al-Muhaddithat: The Women Scholars in Islam

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by

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*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-Hārith, he came [out] to us. We said: O Abū Naṣr, narrate ḥadīth to us. He said: Do you pay the zakāh [that is due] on ḥadīth? I said to him: O Abū Naṣr, is there zakāh [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-Dardā’ (d. 81) taught hadith and fiqh, and ‘Ā’ishah bint ‘Abd al-Hādī (d. 816) was appointed to the post of principal teacher of Sahih al-Bukhārī. (Photo: Yahya Michot)
Preface

This book was conceived as a translation of the *muqaddimah* to an as yet unpublished biographical dictionary in Arabic of the women scholars of hadith in Islamic history.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 Fāṭimah bint Saʿd 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 muhaddithāt 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 ḥadīth compilation developed and were transmitted — some charts provided here (necessarily scaled down) may indicate directions for such focused inquiry; how ḥadīth 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 muhaddithāt were daughters of men bearing the title ‘qāḍī’, ‘imām’, ‘ḥāfiẓ’ (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 Sunnab; 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-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728):¹

A Shāfi‘ī said: ‘No politics (ṣiyyāṣa) excepting something that corresponds with the Law (ṣhar)’! [...] If in saying ‘excepting something that corresponds with the Law (ṣhar)’ 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-Ṭuruq 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. \textit{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 scarfing 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, \textit{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 \textit{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 ḥadīths 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 ḥadīth classes of men and women students in the principal mosques and colleges (when established, from the sixth century \textit{AH} on); issuing fatwas; interpreting the Qurān; 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 mubahithāt, 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 mubahithāt. 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 Companion most often referred to for fatwas or *fiqh* was ‘Aisha bint Abi Bakr al-‘Siddiq. 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 (*islām*) 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 Basra, 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
from a more willing assent. Hence, Muslims are allowed to ask: what is the point of *hijāb*?

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. *Hijāb* 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) *Hijāb* 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) *Hijāb*, 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 *hijāb* 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 *hijāb* 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 hijāb 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 hijāb. It is a part of the faith. The great shaykhahs who are the subject of this book, never doubted its obli-gatoriness. 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 mini-mized. 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 muhaddithāt is a broad interpretation of the duty of hijāb. 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 Ḥāfiz 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-Qurashī (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 (satr).’

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

1 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, Mawāqīt al-salāḥ, bāb al-salāḥ kaffārah; MUSLIM, Sahīh, Tawbah, bāb qaawli-hi taʾālā inna l-hasanāt yudhbibna al-sayyidat; AL-TIRMIDHI, Jāmiʿ, Tafsīr al-Qurʾān, bāb wa min sūrah Hūd; IBN MĀJAH, Sunan, Ikhāmat al-salāḥ, bāb mā jāʾa fī anna al-salāṭa kaffārah. 2 AL-DHAHAABI, Siyar aʾlām al-nubalāʾ, xxiii. 133. 3 AL-QURASHI, al-Jawāhir al-mudīyyah fī ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafiyyah, 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 corresponds to 16 July 622 AD.

| 718 | 100 AH | 1203 | 600 AH | 1688 | 1100 AH |
| 815 | 200    | 1300 | 700    | 1785 | 1200    |
| 912 | 300    | 1397 | 800    | 1882 | 1300    |
| 1009| 400    | 1494 | 900    | 1979 | 1400    |
| 1106| 500    | 1591 | 1000   | 15/7/2007 | 29/6/1428 |

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As this work is about teaching of the Sunnah of the Prophet, it is proper always to remember the supplication: ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-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'ān 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'ān 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 Qurʾān 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 Qurʾān 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 Qurʾān 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 Qurʾān 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, muḥaddithāt). 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 jāqīḥ(ab). It is decisive in informing ḱāḥ, 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 ḱāḥ 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 muḥaddithāt. 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 bides 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? Ab — 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 kindreds:* 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-Dhāriyyāt, 51. 56). The Qurʾānic term ‘abd 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 ḥadith, narrated by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Shaybah:

I heard Umm Salamah, the wife of the Prophet – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam – say: I asked the Prophet – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi 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*

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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 Qurʾān 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 Qurʾān 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 hadith 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 ʿiddah, the period after which she would be free to re-marry. ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb rejected this hadith; so did Zayd ibn Thābit, ʿĀʾishah, and other jurists. They argued that it contradicts the Qurʾān’s command that men must support

¹ Al-Ḥākim, al-Mustadrak, ii. 416. The verse cited is al-ʿAhzāb, 33. 35.
divorced wives during the ᵉᵈᵈᵃ’h. If they had been motivated by ‘patriarchal attitudes’, they would surely have acted on the ḥadith 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 ḥadith; 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 ḥadith 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 ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb during the caliphate of Abū Bakr. ‘Umar divorced the mother of his son ‘Āṣim, then saw her somewhere with their son and took him from her. She appealed her case to Abū Bakr. The caliph judged that ‘Āṣim ibn ʿUmar remain with his mother until grown up or until she re-married.1 This verdict followed the Sunnah, established by the report (among others) that a woman came to the Prophet and said: ‘O Messenger of God – ṣalla l-lāḥū ʿalay-hi wa salla’ – 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 – ṣalla l-lāḥū ʿalay-hi wa salla’ – said: You have more right over the child while you do not re-marry.”2 Neither ʿUmar’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 ʿUmar, the moisture of her lips is better for him than the honey in your house.”3

A great many examples will be presented in the course of this book of the imāms in ḥadith 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

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of their generation for general advice, for a particular ruling, for help in interpreting and implementing the guidance of Qur'an and Sunnah. To be sure, it was largely men who held the formal posts like qaḍī, 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 ʿAmrah bint ʿAbd al-Rahmān, the great tābiʿiyah (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 qaḍī 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 ʿAmrah except as the defendant in this suit, in which she had no personal, private interest. The qaḍī reversed his decision and released the defendant only because he could have no argument against the authority of the ḥadith 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 ḥadith, 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 Qurān, 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 Īmārān, 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 him 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-ma'rūf), and forbid from evil (al-munkar); they establish the prayer and give the alms (zakāh) and obey God and His Messenger (al-Tawbāh, 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 (*Laqīmān, 31. 14; al-Ahqāf, 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 ‘Abdillāh ibn Salām narrates from Khawlah bint Tha'labah (wife of Aws ibn al-Sāmit the brother of ‘Ubādah 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 – ﷺala l-lābu 'alay-hi wa sallam – complaining to him [about] what [treatment] I had received from my husband. The Prophet – ﷺala l-lābu '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 the hearer, the seer. Then God's Messenger – ﷺala l-lābu 'alay-hi wa sallam – said: Ask him to free a slave [by way of expiation]. I said, O 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 – ﷺala l-lābu '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 – ﷺala l-lābu 'alay-hi wa sallam – gave that [for him] in charity.¹

(The Qur'anic 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 Tha'labah, 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 taḍulū-hunna) from marrying their husbands, if they mutually agree in the normal way (bi-l-ma‘rūf). One Khansā’ bint Khidhām al-Ansāriyyah 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 ʿĀ’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.’ ʿĀ’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-Taymi narrates one such incident concerning Abū l-ʿĀṣ 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

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1AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, Nikāḥ, bāb Ḱibā zawwaj al-rajul ibnati-hu wa biya kārihatun fa-nikāḥu-hu mardūd.  2AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, Nikāḥ, bāb yankehi al-abn wa ghayru-hu al-biker wa-l-thayyib illā bi-riḍā-hā; AL-NASARĪ, Sunan, Nikāḥ, bāb al-biker yuzawwiju-hā abū-ba wa biya kārihatun; IBN MĀJAH, Sunan, Nikāḥ, bāb man zawwaja ibnata-hu wa biya 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.¹

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 ‘All] 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.’²

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 Lūt (Lot) and Nūḥ (Noah); of the latter, the wife of Pharaoh, and the mother of the prophet Qīsā (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 Al `Imrān, 3. 37, 40–42). She suffers what was decreed for her of the slanders of her

¹ IBN SA‘D, al-Tabaqāt al-kubrā, viii. 33. ² AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, Jiyāh wa-l-muwāda‘ah, bāb amān al-nisā‘ wa jiwārī-hinn. MUSLIM, Sahīh, Salaḥ al-musāfiqīn wa qaṣrī-bā...
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 Isā is born, and how she is comforted after that (Maryam, 19. 16–34). Another remarkable portrait is that of the Queen of Sabāʾ: 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 ḥajj, 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 ḥajj. 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 iḥrām, the end of pilgrimage sanctity). The narrator of this hadith 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 ‘alayhi 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 Fātimah, 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: Sālīm ibn ʿAbdillāh narrates from his father ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar that the Prophet said: 'When your women ask your permission to go to the

¹AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Ṣaḥīḥ, Shurūt, bāb al-shurūt fi-l-jihād.
mosque in the night, give them permission." 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 Ḥudaybiyyah, 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 hijrah; 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 Ḥudaybiyyah 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

\[1\] AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, Ṣalāh, bāb khurūj al-nisā' ilā l-masjid bi-l-layl wa-l-ghalas.
'Abd al-Barr says in his account of Rubayyi\textsuperscript{c} bint Mu\textsuperscript{a}awwidh:\textsuperscript{1} She is a Companion of the Prophet – \textit{salla l-lâhu 'aley bi wa sallam} – and she has narrated his hadîth. And the people of Madinah have narrated hadîth from her. Ahmad ibn Zuhayr says: I heard my father saying: Rubayyi\textsuperscript{c} bint Mu\textsuperscript{a}awwidh is from those women who did allegiance under the tree.’ Similarly, of Salmā bint Qays ibn 'Amr from the clan of 'Adī ibn al-Najjār, whose kunyah is Umm al-Mundhir, a sister of Salît 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, \textit{salla l-lâhu 'aley bi wa sallam}. Some say: She was a paternal aunt of the Prophet, \textit{salla l-lâhu 'aley bi wa sallam}. She prayed in the direction of both qiblahs and she was among those women who did allegiance with the Prophet, \textit{salla l-lâhu 'aley bi wa sallam}.\textsuperscript{2}

The single most important event was the Hijrah from Makkah 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 Kulthum bint 'Uqbah was from a house well-known for unbelief and enmity to the Prophet. She did the Hijrah by herself. Her brothers al-Walîd and 'Umârah tracked her until they reached Madinah the day after she did, and demanded that she be handed over to them. Umm Kulthum 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.’\textsuperscript{3} Then the famous verses of \textit{al-Mumtahanah} were sent down (60. 10–13). The first of them begins: \textit{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 unbe-

\textsuperscript{1}IBN 'ABD AL-BARR, \textit{al-Istī'âb}, ii. 731.
lievers. 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 hadîth that others did not recognize as one that should be acted upon – the case of the Companion Fâtimah bint Qays; or that a woman could challenge the decision of a court and the decision be over-tuned because the hadîth she had reported was decisive and clear – the case of the Successor, ʿAmrah bint ʿAbd al-Rahmân. 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 Qur’ân was secured in writing (that is, outside the hearts of the believers) was entrusted to the safe-keeping of his wife, Ḥafṣah bint ʿUmar.¹

Before I turn to an exposition of how women acquired and exercised their role as muḥaddithât, I should perhaps note that hadîth 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 tajwîd and tafsîr, 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

¹ AL-BUKHÂRÎ, Sahîh, Fadâʾîl al-Qur’ân, báb, jamʿ al-Qur’ân.
² www.interfacepublications.com/images/pdf/AKRAM_Article2.pdf
Chapter 1

The legal conditions for narrating ḥadīth

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 ḥadīth 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 confound 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 hadīth might (or even must) be considered weaker than that of men. It is necessary therefore to explain the particular conditions of testimony (ṣhabādah), and the differences between that and reporting or narration (tirwāyah).
TESTIMONY AND NARRATION

Many people misunderstand the meaning of God’s saying:

O believers, when you make one another liable (tadāyantum), then put it in writing. And let a scribe write [it] between you justly (bi-l-sād) [...]. 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 (tudhakkira) the other. (al-Baqarah, 2. 282)

What is meant by a liability (dayn) is not a bare lending (qarḍ), 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,¹ 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’an, such a preference in the particular circumstances where men are more familiar with the

¹Shaykh Sa’īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭi 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‘ah bayna ẓuhuyān al-nizām al-gharbī wa latā‘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) dābt (‘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-Shaʿbī (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

1 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 751), al-Turuq 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'ānic 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 testi-mony is preferred over a man's. That is the known practice of, among others, the third and fourth caliphs, ʿUthmān and ʿA ṭ i, of renowned Companions like ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68) and ʿAbdullāh ibn Umar (d. 73), and, from the generations after them, of widely followed scholars such as Hasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110), Ibn Shīḥāb al-Zuhrī (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 l-Walīd 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 (qaʿīdah), 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

¹ See ibid., 145–55; Al-Būṭī, al-Marʿah, 147–53. ² Abū l-Walīd Al-Bājī (d. 474), Iḥkām al-fuṣūl fī aḥkām al-uṣūl, i. 364.
each of them is, since both are a kind of reporting. [So it continued] until I studied Sharḥ al-Burḥan of al-Māzarī [d. 536, who writes]: ‘Testi-
mony and narration are both reports; except if the report belongs to a
general matter, not related to a specific individual, then it is a narra-
tion, like his saying – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-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-thubūt observes:

The report of a reliable pious woman will be accepted without any en-
dorsement by a man, in contrast to testimony, because the condition of
being male has come with regard to testimony by the text [of the
Qurān]. [...] 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 Barīrah even before her emancipation, as they accepted the
report of umm al-muʾminīn ʿĀʾishah al-Ṣiddiqah, the report of umm al-
muʾminīn Umm Salamah, and of others.\(^2\)

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 (ṣifāb) required in a witness
of the ḥaqiq [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

\(^1\)AL-QARĀFĪ, K. al-Furūq, i. 74–76. \(^2\)Lit. ‘mother of the believers’, an
honorable title exclusive to the wives of the Prophet. \(^3\)Mullā ʿAbd al-
ʿAlī al-Anṣārī (d. 1225), Fawāʾil al-rahāmūt (his commentary on
Musallam al-thubūt of Muhibullāh ibn ʿAbd al-Shakūr [d. 1119],
appended to al-Ghazālī’s al-Mustasfā), 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 LAWFULNESS OF WOMEN RECEIVING AND NARRATING ḤADĪTH

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 ḥadīth. 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 ḥadīth is not an idle or leisure pursuit, but a means to understand the guidance of the Qurʾān and then implement it in personal life and in society. The lawfulness of receiving and transmitting ḥadīth is based on the duty of all Muslims to know their religion (dīn) and put it into practice: neither men nor women are exempted or excluded from this duty.

The first call to Islam is reported by Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab (d. ca. 90) and Abū Salamah ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 94) from Abū Hurayrah (d. 57), who said:

When God sent down this verse [al-Šuʿarā, 26. 214], ‘And warn your close kin’, then the Messenger of God – ṣallā l-lāhu ʿalayhi 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 ʿAbd Munāf! I shall not avail you in anything against God. O ʿAbbās, son of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib! I shall not avail you in anything against God. O Ṣafīyyah [aunt of God’s Messenger]! I shall not avail you in anything against

¹AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDADI, 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 Fātimah, 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, Khadijā. 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 Muʿtazilah, a sect of rationalists in the early period, were the strictest in their rules: they would not consider a ḥadīth as sound (ṣaḥīḥ) 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 Muʿtazilīs required that the two narrators in each generation had to be male. In mainstream

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Ṣaḥīḥ, Tafsīr, bāb wa-andhir ʿasīrata-ka l-agrābin.
Islam, one of the greatest experts on the principles of the science (ṣūṣūl al-hadīth) is Ibn al-Ṣalāh (d. 643). He defines a ḥadīth as sound if it goes back to the Prophet through a solid, well-connected chain of narrators, each characterized as ‘adl and ḍabīt (just and truthful, with a strong memory). He defines as shādbdh (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-Ṣalāh gives no weight whatever to whether a report was narrated by a male of female.\(^1\)

Among specialists in the field what weighed most heavily in discussions about the soundness of particular ḥadīths, were the personal qualities of the narrators, male and female alike, and how well the links between the individuals in the chains of narration (īsnād) 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 ‘Āʾishah is a solid gold chain of narration.\(^2\) Several chains that begin with ‘Āʾishah are consistently described as among the best. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī reports

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1See IBN AL-ṢALĀH, Muqaddimah, 15, 26–27. Similar arguments can be found in other of the great specialists in ḥadīth sciences. See, for example: AL-NAWĀWĪ (d. 676), al-Taqrīb with its commentary al-Tadrīb, i. 300–01. IBN RUSHAYQ AL-MĀLIKĪ (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 (Lūbāb al-maḥṣūl fiʾilm al-ṣūṣūl, i. 356): ‘They [the Companions and their successors] relied on the narration of a single person, like the narration of ‘Āʾishah, Ḥafṣah, Umm Salamah, Abū Hurayrah, Ibn ‘Abbās, 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-Kīfayah, 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.’ 2AL-ḤĀKĪM, Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-hadīth, 69, reporting from Abū Bakr Ahmad ibn Salmān the jurist, from Jaʿfar ibn Abī ʿUthmān al-Ṭayālīṣī, from Yahyā ibn Maʿīn.
that Wāки ibn al-Jarrāḥ (d. 197) was once asked to indicate his preference among three of them: (1) Hishām ibn Urwah from his father Urwah from ʿĀʾishah; (2) Aflāḥ ibn Ḥumayd from al-Qāsim from ʿĀʾishah; (3) Sufyān from Manṣūr from Ibrāhīm from al-Aswad from ʿĀʾishah. He said: 'We do not consider anyone equal to the people of our city [Kufah]. Sufyān from Manṣūr from Ibrāhīm from al-Aswad from ʿĀʾishah 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-Aswad was famous for being exactly meticulous about wording; for example, he reports from ʿĀʾishah that

God's Messenger — ʿalla 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 muʾādhīn 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'.

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

THE PUBLIC AUTHORITY OF ḤADĪTHS NARRATED BY WOMEN

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

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1 Al-Khaṭīb Al-Baghdādī, al-Kifāyah, 174. However, Aḥmad ibn Saʿīd al-Dārīmī (d. 253), following his teachers, preferred the first of these chains (Al-Khaṭīb Al-Baghdādī, al-Jāmiʿ li-akhlāq al-rāwī wa ʿādāb al-sāmiʿ, ii. 299). 2 Al-Ḥākim, Maʾrifat 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 Rabīʿ 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-lāhū 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 ḥadīth [in common] with [others] who are known for being accurate, his hadith should corroborate their hadith. He should not be a muddalīs – [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-lāhū ʿalay-hi wa-sallam – what goes against the ḥadīth of people [with an established reputation as] reliable.

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 Kaʾb ibn Uqrah, from his paternal aunt Zaynab bint Kaʾb ibn Uqrah

that Furay'ah bint Mālik ibn Sinān, sister of Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, 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 Qadūm, where he caught up with them and they killed him:

So I asked God’s Messenger – șalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi 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 – șalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi 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 (ṣiddah) passes.

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

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

ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, 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, Tālāq, bāb fi l-mutwaффā ʿan-hā tantaqil.
²AL-SHAWKĀNĪ, Nayl al-aţfār, 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 Fāṭimah bint Qays. Al-Khaṭāb al-Baghdādi reports that ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭāb 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 – salla l-lāhu ‘alayhi 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 Fāṭimah’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.

1Al-Khaṭāb al-Baghdādi, al-Kifāyah, 83. See also Al-Tirmidhī, Jāmi’, Tālāq, bāb mā jā’u fī l-muṭallaqab thalāthan lā suknā la-hā wa-lā nafaqah ‘[The famous Kufan jurist Mughirah] says: I mentioned the hadith of Fāṭimah to Ibrāhim al-Nakha‘ī, who then said that ‘Umar said: We will not leave the Book of God and the Sunnah of our Prophet – salla l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam – for the hadith of a woman, [about which] we do not know if she remembered or forgot [something related to it].’

2Among those who have included Fāṭimah’s hadith in their books are: Mālik, Muwattī, Tālāq, bāb mā jā’u fī nafaqat al-muṭallaqab; Muslim, Sahīh, Tālāq, bāb al-muṭallaqab thalāthan lā nafaqah la-hā; Abū Dāwūd, Sunan, Tālāq, bāb fī nafaqat al-mabṭūtah; Al-Tirmidhī, Jāmi’, Nikāḥ, bāb mā jā’u fī an lā yakḥaṭuba al-raǧul ‘alā khibāb akihi-hi; bāb al-rukḥsah fī kburīj al-mabṭūtah min bayti-hā fī ʿiddati-hā; bāb nafaqat al-bā’inah; Ibn Mājah, Sunan, Tālāq, bāb al-muṭallaqab thalāthan la-hā suknā wa-
Indeed, respect for the ḥadīth was such that, once accepted as ṣaḥīḥ by the normal conventions, some scholars and jurists felt obliged to reconcile it somehow with the Qurʿān.

**The ḥadīth of Fāṭimah bint Qays**

The meaning of Fāṭimah’s ḥadīth is that a divorced woman has no right of accommodation and living expenses from her former husband during the ʿiddah, the waiting period before the end of which she cannot re-marry. Fāṭimah bint Qays reports that her husband Abū ʿAmr ibn Ḥāfṣ 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 – ṣalla l-lāhу ʿalayhi wa-sallam – said: Your expenses are not [an obligation] on him.’

ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd, Zayd ibn Thābit, 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-Nakḥāʾī, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Abū Ḥanīfah and his students, and the rest of the people of Kufah. Their view is based on the following verses of the Qurʿān (al-Ṭalāq, 65. 1, 6):

*O Prophet! When you [men] divorce women, divorce them for their ʿiddah, and count their ʿiddah [accurately] and be wary of 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 AḤ SHAYBAḤ, Muṣannaf, Ṭalāq, bāb man qāla ʿiddah ṭarallaqa-ha thalāthân laysa la-hā nafaqah; Saʿīd ibn Mansūr, Sunan, bāb mā jāʾa fi l-munākhabah; AL-TĀḤĀWI, in Sharḥ Maʿānī al-ʿāhār, 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 ḥadith mentioned earlier of Furayyah bint Mālik, in which she is required to remain in her former husband’s home during her ‘iddah.

Some Companions criticized Fāṭimah for narrating the ḥadith. ‘Ā’ishah did so, and explained that the ruling for Fāṭimah was because of some danger for her in staying at her ex-husband’s home, with her in-laws. Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab says: ‘Fāṭimah was moved from her house because of her quarrelling with her in-laws.’ But she continued narrating the ḥadith, 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 Fāṭimah’s ḥadith is about a woman divorced finally. That is the opinion of Hasan al-Baṣrī, ‘Aṭā ibn Abī Rabah, Āmīr al-Sha‘bī, Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal and Ishāq ibn Rāhawayh. Others held that the divorcee has the right of accommodation by the Qur’ānic verse, but by Fāṭimah’s ḥadith not the right of maintenance. That is the opinion of Mālik ibn Anas, Layth ibn Sa‘d and al-Shāfi‘ī. Other jurists derived other, different rulings from the ḥadith of Fāṭimah. For a summary and more references see Table 1.

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1 al-Qāsim narrated from ‘Ā’ishah: ‘What is it with Fāṭimah? Does she not fear God in narrating this ḥadith?’ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, Tālāq, bāb man ankara dhālika ‘alā Fāṭimah; MUSLIM, Sahīh, Tālāq, bāb al-muṭallaqah thalāthan la nafaqah la-bā. See also AL-TAHĀWI, Sharh Ma‘ānī al-āthār, iii. 68. 2 ABŪ DĀWŪD, Sunan, Tālāq, bāb man ankara dhālika ‘alā Fāṭimah. 3 Ibid, AL-BAYHAQĪ, Sunan, Nafaqāt, bāb al-mabṭūlah la nafaqah la-bā. 4 AL-TIRMIDHĪ, Jāmi‘, Tālāq, bāb mā jā‘a fi l-muṭallaqah thalāthan la sukna la-bā wālā nafaqah. Hushaym narrates from Ismā‘īl ibn Abī Khalīd (‘Awn al-ma‘būd commenting on the ḥadith in Sunan Abī Dawūd) that Sha‘bī said about ‘Umar’s saying he was uncertain whether Fāṭimah ‘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]?!’.
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Table 1. The figure to display different intrinsic responses to the failure of Pamarin and Oaps

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Another example: a hadith from ‘Ā’ishah

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. ‘Ā’ishah 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 – salla l-lāhu ‘alayhi 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 ‘Ā’ishah 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 ‘Ā’ishah 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

legal effects of that relationship do not apply. Ibn Mas‘ūd has narrated something similar. 2 ABDULLĀH ibn al-Zubayr has narrated from the Prophet: ‘There is no breast-feeding but what enters into the intestines.’ 3 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.’ 4 After citing that hadīth, al-Tirmidhī says:

Most scholars from among the Companions of the Prophet – ṣalla l-lābu ‘aley-hi 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 ʿAbdillāh 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-lābu ‘aley-hi wa-sallam – used to say: All wives of the Prophet – ṣalla l-lābu ‘aley-hi wa-sallam – refused to allow anyone to enter upon them by that breast-feeding [which ʿAʿishah allowed] and they said to ʿAʿishah: 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. 7

Despite the opposition to it, ʿAʿishah continued to narrate the hadīth 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 hadīth of ʿAʿishah to him. He adds: ‘I endured one year or about one year not narrating this hadīth to anyone and I was afraid of [doing so]. Then I met Qāsim and I said to him: You narrated to me a hadīth 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 ʿAʿishah narrated it to me.’ 8

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1 See AL-BAGHAWI (d. 494) Sharh al-Sunnah, v. 65. 2 ABŪ DĀWŪD, Sunan, Nikāh, bāb fi rada‘at al-kabīr. 3 IBN MĀJAH, Sunan, Nikāh, bāb la rada‘at ba‘da fisāl. 4 AL-TIRMIDHĪ, Jāmi‘, Rada‘, bāb mā dhukira anna l-rada‘at la tuhrāmī illā fi 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 *dīn* 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 Qur'ān 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 hadiths, 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 Qur'ān 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, God-worship 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 dīn – law and rule were as means to that end:

He it is Who has sent among the unscriptured (ummiyyūn) a Messenger from among them, reciting to them His verses, purifying them, and teaching them the Scripture (kitāb) and the Wisdom (ḥikmah). And before [that] they had certainly been in manifest error. (al-Jumūʿah, 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’ān alludes delicately (al-Abqā’āb, 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 ʿĀ’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 – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam – said: No-one among them will ask me but I will tell her. God has not sent me as muʾāmin [who makes it hard for people] or as mutaʾāmin [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 ʿĀ’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:

1 MUSLIM, Ṣaḥīḥ, Ẓalāq, bāb bayān anna takhyīr imraʾati hi la yakūn talaqan illā baʿd al-niyah. 2 AL-TABARĀNĪ, cited in AL-HAYTHAMI (d. 807), Majmaʾ al-ṣawāʾid, viii. 270.
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?' 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.' Ḥaḍīth narrates that he said: 'Whoever is tested with anything of these girls — they will be his screen from the Fire.' Anas ibn Mālik 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. Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī (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.' The Prophet’s teaching was remembered by his community: Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭahir, son of the great muḥaddith and jurist said: 'Whenever my father 'Abdul-Malik ibn Ḥanbal 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 ḥadīths] the reward that is known.'

The Sunnah is particular about treating sons and daughters equally. Al-Bazzār (d. 292) has cited the ḥadīth from Anas ibn Mālik 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 l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam — said to the man: Why did you not treat them equally?'

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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 ʿalay-hi 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 ʿalay-hi wa-sallam, when he came out carrying his granddaughter, Umāmah 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. Thābit al-Bunānī narrates from Anas ibn Mālik that he said: ‘The Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-

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1. AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Ṣābih, Adab, bāb man taʿaka sabiyyata ghayri-hi ḫattā taʾabha bi-hi aw qabbala-hā aw marāba-hā. 2. IBN SĀD (d. 230), al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā, viii. 39.
sallam — 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]. Ḍiyā’ bin Honey (d. 118) narrated, also from Anas, that he said: ‘The Messenger of God — salla ʿl-lāhu ʿalay-bi 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].

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’i) narrated from Rubayyi bint Mu’awwidh (d. ca. 70) that she said: ‘The Prophet — salla ʿl-lāhu ʿalay-bi wa-sallam — sent his messenger on the morning of ʿĀshūrā 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. Fasting on the day of ʿĀshūrā is not compulsory, but the believers were keen to encourage their children to grow in piety. As for fasting in Ramaḍān, children used to do it regularly. Umar said to someone who was not fasting in Ramaḍān: ‘Woe to you! even our children are fasting.

The Prophet said: ‘That the father teaches good manners (ṣulm) to his child is surely better for him than giving charity of a ʿrāʾ in the path of God.

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

1 MUSLIM, Ṣahīḥ, Ṣalāḥ, bāb amr al-aʿīmah bi-takhfīf al-ṣalāh fī tamām.
2 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Ṣahīḥ, Sawm, bāb sawm al-ṣibyān. 3 AL-TIRMIDĪḤ, Jāmīṣ, al-Bīr wa-l-ṣilāb, bāb mā jāʿa fī adāb 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-Kāsānī (d. 587) says: ‘The child is to be rebuked (‘azzara) 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 ‘alay-hi wa-sallam — that he said: Command your children to pray when they are seven, and strike them for that when they are ten.’

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 ʿAtiyyyah al-Anṣāriyyah narrates:

The Messenger of God — salla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam — commanded us to bring them out on [ʾĪd] al-fitr and [ʾĪd] al-ādha — adult girls, adolescents, and those kept secluded (buyyad dhawāt al-khudār). 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 ʾĪds.³ They already had ample opportunity to learn from him directly; the reason he did this was to establish

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¹ Al-Kāsānī (d. 587), Badāʾīʾ al-ṣanāʾīʾ, vii. 63. ² Al-Bukhārī, Sahīh, Hayd, bāb ṣuhūd al-ḥāʾid al-ʾīd yān wa daʿwat al-muslimīn. Al-Baghawi says about this ḥadīth (Sharḥ 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 Mājah, Sunan, Abwāb iqāmat al-ṣalāb, bāb mā jāʾa fi khurūj al-nisāʾ fi l-ʾīd yān.
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 ḥadīth informs [us] of the humility of the Prophet — *salla l-lāhū ʿalay-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**, *Ṣaḥīh*, Fadā’il, bāb qurb al-nabī ʿalay-hi l-salām min al-nās wa tabarruki-him bi-hi. \(^2\) **AL-NAWAWĪ**, *Sharḥ al-Ṣaḥīh Muslim* (commenting in loco on the ḥadīth cited in the preceding note). \(^3\) **AL-BUKHĀRĪ**, *Ṣaḥīh*, Ulm, bāb hal yaj‘al li-l-nisā‘ yawman ʿalā ḥidah.
— *salla l-lāhu ʿalay-bi 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.\(^1\)

Sometimes the Prophet would teach using analogy so that the listener could grasp the reasoning supporting the ruling. For example, Ibn ʿAbbās 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 ʿalay-bi 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 ʿĀʾishah that ʿASmāʾ bint Shakal asked about the bathing at the end of the menstrual period. He said:

The woman should take water and leaves of the lote 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. ʿASmāʾ asked: How will she clean with it? The Prophet — *salla l-lāhu ʿalay-bi wa-sallam* — said: *Subḥān al-lāh!* \(^2\) You will clean with it. Then ʿĀʾishah said to her in a subdued voice: Follow the traces of blood.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Ṣaḥīḥ, abwāb al-iḥṣāʾ wa jaẓāʾ al-sayd, bāb al-ḥajj wa-l-nudbūr ‘an al-mayyit wa-l-rajul yahurr ‘an al-maʿrāb. \(^2\) This phrase (roughly 'Glory be to God') serves as a common exclamation to mark the moment when Muslims recognize a matter as being beyond their capacity to influence. \(^3\) AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Ṣaḥīḥ, Ḥayd, bāb dalk al-maʿrāb naṣṣa-hā; MUSLIM, Ṣaḥīḥ, Ḥayd, bāb istibāb istirmāl al-muqhtasīlāb min al-ḥayd firṣāb min mask fi mawḍī al-dam; ABū DĀWŪD, Sunan, Ṭahārah, bāb al-iqtiṣāl min al-maḥīd; AL-NASAYĪ, Sunan, bāb dhikr al-ʿamāl fi ghāsī al-maḥīd; IBN MĀJAH, Sunan, Ṭahārah, bāb al-ḥāʾid kāfī’u tghtasīl.
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 ‘Aṭā’ that Jābir ibn ‘Abdillāh said: ‘The Prophet – ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam – stood up on the day of Ḥaḍr al-fītr 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 ‘Aṭā’: ‘Do you think it is incumbent on the imām that he [preach to and] remind the women? ‘Aṭā’ said: ‘Surely it is incumbent on them. And why do not they do that?’1 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-Dardā’ (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.’2

After explaining in detail what is incumbent on guardians regarding the education of dependants, Ibn al-Ḥājj (d. 737) said: ‘The scholar should free himself to teach these commands (ḥukmā) 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-Abzāb, 33. 35): The muslim men and muslim women... God has prepared for them

forgiveness and a great reward]. The Prophet, ṣalla l-lābu ʿalay-bi 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].”\footnote{Ibn Al-Hājj, al-Madkhāl, ii. 215, cited in ibid., 22.}

The biographical sources are full of examples of women
whose fathers took care to teach them ḥadīth and other subjects.
The Companions and, after them, the Successors were most
particular in this. Among the latter, for example, Saʿīd ibn al-
Musayyab taught all his ḥadīths to his daughter; in the next
generation, Mālik ibn Anas taught his daughter the whole of his
Muwattā. 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 qāṭī Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn
Kāmil ibn Khalaf ibn Shajarah al-Baghdādī (d. 350), student of
the famous historian and Qurʾān commentator, Mūhammad ibn
Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī (d. 310), the mubaddithah Amat al-Salām, Umm al-
Fath (d. 390) heard ḥadīths from Mūhammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-
Baṣlānī and Mūḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥumayd ibn al-Rabīʾ
(both early 4th c.). Al-ʿAtiqī (d. 441) confirms this and notes:
‘Her hearing ḥadīth is recorded in her father’s handwriting.”\footnote{Al-Khaṭīb al-
Baghdādī, Taʾrīkh Baghdād, xiv. 444.}
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'allimîn of Ibn Sa'înîn (d. 256): 'The pious qâdi ʻIsâ ibn Miskîn used to teach his daughters and granddaughters. Qâdi ʻIyâd [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-Furâât, the conqueror of Sicily, with his daughter A'mâ 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-Qurrä, Abû Dâwûd Sulaymân ibn Abî l-Qâsim al-Andalusî (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 Muḥammad, a youth who read [studied] with him. [This Aḥmad] 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 'Abî2 al-Dîn al-Samarqandi (d. 539), author of Tuhfât al-fuqâbâ' 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 *Tadhkira fil-fiqah*. One particular student stayed with him until he became an expert in both the principles and practical details of the Law, and then wrote *Badawi al-sunan*, a commentary on his shaykh’s *Tadhkira fil-fiqah*. 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 Ṣiddī Abū Muḥammad. His wife read the whole Qur’ān 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 *Muwatta* of Imām Mālik.2 Another example is the wife of Hāfiz Ibn Ḥajar, Uns bint ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Ahmad al-Karīmī al-Lakhamī. Ibn Ḥajar enabled her to hear the *Musalsal bi-l-awwaliyyah* of his own shaykh, the great muhaddith Hāfiz al-Ṭrāqī (d. 806); also the *Musalsal bi-l-awwaliyyah* of Sharaf al-Dīn ibn al-Kuwayk (d. 821). Then she got *ijāzahs* for her in Syria in Dhul-Qaʿda 798, in Mīnā in Safar 800 and again in Rabiʿ al-Ākhir 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 *dīn* 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, salla l-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.’

During the Prophet’s lifetime women were anxious not to miss any opportunity to learn from him. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal has narrated from ‘Abdullāh ibn Rāfī’ that he said:

Umm Salamah narrated that while she was combing her hair, she heard the Prophet — salla l-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, salla l-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.’

Fāṭimah bint Qays (mentioned in the previous chapter), the sister of al-Ḍāḥḥak 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 — salla l-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

1Muḥlim, Sabīḥ, Fadāʾil, bāb fī fadāʾil Umm Ayman, radi Allāhu ʿan-bā.
2Ibid., bāb ihbāt Ḥawd nabiyyi-nā salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam wa sifāti-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 bereave-ment, 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 ḥadīth subsequently recorded in the Šaḥīḥ 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. Jābir 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-Nahl, 16. 43): ‘Then ask the people of remem-brance 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:

ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Qibṭiyah narrates from Umm Salamah that the Prophet stated that an army heading to the House of God will be destroyed by sinking into the earth. Umm Salamah

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 Ḥakîm 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.

Mujâhid (d. ca. 100) has narrated from Asmâ’ bint Umays the hadith about the wedding of ‘Ā’ishah when there was only a bowl of milk for guests. When ‘Ā’ishah offered some to her guests they said they did not desire any. The Prophet said: ‘Do not combine a lie with hunger. Then [Asmâ’] 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 – salâl-lâhu ‘alayhi 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. Mujāhid said: "The shy one (mustahyī) and the haughty one (mustakbir) cannot attain to knowledge." Ḥāfīz Ibn Ḥajar has commented on that: "Shyness [hayā’, 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 Mujāhid means when he said: the shy one cannot attain knowledge."²

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 — sallā l-lābū ‘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 — sallā l-lābū ‘alay-hi wa-sallam — said: [Yes.] When she sees the emission. Umm Salamah covered her face and said: O Messenger of God — sallā l-lābū ‘alay-hi wa-sallam — do women have wet dreams? The Prophet — sallā l-lābū ‘alay-hi wa-sallam — said: Yes. May your hand be dusty! How otherwise does [a woman’s] child become like her?³ ‘Ā’ishah once said: ‘How good are the women of the Anṣār! Shyness did not prevent them from acquiring understanding of their din.”⁴

¹AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, ‘lm, bāb al-hayā’ fi l-‘ilm. ²IBN HAJAR, Fath al-bārī, ‘lm, bāb al-hayā’ fi l-‘ilm. ³AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, ‘lm, bāb al-hayā’ 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.) ⁴Ibid.
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:

‘Abdullāh ibn Jābir al-Ahmāsī narrates from his paternal aunt Zaynāb bint al-Muhājir that she said:

I went for hajj 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-salamu ‘alaykum. 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-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā, 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-Razzāq said: ‘Any knowledge that does not “enter with its owner into the bathroom” — then do not consider it as knowledge.’ Al-ʿAṣmāʾī (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 Ishāq 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 Ishāq said to me [ʿAlī ibn Khashram]: ‘Are you surprised at this, O Abū Ḥasan? I said: Yes. Then Ishāq 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 hadīths 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 ʿalay-hi wa-sallam, and other women who heard him knew his sayings by heart. Some among them narrated a large number of ḥadīths, notably ʿĀʾishah. Nor are these ḥadīths narrated by women short texts.

1 AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDI, al-Jāmiʿ li-akhlāq al-rāwī, 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 Fātimah bint Qays was able to commit to memory the long ḥadīth of Tamīm al-Dārī after hearing it once, and for years she taught it to her students from memory. Al-Ṭabarānī compiled al-Abādīth al-jāwil (The long ḥadīths), which contains several narrated by women.

Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab, considered the leading Successor, was exceptionally knowledgeable of Prophetic ḥadīths. His daughter learnt all of them by heart. Abū Bakr ibn Abī Dāwūd (d. 316) reports that ‘Abd al-Mālik ibn Marwān (the Umayyad caliph (r. 65–86) asked for Saʿīd’s daughter’s hand in marriage for his son al-Walīd. Saʿīd 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-lāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam, and most aware of the right of the husband.’ Abū Nuʿaym (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 Saʿīd to get knowledge. She said to him: Sit here, I will teach you the knowledge of Saʿīd.’

Similarly, Imām Mālik’s daughter learnt all of his ḥadīths and memorized the whole Muwattā, the best book of its time combining ḥadīth and fiqh (jurisprudence). Al-Zubayr (d. 256) says: ‘Mālik had a daughter who knew his knowledge [the Muwattā] 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. Mālik 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 Mālik among others is ʿAbidah al-Madaniyyah. She was famed for knowing a lot of ḥadīths by heart Ibn al-Abbār says: ‘She narrated a lot of ḥadīths.

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1 ABU NUQAYM, Hīyat al-anwāyā, ii. 167–68. 2 AL-QĀDĪ ʿIYĀD, Tartīb al-madārik, i. 109–10. 3 MASHHŪR, ʿInāyat al-nisāʾ, 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 *Saḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī (including its chains of narrations) by heart. They are students of my shaykh, the excellent *muḥaddith*, Nūr al-Dīn ʿItr.

**Writing**

Initially the Prophet prohibited the writing down from him of anything other than the Qurʾān, lest it be mixed with the Qurʾān. 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 Qurʾān and the ḥadīth. Women also took part in this effort. The Prophet himself instructed Shifāʾ bint ʿAbdullāh to teach writing to his wife Ḥafṣah. Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (d. 463) says: ‘[Shifāʾ] was among the virtuous and intelligent women. The Prophet used to visit her.’ Similarly, ʿĀʾishah and Umm Salamah, and many other women Companions were well known for writing. The letters of ʿĀʾishah and Umm Salamah are recorded in the sources. Al-Qalqashandi (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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chefs, 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 hadith, which not all could memorize, writing became essential. There are many examples of women who wrote books of hadith in their own hand. Here I will mention a few examples of muḥaddithāt celebrated for their calligraphy.

