī (d. 1318), both of whom were taught major books of hadith.1

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1See AL-ḤASANI, Nuzhat al-khawāṭir, viii. 185. 2Ibid., 195.
In this last chapter I come to what the whole effort of hadith activity is for. Much of what the muhaddithat were concerned with was the transmission of accurate texts through verified chains of narration. However, phrases like ‘they taught hadith’ or ‘they narrated hadith’ probably do not convey to a modern readership the whole of what they were engaged in, or its purpose. The bare fact is that – assuming motivation for the effort – even a non-Muslim could in theory be relied on to hold and transmit a bundle of texts accurately. Within functioning Islamic society, authority does not derive from that sort of academic integrity and competence alone. Rather, it derives from those qualities combined with piety and virtue in manners and conduct. The test and expression of the relevant qualities combined are fiqh and ‘amal.

Fiqh means understanding the legal import of the texts: how they inform rules and norms to guide the transactions that believers have with each other and their transactions (the kind of relationship they build) with God. By ‘amal (literally ‘doing’, ‘practice’) is meant implementation of what the texts preach. Strength in fiqh is not considered only in relation to expertise about individual texts or even individual chapters of fiqh, but to their connectedness and proportions, their harmony altogether. Weakness in this regard – we could call it narrowness in fiqh – can lead to distortions in ‘amal. So, for example, it may be that an individual, isolated from the collective knowledge of the community of scholars, learns the detail of obligations related to prayer and presence in the mosque. However, if he does not also know what is allowed or forbidden regarding transactions in the marketplace, and then rules that women must be dressed
and behave in such-and-such a way, without allowance for the
difference in conditions between doing the prayer and doing
business, between mosque and marketplace, he is likely to issue
rulings that constrain women's doing business well, making it
uncomfortable, eventually impossible, for them. For 'doing
business' we might substitute 'seeking knowledge' or another
activity that we know to be permitted or commended by the
religion, and similar outcomes result. A rich, broad *fiqh* enables
a rich, broad *'amal* so that individual and society live the largest
area of their lives within the rule of their *'Islām*, their submission
to God. The inverse is to inhabit a narrow core of behaviour
ruled by Islam, while all the rest of life, piece by piece, is yielded
up to (or seized by) the rule of non-Islam. This core can then
harden into a token or symbol of identity, encouraging narrow
sectarianism and destroying the plural solidarity of the *ummah*.

*Fiqh* and *'amal* are the twin pillars on which is founded the
community's recognition of the greater authority, among the
Companions, of 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd, Ubayy ibn Ka'b, Muḥādh
ibn Jabal, Zayd ibn Thābit, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, 'Abdullāh ibn
'Abbās, and others. Similarly, the community did not bow to
the authority, after them, of Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab, 'Alqamaḥ,
al-Aswad, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Muḥammad ibn Sirīn, Ibrāhīm al-
Nakhaʿī, 'Atāʾ ibn Abī Rabāḥ, 'Āmir al-Sha'bī, Ḥammād ibn Abī
Sulaymān, Abū Ḥanīfah, al-Awzāʾī, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Mālik, al-
Qāḍī Abū Yūṣuf, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī, al-
Shāfiʿī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and others, except because of their
excellence in combining scholarship with *fiqh* and *'amal*. Did
such authority accrue only to men and did women have no part
in it? The answer is No; and I have provided in the foregoing
chapters several examples of women whose authority was
respected by their male peers in the scholarly community. In
this chapter, because the precedent of the Companions and
their Successors is so decisive for Muslims, I have concentrated
mainly on examples from that period.
THE FIQH OF THE WOMEN SCHOLARS

A more precise definition of fiqh is 'understanding the divine command by derivation from the Book of God and the Sunnah of His Messenger, salla l-lâhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam'. We must begin therefore with the women scholars' command of these primary sources of the din.

Understanding the Qur'ân

The best recitation of the Qur'ân is the kind that enables its meaning to enter the heart. Ibn Abî Mulaykah has narrated from Umm Salamah that she said: 'The Messenger of God – salla l-lâhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – recited the Qur'ân, pausing at the end of every verse. He would recite al-ḥamdu li-l-lâhi rabbi l-‘âla-min, then he would pause and then he would recite ar-rahmâni r-raḥîm, then he would pause and then he would recite, mālikî yawmî d-dîn.' All the major jurists in the history of Islam began their education by memorizing the Qur'ân, learning its different recitations, and gaining expertise in its interpretation. Women have also built this strong relationship with the Book, the fruit of which is that it is fully internalized, and they become fluent in it, speaking from it like a mother tongue.

In the later period, there was Fâtimah bint Abî ‘Alî al-Daqqâq al-Naysâbūriyyah (d. 480). Abû Sa‘d al-Sam‘arî said about her: 'She was the pride of the women of her time, no parallel of her has been seen for her character. She was a scholar of the Book of God and virtuous.' Al-Ṣayrafînî said: 'She knew the Book of God by heart, recited it day and night and knew its meaning.' Sayyidah bint ‘Abd al-Ghâni al-Ghîrânîyyah (d. 647),

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brought up in Murcia (Spain), excelled in Qur'anic studies. In
the ninth century Bayram bint Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Dayrūṭiyyah mastered the seven recitations under the tuition of al-Shams ibn al-Ṣā'īgh, studying in the company of his daughter Fāṭimah. Then this Fāṭimah moved, along with her father, to Jerusalem, and practised reading of the Qurʾān with teachers there. Fāṭimah bint Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Yūṣuf al-Dayrūṭī (9th c.), also excelled in the seven recitations and memorized al-Shāṭibiyah. She studied with several teachers before going on to teach the different recitations to both men and women.

I turn now to examples of the women's understanding of the Qurʾān. Īrwaḥ asked ʿĀʾishah about God's saying (in the verses beginning with al-Nisā', 4. 3) And if you fear that you will not deal fairly with the orphan girls [...] ʿĀʾishah said: O nephew: An orphan girl would be under the care of a guardian with whom she shared property. Her guardian, attracted by her wealth and beauty, would intend to marry her without giving her a just dowry [i.e. the same dowry as any other person might give her]. So such guardians were forbidden to do that unless they did justice to their female wards and gave them the highest dowry their peers might get. They were commanded [by God] to marry women of their choice other than those orphan girls. [...] The people asked God's Messenger's for instructions after the revelation of this divine verse, whereupon God revealed [4. 127]: They consult you concerning women [...] [...] And the statement of God, And yet whom you desire to marry, as any of you refrains from marrying an orphan girl [under his guardianship] when she is lacking in property and beauty. [...] So they were forbidden to marry those orphan girls whose wealth and beauty they had a desire for unless with justice, and that was because they would refrain from marrying them if they were lacking in property and beauty.

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The tafsīr of other women is also recorded or attested in the sources. For example, al-Tirmidhī has recorded the tafsīr of ʿUmm Salamah.2 Al-Subkī has reported about the mother of al-Shāfīʿī, whom he describes as devout, God-wary and among the most intelligent of people, that she and the mother of Bishr al-Mirrīṣī were summoned to witness in a case before the judge in Makkah. The judge wanted to separate them in order to cross-examine them separately. The mother of al-Shāfīʿī said to him: ‘You have no authority to do that as God says in the Qur’ān if one of the two errs [in what she remembers], then one of the two may remind (tadhakkira) the other [al-Baqarah, 2. 282].’ The judge did not separate the two witnesses after that intervention although, technically, according to the doctrine of al-Shāfīʿī, it is allowable when necessary. Al-Subkī comments:

This is good derivation, strong meaning, and fine argument. Though the known thing in the madhhab of her son is an absolute opinion (ijtāla ʾl-qaww) that, if the judge has suspicions about the witnesses, it is better for him to separate them [in order to question and probe their testimony for collusion etc.] Her word is clear in exempting the women on the basis of the proof that she mentioned and there is no harm in that.3

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2 Al-Tirmidhī, Jamīʿ, Tafsīr al-Qurʾān, bāb min sūrat al-Baqarah.
Understanding the hadith

Women are also known for their understanding of the import of hadiths and competence in basing argument on them. Some examples of that have come earlier. Here, I mention the case of the maidservant Barirah. She had been a slave of Banū Hilāl, till Ā'ishah emancipated her. The case contains many fine legal points; the hadith could not have become, as it did, a text that the jurists depended upon if Barirah and Ā'ishah had not been aware of those fine points and preserved and conveyed them accurately. The whole incident is dispersed by al-Bukhārī in different parts of his Sahih the better expose its relevance in different legal contexts. I summarize here from one occurrence of the Barirah hadith in the Sahih.

Ā'ishah narrated that Barirah came to her for help in drawing up the mukātabah (the emancipation contract whereby slaves were enabled to buy their freedom over a period of time). Ā'ishah was willing to pay the whole sum, but required that Barirah should then come into her care under the Arab system of walā', which enabled an individual or clan to extend their family's protection to someone who had no tribal connections. Barirah's owners refused this condition. They said to her: 'If [Ā'ishah] is seeking reward from God [for freeing a slave] she can do so, but your walā' will be ours.' Ā'ishah reported this to the Prophet who said: 'Buy and emancipate her, as the walā' is for the one who emancipates. Then [on an occasion after that] God's Messenger stood up and said: What about those who stipulate conditions that are not present in God's law? [No matter] who imposes conditions that are not present in God's law, those conditions will be invalid, even if he imposed them a hundred times. God's judgement is the truth and more solidly established [than any man-made custom or law].'

