Relations, Narrations, and Judgments:
The Scholarly Networks and Contributions of an Early Female Muslim Jurist

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Abstract

Through an extensive analysis of early biographical dictionaries and histories, ḥadīth collections and commentaries, as well as legal texts, I reconstruct the life of a female jurist from the third generation of Muslims. It was through informal networks of kinship and scholarship that ʿAmrah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 106/724) contributed to the core of Islamic knowledge in ways similar to her male contemporaries, while she also served as a resource within the community for the gender-specific concerns of women. The depth of her knowledge established ʿAmrah's narrations as reliable evidence of the Prophet Muḥammad's conduct and endowed her own opinions and deeds with an authoritative weight respected by contemporaries and subsequent generations of Muslim scholars.

Keywords


“Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim” is a famous statement attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad. It is recorded among the collections of his statements and deeds, reiterated by generations of Muslims, and docu-

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mented in the writings of academics regarding the centrality of knowledge in the Islamic tradition. As ʿAbd al-Hādī al-Sindī explains in his commentary on *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, the word Muslim in the above ḥadīth encompasses both males and females, even if it is textually inaccurate to add the phrase “wa-Muslimah” in order to emphasize the inclusion of women as the ḥadīth has been commonly circulated.1 Yet the extent to which women participated in the formation and transmission of Islamic knowledge remains a budding field of inquiry. Some noteworthy contributions have offered broad, initial forays into the wealth of biographical materials, such as Ruth Roded’s *Women in Islamic Biographical Collections: From Ibn Saʿd to Who’s Who*, Mohammad Akram Nadwi’s *al-Muhaddithat: The Women Scholars of Islam*, and Asma Sayeed’s *Women and the Transmission of Religious Knowledge in Islam*, which concentrate primarily on the field of ḥadīth.2 Roded first exposed English-speaking audiences to the plethora of biographical data on women who were Companions of the Prophet, transmitters of ḥadīth, and pious saints. Nadwi offers a thematic analysis of female ḥadīth scholars in a work that was originally intended to introduce an unpublished 40-volume biographical dictionary of his own on them. And Sayeed combs through the classical biographical dictionaries to track the ebb and flow of female transmitters of ḥadīth from the seventh to the sixteenth centuries.

The first few generations of Muslims, however, present an excellent opportunity for us to delve more deeply into how gender dynamics shaped the twin ideals of attaining religious knowledge and ensuring its subsequent

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transmission. It was these generations of Muslims who were closest to the Qur’ānic revelations both temporally and spiritually and who retained a vivid memory of the revelations’ embodiment in the life and character of the Prophet Muḥammad. As such, Muslims have deemed them to be the best of generations, and their influence has left a profound impression upon the whole of the Islamic tradition. By carefully reconstructing the life of a female jurist from the third generation of Muslims, ʿAmrah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 106/724), I hope to further our understanding of early Muslim women’s scholarly activities in the intertwined and nebulous domains of Islamic law, prophetic reports, and communal history. Accordingly, my source materials encompass a broad range of biographical dictionaries, narrative histories, ḥadīth collections, both canonical and otherwise, legal texts, and the successive layers of commentary and elaboration. By analyzing and integrating materials from such diverse genres and of various levels of authenticity, this article investigates how the categories of religion, gender, and society intersected in the early Islamic context.³

Moving beyond the rough contours of valuable prosopographical analyses, this study explores the rich textures and details of one eminent female jurist’s life and legacy as a way to shed even further light on – and indeed to revise our understandings of – the gendered dynamics of early Islamic knowledge and learning. As my research reveals, it was through informal networks of kinship and scholarship that ʿAmrah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān contributed to the core of Islamic knowledge in ways similar to her male contemporaries, while she also served as a resource within the community for the gender-specific concerns of women. The depth of her knowledge established ʿAmrah’s ḥadīth narrations as reliable evidence of the Prophet Muḥammad’s ways and endowed her own opinions and deeds with an authoritative weight respected by contemporaries and future generations of Muslim scholars. As described by the traditionist, historian, and biographer Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), ʿAmrah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān “was a scholar, jurist, authoritative, and very knowledgeable.”⁴

³ In adopting a literary-historical approach to gender the study of Islamic education and learning, I am not concerned with the traditional preoccupations of ḥadīth studies in Islamic and modern European scholarship to investigate questions of authenticity. For a concise summary of the formalistic study of ḥadīth, see Jonathan Brown, Hadith: Muhammad’s Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009).
Figure 1
In seeking to understand ʿAmrah bint ʿAbd al-Rahmān’s eminent position as a traditionist and jurist, we must first consider the extent to which her immediate family may have shaped her scholastic career. Born in first/seventh-century Medina to descendants of the Anṣār, ʿAmrah lived a couple of generations after the Prophet Muhammad among the Followers (al-Tābiʿīn) of his Companions. Even though she herself was not one of the Prophet’s Companions, ʿAmrah still bore the honorific appellation al-Anṣāriyyah as an indication of her descent. Her ancestry, moreover, was rooted in Banū al-Najjār, a major branch of the Medinese family of Khazraj. (See Figure 1 for a genealogical chart.) Apart from their names, little is known about her parents. In his biographical study, Ibn Saʿd (d. 230/845) indicates that ʿAmrah’s mother was Sālimah bint Ḥakīm b. Hāshim b. Qawwālah, but he offers no further details on her life. Similarly, a couple of brief entries in biographical works on ʿAmrah’s father, ʿAbd

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al-Raḥmān, yield little information. However, ‘Amrah’s father does appear in
the recension of Mālik’s Muwaṭṭa’ that was compiled by Muḥammad b. al-
Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (d. 189/805), the disciple of Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767). In this
recension, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān is described as visiting the Prophet’s widow, ʿĀʾishah
(d. 58/678), during an illness of hers, along with Ismāʾīl b. Abī Bakr – both of
whom ʿĀʾishah charged with locating a remedy. This narration seems to indi-
cate close familiarity with the Prophet’s household, although the classical bio-
graphical sources are not entirely certain whether ‘Amrah’s father was a con-
temporary of the Prophet Muḥammad himself.