Fāṭimah bint al-Hasan ibn 'Alī al-Mu'addib al-ʻAṭṭār (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 (tarīqah) 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 'Amīd 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-Samāni says: ‘I heard Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Baqī al-Anṣārī saying: I heard Fāṭimah bint al-Aqrā’ saying: I wrote a paper for ‘Amīd 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-Samāni says about ‘Fakhr al-Nisā’ Umm Muḥammad Shuhdah, daughter of the famous muḥaddith Abū Naṣr Aḥmad 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.¹ Al-Ṣafādī (d. 764) notes her extensive knowledge of ḥadīth, her piety, God-wariness, benevolence and calls her ‘the calligrapher, the pride of womanhood, a muḥad-dithab of Iraq with a high isnād.'² Her style of writing (mansūb) gained much popularity and was taken up generation after generation.³

Another late example is of Fawz bint Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn Yahyā ibn ʿAlī from the descendants of al-ʿAffī ibn Mansūr. The vizier al-Hādī ibn Ibrāhīm says: ‘She was one of the scholars; she had a novel handwriting. Her calligraphy is well-known in the Qur'āns 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 San'a at al-Mashhad al-Aḥmar near the mosque of Ibn Wahb.'⁴

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-Jāhiz (d. 255) says: ‘Jaʿfar ibn Saʿīd the milk-brother and chamberlain (ḥājib) of Ayyūb ibn Jaʿfar told me that Jaʿfar ibn Yahyā’s Tawqīṭāt (concise writings) was mentioned to ʿAmr ibn Masʿadah. He said: I have read the tawqīṭāt 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.’⁵

Comparison and correction

The people of ḥadīth 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-Baghdādī says: ‘I asked the qādī Abū l-Tayyib Tāhir ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Ṭabarî about one who finds [in his written

notes a reference] to a shaykh named and described in the written [notes] but he does not [now] know him. The qādī 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 Muhammad Aflah ibn Bassām says: ‘I was with al-Qa‘nabī 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 muhaddithah Umm al-Kirám Karimah bint Aḥmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ḥatim 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-Kushmani’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-Dhahabī says: ‘Whenever she narrated, she would compare with her original. She had knowledge and good understanding [combined] with goodness and worship.’ Al-Ṣafādī says: ‘Her book was very accurate.’ Ibn al-Imād (d. 1089) says: She would be most accurate with her book and compare its copies.’ Abū l-Ghanā‘im 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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1 AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, al-Kifāyah, 237. 2 AL-DHĀHABI, Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā‘, xviii. 233. 3 AL-SAFĀDĪ, al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt, xxiv. 338. 4 IBN AL-IMĀD, Shadharat al-dhabab, iii. 314. 5 AL-DHĀHABI Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā‘, xviii. 234.
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 OCCASSIONS

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 ‘alay-hi 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.’¹ The group could include young girls: Umm ʿAlī bint Abī l-Ḥakam narrates from Umayyah bint Qays Abī l-Ṣalt al-Ghfāriyyah 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

¹IBN 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 – salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi 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 – salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi 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 ḥadith 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 Ḥawshab has narrated from Asmāʾ bint Yazīd that she said: ‘I was holding the rein of ʿAḍbāʾ, the she-camel of the Prophet – salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa

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1 Ibn Saʿd, al-Ṭabaqat al-kubrā, viii. 293.
sallam — when [verses of the] sūrat al-Māʾidah [were] revealed to him. Because of the heaviness of the revelation the camel’s leg (ʿadud) was on the point of buckling (dagga).  

Another hadīth from Asmāʾ bint Yazīd 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 jihād in the path of God. When [you] men go for ḥajj or umrah or jihād, 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-wadāʾ  

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

1IBN HANBAL, Musnad, musnad al-nisāʾ. 2IBN AL-ATHĪR (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 hajj 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 hajj during the lifetime of the Prophet would have heard as many hadîths 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.

Hajjat al-wâdâ‘, ‘the farewell pilgrimage’, so called because it was the last hajj 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 hadîths relating to the faith in general and to details of the rites of pilgrimage in particular. Some examples of the latter:

‘A‘îshah narrates that Asmâ‘ bint Umays the wife of Abû Bakr, while going for hajj, delivered beside a tree. The Prophet asked Abû Bakr to ask her to take a bath and then to put on ihram. 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 hadîth, ‘A‘îshah said: ‘I could still see stains of perfume on the head of the Messenger of God – salla l-lâhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – when he was in the state of ihram.’ Because of this hadîth Abû Hanîfah and other jurists

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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-lähū ‘alay-hi 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].’ 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. Yūsuf ibn Māhak 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 Minā? He said: No, Minā is a station of those who arrive earliest.’ The meaning is that one cannot reserve a place for oneself at Minā. Mughirah ibn Ḥakīm narrated from Ṣafiyah bint Shaybah, from Tamlik (a woman Companion who had a house overlooking Ṣafā and Marwah) that she said: ‘I watched the Prophet – salla l-lähū ‘alay-hi wa sallam – while I was in my upper room between Ṣafā and Marwah and he was saying: O people! God has prescribed the sa’ī [the running between Ṣafā and Marwah] for you, so do sa’ī.’

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.

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās has narrated that Faḍl ibn ‘Abbās (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 Faḍl, who stared back. The Prophet turned Faḍl’s face away with his hand to

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1 ABŪ DĀWŪD, Sunan, Manāṣik, bāb fi l-muḥrimah tuḥaṭṭī wajha-hā; IBN MĀJAH, Sunan, Manāṣik, bāb al-muḥrimah tusdīl al-thawb ‘alā wajbi-hā.
2 ABŪ DĀWŪD, Sunan, Manāṣik, bāb tahriṃ haram Makkah; IBN MĀJAH, Sunan, Manāṣik, bāb al-nuṣūl bi Minā. 3 IBN AḤMAD wa-l-mathānî, 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 – ﷺ – said: Yes. And that was during ḥajjat al-wadā’.’ 1 Jābir ibn ʿAbdillāh narrates: ‘A woman brought her child to the Prophet – ﷺ – 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.

Shabīb ibn Gharqadah narrates from Jamrah bint Quḥāfāb that she said:

I was with ʿumm al-muʾminīn Umm Salamah during ḥajjat al-wadāʾ. Then I heard the Prophet – ﷺ – say: O my ummab (ya ʿummata), have I conveyed the message to you? She says: My little boy asked why is the Prophet – ﷺ – calling to his mother? She says: I said: My son, he means his ummab. 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 Ṭāḥmān ibn Ḥuṣayn narrated about his grandmother Sarrā 2 bint Nabhān who had been a temple priestess before embracing Islam:

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

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1 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Ṣaḥīḥ, Ḥajj, bāb waḥūb al-hajj wa sādīq; MUSLIM, Ṣaḥīḥ, Ḥajj, bāb al-hajj ʿan al-ṣājīq. 2 AL-TIRMIDHĪ, Ḥāmiʾ, Ḥajj, bāb mā jāʾa fī ḥajj al-sabr, IBN MĀJAH, Sunan, Manāṣik, bāb mā jāʾa fī ḥajj al-sabr; MUSLIM has narrated it from Ibn ʿAbbās in Ṣaḥīḥ, Ḥajj, bāb sīḥat ḥajj al-sabr. 3 ABŪ NUʿAYM ASBAḤĀNĪ, Maʿrīṣat al-ṣaḥāb, v. 206.
this day? [The people] said: God and his Messenger know best. He said: This is the best of the days of tashrīq [10 Dhū l-Hijjah]. Then he said: What is this town? They said: God and His Messenger know best. He said, al-maš’ar al-ḥarām. 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-Rahmān ibn Ḥumayd has narrated from his father, from his mother Umm Kulthūm bint ‘Uqbah from Busrah bint Ṣafwān that she said: ‘The Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam – called on [us] while I was combing the hair of Ā’ishah. He said: Busrah, who is proposing marriage to Umm Kulthūm? I said: So-and-so and ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn ‘Awf. He said: Then why not marry [her] to ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn ‘Awf, for he is among the best of the Muslims and of their leaders? I said: Umm Kulthūm dislikes to marry someone who already has a wife; nor does she like to ask ‘Abd al-Rahmān [to divorce] his previous wife, for she is her cousin. Then the Prophet – salla l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam – 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 Kulthūm. She called ‘Abd al-Rahmān, and [her relatives] Khālid ibn Sa‘īd ibn al-‘Ās and ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān. These two married her to ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn ‘Awf.2

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

is an important hadith narrated from her by 'Amr ibn al-Hārith, and worth quoting in full:

She said: The Prophet — șalla 1-lāhū 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 'Abdullāh was a man of light hand [i.e. of little wealth]. I said to him: Ask the Messenger of God for me — șalla 1-lāhū 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 — șalla 1-lāhū 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 — șalla 1-lāhū 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 — șalla 1-lāhū ʿalay-hi wa sallam — that it is Zaynab at the door. The Prophet — șalla 1-lāhū ʿalay-hi wa sallam — said: Which Zaynab? Bilāl said: Zaynab, the wife of 'Abdullāh, 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 — șalla 1-lāhū 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 hadith 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

¹Al-Bukhārī, Šahīh, Zakāh, bāb al-zakāh ʿalā 1-zawj wa-l-aytām fi l-hijr, Muslim Šahīh, Zakāh, bāb faḍl al-nafaqah wa-l-ṣadaqah ʿalā l-aqrābin wa-l-zawj...
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, Ibrāhim, that she said:

O Messenger of God – șalla l-lāhū ʿalay-hi wa sallam – you convey all good news and glad tidings to the men, and do not tell women glad tidings. The Prophet – șalla l-lāhū ʿalay-hi 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 – șalla l-lāhū ʿalay-hi 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 Busrah bint Ṣafwān.² On such occasions

¹ABŪ NUʿAYM AŠBAHĀNI, Maʿrifat al-sahābah, v. 253. ²Ibn Shabbah AL-NUMAYRĪ (d. 262), Akhbār al-madīnah 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.

ʼAbdullāh ibn al-Ḥārith al-Ḥāshimī has narrated from Umm al-Faṣṭ that she said:

The Messenger of God – salla l-lābu ʻalay-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 ʻalay-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-Ḥārith, from Umm al-Faṣṭ that she said:

The Prophet – salla l-lābu ʻalay-hi wa sallam – called upon [her husband] ʻAbbās, the uncle of the Prophet, while he was ill. ʻAbbās wished to die. The Prophet – salla l-lābu ʻalay-hi wa sallam – said: O ʻAbbās, 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 respiited, you will have a chance to ask forgiveness. So do not wish death.²

The Prophet visited al-Rubayyiʿ bint Muʿawwidh on the morning of her marriage. She narrates:

The Messenger of God – salla l-lābu ʻalay-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 ʻalay-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 naft prayer in her house and said: ‘O Umm Sulaym, when you pray jārīd ṣalāh, then say subḥān al-lāh ten times, al-ḥamdul il-lāh ten times and al-lāhū akbar ten times. Then ask God whatever you want: for you will be answered with Yes, Yes, Yes.’ Anas ibn Mālik also narrates:

The Prophet – salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi 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 ʿUmayr. One day, the Prophet – salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam – visited us and said: Why is Abū ʿUmayr down-hearted? Umm Sulaym said: his ʿawāb [a small bird] that he used to play with has died. The Prophet – salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam – began to stroke his head and said [consoling him with a little rhyme]: O Abū ʿUmayr, what befell mugbayr [the bird]? 1

The Messenger of God respected Umm Ḥarām 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 Ḥarām bint Mīlḥān narrated to me that the Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam – took rest in her house once. Then he woke up and he was smiling. I said: O Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi 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 – salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi 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. 2

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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-ṣabī wa qabla an yūlud li-l-rajuḥ; Muslim, Sahih, Adab, bāb isḥāb ṭabniṭ al-mawādīʿ ʿinda wilādatī-hi; Abū Dāwūd, Sunan, Adab, bāb ḥi l-rajiḥ yatakannā wa layṣa la-hu wālaḍ. 3 Al-Bukhārī, Sahih, Taʿbīr, bāb al-naʿāwab bi-l-nabār, ibn Al-ʿAthir, Usd al-ghabāb, vii. 305. (The naval campaign, to Cyprus in 27 AH, took place under Muʿāwiya’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 ḥadīth 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 īshā. 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."1

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 Mu'ādh’s coming to the Yemen: ‘Mu'ādh 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 Mu'ādh at that time was eighteen years old."2 Ismā'il al-Bazzār has narrated that Umm ʿAffī said: ‘I saw Āli ibn Abī Ṭālib wearing a red cloak like the cloaks of labourers; it had a white patch on it."3 Abū Ubaydah has narrated from Luḥa'ah, the freed slave of Umm al-Hakam 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]."4

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

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1 Ibn Hishām, al-Sīrah al-nabawiyyah, ii. 43–44. 2 Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, al-ʾIstiṣbāb, ii. 708. 3 Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, al-Khumūl wa-l-tawadhū, no. 132. 4 Ibn Saʿīd, 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."^1 Abū l-Šabāḥ has narrated from Umm Kathir bint Marqad that she said: 'I and my sister called on Anas ibn Mālik. 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."^2 Bishr ibn ʿUmar narrates from Umm ʿAbdān, wife of Hishām ibn Hassān, that she said: 'We were staying with Muḥammad ibn Sirīn 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]."^3 Āṣim al-Əhwāl narrates from Karīmah bint Sirīn that she said: 'I asked ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar: 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 – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – has prohibited fasting on the day of sacrifice."^4 Ibn ʿUmar was indicating that she must do the fast as she had vowed to, but on another day.

ʿUmar ibn Qays narrated from his mother that she called on ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Zubayr in his house while he was praying. A snake fell from the roof onto his son Hāshim, and coiled itself on his stomach:^5

All the people of the house cried Snake! and chased it until they killed it. But ʿAbdullāh 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? Hāshim's

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^1 AL-DHAHABI, Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ, ii. 74. ^2 BAHSAL AL-WĀSITĪ (d. 292), Taʿrīkh Wāsit, 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. ^3 AL-KHATTĪB AL-BAGHDĀDI, Taʿrīkh Baghdādī, v. 335. ^4 IBN ḤIBBĀN (d. 354), K. al-Thiqāt, v. 343. ^5 IBN ʿASAKIR, Taʿrīkh Dimashq al-kabīr (al-Fuṣ al-thālith min tarājim harf al-ʿayn), 413.
mother said: May God have mercy on you! If we do not, does not your son also matter to you? 'Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr said: Woe to you! what would have been left of my prayer if I had turned away?

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

Sometimes, following the Prophet’s example, it was the scholars who would call on the women. Ḥazzān ibn Ṣa‘īd has narrated from Umm al-Ṣa‘bah that she said: ‘Abū l-Dardā’ visited us at the time of fitnāh 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].  

Ismā‘il ibn ‘Ubaydullāh has narrated from Karīmah bint Ḥāshās al-Muzaniyyah that she said: I heard Abū Hurayrah in the house of Umm al-Dardā 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.

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. It has long

1 'Abū Dāwūd, Sunan, Tarajjul, bāb mā jā‘a fi l-rukhsha. Muslims are discouraged from imitating non-Muslims in matters and manners connected to the non-Muslims’ religious symbols or worship.  

2 Al-Khaṭīb Al-Baghdādi, Talkībis al-mutasabib, i. 406. Fitnāh here refers to the civil strife among the Muslims from the latter part of the rule of Uthmān through the rule of ‘Aī.  


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 traveling 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 ‘Amr ibn Abī Salamah that he said: ‘I said to Awzā‘ī: Abū ‘Amr [kunyah of Imām Awzā‘ī], 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 ‘Abdillāh 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. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal commended travelling to get a higher isnād, and gave this example: “Alqamah and al-Aswād 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 sunnāhs 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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1 AL-HAKIM, Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth, 10–11. 2 IBN AL-ṢALĀH, Muqaddimah, 148.
for scholars from different centres of learning in the Islamic world to meet. Sometimes, students of hadith undertook ḥajj journeys with the primary intention of meeting the ulema.\(^1\) 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-wada\(^c\). 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 ḥajj] 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 – salla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – and I also was with him and I had two golden earrings. The Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – said: Two metals of the Fire. So no-one from our house wears any jewelry other than silver.’\(^2\)

Yūnus ibn Abī Ishāq narrates from his mother al-Ḥāliyah bint Ayfa\(^c\) ibn Sharāḥil that she did ḥajj with Umm Maḥabbah. The two of them called on Ṭabiḥah, greeted her with salām, and asked her questions and heard hadiths from her.\(^3\) Abū Ḥibbān narrates from his father from Maryam bint Ṭāriq that she told

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

Kathīr ibn Ziyād narrates from Mussah al-Azdiyyah that she said: I did ḥajj, then I called on Umm Salamah. I said: O ʿumm al-muʾminin, 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 ʿalla 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 ʿĀʾishah 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 ihrām? [ʿĀʾishah] 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 Hāni, d. 871) bint al-Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Qaḍī al-Qudāt Taqī al-Dīn al-Hūrimiyyah. She was a granddaughter of the qāḍī Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Qayāṭi, and the mother al-ʿAllāmah Ṣayf al-Dīn al-Ḥanafī, born on 15 Shaʿbān 678, a Friday, in Egypt. Her maternal grandfather was specially solicitous of her education and took her to Makkah, where she studied ḥadīth with ʿAffī al-Dīn al-Nashāwārī, Abū l-ʿAbbās ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭlīc; Shiḥāb al-

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Dīn Zahiriyya and Muḥammad al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī. She continued her studies in Egypt.⁴

Women also undertook journeys that were expressly for knowledge. The famous expert of hadīth, much sought after for her high isnād, Shaykhah Umm al-Kirām Karīmah bint Ahmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥātim al-Marwaziyyah, (d. 463) travelled in the path of knowledge to Sarakhs, Isfahan, Jerusalem, and then to Makkah. Al-Dhahabī says: ‘Her father was from Kūshmīhan then travelled with her to Jerusalem and returned with her to Makkah […] She studied Sahih al-Bukhari with Abū I-Haytham al-Kūshmīhānī; she studied also with Zāhir ibn Ahmad Sarkerthin and ‘Abdullāh ibn Yūsuf ibn Bāmūyah al-Aṣbahānī.’¹

Another scholar who made many journeys in the cause of knowledge of the religion is the shaykhah of high isnād Umm ‘Abd al-Karīm Fāṭimah bint Sa’d al-Khayr ibn Muḥammad ibn Sahil al-Anṣāri al-Andalusī al-Balānšī (?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 Fāṭimah, who travelled so much and so widely, did not travel to the Ḥaramayn, but the sources do not record that she did the ḥajj. Her extraordinary toil (she was attending ḥadīth 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 hadīth, the different ways in which hadīths were passed from teachers to students, and the documentation that accompanied this, I present a brief sketch of the scholarly career of Fāṭimah 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

¹AL-DHABAB, Siyar a’lām 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, Wāṣiṭ 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 Qalānīš (Damascus) was perhaps the most important one, where ḥadith classes were held regularly and well attended by both men and women. Shaykh Ahmad ibn Ḥāfiz ibn Šaṣṭā studied Ḥadith Abī ‘Amr ‘Uthmān ibn Muḥammad al-Samargandi there in 572. Khadijah bint Abi Bakr ibn Salmān al-Wāṣiẓ al-Ḥamawī, studied in a class of twenty students, Abū Dāhir Thalūt of Abū ‘Uthmān Thalūt ibn ‘Abbād al-Sayrafi al-Baṣrī (d. 238) with ‘Abd al-Jalīl ibn Abī Ghālib ibn Abī 1-Ma‘alī al-Surayjānī in a Damascus ribāṭ in 610. Āsiyah bint Muḥam-

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1 An example: Asmā‘ bint Ahmad ibn ‘Alām ibn Maḥmūd ibn ‘Umar al-Ḥarrānī attended a class of 17 students on K. al-Adab of AL-BAYHAQI (d. 458) with Za‘yn al-Dīn Ayyūb ibn Nīmah ibn Muḥammad ibn Nīmah al-Maqdīsī 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 ḥadiths; many eminent Companions served as sentries in the ribāṭs. 3 LEDER et al., Mu‘jam al-sāma‘āt al-Dimashqīyab, 305–06. 4 Ibid., 119, 290.
mad ibn ʿAlī al-Dimashqī al-Iskāf studied Amāʿī Ibn Bishrān of Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Malīk ibn Muḥammad ibn Bishrān (d. 430) with Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn ʿIsā Abū Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Maghārī in Ribāṭ 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-ʿImām al-Zāhīd Taqī al-Dīn Abī Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAlī ʾĀḥmad ibn Faḍl al-Wāṣiqiyyah al-Dimashqiyyah (d. 740), studied at home with her father al-Fawāʾid al-Muṣṭafāzh wa-l-Fawāʾid al-Muṣṭaqātah, containing the ḥadīths of Abū l-Fath ʿAbdullāh ibn Ahmad ibn Abī l-Fath al-Khiraqī (d. 579), selected by Muḥammad ibn Makkī ibn Abī l-Rajāʾ ibn al-Faḍl.\(^2\) In Qāsyūn in Damascus in 718, Malikah bint al-Jamāl ibn ʿAlī studied K. al-Shukr li-l-lāh taʿāla of Ibn Abī l-Dunyā (d. 281) with her maternal grandfather Abū Bakr ibn Zayn al-Dīn Abī l-ʿAbbās ʿĀḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Dāʾim al-Maqdīsī in his house.\(^3\) She studied, also with him and in his house, K. al-Karam wa-l-jūd wa-l-sakhāʾ al-nuṣūs of Abū Shaykh Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Barjalānī (d. 238).\(^4\)

Among those who attended classes in the houses of others is Asmāʾ bint Abī Bakr ibn Yūnus al-Dimashqiyyah (d. 691). She studied the Ḥadīth Quṣṣ Sāʾidah al-ʿIyādī in the narration of Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn ʿĀḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Muʿaddil al-Rāzī (d. 525), with Jaʿfar ibn ʿAlī ibn Ḥibatillāh al-Hamadānī. in

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the house of Ibn al-Hilāl in 635. Another example is ʿAdliyyah bint Abī Bakr ibn ʿAḍīd, the grandmother of Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-ʿAqrabānī. She studied Forty Hadiths of Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Aslam ibn Sālim al-Kīndī al-Ṭūsī (d. 242) with Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Ḥazm in the house of a fellow-student, Ismāʿīl ibn Ḥibrīm ibn Sālim al-Khubbāz. 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-Fawaʾid al-Muntaqāb al-gharāʾib ʿan al-shuyūkh al-ʿawālī, narrated by Abī Tāhir Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Muhallīs, selected by Abū l-Fath ibn Abī l-Fawāris, with the aged shaykhah Umm al-Fīyān Ḥantamah bint al-Shaykh Abū l-Fath al-Mufarrīj ibn ʿAlī ibn Maslamah (d. ca. 630) in her house in Damascus in 628. Then again the class might be held in a house other than that of either student or teacher: for example, Āminah bint Āḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ahmad ibn Āḥmad ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Rājih studied Amāli Abī Bakr Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān ibn al-Ḥārith al-Bāghbinī al-Wāsīṭī with Shaykhah Umm Muḥammad Hadiyyah bint ʿAlī ibn ʿAskar al-Baghdādī (d. 712) and Saʿd al-Dīn Yahyā ibn Muḥammad ibn Saʿd ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Maqdīsī (d. 721) in the house of Shaykh Shams al-Dīn Abīl-Raḥmān ibn Tāj al-Dīn Abīl-Raḥmān ibn ʿUmar Ibn ʿIwāḍ al-Maqdīsī in 710.

The scale of the women’s efforts with ḥadith study in private homes may be gauged from the list transcribed below of the women who, with Taqī 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 ḥadiths of al-Dibājī and others. 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

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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 Aḥmad Amīnah
Umm ʿAbdillāh Khadijā bt. Shaykh Abī ʿUmar b. Qudāmah
Umm Ḥamzah Sārah bt. ʿUbaydillāh b. Ahmad b. Muḥammad b. Qudāmah
Umm Ibrāhīm ʿAziziyyah bt. ʿAbd al-Ḥādī b. Yūsuf b. Muḥammad b. Qudāmah
Umm Ibrāhīm Āsiyah bt. Shujah
Umm Muḥammad Zaynab bt. Aḥmad b. ʿUbaydullāh b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Qudāmah
Umm ʿAbd al-Raḥīm bint ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Maqdisī
Umm Muḥammad Ṣafiyyah and Umm Muḥammad Zaynab bt. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Saʿd b. ʿAbdillāh al-Maqdisī
Umm ʿAbd al-Raḥīm bt. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Maqdisī

Umm Sulaymān ʿĀʾishah
Umm Aḥmad Ṣafiyyah and Umm Muḥammad Fāṭimah
bt. Shaykh Muwaffaq al-Dīn b. Qudāmah
Umm ʿAbdillāh Āsiyah and Umm Muḥammad Fāṭimah
bt. Muḥammad b. Khalīf b. Rajih
Umm ʿUmar Fāṭimah bt. ʿAbd al-Dāʾīm b. Niʿmah
Umm Muḥammad Zaynab
and Umm Ahmād Āsiyah
bt. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ismāʿīl b. Manṣūr
Umm Aḥmad Zaynab and
Umm ʿAbdillāh Fāṭimah bt. Makkī b. ʿAlī al-Ḥarrānī
Umm Muḥammad Ṣafiyyah
and Umm Muḥammad Zaynab bt. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Saʿd b. ʿAbdillāh al-Maqdisī

Names of women teachers, extracted and transcribed from the ʾsamāʾ shown on the next page.
Samā′ of a very large class on some of the ḥadīths 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-Ansāriyyah learnt sūrah Qāf from hearing the Prophet recite it in the prayer. Ibn Jābir and ʿUthmān ibn Abī l-ʿAtikah 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-Ḥanābilaḥ, also known as al-Jāmiʿ al-Muzaffarī in Ṣāliḥīyyah in Qāsyūn, Damascus. The building of the mosque started in 598. Dr. Muḥammad Mutīʿ al-Ḥāfiẓ has written a 720-page history of this mosque,⁴ including in it records of the ḥadīth classes held there, with the names of

¹This 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 ʿAlī DABŪZ, Taʾrīkh al-maqbūrāt al-kabīr, 406–07, and Badriyyah bint Hamad AL-SHAQAṢIYYAH, al-Sīrah al-zakiryyah li-l-marʿah al-Ibbāḍiyah, 21. ²For examples, see ʿAjjāj AL-KHAṬĪB, Uṣūl al-ḥadīth, 145. ³AL-BUKHĀRĪ, al-Taʾrīkh al-saghir, i. 193; AL-DHĀHABI, Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ, iv. 278. ⁴Mutīʿ AL-ḤĀFIẒ, Jāmiʿ al-Ḥanābilaḥ al-Muzaffarī (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir al-Islāmīyyah, in 1423/2002). (See photo, p. 96 below.)
the many women who studied different compilations of ḥadīth. Another prestigious teaching venue was the great Umayyad Mosque in Damascus: here too women students attended the same classes as men. For example: Asmāʿ bint Aḥmad ibn ʿAlam ibn Maḥmūd ibn ʿUmar al-Ḥarrānī studied, in a class of 20, al-Majālis al-kbamsah of Abū Ṭāhir Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Silāfi al-Aṣbahānī (d. 576) with Ismāʿīl ibn ʿUmar ibn Abī l-Faḍl ibn Naṣr al-Ḥamawi ʿDiyāʾ al-Dīn in al-Jāmiʿ al-Amawi in 724,1 Qaṭlū al-Rūmiyyah studied, in a class of 43, the third part of K. al-Qaḍāʿ of Abū l-Ḥārith Surayj ibn Yūnus ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Shuayh al-Balkhī (d. 235) with four teachers – Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn al-Zakī ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Yūsuf al-Mizzī, ʿAlam al-Dīn al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Birzālī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ghanāʾīm al-Muhandis and Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Raqiqi in al-Jāmiʿ al-Amawi in 733.2

Another important mosque where women attended ḥadīth classes was the Jāmiʿ of Bayt al-Abbar (Syria). An example is Ruqayyāh bint Dāwūd ibn ʿUmar ibn Yūsuf ibn Yaḥyā al-Shāfiʿī, who studied – in a class of 22 – K. al-Karam wa-l-jīd wa sakāhā al-nuṣūs of Abū Shaykh Muḥammad ibn al-Husayn al-Barjalānī (d. 238) with Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Musallam ibn Salmān al-Irbālī, in 631.3

Schools

Women also attended ḥadīth 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 ḥadīth classes in large numbers was al-Madrasah al-Umariyyah, founded by Shaykh Abū ʿUmar al-Maqdisi in 557 in ʿAṣlāhīyyah in Damascus. Registers of attendance at this school have been

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1LEDER et al., Muʿjam al-samāʿāt al-Dimashqīyyah, 307, 106. 2Ibid., 93, 478. 3Ibid., 106, 307.
compiled in the history of it by Dr. Muḥammad Muṭṭir al-Ḥāfiẓ. Among the earliest documents relates to the year 604, when the famous teacher of ḥadīth Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar ibn Ṭabrazad 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-Wāḥid al-Maqdisiyah 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-Zāhīd Taqī al-Dīn Abī Ishāq Ibrāhīm ṬAli ibn Aḥmad ibn Fadl al-Wāsitiyyah studied K. Tuhfah Id al-Fitr of Zahir ibn Ṭahir ibn Muḥammad al-Shāḥāmī al-Muʿaddil (d. 533) and Ḥadīth Abū Ṭāhir al-Ziyādī with ṬAli ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Dāwūd ibn al-ʿAṭṭār al-Dimashqī in 724.²


In another school, the Madrasah al-Mismāriyyah Asmāʾ bint Abī Bakr ibn Hamzah al-Mardāwī studied, in a class of 19, Ḥadīth Bakr ibn Aḥmad al-Shīrāzī, in 688 – her teacher was Zaynab bint Makki 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-Mızzī (d. 742) would teach. For women also attended classes there in large number. For example, Asmāʾ bint al-Imām Taqī al-Dīn

Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Ǧābir studied in a class of 28 the Forty Hadīths of Ḥasan ibn Sufyān ibn Āmir al-Shaybānī (d. 303), with the head of the school, Ḥāfiz Abū l-Ḥajjāj Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mizzī in 741.¹

Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Diyā'īyyah was another school of ḥadīth in Damascus. Here Shaykhah Asmā' bint Muhammad ibn al-Kamāl 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Maqdisīyyah studied, in a class of 34, Amārī al-Naqgāsh with the most famous teacher of ḥadīth at that time, Fakhr al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad 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. **Samā'** (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 samā', hearing the words of the teacher spoken from memory or from the teacher's book, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 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 (samī'ī) so-and-so say" or "he narrated to me (hadath-nī)" or "he narrated to us" or "he informed us (akhbar-nā)" or "he provided to us information (anbā'ī-nā)"."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-Ṣalāḥ, Mughaddimah, 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 ḥadīth. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 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.’\(^1\) 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.\(^2\)

‘Ā’ishah was certainly what we would call a child prodigy, and so her hearing of ḥadīths as a young girl\(^3\) may be considered out of the ordinary. But the examples of young girls listening to ḥadīth and attending assemblies for that purpose, especially in the later centuries, are plentiful.

2 al-‘ard

The term al-‘ard (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

\(^1\)Ibid., 54–56. \(^2\)IBN AL-ṢALĀḤ, Muqaddimah, 79. \(^3\)AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, al-Kifāyah, 58.
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-Khaṭīb says: ‘Most fuqahā’ and all the imāms of the knowledge [i.e. hadīth] 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 ‘ard 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 sama‘ 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 sama‘ and ‘he informed us’ for ‘ard. Ibn al-Ṣalāh cites Muḥammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tamīmī al-Jawharī as saying: ‘This is the opinion of most people of hadīth, 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

¹IBN AL-ṢALĀH, Mugaddimah, 82. ²AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDI, al-Kifāyah, 259–60. ³AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, ʿIlm, bāb mā ja‘a fī l-ʿilm. ⁴IBN AL-ṢALĀH, Mugaddimah, 83. ⁵Ibid. ⁶Ibid., 90–92. ⁷Ibid., 92.
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(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-Baghdaḍī says: 'The people differ regarding ījāzah of ḥadīths. 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-Ṣaḥāḥ 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-BAGHDĀDI, al-Kīfīyāh, 311. ³Ibid., 101.
5 *al-Mukātabah*

The term *mukātabah* means correspondence whereby the teacher transmits a written copy of his ḥadith to the student; if combined with explicit permission to narrate the ḥadith from him, it becomes like an *ijāzhah*. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ says: ‘Many great scholars of ḥadith like Layth ibn Saʿd and Mansūr 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 Hāshim. She wrote to the Companion, al-Nuʿmān ibn Bashīr (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-Nuʿmān ibn Bashīr ‘heard’, and he wrote her a detailed letter in reply.

6 *al-Islām*

The term *islām* is used where the teacher informs the student that this ḥadith 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 ḥadith that narration of [ḥadith received like] that is not allowed.’

7 *al-Waṣīyyah*

*Waṣīyyah* 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 *waṣīyyah*, but the majority, in the absence of explicit permission (i.e. an *ijāzhah*) 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 ījāzh.1 An example of wijādah, from the time of the Companions’ Successors, is that Hammām ibn Yaḥyā narrated that the mother of Sulaymān al-Yashkūrī brought out his book, and it was read out to Thābit, Qatādah, Abū Bishr, al-Ḥasan and Muṭṭar rif. Then they, except for Thābit, narrated the whole of that; Thābit narrated from it only one ḥadīth.2 Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Ibrāhim al-Shāfīī says: Samānah bint Hamdān narrated to me saying: ‘I found in the book of my grandfather al-Waḍḍāḥ ibn Ḥassān, where he says: ʿAmr ibn Shimar has narrated to us from Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī, from ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn, from Jābir ibn ʿAbdillāh, that when the Prophet – salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam – sat down on the pulpit he would say...’3

Documentation of the samāʿc and ījāzh

It has long been an established tradition among the scholars of ḥadīth to preserve samāʿs and ījāzabs. These documents are a precious resource. The samāʿs, 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 samāʿs look like; they vary greatly in style, some being very formal and written in an accomplished

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1Ibid., 106. 2Al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, al-Kifāyah, 354. 3Id., Taʾrīkh 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'ā*³. Below, I give partial translation of two *samā‘*s mentioning the shaykhah, Umm Muhammad Āminah bint Ibrāhīm al-Wāsitiyyah; 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 ʿAbd al-Khaliq ibn Zāhir ibn Tāhir al-Shaḥḥāmī* (d. 549), compiled by ʿAlī al-Shahrastānī, with the shaykh, Badr al-Dīn Abū Ḥafs ʿUmar ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Saʿd ibn ʿAbd al-Kimānī al-Naysābūrī, who heard the book from Abū Bakr al-Qāsim ibn Abī Saʿd al-Ṣaffar, in al-Jāmi⁶ al-Muẓaffarī in Mt. Qāsyūn on Saturday 25 Ṣafar 667 with the reading of Najm al-Dīn Mūsā ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Yāḥyā al-Shaqrāwī, and he gave her permission.²

She heard Juz³ ʿHanbal ibn Ishāq from her father Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Wāṣiti, by his hearing from al-Shaykh Abū Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Barākāt ibn Abī l-Saʿādāt al-Harīmī, by his narration from Abū Shākir Yūsuf ibn Yūsuf al-Saqlātūnī, by his hearing from Abū l-Ḥasan ibn Shādhān al-Baghdādī al-Bazzāz, from Abū ʿAmr ʿUthmān ibn ʿAbd al-Můshā ibn al-Sammāk, from Abū ʿAlī ʿHanbal ibn Ishāq al-Shaybānī. That was on Sunday 17 Jumādā al-Ūlā 673 at the house of the shaykh in Mt. Qāsyūn in Damascus.²

In both translations above, the names of others attending the class are omitted. Next, translation of an *istid'ā*³ 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 *jaqīb* Abū ʿUmar Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Muḥammad ibn Qudāmah, for his

son ʿAbdullāh, his daughter Zaynab, the son of his son Ahmad ibn ʿUmar, for Muḥammad ibn Khalaf ibn Rājḥ ibn Bilāl ibn ʿIsā, for his son Abū l-Faṭḥ Ahmad, daughter of Aḥsīyah, and for their mother Āminah bint Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Qudāmah, for all the ḥadīths that they received by hearing and then received by ĵāzāh, and the rest of what is allowed for them to narrate, without them [the shaykhs, giving permission and] being responsible for whatever invalidates the ĵāzāh. May they continue doing service to the people. Written in the last ten [days] of ʿṢāfār in 579. And praise is due to God alone, and His Mercy on Muḥammad the Prophet and His peace.

Istidʿār and first words of the ĵāzāh translated above. (Detail of p. 97 MUTĪʾ AL-HĀFĪZ, al-Madrasah al-ʿUmariyah.)

I have given them ĵāzāh, may God guide them to His obedience, in all that they asked ĵāzāh for, after avoiding what can weaken an ĵāzāh. May God guide us and them to what pleases Him. Written by Muḥammad ibn Ḥamzah ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Ṣaqr on 24 ʿṢāfār, 579 in Damascus, while praising God, Glorified is He, and praying for mercy and peace on our master Muḥammad, 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 masmūʿāt and ĵāzāt on the way of the salaf, may God have mercy on them. It is written by Barākāt ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ṭāhir ibn Barākāt al-Khushūʿī al-Qurashi. That was on Wednesday 12 Rabīʿ al-Ākhir 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 hadīth Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Ya‘mūrī ibn Sayyid al-Nās [d. 734] was asked: Who gave ijāzah to Ruqayyah bint Ismā‘īl ibn al-Anmāṭī [d. 676]?

Then he answered: As for Ruqayyah bint Ismā‘īl 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 Ismā‘īl 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 Īsā 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 Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Abdillāh 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-‘Ulā year 614, and similarly, they grant ijāzah to Ṣafī and Jumū‘ah, 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 ‘Abd al-Ṣamad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Faḍl al-Anṣārī.’

Below that is:

Like that says Muḥammad ibn Ḥibatullāh, ibn Muḥammad ibn Mu‘ammīl 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 shaykhīs.  

1 Muḥammad al-Rawandi, Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Ya‘marī al-‘Ajwīh, ii. 229–32.
FĀTIMAH BINT SAʿD AL-KHAYR (?525–600)

Fātimah’s father, Saʿd al-Khayr, was himself a scholar. One of his eminent students, al-Samʿānī (author of al-Ansāb), describes him as mubaddith, 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 Saʿd 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 samāʾ records her hearing al-Dārāqūṭnī’s K. al-Duʿafāʾ al-matrūkīn in Dhū l-Qaʿdah 529; a samāʾ at the end of a copy of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī’s al-Jāmiʿ li-akhlāq al-rāwī wa ʿādāb al-sāmiʿ records her hearing it in Rabiʿ al-Awwal and Rabiʿ al-Ākhir 529. Al-Mundhirī notes that Saʿd 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 Saʿd al-Khayr heard from her all of Muʿjam al-kabīr (printed now in 37 volumes) and Muʿjam al-saghīr (2 volumes).

¹ AL-SAMʿĀNĪ, al-Ansāb, in loco ‘al-balansi’. ² IBN NUQṬAH, al-Taqīyīd, 409. ³ AL-MUNDHIRĪ, Takmilah, ii. 15.
The study journeys of Fātimah 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 Tāhir al-Shaḥḥāmī, Abū Ghālib Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Banā̀, 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 Ibrāhīm 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-Wāʿījī for his fame as a preacher, and al-Raʾīs for the social standing he enjoyed through relations with the Ayyūbid court: he served as secretary for Nūr al-Dīn. The historian Abū Shāmā records that he was held in high esteem by both Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (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,\(^3\) Ḥadīth al-Khiraqī,\(^4\) Ziyādat Amālī Imām Mālik,\(^5\) and

\(^1\) Al-Dhahabī, Tarīkh al-ʾIslām (sub anno 591–600), 461. \(^2\) Id., Siyar al-ʾālam al-mubalāt, xxi. 393–96. \(^3\) Ibn Hājr, al-ʾMajmāʾ al-maʿūssas, i. 482–83. \(^4\) Ibid., i. 263. \(^5\) Ibid., ii. 114.
other works. Ismā'īl ibn ‘Azzūn1 read with her al-Ṭabarānī’s Muṣjam al-kabīr, as did Diyā? al-Dīn al-Maqdisī,2 who carried it to Damascus. ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abd al-Wāḥid ibn ‘Allāq studied with her Ḥadīth al-Qudūrī3 Fawā'id Abū Nasr,4 and Juz’ al-Ghīṭrifī.5 His home-city was in Egypt. Her knowledge of Ḥadīth passed to Tinnīs in Egypt through Abū l-Qāsim ibn Ḥusayn al-Qurashi al-Tinnīsī;6 to Hamadan through the jurist Abū Muhammad Ishāq ibn Muḥammad al-Hamadānī; through Abū l-Hasan ibn al-Qāsim al-Jūṭī to Jīt (near Nablus).7 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 Fātimah bint Sa‘d al-Khayr in the Dictionary that I have compiled of the Muḥad-dīthāt runs to 20 pages.