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1 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahih, Mukātab, bāb istiṣ'ānah al-mukātab wa su'āli-bi al-nās.
Women jurists

`Aṣiṣah was, among the Companions, men and women, a principal resource for juristic opinion. 'Atā' ibn Abī Rabāh said: "`Aṣiṣah was the most expert in jurisprudence among all the people."1 Masrūq said: 'I have seen the great jurists among the Companions of the Prophet – salla l-lāhu `alay-hi wa sallam – asking her about the law of inheritance.'2 Urwah said: 'I have never seen anyone more knowledgeable of the fiqh than 'Aṣiṣah.'3

Among the Companions Umm Salamah is also considered to have been a jurist, and her opinions are well recorded in the books of hadith and fiqh. Another Companion well-known for her knowledge and expertise in the sunnahs is al-Rubayyi' bint Mu'awwidh. Ibn Abbās, in spite of his excellent knowledge of the Book of God and juristic aspects of law, consulted her.4 So also did 'Abdullāh ibn Umar, famously on a judgement related to divorce law during the rule of 'Uthmān.5

There is also record of women publicly intervening in court judgements in the expectation of being able to prevent grave miscarriage of justice. Mālik narrates from Yahyā ibn Sa'īd that he said: 'Abū Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn 'Amr ibn Ḥazm [the qāḍī of Madinah] informed me that he was holding a Nabī who had stolen iron rings in prison [and intending] to cut off his hand. Then 'Amrah bint 'Abd al-Rahmān sent to me her client called Umayyah. [...] She came to me while I was among the people and said: Your aunt 'Amrah says: O nephew, are you holding a Nabī [in custody] for a minor thing that has been mentioned to me, and do you mean to cut off his hand? I said: Yes. She said: 'Amrah says to you that there is no cutting off of the hand except for stealing something worth a quarter of a dinar or more than that. [...] Then I released the Nabī.'6 This intervention by 'Amrah happened at the time when the city was

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1 IBN 'ABD AL-BARR, al-Istī'āb, ii. 744; AL-DHAHABĪ, Siyar aṣlām al-nubalā, ii. 185. 2 IBN 'ABD AL-BARR, al-Istī'āb, ii. 744. 3 AL-MIZZI, Tahdhib al-kamāl, xxxv. 234. 4 IBN 'ABD AL-BARR, al-Istī'āb, ii. 731. 5 Ibid. 6 MĀLIK, al-Muwattā, 437–38.
graced by the residence of the much renowned 'Seven Jurists of Madinah'.

It is a measure of how well respected knowledge was that even a well-informed slave could on occasion correct someone of established reputation. Al-Ash'ab, a jurist of the school of Mālik, narrates that he was in Madinah, and he wanted to buy vegetables from a girl, and the people at that time would not sell their vegetables except for bread, for that is what they needed. He told her to wait till evening, then come and he would make the exchange then. She said: 'That is not permissible.' Ash'ab asked why and she explained: 'Because it is selling of food for food [which must be done directly, hand over hand, whereas what you are proposing is] not hand over hand.' When Ash'ab asked about the girl, he discovered that she was a slave in the household of Imām Mālik.

This respect for knowledge whoever had it was not confined to the formative period of Islam. I have given several examples from later centuries of women whose jurisprudence was respected and admired by their male peers. One scholar particularly worth mentioning is Umm Zaynab Fātimah bint ʻAbbās ibn ʻAlī al-Fath al-Baghdādiyyah (d. 714). She learnt fiqh with Shaykh Shams al-Din and other Maqdisī scholars. Al-Dhahabī says: 'I visited her and I liked her character, humility and God-wariness. She knew fiqh well. Ibn Taymiyyah was amazed by her knowledge and intelligence and praised her fulsomely.' Ibn Kathir says: 'I heard Shaykh Taqi al-Din ibn Taymiyyah praising her a lot and lauding her virtue and knowledge. He stated that she knew most of al-Mughni by heart. And [he] used to prepare for her many juristic issues [adequately suited to] her questions and her sharp understanding.'

Women giving fatwas

Giving fatwas is conditional on having the appropriate degree of knowledge, not on gender. Imām Nawawī has stated explicitly that a woman can give fatwas. Ibn Muflih has also affirmed it; so too has the greatest of Ibn Taymiyyah’s disciples, Ibn al-Qayyım. Ibn Ḥazm al-Ẓāhirī says: ‘If a woman attains fiqh in the sciences of the religion it would be incumbent upon us to accept her warning. That actually happened. These are wives of the Prophet, salla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam, and his woman Companions. Religious rulings have been narrated from them and the proof is established by their transmission. There is no difference among our companions [i.e. fellow Zāhirī jurists] in this regard. Among them, other than the wives of the Prophet, salla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam, were: Umm Sulaym, Umm Ḥarām, and Umm ‘Atiyah.’ Ibn Ḥazm counted the Companions known for giving fatwas as 130. Of those, seven are known for giving a lot of fatwas; of those seven, one was ‘Ā’ishah.

Mahmūd ibn Labīd says: ‘‘Ā’ishah used to give fatwas in the time of Umar and ‘Uthmān until she died; [those] great Companions of the Prophet, Umar and ‘Uthmān, used to refer to her. The great jurists among the Successors used to attend on her to get her juristic opinions. Abū Ḥanīfah narrated from Hammād, from Ibrāhīm, from al-Aswad ibn Yazīd, the great jurist of Iraq, that he asked umm al-mu’minin ‘Ā’ishah: ‘What cuts the prayer? She said: Listen, O people of Iraq, you think that a donkey, a dog, a woman, and a cat [passing in front of the one praying] cuts the prayer. You have equated us women with them?! Push away [whoever is coming in font of you] as much as is possible for you. For nothing cuts the prayer.’ Muḥammad al-Shaybānī says: ‘We hold the opinion of ‘Ā’ishah, and it is the opinion of Abū Ḥanīfah.’ Sometimes it is women who put to
'A'ishah issues that concerned them; here is an example from the domain of commerce:

'Abd al-Razzaq says: Ma'mar and [Sufyān] al-Thawrī narrated to us from Abū Ishāq, who narrated from his wife saying that she called among a company of women on 'A'ishah. A woman said to her: O umm al-mu'minin, I had a slave girl, whom I sold to Zayd ibn Arqam for 800 with deferred payment of the price. Then I bought her from him for 600 and I paid those 600 on the spot and I wrote him 800 as debt. 'A'ishah said: By God, how evil is what you bought! How evil is what you bought! Tell Zayd ibn Arqam that he has invalidated his jihad with the Messenger of God—except if he repents. [Then 'A'ishah explained the issue further; this kind of transaction is a trick to lend money for interest.]

Debate between men and women

That women can raise issues and discuss them with men should be beyond dispute. The wives of the Prophet sometimes did so; a sūrah of the Qurʾān was sent down concerning the discussion of a woman with him.

Once the caliph 'Umar gave a speech asking the people not to inflate dowries, and told them to keep them small. An old woman stood up and said: 'God says in the Qurʾān [al-Nisā', 4. 20]: And if you mean to take a wife in place of another and you have given one of them a qintar [of gold] do not take a thing [back] from it.' Possibly the woman had in mind that a large dowry might serve to deter a husband from divorcing a wife in order to take another, but at very least the verse clearly states the permissibility of a large dowry. The caliph responded: 'The woman is right and 'Umar is wrong.'

It is not always the case that the questioner is right, but the right of questioning is what is being illustrated here: 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd had said: 'The curse of God is on women who wear tattoos...' That came to the knowledge of a woman of Banū

1ʿABD AL-RAZZĀQ, al-Muşammāf, viii. 185. 2IBN HĀJAR, Fath al-bārī, Nikāh.
Asad called Umm Ya'qūb, who came to him to protest. He said: 'Why should I not curse one who has been cursed by the Messenger of God - صلى الله عليه وسلم - and who is mentioned in the Book of God? She said: I have read the whole Qur'ān and I did not find in it what you say. He said, if you have read it you must have found [it]. Did you not read in it [59. 7] Whatever the Messenger gives you take it and whatever he forbids refrain from it. She said: Yes. He said: The Messenger has forbidden it. She said: I think your wife does it. He said: Then go and look. She went and looked and she did not find what she was after. Then 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd said: 'If she did that I would not live with her.'

Reliance of the jurists on the fiqh of women

I illustrated earlier how the imāms among jurists relied on hadiths that are narrated exclusively by women. There are also examples of their relying on the fiqh of women. Examples can be found for most, if not all, the various ‘chapters’ or divisions of fiqh. Imām Mālik has referred in his Muwattā to the fatwas of the great tābi‘iyyah, ‘Amrah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, on issues related to ḥajj. Abū Ḥanīfah relied on the saying of ‘Ā’ishah (narrated from Yazīd ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, from an old woman of al-ʿAtīk) that: ‘There is no harm in doing ʿumrah in any time of the year that you want except five days – the day of ʿArafah, the day of nahr and the [three] days of tashrīq.’ Muḥammad al-Shaybānī, the disciple of Abū Ḥanīfah, confirms that as the opinion of his master and of their school, ‘with one exception, that is, we say that [on the] evening of ʿArafah, as [also on] the morning of ʿArafah – there is no harm in doing ʿumrah at that time.’ Abū Ḥanīfah followed the ruling of ʿĀ’ishah with regard to an issue in ṭahārah, namely when a bath becomes obligatory after sexual relations. He ruled, also according to ʿĀ’ishah’s practice,
that if a woman leads other women in the salāh, she should stand in the middle of the front row rather than out in front of the front row. And, as a last example, he ruled in favour of the lawfulness of a father in need being provided from the earnings of his children on the basis of Ā'ishah’s saying, which he narrated from Hammad from Ibrāhīm, that: ‘The best that you eat is what comes out of your earning, and your descendants are your earning.’ Muḥammad al-Shaybānī said: ‘There is no harm for the father, if he is in need, to eat from the wealth of his son in the normal way (maʿrūf). But if he is rich and he took something from the wealth of his son, then it is a debt upon him. It is the opinion of Abū Ḥanīfah.’