The exact identity of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s father is another matter of confu-
sion. In the biographical and ḥadīth literature, both Sa’d and Asʿad, the sons of
Zurārah b. Ūdus b. Ṭalib b. Thaʿlabah b. Ghanm b. Mālik b. al-Najjār, are men-
tioned as ‘Amrah’s paternal grandfather. Asʿad is certainly the more famous of
the two brothers: he was present at all three pledges of allegiance to the Proph-
et Muḥammad, was appointed as the leader (naqīb) of Banū al-Najjār by the Prophet, and was the host of the Prophet’s emissary to the city, Mus'ab b. ʿUmayr (d. 3/625), before the Prophet’s actual migration there. The Anṣār also claimed that Asʿad, who died before the battle of Badr in 2/624, was the first person to be buried in the Muslim cemetery, al-Baqī’.13 The most outstanding description of his brother Sa’d, on the other hand, is that he was “the grandfather of ‘Amrah.”14

‘Amrah’s husband, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥārithah b. al-Nu‘mān, has attracted little attention in the biographical literature. His name surfaces only in the context of Ibn Sa’d’s entry on ‘Amrah and in the widely reported genealogy of their son, Abū al-Riḍāl Muḥammad, who transmitted ḥadīths mostly from his mother.15 By contrast, ‘Amrah’s father-in-law, Ḥārithah b. al-Nu‘mān, was a personage of some standing. He is commemorated for having participated in all of the battles of the early Muslim community, for having seen the Archangel Gabriel sitting with Prophet Muḥammad, and for having earned a position in heaven due to his exceptional kindness to his mother.16 Ultimately, however, it was not the status of her parents, in-laws, husband, or grandparents that was critical in shaping ‘Amrah’s career as a scholar.

Ibn al-ʿImād (d. 1089/1679) pithily indicates the source of ‘Amrah’s learning as follows: “The distinguished jurist (al-faqīhah al-fāḍilah) ‘Amrah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān: she grew up in the care of ʿĀʾishah and therefore narrated much from her; she is accurate and reliable (al-ʿadl al-ḍābiṭah) in what is taken from her.”17 Similarly, al-Dhahabī prefaces his entry on ‘Amrah in his Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalāʾ with the remark, “‘Amrah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Sa’d b. Zurārah b. ‘Udus al-Anṣāriyyah al-Najjāriyyah al-Madaniyyah, the jurist, [who was] raised

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by ʿĀʾishah and [was] her student (tarbīyyat ʿĀʾishah wa-talmīdhatuhā).” As both of these descriptions manifest, ʿAmrah’s position as a Muslim jurist and traditionist derives directly from her close relationship with ʿĀʾishah, widow of the Prophet Muḥammad and hence regarded as Mother of the Believers (Q. 33:6). Of course, ʿĀʾishah herself was noted for her reports of the Prophet’s sayings and deeds, and the accounts of her knowledge and intelligence abound. Even the most venerable of the Prophet’s Companions (mashyakhhat or mashāyīkh al-ṣaḥābah), it is noted, were known to ask ʿĀʾishah about the division of inheritances. Her aptitude in such a mathematically complex topic evinced her sharp and lucid mind. Whenever the Prophet’s Companions were unsure about an issue and went to ʿĀʾishah for clarification, she would always have knowledge of the topic.19 It was this prominent figure in Islamic history who raised ʿAmrah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān.20

Why ʿĀʾishah would have taken custody of ʿAmrah remains a matter of speculation. She was not ʿAmrah’s paternal aunt, as at least one study suggests.21 Rather, ʿAmrah’s father was ʿAbd al-Raḥmān the son of either Saʿd or As’ad al-Anṣārī and not ʿĀʾishah’s full brother ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq. The two men named ʿAbd al-Raḥmān bore distinctly different lineages – one from the Medinese family of Khazraj and the other from the Meccan family of Quraysh. Yet the report in al-Shaybānī’s recension of al-Muwafṭaʾ, which I discussed earlier, appears to suggest that ʿAmrah’s father was personally acquainted with ʿĀʾishah. In addition to this presumed familiarity, another report narrated by ʿAmrah’s nephew Yahyā b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, in the Ṭabaqāt of Ibn Sa’ d, indicates further possible connections with the Prophet’s household. He states that As’ad b. Zurārah entrusted his three daughters Kabshah, Ḥabībah, and al-Fārīʿah (also known as al-Furīʿah) to the Prophet so that they were included among the dependents of the Messenger of God

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18 al-Dhahabī, Siyar, 5:416.
20 The phrase that she was “fī ḥajr/ḥijr ʿĀʾishah” frequently surfaces in discussions of ʿAmrah. Ibn Sa’ d reports that she and her sisters were raised in ʿĀʾishah’s care, although none of ʿAmrah’s sisters attained a similar scholarly standing. Ibn Sa’ d, al-Ṭabaqāt, 8:350; Muslim b. al-Hajjāj al-Qushayrī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, ed. Khalīl Ma’mūn Shīḥā, 18 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Ma’rīfah, 1994), 3:336; al-Mizzā, Tahdhib al-Kamāl, 35241; al-Dhahabī, Siyar, 5:416–7; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, Tahdhib, 4:682; Ibn al-ʿImād, Shadharāt, 1:395; Kaḥḥālah, Aʿlām al-Nisāʾ, 2:1086.
21 Sayeed, Women, 66–7, 68.
(fī ʿiyāl Rasūl Allāh) and moved freely with him in the houses of his wives.22 Depending on Amrah’s own genealogy, these three daughters of As‘ad would be either her paternal aunts (if her grandfather is As‘ad) or her father’s cousins (if her grandfather is Sa‘d). Either scenario establishes a bond between her close relatives and Ā‘ishah. It is also probable that Amrah was orphaned at an early age and that Ā‘ishah, who was childless herself, decided to raise the girl and bestow motherly affection upon her – a pattern that is found with respect to Ā‘ishah’s nephew al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad (d. 106/725) and his younger sister. As al-Qāsim later reported, “I have not seen a mother or father more devoted or more abounding in compassion than her.”23 The dearth of biographical information on Amrah’s father and the complete absence of her mother in the biographical texts seem to support this surmise about how the young Amrah ended up in Ā‘ishah’s care.