She died in Cairo in the year 600, at the age of 78. She was buried below the mountain called Muqāṭṭam.8

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1Ibid. 2Ibid., ii. 383–84. 3Ibid., i. 322. 4Ibid., i. 329. 5Ibid., ii. 212. 6AL-MUNDHIRI, Takmilah, ii. 50. 7Ibid., iii. 283. 8Ibid., ii. 14.
Chapter 4

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 Shari̇’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

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. ʿAbd Rabbīh ibn al-Ḥakam has narrated from the daughter of Ruqayyqah from her mother that she said: ‘When the Prophet – s al-l-lāhu ʿalay-bi wa-sallam – came seeking victory at Ṭāʾīf, he came to me [...]’¹ and then she mentioned the whole ḥadīth. Ḥubābah bint ʿAjlān also got ḥadīth from her mother: She has narrated from Ḥubābah bint ʿAjlān from her mother, Umm Ḥafṣ, from Ṣafiyyah bint Jarīr, from Umm Ḥakim bint Waddāc that she said: ‘I heard the Messenger of God – s al-l-lāhu ʿalay-bi 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: Alī bint Nāṣir al-Dīn Muhammad learnt ḥadīth from her mother, the great muhaddithah, Umm Muḥammad ʿĀʾishah bint Sayf al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn Ḥisā al-Ḥanāfī (d. 793). One of the ḥadīth works that she studied with her was Fawāʾid of Abū Ahmad al-Ḥakim (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-Fuzāriyyah (tābiʿiyyah), who narrated from her father from the Prophet;⁴ Jabalah bint Muṣaffah al-Ḥāmiriyyah (tābiʿiyyah), who narrated from her father from Alī;⁵ and Ḥafṣah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq.⁶ In the later centuries: Hind bint Jaʿfar ibn ʿAbd al-Razzāq (5th c.)

studied with her father, 1 Umm Salamah Aminah studied with her father, Abù Sa‘īd Hasan ibn Ishāq ibn Bulbul al-Naysābūrī (d. 348), 2 Warā 3 studied with her father Ahmad ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Khallāl (5th c.), 3 Lu`lu’ah studied the whole al-ʿArba‘īn hadith min al-musāwāt mustakbrājah ʿan thiqāt al-ruwāt of Ḥāfīz Ibn ʿAsakir, with her famous father, Shaykh ʿImād al-Din ibn ʿAsākir al-Dimashqī in 718; 4 Amat al-Raḥīm al-Yūnīyiyah (d. 739) studied the women’s hadith from Musnad of Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal with her father, the great muhaddith and jurist Muhammad ibn Ḥamad al-Yūnī (8th c.); 5 in India the great scholar of hadith and fiqh, Khadijah al-Dihlawiyah (early 14th c.) studied hadith and other subjects with her father, Imām Muhammad Ishāq al-Dihlawī (d. 1262).

There are women who received knowledge of hadith from their grandmothers. For example, Aminah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Laylā narrated from her grandmother Umm Laylā that she said: ‘We pledged allegiance to the Prophet – ʿalla-l-lāhin ʿalayhi wa-sallam.’ 6 The muhaddithah and jurist Fāṭimah bint al-Mundhir ibn al-Zubayr got many hadiths from her grandmother Asmāʾ bint Abī Bakr, which she then passed on to her students. 7 A later muhaddithah, Asmāʾ bint Abī Bakr ibn Hamzah al-Mardāwī studied Hadīth Abū Bakr ibn Ahmad al-Shīrāzī with her grandmother, Zaynab bint Makkī ibn ʿAli ibn Kāmil al-Harrānī (the teacher of al-Mizzi, Ibn Taymiyyah and al-Dhahabī) in Madrasah al-Misrāmiyyah in Jumādah al-Ūlā 688. 8 She also studied other books with her. 9 Umm al-Khayr bint ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Zahirah al-Qurashi studied Nuskhah Abī Muḥāwiyyah, Nuskhah Bakrār ibn Qunaybāh and al-Maṣābiḥ of al-Baghawī

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1 Ibn ʿAsākir, Taʿrīkh Dimashq, (tarājim al-nisāʾ) 436. 2 See the account of al-Hasan ibn Ishāq ibn Bulbul in IBN AL-ṢADĪM, Baghyyat al-ṭalah, 2295-98. 3 Al-Dhahabi, Taʿrīkh al-Īslām (sub anno 561-70), 402. 4 See IBN ʿAsākir, al-ʿArba‘īn hadith min al-musāwāt mustakbrājah ʿan al-ruwāt, 228. 5 Al-Dhahabi Muḥāmmed al-Shuyūkh, i. 189. 6 IBN HIBBĀN, K. al-Thiqāt, iv. 63. 7 Ibid., v. 301. 8 See LEIDER et al., Muḥāmmed al-samāʿat al-Dimashqīyyah, 50, 215. 9 See ibid., 139, 215.
(d. 494) with her maternal grandmother, Umm al-Ḥasan bint ʿAḥmad ibn Qāsim al-Ḥarāzī in Makkah in 762.¹

Among the women who received ḥadīth from their grandfathers is Munyah bint Ṭubah ibn Abī Barazah al-Aslämī. Umm al-Aswād has narrated from Munyah bint Ṭubah that she narrated from her grandfather Abū Barazah that he said: The Messenger of God — ṣalla-l-lāhu ʿalayhi 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 Ḥind bint al-ʿWāzīc ibn Zāriʿ also received ḥadīth from her grandfather, the Companion, Zāriʿ ibn ʿAbīrīʿ Abī-ʿAbdī.³ Duḥyabah and Şafiyah, daughters of ʿUlaybah al-ʿAnbariyah, got ḥadīth from their grandfather Ḥarmalah ibn ʿAbdillāh al-ʿAnbarī, a Companion, and also from their father’s grandmother, Qaylah bint Makhraḥah, another Companion.⁴ Sitt al-ʿArab bint Muḥammad 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 Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, al-Sunan al-kubrā of al-Bayhaqī and Fawāʾid 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 Salām al-Fārisī received and narrated ḥadīth from him.⁶ So also did Jumānah bint al-Musayyab ibn Najabah, wife of the Companion Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān.⁷ Similarly, Zaynab bint Kaʿb ibn ʿUjahrah, wife of the famous scholar among the Companions, Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī, received ḥadīth from him, copiously recorded in the major

hadith compilations. Among the Successors, Umm al-Dardā' al-
Śughrā received many hadiths from her husband Abū l-Dardā'. Šafiyyah bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Makhzūmiyah al-Makkiyyah heard directly from her husband Musalsal bi-l-
awwaliyyah, in Rabī al-Awwal 743. 2 Sitt al-Fuqahā' bint Ibrāhīm al-Wasitiyyah studied Amāli ibn Bishrān of Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-
Malik ibn Muḥammad ibn Bishrān (d. 430) with her husband ʿDiyā' al-Dīn ʿĪsā ibn Abī Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-
Maghāri al-Ḥanbāli in Rībāt al-Qalānīsī on 22 Șafar 703. 3 Zaynab bint Iṣmāʾīl ibn Ahmad studied Ḥadīth of Abū ʿAmr ʿUthmān ibn Muḥammad al-Samarqandi (d. 345) with her husband Qādī Taqī al-Dīn Sulaymān ibn Ḥamzah al-Maqdisī in his house in 715. 4 Dunyā bint Hasan ibn Balbān studied Ḥadīth Abī Ḥusayn ʿAbd al-Wahbāb ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Walīd al-Kilābī (d. 396) with her husband the great muḥaddith and historian ʿAlam al-Dīn al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn al-Birzālī in 728. 5

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 Sirīn, sister of the renowned Muḥammad ibn Sirīn, received hadith from her master Anas ibn Mālik. 6 Hishām ibn Ḥassān from Iyās ibn Muʿāwiyah saying: ‘I did not meet anyone whom I can prefer over Ḥafṣah’. He was asked: ‘What about Ḥasan al-Ṭabarṣī and Muḥammad ibn Sirīn?’ He said: ‘As for me I do not prefer anyone over her. She learnt the Qurʾān by heart when she was twelve years old.’ 7 Though born a slave, Ḥafṣah bint Sirīn 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-
Ṭabarṣī. Her hadiths from her master are in Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī. For

1 Ibn Ḥajar, al-Isābī fi l-tamyīz al-sahābah, viii. 97. 2 Taqī al-Dīn al-Fāṣī, al-Iṣq al-thamin, vi. 41. 3 See Leder et al., Muʿjam al-samāʿat al-Dimashqīyah, 142, 319. 4 Ibid., 110. 312. 5Ibid., 130, 304. 6 Ibn Ḥibbān, K. al-Thiqāt, iv. 194. 7 Al-Mizzī, Tahdhib al-kamāl, xxxv. 152.
example, 'Āṣim 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:


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1 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, Tībīb, bāb mā jadhika fi al-tāˈṣīn. 2 AL-SAYRAFĪNĪ (d. 641), al-Muntakhab min kitāb al-Siyāq li taˈrīkh Nasyābūr, 183. 3 AL-MUNDHIRĪ, al-Tākmilah li-alfayyāt al-naqlab, i. 314. 4 AL-SAMĀˈNĪ, al-Muntakhab min Muˈjam al-shuyūkḥ, iii. 1883.
Hamd ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Wakīl, Abū Ghālib al-Baqillānī and a sizeable group of others.  


VISITING TEACHERS

Women also received ḥadīth from teachers visiting their towns. As before, the practice has the best precedent. On her way back from the Battle of the Camel, ʿĀʾishah stayed as the guest of Ṣafiyah bint al-Ḥārith al-ʿAbdārī in the house of ʿAbdullāh ibn Khalaf in Basrah. Here Ṣafiyah 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 ḥadīth. Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī, narrated from Muḥammad ibn Sīrin that ʿĀʾishah came down as a guest to Ṣafiyah Umm Ṭalaḥah al-Ṭalaḥāt. On seeing Ṣafiyah’s daughters ʿĀʾishah 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
adults.\(^1\) Abdullah ibn Ubayd, the *mu'adhdhin* of the mosque of Jurdan, narrated from Udayah bint Uhban that he said: 'When Ali ibn Abi Talib came here to Basrah, he called on my father, and said: O Abu Muslim, are you not going to help me against these people? My father said: Yes I am. Then he called his slavegirl 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. [Ali] said: No. I do not need you and your sword.\(^2\) Similarly, when Abu Hurayrah came to Damascus and stayed as a guest in the house of Abu l-Dardah, the women used the chance to learn from him. Isma'il ibn Ubaydillah has narrated from Karimah bint al-Hashas al-Muzaniyyah that she said: 'Abu Hurayrah narrated to us when we were in the house of Umm al-Dardah that he heard the Messenger of God – *sa'da lubhu 'alayhi wa-salama* – 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 *Sa'ih al-Bukhari* is one that goes through the great *muaddith* Abu 'Abdillah al-Husayn ibn al-Mubarak al-Zabidi. His place of residence was Baghdad. When once he visited Damascus the people crowded to him to read the *Sa'ih* with him. The class was arranged in al-Jami' al-Muzaffari, beginning at the end of Shawwal 630 and concluding on 10 Dhul-Qa'dah of the same year. The whole *Sa'ib* was read to al-Zabidi in 22 sessions, and the class was attended by the most eminent scholars and jurists. The last surviving person to narrate from al-Zabidi after attending these sessions was Abu l-Abbas Ahmad ibn Abi Talib al-Hajjar, by

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whom the chain of narration to the *Saḥīḥ* 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 *Saḥīḥ*, and in great numbers. Among them were Khadijah bint Muḥammad ibn Saʿd ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Maqdisiyyah (d. 701), and the long-lived Shaykhah Zaynab bint Sulaymān ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Raḥmān al-Isʿārī (d. 705). Ibn Ḥajar confirms this in his account of her: ‘She heard the *Saḥīḥ* from Abū ʿAbdillāh al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Mubārak al-Zabīdī.’  Shaykhah Umm al-Khayr Fāṭimah bint Ibrāhīm ibn Maḥmūd al-Baṭāʿihiyyah also attended and al-Dhahabī confirms it: ‘She heard the *Saḥīḥ* from al-Zabīdī.’

The long-lived shaykhah Umm al-Ḥasan Fāṭimah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAmr al-Farrā only attended two sessions and narrated them. Al-Dhahabī says of Hadiyyah bint ʿAli Ibn ʿAsākir al-Baghdādī: ‘She attended the class of al-Zabīdī.’ Another shaykhah, one well known for her higher *iṣnād*, Sitt al-Wuzarāʾ bint ʿUmar ibn Asʿad ibn al-Munajjā al-Ṭanūkhiyyah also attended. Taqī al-Dīn al-Fāsī says of her: ‘She studied with Ḥusayn ibn al-Mubārak al-Zabīdī, *al-Saḥīḥ* in al-Jāmiʿ al-Muzaffarī and also *Musnad al-Shāfiʿī*.’ Ibn Ḥajar says in his account of ʿĀʾishah bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī al-Maqdisiyyah: ‘She was the last person who narrated *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* with high *iṣnād* by her hearing [it]; and it is a wonderful coincidence that Sitt al-Wuzarāʾ was the last woman in the world among all those who narrated from al-Zabīdī and she died in 716, while this ʿĀʾishah is similar to her in dying in 816 and she had above [Sitt al-Wuzarāʾ] this quality that even from among the men who heard from al-Ḥajjār, the colleague of Sitt al-Wuzarāʾ, none remained in the world other than herself. Between the death of ʿĀʾishah and Sitt

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al-Wuzara' the difference is exactly one hundred years. In the thirteenth century Umm al-Faḍl Naḥṣah bint ʿAbū l-Ṭizz Āḥmad ibn Yūsuf al-Shanwānī studied with Ḥāfiz Muḥammad al-Murtadā al-Zabīdī Thulāṭiyyāt of al-Bukhārī — i.e. those ḥadīths with only three narrators before al-Bukhārī — and Arbaʿīn of al-Nawawī in 1189 in the house of her father.¹

**TEACHERS IN OTHER TOWNS**

Women also got ḥadīths from teachers of other towns, either by travelling to them, or by correspondence, or by request of ijāzaḥs. Among those who travelled in the path of knowledge, the Kufan muhaddithah Jasrah bint Dajājah al-ʿĀmīriyyah, got ḥadīth in Madinah from ʿĀli ibn Abī Ṭālib, ʿĀʾishah and Umm Salamah, and from Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī.² Muḥammad ibn al-Sāʾīlīb ibn Barakah narrated from his mother that she said: ‘I did tawāf of the House in a group of women from Banū al-Mughirah in the company of ʿĀʾishah. The women mentioned Ḥassān ibn Thābit and attacked him [for his part in the slander about ʿĀʾishah]. ʿĀʾishah reminded [them of] Ḥassān’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 Fāṭimah bint ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Qazwīnī studied ḥadīth with Abū l-Ḥusayn Āḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Jawhari al-Mawsīlī in Tripoli, and with Abū Muḥammad Ṭāhir ibn Naṣr al-ʿAsfijābī and the qāḍī Abū l-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn Āḥmad ibn ʿĪsā al-Saʿdī in Egypt. She settled in ʿUṣur.⁴ Jumʿah bint Āḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿUbaydullāh al-Mahmiyyah of Nishapur (d. ca. 396), having studied with teachers of her town, did ḥajj and heard from various teachers on the way.⁵ Al-Sulamī says: ‘I heard her say: In Baghdad I called upon Shaykh Abū l-Ḥusayn

¹See samāʿat at the end of Jurj fi-hi Thulāṭiyyāt al-Bukhārī. ²AL-MIZZĪ, Tahdhib al-kamāl, xxxv. 143. ³See AL-DHAHABI, Siyār aš-šām al-nubalā', ii. 515. ⁴AL-SUYUTĪ (d. 911), al-Minjam fi l-munājam, 95–97, 85. ⁵AL-ŠAYRAFĪNĪ, al-Muntakhab min kitāb al-Siyāq li-l-Taʾrīkh Naysābūr, 183.
al-Khuḍrī, and he asked me: Who did you ‘accompany’ [i.e. study with for a long time]? I said: I ‘accompanied’ al-Naṣrābādī. 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-Khuḍrī [being impressed by what he heard] remained silent. When I came back al-Naṣrābādī 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 Fāṭimah, also called Sutaytah, daughter of the qādi Kamāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Shīrīn al-Hanafī, used to write letters to scholars. When Ḥāfiz al-Sakhāwī’s brother died, she wrote to him to console him.²

The women got ijtāżabs from the scholars of other towns. For example ʿAishah bint ʿUmar ibn Rushayd al-Fihri of Sabta in Morocco received ijtāżabs from a lot of scholars in Egypt, Makkah, Madīnah and Syria. Another example is Āsiyah bint Jārullāh ibn Ṣāliḥ al-Shaybānī (d. 873): the large number of scholars who gave her ijtāżabs 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-wuḥdān wa-l-mathānī’. At the end of the most famous of these compilations, al-Abād wa-l-mathānī of Abū Bakr ibn Abī Āsim (d. 287), are mentioned those women who have narrated only one or two ḥadīths.

¹AL-SULAMI (d. 412), Dhikr al-niswah al-mutaʿabbidāt, 423. The term of genealogy (nisbah) is here used metaphorically to indicate the spiritual connection between master and disciple. ²AL-SAKHĀWĪ, al-Dawʾ al-lāmiʿ, xii. 111. ³AL-SUYŪṬĪ, al-Minjam fī l-muʿjam, 95–97, 85.
However, many women received ḥadiths from a great many narrators, most famously ʿĀʾishah who, as well as narrating directly from the Prophet himself, also narrated from Ḥanẓah ibn ʿAmr al-Aslāmī, Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, her father Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, Judāmah bint Wahb al-Asadiyyah, and Fāṭimah, the daughter of the Prophet.¹ The Successor, Umm al-Dardāʾ narrated from her husband Abū l-Dardāʾ, Salmān al-Fārisī, Kaʿb ibn ʿĀṣim al-Ashʿarī, ʿAʾishah, Abū Hurayrah, Fadālāh ibn Ubayd al-Anṣārī. In later centuries, the renowned muḥaddithah Shuhdah received ḥadith from Tirād ibn Muḥammad al-Zaynabī, Ibn Talḥah al-Niʿālī, Abū l-Ḥasan ibn Ayyūb, Abū l-Khaṭṭāb ibn al-Baṭrī, Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Qādir ibn Yūṣuf, Ḥasan ibn Salmān al-Ḍaqqāq, Thābit Bundār, Abū Yāsir Aḥmad, ʿAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Ulawan al-Shaybānī, Jaʿfar al-Sarrāj Abū Maḥsūr Muḥammad ibn Ḥarīsah, Maḥsūr ibn Ḥayd al-Naysabūrī, Abū l-Baraʾkāt Ḥamd ibn ʿAbdillah al-Wakil, Abū Ghālib al-Baqillānī and many others.²

As for those women who received ijāzaḥs, the lists of the teachers of some of them are, as I mentioned just above, very long indeed. For example Ṣaʿyidah bint Muḥammad al-ʿIrbiḥī received ijāzaḥs of over two hundred teachers, both male and female. Among those teachers are: the Shaykhah Umm Muḥammad Zaynab bint Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar ibn Shukr al-Maqdīsī, ʿAbd al-Ḥāfīz ibn al-Shaykh Badrān al-Maqdīsī, Muḥammad ibn Ḥibatullāh al-Shīrāzī, ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-Muḥsin ibn ʿUmar al-Qawwās, ʿĀli ibn Aḥmad ibn Abī l-Fāhim, Umm Muḥammad Sitt al-ʿArab bint al-Shaykh Tāj al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿUmar al-Sulamī, Umm Ibriḥīm Fāṭimah bint Ibriḥīm al-Baṭlabakkiyyah, the long-lived imam Kamāl al-Dīn Humām ibn Muḥammad al-Hanāfī, Umm Muḥammad Zaynab bint al-Kamāl, and Amāt al-ʿAzīz Khadijah bint Yūsuf ibn Ghunaymah.³

Chapter 5

The reading matter

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'an 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 ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭalīb. 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: ʿAlī Māzinī narrated to us that the cause of the foundation of grammar was that the daughter of Abū l-Aswād [d. 69] once said to her father mā asbadda al-barri? [What is the most violent of heat? instead of mā asbadda al-harrā? 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 ʿAlī about that; [and then ʿAlī] dictated to him some basic rules that were later expanded by Abū l-Aswād."

After or alongside acquiring language skills, the girls would turn their attention to the Qur’ān, learning how to recite and memorize it, and understand its meaning. Only then would they start learning hadiths by memorizing and then narrating them. Those with more aptitude would go on to learn how to think about the ‘scholarly apparatus’ of the hadiths – their occasions and their narrators – how to distinguish among narrators and chains of narrators, and learn the sunnabs that derive from the hadīth 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 Nizām al-Mulk Qiwām al-Dīn Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Iṣḥāq al-Ṭūsī (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, Bakh, and Basrah. Philosophy, theology (kalam), logic, and practical sciences like mathe-

\[1\] AL-DHĀHABI, Siyar ʿulām al-nubalā’, iv. 83.
matics, medicine and engineering were part of the curriculum of the 'Nizâmî' 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 Qur'ân, reciting and memorizing it. Some learnt the whole of it by heart at a remarkably early age. One example of that is Fâtimah bint 'Alî ibn Mûsâ ibn Ja'far al-Tâwûsiyyah al-Husayniyyah (5th c.), who had memorized the Qur'ân before she was nine years old. Later, she learnt hadîth 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 Jamâl al-Dîn 'Alî ibn Abî l-Fawâris al-Hamdânî (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 Murji'î 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. 'Alî alluded to the verse in sûrat al-Â'râf (6. 40), quoting the end of it: 'Indeed those who belie Our signs (âyât) 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 Murji'î 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 'Alî returned home his mind was still preoccupied, and he was sleepless because of the Murji'î's retort. Maryam asked him what the matter was. After he had explained it, she said: 'In the verse of the Qur'ân the camel is the subject [of the verb], not

¹See 'Umar Riḍâ Kâhâlah (d. 1407), A'lam al-nisâ', iv. 86.
object.' Her husband now understood what he could have said in answer to the Murjī‘ī, was content and slept. Early next morning he went to his companions and told them what should render the Murjī‘īs speechless.¹

The biographers’ account of Amat al-Wāhid bint al-Ḥusayn ibn Muhammad al-Dabbī al-Mahāmīlī (d. 377) sheds light on the syllabus from the beginning of the fourth century. Al-Dāraquṭnī says: ‘She memorized the Qurʾān, and learnt fīqh according to the madhhab of Imām al-Shāfi‘ī, inheritance law and its mathematical calculation, dawr, grammar and other sciences.’² Also, al-Dhahabī says: ‘She narrated from her father, from Ismā‘īl al-Warrāq, ʿAbd al-Ghā fir ibn Salamah, and memorized the Qurʾān and studied the fīqh according to the madhhab of Imām al-Shāfi‘ī, inheritance law, dawr, and Arabic language and grammar, and other Islamic sciences.’³

In this period, study of Sahīh al-Bukhārī became widespread among men and women. The most famous woman of the fourth century to hear the whole Sahīh directly from her teacher – Abū l-Haytham al-Kūshmīhānī (d. 389) – was the great scholar, Shaykhah Umm al-Kīrām Karīmah bint Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥātim al-Marwaẓiyyah (d. 463).⁴ Also in this period the Sahīh al-Bukhārī was introduced into Spain. Khādijah bint Abī Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh ibn Sa‘īd al-Shantīyālī (in the fifth century) heard the whole of it from its famous narrator, Abū Dharr ʿAbd ibn Aḥmad al-Harawī.⁵ Ibn Bishkwāl (d. 578) says: ‘I have seen her samā‘ in the originals of her father in his handwriting; and she came with him to Spain.’⁶

Women also studied the Sahīh of Muslim, even engrossing themselves in mustakhrāj of it – the narration of its texts by a

¹See Leder et al., Muʿjam al-nisā‘ al-Yamanīyyāt, 177. ²Al-Khāṭīb al-Baghdādī, Taʾrīkh al-Baghdād, xiv, 443. Al-Jurjānī (d. 816; al-Taʾrījī, 76) defines dawr as a kind of argumentation in which each proposition is dependent upon the next in a circular chain. ³Al-Dhahabī Taʾrīkh al-ʾIlām (sub anno 351–80), 607. ⁴Al-Dhahabī Siyar al-Imām al-nubalā‘, xviii. 223. ⁵Ibn Bishkwāl (d. 578), K. al-Šilah, ii. 696. ⁶Ibid.
different route with higher isnād. The renowned scholar Fāṭimah bint al-Ustād Abū ʿAli al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAli al-Daqqāq (d. 480), wife of Abū l-Qasim al-Qushayrī,1 heard the whole ʿSabīḥ Abī ʿAwānāh (mustakhraj of ʿSabīḥ Muslimī) and then later transmitted it. Ibn Ḥajar, in the account of his teacher Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Latīf al-Takrītī says, after mentioning his isnād for ʿSabīḥ Abī ʿAwānāh to ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn al-Ḥāfiẓ Abī Saʿd ibn al-Samʿānī: ‘He heard it from Abū l-Barākāt al-Furāwī, who heard it from Fāṭimah bint ʿAli al-Daqqāq, who heard it from Abū Nuʿaym ʿAbd al-Mālik ibn al-Ḥasan al-Isfrāyīnī, who heard it from Abū ʿAwānāh.’²

Some women took an interest in ḥadith books written on specific topics. For example, Fāṭimah bint ʿAbdād ibn al-Fadl al-ʿAnazi studied Kitāb al-Ṣalāh of Abū Nuʿaym al-Fadl ibn Dukayn with Shaykh Abū Bakr al-ʿArāj Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Ahmad ibn Shadhān in 431.³ Others specialized in sub-disciplines of the sciences of the Qurʾān and Sunnah. For example, Umm Saʿdīn Asmāʾ bint Ḥamād ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn ʿAbdād al-Bahrāniyyah (5th c.) specialized in the science of nāsīkh (abrogating) and mansūkḥ (abrogated). Ibn Ḥajar narrated K. al-Nāṣīkh wa-l-mansūkḥ of ʿAṭāʾ al-Khūrāsānī (d. 135) from Ahmad ibn Abī Bakr from Sulaymān ibn Ḥamzah, from Jaʿfar ibn ʿĀli from Abū Tāhir al-Silāfī from Asmāʾ bint Ḥamād al-Bahrāniyyah, 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-Raḥmān bint Abī l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Waḥīd ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Junayd (d. 487) studied K. al-Taʃarrūd wa-l-ʿuzlaḥ of Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn al-ʿĀjurri with Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Muḥammad ibn Bishrān.⁵ One consequence of the

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-Wāṣīṭah al-Shāhja-hāniyyah (376–460) studied Amāli of Abū l-Husayn ibn Samʿūn al-Wāṣīṭ with its author. 1 ʿĀṣimah bint Ḥasan ibn Ibrāhim al-Wāṣīṭah (d. 460) wrote down the Amāli of Ibn Mandah, receiving the work directly from him. 2

Also in this period, interest in the ‘Forty Ḥadīths’ genre blossomed. It is recorded in the account of Umm al-ʿAlāʾ, the grand-daughter of Shaykh Abū l-Ṭayyib ʿAbd al-Razzāq ibn Shammah that she attended the reading of the Forty Hadīths of Abū Bakr ibn al-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-Mutarrīf ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Ghalbūn al-Qurtubi, from Valencia in Spain. She studied Arabic grammar, language and literature and became so expert in ʿarūd (prosody) that she was called al-ʿArūdīyyah. She also learnt by heart and lectured on two important works on literature: al-Kāmil of Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Mubarrid and Amāli of Abū ʿAlī al-Qālī. 4 Another woman, the daughter of Sharīf al-Raḍī learnt the Nahj al-balāgah 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

Commitment to memorizing the Qurʾān and understanding it also continued. Some learnt it at an early age—like Sharaf al-Ashraf bint ʿAlī ibn Mūsā al-Ṭawūsiyyah al-Ḥasaniyyah, who memorized the whole Qurʾān, when she was twelve; others did so much later in life—like Umm al-Ḥasan Karimah bint Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-ʿAbīwārdī (d. 555), who memorized parts of the Qurʾān and recited them regularly, as well as studying the ḥadīth sciences. Some women made a particular study of the seven recitations, like Umm al-ʿĪz bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Ghālib al-ʿAṣ-ṣul qoṣar al-Kāfī (d. 617). Some of them learnt books of tajwīd. In 786 ʿUsn bint Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Ṣaʿdiyyah al-Maṭkiyyah (d. 842) learnt part of al-Shaṭiḥiyyah and another work on the subject.

There are other women who specialized in some sciences of the Qurʾān. Aḥisah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Zuḥayr studied with her teachers Gharṣiyyah al-Qurʾān of Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn ʿAzīz al-Sijistānī (d. 330), and Faḍl ṭal al-Qurʾān of Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn ʿAyyūb al-Baghdādi (3rd c.). The long-lived shaykhah, famed for her higher isnād, Dawʾ al-Ṣabāḥ ʿAjibah al-Bağhdādiyyah (d. 647) learnt Faḍl ṭal al-Qurʾān of al-Baghdādi from Abū Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Khaṭir al-Shirāzī with an isnād to its author. She studied K. Akhlaq hamalat al-Qurʾān of Abū Bakr al-ʿĀjurri (d. 360) with Abū ʿĪsā Fath Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Baqiʾ by his isnād to its author; and Mushkiyl al-Qurʾān al-ʿAzim of Muḥyi l-Sunnah al-Baghawi with Ḥafiz Abū Mūṣā al-Madīnī, who got it from the author.

Summaries of ṣiḥḥ were popular in the syllabus: among the Ḥanafīs, Mukhtaṣar al-Qudūrī; among Mālikīs, al-Risāla al-Qayramāniyyah; among Shāfiʿīs Mukhtaṣar al-Muṣannī. Al-Dhaḥabī has

1KAḤHĀLAH, Aʾlām al-nisāʾ ii. 292. 2AL-SAMʿĀNĪ, al-Muntakhab min Muṣjam al-shaykhīkh, iii. 1918. 3AL-DHAḤABĪ says: 'She was well versed in the seven readings.' Taʿrīkh al-Islām (sub anno 611–20), 328. 4ĪBĪN FAHĪD, Muṣjam al-shaykhīkh, 310; al-Durr al-kāmin, 1411. 5KAḤHĀLAH, Aʾlām al-nisāʾ ii. 158. 6Ibid. 7Siraj al-Dīn AL-QAẒWĪNĪ, Mushaykhab, MS, 48. 8Ibid., 83. 9Ibid., 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. Fâtimah al-Samarqandiyyah (6th c.) memorized all of Tahâjat as-suqabâ. Others studied specific topics in fiqh – for example Shaykhah Umm Muhammad Khadijah bint Abi ʿAbdillâh Muhammad al-Harrânîyyah (d. 634) studied K. al-Amwâl of al-Azdi with her father.

As for the “Six Books”, the principal compilations of hadith, the examples of women’s interest in them will be given under a separate heading. Some were interested in other sound works of hadith also, those less popularly known. Khadijah bint Shams al-Dîn Muhammad ibn Abî Bakr ibn Abî Ahmad ibn ʿAbd al-Dâʾîm studied Sahîh Ibn Hibbân with Muhammad ibn Abî Ahmad ibn Abî l-Hayjâ ibn al-Zarrâd al-Ḥarîn. Umm al-Ḥarîa ʿHaṣâfah bint Abî ʿAbdillâh Abî Ahmad ibn Mulâʾib al-Baghîdâdiyyah al-ʿAzajîyyah (d. 612) learnt Sahîfah of Hammâm ibn Munnabîh (d. 131) from Abû l-Fâḍl Muhammad ibn Umar al-Urmawî with his sanâd to the Companion Abû Hurayrah. The long-lived shaykhah of high iṣnâd Tajânî bint ʿAbdillâh al-Wabhâniyyah (d. 575) learnt Ḥadîth al-Mukharrani wa-l-Marwâzî and Amâlî al-Mahâmîli with Ḥusayn ibn Abî Ahmad ibn Talhah al-Nîʿâlî, and ʿUzî Hilâl with Ṭirâd ibn Muhammad ibn ʿAli al-Zaynâbî, who got it from its author. Umm al-Khayr Ḥâlîmâh bint al-Ḥâfîz ibn ʿAsâkîr studied ʿUzî ʿAlî ibn Muhammad al-Ḥîmyarî with her father in 541.

Ḥadîths narrated principally through women were a special interest. Sitt al-ʿArab bint Muhammad ibn ʿAlî ibn al-Bukhârî (d. 767) studied Fâḍil Fâṭimah of Abû Ḥâfîṣ Umar ibn Shâhîn with her grandfather. Sitt al-Shâm bint Khalîl ibn Naṣr studied 41 ḥadîths from Musnad al-nisâʾ al-ṣahâbîyyât with Yûsûf ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥâdî in 808. ʿAʿîshah bint Badr al-Dîn al-Zarkashî

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studied with her father his book *al-Isābah fi-mā istadrakat ʿAḥīshah ʿalā l-sahābah* in 794.\(^1\)

From the sixth century onwards, women are found learning books written on the principles of ḥadith and narrators of ḥadith. Shaykhah ʿAzizah bint Abī l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn al-Ṭarrāh (d. 600) received the whole of *al-Kifāyah fi qawānīn al-rīwāyah* of Abū Bakr al-Khaṭīb (d. 463) from her grandfather, who narrated it directly from the author.\(^2\) Khadijah bint ʿUmar ibn Abī Bakr studied *K. al-Taʾrikh* of Yahyā ibn Maʿīn with Abū l-Faḍl Ismāʿīl ibn Aḥmad al-Īrāqī in 652.\(^3\) Fāṭimah bint al-Mubārak studied al-*Taʾrikh al-kabīr* of ʿĪmām Abū al-Bukhārī in 503 with Ḥāfīz Abū l-Ghanāʾim al-Narsī.\(^4\) The long-lived Shaykhah Zaynab bint Makkī al-Ḥarrāniyyah (d. 688) studied *K. al-Nasab* of Zubayr ibn Bakkar with ʿUmar ibn Ṭabarzad.\(^5\) Dawʾ al-Ṣabāh ʿAjībah (d. 647) studied Ibn Mandah’s (d. 395) *Maʿrifat al-sahābah* with Masʿūd al-Thaqafi.\(^6\) Sitt al-Ṭaraf bint al-Īmām Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Tinnīsī studied part of *Taʾrikh Jurjān* of al-Sahmī (d. 427) with her father in 597.\(^7\) In 529, Rabīʾah bint Saʿd al-Khayr read *K. al-Duʿafāʾ wa-l-matrūkūn* with ʿĪmām Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Khayrūn, and *al-Jāmiʿ li-akhlāq al-rāwī wa-ʿadāb al-sāmi* with Abū l-Qāsim al-Mubārak ibn al-Buẓūrī.\(^8\) The great scholar and expert in Qurʾānic reading, Umm al-Khayr Fāṭimah bint Abī l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn al-Muẓaffar al-Baghdādiyyah (d. 532) studied *K. Gharīb al-ḥadīth* of Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī with Abū l-Ḥusayn ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī.\(^9\) Umm al-Ḥusn Kamāl bint al-Ḥāfīz Abī Muḥammad ʿAbdillāh ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Samarqandi (d. 558) studied *Taqyīd al-

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Interest in theology also continued: Zaynab bint ‘Umar al-Kindī (d. 699) learnt K. al-Tawḥīd of Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Khuzaymāh (d. 311) with Abū Rawḥ ‘Abd al-Mu‘izz...
ibn Muhammad al-Harawi, with his sanad going back to Ibn Khuzaymah.\textsuperscript{1} 

Daw\textsuperscript{2} al-Sabah ‘Ajibah al-Baqdariyyah received K. \textit{al-Tawhid} of Ibn Mandah (d. 395) from Hasan ibn ‘Abbās al-Rustamī, Mas‘ūd ibn al-Hasan al-Thaqafī and Abū l-Khayr ibn al-Baghbān, all three from ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Mandah from his father, its author.\textsuperscript{2} She also studied \textit{Dalā’il al-Nubūwwah} of al-Bayhaqi with al-Mubārak ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Ṭabbākh,\textsuperscript{3} and \textit{K. al-Īmān} of Abū l-Hasan ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn ‘Umar al-Zuhārī, with Mas‘ūd al-Thaqafī.\textsuperscript{4} 

\section*{FROM LATER NINTH TO THIRTEENTH CENTURIES}

From the later ninth–tenth century on, there was a decline in hadith 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\textsuperscript{5} Umāmah bint Qaḍī al-Quḍat Athīr al-Dīn Muhammad ibn al-Shāhnaḥ al-Ḥanafī (d. 939) knew by heart some of \textit{Mulḥat al-i‘rāb} and other books.\textsuperscript{5}

Besides grammar, interest in the Qurān remained strong. Būrān bint Muḥammad Athīr al-Dīn (d. 938) read the Qurān, studied books and copied them.\textsuperscript{6} The emperor Awrangzeb ‘Alamgir (d. 1113) paid Maryam al-Kashmīrīyyah 30,000 gold dinars after his daughter Zayb al-Nisā\textsuperscript{7} memorized the Qurān with her. Zayb al-Nisā\textsuperscript{2} also learnt writing and different styles of calligraphy, and she studied hadīth and fiqh according to the syllabus of that time.\textsuperscript{7} 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

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\begin{itemize}
    \item[1] ibn Hajar, \textit{al-Mu'jam al-mu'jaras}, 52. \textsuperscript{2}\textit{Id.}, \textit{al-Majma' al-mu'assas}, i. 517.
    \item[3]\textit{Ibid.}, ii. 38, 39. \textsuperscript{4}\textit{Ibid.}, 43. \textsuperscript{5} ibn al-Ḥanbalī (d. 971), \textit{Durr al-bibāb fi tārīkh a'yān Halaḥ}, i. 338. \textsuperscript{6}\textit{Ibid.}, 403. \textsuperscript{7} Abd al-Ḥayy al-Ḥasanī (d. 1341), \textit{Nuzhat al-khayūf}, vi. 99–100.
\end{itemize}
bint Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Muʿayyadī (d. 1114), who studied grammar, logic, theology, fiqh, astrology, astronomy, literature and other sciences. Jahān Āra Begum bint al-Sultān Shāhjāhān (d. 1092) studied the art of Qurʾānic recitation and tajwīd with Sitt Khānum, learnt calligraphy, Persian and became expert in composition, poetry, household management and other skills.

Some women turned, after tajwīd, to ḥadīth. Khunāthah bint Bakkār ibn ʿAlī al-Maʿāfīrī (d. 1159) was an expert in all seven recitations and a scholar of ḥadīth. Ḥadīth education began with the Forty Hadīths of al-Nawawī. Zayn al-ʿArab bint Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn (10th c.) knew by heart al-Jazariyyah in tajwīd, and al-Nawawī's Forty Hadīths. Fāṭimah bint ʿAbdillāh al-Manshāwīyyah studied Forty Hadīths of al-Nawawī and Thub increasing ṣiyāt al-Bukhārī with Ḥāfiz Murtadā ʿ al-Zabīdī in 1189.

Some women did go further in hadīth 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 Ṣirāb of Ibn Hishām, Musnad Ahmad [ibn Ḥanbal], al-Ghaylānīyyah and other books of ḥadīth. She received ijāzsah from many scholars. She also studied Mashyakhab of Ibn al-Bukhārī and al-Muʿjam al-saḥīr of al-Ṭabarānī. In 857 Aymalik bint Aḥmad studied with Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Hilāl al-Azdi K. al-Tawwābin of Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāmah (d. 620). Bāy Khāṭūn bint Ibrāhīm al-Halabiyyah (d. 942) studied Minhāj of al-Nawawī and part of Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn with Zayn al-Dīn al-Shammāt. Bulbul bint ʿAbdil-lāh al-Rūmīyyah studied with her master, Shaykh Yūsuf ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥādī the Forty Hadīths of Abū Bakr ibn al-Muqrī in

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Besides general and specialized study of ḥadīth, women also studied ʿirāb and kalām. For example, in 906 ʿĀʾishah bint Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī al-Kinānī read ʿIrāb of Ibn Hishām and Dalāʾīl al-nubuwvah with Ḥāfiz Yūsuf ibn ʿ Abd al-Ḥādī.

IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

The Qurʾān continued to be the foundation of the syllabus in this century as before. Khadijah bint Aḥmad ibn ʿ Azzūz al-Ḏāsiyyah (d. 1323) knew the Qurʾān by heart and read it with different readings, with Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan Janbūr. After that the women would study the common syllabus, comprising language and rational and traditional sciences. The long-lived muḥaddithah Amatullāh bint ʿ Abd al-Ghanī al-Dīhlawīyyah (d. 1357) studied

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the Qur‘ān, grammar, Arabic literature, and Ḥanafi fiqh with her father, then devoted herself to ḥadith, reading the Six Books with him many times, and other more specialized works including ajza‘ and musalsalat.\(^1\) Amatullāh ‘Ā’ishah bint ‘Abd al-Hayy al-Hasaniyyah (d. 1396) memorized much of the Qur‘ān, and received her primary education, from her uncle Sayyid ‘Azīz al-Raḥmān al-Nadwī and her mother, Khayr al-Nisā‘. She went on to study a large number of books.

Khadijā bint Aḥmad 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 Mukhtāṣar al-Safinah and other works.\(^2\)

Some of them specialized in ḥadith and studied the Six Books and others. Shams al-Nisā‘ bint Āmīr Ḥasan al-Sahsawānī (d. 1308) studied the Qur‘ān with tajwīd, then learnt calligraphy, Arabic grammar, tafsīr, Mishkat al-masābīh, then the Six Books, with her father.\(^3\) Śāliḥah bint ‘Īnāyat Rasūl al-‘Abbāsī 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.\(^4\) Fāṭimah bint Sālim (d. 1339) of Java learnt reading and writing from her father and studied al-Minhaj al-mukhtāṣar of Bā Faḍl and al-Ajrūmiyyah with him.\(^5\) She studied Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī with Zubayr ibn Qāsim Bā Raqabah,\(^6\) and Awā’il al-Ajlūnī with Sayyid Ahmad ibn Zaynī Dāfhān.\(^7\) The great scholar Liḥāz al-Nisā‘ 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 Sahīḥ and Sunnah with Mawlānā Muḥammad Bashīr al-Sahsawānī (14th c.), then other ḥadith books with Shaykh Ḥusayn ibn Muḥsin al-Anṣārī (d. 1327).\(^8\)

Some women also became interested in the study of books of *tasawwuf*. Mas‘adah bint Ahmad ibn Ḥādī ibn Āḥmad al-Haddār, for example, was well-known for her study of books like *Ihya‘Ulūm al-Dīn* of al-Ghazālī (d. 505), *Awārīf al-ma‘ārif* of al-Suhrawardī (d. 632), and for having memorized *Forty Ḥadīths* of al-Nabhānī (d. 1350).\(^1\)

**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 *fiqh*. 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‘ī. Shuhdah al-Baghdādiyyah (d. 574) studied the whole of it;\(^2\) Ḍaw‘ al-Ṣaḥāb Ajībah al-Bāqḍāriyyah studied it in the narration of al-Qa‘nābī from Yahyā ibn Thābit (d. 566);\(^3\) Khadijah (d. 873) bint Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī al-Anṣārī from Egypt studied it in the narration of Yahyā ibn Yahyā, with al-‘Izz ibn Abī l-Yumn al-Kuwayk.\(^4\)

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al-Jawāmiʿ

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

As I noted earlier, the women’s interest in Sahīḥ 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-Bahāʿ Fāṭimah bint Abī l-Faḍl Muhammad ibn Abī Saʿd al-Aṣbāḥānī (d. 539) studied it with Saʿīd al-ʿAyyār. Some women studied only a part of the book: for example, Aminah bint al-Muʿayyad Abī Bakr ibn al-ʿAmīd (7th c.), who read it with Abū l-Waqt al-Sijzī. Interest in Sahīḥ Muslim was only a little less. The renowned Nishapuri scholar, Umm al-Khayr Fāṭimah bint Abī l-Ḥasan ʿAlī (d. 532) studied it with its most famous teacher of her time, Abū l-Ḥusayn ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī.3 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 Ṭabarzād.4

On the following pages, three linked charts show the transmission of Sahīḥ 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.