The women’s holding opinions that others disputed

Ibn Kathīr said that Ā'ishah is distinguished for having noted and formed a judgement on a variety of issues (masāʿīl) that are not found with any of the other Companions. Moreover, she had ‘unique preferences’ on some matters, that is, opinions in which she differed from others. There are reports (akhbār) about her opinions, and others’ counter-opinions, which later imāms have collected.

It is inevitable that when jurists do ijtihād, that is, exert conscience and reason to reach their judgement on a matter, sometimes their judgement is accepted by or conforms to the majority or consensus view, and sometimes is rejected by the majority and the consensus goes against it. All the great jurists, men as well as women, have held opinions that others disputed. Where the primary texts are not explicit and incontrovertible, it was their right to adhere to those opinions without pressure to conform. The strongest evidence for the respect that was accorded to women’s right to independent reasoning within the

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1 AL-SHAYBĀNĪ, K. al-Āthār, 57. 2 Ibid., 198. 3 IBN KATHĪR, al-Bidāyah wa-l-nihāyah, sub anno 58. 4 There is an extended discussion of this issue in Yahya MICHOT’s annotated translation of the discourses of Ibn Taymiyyah on Power and Religion (Oxford: Interface Publications, forthcoming Nov. 2007).
same boundaries as men, is that they publicly held to, and continued to teach, opinions that had been publicly refused. I gave the detail of two examples of that in Chapter 1, where the isolated women holding their own were Fāṭimah bint Qays and Āʾishah. Similarly, idiosyncratic expression of an individual's personal preference in minor details of practice was also quite acceptable: for example, the great Syrian tābiʿīyyah Umm al-Dardāʾ when sitting in the prayer used to adopt the posture usual for men rather than women.

‘AMAL

One who has attained scholarly expertise in the knowledge of the rites but does not implement it, one who has accumulated vast knowledge of minor and major sins and does not use it to avoid those sins, or who knows the description of good deeds and good character but does not strive to adorn his life with those – all his knowledge has been useless and he is deluded in his religion and in himself. Imám Mālik said: ‘Knowledge is not by abundance of narrations; rather, knowledge is a light that God puts in the heart.’ Abū Āṣim says: ‘One who seeks the knowledge of hadith, he is [seeking] the highest matters of the world, so he must be the best of all people.’ ¹ Fāṭimah bint al-Ḥusayn narrates from Husayn ibn Ālī that he said: ‘The Messenger of God – sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam – said: God loves high and noble characters, and dislikes low characters.’ ² Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbi said: ‘Whenever one hears something of the manners of the Prophet – sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam – one should hold fast to it.’ ³ Qāsim ibn Ismāʿīl ibn Ālī said: ‘We were at the door of Bishr ibn al-Ḥārith, he came [out] to us. We said: O Abū Naṣr, narrate hadith to us. He said: Do you pay the zakāh [that is due] on hadith? I said to him: O Abū Naṣr, is

¹ AL-KHĀṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDI, al-Jāmi` li-akhbār al-rāwī wa ʿadhāb al-sāmi`, i. 78. ² Ibid., 92. ³ Ibid., 42.
there zakāh [that is due] on ḥadīth? He said: Yes. When you hear ḥadīth or remembrance of God you should apply it.  

It would fill another book to relate all the ways in which the muḥaddithūn paid the zakāh on the knowledge they accrued and transmitted to others. In any case, the virtues — devotion in worship and continual remembrance of God; charity, whether giving of their time or their wealth; gentleness and kindness in their bearing, speech and manners; modesty and self-discipline in their dress and in their taking a share in the goods of this world; integrity and truthfulness in scholarship (meaning their recording and transmitting the knowledge that came to them from reliable sources, even if they did not like the doctrine or affiliation of those sources); humility and fear of God; love of the Prophet and his Sunnah in the full breadth of it; firmness, at times even implacability, in the face of speech or actions offensive to or corrosive of the din; and an enduring concern for the well-being of the ummah such that they were able to dedicate their lives to learning and teaching — can be illustrated just as well from the lives of the muḥaddithūn as of the muḥaddithūn. But we should acknowledge that for the latter the effort of will to take up and sustain such a life — absent the incentive of rewards in terms of employment or reputation in the world — had to be that much greater for women than men.

I here cite two incidents, side by side, that capture well the tone and temperament of Islamic teaching. Both demonstrate a strong consciousness of being seen by God, a powerful steadfastness, and a passion to improve human understanding and conduct.

Umm al-muʾminin Ḥafṣah, the daughter of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, called on him in the final moments of his life. He had been stabbed by an assassin and there was no possibility of his recovering. During ʿUmar’s rule, the Muslims had defeated two long-lasting and far-flung empires, secured the territories and established the major forms of the institutions that have ever

1Ibid., 143–44.
since defined the heartlands of Islam. His son, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, was already present at his death-bed. Miqdām ibn Ma'dikarib narrates:

When 'Umar suffered [his wounds], Ḥafṣah called on him and said: O Companion of the Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu 'alay-bi wa sallam – O in-law of the Messenger of God, O Commander of the Believers...

'Umar said to Ibn 'Umar: 'Abdullāh, help me to sit up, I cannot bear what I am hearing. So 'Abdullāh raised him up, leaning [him] against his [own] chest. Then 'Umar said to her: 'I am forbidding you, by the right that I have over you, from bemoaning me after this. As for your eye, I do not own it. For when a dead person is bemoaned for something that is not in him the angels hate him.1

The second incident concerns Umm Sulaym and is related from Anas ibn Mālik. The son of Umm Sulaym was ill. While her husband, Abū Ṭalḥah, had gone to the mosque, the boy passed away. Umm Sulaym made the preliminary arrangements for that and told her people not to inform Abū Ṭalḥah. When he returned home she set out his dinner in the normal way. He ate his dinner, then husband and wife had relations with each other. Then:

when it was the end of the night, she said: Abū Ṭalḥah, did you not see [how it was] with such-and-such family who borrowed something, then they kept it; when they were asked to return it, it was very hard on them. He said: They were not fair [in their attitude]. She said: Your son was a loan from God and He has taken him [back]. He uttered the supplication and praised God. In the morning, he came to the Messenger of God, salla l-lāhu 'alay-bi wa sallam. When he saw him, he said: May God bless the two of you in your night. Then she bore 'Abdullāh ibn Abī Ṭalḥah.2

Umm Sulaym's teaching of how believers should manage grief may seem gentler than 'Umar's. Indeed it is; she has the same wisdom and with it 'the woman’s touch'. Yet 'Umar’s rebuke is not without tenderness, for he does not ask Ḥafṣah to

1 IBN SA'D, al-Tabaqāt al-kubrā, iii. 361. 2 IBN AL-ATHĪR, Usd al-ghābah, iii. 285–86.
control her tears. Rather, he was concerned – being well aware of the achievements of his reign – that no Muslim should build for him a mausoleum, neither in words nor in stones. The Taj Mahals of the Islamic world belong to a far different age, a different tone and temperament.

Some measured strictness, such as we hear in Umar's voice – one marvels that he could find energy for it at that moment – is necessary to defend the Sunnah against corrosion. For Muslims, the Sunnah is to be defended against one’s own family, even against one’s own preferences. Safiyyah bint Abī Ubayd al-Thaqafiyah narrates that, some days after Abū Sufyān died, his daughter, umm al-muminin Umm Habībah, called for perfume and applied it to her arms and cheeks. Then she said:

I was in no need to do this if I had not heard the Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam – say: It is not permitted for any woman who believes in God and the Last Day to be in mourning (iḥdād) more than three days for any deceased, except for a husband. For him she is to be in mourning four months and ten days.¹

Sometimes the effort to correct is done by feeling or expressing aversion: ‘Abdullāh ibn Urwah ibn Zubayr narrates:

I said to my grandmother Asmā’ [bint Abī Bakr]: How were the Companions of the Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam – when they heard the Qur’ān? She said: Their eyes shed tears, the hairs of their body stood on end, [just] as God has described them. I said: Here are some people when any of them hear the Qur’ān they fall unconscious. She said: I seek refuge in God from the outcast satan.²

Yazīd ibn al-‘Aṣamm relates that a relative of umm al-muminin Maymūnah called on her. She found on him the smell of drink. She said: ‘If you do not go to the Muslims so they can flog you, then never call upon me.’³

Women in the formative period certainly did not lack courage to challenge and correct misbelief and misconduct. The