As a result of her proximity to Ā‘ishah, Amrah is primarily identified with having transmitted accounts of the Prophet’s statements and deeds through her. In fact, 311 (or 93%) of the 333 ḥadīths that Amrah transmits in the nine traditionally esteemed collections are on the authority of Ā‘ishah. These nine collections by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā‘ī, Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Mājah, Ahmad, Mālik, and al-Dārimī comprise the sample base for my statistical analyses, though I have also consulted the compilations of al-Ḥumaydī, ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd, Ibn Abī Shaybah, al-Marwazi, Ibn Khuzaymah, and al-Bayhaqī. Therefore, it is with good justification that Ibn Sa‘d identifies Amrah in an entry on her nephew as “the one who related from Ā‘ishah” and that Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449) refers to her in an entry on her father as “the famous Successor who narrates much from Ā‘ishah.”24 Similarly, Ibn al-Madīnī is reported to have said that Amrah is “one of the trustworthy scholars of Ā‘ishah who are confirmed in [what they narrate from] her,” while Ibn Ḥibbān remarks, “She relates from Ā‘ishah and was among the most knowledgeable regarding her ḥadīths.”25

The actions of Amrah’s close contemporaries, however, speak even more eloquently to the status she acquired through such learning. Indeed, Amrah’s

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23 After their father Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr was killed in Egypt in 38/658, both al-Qāsim and his sister were brought to Medina by their paternal uncle ‘Abd al-Raḥmān to live with Ā‘ishah. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, Tahdhīb, 3:420; idem, Taqrīb, 470; ‘Abd al-Munʿim al-Hāshimī, Fuqahāʾ Madīnah al-Sab‘ah (Damascus and Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1993), 100–1.


transmissions are said to have been of such quality that they attracted the attention of the growing Muslim community's pious leader, the Caliph ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Azīz (d. 101/720). As he reportedly told ʿAmrah's grandnephew, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 124/742), whom he installed in various official posts, “There is no one left who is more knowledgeable about the prophetic transmissions of ʿĀʾishah than ‘Amrah.”

Even more significantly, ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Azīz is recorded as having specifically requested written compilations of ʿAmrah's ḥadīth transmissions. He wrote to another nephew of hers, Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. ʿAmr b. Ḥazm (d. 120/738), whom he had appointed as the governor of Medina, and asked him to write down what he could find of the Messenger of God's statements, the past ways, and the statements of ‘Amrah, because he feared the loss of knowledge with the passing of its possessors.

Different versions of ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz's request have been highlighted by traditionists and Islamicists for their relevance in demonstrating the first efforts to compile collections of the written and oral ḥadīth reports. In

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Al-Khaṭīb makes a point of correcting those who conflate this Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān with her son, who shares the same name, in the report quoted above and transmitted by Shuʿbah b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 160/777). Genealogically, Ibn Saʿd, Ibn ʿAsākir, al-Dhahabī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī affirm that his name is Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān and that he is the son of ʿAmrah's nephew.


another account, Mālik (d. 179/796) further notes that ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz wrote to Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. ‘Amr b. Ḥazm specifically requesting that he write down the knowledge of ‘Āmah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān and al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad, both of whom were known for their narrations from ‘Ā’ishah. When Abū Bakr’s son ‘Abd Allāh (d. 135/753) was later asked about those writings (kutub), he replied that they had been lost.  

Similarities in the personal backgrounds of ‘Amrah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān and two of her male contemporaries, al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad and ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr (d. 94/713), underscore the shared roots of all three jurists’ scholastic prominence. Both al-Qāsim and ‘Urwah were nephews of the Prophet’s wife, ‘Ā’ishah; al-Qāsim was the son of her brother Muḥammad (d. 38/658), and ‘Urwah was the son of her sister Asmā’ (d. 73/692). In a striking parallel with ‘Amrah, al-Qāsim was raised by and lived with ‘Ā’ishah, who was his paternal aunt, after his father’s death. Eventually, however, al-Qāsim was returned to the household of his paternal uncle ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, who also expressed a desire to raise his nephew. Significantly, it was the proximity of al-Qāsim and ‘Urwah to their aunt ‘Ā’ishah that enabled both of them to study intensively with her and thereby acquire a position of immense scholarly standing.

As with ‘Amrah, this connection with the Prophet’s beloved and astute widow is manifested in the works of classical Muslim biographers and traditionists. For example, al-Dhahabī describes ‘Urwah in the following terms, “He narrated from his maternal aunt, the Mother of Believers, ‘Ā’ishah, adhered to her (lāzamahā) and learned legal matters from her (tafaqqaha bihā).” Similarly, he describes al-Qāsim with the words, “al-Qāsim was raised in the care of his paternal aunt the Mother of Believers; he learned legal matters from her (tafaqqaha bihā) and narrated much from her (akthara ‘anhā).” Ibn al-‘Imād concurs, remarking that al-Qāsim was “one of the seven jurists; he grew up in the care of his paternal aunt ‘Ā’ishah and therefore narrated much from her.”