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1 AL-DHAAHABI, al-‘Ibar, ii. 457. 2 IBN FAHD, al-Durr al-kamin, ii. 399. 3 AL-SAMĀNĪ, al-Taḥbīr, ii. 256. 4 TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FAṢĪ, Dhayl al-taqīd, ii. 372.
Chart 1a. Transmission of Ṣahih al-Bukhari to women from Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhari (d. 256, Samarqand) to ʿAṣībah bint ʿAbd al-Hādī (d. 816)

Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhari, d. 256, Samarqand
- Ḥammād ibn Shākir al-Nasawi, d. ca. 290, Nasa
  - Ahmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Rumh al-Nasawi, Nasa
    - al-Ḥākim Abū ʿAbdillāh al-Ḥaṣf, Nishapur
      - Abū Bakr Ahmad ibn ʿAlī ibn Khalaf
        - Abū l-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ḥaṣf, d. 550
          - ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Jawzī, d. 597
      - Ḥaṣf, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Jawzī, d. 597
    - Jawharah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Jawzī
      - Baghdād
- Ibrāhīm ibn Maʿṣūl al-Nasafi, d. 294
  - Abū Ṣāḥib Khalaf ibn Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhari
    - Abū l-Faḍl Ḥāmid ibn Abī ʿImrān al-Harawi
      - Abū ʿAlī al-Jayānī, d. 498, Andalus
    - ʿAbdullāh ibn Muḥammad al-Bāhili
      - ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Dibāji
        - Ja'far ibn ʿAlī al-Hamdānī, d. 636
    - Zaynab bint Ahmad ibn Shukr
      - Jawwariyyah bint Ahmad
        - al-Hakkarīyyah, d. 783
      - Raqayyah bint Yarshud
        - al-Ṣāhibiyah
- Abū Ṭalhah Mansūr ibn Muḥammad al-Bazdawi, d. 329
  - Ahmad ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz
    - Abū al-ʿAbbās Ja'far ibn Muḥammad al-Mustaghfiri
      - al-Ḥasan ibn Ahmad
        - Abū Ṭusīb Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr al-Maḏini
          - al-Nāṣih ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Hanbali, d. 634
        - Amatullāh bint al-Nāṣih, d. 679
          - Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī al-Maqdisi
            - Sulaymān ibn Ḥamzah ibn Abī ʿUmar, Damascus
              - Fāṭimah bint al-Mawjūd, d. 803
      - Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn Maṭar al-Firābī, d. 320, Firābr
        - Abū Ḥamīd al-Nuʿaymī
          - Abū ʿUmar al-Muḥayhī
            - Khalaf ibn ʿAta'
          - Abū Ṣawḥ al-Harawi, d. 618
            - Sitt al-Umnāt bint Abī Ṣayf, d. 689
              - Raqqayyah bint ʿAbdullāh al-Anmāsī
Chart 1b. Transmission of Sāhib al-Bukhārī to women from Mūḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī (d. 256, Samarqand) to ʿAīshah bint ʿAbd al-Ḥādī (d. 816)

Mūḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn Maṭar al-Firābī, d. 320, Firābī
-ābū ʿAlī Mūḥammad ibn ʿUmar ibn Shabbāyah
-Ṣa‘īd ibn Ahmad al-ʿAyyār, d. 457
  -Mūḥammad ibn al-Fādí al-Furūwī, d. 530
    -Ṣafyāb bint ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Naysābūriyyah, d. 603
    -Zaynāb bint Ibrāhīm al-Qayī, d. 610
    -ʾAīshah bint ʿAbi Nāṣr al-Asbābī, Isfahān
    -Fāṭimah bint Mūḥammad, d. 539, Baghdad
  -Mūḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Fārisī
    -al-Muʿayyad al-Ṭūsī, d. 617
      -Sitt al-ʿArab bint Yabīyā, d. 684
      -Iḥbānīnāb (the grandmother of al-Birzālī)
    -Zaynāb bint ʿAbd al-Rahmān, d. 615
      -Sayyīdah bint Māsā al-Marrānīyyah, d. 695
  -Abū Iṣḥāq Ibrāhīm ibn Ahmad al-Mustamī
    -Ḥāfīz Abū Dharr al-Harawī
      -Khāṭijah al-Shantagyāḥ, Andalus
    -Iṣā ibn Abī Dharr al-Harawī
      -ʿAlī ibn Ḥumayd al-Ṭarābulusī
    -ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Abī Ḥaramī al-Makkī, d. 645
      -Zaynāb bint Ahmad al-Ṭabarī, Makkah
      -Ibrāhīm ibn Mūḥammad ibn Abī Bakr al-Ṭabarī, d. 722
    -Fāṭimah bint Ahmad al-Iṣārī, d. 783, Makkah
  -Abū al-Haytham Mūḥammad ibn Makkī al-Kushmihānī, d. 389
    -Ḥāfīz Abū Dharr al-Harawī
    -Mūḥammad ibn Ahmad al-Ḥaṣī
      -Wajīh al-Dīn Tāhir al-Shāhīmī
        -Zaynāb bint ʿAbd al-Rahmān, d. 615
        -ʿAsmāʾ bint Zayn al-Umānī, d. 680
      -Karīmāb al-Marwāziyyah, d. 463, Makkah
    -Abū al-Khayr ibn Abī Ḫumān
    -Mūḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Kushmihānī, Kushmihān
      -Ṣaḥīfah bint Ahmad al-Nasawī, Nasa
Chart 1c. Transmission of Șahîb al-Bukhârî to women from Muḥammad ibn Ismâ’il al-Bukhârî (d. 256, Samarqand) to ʿĀʾisab bint ʿAbd al-Hâdi (d. 816)

Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn Maṭar al-Firâbî, d. 320, Firâbî

Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdullâh ibn ʿAbd al-Salâh, d. 818, Sarakhs

Ḥâfiz Abû Dharr al-Harawî

ʿAbd al-Rahmân ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Muṣâfâr al-Dawûdî, d. 467

Umm al-Fâdî ʿÂʾisab bint Abû l-Wâqâl ibn Ḥâdi, d. 553, Baghdad

Abû l-Wâqâl ibn Ḥâdi, d. 553, Baghdad

Abû al-Hasan ʿAlî ibn Rûzbah, d. 633

Sitt al-Dâr bint Majd al-Dîn ibn Tâmûryah, d. 686

Umar ibn Kâram, d. 629

Zâbidab bint Iṣâq

Tâj al-Nisâ bint Râstum, d. 610, Mâlkâh

Āʾiminah bint Abî Bakr

ʿAbî Ṣâmah bint Abî Ṣâmah

Ḥâfiz bint Majd al-Dîn

Nâr Sitt bint Sâʾd al-Dîn

Umm al-Suídâ bint Abî Ţâlib

Karîmab bint Abîl-Wâbab al-Zubayryah, d. 641, Damascus

al-Husayn ibn al-Mubârâk al-Zâbîlî, d. 631, Baghdad

ʿÂʾisab bint Ḥâdi al-Maqdisiyah, d. 697

Fâtîmah bint Husayn al-Āmidiyah, d. 698

Khâdijab bint Muḥammad al-Mâribiyah, d. 699

Khâdijab bint Muḥammad al-Maqdisiyah, d. 703

Khâdijab bint al-Rafîʿ Abî al-Rahmân, d. 701

Zaynab bint Sulaymân al-Iṣârî, d. 705

Hâdîyyab bint Ṣâmah, d. 712

Fâtîmah al-Batâʾibiyah, d. 711, Damascus

Sitt al-Wazirî, d. 716, Damascus, Cairo

Janâbîyab bint Ahmad al-Ḥakîmîrîyab, d. 783

Fâtîmah bint Ahmad al-Jâzîrî, d. 766

Fâtîmah bint al-Munajjî, d. 803, Damascus

Abî Ŧâlib al-Ḥajjâr, d. 730, Damascus

Kullum bint Muḥammad al-Bâzî, d. 777, Balâbak

ʿÂʾisab bint ʿAbî Bakr, d. 793

Fâtîmah bint Muḥammad al-ʿAmarî, d. 793

Zaynab bint ʿUtbân ibn Luʿain, d. 800, Damascus

Amât al-Râhmân al-Balâbakîyab, Balâbak

Sitt al-Banîb bint Muḥammad al-Bâzîyab, Balâbak

Fâtîmah bint Abî al-Makbûzîmîyab

Fâlîshab bint ʿAbdullâh al-Balâbakîyab, Balâbak

ʿÂʾisab bint Ismâ’il

Nâsîh bint ʿAbîl-Bâbî al-Ḥimîryah, Hîms

Fâtîmah bint Abî al-Hâdi, d. 803, Damascus

ʿÂʾisab bint Abî al-Hâdi, d. 816, Damascus
al-Sunan

The Sunan, like the Jawāmi', are compilations of hadiths by topic arranged according to the divisions of fiqh – like tahārah, salāh, ḥakāb, ḥajj 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-Nasā‘ī (d. 303), of Muḥammad ibn Yazīd ibn Mājah al-Qazwīnī (d. 273). Of almost equally high repute are: Sunan of ʿAllī ibn ʿUmar al-Dāraquṭnī (d. 385) and Sunan al-kabīr of Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (d. 485). Many women studied these Sunan. One example for each must suffice:

Zaynab bint Makkī al-Harrānī (d. 688) studied Sunan Abū Dāwūd with ʿUmar ibn Ṭabarzad.1 Aminah bint Taqī al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Wāṣīṭī (d. 740) studied with her father Sunan al-Nasā‘ī in the narration of Ibn al-Sunni.2 Ṣafīyyah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Farrāʾ (d. 699) studied Sunan Ibn Mājah with Imām Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāmah.3 Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Muqaddam studied Sunan al-Dāraquṭnī.4 Sitt Quraysh Fāṭimah bint Taqī al-Dīn ibn Fahd (d. 879) studied Sunan al-kabīr of al-Bayhaqī with Nūr al-Dīn ibn Salāmah.5

al-Masānid

Masānid (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 masānid are: the Musnads of Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150), al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204), al-Ḥumaydī (d. 219), Musaddad ibn Musharhad (d. 228), Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241), of ʿAbd ibn Ḥumayd (d. 249), and Abū Ya‘lā al-Mawṣīlī (d. 307). Again, just one example for each:

1TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FĀSĪ, Dhayl al-taqyīd, ii. 372. 2Ibid., 359–60. 3Ibid., 379. 4KAHHĀLAH, A‘lām al-nisā‘, iv. 135. 5AL-SUYUṬĪ, al-Minjam fi-l-mu‘jam, 123.
Daw3 al-Šabāh Ajibah (d. 647) learnt Musnad Abī Ḥanīfah, in the version of Abī Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Ḥārithi, from Abū l-Khayr Muḥammad ibn Ahmad ibn ʿUmar al-Bāghbān;1 she studied Musnad al-Shāfiʿī with Abū Zurʿah Tāhir ibn Muḥammad al-Maqdisī (d. 566),2 and Musnad al-Humaydī with two teachers: Abū l-Ḥasan Saʿdullāh ibn Naṣr al-Dājājī and Abū l-Maʿālī Ahmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ghānī al-Bājisrāʾī.3 Umm al-Ḥayā Zuhrah bint Muhammad al-Anbāʾī (d. 633) studied Musnad Musaddad ibn Musharad with Yahyā ibn Thābit ibn Bundār.4 Zaynab bint Makki (d. 688) studied Musnad Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal with Ḥanbal ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Ruṣūfī.5 Asmāʿ bint Ibrāhīm ibn Sufyān ibn Mandah al-Aṣbahānīyyah (d. 630) studied Musnad ʿAbd ibn Humayd with Abū l-Waqt ʿAbd al-Awwal ibn ʿĪsā al-Ḥarahwī.6 Fāṭimah bint Saʿd al-Khayr (d. 600) studied Musnad Abī Yaʿlā with Zāhir ibn Ṭāhir.7 (For the names of other women who studied the Musnad of Ibn Ḥanbal, see Chart 2 on the next page.)

al-Maʿājīm and al-Maṣḥyakbāt

Maʿājīm (pl. of muʿjam): 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. Maṣḥyakbāt (pl. of maṣḥyakhbāh): an arrangement of ḥadīths by the shaykhs or teachers of those ḥadīths. Fāṭimah bint ʿAbdillāh al-Jūzdānīyyah (d. 524) studied al-Ṭabarānī’s al-Muʿjam al-kabīr and al-Muʿjam al-sagbir with their most famous narrator, Ibn Riddhā.8 Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī studied al-Muʿjam al-aṣwat of al-Ṭabarānī with Abū Naṣr ibn al-Shīrāzī.9 (See Chart 3 on the next page.)

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1 Ibn Hajar, al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas, ii. 482–83. 2 Taqī al-Dīn al-Fasī, Dḥayl al-taqīyīd, ii. 383. 3 Al-Qazwīnī, Mashyakbāh, MS, 44. 4 Taqī al-Dīn al-Fasī, Dḥayl al-taqīyīd, ii. 366. 5 Ibid., ii. 372. 6 Ibid., ii. 357. 7 Ibn Hajar, al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas, i. 482–83. 8 Al-Dhahabi, Siyār aʿlām al-nubalāʾ, xix. 505. 9 Ibn Hajar, al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas, ii. 375.


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studied the *Mashyakbah* of Abū Ṭālib al-ʻUshārī with Ibn Ṭabarzad. ¹

**al-Arbaʻūnāt**

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:


Later, Imām Nawawi’s *al-Arbaʻūn* became the most popular. Sutayyah bint al-Zayn Abī ʻAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad (d. 879) studied it with her father in 792. ⁶

**al-Ajzāʾ**

*Ajzāʾ* (plurals of *juzʾ*) 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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Shuhdah al-Baghdādīyyah studied the most famous Ḥanbal with its highest narrator Ibn Bayān; 1 Ḥanbal with Ahū l-Hasan ibn al-Ṭuyūrī 2 and Ḥilāl al-Haffār with Tīrād. 3 Zaynab bint Makkī al-Harrānī (d. 688) studied the juz’ 2 with next highest isnād, al-Ghaylānīyyah, with Umm ibn Ṭabrazad. 4 Sitt al-ʿArab bint Yahyā al-Kindī (d. 684) studied the third highest, Ḥanbal with her master Ahū l-Yumna al-Kindī. 5 Amat al-Ḥamīd Khadijah bint Abī Ghānim studied juz’ 2 mā qaruba of al-Samarrānī (d. 536) in 529. 6 Umm al-Ḥayā 7 Sitt al-Jalīl bint Abī l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Warkānī (6th c.) studied Ḥanbal with Abū Bakr ibn Majah. 7 Umm al-Bahā? Fātimah bint Abī l- Faḍl Muḥammad ibn Abī Saʿd al-Baghdādī (d. 539) received Ḥanbal from Saʿīd al-Ayyār. 8 Nūr Sittī bint ʿAbd al-Kārim al-Rāzī (6th c.) studied Kitaḥ Thawāb al-a’nāmal of ʿAbd al-Rāḥmān ibn Hātim al-Rāzī with her grandfather Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Bayyādī. 9 Umm al-Khayr Jamāl al-Nisāʾ bint Abī Bakr al-Baghdādīyyah studied Ḥanbal with its author Muḥammad ibn Abī Bāqī al-Batī. 10 Khadijah bint Abī Bakr al-Ḥanawī studied Abādith Tālūt of Abū ʿUthmān Tālūt ibn ʿAbbād al-Šayrafī (d. 238) with ʿAbd al-Jalīl ibn Abī Ghālib al-Surayjānī in a ribāt of Damascus in 610. 11 Umm al-Ḥayā Zuhrah bint Muḥammad al-Anbārī (d. 633) studied Ḥanbal al-Bānūsī with Ibn al-Batī. 12 Zaynab bint ʿAlī al-Wāṣītī (d. 695) studied Majlis al-Bītāqah of Abū l-Qāsim Ḥanzah ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Kinānī (d. 357) with Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl,

Khaṭīb Mardā in 653. Umm ʿAbd al-Ḥakam Sitt al-ʿĪbād bint Abī l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Salāmah al-Miṣriyyah (d. 616) studied al-

al-Musalsalāt

The term musalsal refers to a hadīth around the narration of which there is some particular association that the tradition has deemed worthy of preserving, along with the hadīth itself. An example would be the Prophet’s shaking someone’s hand just before he said what the hadīth records, or giving them a date and water, etc.; then, each time that this hadīth 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 hadīths by these associations, and remembering one’s lessons is facilitated by them. There are many hadīths narrated as musalsalāt.

al-Musalsal bi-l-ʿawwalıyāh. This is the hadīth of ʿAbdullāh ibn Āmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ that the Prophet salla ʾllāhu ʿalayhi 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 ʿUyaynah, who narrated it from ʿAmr ibn Dīnār, from Abū Qābūs, from his master ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. His student ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Bishr al-Ḥakam heard it from him as his first hadīth; then it became a tradition that students would hear this as their first hadīth from their teachers. It has continued to this day. There are many women who received this hadīth. Here are some examples: Ḥasanah bint Muḥammad ibn Kāmil

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al-Hasaniyyah (d. 765) heard it from al-Tawzarî through the 
ismād of Ibn al-Samarqandi. ¹ Umm al-Ḥasan bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Makhzūmî heard this ḥadīth with her 
sister Ṣafiyah from al-Sharīf Abū ʿl-Khayr ibn Abî ʿAbdillâh al-
Makhzûmî in 742. ² Khadijah bint Abî Bakr ibn ʿAlî known as 
Bint al-Kūrî (d. 803) heard it from Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-
Ḥarrâî. ³ Zaynab bint Muḥîbb al-Dîn Abû ʿl-ABBâd Aḥmad ibn 
Zahīrah al-Qurashî (d. 863) heard it from the qâdî Zayn al-Dîn 
Abû Bakr ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Murâghî. ⁴ Ghazâl Umm ʿAbd al-
Laṭîf al-Nûbiyyah (d. 802) heard it from its famous narrator al-
Maydûmî (d. 754). ⁵

Some traditionists compiled the musalsalât they received 
from their teachers as books, which made it easier to study and 
transmit them. Women also heard some of these books of 
musalsalât with their teachers. Sitt al-ʿArab bint Muḥammad ibn 
Fakhir al-Dîn al-Bukhârî (d. 767) heard Musalsalât al-Ibrâhîmî 
from her grandfather. ⁶ Umm Kulthûm ʿĀishah bint Muḥammad 
ibn Ibrâhîm al-Murshidî (d. 846) heard Musalsal al-ʿAlâ? from 
Majd al-Dîn al-Shîrâzî. ⁷ Fâṭimah bint al-Munajjâ heard Nuzhat 
al-ḥuffâz of Abî Mûsâ al-Madîni from Taqî al-Dîn Sulaymân ibn 
Ḥamzah. ⁸ Shuhdah al-Baghdâdiyyah studied al-Musâfârâh of al-
Barqâî. ⁹ Umm Muḥammad Sitt al-Kull Āsiyah bint Jarullâh 
Muḥammad al-Makki studied Musalsal bi-l-awwalîyyah and 
Musalsal li-khatm l-dâ? with Sharaf al-Dîn Abû l-Qâsim al-
Râfîî. ¹⁰

nubalâ?, xxii. 88. ⁹IBN FAHD, K. Nayl al-Munâ, i. 217–18.
THE READING LIST OF
UMM HANİ BINT NÜR AL-DİN AL-HÜRİNİYYAH (d. 871)

She studied:
'Umar b. 'Umayr b. 'Umar b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Sadâsîdîn min hadith Ibn Ghalîbun
'Umar b. 'Abdîdîlîlîlîh al-Hasan b. 'Abdîr-Rahîm b. 'Abdîr-Rahîm al-Tabarî: Sahîh al-Bukhari
'Muhammad b. Abî l-Sâ'îd b. Abî l-Hasan: Sahîh al-Bukhari
'Muhammad b. Abî l-Hasan: Sahîh al-Bukhari
'Muhammad b. Abî l-Hasan: Sahîh al-Bukhari
'Muhammad b. Abî l-Hasan: Sahîh al-Bukhari
'Muhammad b. Abî l-Hasan: Sahîh al-Bukhari
'Muhammad b. Abî l-Hasan: Sahîh al-Bukhari
'Muhammad b. Abî l-Hasan: Sahîh al-Bukhari
'Muhammad b. Abî l-Hasan: Sahîh al-Bukhari
'Muhammad b. Abî l-Hasan: Sahîh al-Bukhari

1 AL-SUYUTI, AL-MUSJAM FI L-MUFSAM, 101–03.


with Muḥībb al-Dīn Mu'tammad b. Aḥmad b. al-Rađī Ibrāhīm al-Tabarī: Musalsalat al-Dībājī

with Abī 'Abdillāh Mu'tammad ibn 'Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Abī Dhubā al-Miṣrī: al-Ghaylāniyyāt.


(Photograph: 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 ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Māhmūd ibn al-Najjar (d. 643) reports from Ibn al-Sā‘ātī that ‘[Ibn al-Najjar’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 ʿAʾishah are: her father, Abū Bakr; ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb; ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar; Abū Hurayrah; Abū Mūsā al-Asch‘arī; ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās; Rabīʾah ibn ʿAmr al-Jurashi; al-Sāʾib ibn Yazīd; ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ; Zayd ibn Khālīd al-Juḥānī; ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmīr ibn Razīr; ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Nawfal and others. In addition, in the major compilations of hadith, there are over 300 narrators from ʿAʾishah: al-Mizzi has listed them, in alphabetical order,

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1 AL-DHAAHABI, ʿISAR aʾlām al-nubalāʾ, xxiii. 133.

The Companions narrated also from women other than the wives of the Prophet. ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, a prominent figure of knowledge among the Companions narrated from Maymūnah, a slave of the Prophet.\footnote{Ibid., 313.} From Durrah bint ʿAbdī Lahab, ʿAlī narrated that she said that the Messenger of God, \textit{salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam}, said: ‘No living person should be given hurt through [criticism of] a dead person.’\footnote{Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, al-Iṣrāʾīl, ii. 726.} The Umayyad caliph ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz narrated: ‘The righteous woman, Khawlah bint Ḥakīm, the wife of Uṯmān ibn Maz‘ūn narrated that the Messenger of God – \textit{salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam} – came out holding in his arms the two sons of his daughter saying: ‘By God, you cause [one to be] undisciplined (tujabḥilū-nā), cowardly (tujabbīnū-}
nā) and miserly (tubakhkhilī-naissance] and [yet also] you are indeed as a flower of Paradise.'\(^1\) The great tābi‘ī scholar Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab also narrated from Khawlāh bint Ḥakīm. ʿAmīr al-Sha‘bī narrated from Rāyīdah bint Karāmah.\(^2\)


**MAJOR SCHOLARS WHO NARRATED FROM WOMEN**

We find the same practice in the succeeding centuries. Imām Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241), Abū Ibrāhīm al-Tarjumānī (d. 236), Muḥammad ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ al-Jarjarāī (d. 240), Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Harawi (d. 244) and ʿAlī ibn Muslim al-Ṭūṣī (d. 253) narrated from Umm ʿUmar bint Ḥassān ibn Zayd al-Thaqafī.\(^5\)

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Ḥāfiz Ibn ʿAsakir (d. 571) narrated from over 80 women, and dedicated a whole book to biographical accounts of them. His colleague Abū Saʿd al-Samānī (d. 562) wrote down accounts of 69 women from whom he heard ḥadīth directly or who wrote ijāzahs to him. Ḥāfiz Abū Ṭāhir al-Silafi (d. 576) studied ḥadīth with tens of women scholars, Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597) narrated from three, and Ḥāfiz ʿAbd al-Ghānī al-Maqdisī (d. 600) narrated from a number.

In the seventh century, Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630), Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643), and al-Diyāʾ al-Maqdisī (d. 643), all narrated from several women teachers. Ḥāfiz al-Mundhirī (d. 656) narrated from a large number of women and provided accounts of them in al-Takmilah li wafayāt al-naqalāh, and Muhīb al-Ṭabrī (d. 694) also narrated from a number of women.

Imām Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728), probably the greatest thinker and jurist of his time, received ḥadīth from a number of women and included some ḥadīths from them in his Forty Ḥadīths. 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 imāms studied with women: Ibn Jamāʿah (d. 733); Ibn Sayyid al-Nāṣ (d. 734); Abū l-Ḥajjāj al-Mizzī (d. 742) narrated from some of them in his Ṭabdhīb al-kamāl; Imām al-Dhahabi (d. 748) narrated from them in Muḥjam al-shuyūkh, Tāʾrikh al-Islām, and Siyar aṭ-Ṭālām al-nubalāʾ; Imām Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751); Ḥāfiz al-ʿAllām (d. 761); Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771) narrated from them and provided accounts of them in his Muḥjam al-shuyūkh; likewise: Ḥāfiz Ibn Kathīr (d. 774); al-

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1Ibid., 443.
Zarkashi (d. 794); Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbali (d. 795); al-Bulqīnī (d. 805); Ḥāfīz Abū l-Fadl al-ʿIrāqī (d. 806); Ḥāfīz Nūr al-Dīn al-Ḥaythamī (d. 807); Ḥāfīz Wāli al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī (d. 826). Ḥāfīz Taqī al-Dīn al-Fāsī (d. 832) mentioned some women teachers in his Dhayl al-Taqyīd and other books; Ibn al-Jazāʿirī (d. 833) mentioned some of them in his Taʾrīkh; Ḥāfīz Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852) mentioned them in his Muʿjam and gave accounts of them in al-Durar al-kāminah and Inbāʾ al-ghumr; Najm al-Dīn Ibn Fahd (d. 885) provided accounts of his women teachers in his Muʿjam; so too Ḥāfīz Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī (d. 902) in al-Dawʾ al-lāmiʿ; and Ḥāfīz 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 muḥaddithītāt 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 Muʿādh ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Ḥabīb al-Juhamī: ‘Muʿādh asked his wife: When should the child pray? She said: A man from our people mentioned from the Prophet – salla l-lāhū ʿalayhi wa 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 (ṭābiʿiyah) is another example of a woman whose husband ʿAbdullāh ibn Wahb ibn Zamʿah narrated from her.² Išāq ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Abī Ṭalḥah narrated from his wife Umm Yahyā Ḥumaydah bint Ubayy ibn Rifāʿah al-Ansāriyyah al-Zuraqiyyah.³

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

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¹ ABŪ DĀWŪD, Sunan, ʿSalāḥ, bāb maṭā yuʿmaru al-ghulām bi-l-salāḥ. ² IBN ḤAJAR, Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb, xii. 475. ³ AL-MIZZĪ, Tahdhīb al-kamāl, xxxv. 159.
Successors to the Companions. She knew a lot of hadiths, mostly through her grandmother Asmā' bint Abī Bakr. Great imāms narrated from her including Muḥammad ibn Ishāq, the author of the famous Sirah. Most of her hadiths 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 Ḥanifah, Mālik, Shu'bah, Sufyān al-Thawrī and others. I will mention here a few examples of her hadiths 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 — salla l-lāhu 'alayhi wa sallam — and said: 'O Messenger of God — salla l-lāhu 'alayhi wa sallam — I have a daughter who is a bride: she has a disease (ḥabab) that has thinned her hair. Can I join [another's hair] to it? The Messenger of God — salla l-lāhu 'alayhi 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 hadith is narrated by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Nasa'i and Ibn Mājah.) 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, salla l-lāhu 'alayhi 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 hadith, found in the

1 Al-Bukhārī, Sahih, Libās, bāb al-wasl fi al-sha' r; Muslim, Sahih, Libās, bāb tahrim fi'l al-wāsilah wa-l-mustawṣilah wa-l-wāshimaḥ; al-Nasa'ī, Sunan, Zīnāh, b. la'n al-wāsilah wa-l-mustawṣilah; Ibn Mājah, Sunan, Nikāh, bāb al-wāsilah wa-l-mustawṣilah. 2 Al-Bukhārī, Sahih, Dhabā'ih, bāb al-nahr wa-al-dhabih; Muslim, Sahih, Sayd wa-l-dhabā'ih, bāb fi akl luḥūm al-khayl; al-Nasa'ī, Sunan, al-dahāya, bāb al-rukhṣah fi nahr ma yūdbbūh; Ibn Mājah, Sunan, Dhabā'ih, bāb luḥūm al-khayl. 3 Al-Bukhārī, Sahih, Zakāb, bāb al-tahrīd 'ala al-sadaqah; Muslim, Sahih, Zakāb, bāb al-ḥattib 'ala l-infāq wa karāḥat al-iḥsā'; al-Nasa'ī, Sunan, Zakāb, bāb al-iḥsā' fi l-sadaqah.
Sahīhs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, about the prayer on the occasion of solar eclipse.\footnote{AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, Ṭabarab, bāb man lam yatradda illā min al-ghashy al-mushqilī; MUSLIM, Sahīh, Salah, bāb mā ṣurda al-Nabi ṣallā l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam fi ṣalāt al-kutub.\footnote{Abd al-Qādir al-QURASHĪ, al-Jawābī al-mudīyyah fi ṭabaqāt al-Hanafiyyah, iv. 4.} AL-SHAWKĀNĪ, al-Badr al-tālī\footnote{See AL-HIBASI, Muʿjam al-nisāʾ al-Yamanīyyah, 149.}, ii. 24.}

Fāṭimah, the daughter of Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Abī Aḥmad al-Samarqandi (d. 540) the author of Tuhfat al-fuqahā’, was herself a great scholar and jurist, and renowned for it. She was married to ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn Masʿūd al-Kāsānī, the author of Badaʾiʾ al-sañūs. Ibn al-ʿAdīm 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.’\footnote{An example from the ninth century is Fāṭimah bint Yahyā. Al-Shawkānī (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 Fāṭimah applies jihatā 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.’ 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.’} An example from the ninth century is Fāṭimah bint Yahyā. Al-Shawkānī (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 Fāṭimah applies jestibād 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.’ 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.’

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
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. ʿĀʾishah has narrated that the children were brought to the Messenger of God, then he would bless them and do ṭabnīk (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. 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.

The following incident, reported by Abū Burdah ibn Abī Mūsā al-Ashʿarī, sheds light on how mothers would impress the sunnāhs 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-ḥamdu lī-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.

1. MUSLIM, Sahih, Tadhārah, bāb ḥukm bawl al-ṣaf al-rādī wa kasyf yati ghashi-hi.
2. Ibid., Sahih, bāb amr al-aʿimmati bi takhffī al-ṣalāh fī tāmām. AL-ḤĀKIM, Mustadrak, iv. 265.
Sometimes, the children were taught by explicit precept. For example, Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah narrates from Ibn al-Munktadir 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: ʿĀsim ibn ʿAli has narrated: ʿAbdullāh ibn Bakr ibn ʿAbdillāh 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 rakʿabs. 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. ʿAffān narrates from Shuʿbah that he said: ‘My mother said to me: There is a woman here narrating hadiths from ʿAishah. 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. ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr narrated from Zaynab bint Abī Salamah, from Ḥabībah bint Umm Ḥabībah, from her mother from Zaynab bint Jaḥsh that she said: ‘The Messenger of God – ʿalla l-lāhu ʿaley-bi 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 – ʿalla l-lāhu ʿaley-bi wa sallam – will we be destroyed when righteous

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1 AL-WASHSHĀʾ, al-Zarf wa-l-zurafāʾ, 54. 2 ABU NUʿAYM AL-ASIẒBAHĀNI, Ḥiyyat awliyāʾ, ii. 256. 3 BAḤSHAL, Taʾrikh Wāsīṭ, 109.
people are among us? He said: Yes, when the evil becomes preponderant.'

Yaḥyā ibn Bashir ibn Khallād narrated from his mother that she called upon Muḥammad ibn Ka'b al-Qurāzī and heard him say: ‘Abū Hurayrah narrated to me: The Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam – said: Make the imām [stand] in the middle [of the rows in prayer] and fill the gaps [in the rows].’

ʿAbd Rabbīḥ ibn al-Ḥakām al-Thaqāfī al-Ṭāʾīfī narrated from his mother Bint Ruqayyah who narrated ḥadith from her mother.

ʿĀmir al-Shaʿbī narrated from Yaḥyā ibn Ṭalḥah, from his mother Suʿdā al-Murriyyah that she said: ‘Umar passed by Ṭalḥah after the death of the Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi 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 – salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi 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 Ṭalīb] to utter. Had he known anything better than that for his salvation he would have required him [to utter it].’

Sufyān ibn ʿUmaynah narrated from Ibn al-Munkadīr, 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 – salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam – anything [that he said] about this prayer.

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She said: I will not tell you anything about it from the Messenger of God – *salla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam*. But if my father could be brought back to life on the condition that I quite [doing these *rak‘abs*], I would not quit [them].¹

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Awn narrated from al-Ḥasan 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 ‘alay-hi 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.’²

‘Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn ‘Abd al-Wāhid narrated saying: Umm Janūb bint Numaylah narrated to me from her mother Suwaydah bint Jābir, from her mother ‘Uqaylah bint Asmar ibn Muḍarris from her father Asmar ibn Muṭarris 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.’³

Kathīr ibn Farqad narrated from ‘Abdullāh ibn Mālik ibn Ḥudhayfah, from his mother al-‘Āliyāh 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 ‘alay-hi 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-‘Āliyāh] said: Is it allowed (*halāl*)? She said: Some people from Quraysh passed by the Messenger of God – *salla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – pulling a [dead] goat of theirs [behind them] as [one pulls] a donkey. The Messenger of God – *salla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – said to them: If you had taken its hide! They said: It is dead. The Messenger of God – *salla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – said: Tanning will purify [its hide].⁴

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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 Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Ansārī, a number of whose narrations of ḥadīth are recorded by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Nasaʾī and Ibn Mājah.¹

THE MANNERS OF THE WOMEN SCHOLARS

The sources that record the work of the muhaddithāt 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 musnidaḥ, 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-MIZZĪ, Tahāhīb al-kāmil, 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 *muhaddithīt* is the *tābi'īyyah* 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 ‘Ubaydillāh 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. Yūnus ibn Maysarah reports: ‘The women used to worship with Umm al-Dardā and when they became weak from standing they

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would lean on ropes."  

Intensity of worship is also reported of other women teachers: Ḥāfiẓ al-Sīlāfī narrates from Abū l-Riḍāl Fīḥān ibn Naṣrullāh al-Azīdi that he said: "The mother of my children [i.e. my wife] narrated to me that she saw Khadijah bint al-Faqqīh Abī l-ʿAbbās 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. ʿUthmān ibn Ḥayyān (d. 105) says: "We ate food with Umm al-Dardāʾ 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." ʿAbd Rabī ibn Sulaymān ibn ʿUmayr ibn Zaytūn reports that "Umm al-Dardāʾ 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 ʿĀmir says: "I set out intending [a journey to] Jerusalem. I passed by [the home of] Umm al-Dardāʾ. She gave me [something] to drink and she gave me a dinar." This spirit of generosity, giving of their wealth as well as time, is a consistent and stable characteristic of the muḥaddithūt. Mūsā ibn ʿAbdillāh says: "ʿAʾishah bint Ṭalḥah narrated to us and said [that] the people used to come to [umm al-muʾminīn ʿĀʾishah] from every city. They would write letters from their cities. I would sit before ʿĀʾishah [and say]: Khālah [aunt], this is a letter from so-and-so and a gift from him. Then ʿĀʾishah 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]."

1 inid. 2 ABŪ ṬAHIR, Muʿjam al-safar, 83. 3 IBN ʿASĀKIR, Taʿrīkh madīnat Dimashq, Tarājim al-nisāʾ, 433. 4 Ibid., 428. 5 Ibid., 433. 6 ABŪ ZURʿAH AL-DIMASHQĪ, al-Taʿrīkh i. 333. 7 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, al-Adab al-muḥfrad, báb al-kitābāh ilā l-nisāʾ 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 mubaddithah renowned for stamina through all-day sessions of teaching was Sitt al-Wuzarah bint 'Umar ibn al-Munajja (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-Dhahabī (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-Dhahabī 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 Rāfī (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.'