¹ IBN SĀ‘ID, al-Tabaqāt al-kubrā, viii. 100. ² IBN ʿASĀKIR, Taʾrikh madīnat Dimashq, Tarājim al-nisāʾ, 20; see also IBN SĀ‘ID, al-Tabaqāt al-kubrā, viii. 253. ³ AL-DHAHABI, Siyār aḥlām al-nubalāʾ, ii. 244.
best of them were not waiting for others to establish the *din* for them but took that responsibility, as did the best of the men. Here are two examples of women 'speaking truth to power', albeit a power willing to be spoken to and told off:

Qatādah says:

'Umar came out from the mosque and with him was al-Jārūd al-‘Abdī. There was a woman on the main road. 'Umar greeted her. She answered [his greeting] and [then] said: Be off, O 'Umar! I have seen you [when you were] called 'Umayr [little 'Umar] in the marketplace of 'Ukaz, tending the sheep with your stick. Then the days passed and you were called 'Umar. Then the days passed and [now] you are called Commander of the Believers. So, be wary of God in respect of the subjects whom you govern. And she continued advising him. Then al-Jārūd said: Woman, you have said a lot to the Commander of the Believers. 'Umar said: Let her be. Do you not know her? This is Khawlah bint 'Abdījīl, the wife of 'Ubayd ibn al-Šāmit, whose word was heard by God from above the seven heavens.1 So it is most fitting for 'Umar to listen to her.2

Zayd ibn Wāqid narrates from 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān about the counsel he was given, before he became caliph, by Barīrah, the slave emancipated by 'Ā’ishah:

I used to sit with [i.e. attend the class of] Barīrah before assuming the caliphate in Madinah. She said: 'Abd al-Malik, I see in you some qualities, and you are worthy to assume this matter. Now if you do assume this matter, then avoid bloodshed. For I have heard the Messenger of God - *sallam* - say: After having sighted the gate of Paradise the man will be pushed away from it on account of a little blood of a Muslim that he shed unlawfully.3

Not only in the formative period but throughout Islam's history, there have been great women teachers, famous for their preaching and their effort to deepen and reform the Muslims’

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1The caliph is here alluding to the sending down of the opening verses of *al-Mujādalah* (58. 1 seq.) when Khawlah brought her dispute with 'Ubayd ibn al-Šāmit before the Prophet. 2*Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, al-Iṣrā‘āb*, ii. 723. 3*Ibid.*, 708.
understanding of the *din*. Some of them funded, some lived and taught in, *ribâts* or retreats built for just this purpose. I close with a second mention of a famous reformer of the seventh–eighth century – not Ibn Taymiyyah, but one Ibn Taymiyyah revered and praised highly – great scholar, jurist, ascetic, leader of the women of her time and preacher: Umm Zaynab Fātimah bint ʿAbbās al-Baghdādiyyah (d. 714). Al-Dhahābī says:

A large number of women benefited from her and repented. She had abundance of knowledge, was content with little, keen to benefit people and give sermons with sincerity, God-wariness and for [the sake of] commanding the good. The women of Damascus [and] then [after her fame had spread, and she moved, to Cairo] the women of Egypt were reformed by her. She had a lot of popularity and influence over the hearts [of people].

Ibn Kathīr says:

She was among the scholars and women of virtue. She commanded good and forbade evil, and opposed the Ḥmadiyyah sect for their [illicit] friendship with women and young boys. And she criticized their states (*ahwāḥ*) and the thinking and arguments [*uṣūl*] of the people of *bid'ah* and others. In [all] that she did what men are unable to do.

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1 AL-DHĀHABĪ, Dhayl al-ʿIbar, 80; AL-YĀFIʾI, Mirāt al-jinān, iv. 254. See also AL-DHĀHABĪ, al-Juzʾ al-maqūd in Siyar aḥlām al-nubalāʾ, 416. 2 IBN KATHĪR, al-Bidāyāh wa al-nihāyah, sub anno 714.
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## Indexes

### The Companions and their Successors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'Abd al-Muttalib, 'Abd al-Nasir</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abd al-Malik b. Marwân, 53</td>
<td>150, 154, 179, 249, 289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abd al-Rahmân b. 'Awf, 31</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abd al-Rahmân b. Abi Laylâ, 196</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abd al-Rahmân b. al-Assad, 153</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abd al-Rahmân b. al-Hârith, 139</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abd al-Rahmân, 139</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abd al-Rahmân b. 'Aqil b. Abi Talib, 185</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abd al-Rahmân b. al-Qibtiyyah, 48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abd al-Rahmân b. Sa'id, 186</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abd al-Rahmân b. 'Umar, 22, 24, 31</td>
<td>36-7, 70, 138-9, 165-6, 198, 201, 207-8, 222, 238-40, 242, 274, 279, 286-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abd al-Rahmân b. Wahb b. Zam'ah, 139, 142</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abd al-Rahmân b. al-Zubayr, 33, 70</td>
<td>71, 167, 239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abû Ayyûb 186</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abû Ayyûb al-Ansârî, 241</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abû Bakr, 26, 34, 47, 51, 61, 98, 108, 131, 138, 139, 140, 144, 147, 165, 166, 192, 204, 205, 208, 209, 210, 219, 229, 234, 236</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abû Bakr b. 'Abd al-Rahmân, 242</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abû Bakr b. Sulaymân b. Abî Khayyamah, 139</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abû Bishr, 89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abû Burdah b. Abi Mûsâ al-Asâ'îrî, 145</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abû Dharr, 69, 106, 266, 270</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abû l-Dardâ, 71, 81, 101, 104, 108, 154</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abû Hudhayfah, 32, 33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abû Ishâq al-Sab índice, 235</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abû Ishâq al-Sab índice, 250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abû Jahm, 231</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abû Qâdîmah, 38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abû Mûsâ al-Asâ'îrî, 138, 145, 248</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abû l-Sanâbîl b. Bâ'kak, 170</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abû Talhah, 287</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abû l-Rijâl Muhammâd b. 'Abd al-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ar-Rahmân al-Ansârî, 149</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abû Sa'id al-Khadrî, 27, 37, 41, 100, 244</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abû Salamah b. 'Abd al-Rahmân, 139, 196</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abû 'Ubaydah b. 'Abdallâh b. Zam'ah, 33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abû 'Uthmân al-Nahdi, 139</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abû Wa'il Shaqiq b. Salamah al-Asâdî, 139</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aflâh b. Humaydî, 25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'A'ishah b. 'Araj, 140</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'A'ishah b. Abî Bakr, vi, 5, 10, 21, 24, 25, 29, 30-3, 36-7, 42, 49-50, 52, 54, 61-2, 64, 73-4, 79, 85, 98, 103, 105-6, 108, 117, 138, 145-6, 147, 151, 153, 155, 167-8, 177, 185-6, 190-5, 199, 219-20, 228, 234, 236-8, 240-4, 248, 265-6, 276-9, 281-5, 289</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'A'ishah bt. Sa'id b. Abî Waqâqûs, 140, 234, 249</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'A'ishah b. Talhah, 151, 233</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abî b. Abî Talib, 20, 69, 71, 104, 106, 110, 139, 185, 193, 241, 266, 268</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abî b. Husayn, 89, 166, 185</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abî Zayn al-'Abîdîn, 185</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-'Aliyah bt. Ayya', 73, 235</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-'Aliyah bt. Subay', 148</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-'Aynash, 250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Aqîmah, 72, 274</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Am'mâr, 69, 239</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Aminah bt. 'Abd al-Rahmân b. Abî Laylâ, 99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amr b. 'Utba, 170</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INDEXES—303