In addition to revealing the direct connection between their proximity to ‘Ā’ishah and acquisition of knowledge, such descriptions are also indicative of how both male scholars were primarily identified with the female figure of ‘Ā’ishah. It was this unparalleled access to ‘Ā’ishah, as wistfully noted by Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742), that enabled her nephews to surpass the other male scholars of their generation. Al-Zuhri’s palpable dismay that he and other

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29 Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī, Tahdhib, 4:495; idem, Taqrīb, 294.
32 al-Dhahabī, Siyar, 5:356.
33 Ibid., 5:534.
34 Ibn al-‘Imād, Shadharāt, 2:44.
male scholars of their generation could never surpass al-Qāsim and ‘Urwah because of their unfettered access to ʿĀʾishah speaks eloquently to her stature and influence in shaping the reputation and standing of her scholastic-minded kin and close relations.35

ʿAmrah did narrate ḥadīths from Companions of the Prophet other than ʿĀʾishah, but they clearly constitute the minority of her transmissions. In this context, three principal figures emerge from the nine major ḥadīth collections – all of them women. The first, Umm Hishām bint Ḥārithah b. al-Nuʿmān is noted for being one of the women who pledged her allegiance to the Prophet Muḥammad in person, and her narrations deal primarily with her having memorized the Qur’ānic chapter entitled Qāf because of how frequently the Prophet recited it in prayer. She was also ʿAmrah’s sister-in-law and a fellow member of Banū al-Najjār.36 The second, Ḥabībah bint Sahīl b. Thaʿlabah, belonged to the same sub-group of Banū al-Najjār as ʿAmrah, the Banū Ghannām b. Mālik, although this ancestry makes them only distant relatives at best. Ḥabībah’s legacy in the ḥadīth literature is her acquisition of a divorce from her husband, Thābit b. Qays b. Shammās (d. 11/632), with the help of the Prophet Muḥammad, thereby establishing a legal precedent for female-initiated divorce (khulʿ) in Islam.37 The third Companion, Umm Ḥabībah Ḥamnah bint Jaḥsh, was the sister of the Prophet’s wife Zaynab bint Jaḥsh (d. 20/641).

35 al-Dhahabī, Siyar, 5:358.
36 Ibn Saʿd, al-Ṭabaqāt, 8:325–6; al-Mızzī, Tahdhib al-Kamāl, 3:241–2; al-Dhahabī, Siyar, 5:416; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, Iṣābah, 8:200, 320; idem, Tahdhib, 4:482, 703; Ṣaḥīḥ Mus-līm, 6:398; Ḥamd b. Shuʿayb al-Nasāʾī, Sunan al-Nasāʾī, 9 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1991) 1:495; Abū Dāwūd, Sunan, 1:133; ʿAlīmd b. Ḥanbal, Musnad, 45:600–1. It is rarely mentioned that Umm Hishām was ʿAmrah’s half-sister through the same mother (cf. Sayeed, Women, 67). Ibn Saʿd indicates different mothers for each: Umm Khālid bint Khālid for Umm Hishām and Sālimah bint Ḥakīm for ʿAmrah. The only ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. Ḥārithah b. Nuʿmān mentioned in the biographical collections is the full brother of Umm Hishām. Thus, if ʿAmrah were the half-sister of Umm Hishām, she would also have to be the half-sister of ʿAbd al-Raḥman. Since ʿAmrah and ʿAbd al-Raḥman were married, we can reasonably reject this possibility. Moreover, Ibn Saʿd and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī report that Umm Hishām had a full sister by the name of ʿAmrah bint Ḥārithah. Hence, the confusion between her and ʿAmrah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān must arise from the popularity of their shared name, ‘Amrah, among the Anṣār, as even a cursory glance at Ibn Saʿd’s “Kitāb al-Nisāʾ” reveals.

Hamnah is best known in the hadith literature as al-mustaḥāḍah, or the woman whose blood continued to flow after her menstrual cycle had ended, a situation that continued for seven consecutive years. When Ḥamnah consulted the Prophet about this constant flow of blood, which would have prevented her from engaging in regular ritual prayer, he advised her to make full ablution and pray as usual. One possible connection between ‘Amrah and Ḥamnah is that Ḥamnah’s first husband, who died during the Battle of Uḥud in 3/625, was Muṣ‘ab b. ‘Umayr. As noted earlier, when Muṣ‘ab came to al-Medina as the Prophet’s emissary, he stayed with ‘Amrah’s grandfather or great-uncle As‘ad b. Zurārah, and the two of them reportedly began to speak with the city’s inhabitants, recite Qur’ān to them, and invite them to enter Islam.38

Already, we can see how gender and kinship relationships contributed to ‘Amrah’s acquisition of knowledge in the form of prophetic traditions. Not only were all four of her prominent teachers women, but she was closely related through marriage to one (Umm Hishām), distantly related to another (Ḥabībah), raised by a third (‘Ā’ishah), and there are grounds to suppose a relationship, or at least an acquaintance, with the fourth (Ḥamnah). Yet the other Companions who are listed in the classical biographical sources as having narrated to ‘Amrah (but who do not appear in the nine main hadith collections or in several others that I have examined) seem to defy this initial pattern of same-sex and kinship relationships between ‘Amrah and her teachers. Of these four additional figures, three are men: Marwān b. al-Ḥakam (d. 65/685) who served as governor of Medina for Mu‘āwiyah,39 Rāfī’ b. Khadīj al-Awsī (d. 59/679) who was wounded at the Battle of Uḥud,40 ‘Ubayd b. Rifa‘ah b. Rāfī’ al-Zuraqī,41 and the Prophet Muḥammad’s wife Umm Salamah (d. 61/681).42

With the exception of Umm Salamah, who would have come into contact with

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38 Ḥamnah bint Jaḥsh was later the wife of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Awf (d. 31/652). al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 1:58–63; Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisi, Istīṣār, 57, 206–7; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, al-Isābah, 8:188; idem, Tahdhīb, 4:4670; idem, Taqrīb, 747; Abū Dāwūd, Sunan, 1:117–8; Ahmad b. Ḥanbal, Musnad, 45:447–8; al-Nasāʾī, Sunan, 1:127–8, 130–1, 201.