‘Awn ibn 'Abdillah reports about Umm al-Dardah 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-kamīnah, ii. 129. 2 Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa-l-nihayah, sub anno 79. 3 Al-Dhahabî, Mu'jam al-shuyukh, i. 292. 4 Al-Dhahabî, al-Juz' al-majqūd min Siyar a'sām al-nubalā', 421. 5 Ibn Hajar, al-Durar al-kamīnah, ii. 117. 6 Ibn Rāfī, al-Wafayāt, i. 318. 7 Al-Mizzī, Tahdhib al-kamāl, xxxv. 355.
Al-Dhahabî says about his teacher, Zaynab bint ‘Abd al-Rahmân (d. 704), that she was particularly good in revising.¹

Sometimes, as a break from the serious work of studying hadith, the muhaddishât would narrate interesting stories to relax their students. Sitt al-Fuqâhâ’ al-Ḥamawîyyah (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-Rahmân ibn al-Aswad narrates: ‘My father used to send me to ‘A‘îshah 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-mu‘minîn, when does the bath becomes compulsory? She said: So, you have done it, O Luka!⁵ 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-‘Aṣamm narrates: ‘I and a nephew of hers welcomed ‘A‘îshah 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-lâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam? By God, Maymûnah 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.⁶ An example of appropriate severity is this response by Umm al-Dardâ’ to a serious failure of manners in one of her students. It is reported by Ibn Abî Zakariyyâ al-Khuzâ‘î: ‘We went out on a journey with Umm al-Dardâ’. Then a man joined our company. Umm al-Dardâ’ asked him: What is preventing you from reciting [the Qurân] and remembering God as your companions [are doing]? He said: I have [memorized] only one

¹Al-Dhahabî, Mu‘jam al-shuyûkh, i. 258. ²Ibid., i. 290. ³AL-DHAHABÎ, Siyar a‘lâm al-nubalâ’, v. 11. ⁴Ibid., ii. 243–44.
sūrah of the Qurʾān, and I have repeated it so often that I have let it go. She said: Is the Qurʾān 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 Ismāʿīl ibn Ubaydillah narrates: ‘Umm al-Dardā’ said to me: O Ismāʿīl, how can one sleep if he has 10,000 under his pillow? Ismāʿīl said to her: Rather, how can one sleep if he does not have 10,000 under his pillow! She said: Subḥān al-lāh! I see you will be tried (tubtalā) by [fortune in] this world.’ And Ismāʿīl was indeed tested by getting fortune in this world.2 Zayd ibn Aslam narrates that ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān, the caliph, once invited Umm al-Dardā’ 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-Dardā’ said to him: I heard you last night cursing your servant. I have heard Abū l-Dardā’ say that the Messenger of God – ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi 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. ʿUthmān ibn Ḥayyān reports from Umm al-Dardā’ 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 Ibrāhīm ibn Abī ʿAblah says: ‘I saw Umm al-Dardā’ in Jerusalem sitting among poor women. A man came and distributed some money among them. He gave Umm al-Dardā’ a fals [a copper]. She said to her servant: Buy camel meat

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1 Ibn ʿAsākir, Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq, Tarājīm al-nisāʾ, 431. 2 Ibid., xxxix. 452. 3 Ibid., Tarājīm al-nisāʾ 435. 4 Al-Dhahabi, Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ, iv. 279.
with it. She said: Is not that money ṣadaqah? Umm al-Dardā\textsuperscript{3} said: It came to us unasked.\textsuperscript{1} The sources record many instances of muhaddithāt 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-Hamawīyyah (d. 855), he says; ‘She narrated a lot of hadith; the imāms [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.’\textsuperscript{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 ʿumm 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 Aḥmad ibn al-Faraj al-Baghdādīyyah (d. 574)\textsuperscript{3} who were, or who later became, famous as scholars, jurists, qādis, and ascetics.\textsuperscript{4} After that, to show how heavily attended some of the muhaddithāt’s classes could be, I present a copy of, and then a transcription of the names of the students given on the attendance record (ṣamāq) 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 Juz? ʾIntīkhāb al-Ṭabarānī li ibni-hi Abī Dharr ʿalā ibn Fāris, which

\textsuperscript{1} Ibn ʿAsākir, Taʾrikh madinat Dimashq, Tarājim al-nisāʾ, 430. \textsuperscript{2} Al-Sakhāwī, al-Dāwi al-lāmiʿ, xii. 52. \textsuperscript{3} Al-Dhaḥabī, Taʾrikh al-Islām (sub anno 571–580), 146. \textsuperscript{4} Accounts of Shuhdah’s students can be looked up in loco in al-Mundaḥirī, al-Taqumilah li-wafyāt al-naqalāb.
she heard from Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Dā'im, who heard it from Yahyā al-Thaqafi, 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
Ahmad ibn al-Faraj al-Baghḍādīyyah (d. 574)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of student (d., place) [other places associated with]</th>
<th>place(s) mainly associated with</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abū Ismā'īl Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Maqdisī al-Dimashqī (d. 614, Damascus)</td>
<td>Damascus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaykh Ibrāhīm ibn al-Muẓaffar al-Baghḍādī (d. 622, Mosul)</td>
<td>Mosul, Sinjar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Maʿālī Ahmād ibn ʿUmar al-Nahrawānī (d. 629, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-ʿAbbās Ahmād ibn Yaʿqūb al-Mārīstānī al-Ṣūfī (d. 639, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Muḥammad Ismāʿīl ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Azajī al-Māmūnī</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Muḥammad Ismāʿīl ibn ʿAlī al-Jawhārī (d. 631, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaykh Abū l-Fadl ʿIrās ibn Jāmīr al-Irbilī al-Shurūṭī (d. 601, Irbil)</td>
<td>Irbil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAbdillāh al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿUmar al-Mawsīlī (d. 622, Mosul)</td>
<td>Mosul, Irbil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Khalīl ibn Ahmād al-Ṣarsarī (d. 633, Sarsar)</td>
<td>Baghdad, Sarsar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Ahmad Dāwūd ibn ʿAlī al-Hammāmī</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Maʿālī Saʿīd ibn ʿAlī al-Baghḍādī al-Wāʾiz</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Muḥammad Ṭalḥah al-ʿAlī al-Ḥanbalī (d. 593, al-ʿAlī)</td>
<td>al-ʿAlī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Bakr ʿAbdullāh ibn Abū Ḥasan al-Ṭahhān (d. 623, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Jaʿfar ʿAbdullāh ibn Naṣrullāh al-Ḥāshīmī (d. 622, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Fath ʿAbdullāh ibn Abī Ghālib al-Sāmarrī (d. 636, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Qāsim al-Diyāʿ ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Muḥammad al-Qurashi (d. 616, Cairo)</td>
<td>Cairo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Bakr ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Maḥfūz al-Hanbalī (d. 630, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Faraj ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Najm al-Anṣārī (d. 634, Damascus)</td>
<td>Damascus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn ʿAbd al-Razzāq ibn ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlī (d. 606, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Dulaf al-Baghḍādī (d. 637,</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Tālib ʿAbd al-Latīf ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Qubbayṭ (d. 641, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-Muwaffaq Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Latīf ibn Yūsuf al-Mawsīlī (d. 629, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad, Damascus,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Manṣūr ʿAbd al-Malik ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Sukaynah (d. 602, Qanā, Egypt) [Aleppo, Jerusalem, Egypt]</td>
<td>Baghdad, Makkah Madinah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Bakr Ubaydullāh ibn ʿAlī al-Baghdādī</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Maʿālī Ubaydullāh ibn ʿAlī al-Naghūbī (d. 622, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Qāsim Ubaydullāh ibn ʿAlī al-Mubārak al-Azājī (d. 619, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Futūḥ Uthmān ibn ʿAbd al-Nāṣr al-Baghdādī al-Masʿūdī (d. 636, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Qāsim ʿAlī ibn Afdal al-Hāshimī (d. 625, Makkah)</td>
<td>Basrah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Hasan ʿAlī al-Tūlīsānī al-Mālikī (d. 599, Sāid, Egypt)</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Hasan ʿAlī ibn al-Hāfīẓ Abī l-Fāraj ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jawzī (d. 630, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Hasan ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Sulāmī (d. 602, Hims) [Damascus]</td>
<td>Baghdad, Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Hasan ʿAlī ibn Nābit al-Azājī (d. 618, Ras al-ʿAyn)</td>
<td>Ras al-ʿAyn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Ḥafs ʿUmar ibn Ibrāhīm al-Turkistānī al-Sūfī (d. 602, Shiraz) [al-Jazirah, Diyar Bakr, Khurasan]</td>
<td>Wasit, Hijaz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Ḥafs ʿUmar ibn Yūsuf ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Bundār al-Dimashqī (d. 600, Cairo)</td>
<td>Egypt, Damascus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qaysar ibn Kumushrink (d. 607, Tustar)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Farghānī (d. 623, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Manṣūb Muḥammad ibn Ahmad al-Tāliqānī (d. 623, Damascus) [Egypt]</td>
<td>Qazwin, Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Hasan Muḥammad ibn Ahmad al-Baghdādī</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ahmad al-Tāliqānī (d. 614, Rome) [Irbil]</td>
<td>Qazwin, Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Maʿālī Muḥammad ibn Ahmad al-Jīlī al-Baghdādī (d. 627, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Nasr Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Mashshiq al-Baghdādī al-Bayyārī (d. 593)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Hasan Muḥammad ibn ʿIsām al-Irbilī (d. 618, Irbil)</td>
<td>Irbil, Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Hasan Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Yūsufī (d. 640, Baghdad)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Uthmān al-Zabīdī (d. 608, Kaysh island)</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū l-Barakāt Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Anṣārī (d. 600, Asyut)</td>
<td>Asyut, Mosul</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Continuation of samāʿ of the class of Zavnab bint al-Kamāl
Some of the class of 'Abd al-Karim (d. 740), teaching [ex]

Muhaddith al-Tadmuri lilmawā'il, Al-Dirr wa-l-Fārsi min Jann al-

Qāyūn, Damascus, 1 Rajab, 718. Continues on previous
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 samāc of the class of Zaynab bint al-Kamal (d. 740), teaching Juq Intihāb al-Ṭabarānī li ibn-hi Abī Dharr ʿalā ibn Fāris in Jāmīc al-Muṣaffārī, Qāsyūn, Damascus, 1 Rajab 718. (The names of the few women students in this class are in italic.)

name of student (date of death if known; place associated with)

Muḥammad ibn Saʿd al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad ibn Saʿd ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Maqdisī
Shaykh Muwaffaq al-Dīn ʿAli ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn Ḥassān al-Farrāʾ
Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar ibn Salmān al-Bālīsī
Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAbdullāh ibn Yaʿqūb ibn ʿAbbās al-Iskandārī (d. 754; Alexandria)
Aḥmad ibn al-Shaykh Abī ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Tammām ibn Ḥassān al-Ḥanbalī (d. 760; Damascus)
Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Abī-ʾl-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn Baqā al-Baghdādī (d. 759; Damascus)
Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn ʿUmar ibn Ṭwāḍ al-Maqdisī
Ibrāhīm ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Izz ʿUmar ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar
Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Muṣaffārīn
ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn ʿAyyāsh
Ismāʿīl ibn Sulṭān ibn Ghanāʾīm al-Khābbāz the grandson of Naṣrullāh ibn ʿAyyāsh
Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUmar ibn ʿAtīq al-Najm ibn ʿAbbās al-ʿAṭṭār
ʿAlī ibn al-Zayn ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Ismāʿīl ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Mūsā
Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Abī-ʾl-Ḥarām al-Sanbūsālī
Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-ʿAṭbāqī al-Tājir

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1MUṬĪ AL-HĀFIZ, al-Jāmīc al-Muṣaffārī, 445–46. MS M105–Q239.
Women's Role in the Diffusion of Knowledge

Ali ibn Naṣir ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn al-Khabbab al-Nassāj
ʿAbdullāh Aybak ʿAtiq ibn Sabʿ al-Majānīn
ʿUmar ibn Ḥamzah ibn Yūnus ibn Ḥamzah al-Irbilī al-ʿAdawi (d. 782; Safad)
ʿUmar ibn Saʿd ibn ʿAwsajah al-Maqhūrī
Muḥammad ibn Hasan ibn ʿAbd al-Muhsīn
Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Nāṣīḥ ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAyyāsh
Aḥmad ibn ʿAbdillāh
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Shaykh ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn al-Shaykh Abī ʿUmar
ʿUthmān ibn ʿAtiyah ibn ʿAbd al-Wāḥid
al-Sharīf Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAli ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥaffar al-Ḥusaynī (d. 776; Damascus)
ʿUmar ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar ibn Musallam al-Kattānī (d. 777; Damascus)
Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Naṣrullāh ibn Ḥasan
ʿUmar ibn al-ʿImād ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿUqbah
Muḥammad ibn al-ʿImād ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿUqbah
Muḥammad ibn Fudayy ibn ʿAbd al-Muḥṣīn
Yaḥyā ibn Fudayl ibn ʿAbd al-Muḥṣīn
Ibrāhīm ibn Shībīl ibn Ḥamdān al-Ḥammāl al-ʿAyti al-Sammān
Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿIzz al-Dīn Aybak al-Turaykī
Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿIzz al-Dīn Aybak al-Turaykī
Ibrāhīm ibn Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad
Aḥmad ibn ʿĪsā ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Jamāʿīlī
Muḥammad ibn Naṣīr ibn Maḥṣūr
ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥājj Yūsuf ibn Muḥammad al-Tannūrī
ʿAlī ibn ʿUmar ibn Shībīl al-Fiqāʾī
Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar ibn Shībīl al-Fiqāʾī
ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlwān
Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh, relative of al-Ṣāʿīn al-Ḥanafī al-Turkmānī
ʿUmar ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh
Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-ʿIzz
Rāfī ibn Rikāb ibn Rikāb al-Ṣarghānī
al-Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Salmān ibn Muḥammad al-Maʿmari al-Nuʿmānī
Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān
ʿAlī ibn al-ʿIzz
Zayn al-Dīn ʿUmar ibn ʿUthmān ibn Sālim ibn Khalaf al-Maqdisī
Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn
Kāmil al-Maqdisī
Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Faṣr al-Ikhmīmi
ʿAbd al-Salām ibn ʿAli ibn ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Mutāʿayyish
Ḥusayn ibn Aqsh ibn Shardaḥ al-Kurdi
Muḥammad ibn ʿAlam al-Dīn al-Khayyāt
ʿAli ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm
Umar ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh
Muḥammad ibn al-Muḥibb ʿAbdillāh al-Maqdisī
his sister Khadijah
her mother Dūyā bint Yamān ibn Maṣʿūd ibn Jān
Muḥammad
Ibrāhīm
ʿAbd al-Rahmān
Zaynab, brothers and sister of Muḥibb ʿAbdullāh al-Maqdisi
Zaynab and Muḥammad descendants of their brother
their mother Fāṭimah bint Muḥibb ibn al-Muḥibb
al-Imām Amīn al-Dīn Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn
Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad 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-Iskandarī (d.
754; Damascus)
his children Muḥammad, Ahmad and ʿAʾishah
Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Rushayq al-
Miṣrī al-Mālikī
his daughter ʿAʾishah
Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Naṣrullāh ibn Abī-Iṣṣaẓ al-Zaynī
his son Muḥammad
ʿUmar and Khadijah descendants of ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn al-Ḥāfiz
Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī
their aunt Zaynab
ʿAbdullāh Aybak ʿAtīq ibn Sabʿ al-Majānīn
ʿAli ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥāzim ibn ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī
Ibrāhīm ibn Sulaymān ibn Abī-l-Ḥasan al-Daryūqūnī
Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Mānnāʾ al-Tikritī
ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Dāwūd ibn al-Khaḍīr al-Ṭahīḥān
Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Muḥsin ibn Ṭāmīr al-Khayyāt al-Dallī
ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Ṣāliḥī
Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Qayyīm al-Qattān
ʿUmar and Aḥmad sons of Aḥmad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn
 csak with their father
Muḥammad and Aḥmad sons of Shams al-Dīn ibn mpjes their slave Aydmar
Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Sālamah al-Khayyāt
Rasūl ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Muwaffaq Ismā‘īl al-Dhahabī (d. 796; Damascus)
Ibrāhīm ibn Sulaymān ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn ʿAbd al-Razzāq ibn Abī-l-ʿAbbās al-ʿAttār
ʿAbdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Nīmah ibn Sālim al-Nābulṣī
Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn al-ʿAlām ibn Māḥmūd ibn Umar al-Ḥārānī
(d. 742; Damascus)
his children Khadijāb and Muḥammad
their grandmother Zaynab bint ʿAlī ibn Isrā‘īl al-Kinānī
Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Imām Zayn al-Dīn Abī Bakr ibn Yūsuf ibn Abī Bakr al-Mizzī
ʿUthmān ibn al-Zayn ʿUmar ibn Muḥammad ibn Bayān
Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Mawsīlī al-
Khabbāz
his daughter Ẓābidab
ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Salmān al-Jammāʿīlī
his son ʿAbd al-Qādir
al-Ḥājī ʿUthmān ibn Khalaf ibn ʿĪsā al-Ḥarārījī
his son ʿAbd al-Raḥmān
al-Ṣārim Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Ṣūr ibn Muḥammad al-Kinānī
his brother Ḥasan
their cousins Ahmad and Muḥammad, sons of ʿUthmān
Sālamah ibn ʿĀmir ibn Najwān al-Fuzārī
Fayyād ibn Fayyād ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Funduqī
ʿAlī ibn Abī Bakr ibn ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Ṣumādī
Aḥmad ibn al-Zayn ibn al-Shihāb al-Ḥalbūnī
Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar ibn Aḥmad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Maʿarrī
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān and Ahmad sons of Shaykh Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAlī ibn
Muḥammad ibn Baqā al-Mulaqqīn
Muḥammad ibn Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn ʿAbd al-
Dāʾīm
Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ghāzī ibn ʿAlī ibn Bashīr al-Turkmānī
Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Mānī al-Baytār
Abū l-Thanāʾ ibn Mūsā ibn ʿAbd al-Jalīl al-Furāwī
his son Muḥammad
ʿAbd al-Ghaffār ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Ghaffār
ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd
Abū Bakr and ʿAisbah children of Shaykh Ibrāhīm ibn Barakāt ibn Abī-l-Faḍl al-Baḥbakki
Abdullāh ʿAtīq al-ʿIrāqī
Muḥammad and Fātimah children of Muḥammad ibn Shaddād ibn ʿUthmān al-Qaṭṭān
Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Sulaymān al-Warrāq
Fātimah bint ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥajāwī
Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Thiqah al-Warrāq
Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Muʿallim al-Shāghūrī al-Balkhī al-ʿAttār
his son Muḥammad
Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn al-Shiḥāb Aḥmad ibn Muḥsin al-Māwardī
his son Muḥammad
Shiḥāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Murshidī
Zayn al-Dīn ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn al-Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn
ʿAbdullāh ibn Marwān al-Fāriqī
ʿAlī ibn ʿUmar ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar ibn Muʿmin
ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar ibn Naṣr al-Ḥarrānī al-Nassāj
ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdān al-Daqqāq
Yūsuf and Khalīl sons of Šalīḥ ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāfīzī
ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn ʿUthmān ibn al-Šāfī ibn ʿUqbah
ʿAlī ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Mawṣūlī al-Dhahabī
Muḥammad ibn al-Shaykh Shiḥāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn al-Ṭanbā ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn al-Ḥalabīyyah and his brothers
and Muḥammad ibn Tughrīl ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn al-Šayrafī

HOW THE MUḤADDITHĀT TRANSMITTED ḤADĪTH

We saw in an earlier chapter that the women as students got ḥadīth 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 ḥadīth 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 ḥadīth 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 Safiyyah bint Abi Ubayd that

She heard Hafsah bint ‘Umar, the wife of the Prophet — salla l-lāhū ‘alayhi wa sallam — say that the Messenger of God — salla l-lāhū ‘alayhi 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-lāhū ‘alayhi 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:

Hafsah narrated to me, and this is about a time when no one would enter upon him [salla l-lāhū ‘alayhi wa sallam], that he used to pray two rak’ahs when the dawn broke. She meant [then] the Prophet — salla l-lāhū ‘alayhi wa sallam — and the caller would call for the prayer.\(^2\)

‘Abdullāh ibn Abi Sa‘īd al-Muzani says:

Hafsah bint ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb narrated to me saying: The Messenger of God — salla l-lāhū ‘alayhi 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 – salla l-lābu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿAli, 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 ʿAbdillāh ibn ʿUmar narrated from Abū l-Jarrāḥ that Umm Ḥābībah narrated to him saying:

I heard the Messenger of God – salla l-lābu ʿalay-hi 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 Ṽnḏū.  

Zuhrī narrated from ʿAli ibn Ḥusayn that Ṣafīyyah, the wife of the Prophet, narrated to him:

I came to the Prophet – salla l-lābu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – and spoke to him when he was in ʿṣṭikāf 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 – salla l-lābu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – they felt shyness and stepped back. He said: Come forward; this is Ṣafīyyah, my wife. They said: We seek refuge in God, Glorified is He. He said – salla l-lābu ʿalay-hi 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 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās that Muʿāwiyah prayed ʿasr then Ibn al-Zubayr stood up and prayed after it. Muʿāwiyah said: 'O Ibn ʿAbbās, what are these two rakah? [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 (khālah) ʿĀʾishah narrated [that] to me. Then Muʿāwiyah sent someone to ask ʿĀʾishah. She said: He is right; that is what Umm Salamah narrated to me. Then Muʿāwiyah 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 — ṣalla ʾl-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam — came and he prayed after the ʿasr. 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 zakāh-collectors came so I had been preoccupied [with him].

Sha'ībī says:

Whenever Masrūq narrated from ʿumm al-muʿminīn ʿĀʾishah, he would [begin by] say[ing]: '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 — ṣalla ʾl-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam —, whose name is Zaynab, narrated to me. I asked her: Tell me whether the Prophet — ṣalla ʾl-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam — was from among [the descendants of] Muḍar? She said: Then who else was he from, other than Muḍar? He was from among the descendants of Naḍr 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 fī man fātathu al-rakʿatān baʿda t-zubr. 2 IBN SAŠD, al-Ṭābaqāt al-kubrā, viii. 64. 3 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, al-Tārīkh al-ṣaghir, i. 12.
Sha'bī 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 ḥadith 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—ṣallā l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam—said [the Antichrist] is in the direction of the east.

Then I met Qāsim ibn Muḥammad and I mentioned to him the ḥadith of Fāṭimah. He said I testify of ʿAḥishah 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 ʿUyaynah narrated that:

ʿUbaydullāh 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—ṣallā l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam. Then she narrated to me this ḥadith that they made special food for the Prophet—ṣallā l-lāhu ʿalay-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 ḥadiths directly from their teachers, spoken by them. Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajjar, while listing the works that he studied with Khadijah bint Ibrāhīm al-Baʿlabkīyyah, notes: ‘...and the Musnad of Musaddad: if not by hearing, from al-Qāsim ibn Muẓaffar, with his ḵāṣah from ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Dulaf and Zuhrah bint Muḥammad ibn Ḥādir, with ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz’s hearing it from Shuhdah.’³ It is

clear here that ‘Abd al-‘Azīz heard the Musnad of Musaddad directly from Shuhdah, one of its renowned narrators. Ibn Hājur has stated that Ibrāhīm ibn Māhmūd ibn al-Khayyir heard Amālī Abī Bakr Ahmad al-Najjād from Shuhdah;¹ and that Naṣr ibn ‘Abd al-Razzāq ibn ‘Abd al-Qādir, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Dulf, Muḥammād ibn Abī l-Badr ibn Fityān and Ibrāhīm ibn Māhmūd ibn al-Khayyir and others heard Mashyakhbāh 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-Jawzī says in the account of Karīmah al-Marwazīyih that imāms like al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādi, Ibn al-Muṭṭalib, al-Samānī, and Abū Ṭalīb al-Zaynabī read to her.³ Al-Samānī has stated that al-Khaṭīb read the whole of Sahīh al-Bukhārī to Karīmah al-Marwazīyih in five days.⁴ Similarly Abū l-Waqt ‘Abd al-Awwal ibn Īsā ibn Shu‘ayb al-Harawī read the Juz³ Bihā bint ‘Abd al-Ṣamād al-Hartūmīyih with her.⁵ Al-Dhahabī says in the account of Sitt al-Wuzarā³ bint al-Munajja: ‘I read to her Sahīh al-Bukhārī and Musnad al-Shāfi‘ī.⁶ Muḥammad al-Wānī read to her Thulāṭiyūt al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Ṭawāhid from Sahīh al-Bukhārī, then the whole of the Sahīh, then the fifth part of Fawā‘id ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿUmar ibn Naṣr al-Dimashqī, a juz³ containing 12 ḥadīths from Musnad al-Shāfi‘ī, three sections from the Amālī of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādi.⁷ Similarly, readings to her were attended by Ahmad ibn Abī Bakr ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥādi,⁸ Abū Hurayrah ibn al-Dhahabī,⁹ Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Majd al-Dimashqī.¹⁰ Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad ibn al-Munajjā al-

Tanūkhiyyah, Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Salāḥ al-Dīn al-Zaftawi, Ahmad ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn Ahmad ibn al-Nāšīḥ al-Ḥanbalī, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn Aḥmad al-Ṣāmit, Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar, ibn Muḥammad al-Shāfīʿī. A very large number of people read to Zaynab bint al-Kamāl. Ḥāfīz Ibn Ḥajar says in the account of Fāṭimah bin Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥādī: ‘I read to her many books and qīṣā in Ṣāliḥiyah. Taqī al-Dīn al-Fāsī also read many books with her.

Correspondence

Students also received ḥadith from the muḥaddithāt by writing to them. An early example is scholars writing to Subayʾah al-Anṣārīyyah about her ḥadith. ʿAmīr al-Shaʾbī narrates that Masrūq and ʿAmr ibn Utbah wrote to Subayʾah bint al-Hāritīh 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-Sanābil ibn Baʾkak 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.’

Correspondence with women for the purpose of establishing knowledge of their ḥadith is well established in Islam. Ḥāfīz ʿAbd al-ʿAṣim al-Mundhirī wrote to a large number of women scholars, whom he has mentioned in al-Takmilah li-wafayāt al-nuqalah. Another example is Sayyidah bint Mūsā al-Mārānīyyah (d. 695). She left Syria for Egypt and al-Dhahabi was unable to receive

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1Ibid., ii. 389. 2Ibid., ii. 469. 3Ibid., ii. 594. 4Ibid., ii. 646. 5Ibid., ii. 651. 6AL-DHAHABI, al-Iṣrāʾ al-maṭajūd min Siyar aṭ-ṭām al-nubalāʾ, 546. 7IBN ḤAJAR, Inbāʾ al-Ghumm, iv. 314. 8TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FĀSĪ, Dhayl al-taqyīd, ii. 390–91. 9IBN MĀJAH, Sunan, Taḥāq, b. inqīdāʾ ʿiddatī al-mutawaffaʾ anhā zanjū-bā, wa ghayrāh bī wādī al-ḥaml.
hadith directly from her. He much regretted missing the opportunity, and then he received her ḥadith from her through correspondence.¹

**Ijāzah**

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

¹AL-DHABÆBI, Mu'jam al-shuyūkh, i. 294.
The document requesting ḫāżah, the istīd‘ā, would often be circulated to different teachers, who would record their ḫāżah on that document. Sometimes the istīd‘ā 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 Rājīḥ for himself and his children, male and female and for their mother. The shaykhah responding writes: ‘I have given ḫāżah for what they have asked.’ Then, following the word ‘written’ is her signature: ‘Sitt al-Katabah bint ʿAlī ibn Yahyā ibn ʿAlī al-Ṭarrāh.’

It was more typical, just as it was more practical, for the istīd‘ā to be circulated to many from many. The teachers would then register the names of several people within the document, for whom the ḫāżah was valid. At times such ḫāţahs included a very long list of students’ names. For example, the shaykhah Umm Muḥammad Zaynab bint Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar al-Maqdisiyah (d. 720) gave ḫāżah in an istīd‘ā, 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 –:


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Muḥammad and Zāhidah, both children of ʿAli b. Ibrāhīm al-Khabbāz, Muḥammad ʿĀḥmad and Fāṭimah, children of Shāmah


Muḥammad and Fāṭimah children of Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAlī b. ʿAbdillāh al-Sirāj

Abū l-ʿAbbās ʿĀḥmad b. Muḥaffar b. Muḥammad al-ʾNabulsi
Abū Bakr b. ʿĀḥmad b. ʿUmar al-Khabbāz


ʿĀbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿĀḥmad b. ʿĀbd al-Raḥmān al-Munajjā

ʿĀli and Abū Bakr sons of Salāḥ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Shahra-zūrī


ʿĀḥmad b. ʿĀbd al-Barr b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Razîn al-Hamāwī al-Shāfīʿī

Muḥammad b. ʿĀḥmad b. Iṣmāʿīl b. ʿĀḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Sharāʿīḥī

ʿUmar and Muḥammad sons of Muḥammad b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad b. ʿUmar b. al-Ḥasūb, their slave Maṣūd b. ʿAbdullāh, their aunts Zaynab and Khāṭūn daughters of al-Badr Ḥasan b. Balbān al-Salūqī

Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. ʿĀbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Quwayrah al-Ḥanafī al-Sulamī

Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbdullāh, guardian Dār al-Hāḍith al-Zāhiriyyah

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

Marwān b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Marwān al-Najjār

Muḥammad b. ʿUmar b. Yūnus al-Najjār

Muḥammad b. ʿĀḥmad b. ʿUmar

Muḥammad b. ʿĀḥmad b. Yūnus, Muḥammad b. ʿĪdīq b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Jabbār, his sister Dayfah and her sisters living [at time of writing]
Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Jabbār
Ahmad b. Dāwūd b. ʿAlī al-Dimashqī
Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbdillāh
Muḥammad and ʿAlī sons of ʿIzz al-Dīn Aybak b. ʿAbdullāh al-Rushaydī al-Ṣāliḥī
Ahmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Tājīr
Muḥammad b. Ghāzī b. Muḥammad
Hasan b. Ibrāhīm al-Daqqāq
ʿAlī b. ʿUmar b. ʿUmar
Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. ʿĀmir al-Tadmūrī
Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Mawsīlī, his sister on his mother’s side
Muḥammad b. Ḍāqūsh b. ʿAbdullāh al-Qabāqībī
Muḥammad 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-Shuʿayb ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Rahīm and his brother, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Rahīm b. ʿUmar al-Halābī
Muḥammad b. Muḥṣīd b. Muḥammad al-Ṣahrāwī
Muḥammad b. Ahmad b. Muḥammad al-Ṣahrāwī
Uzbek b. ʿAbdullāh slave of ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Zāhirī
Muḥammad, Ahmad and ʿAlī, children of Dāwūd b. Khuzaymah al-Khabbāz
Muḥammad and ʿAlī sons of Yaqẓān b. Ghazwān al-Daqqāq al-Samtī
Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Samtī al-Khabbāz
Ahmad b. Muḥammad b. Ahmad
Ahmad b. Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad al-Daqqāq
Muḥammad and ʿAlī sons of Nāṣīr b. Ṣāliḥ al-Shawī
Ahmad b. ʿUmar b. Sharaf al-Daqqāq
Mūsā and Muḥammad sons of Ahmad b. Muḥammad
Muḥammad and ʿAlī sons of Mūsā al-Humaydī
Muḥammad 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. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Nassāj
Ahmad b. Yūsuf b. Ahmad al-Sammān

Ahmad b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. Ahmad b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Maqqīsī

Muhammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAlī al-Fāmī

Ahmad b. Maʿtūq b. Ahmad al-Ḥammāmī

ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Ahmad al-Khayyāt

Muhammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-ʿAttār

Muhammad b. Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al- Nassāj

Ibrāhīm b. Sharaf b. Yaʿqūb al-Dimashqī

Mansūr b. Muḥammad b. Uthmān Fakhūrī

Ahmad b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad al-Jāmūs

ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. ʿAlī al-Tahwīl

Muhammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Qaṭṭān

Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Dimashqī

Muhammad b. Mahmūd b. Ahmad al-Dimashqī

Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Mujib b. Abī l-Funūh al-Ḥarīrī

ʿAlī b. Ḥasan b. ʿAbdullāh al-Jamāl

ʿUmar b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al- Nassāj

Ahmad and Ḥasan sons of Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Maṣṣīlī al-Jundī

ʿUmar b. Uthmān b. al-Shihāb Ahmad al-Khashshāb

Ibrāhīm b. Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm al-Tayyāḥ

Muhammad b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad

Ibrāhīm b. Ahmad b. Thumālāh b. Minhāl al-Muʿarbad

al-ʿĪzz ʿUmar b. Ḥasan b. ʿAbdullāh b. Ḥabīb al-Tājir

Yūsuf b. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ṭammām al-Dimashqī al-Muʿādhhdhīn

Fakhr al-Dīn Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad b. Amin al-Dīn Muḥammad

Abī Bakr al-Dimashqī, his sister Fātimah

Muḥammad and Naṣrullāh sons of Kamāl al-Dīn ʿAlī b. al-Qalānīsī, their sister Zāhīdah

Muḥammad b. Badr al-Dīn Luʿluʿ b. ʿAbdullāh al-Mubārizī, his sister ʿAlīshah


ʿUmar, ʿAlī and Fātimah, children of al-Ḥājī Ahmad b. ʿUmar b. Uthmān al-Dimashqī al-Anṣārī

Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Muqīrī

Fātimah bint al-Jamāl Yūsuf b. Yaʿqūb al-Ghumārī al-Mālikī, her sister on her mother's side Zaynab bint Sirāj b. Muḥammad b. Saʿūd al-
Mash'arānī

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān and ʿAbdullāh


Muḥammad and Amat al-Rahmān, children of Shaykh ʿAffī al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAbdillāh b. al-Ḥusayn al-Irbīlī al-Shāfīʿī,

Muḥammad, Fāṭimah and Zaynab, children of Imām Jamāl al-Dīn Ibrāhīm b. ʿAlī b. Shāwar al-Ḥimyari al-ʿAdawī

Ḥasan and ʿAlī, sons of Shaykh Fatḥ al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Anṣāri b. al-Zamlakānī

Muḥammad b. Sharaḥ al-Dīn Muḥammad


Muḥammad b. ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Haqq b. Khalaf

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


Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Tāj al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Abī Bakr al-Fākhūrī al-Raqīqī

Muḥammad b. Sharaḥ 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

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad, ʿAbdullāh and Iṣmāʿīl, sons of Shaykh Majd al-Dīn Abū Iṣḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Abī Bakr b. Ibrāhīm al-Jāzārī and [...] ¹

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,

¹Majmūʿ ab al-Íjāzāt, MS in the Madrasah al-Ḍiyāʾyyah, Qāsyūn.
madrasas and other places, like *ribāṭ* (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’minin* Ā’ishah taught in her own house, and in Basrah in the house of ‘Abdullāh ibn Khālaf where she was a guest of Ṣafiyyah bint al-Ḥarīth ibn Ṭalḥah ibn Abī Ṭalḥah al-‘Abdārī. 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 ‘Aṣākīr attended her classes and narrated from her. Before citing the hadith, he says: *Umm Abīhā Fāṭimah bint ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn narrated to us in her house while I was reading to her.*

Ḥāfīz Diyya’ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī says: *I heard the first, second and third [parts] from *Fawā’id al-Ḥaṣj* with Umm al-Fakhr Jumā’ah bint Abī Sa’d Rajā’ ibn Abī Nasr al-Husayn ibn Sālim al-Āsbahānīyyah on Wednesday the 4th or 5th Šafār 599 at her house in Isfahan.*

Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn Muhammad al-Birżālī says: *I read the sixth part of *al-Fawā’id al-Muntaqab al-ghara’ib an al-shuyūkh al-ʿAwālī al-ma’rūf bi-l-Mukballisīyyah*, with the righteous shaykh Umm al-Fīṭrān Ḥantahām bint al-Shaykh Abī l-Fath al-Şafarīb ibn Abī 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 ʿUmar al-Maqdisī (d. 687) that Ibn Rushayd received hadith from her in her house in Qāsyūn.

in 684. Ibn Rushayd says in his account of Zaynab bint Muwaffaq al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Latīf al-Lughawī: ‘I read to her a juz’ from the Ḥadīth Abī Isḥāq Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Dizīl al-Hamadānī in the house of Umm al-Faḍl in Cairo on Monday 29 Rajab 684.2

Hadīth ʿAbd al-Wābbāb al-Kilābī was read to Zaynab bint ʿAbdillāh ibn ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Maqdisiyah at her house in Damascus on Thursday 23 Shaʿbān 718.3 Fadāʾil al-Madinah of Abū Saʿīd al-Mufaḍḍal ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Jundī al-Yamānī (d. 308) was read to Umm Aḥmad Khadijah bint Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Dāʾim al-Maqdisi (d. 685) in her brother’s house on Wednesday 12 Rabīʿ al-Ākhir 683.4 Hadīth Hibatullāb al-Akjānī was read to Zaynab bint Ismāʿīl ibn al-Khābbāz in the house of Aḥmad ibn Saʿīd ibn ʿUmar al-Ṣūfī – one of the students – on Thursday 24 Jumādā al-Ākhirah 744.5

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1 Ibn al-Qāḍī, ʿDurraṭ al-Ḥijāl, i. 278. 2 Ibn al-Rushayd al-Sabṭī, Miṣbāḥ al-Sayyab, iii. 319. 3 Leder et al., Muʿjam al-aʿamāʾ, al-Dimashqīyyah, 95, 316. 4 Abū Saʿīd al-Mufaḍḍal, Fadāʾil al-Madinah, 55. 5 Leder et al., Muʿjam al-aʿamāʾ, al-Dimashqīyyah, 120, 312.
The document copied above is a *samāʿ* for the book *Hadīth Luwayn*. It names the teacher as ‘the Shaykhah, the righteous, the authentic (*al-aṣīlah*) Umm al-Fadl Karīmah bint al-Amīn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Khaḍīr al-Zubayriyyah. Then follows her *isnād* 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 Rabīʿ al-ʿAwwal, 629 ‘in her house in Damascus’.

**Mosques**

The women also held their classes in the mosques. Umm al-Dardāʾ is well known for teaching in the mosques of Damascus and Jerusalem. Her classes were attended by male and female jurists and traditionalists as we noted earlier, even the caliph, ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān was a regular participant. Another example is of the righteous Shaykhah Umm al-Khayr Fāṭimah bint Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Jawhar al-Baʿlabakkī al-Bātūrī (d. 711). Al-Dahahabi says in his account of her: ‘She heard *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* from Ibn al-Zabīdī, *Saḥīḥ Muslim* from Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasirī, and also studied with Abū l-Qāsim ibn Rawāhah. She lived a long life and narrated a lot.’

2 Hāfīẓ Ibn al-Qayyim studied ḥadīth with her. 3 Al-Dahahābī says: ‘My son, al-Ṣubkī, Sirāj al-Dīn ibn al-Kuwayk, al-Taqī ibn Abī l-Ḥasan and a great number [of others] studied ḥadīth with her.’ 4 She taught ḥadīth 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 — *sallā l-lāhu alay-hi wa sallām* — and ḥadīth were read to her while she was leaning on the side of the wall of the grave of the Prophet — *sallā l-lāhu alay-hi wa sallām* — in front of his head. She wrote *ijtībā* with her own hand for me and for others.’

There too Ibn Rushayd records

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1 Leder et al., *Muʿjam al-samāʿāt al-Dimashqiyyah*, 402. MS 3803 fol. 35a.
that he read some ḥadīths with Fātimah. It is not possible that Fātimah 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-Jāmīʿ al-Muẓaffarī (Jāmīʿ al-Ḥanābila) and Jāmīʿ Banū Umayyah. Ḥāfīz Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn Dimashqī says in his note on Āʾishah bint ʿAbd al-Ḥādī (d. 816): ‘She was appointed to the post of teacher of ḥadīth in the grand mosque of Banū Umayyah.’¹

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-Bītāqah of Abū l-Qāsim Ḥamzah ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAli al-Kinānī (d. 357) was read to Zaynab bint al-Ḳamāl and Ḥabibah bint al-Zayn in al-Madrasah al-Ḍiyāʾiyah on Thursday 28 Ṣafar 733.² Ḥadīth of Bakr ibn ʿAbd al-Shīrāzī was read to Zaynab bint Makkī al-Ḥarrānī in al-Madrasah al-Mismāriyyah in Damascus in 688 in a class of 19 students.³ K. al-Fitan of Ḥanbal ibn Ishāq al-Shaybānī (d. 273) was read to Sitt al-Aḥl bin ʿAlwān (d.703) in the Madrasat al-Ḥanābilah in Damascus on Saturday 16 Ṣaḥīl 1-Awwal 699 in a class of 16 students.⁴ Fawāʾid Abī ʿAbd al-Ḥākim was read to Āʾishah bint Sayf al-Dīn Abī Bakr ibn Qawālījī on Tuesday, 4 Muḥarram 793, in al-Madrasah al-Khāṭūniyyah.⁵

WOMENS' ROLE IN THE DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE

Below is a copy of a legible, beautifully written *sama* for a class on *Hadith Abī l-Husayn al-Kilābī*. The teacher is 'the shaykhah, the righteous, the woman of high *isnād*, the long-lived' Umm Ahmad Zaynab bint Makkī ibn ʿAlī ibn Kāmil al-Harrānī.

[Literary text in Arabic]

She was one of the teachers of al-Mızzi, of Ibn Taymiyyah, al-Dhahabî, al-Birzâlî, and other famous scholars of that time. The document continues with her isnâd 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 Amâlî al-Jawhari. The date given is: Friday, 10 Jumâdâ al-Ákhirah, 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 ribââfs and gardens. For example, Ḥadîth of Abû 'Amr Ûthmân ibn Muhammed 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 Juz’ of Ḥanbal Ibn Ishâq was read to her in a ribââ in Damascus in 733 and attended by a large number of students.3 Ḥadîth of Abû 'Ali al-Hasan ibn Ahmad ibn Ibrâhîm ibn Shâbdân (d. 426) was read to Zaynab bint al-Khaṭîb Muhîbb al-Ḍîn al-Ḥarastânî in Ribât Baldaq in Damascus in 722.4 Karâmât al-Awliyâ of al-Hasan ibn Muhammed al-Khallâl was read to Sitt al-Fuqahâ al-Wâsitiyyah in a ribââ in Qâsyûn in 723.5

Musnad 'Abdillâh ibn 'Umar was read to the great shaykhah and famous muhaddith of Syria Karîmah bint 'Abd al-Wâhhâb al-Zubayriyyah (d. 641) in her garden in 639.6 Karâmât al-Awliyâ was read to Zaynab bint al-Kamâl in the garden of 'Amîn al-Ḍîn al-Wânî in the land of al-Arzah in 728.7 Ḥadîth Luwayn of Abû

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1These ribââfs 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.2MUṬĪ AL-HÂFĪZ, Muṣjam al-sâma‘ât al-Dimashqīyâh, 110, 312. 3See sama‘ât at the end of Juz’ ḤANBAL.4LEDER et al., Muṣjam al-sâma‘ât al-Dimashqīyâh, 60, 315.5Ibid., 41, 319.6Ibid., 69, 482.7Ibid., 41, 311.
Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Miṣṣīṣī (d. 245) was read to Umm al-Fadl bint al-Amīn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Khaḍir al-Zubayriyyah in the garden in al-Mayṭūr of Bayt Lahyā in 633. The copy, show on the next page, of the sama'c 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 ījāzah 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

¹Leder et al., Mu‘jam al-samā‘āt al-Dimashqīyyah, 402. MS 3803 fol. 35v.
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 Sahīh, Muslim 36, Abū Dāwūd 75, al-Tirmidhī 46, al-Nasa’ī 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 ḥadīths varies as it does in the ḥadīths 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 ḥadīths under the different topics. This survey excludes ʾĀʾishah’s ḥadīths, partly because they are well known, partly because some of them will come in the chapters on ḥadīth critique and fiqh. The ḥadīths narrated exclusively by women are discussed under a separate heading.

On ʾimān (faith), several well-known ḥadīths are narrated by women. An example was quoted earlier (see above, p. 147) from Suʿdā al-Murriyyah narrated by her son Yaḥyā ibn Ṭalḥah.

On ṭabārah (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 ḥadīth of al-Rubayyi bint Muʿawwīdth describing the Prophet’s wudu. Scholars travelled from far and wide to hear this ḥadīth from her. ʿAbdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAqīl ibn Abī Ṭālib reports saying: “Alī ibn Ḥusayn [Zayn al-ʿĀbidin] sent me to al-Rubayyi bint Muʿawwīdth to ask her about the ablution of the Prophet, ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam. She described [it] in detail, then she said to him: Your cousin [ʿAbdullāh] Ibn ʿAbbās also came to me and asked me about the description of the ablution of the Prophet, ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam.” Both ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās, a Companion and cousin of the Prophet, renowned for his knowledge and fiqh, and ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidin, a great scholar among the Successors and the grandson of ʿAlī and Fāṭimah, referred to this woman for knowledge about the Prophet’s wudu.