‘Amr b. al-‘Aq, 138
‘Amr b. al-Harth, 65, 187
‘Amr b. Dinár, 250
`Amrah bt. ‘Abd al-Rahmán, 7, 16, 140, 149, 233, 238, 248, 279, 283
‘Amrah bt. al-Harth b. Abi Ditár, 187
Anas b. Málik, 37, 38, 39, 41, 47, 66, 68, 70, 71, 101, 102, 123, 236, 287
Aṣim al-Ahwál, 70
Asmá’ bt. ‘Umayys, 49, 61, 186, 189
Asmá’ bt. Abi Bakr, 77, 83, 99, 143, 186–8
Asmá’ bt. Yazíd, 58, 59, 60, 116, 127, 188
Asmá’ bt. Abi Bakr, 288
Asmar b. Muc. lárris, 148
al-Aswad, 25, 31, 72, 100, 139, 236, 249, 274
`Awn b. ‘Abdulláh, 152
Asmá’ bt. ‘Umayys, 248
Asmá’ b. Yazíd b. al-Sakán, 248
`Aṣá’ b. Abi Rabáh, 31, 43, 139, 274, 279
`Aṣá’ b. Yasá’, 139
Ayyúb al-Sakhtiyáni, 103, 140
Bahiyyah (mawlah of Abi Bakr), 234
Barirah, 21, 193, 195, 237, 278, 289
Bilal, 43, 65
Bint Ruqayyah, 147
Buqayrah, 100
Busrarah, 64, 66, 197, 198
dal-Dahhak b. Qays, 47
Dhakwan Abii Siilil:> al-Samman, 139
Durrah bt. Abi Lahab, 139
Fadlalah b. Ubayd al-Ansáří, 108
Fa’dl b. ‘Abbábs, 62
Faṭímah al-Khuza’íyyah, 140
Faṭímah bt. Abi Nábí, 186
Faṭímah bt. ‘Abd al-Málik b. Marwán, 267
Faṭímah bt. Abi Úhábash, 49
Faṭímah bt. ‘Ali b. al-Husayn, 252
Faṭímah bt. al-Husayn, 285
Faṭímah bt. al-Mundhir, 33, 99, 142, 233
Faṭímah bt. Abi Nábí, 23, 185
Faṭímah bt. al-Yamán, 265
Fatimah bt. Husayn b. ‘Ali, 252
Furayyah b. Málik, 27, 30
Habib b. Abi Thábit, 139
Habibah bt. Maysarah, 234
Habibah bt. Umm Habibah, 146
Hafsah bt. ‘Abd al-Rahmán b. Abi Bakr, 98, 233
Hafsah bt. Umar, 16, 24, 54, 139, 165, 188, 189, 286, 287
Hafsah bt. Sirín, 265
Hafsah bt. ‘Abd al-Rahmán b. Abi Bakr, 233
Hafsah bt. Sirín, 101
Hajjaj b. ‘Hassán, 71
al-Ḥakam b. Ja‘l, 73, 236
Hakkámah bt. Uthmán, 235
Hammád, 284
Hammán b. Munábbih, 116, 210
Hamzah b. ‘Amr al-Aslám, 108
Hasan al-Basri, 20, 30–1, 101, 234, 249, 274
Hasan b. ‘Áli, 38
Hasnah bt. Muṣṭiwiyyah b. Sulaýmán al-Šarámiyyah, 234
Háshim b. ‘Abdulláh b. al-Zubayr, 70
Hassán b. Thábit, 106
 Hind bt. al-Hárit, 67, 140
Hind bt. Usayd b. Hudayr al-Ansáriyyah, 81
Hishám b. ‘Hassán, 70, 101, 239
Hishám b. Urwáh, 25, 57, 143, 186, 220
Hudhayfah b. al-Yamán, 100
Hubábáh b. ‘Aján, 98
Humáyad b. ‘Abd al-Rahmán b. ‘Awf, 139
Husayn b. ‘Áli, 38
Ibn ‘Abbás, 24, 42, 63, 139, 167, 185, 196, 279
Ibn Abi Mulaykháh, ‘Abdulláh b. ‘Ubaydulláh, 139, 188
Ikrímah b. ‘Abd al-Rahmán, 139
Ibn Mas‘úd, 33, 136
Ibn Sirín, Muhammad, 70, 101, 103, 196, 198, 239, 249, 274
Ibráhím al-Nákba`, 25, 28–9, 31, 274, 236, 284
Ibráhím b. al-Nábí, 66
Iyás b. Muṣáwiyyah, 101
Jábir, 36, 43, 48, 63, 72, 83, 89, 228
Jafir, 186
Jabaláh b. Muṣáffáh, 98
Jamráh al-Yarbí’íyyah al-Tamímiyyah, 265
Jamráh b. Quháfás, 63
Jasraí b. Dajajah, 106, 266
Juwáírah bt. Wakb, 108
Jumánah bt. Muṣayyab, 100
Juwayriyyah bt. al-Járit, 186
Kaďb b. ‘Ásim al-Ashirí, 108
Karímah b. al-Miqdád, 142
Karímah b. al-Ḥashás, 104
Karímah b. Sirín, 70
Khálid b. Dhawkáw, 39
Khádíjah, 16, 23, 79, 203, 206, 224
Khánsí b. Khídham, 10
Khálah b. Tha‘lábah, 8, 9, 289
Khálah b. al-Hakim, 49, 139, 140, 289
Khawráh, Umm Ḥasan al-Basri, 234
Kulayb, 167
Kurayb (mawāli of Ibn ‘Abbās), 139, 196
Luṭū‘ah, 69
Māriyah, servant of the Prophet, 265
Mansūr, 25
Marwān, 197
Maryam bt. Tārikh, 74
Masrūq 139, 167, 170, 215, 240, 266, 279
Maymūnā (slave of the Prophet), 139
Maymūnā, the wife of the Prophet, 148, 153, 248, 288
Mu‘ād b. Jabal, 69, 142, 241, 274
Mu‘ādhdhah al-‘Aదēwiyah, 265
Mu‘āwiyah, 68, 167, 231, 249
Muhammad b. ‘Aff al-Quraṭi, 147
Muhammad b. Sulaymān, 66
Mu‘āhiz b. Abī Hurayrah, 168
Mughirah b. Ḥakīm, 62
al-Mughirah b. Ḥassān, 71
Mu‘āhid, 49, 50, 139
Munyah bt. Ubayd, 249
Mūsāh al-Azdiyyah, 74
Mūtarrif, 89
Nadba b. al-Māunām (mawād of Maymūnā), 140
al-Nakha‘ī, see Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī
Nā‘īf (mawāli Ibn ‘Umar), 139, 165
al-Nū‘mān b. Bashīr, 88
al-Rubayyī‘ bt. Mu‘āwīdīh, 67
al-Sā‘ib b. Yazīd, 138
al-Zubayr b. al-Awāmīh, 142
Qāsim b. Muhammad, 24, 30, 33, 82, 101, 131, 168, 242, 248
Qamīr bt. ‘Amr, 266
Qatādah, 25, 39, 89, 166, 198, 250, 289
Rabī‘a b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. ʿUsayn, 63
Rabī‘ah b. ‘Amr al-Jurashi, 138
Rayyādah b. Kārahām, 140
Rifā‘ah al-Quraṭī, 199
Rifā‘ah b. Rifā‘, 241
Rubayyī‘ bt. Mu‘āwīdīh, 15, 39, 185, 279
Ruqayyah bt. al-Nabī, 98
Sālim (slave of Abū Hudhayfāḥ), 32
Sālim b. Abdullāh b. ‘Umar, 166, 242
Sa‘d b. Abī Sa‘d al-Maqbūrī, 139
Sa‘d b. al-Muṣāyib, 6, 22, 25, 30–1, 44, 49, 53, 72, 139, 140, 274
Sa‘īd b. Ahmad, 37
Sa‘īfiyyah (aunt of the Prophet), 22
Sa‘īfiyyah bt. Abī ‘Ubayd al-Thaqafīyyah, 165, 233
Sa‘īfiyyah bt. al-Hārith al-‘Abdārī, 103
Sa‘īfiyyah bt. Jarīf, 98
Sa‘īfiyyah bt. Shuybāh, 187
Sa‘īfiyyah Umm Talāhah al-Talāhāt, 103
Sa‘īfiyyah, wife ofg the Porophet, 166
Sa‘d b. Abī Waqā‘ah, 108, 140, 234, 249
Sa‘d b. Ishāq b. Ka‘b b. ‘Ujrah, 27
Salāmah, 66, 128
Salāmah bt. Hurr, 265
Salmā bt. Qays, 15
Salmān al-Fārāh, 100, 108
Samurah b. ‘Ummayr, 74
Sarrā bt. Nabīh, 63
al-Shā‘bī, Amir, 15, 30, 31, 52, 139, 140, 147, 167–8, 170, 274
Shābī b. Gharqadāh, 63
Shāh b. Hawshāb, 58, 59
Shifā bt. Abdullāh, 54
Subayyah bt. al-Hārith, 170, 196
Su‘dā al-Murriyyah, 147, 185
Sudayyah, 189
Suhayl, 32
Sukaynāh bt. Husayn b. ʿAli, 252
Sulaymān b. Yasār, 139, 196
Suwaydah bt. Jābir, 148
Tamīm b. Dārī, 48, 53, 168, 188
Tamīl, 62
Thābit b. Banūnān, 31, 38, 47, 89, 123
Umāmah bt. Abī I Ṭābī‘ al-Rabī‘ (granddaughter of the Prophet), 38, 45
Ubayyad b. al-Sā‘īm, 68
Ubayyad b. Sā‘īm, 8
Ubayd b. ‘Umayr, 244
Ubayd b. Rifa‘ah al-Anṣārī, 241
Ubaydah b. Nābil, 249
Ubaydullāh b. Abī Yazīd, 168
Ubaydah bt. Uḥbān, 104
Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, 165
Umar b. Abī al-‘Azīz, 139, 248, 267
Umayyah b. Mālik al-Anṣārīyyah, 234
Umayyah bt. Qays Abī al-Sa‘īt, 58
Uqaylah bt. Asmar b. Muḍarrīs, 148
Uqbah b. ‘Amr, 37, 72
Urwa, 25, 276, 279
Urwa b. al-Zubayr, 139, 146, 198
Uthmān b. Affān, 20, 24, 27, 64, 68, 71, 76, 140, 166, 182, 196, 224, 279, 281
Uthmān b. Hayyān, 151
Umayyah bt. Qays, 59
Umm Abīdān, 70
Umm Abīdillāh al-Dawṣīyyah, 140
Umm Abīdillāh bt. Abī ʿHāshīm, 88
Umm Affī, 69
Umm Ātiyyah al-Anṣārīyyah, 40,198, 265, 281
Umm ‘Alī bt. Abī I-Hakam, 58
Umm al-Aswād, 249
Umm al-Dardā‘, 43, 71, 81, 101, 104, 108, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 179, 249, 266, 285
Umm al-Faḍl, 55, 67, 145, 178
The women scholars, excluding Companions and their Successors