39 Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, al-Isābah, 6:257; idem, Tahdhīb, 4:50.

40 Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, al-Isābah, 2:436–7; idem, Tahdhīb, 1:1385. Rāfī’ b. Khadīj al-Awsī was considered too young by the Prophet Muḥammad to fight in the Battle of Badr but later participated in the Battles of Uḥud and the Trench. The remnants of an arrow fragment from Uḥud caused his death during the reign of Mu‘āwiyah.

41 Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, al-Isābah, 5:59–60; idem, Tahdhīb, 3:35–6.

42 Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, al-Isābah, 8:150–2; idem, Tahdhīb, 4:690. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī rejects a deathdate of 59 AH for Umm Salamah and prefers the position of Ibn Ḥibbān that she died at the end of 61 AH, after receiving the news of al-Ḥusayn’s death at Karbalā’.
‘Amrah during the period in which she was raised by ‘Āʾishah, there are no clear familial bonds.43

In an analysis of ‘Amrah’s own students, however, the pattern of transmitting traditions among relatives reemerges. Of the twenty-five people to whom ‘Amrah transmitted ḥadīths, nine are close relatives, three are from Banū al-Najjār, and three are her servants. This group alone accounts for the transmission of 253 of ‘Amrah’s 333 ḥadīths, or nearly 76 percent of her narrations, that are included in the nine most authoritative collections. Yet if we consider ‘Amrah’s transmissions from another angle, a new pattern emerges. Of the twenty-five people to whom she narrates, nine are eminent jurists, and this group likewise accounts for 249 out of the 333 ḥadīths, or nearly 75 percent of her narrations, in these collections. The overlap between these two groups points to the need for a third category, that of eminent jurists who are either closely or distantly related to ‘Amrah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. This confluence of relationships reveals an important intersection between kinship and scholar-

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<th>TRANSMITTERS OF ḤADĪTH FROM ‘AMRA BINT ‘ABD AL-RAḤMĀN</th>
<th>NUMBER OF ḤADĪTHS in the Nine Major Collections</th>
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<td><strong>Relatives &amp; Household Members</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>Abū al-Rijāl Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grandson</td>
<td>Ḥārithah (d. 148 AH)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grandson</td>
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<td>Adopted Daughter</td>
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<td>Grandnephew</td>
<td>Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Anṣārī (d. 124 AH)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nephew</td>
<td>Yaḥyā b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fellow Najjārī</td>
<td>Saʿd b. Saʿīd b. Qays al-Anṣārī (d. 141 AH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow Najjārī</td>
<td>‘Abd Rabbīh b. Saʿīd b. Qays al-Anṣārī (d. 139 AH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Servants</td>
<td>Ruqayyah, Umayyah, and Rayṭah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Related Jurists**

| Fellow Najjārī & Judge of Medina | Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd b. Qays al-Anṣārī (d. 144 AH) | 89 |
| Nephew & Judge and Governor of Medina | Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. ‘Amr b. Ḥazm (d. 120 AH) | 36 |
| Grandnephew & Shaykh of Mālik, the Two Sufyāns, and Ibn Ishāq | ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Bakr (d. 135 AH) | 46 |
| Grandnephew & Judge of Medina | Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr (d. 132 AH) | 1 |

**Other Contemporary Jurists**

| Muḥammad b. Muslim Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 125 AH) | 63 |
| ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr b. al-‘Awwām (d. 94 AH) | 9 |
| Sulaymān b. Yasār al-Hilālī al-Madānī (d. before 100 AH) | 4 |
| al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddiq (d. 106 AH) | 1 |
| ‘Amr b. Dīnār al-Makki (d. 126 AH) | n/a |

**Others**

| ‘Abd Allāh b. Nujayy b. Salamah | 1 |
| Ismāʿīl b. Umayyah b. ‘Amr b. Saʿīd b. al-ʿĀṣ (d. 144 AH) | 1 |
| Ruzayq b. Ḥukaym | 1 |
| ‘Ubayd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Maḥbīb | 1 |
| Fāṭimah bint al-Mundhir b. al-Zubayr b. al-‘Awwām | n/a |
ship in the preservation and transmission of ʿAmrah’s narrations. As these patterns of transmission suggest, the ties of blood, marriage, and servitude could ensure access to a person of knowledge, while the ardent pursuit of knowledge could provide the incentive to forge new bonds of Islamic scholasticism. ʿAmrah’s son Abū al-Rijāl, who transmitted 34 of her ḥadīths, is an example of the first tendency, and Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī, who transmitted 63 of her ḥadīths, is an example of the second. Her erudite fellow Najjārī Yahyā b. Saʿīd al-Anṣārī (d. 144/761) and her judicial nephew Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. ʿAmr b. Ḥazm, who transmitted 89 and 36 of her ḥadīths, respectively, are examples of the merging of both trends. Indeed, the fact that this last category – consisting of only four jurists who were personally related to ʿAmrah – accounts for over half of her narrations in the nine most authoritative collections of ḥadīth is a powerful testament to the role of scholarly kin in preserving one’s learning and legacy.

ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad, who likewise exemplifies this convergence of the bonds of kinship and scholarship, was especially influential in transmitting ʿAmrah’s legacy in the fields of Islamic law and history. He was closely related to ʿAmrah in more than one way. By blood, he was the son of her nephew, Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. ʿAmr b. Ḥazm, who served as the judge of Medina and then its governor under the pious ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. And by marriage, ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Bakr wed the woman whom ʿAmrah had raised, Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad, possibly replicating the way in which ʿAmrah herself had been raised by ʿĀʾishah. The union of ʿAmrah’s protégé (who also narrated ḥadīth from her) with her scholarly nephew’s son (himself a judge) aptly illustrates this binding of relatives engaged in a shared pursuit of Islamic knowledge. Commenting on this circle of scholarly kin, al-Dhahabī duly notes that ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Bakr had brothers and relations among “the people of knowledge” (wa-lahu ikhwah wa-aqārib min ahl al-ʿilm).

ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad widely disseminated ʿAmrah’s narrations through the eminent jurists and historians whom he taught, and he may have additionally incorporated them in a lost work, entitled al-Maghāzī, that is attributed to him. As his biographers note, ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Bakr was the educator, or Shaykh, of both the famed historian Ibn Ishāq (d. 159/776) and the eponymous founder of the Mālikī legal school Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/796), despite their supposed mutual animosity for one another. Accordingly, all of ʿAmrah’s ḥadīths that are included in Ibn Ishāq’s foundational biography of the

44 al-Dārimī, Sunan, 1:214; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Musnad, 43:369–70.
45 al-Dhahabī, Siyar, 6:124.
Relations, Narrations, and Judgments

Prophet Muḥammad edited by Ibn Hishām, Sūrat Rasūl Allāh, are transmitted by ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Bakr. And it is through this path of transmission, from ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Bakr to Ibn Isḥāq, that the majority of ‘Amrah’s accounts regarding the Prophet’s life in Medina enter al-Ṭabarī’s (d. 310/923) well-known history Tārīkh al-Rusul wa’l-Mulūk.\(^\text{47}\) Moreover, ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Bakr transmitted ‘Amrah’s learning to Mālik b. Anas, as did several others, including her son Abū al-Rijāl, Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Anṣārī, ‘Abd Rabbih b. Saʿīd al-Anṣārī (d. 139/756), Ruzayq b. Ḥukaym, and al-Zuhrī. And Mālik extolled ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Bakr as being one of those who possess knowledge and insight (kāna min ahl al-ʿilm wa’l-baṣīrah). Given his scholarly prominence, ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Bakr is also regarded as the instructor or Shaykh of two other influential jurists, called the two Sufyāns of their time: Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778) and Sufyān b. ʿUyaynah (d. 198/814). Like Mālik, they received and discussed ‘Amrah’s legacy through multiple channels (see below), thereby ensuring her indelible imprint on the emerging field of Islamic law and jurisprudence.\(^\text{48}\)

A sense of collegiality and regard appears to have existed among ‘Amrah and her fellow jurists ‘Urwah and al-Qāsim, who are often included in the lists of those who learned from her. Since the trio were regarded as the most knowledgeable and trustworthy sources of ‘Āʾishah’s traditions,\(^\text{49}\) people would frequently inform one of the three about a statement they had heard from another of them in search of his or her opinion. For instance, according to a widely circulated report found in Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Muwaṭṭa⁠ʾ Mālik, and the Musnad and ‘Ilal of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd listened to ‘Amrah’s detailed account of the Prophet’s pilgrimage and later went to


al-Qāsim seeking corroboration. In Yahyā’s words, “I told al-Qāsim ‘Amrah’s hadīth, and he replied, ‘I swear by God, she brought you the hadīth in its exact form (atatka wa-Allāhī bi’l-ḥadīthī ‘alā wajhī).’”\(^50\) The commentators on this tradition explain al-Qāsim’s remark as indicating that ‘Amrah had conveyed the information about the Prophet’s pilgrimage in the fullest and most faithful manner possible. And some of them additionally observe that al-Qāsim seems to be drawing a comparison with his own abbreviated account of the event, in appreciation of ‘Amrah’s comprehensiveness.\(^51\) Similarly, ‘Amrah was asked to corroborate the accounts of these male contemporaries. When asked about ‘Urwah’s statement reporting how ʿĀʾishah determined the duration of her divorced niece’s waiting period, ‘Amrah replied with confidence, “ʿUrwah is correct (ṣadaqa ʿUrwah),” and then proceeded to provide further details that contextualized and clarified ʿĀʾishah’s position.\(^52\)

With the ranking of ‘Amrah and the majority of her students among the most trustworthy sources of prophetic narrations,\(^53\) their transmissions are in——

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\(^50\) Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 3:218, 187–8; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 8:386–7; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, 42:397–8; idem, Kitāb al-ʿIlal, 2:355 (#1850); Mālik, al-Muwāṭṭa’, 1:393.

cluded in the collections of ḥadīth that have been traditionally esteemed for their standards. (See Figure 3 for the distribution of ‘Amrah’s narrations across the nine major collections.) Of greater interest, the overall topics to which ‘Amrah contributed in these collections illustrate how her knowledge and understanding addressed matters of concern to the entire Muslim community, such as prayer, legal punishments, ritual purity, death, funerals, and the grave.

Closer examination of these narrations confirms that ‘Amrah’s contributions to early Islamic knowledge were not circumscribed by a segregated woman’s sphere, while they also reveal different layers of women’s participation within the early Muslim community. Based on my reading of these 333 narrations, we can discern three main categories of gender inferences. The first category comprises 103 ḥadīths in which the primary subject matter concerns the actions of women (31% of the total). The second category includes 73 ḥadīths from which secondary inferences can be made about women’s participation in the life of the community (22% of the total). And the third category encompasses 157 ḥadīths on general issues of concern to the entire community, male and female (47% of the total). (See Figure 4.) To some degree, of course, all of these narrations fall into the third category of general concerns, since the actions taken by women necessarily affect their male counterparts within the community. Likewise, we can also say that all of these accounts are gendered by the very act of women’s narration and transmission. Nevertheless, the rough distinctions that I have delineated are useful in appreciating the kinds of contributions that ‘Amrah has made to the corpus of Islamic knowledge. Specific examples from each of these three categories provide further elucidation,
while also demonstrating some of the ramifications of ‘Amrah’s narrations within “the volumes of Islam.”