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

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1 ABŪ DĀWŪD, Sunan, Ṭabārah, bāb ʿifṣat wudu al-nabī ṣalla l-lābu ʿalay-hi wa sallam, al-Tirmidhi, Jāmiʾ, Ṭabārah, bāb mā jāʾa annabu yahdāʾu bi muʾakhkhar al-raʾs; IBN MĀJAH, Sunan, Ṭabārah, bāb al-rajuʿ yastaʾīnu ʿalā wuduʾi bi fa-yasubba ʿalay-hi.
Urwah from his wife Fātimah, from her grandmother Asmā bint Abī Bakr: ‘Once there was an eclipse of the sun in the time of the Messenger of God—salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam. I entered to [where] Āʾishah [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 janāzah (funeral rites), there is a hadīth narrated by three generations of women – Umm ʿĪsā al-Jazzār from Umm Jaʿfar bint Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar ibn Abī Ṭālib, from her grandmother Asmā bint ʿUmay:s:

I got up in the morning the day [my husband] Jaʿfar and his companions suffered. The Messenger of God—salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi 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—salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam—called on me and said: O Asmā, where are the sons of Jaʿfar? 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—salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam—perhaps some news has come to you about Jaʿfar? 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—salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi 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—salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam—went until he called on his daughter Fātimah, and she was crying out: O uncle! The Messenger of God—salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam—said: On someone like Jaʿfar one who would weep should weep. Then he said: Make food for the family of Jaʿfar for they are preoccupied.²

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

¹AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, Ṭabārāh, bāb man lam yattwadda illā min al-ghashy al-muthqīl, MUSLIM, Sahīh, Sahāb, bāb ma ʿuridhā alā l-nabī salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam fī salāt al-kusūf.²IBN MĀJAH, Sunan, Janāʾir, bāb ma jāʾa fī l-ṭāʾām yubʾathu ilā abī al-mayyīt.
her fasting: 'The Prophet – ﷺ l-lāhu ‘alay-hi 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 – ﷺ l-lāhu ‘alay-hi 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 ḥadīths from the women. One enjoining charity is narrated by Muḥammad ibn ‘Amr ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Abī Dirār from his aunt ‘Amrah bint al-Ḥārith ibn Abī Dirār: 'The Messenger of God – ﷺ l-lāhu ‘alay-hi 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 ḥadīths narrated by women related to the rites of the pilgrimage were given earlier. Another example: from Manṣūr ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān from his mother Ṣafīyyah bint Shaybah, from Asmā' bint Abī Bakr: 'We left in the state of ḵārām. The Prophet – ﷺ l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – said: Whoever has ḥady [sacrificial animal] he should continue in ḵārām, and whoever does not have ḥady, he should come out of ḵārām. She says: I did not have ḥady, so I became ḥalāl [to my husband], and my husband Zubayr had ḥady, he did not become ḥalāl [to me ...]. She says: Then I put on my [nice] clothes and came out of ḵārām; 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 ḥadīths narrated by women related to food, clothing, business, ḫārāb and jihād were given earlier. So also on nikāh and ṣulāq (marriage and divorce), and on this topic

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1 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Ṣaḥīh, Sawm, bāb sawm yawm al-jumā’ah. 2 ABU NU’AYM ASBAHĀNĪ, Ma’rifat al-sahābah, v. 277. 3 MUSLIM, Ṣaḥīh, Ḥajj, bāb mā yadhān man taṣa bi-l-bayt wa sa’ā min al-baqā’ 3 ala al-ḥārām wa tark al-tahalluk; AL-NASAĪ, Sunan, Manāsik, bāb mā yaf’al man aballa bi-l-ḏumrah wa abdā; IBN MĀJAH, Sunan, Manāsik, bāb faskh al-ḥajj.
others are discussed in the next chapter. On **mirāth** (inheritance), there is the ḥadīth of Umm Sa’d referred to by Dāwūd ibn al-Ḥusayn: ‘I used to read the Qur’ān to Umm Sa’d bint al-Rabī’, and then she mentioned a ḥadīth related to inheritance.¹

On **fitan** (sing. **fitnah**: trials and tribulations, civil strife), there are several ḥadīths narrated by women Companions. Asmā’ bint Yazīd al-Ansārīyyah narrated the long ḥadīth of the Antichrist and the events leading to it; Fāṭimah bint Qays narrated the famous long ḥadīth of Tamīm al-Dārī containing the account of Jassāsah and the Antichrist.² And there is the ḥadīth from **umm al-mu’minīn** Hafsah, narrated by ʿAbdullāh ibn Ṣafwān, that she said: ‘I heard the Messenger of God — **salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam** — say: An army will head towards this house [the Ka’bah] to invade it. When they reach Baydā’, 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].³

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 Mulaykah narrated from Asmā’ bint Abī Bakr that the Messenger of God said: ‘I will be at the **hawd** (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 **ummah**. [The angel] will say: You do not know what they did after you; they continued turning back on their heels.’⁴

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

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¹ ABŪ DĀWŪD, Sunan, Forā’id, bāb naskh mirāth al-ṣaqd bi-mirāth al-raḥīm. ² MUSLIM, Ṣābih, Fītān, bāb qiṣṣat al-jassāsah; ABŪ DĀWŪD, Sunan, Maḥāmim, bāb fi khabar al-jassāsah; AL-TIRMIDHĪ, Jāmi’, Fītān (bāb not indicated by AL-TIRMIDHĪ); IBN MĀJAH, Sunan, Fītān, bāb fitnāt al-dajjāl. ³ MUSLIM, Ṣābih, Fītān, bāb al-khasīf bi al-jaysb al-ladibī qa’umāl al-bayt. ⁴ Ibid., Faḍā’il, bāb, ḍibkār hawd al-nabī ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam.
companions, Sudaysah narrates from Ḥafṣah that she said: “The Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – 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 ḥadīth of Asmā bint ʿUmays (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 Jaʿfar 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 Muʿtah. 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

1 MUSLIM, Sahih, Talāq, bāb waḥīb al-inbād fī ʿiddāti al-wafāh wa tahrimih fī ghayr dhālik illāthalāthata ayyām.
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. Aṣmā'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 ʿĀʾishah about 'the slander' (jīk). It is much too long to quote in its entirety. ʿĀʾishah 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 Madīnah, were not yet sufficiently united by Islam to overcome tribal and clan loyalties; how the slander was deliberately encouraged by a faction in Madīnah. For that faction, Islam in Madīnah was a political ascendency 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 hadīth 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 need 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 ḥikmah 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 ḥadīth?

‘Ā’ishah is the daughter of Abū Bakr, the first khalīfah. His faith was of a quality subtly different from that of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who succeeded as the second khalīfah. Of ʿUmar 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 read-conformed to the Prophet’s way, so that the need to revise his decision seems never to have arisen. ʿĀ’ishah’s faith, despite her independence of mind and temperament, was between the two, perhaps a little closer to her father’s style than ʿUmar’s. When ʿUmar 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 ḥadīth:

[...] 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 ʿi-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 Mistah [...]  

[She] told me the slander of the people of ifk. So I healed 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: Subhān al-lāh! 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 ‘Alī ibn Abī Ta'lib and Usāmah ibn Zayd to ask and consult them about separating from his household [i.e. his wife, ‘A‘ishah].

She says: As for Usāmah 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. Usāmah said: It is your household and we do not know anything except good about them. As for ‘Alī [ibn Abī Ta'lib], 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 ‘Abdullāh 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‘ādh, [one] of the Banū ‘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 Anšārī 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 tashāḥḥud when he sat down, and then said: "Amma ba'ad. O 'A'ishah, 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 Qurān, 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 Yūsuf [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 ḥadīths 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 ḥadīth of Barīrah. 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 ʿAbdullāh ibn Ḥusayn ibn Zarqūn even compiled a book about it, called *Fiqh ḥadīth Barīrah.* ² Ḥafīz Ibn Ḥajar al-_ASSUMEēnī says: ‘Some imāms have collected the useful points of this ḥadīth, which exceeded three hundred points. I have summarized this [discussion] in *Fath al-bārī.* ³

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The hadīth 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. 'Uthmān, 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 'Abd al-Rahmān and 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās had gathered with Abū Hurayrah and were discussing the waiting period for a pregnant widow. Ibn 'Abbās 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 mawlā of Ibn 'Abbās, to Umm Salamah to ask her. She told them about the incident of Subay'ah al-Aslamiyyah and the Prophet's permitting her to re-marry after she had delivered her child.' Ibn 'Awn narrated from Ibn Sirīn that he said: 'I was sitting in Kufah in a big gathering of Anṣār. Among them was 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Abī Laylā. They mentioned the story of Subay'ah. I mentioned 'Abdullāh ibn Utbah ibn Mas'ūd's saying '[the waiting period] is until she delivers. Ibn Abī Laylā said: But his uncle [i.e. 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd] does not say that. I raised my voice and said, I would be foolhardy if I lied about 'Abdullāh ibn Utbah who is [not far away] in another corner of Kufah.' Imām al-Tirmidhī says after quoting Subay'ah's hadīth: 'The practice on this, according to the majority of the people of knowledge from among the Companions

1 MUSLLIM, Sahīh, Ṭalāq, bāb inqidā' 'iddat al-mutawaffā 'anbā' zayju-bā wa ghayri-bā bi-wad' al-ḥamīl. 2 AL-NASABI, Sunan, Ṭalāq, bāb 'iddatī l-ḥāmil al-mutawaffā 'an-bā' zayju-bā.
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 Ištāq [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 ḥadīth in his commentary on Sahīh Muslim: ‘The majority of scholars from early and late generations have held to this ḥadīth.’

The ḥadīth of Busrah bint Ṣafwān
Zuḥrī narrated from ‘Abdullāh ibn Abī Bakr ibn Ḥazm al-Anṣārī that he heard ‘Urwh ibn al-Zubayr say: ‘Marwān, while he was governor of Madinah, mentioned that if a man touches his sexual organ, he must repeat his wūdū’. I opposed Marwān and said it does not break the ablation. Marwān said: Busrah bint Ṣafwān has narrated to me that she heard the Messenger of God – șalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – say: If one touches his sexual organ, he should do ablation. 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-Tirmidhī says after quoting Busrah’s ḥadīth:

It is the opinion of a number of people from among the Companions of the Prophet – șalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – and [their] Successors. It is the opinion of Imām Āwzā‘ī, al-Shāfi‘ī, Aḥmad [ibn Ḥanbal] and Ištāq [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 Ṣafwān 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 'Urwh 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 'Atiyah

This hadith about the washing of the deceased\(^2\) is considered to be the principal source on the topic. It became very famous. Bukhârî mentions or cites it many times in his Sahih, deriving many rulings from it. When Umm 'Atiyah 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.\(^3\) Qatâdah has narrated that Ibn Sirîn learnt washing the dead from Umm 'Atiyah,\(^4\) and Ibn 'Abd al-Barr records that Ibn Sirîn, among all the Successors, was the most knowledgeable about washing the dead.\(^5\) Imam al-Tirmidhi says after quoting the hadith: 'Umm 'Atiyah's hadith is a sound and good hadith, and the practice is upon it according to the people of knowledge.'\(^6\) Ibn al-Mundhir says: 'Among the hadiths of washing there is nothing higher than the hadith of Umm 'Atiyah, and the imams have relied on it.'\(^7\)

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\(^!\) AL-BAYHAQI, Ma'rifat al-sunan wa al-athâr, i. 255. \(^2\) AL-BUKHÂRÎ, Sahih, Janâ'iz, bâb ghâsi al-mayyit wa wudâ'ibî bi-alma wa al-sîr, MUSLIM, Sahih, Janâ'iz, bâb ghâsi al-mayyit, ABÛ DÂWÚD, Sunan, Janâ'iz, bâb kayfa ghâsi al-mayyit, AL-TIRMIDHI, Jâmi', Janâ'iz, bâb mâ jâ'a fi ghâsi al-mayyit; AL-NASÂ'I, Muytabâ, Janâ'iz, bâb ghâsi al-mayyit bi al-mâ wa al-sîr, IBN MÂJAH, Sunan, Janâ'iz, bâb mâ jâ'a fi ghâsi al-mayyit. \(^3\) AL-MIZZÎ, Tahdhib al-kamâl, xxxv. 316. ABÛ DÂWÚD, Sunan, Janâ'iz, bâb kayfa ghâsi al-mayyit. \(^4\) IBN HAJAR, Fath al-bâri, iii. 163. \(^5\) AL-TIRMIDHI, Jâmi', Janâ'iz, bâb mâ jâ'a fi ghâsi al-mayyit. \(^6\) IBN HAJAR, Fath al-bâri, iii. 164.
‘A’ishah’s ḥadīth about the wife of Rifa‘ah al-Qurāẓī

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-Qurāẓī 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’ān but, on the basis of this ḥadīth, is generally accepted by the jurists and scholars. Imām al-Tirmidhī says: ‘‘A’ishah’s ḥadīth is good and sound, and the practice, [according] to all the people of knowledge from among the Companions of the Prophet – salla l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam – and others, is on this’, and then he clarifies the condition about consummation.²

WOMEN’S NARRATION OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF ḤADĪTH COMPILATIONS

The major kinds of ḥadīth compilations – jawāmi‘, sunan, masānīd, ma‘ajim, arba‘ināt, ajza‘ 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-Bukhārī. 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-Khatib al-Baghdādi.³

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, Ṭalāq, bāb man jawwaza al-ṭalāq al-thalāth. ² AL-TIRMIDHĪ, Jāmi‘, Nikāh, bāb fī man yuttalliqu innā ya’at-a hu thalāthan fī yāzawajīn-hā akhar fī yuttalliqu-hā qably an yadbaha bī-hā. ³ See AL-DHAHABI, Siyyar aṣlām al-nubalā‘, xvii. 277.
Ornamented title page of Ṣāḥīḥ al-Bukhārī written in the hand of Ḥāfīz Ahmad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Nūwayrī (d. 733). Under the main title it is stated that this is the narration of al-Firabrī, and then follows the isnād of Sitt al-Wuzarā to him.¹

Ijāzah from Sitt al-Wuzara2 to narrate her hadith1

Hāfiz Ibn Hajar narrated Karīmah’s version from his shaykh ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar al-Hindi al-Ḥallawi, who studied it with Muḥammad ibn Ghālī ibn Najm al-Dimyāṭi, who studied it with al-Muʿīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn Yusuf al-Dimashqi, who studied it with Abū l-Qāsim al-Būṣīrī, with his well known isnād to Karīmah.2 Ibn Ḥajar also studied it with his shaykh, Hāfiz Zayn al-Dīn al-Trāqi, who studied it with Abū ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Raḥim ibn ʿAbdillāh, with his isnād to Karīmah.3 The famous narrator of the Sahih of the sixth century is Umm al-Bahā Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad al-Baghdādi (d. 539). Hāfiz Ibn Ḥajar says in the account of Aḥmad ibn Khalīl ibn Kaykādī al-ʿAlāʾi: ‘Among his eminent narrations is the Sahih, which he studied with Ghānim ibn Ahmad al-Julūdī, who narrated it from Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad al-Baghdādi.’4 Another and equally famous narrator of the Sahih is the righteous shaykhah and musnīdah of her time Sitt al-Wuzara1 bint ʿUmar ibn Saʿd ibn al-Munajja al-Tanūkhiyyah (d. 716) who taught the whole book many times in Damascus and Egypt. Among her students were: the qāḍi of Madinah ʿAbd al-Raḥim ibn Razīn al-Ḥamawī, Shaykh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Jaʿfārī, Qūṭ al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Thanāʾ al-Hirmās al-Miṣrī, ʿImād al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Qurashī al-Isnāʾī, Shaykh Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Husayn al-Dahrūṭī, Muḥammad ibn Khalīl ibn Yarbāk al-

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The last woman who narrated Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī with very high isnād was ʿĀʾishah bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī al-Maqrīzīyyah.² Many famous scholars like Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar, Ḥāfiz Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī and Ṭaqī al-Dīn al-Fārisī studied the whole book from her.

Ṣahīḥ 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-Baghdādīyyah (d. 532) of Nishapur was a famous teacher of this book. Another popular teacher of it was Zaynab bint ʿUmar ibn Kindi (d. 699). Muḥammad ibn Qawālīj, 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-Tūsī, who narrated it from Faqīḥ al-Ḥaram Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl al-Furāwī, from Abū l-Ḥusayn ʿAbd al-Ghāfīr ibn Husayn al-Fārisī, from Abū Aḥmad Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā ibn ʿAmrūyah 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

last mentioned did not hear some parts of three of the books in Muslim’s compilation from Muslim himself, namely Ḥajj, Wāṣyā and Imārāb. Among the teachers of the book in the eighth century was Ṣafiyah bint Aḥmad ibn Qudāmah (d. 714) and in the ninth, ʿAʾishah bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥādī (d. 816), who narrated it with full hearing from Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Ḥasan, from Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥādī, from Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Ḥarrānī. One of the famous teachers of Jāmi' of al-Tirmidhī was Khadijah bint ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd ibn Ghashm ibn Muḥammad al-Mardāwī (d. 734). Before her Zaynab bint Makkī taught this book several times. Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar says in the account of his teacher Ahmad ibn Ṣalih ibn al-Ḥasan al-Iškandarānī: ‘He heard Jāmi’ al-Tirmidhī in [his] old age from al-Urdī, who heard it from Zaynab bint Makkī.’ Al-Tirmidhī’s Shāmī‘īl was also popular among women. Zaynab bint al-Kamāl narrated it from ‘Ajibah bint Abī Bakr al-Baqdāriyyah, who narrated it from al-Qāsim ibn al-Faḍil ibn ʿAbd al-Wāḥid and Raja’ ibn Hamid ibn Raja’ al-Maʿdānī, both narrated it from Abū I-Qāsim ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-Khuza‘ī, who narrating it from al-Haytham ibn Kulayb, who narrated it from its author, Imām al-Tirmidhī.

Sunan

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

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Šabāh ʿAjjibah al-Bāqdāriyyah, who heard the whole of it from Abū l-Husayn ʿAbd al-Haqq ibn ʿAbd al-Khāliq ibn Yūsuf, 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-Muẓaffari in Qāsyūn. 1

ʿAjjibah al-Bāqdāriyyah narrated Sunan of Abū Dāwūd from al-Ḥasan ibn al-ʿAbbās al-Rustamī, who narrated from Abū ʿAlī ibn Ahmad al-Tustarī and Abū Maṣūr Muḥammad ibn Ahmad ibn ʿAlī ibn Shukrawayh, both heard it from Qāḍī Abū ʿUmar al-Ḥāshimi, who heard it from Abū ʿAlī al-Luʿluʿī, who narrated it from Abū Dāwūd. 2 Taqī al-Dīn al-Fāṣi says in the account of Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl ibn ʿIbrāhīm ibn ʿAṣḥāʾir al-Ḥalabī: He studied some part of Sunan of Abū Dāwūd with Fāṭimah bint al-Malik al-Muḥsin Ahmad ibn al-Sulṭān Šalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb. 3 Ḥāfiz Ibn ʿIbādah read a part of this Sunan with Maryam bint Ahmad al-Asadiyyah, who heard it from al-Dabūsī, who narrated it from Ibn al-Muqayyar, who narrated it from al-Faqīl ibn Sahl al-İsfārāyini, who narrated it from al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, who narrated it from Abū ʿUmar al-Qāsim ibn Jaʿfar ibn ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Ḥāshimi, who narrated from Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad ibn Ahmad ibn ʿAmr al-Luʿluʿī, 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-Nasaʾī. 6 The smaller Sunan of al-Nasaʾī was taught by Āminah bint Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn al-Wāṣīṭi, 7 with the isnād of al-Qubayṭī from Abū Zuhra ʿAṭāʾīr ibn Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir, who heard it from al-Dūnī, who heard it from Abū Nasr Ahmad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḳassār, who narrated it from Abū Bakr

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Ahmad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Sunnī, who narrated from al-Nasā’ī.¹

Sitt al-Fuqahā’ bint Ibrāhīm al-Wāsīṭiyah (d. 726) narrated Sunan of Ibn Mājah.² Imām al-Dhahabī says: ‘She narrated an abundance of hadiths, and the students heard from her Sunan of Ibn Mājah and other things.’³ al-Dhahabī also says: ‘I read to her for my son ʿAbd al-Rahmān.’⁴

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 mubahāthāt. Ḥāfīz Ibn Nāṣīr al-Dīn narrated the Thulāthiyyat of Imām al-Dārimī from Umm ʿAbdullāh Zaynab bint Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAbdillāh ibn ʿAbd al-Halīm ibn Taymiyyah al-Ḥarrānī, who narrated it from Abū l-ʿAbbās Ahmad ibn Abī Ṭalīb al-Ḥajjār who narrated it from Abū l-Munajjā with its well known sanad.⁵ Abū Hafs Sirāj al-Dīn ʿUmar al-Qazwīnī says: ‘I read the whole Sunan al-Dārimī with Sitt al-Mulāk Fāṭimah bint Abī Naṣr ibn Abī l-Badr in Ṭirah 707 in Bāb al-Marāṭib, east of Baghdad, who heard all of it with Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Masʿūd ibn Bahrūz al-Ṭabīb al-Māristānī in Dhi l-Qaʿdah 636, who heard it in Shaʿbān 553, in Jāmiʿ al-Manṣūr with Abū l-Waqṭ ʿAbd al-Awwal ibn Ṭisā al-Harāwī, who heard it in Jumādā al-Ākhirah 464 from Abū l-Hasan al-Dāwūdī, who studied it in Safar 381 with Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh ibn Ahmad al-Sarakhsī, who studied it with Abū Imrān Ṭisā ibn ʿUmar al-Samārqandī, who studied it from its author Imām al-Dārimī.’⁶

Ḥāfīz Ibn Ḥajar studied part of Sunan al-Dāraquṭnī with Ṭīshah bint al-Najm Abī Bakr al-Bāliṣiyah.⁷ Sitt al-ʿArab bint Muḥammad ibn al-Bukhārī (d. 767) narrated al-Sunan al-kaʿbīr of al-Bayhaqī.⁸

Masānid

Zaynab bint al-Kamāl narrated Musnad Abū Hanīfah (in the version of Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Ḥarīthī) from, who narrated it from Abū l-Khayr Muḥammad ibn Awāmad ibn ʿUmar al-Bāghbān, who narrated it from Abū ʿAmr ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Mandah, who narrated it from his father.¹


Zaynab bint Makki was a famous teacher of Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal. She narrated it with full hearing from Abū ʿAlī Hanbal ibn ʿAbdillāh, who heard it from Abū l-Qāsim Ḥibatullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Shaybānī, who heard it from Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Mudhhib al-Baghḍādī, who heard it from Abū Bakr al-Qaṭīrī, who heard it from ʿAbdullāh ibn Ahmad, who heard it with his father, the author, Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal.⁵

Abū l-Fath ibn Sayyid al-Nās read *Musnad ʿAbd ibn Ḥumayd* with Umm Muhammad Zaynab bint Ahmad ibn Shukr al-Maqdisiyah who studied it with Abū l-Munajjā ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar al-Latī, who studied it with Abū l-Waqt al-Sijzī, who studied it with Abū l-Ḥasan al-Dāwūdī, who studied it with Abū Muhammad ʿAbdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥammūyah, who studied it with Ibrāhīm ibn Khuzaym al-Shāshī, who studied it with ʿAbd ibn Ḥumayd.\(^1\)

Fāṭimah bint Saʿd al-Khayr (d. 600) narrated *Musnad Abū Yaʿlā*. Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar studied this *Musnad* with Abū Bakr ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Qudāmah al-Farāʾīḍī, who studied it with al-ʿImād Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Raḍī and Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Maʿalī al-Zabdānī, both narrating from Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Khaṭīb, who heard it from Fāṭimah bint Saʿd al-Khayr, who narrated it from Zāhir ibn Ṭāhir, who narrated it from Abū Saʿd al-Kanjarūdī, who narrated from Abū ʿAmr ibn Ḥamdān from Abū Yaʿlā himself.\(^2\)

Zaynab al-Shīrīyyah (d. 615) narrated *Musnad al-Sarrāj*, and Sayyidah al-Mārāniyyah narrated it from her. Abū l-Fath ibn Sayyid al-Nās studied it with Umm Muḥammad Sayyidah bint Mūsā ibn ʿUthmān al-Mārānī, saying: Four shaykh – Abū Bakr al-Ṣaffār, Abū Rawḥ ʿAbd al-Muʿīzz al-Harawī, Ismāʿīl al-Qārī and Zaynab bint Abū al-Rahmān al-Shīrī – narrated to us.’ Zaynab, Ibn al-Ṣaffār and al-Qārī studied it with Abū Bakr Wajīb ibn Ṭāhir, and Abū Rawḥ and Zaynab also studied it with Zāhir ibn Ṭāhir, and Zaynab alone narrated from Abū l-Muṭṭāf ʿAbd al-ʿUmrūm al-Qushayrī, all of them studied it with Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Khaṭṭāf who studied it with Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Thaqafi al-Sarrāj.\(^3\)

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Ma‘ājīm and Mashyakhāt

Fāṭimah al-Juwzdāniyyah (d. 524) narrated both the small and large Muṣjams of al-Ṭabarānī. Most scholars narrate these two Muṣjams through her. Hāfiz Dīyā’ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī says: ‘I read the small Muṣjam of al-Ṭabarānī with As‘ad ibn Abī l-Futūh ibn Rawh, who studied it with Fāṭimah, who studied it with Ibn Rūdhah, who studied it with al-Ṭabarānī.’ According to al-Dīyā’, As‘ad also narrated the large Muṣjam of al-Ṭabarānī from Fāṭimah. Among her students, Fāṭimah bint Sa‘d al-Khayr was also particularly famous for teaching of these two Muṣjams. Hāfiz Ibn Hajar studied the middle-sized Muṣjam of al-Ṭabarānī with ‘Abdullāh ibn Umar al-Ḥallāwī who narrated it from Zaynab bint al-Kamāl, who narrated it from Yūsuf ibn Khalil, who narrated it from Khalil ibn Badr al-Rārānī, who narrated it from Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥaddād, who narrated it from Abū Nu‘aym who narrated it from al-Ṭabarānī.

ʿĀ'ishah bint Ma‘mar narrated Muṣjam Abū Ya‘lā. Hāfiz Dīyā’ al-Maqdisī says: ‘I studied Muṣjam Abū Ya‘lā with ʿĀ'ishah bint Ma‘mar, who narrated it from Sa‘d al-Shayrāfī, who narrated it from Abū Naṣr al-Kisā‘ī, who narrated it from Ibn al-Muqri, who narrated it from the author.’

Shuhdah narrated Muṣjam of al-İsmā‘īli from Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad ibn al-Husayn ibn al-Ḥarithah, who studied it with Abū Bakr al-Barqānī, who narrated it from al-İsmā‘īli.

Shuhdah also narrated Mashyakhābah of Ibn Shādhān. Hāfiz Ibn Hajar read Mashyakhābah of Ibn ʿAbd al-Dā‘im with Fāṭimah and Ḥabibah, daughters of Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Abī Umar; both of them heard it from Ibn ʿAbd al-Dā‘im. Zaynab bint al-Kamāl narrated Mashyakhābah of Shuhdah. Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī says: ‘I studied with Zaynab, Mashyakhābah of Shuhdah,

1 DĪYĀ’ AL-DĪN AL-MAQDISĪ, Thabat al-masmū‘āt, 77. 2 Ibid., 77–78. 3 IBN ḤAJAR, al-Majma‘ al-mu‘assas, ii. 114. 4 Ibid., ii. 58. 5 DĪYĀ’ AL-DĪN AL-MAQDISĪ, Thabat al-masmū‘āt, 87. 6 IBN ḤAJAR, al-Majma‘ al-mu‘assas, i. 109–10. 7 AL-KATTĀNĪ, Fihris al-fahāris, ii. 626. 8 IBN ḤAJAR, al-Majma‘ al-mu‘assas, i. 446.
with Zaynab's narration from Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Khayyir, Muḥammad ibn Muqbil, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn al-Sayyid and al-Agharr ibn Fadāʾil ibn al-Ulāyiq, all of them heard it from Shuhdah.  

Hāfīz Ibn Ḥajar mentioned Masḥyakhab of Khaṭīb Mardā from Umm ʾAḥmad Tatar bint al-ʾIzz Muḥammad al-Tanūkhiyyah, who narrated it from Zaynab bint al-Kamāl, who narrated from Khaṭīb Mardā.  

**Arbaʿūnāt**


Umm ʿAmr Ḥafṣah bint Muḥammad ibn Abī Zayd Ḥamkā narrated Forty ḥadīths of Ibn al-Muqrī from Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Khallāl and his cousin Bakhtyar ibn Muḥammad, both of whom narrated it from ʿAbd al-Razzāq ibn ʿUmar ibn Mūsā ibn Shammah al-Tājir, who narrated it from its author Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAlī ibn ʿĀṣim ibn al-Muqrī. Hāfīz Ibn Ḥajar read Forty ḥadīths of Muḥammad ibn Muslim al-Ṭūṣī with ʿUmar ibn Muḥammad al-Bālisī, who narrated it from Zaynab bint al-Kamāl who narrated it from ʿAjibah bint Muḥammad, who narrated it from Maṣʿūd ibn al-Ḥasan, who narrated it from ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Ishāq, who narrated it from Zāhir ibn ʾAḥmad al-Sarakhsī, who heard 35 ḥadīths of it from Muḥammad ibn Wāki, who heard all of it from Muḥammad ibn Aslām. Hāfīz Ibn Ḥajar mentioned al-ʿArbaʿūnāt.
al-buldāniyyah al-mukhbarrajah min al-Mu‘jam al-saghir li-l-Ṭabarānī by al-Dhahabī and said: ‘I read it with Abū l-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq, who studied it with Ḥafīz Abū l-Ḥajjāj al-Mizzi, who heard it from Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Muʿmin al-Ṣūrī and Zaynab bint Makkī, who both narrated it from al-As‘ad ibn Sa‘īd ibn Rawḥ and ʿA‘ishah bint Ma‘mar, both narrated from Ṣā’īmah al-Jūzdāniyyah, who narrated it from Ṣā’īmah al-Jūzdāniyyah, who narrated it from Ibn Rūdhah, who narrated from al-Ṭabarānī.’

Ajzā’

Some ajzā’ (sing. jur) became very popular among the people of hadith because of their high isnād, like Sahīfah Hammām ibn Munabbih, Jur’ al-Anṣārī, Jur’ ibn ‘Arafah and Ghaylāniyyāt. These ajzā’ were taught and learnt by women extensively. Ḥafṣah bint Mulā’īb al-Azajjīyyah narrated Sahīfah Hammām ibn Munabbih. Shaykh Abū Ḥafṣ Sirāj al-Dīn ʿUmar ibn ʿAlī al-Qazwīnī read it with Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Muḥṣin al-Muqrī al-Azajī, who read it with Ḥafṣah bint Mulā’īb in 608. She narrated it from Abū l-Fadl Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Urmawī, who narrated it from Abū l-Ghanā’īm ʿAbd al-Ṣamad ibn Abī l-Qāsim al-Hāshīmī by reading it with him in 465, who studied it with Imām Abū l-Hasan al-Dāraqūṭnī in 385, who studied it with Qāḍī Abū ʿUmar Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Azdī in Ṣafar 319, who narrated it from Ḥasan ibn Abī l-Rabī’, who narrated it from ʿAbd al-Razzāq ibn Hammām, who narrated it from Ma‘mar ibn Rāshid, who narrated it from Hammām ibn Munabbih, who said: ‘This is what Abū Hurayrah narrated to us from the Messenger of God.’

Shuhdāh narrated Jur’ ibn ‘Arafah. Ḥāfīz Ibn Ḥajar studied it with Abū Bakr ibn ʿĪbrāhīm ibn Qudāmah al-Farrāʿīdi with his isnād to Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn al-Sayyīdī, who

Hasan ibn 'Arafah, d. 257
Ismā'īl al-Ṣaffār
Abū al-Ḥasan ibn Makhlad
Abū al-Qāsim ibn Bayān
Āḥmad ibn Ābi al-Wāfī
'Ābd al-Ḥaqiq ibn Khalaf
Sitt al-Fugah bint al-Wāṣīfīyab, d. 726
'Ābd al-Mun'im ibn Kulayb
Yūsuf ibn Ābi al-Faraj
Asmā' bint Ābi Bakr, d. 707, Damascus
'Ābd al-'Āzīz ibn Muḥammad al-Anṣārī
Zubair bint 'Umar al-Khutānī, d. ca. 730
al-Najib 'Ābd al-Łatif al-Harrānī, d. 672, Cairo
Fāṭimah bint Ima'm īl, d. 742
Khadijah bint Uthmān, d. 734
'Ābd al-Rahmān al-Yalda'ī
Zaynab bint Yahyā, d. 735
Āḥmad ibn 'Ābd al-Dā'im
Nafṣab bint Ibrāhīm, d. 749
Fāṭimah bint Ubaydallah, d. 732
Fāṭimah bint 'Ābd al-Dā'im, d. 734
Fāṭimah bint Ābi Bakr, d. 726
Fāṭimah bint Ibrāhīm, d. 747
Sitt al-'Arab bint 'Abd, d. 734
Sitt al-'Arab bint 'Abdilāb, d. 722
Zaynab bint Imām al-Dīn, d. 726
Zaynab bint al-Kamāl, d. 740
Khadijah bint Hāẓim, d. 723
Habīb bint Ibrāhīm al-Maqdīṣīyab, d. 745, Damascus
Habīb bint Āḥmad al-Maqdīṣīyab, d. 703
Habīb bint 'Ābd al-Rahmān al-Maqdīṣīyab, d. 733
Jalīlāb bint Ibrāhīm
Asmā' bint Muḥammad ibn al-Kamāl, d. 723, Damascus
Asmā' bint Sa'īd, d. 733, Damascus
Asmā' bint Āḥmad al-Miṣrī, d. 737
Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad al-Harrānīyab
Zaynab bint Ima'm īl al-Khābūz, d. 749

Chart 4: Transmission of Jāz' 'Arafah to women from Hasan ibn 'Arafah (d. 257) to Zaynab bint Ima'm īl al-Khābūz (d. 749)
heard it from ‘Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad al-Muthannā who heard it from Shuḥdah, who heard it from Ṭirād ibn Muḥammad al-Zaynabī, Ḥusayn ibn Ahmad ibn Ṭalḥah, Abū Saʿd ibn Khushaysh and Ibn Bayān, with the isnād to Ibn ʿArafaḥ.¹

Zaynab bint Makki (d. 688) narrated Ḥazr al-Anṣārī. Ḥāfīz Ibn Ḥajar says in the account of Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Saʿd al-Dīn: ‘I have seen the record of his studying of Ḥazr al-Anṣārī with Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Ayyūb ibn Manṣūr al-Maqdisi, who studied it with Zaynab bint Makki who heard it from Ibn Tabrazad, with his sanad.'²

Chart 5. Transmission of Ḥazr al-Anṣārī to women from Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Anṣārī (d. 215) to Zābidab bint Abī Bakr al-Ṣabrāwī (d. 749)

Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Anṣārī, d. 215, Basrah
  └ Abū Muslim Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Kajjī, d. 292, Baghdad
     └ ʿAbdullāh ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ayyūb ibn Māsi, d. 369, Baghdad
          └ Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Barmakī, d. 445, Baghdad
                 └ Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Baqi al-Anṣārī, d. 535
                      └ Abū l-Yamn al-Kindī, d. 613
                           └ Sitt al-ʿArab bint Yabayā, d. 684, Damascus
                               └ Umar ibn Ṭabrazad, d. 607, Baghdad
                                   └ Abū l-Ḥasan ibn al-Bukhārī, d. 690, Damascus
                                       └ ʿAminab bint Ayduḥdī
                                           └ Rujayyab bint Muḥammad al-Ḥarīrī
                                                                     └ ʿAṣiyah bint Ahmad ibn ʿAbd al-Dā'īm, d. 687, Damascus
                                                                          └ Zaynab bint Makki, d. 688, Damascus
                                                                             └ ʿAsmāʾ bint Abī Bakr al-Ṣabrāwī
                                                                                     └ Zābidab bint Abī Bakr al-Ṣabrāwī, d. 749, Damascus

Zaynab bint al-'Alam Ahmad ibn Kāmil al-Maqdisī (d. 687) narrated al-Ghaylāniyyāt.\(^1\) Tājānī al-Wahbānīyyah (d. 575) narrated Ḥadith al-Mukbarramā wa-l-Marwaẓī.\(^2\) Amāli al-Maḥāmili.\(^3\) Juz' Hilāl ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥaffār,\(^4\) K. al-Ṣamīn of Ibn Abī l-Dunyā\(^5\) and other ajzā'. Azīzah bint 'Alī (d. 600) narrated Nuskhah Ṭalut.\(^6\) Karīmah bint 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Qurashiyyah (d. 641) narrated Juz' Ḥarayn,\(^7\) and 'Ā'ishah bint 'Alī ibn Umar al-Ṣinhājīyyah (d. 739) narrated Juz' al-Bīṭāqah.\(^8\)

Chart 6. Transmission of al-Ghaylāniyyāt to women from Abū Bakr al-Shāfī'i (d. 354) to Zaynab bint Makkā (d. 688)

Abū Bakr al-Shāfī'i, d. 354
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Fāṭimah bint Hilāl al-Karjī
Abū Ṭalib ibn Ghaylān, d. 440
---
Zaynab bint al-Aqrā', d. 493, Baghdad
---
Shujā' ibn Fāris al-Dhuhalī, d. 507, Baghdad
---
Nūr al-'Āyn bint Abī Bakr, d. 587, Baghdad
---
Hibatullāh al-Shaybānī, d. 525, Baghdad
---
Zaynab bint 'Abd al-Wabhāb, d. 588, Baghdad
---
Daw' al-Sabāh bint al-Mubārak, d. 585, Baghdad
---
'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Sukaynah, d. 607, Baghdad
---
Aṣīyah bint Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Dā'im, d. 687, Damascus
---
Habībah bint Abī 'Umar, d. 674, Damascus
---
Umar ibn Ṭabrazad, d. 607, Baghdad
---
Aṣīyah bint Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Dā'im, d. 687, Damascus
---
Zaynab bint Ahmad ibn Kāmil, d. 687, Damascus
---
Sitt al-'Arab bint Yahyā, d. 684, Damascus
---
Fāṭimah bint Ḥimād al-Dīn, d. 683, Damascus
---
Zaynab bint Makkā, d. 688, Damascus

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\(^1\)Ibid., ii. 261. \(^2\)Ibid., 19–20. \(^3\)Ibid., ii. 234. \(^4\)Ibid., ii. 346. \(^5\)Ibid., ii. 497. \(^6\)Ibid., ii. 54. \(^7\)Muḥammad ibn Jābir Wādī Aṣh, al-Barnamaj, 240. \(^8\)Ibn ʿHajar, al-Majmaʿ al-muwassas, 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 Ālī al-Urmawī heard Musalsalāt al-Ibrāhīmi 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 Sibṭ al-Khayyāt, who narrated it from its author.¹

Al-Musalsal bi-l-awwalīyyah 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 Hajar received it. They are: Sārah bint Taqi al-Din al-Subkī,² Sūmlak bint al-Fakhr ʿUthmān ibn Ghānim al-Jaʿfariyyah,³ Maryam al-Adhraʾiyyah, and Ghazāl the slave of al-Qalqashandi.⁴

Besides al-Musalsal bi-l-awwalīyyah, women also narrated others such as Musalsal bi-qirāʾt sūrat al-Șaff, Musalsal bi-l-samāʾ, Musalsal bi-l-aswadayn. Amatullāh al-Dihlawiyyah (d. 1357) even narrated Musalsal bi qaḍ al-lūḥyah. In this musalsal, every narrator says certain words while holding his beard. Her student, Shaykh Yāsīn al-Fāḍānī, 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, Ājībah al-Bāq-dāriyyah, Zaynab bint al-Kamāl, Fāṭimah bint al-Munajjā, and Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī and her sister Āʿishah, 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):

Sabih al-Bukhari

al-Mujjam al-Salih li-l-Hafiz al-Hanbali

Mujjam al-Taqi Sulayman b. Hanzah b. Abi `Umar

Mashyakhbah Abi Haithum Siraj al-Din `Umar b. `Abd al-Rahman b. al-Husayn

Yahya b. `Abd al-Muhsin al-Qibabi

K. al-Sirah al-nabawiyah tahdhib Ibn Hisam min al-Sirah al-kubra li-Ibn

Ishag

Juz? fi-hi sittah majalis min amali Abi Bakr Muhammad b. Sulayman b. al-

Harith al-Baghindi al-Wasiti

K. al-awai`il li-Abi Bakr b. Abi Shaybah

K. al-at'imah li-Uthman b. Sa'id al-Darimi

K. al-qaada` wa al-shuhudi li-l-Naqash

K. Fadai'ul al-Sabahab takhrir Abi `Ali al-Baradani min hadith Abi l-Fawaris

Tirad b. Muhammad al-Zaynabi

K. Fadai'ul al-Ism al-Shafi'i li-Ibn Shabir al-Qattan

Juz? from the Hadith of al-Naqash, narration of Abi Muji from him

K. al-karam wa-l-juud li-l-Barjalani

Hadith al-Husayn b. Muhammad b. Ubayd al-Askari

K. bira al-walidayan li-l-Bukhari

K. dhimm al-lwaat li-l-Haytham b. Khalaf al-Duri

K. Fadai'ul Mlik b. Anas

K. Fadai al-ramy li-l-Qarrab

K. al-Qan`ah li-Abi l-`Abbasi Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Masriq

K. al-Faraid al-mustakbrajah min hadith Sufyan b. Sa'id al-Thawri

K. al-Khidab li-Abi Bakr Ahmad b. Amr b. Abi `Asim

K. al-Qubah wa-l-infirad li-Abi Bakr b. Abi l-Dunyay

K. Dhimm al-malabi li-Ibn Abi l-Dunyay

K. al-`ilm li-Yusuf b. Ya`qub al-Qadi

K. al-Qan`ah li-Abi Bakr b. Abi l-Dunyay

al-Mujjam al-kabir li-Abi l-Qasim al-Tabarani

K. al-Du`a`a` li-Abi l-Qasim al-Tabarani

K. Amthd al-hadith li-l-Ramahamuzi

K. al-Mudarab li-Ibn Abi l-Dunyay

K. al-I`tkif li-Abi l-Hasan al-Hammami

K. al-I`khrab li-Abi l-Qasim al-Tabarani

K. al-Hadaya li-Abi Ishhag lbrahim b. Ishhag al-Harbi

K. al-murippab li-l-Darrab


K. Fadai`il al-Quran li-Ibn al-Durays
K. al-Bukā'ī li-Ja'far b. Muḥammad b. al-Muṣṭafāḏ al-Firābī
K. al-Manāṣik li-l-Ṭabarānī
Hadīth al-Mukhallīs takhrīj Abī l-Fath b. Abī l-Fawāris
Mashyakhab Ya'qīb b. Sufyān
Hadīth Abī Bakr b. Khallād
Hadīth ʿAbdullāh b. ʿAlī al-Sufūnī
Musnad Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ of Ahmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Dawraqī
ʿAwāliʿ Abī al-Razzāq
K. al-Ṣalāḥ from Muṣannaf ʿAbd al-Razzāq
Hadīth Abī Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh b. Abī al-Rahmān al-Uthmānī
Fawāʾid al-Zubayr b. Bakkār
Hadīth Ahmad b. ʿṢalīḥ al-Miṣrī
Hadīth ʿAlī b. Ḥarb
Intikhbāb al-Silāfī ʿalā al-Sarrāj
Amāli al-Maḥāmānī min riwāyat al-ʿAshābānīyyīn
Hadīth Abī ʿAmr Uthmān b. Ahmad b. al-Sammāk
Hadīth Abī Jaʿfar b. al-Munādī
t-Fawāʾid Abū ʿAmr b. Hamdān
al-Jawāhir wa-l-Lāʾī fi al-abdāl wa-l-ʿawālī li-Abī l-Qāsim b. ʿAṣākir
al-Safinah al-Baghdādīyyah
Hadīth Ḥajīb b. Ahmad al-Ṭūsī
ʿAwālī al-Layth b. Saʿd
Hadīth Abī Muḥammad b. Saʿd
Amāli Abī Muṭṭaṭī
Abdāl al-Iḥāṣīz al-Diyāʾī
Hadīth ʿAlī b. al-Jaʿd
Hadīth Abī l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ahmad b. ʿUmar al-Hammāmī
Amāli Abī l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Malik b. Muḥammad b. Bisbrān
al-Thaqāfīyyāt
Hadīth Abī Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. ʿAmr b. al-Bakhtārī
Amāli ibn al-Jarrāb
Hadīth al-Khurāṣānī
Hadīth Ḥanbal b. Iṣḥāq al-Shaybānī
Hadīth Abī Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh b. ʿAlī al-ʿAbnūsī
Amāli al-Bāghīndī
Musnad Ahmad b. Manī ʿal-Baghawī
Hadīth ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Baghawī an Abī Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām
Hadīth Abī ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad b. Makhlad
Hadith Abī l-Hasan ʿAlī b. Muhammad al-ʿAswārī  
Hadith Muṭayyān  
Abī Abī l-Hasan ʿAlī b. Yakūb ʿAbdākīyāb  
Fawāʾid Abī Bakr Muḥammad b. Ṭabdillāh b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-ʿAṣbahānī  
Hadith Abī Yaʿlā Ahmad b. ʿAlī b. al-Muthannā  
Juzʾ Kākū  
Hadith Abī Nuʿaym  
al-Muntakhab min ḥadīth Abī Kurayb Muḥammad b. al-ʿAlāʾ b. Kurayb  
Hadith Abī l-Hasan ʿAlī b. Zayd b. ʿAlī b. Shahrāyār  
ʿAwālī Abī l-Shaykh al-ʿAṣbahānī  
ʿAmālī Abī l-Shaykh al-ʿAṣbahānī  
Abī ʿAbdul-Rahmān al-Sulāmī  
Arbaʿaʾuna ḥadīthān min riwāyah Abī l-Fath ʿAbd al-Wāḥīb b. Muḥammad  
b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ṣabīnī  
al-Akkābār wa-l-hikayāt wa-l-nawādir min riwāyah Daʿlaj b. Ahmad  
Hadith Abī ʿAlī b. al-Sawwāf  
ʿAwālī Karīmah bint ʿAbd al-Wāḥīb al-Zubayrīyyah  
al-Kanjarudhiryyāt  
Fawāʾid Zābir b. Ahmad al-Sarakhsī  
Fawāʾid Sammīyab  
Abī Abī Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṣhirāzī  
Hāl Abī Ahmad al-ʾAskārī li al-Silāfī  
Hadith Abī Muḥammad Ibrāhīm b. Ṭabdillāh b. Muḥammad al-Kajjī  
K. al-Fītan of Abī Muḥammad Ibrāhīm b. Ṭabdillāh b. Muḥammad al-Kajjī  
K. al-ʾArbāʾin of Ibn Shanbīyāb  
Hadith Asmāʾ bint Ahmad b. ʿAbdillāh al-Bahrāniyyab  
Hadith Muḥammad b. Juhādāb  
Hadith Qutaybāb b. Saʿīd  
Hadith Abī l-Qāsim ʿAlī b. Abī al-Rahmān al-Naysābūrī (Ibn ʿUlāayyik)  
al-Muntaqā min ʿawali Ibrāhīm b. Abī al-Rahmān al-Ṣhirāzī  
Hadith Māmir b. Ḥārin  
Hadith Abī Bakr b. al-Muqriʾ  
Hadith Abī Bakr Ahmad b. Kāmil, al-Qāḍī Abī ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad b.  
ʿAbdillāh b. Aʾlam, Ahmad b. ʿUthmān al-Adnī  
Hadith al-Dabb li-Abī l-Qāsim al-Tabarrānī  
Hadith Ahmad b. Abī al-Ghaḍāʾir b. Ushtab
Majālis Abī l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Rāhmān al-Ḥurāfī
Musnad Kaʿb b. Mālik wa-ʿAbī Ayyūb al-Anṣārī min Musnad Abī ʿAmr Ahmad b. Ḥazīm b. Abī Gharazah al-Kūfī