INDEXES—305

Umm al-Kirām, 57, 73, 75
Umm al-Hakam bt. 'Ammar, 69
Umm Ayman, 47
Umm Ayyūb, 168
Umm Hānī, 11, 69
Umm Ja'far bt. Muhammad b. Ja'far b. Abī Tālib, 186
Umm Kathir bt. Marqad, 70
Umm Khālid, 38
Umm Kūltūm bt. 'Uqbah, 15, 64
Umm Kūltūm bt. Fātimah bt. al-Nabī, 253
Umm Laylā, 99
Umm Mahabbah, 73
Umm Nā'īlah, 249
Umm Talq, 69
Umm Sa'īd bt. Murrah, 234
Umm Sa'd, 188
Umm Salamah, 4, 12, 21, 24–5, 33, 47, 48–50, 54, 63, 74, 103, 106, 139, 146, 148, 167, 196, 242, 248, 266, 275, 277, 279
Umm Sulaym, 50, 68, 79, 281, 287
Umm Ḥabibah, 146, 166, 288
Umm Hafs, 98
Umm Hānī al-Ḥūrīniyyah, 73–4, 111, 121, 123, 270

Hadī, 103, 105, 180,

Amatullīh 'A'ishah,

Umm Malībabah,

Umm Umm Khilid,

Umm 'A'ishah

'Amat al-Ghafiir bt. Abī Bakr b. 'Abd al-'Alā', 226

'Ā'ishah bt. 'Abd al-Hādī, 103, 105, 180, 214, 202–3, 228, 260, 267

'Ā'ishah bt. al-'Alā', 226

'Ā'ishah bt. 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Zujāj, 115

'Ā'ishah bt. 'Ali al-Ṣināḥiyyah, 213

'Ā'ishah bt. Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashi, 117

'Ā'ishah bt. Hasan al-Kinānī, 121

'Ā'ishah bt. Hasan b. Ibrāhim, 255

'Ā'ishah bt. Hasan al-Wāḍīzah, 114

'Ā'ishah bt. al-Najm al-Bālīsiyyah, 205

'Ā'ishah bt. Ma'mar, 131, 208, 210

'Ā'ishah bt. Muhammad al-Hanbalīyyah, 260

'Ā'ishah bt. Sayf al-Dīn Qawālīji, 180

'Ā'ishah bt. 'Umar b. Rushayd, 107

'Ā'ishah bt. al-Zayn, 155

'Ā'ishah bt. al-Zubayr b. Hīshām b. Urwah, 253

'Abidah al-Madaniyyah, 53

'Adliyyah bt. Abī Bakr b. Ḥākīm, 78

'Ajbah al-Bāqādāniyyah, 115, 117, 119, 123, 203–4, 206, 214, 222

Altī bt. Nāṣir al-Dīn, 98

Amatullāh 'Ā'ishah, 122

Amat al-Ghafūr bt. Iṣḥāq al-Dīlahwī, 263

Amat al-Khālīq bt. Zayn al-Dīn, 120

Amat al-Rahīm al-Yūnīniyyah, 99

Umm Ḥārām, 68, 281

Umm Yāsir al-Ansārīniyyah, 266

Umm Yahyā Ḥumaydah, 142

Umm Ya'qūb, 282

Unaysah, 234

Unaysah al-Nakhaṭiyyah, 69

Usmām b. Zayd, 31, 139, 193, 231

Yahyā b. Talhah, 147, 185

Yahyā b. Sa'id, 72, 231, 232, 239, 279

Ya'qūb al-Taymī, 239

Yahyā b. 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Ḥātib, 244

Ya'zīd b. al-Asamm, 153

Ya'zīd b. al-Hādī, 67

Zayd b. Arqam, 282

Zayd b. Khālid al-Juḥānī, 138

Zayd b. Khārijah, 88

Zayd b. Thābir, 5, 241, 274

Zaynah bt. Abī Mu'āwiyah (wife of Ibn Mas'ūd), 64, 265

Zaynah bt. Abī Salamah, 33, 49, 146

Zaynah bt. al-Muhājir, 51

Zaynah bt. Ja'ish, 146

Zaynah bt. Ka'b b. Uraj, 27, 100

Zaynah bt. al-Nabī, 10, 11, 38, 167

Amat al-Salām bt. al-Qādī Abī Bakr, 44, 141, 254

Amatullāh al-Dīlahwīyyah, 121, 214, 263–4

Amat al-Wāhīd bt. al-Mahānīlī, 112, 253

'Aminah bt. Abī Sa'id al-Naysabūrī, 254

'Aminah bt. Ḥabīb b. Rājīh, 78

'Aminah bt. Mu'āyyad, 124

'Aminah bt. al-Ḥabīb al-Hibāshī, 265

'Aminah bt. Muhammad b. al-Rār, 258

'Aminah bt. Muhammad b. Qudāmāh, 91

'Aminah bt. al-Wāsītīyyah, 77, 90, 128

al-'Arūdiyyah: see Iṣhrāq al-Suwaydā'ī

Ab bt. Ahmad b. Ḥassān, 224

Asmā' bt. Asad b. al-Furāt, 271

Asmā' bt. Abī Bakr b. Yūnus al-Dimashqīyyah, 77

Āsiyya bt. Jarūlāh al-Shaybānī, 107

Āsiyya bt. Kamāl al-Dīn Mūsā al-Ḍajā't, 260

Āsiyyah bt. Muhammad al-'Irbi'ī, 108

Āsiyyah bt. Muhammad al-'Iskāf, 77

Asmā' bt. 'Abdillāh al-Mahānīniyyah, 118, 226

Asmā' bt. Abī Bakr b. al-Khalil, 118, 132

Asmā' bt. Ahmad al-Bahrāniyyah, 118

Asmā' bt. Ahmad al-Harrānī, 76, 82–3

Asmā' bt. Ibrāhim b. Mandah, 129
Asma b. al-Mardawi, 83, 99
Asma b. Muhammad b. al-Hasan, 102
Asma b. Muhammad b. al-Kamal, 84
Aymalik b. Ahmad, 120
‘Azizah b. ‘Ali b. al-Tarrah, 117, 213

Bây Khârin, 120
Biba, 169, 220–2, 255, 271
Bint al-Aqrabâ see Fatimah b. al-Aqrabâ
Bint al-Kür, see Khadijah b. Abi Bakr b.
‘Ali Bayram
Bûran, 120
Bulbul, 120

Dunya b. Hasan b. Balbân, 101
Fatimah b. ‘Abd al-Hâdi, 170
Fatimah b. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Qazwînî, 106
Fatimah b. ‘Abd al-Rahmân al-Harrânîyyah, 253
Fatimah b. Ahmad b. Anazî, 113
Fatimah b. ‘Ali b. al-Husayn, 177
Fatimah b. ‘Ali b. Mûsä al-Kiâlah, 252
Fatimah b. al-Baṭî‘îyyah, 105, 179, 264
Fatimah b. al-Daqqiq, 113, 255, 275
Fatimah al-Tâwûsîyyah, 111
Fatimah b. Ibrâhîm b. ‘Abdollah b. Abi ‘Umâr, 208
Fatimah b. al-Munanîjî, 135
Fatimah b. Ibrâhîm al-Bâlabakkîyyah, 108
Fatimah al-Jûzdânîyyah, 93, 129, 208, 210, 228, 229, 258, 271
Fatimah (Sutayyab) b. Kamâl al-Dîn
Mahmûd b. Shârin al-Hanaﬁî, 107
Fatimah al-Sarwarqandîyyah, 116
Fatimah al-Manshâwîyyah, 120
Fatimah b. al-Aqrabâ, 55
Fatimah b. al-Malîk al-Muhsin Ahmad b.
 al-Sulhân Sulhân al-Dîn, 204
Fatimah b. al-Mubârâk, 117
Fatimah b. al-Munânîjî, 170, 214
Fatimah b. al-Zayyât, 253
Fatimah b. Ishaq b. Wâsîiti, 253
Fatimah b. Ja’far b. Muhammam al-Ṣâdiq, 252
Fatimah b. Mâlik b. Anas, 250
Fatimah b. Mûsâ b. Ja’far, 252
Fatimah b. Muhammam al-Dimashqîyyah, 222
Fatimah b. ‘Abd al-Hâdi, 129, 214
Fatimah b. Muhammam b. ‘Abd al-Rahmân b. Shârik, 253
Fatimah b. Muhammam b. ‘Ali, 252
Fatimah b. Muhammam al-Sarwarqandî, 144
Fatimah b. Salîm, 122

Fatimah b. Sa’d al-Khayrî, ii, 75, 93–6, 207–8, 129, 258, 268
Fatimah b. Shams al-Sâ’îqî, 276
Fatimah b. Muhammam b. Yusuf al-Dawrî, 276
Fatimah b. Shukurrullah al-Kûrânîyyah, 262
Fatimah b. Hamad al-Feçâyî, 263
Fatimah Shams Jâshân al-Jarkasîyyah, 264
Fawz b. Muhammam, 56
Ghazâl (slave of al-Qâqashandî), 214
Ghazâl al-Nûbiyyah, 135
Ghufayrah b. Wâqîd, 253