To begin with an example of women’s actions as the primary subject matter of *ahādīth*, we can point to ‘Amrah’s narrations on breastfeeding. When breastfeeding a child other than her own, a woman legally and socially effectuates a host of rights, obligations, and responsibilities by acquiring a new son or daughter through nursing. Yet the important question arises: after how many occasions of breastfeeding does this legal and social transformation occur? In several narrations, ‘Amrah reports from ‘Ā’ishah that the number of times was specified as ten during the Prophet’s lifetime but subsequently reduced, before his death, to five sessions. As traditionists have observed, those legal scholars,

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
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<th>Collections</th>
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<td>Prayer</td>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Punishments</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>Ritual Purity</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Funerals, Death, and the Grave</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilgrimage</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Retreat</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manners</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breastfeeding</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
like the Shāfiʿīs, who base their ruling on ʿAmrah’s narration, which stipulates five nursings, therefore have a strong and solid argument.57

Turning to those aḥādīth from which secondary inferences can be drawn about women’s activities, one example relates to the matter of prayer. As ʿAmrah relates from ʿĀʾishah, “The Prophet – may God’s peace and blessings be upon him – used to perform the prayer at dawn, after which the women, wrapped up in their garments, would depart and could not be identified as a result of the darkness.”58 This report clearly indicates that women participated in the communal prayer in the Prophet’s mosque, even though it entailed their walking outside in the darkness of early dawn. However, the thrust of this narration lies in identifying the timeframe of the dawn prayer, for which the unidentifiable women are only a useful marker. Indeed, based on this and similar ḥadīths, a multitude of Muslim scholars establish the preferred time of the dawn prayer as the early darkness of dawn (al-taghlīs).59

Finally, one example from the third category – reflecting general issues of concern to the entire community – is the Prophet’s statement narrated from ʿĀʾishah to ʿAmrah, “Whoever believes in God and the Last Day should not disturb or harm a neighbor; Whoever believes in God and the Last Day should speak what is good or keep silent; and Whoever believes in God and the Last Day should be generous to guests.”60 Connecting its subject matter to human accountability before God on the Day of Judgment, this ḥadīth delineates clear ethical behavior expected of all believing men and women. The preponderance of such aḥādīth narrated by ʿAmrah, addressing critical issues of concern to both male and female Muslims, without necessarily specifying a distinction


58 Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 5346; al-Tirmidhī, al-Jāmiʿ al-Kabīr, 1:200; al-Nasāʾī, Sunan, 1:293; Mālik, al-Muwaṭṭa’, 1:5; Abū Dāwūd, Sunan, 1:156.

59 In discussing the import of this ḥadīth, al-Tirmidhī notes that praying in the darkness of early dawn (al-taghlīs) was the preference of many scholars among the Companions of the Prophet, including Abū Bakr and ‘Umar, the generations that closely followed them, and later scholars such as al-Shāfiʿī, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, and Ishāq b. Rāhwayh (d. 238/853). In his Kitāb al-Ṭībār, al-Ḥāzimī (d. 584/1188) indicates that this preference is the majority opinion of Muslim scholars. al-Tirmidhī, al-Jāmiʿ al-Kabīr, 1:200; al-Mubārakfūrī, Tuḥfat al-Aḥwadhī, 1:349–52.

60 Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Musnad, 40:466–7.
between the two sexes, suggests how her transmissions helped establish the broader norms and foundations of Islamic knowledge.

Indeed, the fairly even distribution of ‘Amrah’s transmissions across all three categories of gender inferences – 31, 22, and 47 percent respectively – makes it impossible to consign her role as a traditionist to matters solely affecting women or to deny the gender-specific importance of her narrations. The middle ground occupied by the second category, where the general subject matter also comprises secondary implications for women’s communal activities, illustrates this point particularly well. Were we to add it to the first category, the ratio between women’s activities and broader communal concerns would be 53 : 47. If, however, we were to include it in the third category, the ratio shifts in the other direction to become 31 : 69. As the relative balance between both of these ratios demonstrates, ‘Amrah’s narrations clearly address the particular concerns of women as well as the broader concerns of the entire community.

\[ \text{Gender-Inference Distribution of ‘Amrah’s Narrations} \]

\[ \text{FIGURE 4} \]