Hadīth Ibn Abī Gharazah
K. al-Inṣār li-Imāmāl al-amīnār li-ʿAbī l-Fadl Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī
Hadīth Sufyān al-Thawrī wa Shuʿbāb wa Mālik wa Abī Ḥanīfah wa jamāʿah
muqallīn of al-Bakrāʾī
K. al-Tafsīr ʿan Sufyān b. ʿUyaynah
Hadīth Abī l-Husayn Muḥammad b. Ahmad al-ʿĀfnūsī
Hadīth Abī Yaʿlā al-Khalīl b. ʿAbdillāh al-Khalīl al-Qaswīnī fi l-qabāqabah
wa-qhayri-bā
tawāʾid Yusuf b. ʿĀsim al-Rāzī
Hadīth Abī Bakr Muḥammad b. Abī ʿAlī Ahmad b. ʿAbd al-Rāhmān al-
Hamdānī
Hadīth Nafīʾ b. Abī Nuʿaym al-Qārī
Ḥāl al-ʿAbbās li-ʿAbī Ṭābir al-Silāfī
Hadīth Abī Bakr b. Ḥuṣaymān (Fawāʾid al-fawāʾid)
Amāli Abī l-Qāsim ʿĪsā b. ʿĀli b. ʿĪsā b. al-Jarrāḥ
Hadīth Abī Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Abī Ṭhābit
Hadīth Abī ʿUmar ʿAbdillāb b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wāḥab
Ghārāʾib Shuʿbāb
Musnad Raqabah b. Musqalāh li-ʿAbī l-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī
al-Muʿjam al-ʿĀli li-Qādī al-Ḥanbalī
Nuzhat al-Hujjāz li-Abī Mūsā al-Madīnī
Hadīth al-ʿAtārūdī li-Abī Nuʿaym al-Ashbānī
Hadīth al-Diyāʾ min Shuyūkhi bi
al-Dhayl ʿālah āḥadīth al-ʿAtarūdī
Hadīth Abī Sabīl Abūmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbdillāb b. Ziyād al-Qatṭān
Hadīth al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Asghab
K. Ṭurq man kadhaba ṣalāyya li-Abī Muḥammad b. Saʿīd
Hadīth Ibn Maʿrūf ʿan shuyūkhi bi
K. Ṭurq man kadhaba ṣalāyya li-Ṭabarānī
K. al-Āḥādīth al-mukhtārah mimmi layya fi l-Ṣahihayn aw ahādi-himā li-
Ḥāfīz al-Diyāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Maqdisī
K. al-Amr bi-ittibāʿ al-Sunan li-Ḥāfīz al-Diyāʾ
Manāqib ʿashāb al-ḥadīth li-Ḥāfīz al-Diyāʾ
K. al-Ṭibb al-nabawī li-Ḥāfīz al-Diyāʾ
Ṭurq ḥadīth al-ḥawādī ʿal-Ḥāfīz al-Diyāʾ
Fadl al-ʿAshr wa-l-udhīyyah li-Ḥāfīz al-Diyāʾ
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K. al-Nabhı́ an sabb al-aṣḥāb li-Ḥaṣīf al-Ḏiyā?  
Awālī l-asānīd li-Ḥaṣīf al-Ḏiyā?  
al-Ruwāh am muslim li-Ḥaṣīf al-Ḏiyā?  
Muwaṣṣaṣat Sulaymān b. Ḥarb li-Ḥaṣīf al-Ḏiyā?  
Muwaṣṣaṣat Rawḥ b. ʿUbadah li-Ḥaṣīf al-Ḏiyā?  
Muwaṣṣaṣat ʿAbdullāh b. Yaqūd al-Muqrī lī-Ḥaṣīf al-Ḏiyā?  
Muntaqāḥ min ʿawālī ʿAbdullāh b. Bakr wa ʿAbdullāh b. Numayr wa Abī  
ʿabd al-Rahmān al-Muqrī  
Muntaqāḥ min ʿawālī Saʿīd b. Mansūr  
Awālī Abī ʿĀṣim al-Dahhāk b. Makhbād  
Awālī Sulaymān b. Dāwūd al-Ḥāshimi  
Awālī Abī Nuʾaym al-Fadl b. Dukayn  
Muntaqāḥ min al-ruwāh ʿan al-bukhārī  
Muntaqāḥ min faḍāʾil al-shām  
Faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān li-Ḥaṣīf al-Ḏiyā?  
K. Dhikr al-ḥurūf wa al-ṣawt li-Ḥaṣīf al-Ḏiyā?  
K. al-Tibb al-nabawī li-Ḥaṣīf al-Ḏiyā?  
Ṭuruq ḥadīth al-ḥawd al-nabawī li-Ḥaṣīf al-Ḏiyā?  
al-Ruwāh ʿan Muslim li-Ḥaṣīf al-Ḏiyā?  
K. al-Baʿth li-Ḥaṣīf al-Ḏiyā?  
Muntaqāḥ min K. al-Iḥtiṣās fi aḥwāl al-mawqif wa al-iqtiṣās li-Ḥaṣīf al-Ḏiyā?  
al-Abdāl al-ʿawāl li-Ḥaṣīf al-Ḏiyā? ¹

COLLECTIONS OF THE WOMEN’S NARRATIONS

The ḥadīths 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-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam, narrated from him a lot of ḥadīths. In Musnad of Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, there are 2405 ḥadīths narrated by her. Abū Bakr ibn

Abī Dāwūd collected those ḥadiths of ʿAʾishah which are narrated by Hishām ibn Urwah from his father from ʿAʾishah in a *jūz* called *Musnad ʿAʾishah*. The book does not include all ḥadiths of ʿAʾishah nor all the narrations of Hishām ibn Urwah from his father from ʿAʾishah. Only a single manuscript of it, in an unremarkable hand and with some marginal annotations, is known; it is held in al-Maktabah al-Ẓāhiriyah in Damascus. However, it does record many *samāʿāt* of great scholars like al-Diyyā, al-Maqdisī, Ibn al-Bannāʾ, Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhawī and others. The manuscript has been edited by Abū l-Ghaffār Abī al-Haqq Ḥusayn al-Balūshī; it was published in 1405 [1985] by Maktabat al-ʿAqṣā from Kuwait.

*al-Istīʿāb li-mā istadrakathu ʿAʾishah ʿalā l-ṣahābāb.* Besides narrating a lot of ḥadiths and giving fatwas, ʿAʾishah critiqued the narrations and opinions of many Companions. Imām Abū Maṣnūr Abī al-Muḥsin ibn Muhammad ibn ʿAbī al-Shīhī al-Baghdādī (d. 489) compiled her critique in a *jūz*.[3] Ḥāfīz Ibn Ḥajar has mentioned this *jūz* and narrated it.[4] Uzay Shams obtained the only manuscript of it from Khudā Baksh Library, Patna and edited it; it was published by al-Dār al-Salafiyyah in Bombay in 1416 [1996]. Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī (d.794) included most of it in his *al-Iṣābah li-irād mā istadrakathu ʿAʾishah ʿalā al-ṣahābāh*. This was published in Damascus in 1939, edited by Saʿīd al-Aṣghānī; a third edition appeared from Beirut in 1400 [1980]. Ḥāfīz al-Suyūṭī (d. 911) summarized al-Zarkashī’s work and named it *Ayn al-Iṣābah fī istidrāk ʿAʾishah ʿalā al-ṣahābāh*. It was published in 1396 [1976] from Azamgarh, India as an appendix to *Ṣirah ʿAʾishah* 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-Istīʿāb li-mā istadrakathu ʿAʾishah ʿalā al-ṣahābāb*.

*Musnad Fāṭimah.* Ḥāfīz Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī collected all ḥadiths of Fāṭimah, and those ḥadiths that refer to her virtues in a *jūz* named *Musnad Fāṭimah al-Zabrā* raḍī Allāhu ʿan-hā wa-mā warada 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. *Jūz* *Bībā.* This is a *jūz* of ḥadiths related to the great and long-lived shaykhah, Umm al-Faḍl, Umm ʿIzzā Bībā bint Abī al-Ṣamad al-

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Harthamiyyah al-Harawiyyah (d. 474). It was published, edited by 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Fariwāt, by Dār al-Khulafā' li al-Kitāb al-Islāmi, Kuwait in 1406. Its one hundred pages contain 119 hadiths. The editor's introduction has a biographical account of Bibi, with the names of her teachers and her famous students. It is a very high juz. Al-Dhahabi says: 'She has a juz which is known by her name.' Ibn Rushayd al-Sabti narrated it with his isnad to her. Hāfiz Ibn Hajar read it twice with his shaykh Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbd al-Tanūkhī, with his shaykh Ahmad ibn Abī Bakr ibn 'Abd al-Hādī, and with Abū Hurayrah ibn al-Dhahabi.

Bibi bint ʿAbd al-Ṣamad al-Harthamiyyah, d. 477, Herat

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Abū l-Waqt ʿAbd al-Awwal ibn ʿIsā al-Harawi, d. 553
Abū l-Munajja ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar al-Lattī, d. 635

Khadijah bint ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Muḥammad al-Magdīsī

- Ṣafīya bint Sharaf al-Dīn ibn Abī ʿUmar
- Ṣafīya bint Muḥammad ibn ʿIsā
- Khadijah bint Abī al-Fadl Sulayman
- Ṣafīya bint ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Muḥammad
- Fāṭimah bint Abī al-ʿAzīz ibn ʿAbd al-Malīk
- Khadijah bint Abī al-ʿAzīz ibn ʿAbd al-Malīk
- Ṣafīya bint ʿAbd allāh ibn Abī Abīdillāh
- Zaynab bint Abdillāh ibn ʿUmar
- Zaynab bint ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Muḥammad
- Khadijah bint ʿIsā
- ʿAʾishah bint Mahfīz ibn Ḥilāl
- Amat al-ʿAzīz Khadijah bint ʿUmar Ghunaymab
- Ṣafīya bint Saʿīd
- Fāṭimah bint ʿAbd al-Ghāni
- Zaynab bint ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn ʿAyyāb
- Zaynab bint ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn ʿAyyāb

Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Ḥajjār, d. 730, Damascus

- ʿAʾishah bint ʿAbd al-Hādī, d. 816, Damascus

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1 Al-Dhahabī, al-Ibar, ii. 336. 2 Ibn Rushayd al-Sabti, Miṣr al-sayyab, v. 223. 3 Ibn Ḥajar, al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassar, i. 119. 4 Ibid., i. 272. 5 Ibid., i. 152.


Juz' Bībā has always been immensely popular and its teaching attended by large audiences. One reading of this Juz', with Abū l-Munajjā 'Abdullāh ibn Umar al-Lattī in al-Jāmi' al-Mużaffārī in Qāṣyūn, Damascus on Monday, 24 Shawwal 633, was attended by 338 people.¹

**Mashyakhah Shuhdah.** This Mashyakhah of Shuhdah bint Abī Naṣr Aḥmad ibn al-Faraj al-Baghdādī al-Ibru (d. 574) was compiled in her lifetime by her student ‘Abd al-Azīz ibn Maḥmūd ibn al-Mubārak ibn al-Akhdār (524–611). Most of its 114 narrations are Prophetic hadiths. In this work, Shuhdah has narrated from 27 of her shaykhs. Dr. Rafaat Fawzī ‘Abd 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-Dahābī says in his account of her: ‘She had a mashyakhah which we have learnt.’² Ḥāfīz Ibn Hajar read it with Ibrāhīm al-Tanūkhī, who read it with Abū l-‘Abbās al-Hajjār, Ḥāfīz Abū l-Hajjār al-Mızzī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Fakhr and Muḥibb ‘Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Muḥibb with their īsmā’d.³

**Mashyakhah Khadijah.** This Mashyakhah of Khadijah bint al-Qādī al-Anjāb Abū l-Mukārim al-Mufaqādal ibn ‘Ali al-Maqdisī (d. 618) was compiled by Ḥāfīz Zakī al-Dīn al-Mundhirī and read to her.⁴

**Mashyakhah Karīmah.** This Mashyakhah of the great Syrian shaykhah Umm al-Fāḍl Karīmah bint Abī Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Qurashiyyah al-Zubayriyyah (d. 641) was compiled by Ḥāfīz Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Birzālī in eight ajīzā.⁵ Al-Dahābī studied it.⁶ Karīmah also has a juz’ containing her hadiths of high īsmā’d, which Ibn Hajar studied with Fātimah bint Muḥammad al-Dimashqīyyah.⁷ There is mention in the sources of a third juz’ containing Abādīth musāwāh wa musafahāt wa muwāṣaqaṭ wa aḥadīth ‘awāl.⁸

**Mashyakhah ‘Ajībah.** About this Mashyakhah of the great and long-lived shaykhah, Dawʾ al-Šabāb ‘Ajībah bint Abī Bakr al-Bāqādāriyyah (d. 643), al-Dahābī says: ‘She was unique in the world and her Mashy-

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Mashyakhah Sayyidah al-Mārānīyyah. This is the Mashyakhah of Sayyidah bint Mūsā ibn ʿUthmān ibn Dirbās al-Mārānīyyah (d. 695). Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar read the second part of it with Ṣayȳn al-Dīn al-ʿIraqī and Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythami. 3 ʿAbd al-Hayy al-Kattānī also narrated it. 4

Juz 3 Nudār bint Abī Ḥayyān. Nudār bint Abī Ḥayyān (d.730) studied with al-Dimyāṭī and a group of the students of al-Zabīdī, and she got ijāzs from a group of teachers. She taught and also compiled this collection of her hadīths. 5

Mashyakhah Wajībah al-Ṣaʿīdiyyah. Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar says about this Mashyakhah of Wajībah bint ʿAlī ibn Yahyā ibn Sulṭān al-Anṣāriyyah al-Ṣaʿīdiyyah al-Iskandarānīyyah: ʿTaqī al-Dīn ibn ʿArām compiled her Mashyakhah. I read part of it with Tāj al-Dīn ibn Mūsā, who heard it from her. Ibn Rāfī also compiled a mashyakhah for her before that. 6 Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar read the whole of this Mashyakhah with Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Iskandarānī. 7 Ḥāfiz ʿAbd al-Hayy al-Kattānī (d. 1382) also narrated it. 8

Mashyakhah Zaynab al-Sulamiyyah. This Mashyakhah of Zaynab bint al-Khaṭīb Yahyā ibn Izz al-Dīn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn ʿAbd al-Salām al-Sulami al-Dimashqīyyah (d. 735) has been extensively narrated by the scholars. Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar read it with Abū Bakr ibn Ibrāhīm al-Farāʿīdī. 9

Mashyakhah Zaynab bint al-Kamāl. Ḥāfiz ʿAbd al-Hayy al-Kattānī narrated this Mashyakhah of Zaynab bint al-Kamāl Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd

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al-Rahi m ibn 'Abd al-Wa h id ibn A h mad al-Ma qdis (d.740). 1 Ibn Hajar says: 'I read Mashyakhab Zaynab bint al-Kamal with 'Umar ibn Mu hammad al-Bali s in two huge juz', compiled by Mu hammad ibn Yahya ibn Sa'd. 2 Zaynab also has a Mashyakhab al-masha'ikh, which Ha fi z 'Abd al- Hayy al-Kattani has narrated with his sanad to Ha fi z Ibn Hajar, who narrated it from Umm Mu hammad As bint A h mad ibn Hass an, who narrated it from Zaynab herself. 3 She also has a juz containing a selection of hadiths, about which 'Abd al- Hayy al- Kattani says: 'I have a juz of hadiths of Umm 'Abdillah Zaynab bint al-Kamal, compiled by Ha fi z Alam al-Din al-Birzali, it contains 31 hadiths, and there are some records of hearing by imams in it. 4 Another book of hers, Muwafaqat 'Aliyia, compiled by al- Birzali, is referred to by Ibn Hajar, who says in his account of his Shaykh Ibrahi m ibn Mu hammad ibn Abi Bakr al- Salihii: 'I read with him the second ten from Muwafaqat Zaynab bint al-Kamal, compiled by al- Birzali. 5 Ibn Hajar read the whole Muwafaqat Zaynab with Hasan ibn Mu hammad al- Ba l al- Hanib al, 6 Khadijah bint Abi Bakr al-Kuri, 7 'Ali ibn Ghazi ibn 'Ali al- Salihii al-Kuri, 8 'Umar ibn Mu hammad al- Balsi, 9 Mu hammad ibn Mama al- Simsar, 10 and parts of it with 'Abd al- Qadir al- Urnawi 11 and 'Umar ibn Mu hammad al- Ma qdisi. 12 }

**Mashyakhab Fa'imah bint Ibrahi m al-Ma qdisiyah.** Ha fi z 'Abd al- Hayy al- Kattani narrated this Mashyakhab of Fa'imah bint Ibrahi m ibn 'Abdillah ibn al- Shaykh Abi 'Umar al- Ma qdisiyah (d. 747) with his sanad to Ha fi z Ibn Hajar, who narrated it from Mu hammad ibn Ibrahi m al- Urnawi, who narrated it from Fa'imah herself. 13

**Mashyakhab Zaynab bint al-Khabbaz.** Ibn Hajar narrated this Mashyakhab of Umm 'Abdillah Zaynab bint Najm al- Din Isma'il ibn Ibrahi m al- Khabbaz (d.749) from his shaykh Utman ibn Mu hammad ibn Uthman al- Karki, who heard it from Zaynab. 14 'Abd al- Hayy al- Kattani narrated it with his sanad to Ha fi z Ibn Hajar. 15

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1 AL-KATTANI, Fihris al-fabaris, ii. 653. 2 IBN HAJAR, al-Majma al-mu'asses, ii. 347. 3 AL-KATTANI, Fihris al-fabaris, ii. 644. 4 Ibid., ii. 460. 5 IBN HAJAR, al-Majma al-Mu'asses, 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-fabaris, ii. 654. 14 IBN HAJAR, al-Mu'jam al-mufharas, 208. 15 See AL-KATTANI, Fihris al-fabaris, ii. 654.

Mu'jam Maryam al-Adhra’iyyah. This Mu'jam of Maryam bint Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn IbrahIm al-Adhra’iyyah (d. 805) was compiled by Ḥafiz Ibn Hajar in one volume.1

Mashyakhab Hasanab al-Tabarriyyah. Ḥafiz ‘Abd al-Hayy al-Kattani narrated this Mashyakhab of Ḥasnah bint Abi l-Yumn Muhammad ibn al-Shihab Ahmad al-Tabari al-Makkiyyah (d. 808) with his sanad to Ḥafiz Ibn Hajar, who narrated it from her.2

Mashyakhab ‘A’ishab bint Ibn ‘Abd al-Hadi. ‘Abd al-Hayy al-Kattani has mentioned this Mashyakhab3, and narrated it with his isnads to Zaka-riyyah al-Ansari, Jalal al-Din Suyuti and al-Kamal ibn Hamzah, all of them from Tash al-Din ibn Fahd, al-Kamal Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Zayn, both directly from her.4

Mashyakhab Fatimah bint Khalil. This is the Mashyakhab of Umm al-Hasan Fatiha bint Khalil ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Kinani (d. 838). Ḥafiz Ibn Hajar compiled it and joined with the mashyakhab of another of his teachers and called it al-Mashyakhab al-Basimah li-l-Qibabi wa Fatiha. This Mashyakhab is mentioned by Ḥafiz al-Sakhabwi,5 al-Najmi ibn Fahd6 and others. Ḥafiz ‘Abd al-Hayy al-Kattani has narrated it with isnad to Ibn Hajar, and mentioned that he has a manuscript of half of it, which is a copy of a version corrected by Ḥafiz al-Sakhabwi.7 Dār al-Farfur in Damascus published it in 1422 [2002] edited by Dr. Muhammad Mufti8 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-Qadir al-Nabulsi, a student of Ḥafiz 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 Fātimah’s alone; so all Shaykhs of al-Qibābī are 136 and all Shaykhs of Fātimah are 82.1

Mashyakhbāb ʿĂdash bint al-ʿAlāʾ al-Ḥanbalī. This is the Mashyakhbāb of ʿĂdash bint al-ʿAlāʾ ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥanbalī (d. 840). Zayn al-Dīn Rīḍwān compiled a mujāz2, starting with al-Musalsal bi-l-awwalīyyah, of her higher hadiths in which the number of narrators between herself and the Prophet is nine or ten.3 Najm al-Dīn ibn Fahd says: ‘Shaykh Rīḍwān compiled forty of her hadiths which she narrated.’4

Mashyakhbāb Zaynab bint al-Yāfiʿī. This Mashyakhbāb of Zaynab bint ʿAbdillāh ibn Asʿad al-Yāfiʿī (d. 846) was compiled by Najm al-Dīn ibn Fahd. Al-Kattānī referred to it by the title al-Fawāʾid al-Ḥashimiyyah, and narrated it through his isnād to Ibn Ṭūlūn, who narrated it from Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Śīdq, who narrated it from her.4 Najm al-Dīn ibn Fahd also compiled her higher hadiths under the explanatory title, Ṭaḥāth tasʿīyyat al-isnād wa usbaḥiyyat al-isnād.5 Al-Kattānī has narrated it with his isnād to Abū l-Baqāʾ Muḥammad ibn al-Imād al-ʿUmarī, who narrated it from Ibn Fahd, who narrated it from Zaynab herself.6

Mashyakhbāb Asmāʾ al-Mahrānīyyah. This is the Mashyakhbāb of Asmāʾ bint ʿAbdillāh ibn Muḥammad al-Mahrānīyyah al-Dimashqīyyah (d. 867). It was compiled by Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Khalīl al-Labūdī al-Dimashqī.7 Najm al-Dīn ibn Fahd has mentioned the work by a different title, al-Fath al-asmāʾ al-rabbānī fī Mashyakhbāb Asmāʾ bint al-Mahrānī.8 Ḥāfiz ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī narrated it with his sanad to Shams al-Dīn ibn Ṭūlūn, who narrated it from Yūsuf ibn Ṣahab ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥadi, who narrated it from Asmāʾ herself.9

al-Arbaʿīn of Umm Kīrām Uns bint ʿAbd al-Karīm. This is the collection of Umm al-Karīm ibn Aḥmad al-Lakhamū, the wife (d. 867) of Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar, compiled by Ḥāfiz al-Sakhawī, who read it to her.10

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1Ibid. 2AL-SAKHAWĪ, al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʾ, xii. 78. 3IBN FAHD, Muʿjam al-shuyūkh 323. 4AL-KATTĀNĪ, Fihris al-fahāris, ii. 653. 5IBN FAHD, al-Durr al-kāmil, 1443. 6AL-KATTĀNĪ, Fihris al-fahāris, i. 294. 7AL-SAKHAWĪ, al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʾ, xii. 6. 8IBN FAHD, Muʿjam al-shuyūkh 397. 9See AL-KATTĀNĪ, al-Muṣjam al-mufharaṣ, ii. 653. 10AL-SAKHAWĪ, al-Jawāhib wa-l-durar, iii. 1211.
Mashyakhah Zāhidah bint al-Zāhiiri. This is the Mashyakhah of Zāhidah bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Zāhiiri, compiled by al-Muqāti’ilī.  
She heard ḥadīth from Ibrāhim ibn Khalīl, and got ḫaṭabs from Ibn al-Junayzi, al-Shawī, Ibn al-Ḥubāb and others.

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

Khunāthah’s Notes. Khunāthah bint Bakkār ibn ʿAšr al-Maṣfīrī (d. 1159) wrote marginal notes on al-İsābah fi tamyīz al-ṣaḥābah of Ibn Ḥajari.

Mashyakhah al-Sitt Fāṭimah. The full title of this Mashyakhah is al-Farāris al-qaṭimah fi asārid al-Sitt Fāṭimah. Shaykh Muḥammad Yaṣīn al-FASTAN (d. 1410) narrated it from Muḥammad ibn Arshad ibn Saʿd, who narrated it from Sitt Fāṭimah herself.

**HIGHER İSNĀD 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 isnād. 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-Ḥakim cites examples of the Companions travelling for higher isnād, and he calls doing so a sunnah.

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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 ʿalayhi wa sallam. All the ḥadiths in Sahih al-Bukhari are sahih (sound). Between al-Bukhari and the Prophet there are usually five or six people, sometimes more, sometimes fewer. However, there are 22 ḥadiths in the book where there are only three people between al-Bukhari and the Prophet. These are the highest isnāds in the Sahih. One of them is: Makkī ibn Ibrāhīm ←Yazīd ibn Abī Ubayd ←Salama ibn al-Akwa. In the later centuries, there are many ḥadiths which the scholars narrate through women teachers because doing so shortens the isnād. For example, the tenth-century scholar Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Iṣkandari, narrated the Prophetic ḥadith ‘None from those who pledged allegiance under the tree will enter the Fire’ through the two isnāds below:


ʿĀṣimah bint ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī was the last surviving student of al-Hajjar; accordingly the isnād through her is a degree higher for Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Iṣkandari 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-Bukhari through ʿĀṣimah al-Maqdisiyyah (d. 816), then between them and Imām al-Bukhari there will be one less narrator than through any other isnād. Similarly, if scholars narrate a ḥadith 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 ḥadith 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-Īrāqī (d. 805) narrates a ḥadīth with three isnāds, one through al-Bukhārī, one through Muslim, and this one:


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

Chapter 8

Women and ḥadīth critique

In the foregoing I have demonstrated that the muḥaddithūn were much sought after for their knowledge and piety. Here I outline some formal aspects of evaluation of women narrators within the discipline of jarh (invalidating) and taʿdīl (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-tabayyanū) 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.)

Muḥammad 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.’

Imām al-Nawawī said: ‘Jarh and taʿdīl are made lawful for the protection of the religion.” 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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1Muslim, Ṣahīḥ, Muqaddimah. 2Al-Nawawī, al-Taqrīb (with commentary al-Tadrib), 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 hadith [that they base this opinion on] is the hadith of Abū Hurayrah that the Messenger of God – salla l-lābu ʿalay-hi 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 – salla l-lābu ʿalay-hi 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 jarrh of the one who is not truthful in his narration. Also the sunnah of the Prophet – salla l-lābu ʿalay-hi 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 hadith of the woman who came to the Messenger to consult him about two men who had proposed marriage to her.

She said: Muʿāwiyyah ibn Abī Sufyān and Abū Jahm have proposed to me. The Messenger of God – salla l-lābu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – said: As for Abū Jahm, he never takes his stick from his neck, and as for Muʿāwiyyah, he is a poor one and has no wealth. Marry Usāmah ibn Zayd.' In this hadith there is permissibility of jarrh 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 hadith. Shuʿbah, known as ‘the commander of the faithful’ in hadith, was the first to develop the practice as a distinct discipline. Yahyā ibn Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān and others got this knowledge from him, and from Yahyā, it came to Yahyā ibn

¹ AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDİ, al-Kifāyah, 38. ²Ibid., 39–40.
Ma‘īn, ‘Ali ibn al-Madinī and Ḥāmid 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 Yahyā ibn Sa‘īd al-Qaṭṭān: ‘Don’t you fear that these people who ḥadīth you have left will be claimants against you before God? Yahyā said: ‘If they are claimants against me, it is better than the Messenger of God – ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – being a claimant against me, saying: Why did you not push away lying from my ḥadīth?’

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 awhāq al-nās term ‘the most reliable of people’ or thiqah thiqah ‘reliable reliable’ or with terms meaning ‘reliable’ and ‘expert’ (ḥafż).

III. The narrators who have been described at least once with words of high praise like thiqah or mutqin (‘accurate’) or ṣaḥīḥ (‘firm’) or ‘adl (‘just’).

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

V. The narrators whose quality is marginally less than IV, described as ṣa‘dūq sayyīh ḥifż ‘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 maqbul (‘accepted’).

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

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1 AL-SUYUTĪ, Tadrīb al-rāwī, ii. 299.
VIII. The narrators whose reliability is not affirmed by one whose affirmation matters, and who have pointed to as daʿīf (‘weak’).

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

X. The narrators whose reliability is not affirmed at all, and about whom something negative is known; described as matriık (‘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 (mutabʿanbil kādhīb).

Taʿdīl 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 tābiʿiyyah ‘Amrah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. About her, al-Dhahabi said: ‘She was a scholar, jurist, proof, and holder of abundance of knowledge’;2 Yaḥyā ibn Maʿin said: ‘reliable and proof’.3 Another example is ʿAlʾishah bint Ṭalḥah, about whom Yaḥyā ibn Maʿin 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 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddiq. Al-Ijli (d. 261) said about her: ‘a reliable tābiʿiyyah’;5 about Fāṭimah bint al-Mundhir, he said: ‘a reliable tābiʿiyyah from Madīnah’;6 about Ṣafiyah bint Abī ʿUbayd al-Thaqafīyyah, he said: ‘a reliable jurist of Madīnah’;7 about both Diqrah bint Ghālib al-Baṣriyyah8 and Qamīr bint ʿAmr al-Kūfiyyah,9 he said: ‘reliable tābiʿiyyah’.

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1 Ibn Hajar, Taqrib al-tahdīb, Muqaddimah. 2 Al-Dhahabī, Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā, iv. 508. 3 Al-Mizzī, Tuhdīb al-kamāl, xxxv. 152. 4 Ibn ʿAsākir, Taʾrīkh Madīnah Dimashq, Tarājim al-nisā, 210. 5 Al-Ijli, Taʾrīkh al-thiqāt, 523. 6 Ibid., 523. 7 Ibid., 520. 8 Ibid., 519. 9 Ibid., 524.
Among those women narrators ranked by most experts as IV, V, and VI are: 'Umaynah bint Anas ibn Mālik, Ḥabībah bint Maysarah ibn Abī Khuthaym, Ḥasnah bint Muʿāwiyyah ibn Sulaymān al-Ṣarīmīyyah, Khayrah, the mother of al-Ḥasan al-reative, and many others.

_Jarb_ of women narrators

Grades VII–XII are grades of negative valuation or _jarb_. The least of those (VII) includes those whose quality as narrators is not known. Among the examples of this rank is Bahīyyah, the _mawāla_ of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq. Her ḥadīth is in Ṣūnān of Abū Dāwūd; Ḥāfīz 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 'Ā'ishah bint Sa'īd ibn Abī Waqqās. Al-Khaṭīb narrates from Mālik: 'I asked her about some ḥadīths; 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 Mawātī', as Ḥāfīz Abū Zur'ah al-Ṭrāqī pointed out. Ibn Ḥibbān has confirmed her reliability and al-Bukhārī has narrated her ḥadīth. Al-ʾIlijī says about her: 'She is a reliable tābiʿīyyah.' Al-Ṣafādī said: 'She is among the reliable ones.'

Among the women narrators at the rank indicated by the epithet 'unknown' (IX), is Unaysah. Safrān ibn Sulaymān narrated from her and she narrated from Umm Sa'īd bint Murrah al-Fihīr. Al-Bukhārī has quoted her ḥadīth in al-Adab al-mukrād. Ibn Ḥajar said about her: 'She is not known.' Bunānah bint Yazīd al-ʿĀshimīyyah who narrated from 'Ā'ishah and Ḥāṣim al-Ahwāl narrated from her. Ḥāfīz says about her: 'She is not

known.\(^1\) Again, some were put in this category wrongly, and the mistake corrected by later scholars. An example is al-‘Āliyah bint Ayfa, the wife of Abū Ishāq al-Šabī‘i and the mother of Yūnus ibn Abī Ishāq. About her, al-Dāraquṭnī said: ‘She is obscure’;\(^2\) Ibn Ḥazm said: ‘Nobody knows who she is’;\(^3\) Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr said: ‘She is obscure.’\(^4\) However, Ibn Hibbān named her among the ‘reliable’ tābi‘īyyāt.\(^5\) Ibn al-Jawzī said: ‘They say: al-‘Āliyah is an obscure woman, so her report cannot be accepted. We say: rather, she is a woman of great position, well-known.’\(^6\) Ibn al-Turkmānī (d. 750) says: ‘al-‘Āliyah 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-Awzā‘ī, Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal.’\(^7\)

An example of the rank of those narrators whose ḥadīths are ‘left’ (X) is Ḥakkāmah bint Uthmān ibn Dīnār. Ibn Hibbān, al-Uqaylī, and al-Dhahabi have criticized her ḥadīth.\(^8\)

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].’\(^9\)

EVALUATION OF WOMEN’S ḤADĪTHS

Women’s ḥadīths are described by the experts according to the same categories as men’s, as sahih (sound), hasan (good) and da‘if (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

example: al-Ḥākim narrated from Āʾishah that ‘the Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi 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-Ḥākim said: ‘This is a sahīh sunnah.’

The experts have, in many cases, preferred hadīths narrated by women over those narrated by men, because the former have stronger isnāds and are further from containing mistakes. Al-Ḥākim narrated from Anas ibn Mālik ‘that the Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi 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.’ However, Āʾishah narrated that the Messenger of God in his last illness prayed sitting and Abū Bakr followed him standing. Al-Ḥākim confirms that the hadīth experts have preferred Āʾishah’s narration over that of Anas because Āʾishah’s has the support of other narrators.

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:

Wahb ibn Jarīr narrated from Shuʾbah, from al-Ḥakam, from Ibrāhīm, from al-Aswad, from Āʾishah that she said: ‘When the Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – was in [a state of] major ritual impurity, and he had to eat or sleep, he would do ablution (wudūʿ).’ This hadīth is opposed by another hadīth narrated by Abū Āṣim from Sufyān al-Thawrī, from Abū Ishāq, from al-Aswad, from Āʾishah that she said: ‘The

¹Al-Ḥākim, Maʿrifah ʿulūm al-hadīth, 160. ²Ibid., 156. ³Ibid., 156–57. ⁴Ibid., 155.
Messenger of God – ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam – would sleep while in [a state of] major impurity without touching any water.' Al-Ḥākim says after looking through different isnāds for these ḥadiths: ‘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 Ishaq oppose them.' So this mistake in ‘Ā’ishah’s ḥadith 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 ḥadiths and critique of narrators. What has been narrated from them in this regard is little, but it is significant that the experts of ḥadith and fiqh have accepted it as valid. Before giving some examples, I will discuss the lawfulness of women doing taḍīl and jarḥ.

Women’s role in taḍīl and jarḥ

Most scholars hold that taḍīl and jarḥ 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 taḍīl and jarḥ on, then it is disallowed anyway, whether done by a man or woman. Imām al-Ghazālī affirms in al-Mustasfā the permissibility of women’s taḍīl and jarḥ, and he compares it with their narration of ḥadith. Imām al-Nawawī also affirms it. Qāḍī Abū ‘Alī al-Walīd al-Bājī (d. 474) says that ṭajrīb and taḍīl of narrators of ḥadith by women is valid. The people of ḥadith 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. Qāḍī Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib says: ‘If it is

1Ibid., 156. 2 AL-NAWĀWĪ, al-Taqrīb with its commentary al-Tadrīb, i. 321. Abū l-Walīd AL-BĀJĪ, Iḥkām al-fuṣūl fi aḥkām al-uṣūl, i. 376.
said: Do you hold it obligatory to accept ta'ādil by the woman who knows what ta'ādil and jarh 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 [...].

Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 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'ādil of the narrators by women should be accepted, so the tażkiyāt 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.’

Examples of ta'ādil and jarh by women

‘Amrah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān narrates that it was reported to Ā'ishah that ‘Abdullāh ibn Umar says: ‘The deceased person is punished for the wailing of the living over him.’ Ā'ishah said: ‘May God forgive Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān [the kunyah of ‘Abdullāh ibn Umar]; he did not lie but he forgot or made a mistake. The true story is that the Messenger of God — salla l-lāhū ‘alay-hi wa sallam — passed by a deceased Jewish woman and said: They are wailing over her and she is being punished in her grave.’ It is clear that Ā'ishah has in this instance questioned Ibn Umar’s preserving of knowledge (dabī).

Another example of that is when it was reported to Ā'ishah that Abū Hurayrah said: ‘The Messenger of God — salla l-lāhū ‘alay-hi wa sallam — said: Shu'm [ill-omen] is in three things, in the house, the woman and the horse.’ Ā'ishah said: ‘Abū Hurayrah did not preserve [the whole of the matter]. He entered while the Messenger of God — salla l-lāhū ‘alay-hi wa sallam — was saying: May God fight the Jews [for] they say there is shu'm in

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1 AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, al-Kifāyah, 98. 2 Ibid. 3 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, Jānāʿīz bāb qawi al-nabī ṣallā l-lāhū ‘alay-hi wa sallam yuʿadhdhabū al-mayyīt bi baʿd bukā? abli-hi ‘alay-h; MUSLIM, Sahīh, Jānāʿīz bāb al-mayyīt yaʿadhdhabū bi bukā? abli-hi ‘alay-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.\textsuperscript{1}

Ya'łā al-Taymī narrated: 'I entered Makkah three days after 'Abdullāḥ 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 sawwām [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 – sallā l-lāhu `alay-hi wa sallam – say: In the tribe of Thaqīf 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.\textsuperscript{2}

Ibn 'Ammār narrated that Wākī' was asked about Umm Dāwūd al-Wābishiyah. He said: 'She was a woman with an intelligent heart.' And Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd was asked about her; he said: 'A man asked her about Shurayh. She said: He was like your mother.'\textsuperscript{3} In this report, Yahyā ibn Saʿīd, one of the imāms of jārī is quoting Umm Dāwūd al-Wābishiyah about a narrator (Shurayḥ). Shu'bah narrates that his mother asked Hishām ibn Ḥassān: 'Who does Muḥammad ibn Șirīn narrate from? He said: From Abū Hurayrah and Ibn ʿUmar. Then she said: Ibn Șirīn did hear ḥadīth from them.\textsuperscript{4}

WOMEN'S ROLE IN ḤADĪTH CRITIQUE

The methodology of hadith critique reached full development in the second–third century. Most of its principles relate to the

\textsuperscript{1}Abū Dāwūd AL-TAYĀLISI, al-Musnad, as cited in AL-ZARKASHĪ, al-Ijābah, 59. \textsuperscript{2}AL-DHAHABI, Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ, ii. 294. \textsuperscript{3}AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDADI, al-Jāmiʿ li-akhlāq al-rāwi wa ādāb al-sāmiʿ, i. 133. \textsuperscript{4}BAḤSHAL, Taʾrīkh Wāsīt, 109.
critical study of isnāds, 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, ʿĀʾishah is a famous practitioner of this art. While no formal or systematic statement of key principles of critique is attributed to ʿĀʾishah, it is quite clear that those principles derive from her exemplary practice. Six are illustrated below:

**Checking the ḥadīth against the Qurʾān**

ʿĀʾishah consistently applied the principle, later formulated and agreed upon by all jurists and traditionists, 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, ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās used to say: ‘The Prophet – salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – saw [i.e. actually set eyes on] his Lord twice.’ Masrūq says that he asked ʿĀʾishah:

>O umm al-muʾminin, 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-ʾĀnām, 6. 104]: No seeing [faculties] can encompass Him, and He encompasses all seeing [faculties]. And [al-Shūrā, 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-Māʾidah, 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.’