Habibah b. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Sanbâtî, 121
Habibah b. Ibrâhîm b. Abî ‘Umâr, 208
Habibah b. al-Zayn, 180
Hadiyyah b. ‘Ali b. ‘Askar, 78, 105
Hâﬁz b. Mulâ‘îbî, 116, 210
Hâjir b. al-Sharaf al-Maqdisî, 225
Hasanah b. Muhammam b. Kâmil, 135
Hasnâh b. Abî l-Yunm al-Makkîyyah, 225
Hind b. Ja’far b. Abî al-Razzâq, 98
Hind b. Muhammam b. Abî ‘Ummawî, 214
Humaydah al-Asbahâniyyah, 227
Husn (slave of Abîmnd b. Hanbal), 253
Husn al-Makkîyyah, 115

Ishrâq al-Suwâyîdî, 114
Jâhân A‘na Begum, 120
Jumû’ah b. Muhammam al-Mahmîyyah, 102, 106, 254
Juwayriyyah b. al-Hakkârî, 269
Juwayriyyah b. al-Hâfiz ‘Abd al-Rahîm al-Iraqî, 270
Karimah al-Marwâziyyah, 57, 75, 112, 169, 199, 201, 264, 255
Karimah b. ‘Abd al-Wâhhsâb, 179, 182, 213, 222
Karimah b. Hashâs al-Muzâniyyah, 71
Khadijah b. Abî Abdilläh al-Harrânîyyah, 116
Khadijah b. Yusuf b. Ghunaymî, 108
Khadijah al-Dîhlawîyyah, 99
Khadijah b. ‘Abd al-‘Hâmid al-Mârdawî, 131
Khadijah b. ‘Abd al-‘Hâmid b. Uthmân, 134
Khadijah b. ‘Umar b. Abî Bakr, 117
Khadijah b. Ahmad b. ‘Azzâm al-Fiṣîyyah, 121
Khadijah b. Ahmad b. Jandân, 122
Khadijah b. Abî Bakr al-Harmawî, 76, 133
Khadijah b. Abî Bakr b. Abî, 135
Khadijah b. Abî Muhammam al-Shantiyâlî, 112
Umm al-Hasan al-Harazi, 100
Umm al-Hasan bt. Muhammad al-Makhzumi, 135
Umm al-Hasan Fati mah bt. Abd al-Rahman al-Farr, 105
Umm al-Hasan Fati mah bt. Khail al-Kinani, 225
Umm al-Hasan Karimah bt. Ahmad al-Ablwadi, 115
Umm al-Iyaa Zuhra bt. Muammad al-Anbiir, 129, 133
Umm al-Iyaa Umamah, 119
Umm al-Iyusn Kamil, 117
Umm al-Zaynl b. Muzhliir, 155
Umm Janib bt. Numaylah, 148
Umm Kulthiim 'A'ishah bt. Muhammad al-Murshid, 135.
Umm Kulthim _Jt. Miisa b. Ja'far, 252
Umm Salama Aminah, 99
Umm al-Shafi'1, 277
Umm Iyablb Safwah, 92
Umm Zaynab Faflmah bt. 'Abbas al-Baghdadiyyah, 280, 290
Uns bt. 'Abd al-Karim, 46
Wajibah bt. 'Ali al-An~iitiyyah, 223, 269
Wazlrah: see Sitt al-Wuzaci'
Zahidah bt. Ibrahim al-Khabbaz, 103
Zahrah bt. Kamil al-Din al-Anafi, 118
Zayb al-Nisa', 119
Zayn al-'Arab bt. Kamil al-Din, 120
Zayn al-Sharaf bt. 'Abd al-Qadir al-Tabari, 262
Zaynab al-Shi'riyyah, 153, 207
Zaynab bt. 'Abdillah b. 'Abd al-Jabbar, 178
Zaynab bt. 'Abdillah al-Yafr, 226
Zaynab bt. Akt, 121
Zaynab bt. 'Alam Ahmad b. Kamiir, 177, 213
Zaynab bt. 'Ali al-Wasiit, 133
Zaynab bt. Isma'il b. Ahmad, 101
Zaynab bt. Isma'il b. al-Anmati, 92
Zaynab bt. Akta, 121
Zaynab bt. al-'Alam Isma'il b. Shukr al-Maqdis, 101
Zaynab bt. al-Is'ardl, 105, 206
Zaynab bt. al-Kamil, 208, 152, 155, 158, 160, 170, 180, 182, 203-4, 206, 208, 209, 214, 223, 224, 227
Zaynab bt. al-Khatib al-Harastani, 182
Zaynab bt. al-Khabbiz, 178
Zaynab bt. al-Khatib Yahya al-Sulami, 223
Zaynab bt. Makkii, 83, 99, 117, 124, 128-9, 133, 180-1, 203, 206, 210, 212
Zaynab bt. Muhammad al-Ghazzi, 262
Zaynab bt. Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Muyaydi, 120
Zaynab bt. Mujibb al-Din Abû b. Zahra, 135
Zaynab bt. Musâ b. Ja'far, 252
Zaynab bt. Muwaffaq al-Din 'Abd al-Latif, 178
Zaynab bt. Shukr, 269
Zaynab bt. Umar al-Kindi, 118, 202

Men scholars, excluding Companions and their Successors

'Abd al-Ghaflr al-Faris, 117, 124, 132
'Abd al-Ghanf al-Maqdis, 141
'Abd al-Hafiz b. Badran, 108
'Abd al-Haq al-Sanabiir, 121
'Abd b. Humayd, 103, 128, 129, 207, 266
'Abd al-Khaliqu al-Shahhami, 90
'Abd al-Qadir al-Ayyibi, 83, 103, 131
'Abd al-Rahman b. Bishr, 134
'Abd al-Rahman b. Abi Hamid al-Razi, 133
'Abd al-Razzaq b. Hammam, 52, 163, 169, 209-10, 216, 282
'Abd al-Shamad b. Muhammad b. Abi l-Fadl al-Ansari, 92
'Abd al-Wahid b. 'Ulawan, 108
'Abd al-Wahhab b. Manda, 119, 206
'Abdullah b. al-Hasan al-Khallal, 99
'Abdullah b. Yusuf b. Barmiyah, 75
Abû 'Abbas Ahmad b. 'Abdillahi al-Maghribi al-Fasi, 44
Abû 'Abdillahi al-Faris, 228

Abû 'Abdillahi al-Qasim b. al-Fadl al-Thaqafi, 102
Abû 'Amr Uthman b. Muhammad al-Samarqandi, 101
Abû 'Awana, 113
Abû Bakr al-Ajurri, 113, 115
Abû Bakr b. Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Jabbar, 83, 131
Abû Bakr b. Shadhan, 113
Abû Bakr b. Abî 'Asim, 107
Abû Bakr b. Abî Dawud, 53
Abû Bakr al-Muqri, 114, 120, 132
Abû Bakr b. Abd al-Dä'im, 77
Abû Bakr Muhammad al-Husayn al-Ajurri, 113
Abû Bakr Muhammad b. Isma'il al-Anmati, 92
Abû l-Barakat Hamd b. 'Abdillahi al-Wakil, 103, 108
Abû Dawud, 6, 27-8, 30-1, 33, 42, 45, 48-9, 62, 67-8, 71, 74, 104, 128, 142,
312  AL-MUHADDITHĀT

168, 181, 198, 210, 222, 233, 249, 265, 266, 279
al-Mu‘ayyad b. Muhammād b. ‘Ālī al-Ṭūsī, 202
al-Mubarrīd, Abū l-‘Abbās, 110, 114
Muhammad Bashīr al-Saḥsawānī, 122
Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqī al-Baqī, 133
Muhammad b. ‘Ālī b. Abī Dhūbah al-Miṣrī, 137
Muhammad b. Aslām, 132, 139
Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqī al-Batīr, 133
Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqī al-Batīr, 133
Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqī al-Batīr, 133
Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqī al-Batīr, 133
Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqī al-Batīr, 133
Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqī al-Batīr, 133
Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqī al-Batīr, 133
Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqī al-Batīr, 133
Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqī al-Batīr, 133
Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqī al-Batīr, 133
Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqī al-Batīr, 133
Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqī al-Batīr, 133
Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqī al-Batīr, 133
Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqī al-Batīr, 133
Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqī al-Batīr, 133
Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqī al-Batīr, 133
Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqī al-Batīr, 133
Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqī al-Batīr, 133
Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqī al-Batīr, 133
Sa‘d al-Dīn Yahyā al-Maqdisī, 78
Sa‘d al-Khwārīz, 76, 93
Sa‘d b. Mansūr, 29, 31
Sa‘d al-Ṣayrāfī, 131
Sa‘fādī, 56–7, 234, 249
al-Sahmī, 117
Ṣālāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī, 95
al-Sam‘ānī, 124, 133
al-Sarākhshī, 31, 205, 209
al-Sakhawī, 46, 74, 107, 115, 117–18, 123–
4, 132–3, 135, 142, 220, 225–6, 270,
276
Ṣāliḥ b. Ghalīb b. ‘Ālī, 78
al-Sam‘ānī, 55, 93, 110, 141, 169, 255,
258, 275
al-Sanmāk, Abū ‘Amīr ‘Uthmān b. Aḥmad
b., 90
Ṣayyid al-Dīn al-Hanafī, 74
al-Ṣayrāfīnī, 106, 275
Sayyid Aḥmad b. Zaynī Dahlān, 122
al-Shāhīmī, Zāhir b. Tāhir 95
al-Shaṭrī, 26, 30–2, 105, 112, 123, 128–9,
137, 169, 197, 202, 206, 215, 253, 268,
269, 274, 277
Shams al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Iwād al-
Maqdisī, 78
Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ṭārkhān, 131
Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Arābshāh f. al-Farrā‘, 131
Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ibrāhim b. Ghanā‘īm al-Muḥāndis, 82
Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Abdullāh b. al-Ḥanafī ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Raqī, 103
Sharaf al-Dīn Abī l-Qāsīm al-Rāfī‘ī, 135
al-Shawākānī, 27, 144, 277
al-Shaybānī, Ḥanbal b. Iṣḥaq, 90
al-Shaybānī, Muḥammad, 31, 274, 281,
283–4
Shihāb al-Dīn Abī l-‘Abbās al-‘Aṭṭār, 131
Shihāb al-Dīn al-Jazārī, 83
Shu‘ayb, Abī l-Hārīth Surayj b., 82
Shu‘bāh, 25, 143, 146, 231, 236, 293, 295
al-Silāfī, Abī Tāhir, 82, 113, 118, 141, 151,
216, 217, 218, 258
al-Simsār, Abū Haṣīm ‘Umar b. Aḥmad b., 102
al-Suhrāwārdī, 123
al-Subkī, Tāj al-Dīn, 141, 208
al-Subkī, 179, 202, 209, 277
al-Sulāmī, Aḥmad b. ‘Alī, 76, 107
al-Sulāmī, 106
al-Suyūtī, 107, 120, 128, 136, 142, 220,
260, 262, 270, 277
Ṣūfī b. Aḥmad al-Funaṣayn, 277
Sufyān al-Thawrī, 20, 25, 29, 197, 218,
236, 250, 274, 282
INDEXES—313