ʿUrwaḥ ibn al-Zubayr narrated from ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar that he said: ‘The Prophet – salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – stood

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1 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Šaḥīḥ, Taṣfīr, bāb taṣfīr sūrat al-Najm.
up on the qalīb 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 hadīth was mentioned to ʻĀ'ishah, she said: 'Rather, the Prophet – salla l-lāhub ʻalay-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 hear.'

Checking the hadīth against another, stronger hadīth

Another key principle derived from the practice of ʻĀ'ishah is that if a hadīth goes against one stronger and more firmly established than it, then the weaker hadīth will be 'left', not acted upon. Ubayd ibn Rīfā'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 ʻUmar and told him that. ʻUmar 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 ʻUmar were sitting some Companions of the Messenger of God – salla l-lāhub ʻalay-hi wa sallam – among them, ʻAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Muṣādh ibn Jabal. ʻUmar 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 Rīfā'ah ibn Rāfiʿ and Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī. Then ʻUmar asked those Companions who were there with him and said to them: What do you say? They differed. ʻUmar said: O slaves of God, you differ, while you are the elect of those who took part in [the battle of] Badr! Then ʻAlī said to him: Send someone to the wives of the Prophet – salla l-lāhub ʻalay-hi wa sallam – for they will be aware of there being something like that. ʻUmar sent to Ḥafṣah and asked her. She said: I have no knowledge of that. They sent someone to ʻĀ'ishah. She said: When the circumcised part has passed the other circumcised part, then the bath is obligatory. Then ʻUmar said: If I [come to] know

1 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīḥ, Maghārī, bāb qatl Abī Jahl.
anyone doing that and [after so doing] he does not have a bath, I will give him a lesson.  

Checking the hadith against a sunnah of the Prophet

Sālim narrates from his father ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar that he said: I heard ʿUmar say: ‘When [in the ḥajj] you have done the stoning [and sacrificed] and shaved, then everything becomes permissible for you except women and perfume.’ Sālim continues: ‘Ā’ishah 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 ʿalayhi wa sallam—is more worthy to be followed.’

Abū Bakr ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān 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-Raḥmān] mentioned that to ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥārith, who mentioned it to his father; he did not accept it. Then I and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān went and called upon ʿĀʾishah and Umm Salamah and we asked about that. ʿĀʾishah said the Prophet—ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam—used to get up in the morning in the state of major impurity and he used to fast.

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 ʿalayhi 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.’

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1 AL-TAHĀWĪ, Sharh Maʿani al-ʿāthār, i. 58.  
2 AL-BAYHAQI, al-Sunan al-kubrā, Ḥajj, bāb mā yahillu bi-l-tahallul al-awwal min maḥzūrat al-ībrām.  
3 AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahīh, Sawm, bāb al-ṣāʾim yuṣību-hu junūban; MUSLIM, Sahīh, Šiyām, bāb sīḥat sawm man ṭalāʾa ʿalayhi al-fajrī wa buwa junūb.  
Checking the hadith in the light of its occasion (sabab)

‘Urwah ibn al-Zubayr narrates that it came to the knowledge of ʻĀ’ishah that Abû Hurayrah was saying: ‘The Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu ʻalay-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 – salla l-lāhu ʻalay-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.’ ʻĀ’ishah said:

God have mercy on Abû 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-Balad, 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 – salla l-lāhu ʻalay-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 – salla l-lāhu ʻalay-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 – salla l-lāhu ʻalay-hi wa sallam – so he said: Who will defend me from him? Someone said: O Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu ʻalay-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-An`âm, 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 – salla l-lāhu ʻalay-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 AL-ḤĀKIM, al-Mustadrak, ii. 234.
Checking a hadith against the difficulty of acting upon it

‘Ubayd ibn ‘Umayr narrates that it came to the knowledge of ‘Ā’ishah 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 ‘Ā’ishah, 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 – salla l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam – say: The dead person will be raised in those clothes in which he dies.’ When this came to the attention of ‘Ā’ishah, she criticized it and said: ‘God have mercy on Abū Sa‘īd! The Prophet – salla l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam – meant the [garment of] actions on which a man dies. For the Prophet – salla l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam – said: People will be resurrected, barefoot, naked, uncircumcised.’

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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 muḥaddīthāt. 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 *muhaddithāt* 1st–2nd c.
most important and most famous figure in the ḥadīth and fiqh is ʿĀʾishah. 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.¹ 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 ʿĀʾishah 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-lāhi ‘alay-hi wa sallam – then we asked ʿĀʾishah about it: we found she had got knowledge of that.’²

Next to ʿĀʾishah 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 13.³ Among other women Companions who narrated a lot of ḥadīths are: Ašmāʾ bint Yazīd ibn al-Sakan who narrated 81; umm al-muʾminīn Maymūnah, who narrated 76; umm al-muʾminīn Ḥafṣah, who narrated 60; and Ašmāʾ bint Umayr, who also narrated 60 ḥadīths.

Among the most famous women narrators in the generation of the Successors is ʿAmrah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. In the Six Books and other major collections, her ḥadīths are plentiful. She grew up in the house of ʿĀʾishah and learnt a lot of ḥadīths from her and others. Umar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz said: ‘No one is now [living] who has more knowledge of ʿĀʾishah’s ḥadīth than ʿAmrah’, and he benefited much by her counsel.⁴ Al-Zuhrī 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 ʿAmrah, for she was under the guardianship of ʿĀʾishah.’ Al-Zuhrī said: ‘Then I came to her and I found her an ocean; its water never goes.’⁵

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. Ḥāṣib ibn Muʿāwiyah relied on her in preference even to Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn. Al-Ṣafādī says: ‘She was unique in her time: jurist, truthful, virtuous and of great rank.’

Another expert of this period is the famous scholar of Syria, Umm al-Dardāʾ, whose ḥadīths are also abundant in the sources. Al-Dhahabī praises her for her juristic knowledge and intelligence and for her devotion to worship. Ibn Kathīr said: ‘She was a ṭabrīqiyah, 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 ṭabrīqiyāt, are Umm al-Aswad al-Khuzaʿiyyah and ʿUbaydah bint Nābīl al-Ḥijāziyyah. Umm al-Aswad narrated ḥadīth from Munyah bint ʿUbayd al-Aslamiyah and Umm Nāʿīlah al-Khuzaʿ/yah. Aḥmad ibn ʿAbbīlāh ibn Yūnus, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAmr al-Bajalī, Muslim ibn ʿIbrahīm al-Azdi and Yūnus ibn Muḥammad al-Muʿaddib narrated from her. Al-Ṭīlī said: ‘She was a reliable Kufī narrator.’ ʿUbaydah bint Nābīl narrated from ʿAṣimah bint Saʿīd ibn Abī Waqqās. Among her students were Isḥāq ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥarawī, al-Khaṣīb ibn Nāṣīḥ, Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Waqīdī and Maʿn 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-MIZZI, Tadhīb al-kamāl, xxxv. 152. 2 AL-SAFĀDĪ, al-Wafī bi-l-wafaqāt, xiii. 106. 3 AL-DHĀHABI, Tādhirat al-ḥufṣāq 53. 4 IBN KATHĪR, al-Bidāyāh wa-l-nihāyāh, sub anno 82. 5 IBN HAJAR, Tadhīb al-tadhīb, xii. 486. 6 Ibid. 7 AL-MIZZI, Tadhīb al-kamāl, xxxv. 239.
compilations. The most likely reason for this is that the men’s interest in ḥadīth was becoming very strong and they were travelling extensively to collect ḥadīths from every city and in as short a time as possible — travelling then was arduous. So, when they were compiling ḥadīths, they recorded from the women of their generation only the ḥadīths 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 ḥadīth study, when the major genres of ḥadīth 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, ʿAmr ibn Dīnār (d. 123) in Makkah, Qatādah and Yahyā ibn Abī Kathīr in Basrah, Abū Ishāq al-Sabīṭ and al-ʿAmash in Kufah; at the end of the century Mālik in Madinah, Ibn ʿUyaynah in Makkah, Shuʿbah in Basrah, Sufyān al-Thawrī in Kufah. By the beginning of the third century all the major centres of ḥadīth — in Kufah, Basrah, Baghdad, the Ḥaramayn, Syria and Egypt — are dominated by the male scholars. Women appear to be so far absent from the circles of ḥadīth 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, Nasaʿī and Ibn Mājah, the authors of the Six Books. Before this period, by contrast, we find women named among the teachers of Abū Hanīfah, Mālik, Sufyān al-Thawrī and Shuʿbah. 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 ḥadīth, 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 Muwaṭṭā and became a narrator of ḥadīth, 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 hadith 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 hadith 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 hadith 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 hadiths 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 hadiths. 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 hadiths 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 muḥaddithāt in the heartlands of Islam did narrate from them and so their names, as also their hadiths, have survived. For example, in Madinah: Imam Shams al-Dīn al-Jazāri (d. 813) narrates with his isnād to Bakr ibn Ahmad al-Qasrī, 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 ‘alayhī wa sallam – saying: Have you forgotten the Prophet’s word to ‘Ali: You are to me as Hārūn was to Mūsā.” 1 Also in Madinah: ‘Ā’ishah bint al-Zubayr ibn Hishām ibn ‘Urawah, whose hadiths have been recorded by Qāḍi Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Mahāmili. 2 In Baghdad in this period, Rayhānah wife of Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, and his slave Ḥusn, both received ḥadīth from him. 3 In Kufah there was Fātimah bint al-Zayyāt. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādi has narrated her ḥadīth. 4 In Kufah there was Fātimah bint Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Sharīk, whose hadiths were recorded by Ḥāfṣ Umar ibn Shāhīn. 5 In Basrah, the ḥadīth of Ghufayrah bint Wāqīd were recorded by Ibn Ḥibbān. 6 In Wāṣīt, there was Fātimah bint Ishāq ibn Wahb ibn al-‘Allāf al-Wāṣīṭī; her ḥadīth were recorded by ’Imām al-Ṭabarānī. 7 In Syria, there was Umm al-‘Abbās Lubābah bint Yahyā ibn Ahmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Yūsuf al-Kharrāz, whose hadiths were recorded by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādi. 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 muḥaddithūt. One of the famous ones among them is Amat al-Wāḥid bint al-Ḥusayn ibn Iṣmā’il al-Mahāmili (d. 377). Al-Dāraquṭnī says: ‘She learnt ḥadīth from her father, Iṣmā’il ibn al-‘Abbās al-Wārraq, ‘Abd al-Ghāfir ibn Salāmah al-Ḥimṣī, Abū l-Ḥasan al-Miṣrī, Ḥamzah al-Ḥāshimī and others. She memorized the Qur’ān and learnt fiqh according to imām al-Shāfī‘ī’s school and other sciences. 9 Another example is Fātimah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥarrāniyyah (d. 312), who was born in Baghdad,

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1See IBN AL-JAZĂRĪ, Āsmā al-matālib, 49. 2See AL-MAHĀMILĪ, K. al-Dū‘a‘, 186. 3Abū Ḥusayn IBN ABI YALĀ, Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah, i. 429. 4AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDI, Talkhīṣ al-mutashābih, i. 113. 5IBN SHĀHĪN, al-Targhīb fi ḥadīth al-a‘māl wa hadāth dhālik, 167. 6IBN HIBBĀN, K. al-Thiqāt, iv. 9. AL-ṬABARĀNĪ, al-Mu‘jam al-saghib, ii. 151. 8AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDI, Talkhīṣ al-mutashābih, i. 482. 9Ibid., Ta‘rīkh Baghdād, xiv. 443.
then brought to Egypt where people studied ḥadīth with her.\(^1\)
Another examples is Amat al-Salām bint al-Qāḍi ʿAbī 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 muḥaddithān 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 ʿAbī Saʿīd al-Ḥasan ibn Ishāq ibn Bulbul al-Naysabūrī,\(^4\) Jumūʿah bint ʿĀḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Mahmiyyah from Nishapur (who also taught ḥadīth in Baghdad),\(^5\) and Umm ʿAbbūlilah Zaynab bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭayyibah, who taught ḥadīth 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 ḥadīth classes. Those who heard ḥadīth 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-Dhahābī says in his account of Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Ḥāfiẓ Abī Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Khallāl (385–470), brought by his father to hear ḥadīth 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, ʿijāzah is better in strength than [this] attendance, for whoever heard ḥadīth just attending [a class] without understanding, he did not receive anything. The one who has got ʿijāzah has got something. Yes if, along with the attendance, there is a permission from the shaykh, that is better.'\(^7\)

\(^1\)Ibid., 441. \(^2\)AL-DHAAHABI, Taʾrīkh al-islām (sub anno 381–400), 195. \(^3\)AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDI, Taʾrīkh Baghdad, xiv. 443. \(^4\)See Ḥasan bin Ishāq ibn Bulbul’ in IBN AL-ʿADIM, Bushyat al-ṭalāb, 2295–98. \(^5\)AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDI, Taʾrīkh Baghdad, xiv. 444. \(^6\)AL-SAHMĪ, Taʾrīkh Jurjān, 506. \(^7\)See AL-DHAAHABI, Sīyar aʾlām al-nubalāʾ, xviii. 369.
In the fifth century, women from non-Arab countries excelled the Arabs in the field of teaching and narrating ḥadith. For example, in Nishapur Fātimah bint Abī ʿAlī al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī al-Daqqāq (d. 480) taught major books of ḥadiths including the Musnad of Abū ʿAwāmah.  

1 Al-Samʿānī 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-ʿAshbāḥāniyyah (d. 460). She taught ḥadith regularly. Ibn al-Samʿānī 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 ḥadith. My father sent me to study with her. And she was an ascetic.’  

3 In Herat, there was Bibā bint ʿAbd al-Ṣamad al-Harthamiyyah (d. 477). Al-Samʿānī says: ‘She was a righteous and pure woman’ and ‘The people who learnt ḥadith from her cannot be counted.’  

4 In Marw there was Karīmah bint Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥāṭīm al-Marwaziyyah (d. 465) who taught Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī many times.  

5 About her al-Samʿānī wondered if anyone had seen her like among women.

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 Nuṭṭah, al-Taqyūd, 497.  
2 Al-Dhahabī, Taʾrīkh al-islām (sub anno 471–480), 296.  
3 See Al-Dhahabī, Siyār aṭ-Ṭālīm al-nubalāʾ, 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 hadîth 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 hadîth. Indeed, except for the time of the women Companions, this period is the best for the women's advancement in, and major contribution to, hadîth. The comment by al-Dhahabi quoted earlier refers to this time: in his biographical account of Imâm Hâfîz Abû ʿAbdillâh Muhammad ibn Maḥmûd ibn al-Najîr (578–643), he writes: 'Ibn al-Sâ`âtî 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 hadîth? 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, salla Allâhu 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 Asâkir al-Dimashqî and the family of Ibn Qudâmah, who left Jerusalem as the Crusaders occupied it, settled in Damascus. Here they revived the hadîth 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 hadîth 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 Tājanni bint ʿAbdillāh al-Wahbāniyyah (d. 575). All the major traditionists of the time studied with them. In Isfāhān the most important shaykhah at this time was Fātimah bint ʿAbdillāh al-Jūzdāniyyah (d. 524), considered one of the most outstanding figures in the whole history of hadīth. It is her student Fātimah bint Saʿd al-Khayr (d. 600) who diffused hadīth in Damascus and then in Cairo. By the end of this century, hadīth sciences had strengthened greatly in Damascus so that it was becoming established as a major centre. Among the women teachers of hadīth of this period was Āminah bint Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Tāhir ibn al-Rār al-Dimashqiyyah (d. 595). She studied hadīth with her grandfather, the qāḍī Abū l-Mufaḍḍal Yaḥyā ibn ʿAlī al-Qurashi 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 Qāḍī 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 hadīth with four hundred women teachers during this period is not the only record we have of their activity. Ḥāfız Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571) received hadīth from more than 80 women. His colleague and a famous traditionist Abū Saʿd al-Samʿānī (d. 562) has provided accounts of 69 of his shaykhahs. Abū Tāhir 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. Chingiz Khan began his campaign against the Khwarizmshah in 616. His hordes destroyed Bukhara, Samarkand, 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 madinat Dimashq, Tarājim al-nisāʾ, 49. 2 Al-Dhahābī, Taʾrīkh al-ṣīlahm (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 ʿAyn Jālūt in Ramaḍān 658. Then the Mamlūk sultan 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 hadith 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 Mamluk domains. The revival of hadith had begun in Syria, before it took hold in Egypt, when (as I noted earlier) the family, friends and followers of Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Qudāmah left Palestine in 551 and settled in Qāsyūn in Damascus. Here Shaykh Abū ʿUmar Muḥammad ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī built al-Madrasah al-ʿUmariyyah in 555. Some years later, in 599, Jāmiʿ al-Ḥanābilah was built there. Both were very important centres for hadith science. The first centre dedicated expressly for the study of hadith was Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Nūriyyah in Damascus in 559 founded by the sultan Nūr al-Dīn al-Shāhīd. Al-Malik al-Kāmil al-Ayyūbī built Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Kāmilīyyah in 622 in Cairo and his brother al-Malik al-ʿAshraf built two more centres for hadith 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 samāʿāt attached to the hadith 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, hadith 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 hadith. 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 hadith in this period were: Umm al-Khayr Amat al-Khâliq al-Dimashqîyyah (d. 902). Al-Suyûtî says about her: ‘By her death people fell one rank in hadith; for she was the last person who narrated from ʿĀ’ishah bint ʿAbd al-Hadî, who was the last student of al-Hajjâr.’\(^1\) Another important figure is ʿĀ’ishah bint Muḥammad ibn Ḥamîd ibn Abî Ṣumâr al-Ḥanbâliyyah (d. 906). Ibn Ṭulûn says about her: ‘She studied hadith with a group of people including Abû Bakr ibn Nâṣîr al-Dîn, with whom she studied al-Majlîs al-Awwal of his ʿAmâlî, which contains al-Musalsal bi-l-awwalîyyah and a commentary on it. Ibn Ṭulûn studied with her.’\(^2\) Another famous figure is Shaykhah of Zabid, Ašmâ’ bint Kamâl al-Dîn Mûsâ al-Dâjjâ’î (d. 904). Al-ʿAyrûsî says about her: ‘She was righteous; a devout; reciter of the Qur’ân; she used to read tafsîr and books of hadith, 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, qâdi and amîr; her recommendations were accepted and not rejected.’\(^3\)

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Map 5. Islamic world. Spread of muhaddithāt 10th–14th c.
Another figure was Zaynab bint Muḥammad al-Ghazzī (d. 980). Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzi says: ‘She read with her father, and studied a lot with her brother (my father). She read with him Tānqīḥ al-Lubāb, and part of al-Minḥāj. She copied for him many books in her own hand.’ He goes on to praise her knowledge and uniqueness.\(^1\)

Among the muḥaddithāt of the eleventh century are: the great Makkāni scholar, holder of high isnād, Zayn al-Sharaf bint al-Imām ʿAbd al-Qādir ibn Muḥammad ibn Yāḥyā ibn Mukarram al-Ṭabarī (d. 1083). Her students included the musnads of her time, Ibrāhīm al-Ḵūrānī (who revived ḥadīth in the Hijaz in this period), Ḥāfīz of Hijaz ʿAbdullāh ibn Sālim al-Baṣrī.\(^2\) Another important figure was her sister Mubārakah (d. 1075). She taught major hadith works such as Ṣāḥīh al-Bukhārī and al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaghīr of al-Suyūṭī.\(^3\) Her student ʿHasan al-ʿUjaymī has recorded a long list of the ḥadīth works that he studied with her.\(^4\) Another important figure is the long-lived Shaykhah of Madinah, holder of high isnād and jurist, Fāṭimah bint Shukrullāh ibn Asadullāh al-Ḵūrāniyyah.\(^5\) Her students included Abū ʿIṣḥāq al-Sībāʿī (d. 1155) who studied with her a lot of books of hadīth in 1081 in her house in Madinah.\(^6\)

Among the women of the twelfth century is the famous muḥaddithah and jurist of Makkah Quraysh al-Ṭabarīyyah (d. 1107). Fālīḥ al-Ẓāhirī 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.

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In the thirteenth century the great muhaddithab of Delhi, from a family of hadith scholars, Amat al-Ghafūr bint Ishāq al-Dīlawī 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 Raḥmah bint al-Jīnān al-Mīk-nāsiyyah, 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 ʿAbd al-Ghānī al-Dīlawiy-yah (d. 1357) in Madinah. She studied with her father, many times over, all the Six Books, as well as many ajzā’ and ihābats.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 ʿUmar Ḥamdān al-Mahrasī (d. 1368), Aḥmad al-Ghumārī and Muḥammad Yāsīn al-Fāḍānī (d. 1410).

OVERVIEW BY REGION

Hijāz

The centres of hadith scholarship in the Hijāz were the cities of the Haramayn, Makkah and Madinah. Madinah was the first centre for hadith 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 hadith 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 hadith scholarship started in Madinah and continued until the fourteenth century. The traditionists, including women, who visited Madinah as part of their ḥajj or ʿumrah journeys, also sometimes taught hadith there. The most important muḥaddith hadith from among the outsiders was Fātimah bint ʿAbd al-Baṭāṣahihiyah, who came there from Syria. She taught in the mosque of the Prophet, salla l-lāhu 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-Dihlawiyah (d. 1357) and Fātimah Shams Jahān al-Jarkasiyyah, the wife of Shaykh al-Islām ʿĀrif al-Turkī. Among those who studied with her were scholars such as Ḥāfīz ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī (d. 1382) and ʿUmar Hamdān al-Maḥrāsī (d. 1368).\footnote{AL-KATTĀNĪ, Fihrist al-jahāris, ū. 724.}

Because of ḥajj, Makkah always had some hadith teachers. In the first centuries, hadith 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-Bukhārī there many times. Hadith 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
pious and righteous shaykhah, Āminah bint al-Ḥābib Muḥammad ibn Ḫusayn al-Hibashi (d. 1342). She studied ḥadīth with her father, the mufti of Makkah, and her husband Imām ʿAlawi ibn Aḥmad 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 ʿAtiyyah al-Anṣāriyyah. A number of the Companions and important Successors in Basrah received the knowledge from her.² Baqīʾ ibn Makhlad has recorded forty of her ḥadīth in his Musnad.³

Among the famous muhaddithāt of the generation of Successors were Ḥafṣah bint Sirīn, who diffused much knowledge in Basrah. There also was Muʿādhah al-ʿAdawiyyah, wife of Ṣīlah 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 muhaddithah 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 Muʿāwiyah al-Thaqafiyah the wife of ʿAbdullāh ibn Maṣūd, Salāmah bint Ḥurr al-Fuzāriyyah,⁴ Jamrah bint ʿAbdillāh al-Yarbūʾiyyah al-Tamūmiyyah,⁵ Fāṭimah bint al-Yamān,⁶ Qutaylah bint Sayf al-Anṣāriyyah,⁷ Māriyah,⁸ the servant of the Prophet, Umm Yāsir al-Anṣār-

iyyah, and Jasrah bint Dajājah al-Kūfiyyah, whose being a Companion is disputed. She narrated hadith from Abū Dharr, ‘Ali, Ā’ishah and Umm Salama; al-Ṭālī has confirmed her reliability. The most important Companion who travelled and diffused knowledge there was Fāṭimah bint Qays. Among the Successors in Kufah the most important woman narrator was Qamīr bint Āmr al-Kūfiyyah, wife of the famous scholar Masrūq ibn al-Ajdā. 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-Ṭhaqafiyyah, who narrated from her father, and from her husband Saʿīd ibn Yahyā ibn Qays. Abū Ibrāhīm al-Tarjamānī, Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, Muḥammad ibn al-Ṣabbāh al-Jarrārī, Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Harawi and ʿAlī ibn Muslim al-Ṭūsī are among those who narrated from her. Also figures of significance in this century were the women of the house of Ḥanbal, the sisters of Bishr al-Ḥāfī 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 Shuḥdah 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.

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 taught hadith and fiqh 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-ʿAzīz, was also an active ḥadīth narrator in Damascus at the end of the first century, as affirmed by the famous historian, Abū Zurʿah al-Dimashqī. After the generation of the Successors, ḥadīth scholarship among women in Syria lessened; the sources do not record any major Syrian muhaddithab 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 ḥadīth 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 ḥadīth and small ajza, whether learning and hearing them or teaching and transmitting them is quite extraordinary. Here in this period we find women learning ḥadīth and teaching it in al-Madrasah al-Umariyyah and other colleges, in the grand Umayyad mosque, the Jāmiʿ al-Muẓaffarī and other mosques; in ribâṭs, 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 isnād. The one who narrated the whole Sabīh al-Bukhârī with the highest isnād among men or women was Āʾishah bint ʿAbd al-Hadī (d. 816) from Damascus, the last student of al-Hajjâr in the world. Before her, by a century, was Sitt al-Wuzarāʾ al-Tanukhiyyah (d. 716), the last student of Husayn ibn al-Mubârak al-Zabīdī and Abū ʾl-Munajją Ibn al-Latti among all the woman of the world. And there was Zaynab bint al-Kamāl (d.740) who outdid men and women alike in the sheer abundance of her teaching of both major books and small ajza.

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1 Ibn ʿAsākir, Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq, Tarājim al-nisāʾ, 291.
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 Amīr al-Munīn al-Ḥasan ibn Zayd ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ţalīb al-ʿAlawiyyah al-Ḥasaniyyah (d. 208). Ibn Kathīr 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 Imām al-Shafiʿī arrived in Egypt, she did good to him, and sometimes Shafiʿī led her in prayers in Ramdān.’ Al-Yaʻfī says: ‘It is narrated that when Imām Shafiʿī 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-ʿImād says: ‘Her connections: al-Shafiʿī 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 Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī al-Ṣadafī, Umm Ḥabīb Ṣafwah (d. 379). Al-Dhahabī says: ‘She had a lot of hadith. Her father was a muḥaddith, his son and her sisters also. She taught hadith.’

But hadith science was really activated among the women of Egypt when Fāṭimah bint Saʿd al-Khayr (d. 600) emigrated there. Al-Dhahabī says in his account of her: ‘She married Ibn Najā al-Ḥāfiẓ who brought her to Damascus, then settled with her in Egypt. The Egyptians learnt much from her.’ After Fāṭimah, there was Taqiyyah bint Abī l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Qurashi, (d. 606) who learned hadith from her father and got ijāzah from a group of scholars including Abū l-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn al-Ṭufayl, al-Ṣallāmah Abū ʿAbdillāḥ Muḥam-


Haфиз أبو زرعاء الأتربة studied with her all the above-listed books, which she taught many times.

In the ninth century, there were many women teachers of حافظ ابن حajar. حافظ السكاحي and حافظ السعوطي had women teachers, among them سراح بنت طقي الادن السبكي (d. 805), who taught many, including Ibn حajar. Among other "مهددتات" there was Maryam بنت أحمد ابن محمد الادرهي (d. 805), the last student of al-Wاني and al-طابوسي; Ibn حajar studied a great number of books with her. سراح بنت عمر ابن جامع السكاحي (d. 855) narrated a lot of hadith and great experts studied extensively with her. الاتربة studied with her so many books and hadiths 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 hadith, and patience for long sessions. With her death, people of Egypt fell one degree." Juwayriya بنت حافظ عبد الرحمان الأتربة (d. 863) studied hadith with her father; heard the hadith الاتربة al-Musalsal bi-l-اوناليyyah, جزء al-غابة يري, some parts of أمالي of Ibn الاعسائي, part of "Usbariya" of her father with نور الادن الهايثمي, and some parts of مسلم al-Dabosi with طقي الادن ابن جامع. She got ijazahs from a very large number of people. Experts of hadith including الاتربة studied with her.

Spain and Morocco

Hadith became popular in this part of the world in the second century, especially after the arrival of students of دام مالك, and then باقي ابن مكلد. Here too there were women who studied ساهب الاتربة and Abi Dharr. Among the most well-known traditionists of Spain was وم al-Hassan بنت Abi Liwā'.

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Sulaymān ibn Aṣbagh al-Mīknāsī from Cordoba, who narrated hadīth from Baqi' ibn Makhlad, studied with him, accompanied him, and herself read to him K. al-Dubīr.¹

Another early narrator was Aṣmā' 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 hadīth 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.² 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.³

Later on, after Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (d. 462), fiqh became more dominant in Spain and North African countries. Later on, Ḥāfiz Muhammad ibn Ja'far al-Kattānī and ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī revived the science of hadīth there and then many women became eminent in that field.

The region of Khurasan and Transoxania

The science of hadīth 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 hadīth scholarship from the end of the third century, then its growth through the fourth and fifth centuries until, in the field of hadīth 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 Karimah al-Marwaziyyah, famous teacher of Sahīh al-Bukhārī, and Bībā bint ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-Harwiyyah. In the sixth, Fāṭimah al-Jūzdāniyyah was distinguished for her narration of al-Muṣjam al-ṣaghīr and al-Muṣjam al-

¹ Ibn al-Abbār, Takmilah šilat al-šilāb, 401. ² Kahlālah, Ašlām al-nisā', i. 45. ³ Ibid., 332.
kabīr of al-Ṭabarānī. Scholars travelled from every part of the Islamic world in order to study ḥadīth with her.

The fifth and sixth centuries are the peak of ḥadīth activity among the women of this region. When the Mongols destroyed its major cities, the ḥadīth scholarship in them was destroyed too, and has not yet returned to this region.

India

Hadīth 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 ḥadīth scholarship was already experiencing decline in most parts of the Islamic world. In this period in India the activity of scholars of ḥadīth was confined to reading and writing commentaries on some books until Ahmad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Dihlawī, better known as Shāh Walīullāh (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 ḥadīth 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 Walīullāh and those of the family of Ahmad Sirhindī (d. 1034). Among others, there were: Shams al-Nisāʾ bint Amīr Hasan al-Sahsawānī (d. 1308) and Ṣāliḥah bint Ināyat Rasūl al-Chirayākotī (d. 1318), both of whom were taught major books of ḥadīth.2

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1See AL-ḤASANI, Nuzhat al-khawāṭir, viii. 185. 2Ibid., 195.
Chapter 10

Fiqh and `amal

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 islam, 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, Mu‘ādh
‘Abbās, and others. Similarly, the community did not bow to
the authority, after them, of Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab, ‘Alqamah,
al-Aswad, Ḥāsan al-Baṣrī, Muhammad ibn Sirīn, Ibrāhīm al-
Nakha‘ī, ‘Aṭa‘ ibn Abī Rabāḥ, Āmīr al-Sha‘bī, Hammād ibn Abī
Sulaymān, Abū Ḥanīfah, al-Auwzā‘ī, Suwayn al-Thawrī, Mālik,
al-Qāḍī Abū Yūsuf, Muhammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī, al-
Shāfi‘ī, Ahmad 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, ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam'. We must begin therefore with the women scholars' command of these primary sources of the dīn.

Understanding the Qurʾān

The best recitation of the Qurʾān is the kind that enables its meaning to enter the heart. Ibn Abī Mulaykah has narrated from Umm Salamah that she said: The Messenger of God – ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam – recited the Qurʾān, pausing at the end of every verse. He would recite al-ḥamdul li-l-lāhi rabbi l-ʿālamīn, then he would pause and then he would recite ar-raḥmāni r-raḥīm, then he would pause and then he would recite, māliki yawmi d-dīn.1 All the major jurists in the history of Islam began their education by memorizing the Qurʾān, 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 Fātimah bint Abī ʿAlī al-Daqqāq al-Naysābūriyyah (d. 480). Abū Saʿd al-Samʿānī 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.2 Al-Ṣayrafīnī said: 'She knew the Book of God by heart, recited it day and night and knew its meaning.'3 Sayyidah bint ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Ghirmātiyyah (d. 647),

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1Al-Tirmidhī, Sunan, Qirāʾah, bāb fātiḥat al-Kitāb. 2Al-Dhahabī, Taʾrīkh al-İslām (sub anno 471–80), 269. 3Al-Sayrafīnī, al-Muntakhab min kitāb al-siyāq li al-taʾrīkh Naysābūr, 459.
brought up in Murcia (Spain), excelled in Qur'anic studies. In the ninth century Bayram bint Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Dayrūṭiyah mastered the seven recitations under the tuition of al-Shams ibn al-Ṣāḥib, 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 Yūsuf al-Dayrūṭi (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. Urwah 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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Æishah’s interpretation of these Qur'anic verses became very popular among the jurists. The compilations of hadith and books of tafsîr contain many other examples of her tafsîr. Su'ûd ibn Abdillâh al-Funaysân has put together a 500-page book of them, Marwîyyat umm al-mu'minîn Æishah fi l-tafsîr,1 culled from the books of the famous mujassirîn like Ibn Jarîr al-Tabari, Ibn Abî Hâtim, al-Baghawi, Ibn al-Jawzi, al-Qurtubi, al-Khâzin, Ibn Kathîr, al-Suyûtî, al-Shawkânî.

The tafsîr of other women is also recorded or attested in the sources. For example, al-Tirmidhî has recorded the tafsîr of Umm Salamah.2 Al-Subkî has reported about the mother of al-Shâfi'î, whom he describes as devout, God-wary and among the most intelligent of people, that she and the mother of Bishr al-Mirrâsi 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-Shâfi'î said to him: 'You have no authority to do that as God says in the Qur'an if one of the two errs [in what she remembers], then one of the two may remind (îndhakkîra) 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-Shâfi'î, it is allowable when necessary. Al-Subkî comments:

This is good derivation, strong meaning, and fine argument. Though the known thing in the maddhab of her son is an absolute opinion (îtlâqu l-qawî) 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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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 Hilal, 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 wala', 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 wala’ will be ours.’ Ā'ishah reported this to the Prophet who said: ‘Buy and emancipate her, as the wala’ 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].’

1AL-BUKHĀRĪ, Sahih, Mukātab, bāb isti‘ānah al-mukātab wa su‘āli-bi al-nās.
Women jurists

‘Ā’ishah was, among the Companions, men and women, a principal resource for juristic opinion. ‘Ātā’ ibn Abī Rabāh said: ‘‘Ā’ishah was the most expert in jurisprudence among all the people.’ 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.’ Urwah said: ‘I have never seen anyone more knowledgeable of the fiqh than ‘Ā’ishah.’

Among the Companions Umm Salamah is also considered to have been a jurist, and her opinions are well recorded in the books of ḥadīth and fiqh. Another Companion well-known for her knowledge and expertise in the sunnah 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. So also did ‘Abdullāh ibn Umar, famously on a judgement related to divorce law during the rule of Uthmān.

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 Yaḥyā ibn Sa‘īd that he said: ‘Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad 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-Raḥmān 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. This intervention by ‘Amrah happened at the time when the city was

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 ʿAbbās ibn ʿAlī al-Fath al-Baghdādiyyah (d. 714). She learnt fiqh with Shaykh Shams al-Dīn 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 Kathīr says: ‘I heard Shaykh Taqi al-Dīn ibn Taymiyyah praising her a lot and lauding her virtue and knowledge. He stated that she knew most of al-Mughnī 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-Qayyim. 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 ʿalay-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 Ẓāhirī jurists] in this regard. Among them, other than the wives of the Prophet, salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam, were: Umm Sulaym, Umm Ḥarām, and Umm ʿAtiyah.' 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 ʿĀʾishah.

Mahmūd ibn Labīd says: "ʿĀʾishah used to give fatwas in the time of ʿUmar and ʿUthmān until she died; [those] great Companions of the Prophet, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān, 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-muʿminīn ʿĀʾishah: '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 ʿĀʾishah, and it is the opinion of Abū Ḥanīfah.' Sometimes it is women who put to

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"A'ishah issues that concerned them; here is an example from the domain of commerce:

'Abd al-Razzāq 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'minīn, 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 jihād with the Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu 'alayhi wa sallam – except if he repents. [Then "A'ishah explained the issue further; this kind of transaction is a trick to lend money for interest.]\(^1\)

**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 Qurān 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 Qur'ān [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.'\(^2\)

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

\(^{1}\) ABD AL-RAZZĀQ, al-Muṣannaf, viii. 185. \(^{2}\) IBN ḤAJAR, Fath al-bārī, Nikāḥ.
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 – salla l-lāhu 'alayhi wa sallam – 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 *Muwaṭṭa* to the fatwas of the great tābi‘īyyah, ‘Amrah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, on issues related to ḥajj. Abū Ḥanīfah relied on the saying of ‘Ā’ishah (narrated from Yazīd ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, from an old woman of al-Ṣā‘īd bint Abū Bakr) that: ‘There is no harm in doing *umrah* in any time of the year that you want except five days – the day of ‘Arafah, the day of nahr and the [three] days of tasbīr.‘ 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 ‘Arafah, as [also on] the morning of ‘Arafah – there is no harm in doing *umrah* at that time.’ Abū Ḥanīfah followed the ruling of ‘Ā’ishah with regard to an issue in *tahārah*, namely when a bath becomes obligatory after sexual relations. He ruled, also according to ‘Ā’ishah’s practice,

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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 Āʾishah’s saying, which he narrated from Ḥammād 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 Āʾishah is distinguished for having noted and formed a judgement on a variety of issues (masāʾil) 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 ījīthād, 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
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 Fātimah bint Qays and ʿĀʾishah. Similarly, idiosyncratic expression of an individual’s personal preference in minor details of practice was also quite acceptable: for example, the great Syrian ṭabīʿiyah Umm al-Dardā when sitting in the prayer used to adopt the posture usual for men rather than women.

ʿAMAL

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. Imām Mālik said: ‘Knowledge is not by abundance of narrations; rather, knowledge is a light that God puts in the heart.’ Abū ʿĀṣim says: ‘One who seeks the knowledge of ḥadith, he is [seeking] the highest matters of the world, so he must be the best of all people.’1 Fātimah bint al-Ḥusayn narrates from Husayn ibn ʿAlī that he said: ‘The Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi 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 – salla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam – one should hold fast to it.’3 Qāsim ibn Ismāʿīl ibn ʿAlī said: ‘We were at the door of Bishr ibn al-Ḥarith, 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 ḥadith? I said to him: O Abū Naṣr, is

1. Al-Khāṭīb Al-Baghdādī, al-Jāmi‘ li-akhlāq al-rāwī wa adāb al-sāmi‘, i. 78. 2. Ibid., 92. 3. Ibid., 42.
there zakāb [that is due] on ḥadīth? He said: Yes. When you hear ḥadīth or remembrance of God you should apply it.\footnote{Ibid., 143–44.}

It would fill another book to relate all the ways in which the muḥaddithāt paid the zakāb 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 muḥaddithāt. 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-mu’minīn 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
since defined the heartlands of Islam. His son, 'Abdullah ibn Umar, was already present at his death-bed. Miqdām ibn Ma'dīkarīb narrates:

When Umar suffered [his wounds], Ḥafṣah called on him and said: O Companion of the Messenger of God — salla l-lāhu 'alayhi wa sallam — O in-law of the Messenger of God, O Commander of the Believers... Umar said to Ibn Umar: 'Abdullah, help me to sit up, I cannot bear what I am hearing. So 'Abdullah 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.'

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 'alayhi 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.

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

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1 IBN SĀD, 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. Ṣafiyyah bint Abī ‘Ubayd al-Thaqafiyah narrates that, some days after Abū Sufyān died, his daughter, umm al-mu’minin Umm Ḥabībah, 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 ʿalayhi 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 Asmāʾ [bint Abī Bakr]: How were the Companions of the Messenger of God – salla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam – when they heard the Qurʾān? 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 Qurʾān they fall unconscious. She said: I seek refuge in God from the outcast satan.²

Yazīd ibn al-ʿĀṣamm relates that a relative of umm al-muʿminin 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

¹IBN SĀD, al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā, viii. 100. ²IBN ‘ASĀKIR, Taʾrīkh madinat Dimashq, Tarājim al-nisāʾ, 20; see also IBN SĀD, al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā, viii. 253. ³AL-DHAHABI, Siyār aʿlām al-mubalāğ, ii. 244.
best of them were not waiting for others to establish the \textit{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 Khawlāh bint Ḥākim, the wife of Ubayd ibn al-Ṣāmit, whose word was heard by God from above the seven heavens.\textsuperscript{1} So it is most fitting for ‘Umar to listen to her.’\textsuperscript{2}

Zayd ibn Wāqīd narrates from ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān about the counsel he was given, before he became caliph, by Barīrah, the slave emancipated by ‘A‘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 – \textit{salla l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa 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.\textsuperscript{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’

\textsuperscript{1}The caliph is here alluding to the sending down of the opening verses of \textit{al-Mujādalah} (58. 1 seq.) when Khawlāh brought her dispute with Ubayd ibn al-Ṣāmit before the Prophet. \textsuperscript{2}IBN ‘ABD AL-BARR, \textit{al-Istī‘āb}, ii. 723. \textsuperscript{3}Ibid., 708.
understanding of the *dīn*. Some of them funded, some lived and taught in, *ribāṭs* 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 Fāṭimah bint ʿAbbās al-Baghdādiyyah (d. 714). Al-Dhahabī 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 (*ahwāl*) and the thinking and arguments [*uṣūl*] of the people of *bidʿah* and others. In [all] that she did what men are unable to do.

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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.)