Sufyān b. 'Uyaynah, 146, 147
Sufyān Thawrī, 86, 143
Sulaymān b. Ḥamzah, 101, 113, 135
Suwayd b. Sā'īd, 203
Suwayd, M. N. b. 'Abd al-Hāfiz, 37
al-Suyūṭī, 106
al-Ṭabbākh, 120
al-Ṭabarānī, 253
al-Ṭabarī, 44, 75, 277
al-Ṭabarî, Muḥammad al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ahmad b. al-Rādī Ibrāhīm, 137
al-Ṭabarānī, 36, 53, 93, 96, 103, 120–1, 129, 155–6, 208–9, 210, 215–8, 228–9, 253, 272
al-Ṭahāwī, 29, 31, 30, 242
Taklāh, 114, 121, 132
Taqī al-Dīn al-Fāsī, 100–1, 103, 105, 124, 128–9, 142, 170, 202, 204–5, 269
Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ṭarkhān, 78
Thābit Bundar, 102, 108
al-Ṭaylīṣī, Ja’fār b. Abī ʿUthmān, 24
Ṭirāḍ b. Muḥammad al-Zaynābī, 102, 108, 116, 212
al-Ṭirmidhī, xi, 28, 30, 31, 33, 37, 39, 49, 63, 67, 74, 118, 124, 147, 165, 168, 184, 185, 188, 196, 197, 198, 199, 203, 250, 275, 277
al-ʿUqaylī, 235
ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Munʿīm b. al-Qawwās, 108
ʿUmar Ḥamdān al-Maḥrāsī, 263
Wāḥī b. al-Jarrāḥ, 25
al-Wāqidī, 118, 249
al-Washshāʿ, 55, 146
al-Yāfī, 226, 268, 290
Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn, 24, 25, 117, 140, 232, 233
Yaḥyā al-Thaqāfī, 156
Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā, 123, 203
Yūnūs b. Abī Ishaq, 73, 235
Yūsuf b. ʿAbd al-Hādī, 116, 120, 121
Yūsuf b. Khalīl, 208
al-Yūnīnī, Muḥammad b. Ahmad, 99
al-Zabīdī, al-Ḥusayn b. al-Mubārak, 104–5, 157, 179, 223, 267
al-Zarkashī, 142, 220, 239, 244
Zāhir b. Abī al-Sarakhshī, 75
Zāhir b. Ṭāhir, 83, 90, 95, 129, 207
Zayn al-Dīn al-Murāghī, 135
Zayn al-Dīn b. Najā, 95
Zayn al-Dīn Abī Muḥammad al-Takrītī, 131
Zayn al-Dīn al-Shammāʿī, 120
Zayn al-Dīn Ridwān, 226
Zubayr b. Bakkār, 117
al-Zubayr, 31, 53, 122, 143, 187, 197, 216, 228, 240, 243
Zuhrah bt. ʿUmar al-Khutanī, 131
al-Zuhri, ʿIbn Shihāb, 20, 119, 140, 166, 197, 248, 250
Place names

Abyssinia, 14, 38
Aleppo, 259
'Aqaba, 14
al-'Atik, 283
Alexandria, 158, 160, 269
'Ayn Jalūt, 259
Azamgarth, 220
Bāb al-Maṭāth, 205
Baghdad, 55, 75, 76, 93, 102, 104, 106, 110, 156, 157, 158, 205, 250, 253, 254, 255, 257, 258, 259, 266
Balkh, 82, 110, 164
Bāsrāh, vii, 76, 81, 104, 110, 157, 158, 177, 198, 249, 250, 253, 265
Baydūd, 188
Bayt al-Abbar, 82
Beirut, 81, 220
Berlin, 225
Bombay, 220
Bukhara, 258, 259
Cairo, 95, 96, 152, 156, 157, 158, 178, 222, 225, 257, 258, 259, 290
Central Asia, 257
China, 93
Damascus, 54, 76–8, 81–4, 90–2, 95–6, 104, 131, 133, 150, 152, 155–8, 160–3, 172, 177–82, 201, 220, 222, 225, 257–9, 267, 268, 290
Damscus, 83, 179
Delhi, 263
Egypt, 72, 74, 75, 81, 96, 106–7, 123, 157, 170, 201, 250, 254, 259, 260, 268–70, 290
Hamadān, 93, 96, 258
Haramayn, the, 250, 260, 264
Herat, 110, 255
Hzjaz, 262
Hims, 202
Hudaybiyyah, 12, 14
India, ii, iii, 99, 119, 220, 272
Isfahan, 75, 93, 102, 124, 177, 255, 257–8
Jerusalem, 14, 69, 75, 81, 95, 150–1, 154, 179, 255, 257, 267, 276
Jurjan, 254
Kaprīlī, 222
Kashghar, 93
Khāth'am, 62
Khaybar, 59
Khurāsan, 157, 254, 271
Kufah, 25, 29, 76, 81, 196, 237, 250, 253, 265, 266
Kuwait, 220–1 Madinah, x, 7, 10–12, 14–15, 61, 64, 72, 81, 102, 106–7, 153, 157, 168, 179, 190, 192, 197, 201, 202, 233, 237, 250, 252, 253, 262, 263–5, 279, 280, 289
Makkah, 11–12, 14, 57, 61–2, 72–5, 81, 100, 107, 153, 157, 168, 239, 250, 262–5, 277
Marw, 53, 110, 197, 255, 258
Marvah, 62
Mesopotamia, 257
Minā, 46, 62, 74
Mu'tah, 189
Murcia, 276
Nishapur, 102, 106, 110, 202, 254, 255, 258
Pakistan, ii, iii
Palestine, 255, 259
Patna, 220
Qāsyūn, 77, 81, 90, 108, 134, 155, 176, 177, 182, 204, 222, 259
Qadīm, 27
Qazwin, 258
Sabta, 107
Samarqand, 45, 76, 101, 116, 117, 133, 135, 144, 182, 205, 258–9
San'a, 56
Sarakhs, 31, 75, 205
Sind, 272
Spain, 93, 112, 114, 270, 271, 276
Ṣaţā, 62
Ţur, 106
Syria, 10, 46, 75, 82, 107, 170, 182, 249–50, 253, 257, 259–60, 264, 266–7
Ta'īf, 98
Tinnis, 96
Transoxania, 254, 271
Tripoli, 106
Turkey, 222
Tus, 110
'Ūkaz, 289
Valencia, 93, 114
Wāsīt, 70, 76, 78, 128, 146, 204, 239, 253
Yemen, 69, 119
Zabid, 260
Zinjan, 258
This book is an adaptation of the *Muqaddimah* or Preface to Mohammad Akram’s 40-volume biographical dictionary (in Arabic) of the Muslim women who studied and taught hadith. It demonstrates the central role women had in preserving the Prophet’s teaching, which remains the master-guide to understanding the Qur’an as rules and norms for life. Within the bounds of modesty in dress and manners, women routinely attended and gave classes in the major mosques and madrasas, travelled intensively for ‘the knowledge’, transmitted and critiqued hadith, issued fatwas, etc. Some of the most renowned scholars among men have depended on, and praised, the scholarship of their women teachers. The women scholars enjoyed considerable public authority in society, not exceptionally, but as the norm. The huge body of information reviewed in *al-Muhaddithat* is essential to understanding the role of women in Islamic society, their past achievement and future potential. Hitherto it has been so dispersed as to be ‘hidden’. Akram’s dictionary will greatly facilitate further study, contextualization and analysis.

**Mohammad Akram**, currently a fellow of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, is an alumnus of the prestigious Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow. He has written many books on hadith, *fiqh*, Islamic biography, and Arabic grammar. This is his first major publication in English.

The cover shows the study journeys of Fatimah bint Sa’d al-Khayr, and of a few of her principal teachers and students. Her family moved from Valencia to the western edge of China; she died in Cairo in 600 AH. (Full map and details in ch. 3.)