‘Amrah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s role in addressing gender-specific as well as shared communal concerns is also reflected in the range of issues on which her legal opinions were sought. ‘Amrah was consulted on a range of legal matters by men and women alike, and she issued authoritative orders to members of both sexes. Ibn Sa’d includes ‘Amrah among those prominent individuals who issued legal opinions in Medina after the Prophet’s Companions (man kāna yaftī bi’l-Madinah ba’d Aṣḥāb Rasūl Allāh ṣalla Allāh ‘alayhi wa-sallam min Abnā’ al-Muhājirīna wa’l-Anṣār wa-ghayrihim), and he notes that the pious Caliph ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Azīz used to seek her counsel (wa-kāna ‘Umaru yasʾaluhā). Additionally, al-Wāqīdī (d. 207/822) recounts that Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b.
'Amr b. Ḥazm sought out and transcribed 'Amrah's knowledge on military matters (al-katībah) on behalf of 'Umar b. 'Abd al-Azīz.61 'Amrah's colleague, the eminent jurist of Medina, al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad, was also known to consult her.62 Since both al-Qāsim and 'Amrah had been raised by, and studied with, 'Āʾishah bint Abī Bakr, the widow of the Prophet Muhammad and the underlying source of both scholars' prominence and prestige, al-Qāsim's humble regard for 'Amrah's scholarship is particularly noteworthy. In advising a youthful Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī, who had yet to rise to scholarly eminence, al-Qāsim said, "Young man, I see that you aspire to seek knowledge; shall I not tell you of its container (wiʿāʾihi) ... You should learn from 'Amrah ('alayka bi-ʿAmrah), because she was in the care of 'Āʾishah." al-Zuhrī later recalled, "So I came to her and found her to be a sea [of knowledge] that is not exhausted (bahrun la yunzaf)."63 After studying for seven years with another prominent jurist, Saʿīd b. al-Musayyib (died after 90 AH), al-Zuhrī began learning from 'Urwah b. al-Zubayr and found him, like 'Amrah, to be an endless sea of knowledge.64 Thereafter, he would frequently confirm the ḥadīths of 'Urwah with 'Amrah.65 Indeed, half of al-Zuhrī's narrations through 'Amrah in the nine foremost collections of ḥadith are reported on the authority of both 'Amrah and 'Urwah.66

When comparing these two eminent scholars and students of 'Āʾishah in what appears to have been the later stage of his career, al-Zuhrī seems to imply subtly that he discovered a greater wealth of knowledge with 'Urwah. As he is reported to have said: "When 'Urwah would narrate to me and then 'Amrah would narrate to me, 'Amrah's narration would confirm 'Urwah's narration (ṣaddaqa 'indī ḥadīthuʿ Amrah ḥadīth a ʿUrwah). And when I plunged into the depths of their knowledge (fa-lammā tabaḥḥartuhumā), there was 'Urwah – an inexhaustible sea!" Here, al-Zuhrī gracefully conveys his admiration of 'Urwah. Yet it would be erroneous to assume that al-Zuhrī belittled 'Amrah's scholarly abilities on the basis of this narration or that he baldly asserted he was easily satiated by them, especially in light of his other descriptions of her. With his judicious choice of phrasing (tabaḥḥartuhumā), al-Zuhrī compares the bodies of knowledge possessed by these two scholars to immense bodies of

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63 al-Dhahābī, Siyār, 5:417; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, Taqrīb, 506.
66 31 out of 63 ḥadīths.
water into which he sought to delve. Following the linguistic implications of his analogy, one would not attempt to plunge into the depths of a shallow creek; the incongruity would be too obvious to merit the effort. To the contrary, by conjoining ‘Amrah and ‘Urwah in this fashion, al-Zuhri acknowledges the inherent comparability of their stature, as widely recognized by their contemporaries. While the later professionalization of ḥadīth studies, as recently suggested by Sayeed, may have diminished opportunities for female scholars, the life of ‘Amrah bint ‘Abd al-Rahmān does not readily exemplify this process of constriction. It appears to have occurred later in the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries rather than in the first century of the Islamic era, which was marked by greater fluidity. Al-Zuhri did not regard ‘Amrah – or for that matter ‘Urwah – as one of the top four jurists who issued legal opinions (fatwās) in Medina. That distinction among the trio of ‘Amrah, al-Qāsim, and ‘Urwah went to al-Qāsim, even though he refrained from issuing legal opinions whenever possible. Yet Ibn Sa’d still includes ‘Amrah and ‘Urwah among the top eight jurists of their generation. They, female and male, represented an illustrious cohort by any standard.67

Highly respected by her contemporaries, ‘Amrah’s actions were adopted as important precedents and legal evidence by later jurists who represented most of the major and minor schools of Sunnī Islamic law. To turn to some of the literary examples of ‘Amrah’s exercise of juridical authority, I begin with her involvement in economic transactions. In al-ʿIlal of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, the prominent jurist Sufyān b. ʿUyaynah is reported as saying, “They used to consult her regarding sales transactions.”68 Although Sufyān b. ʿUyaynah personally would not have had the opportunity to witness people consulting ‘Amrah,

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67 Ibn Sa’d, al-Ṭabaqāt, 2:292, 295; al-Dhahabī, Siyar, 5:357; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, Tahdhib, 3:93; Sayeed, Women, 94–5. The specification of the grammatical subject (ḥadīthu ‘Amrah) in most transmissions clarifies the meaning understood and conveyed by classical Muslim traditionists, as in the version translated above: idhā ḥaddathānī ‘Urwah thumma ḥaddathatnī ‘Amrah saddaqa ‘indī ḥadīthu ‘Amrah ḥadītha ‘Urwah fa-lammā tabaḥḥartu-humā idhā ‘Urwah baḥr lā yunzaf. One narration of this report merges the subject (ḥadīthu ‘Amrah) into the verb (yuṣaddiqu), which is best translated into English as “it would confirm ‘Urwah’s narration to be correct” (idhā ḥaddathānī ‘Urwah thumma ḥaddathatnī ‘Amrah yuṣaddiqu ‘indī ḥadīthu ‘Urwah). Sayeed’s translation and interpretation of this particular version must be revised in light of the parallel narrations. Another transmission transposes the order of narrators in the first part of the ḥadīth in parallel with the second half: “When ‘Amrah would narrate to me and then ‘Urwah would narrate to me, ‘Amrah’s narration would confirm ‘Urwah’s narration” (idhā ḥaddathatnī ‘Amrah thumma ḥaddathatnī ‘Urwah saddaqa ‘indī ḥadīthu ‘Amrah ḥadīthu ‘Urwah).

68 Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Kitāb al-ʿIlal, 2:66 (#1566).
several of his teachers had been students of hers, and therefore they would have been able to convey their first-hand observations to him. In another account in *al-ʻIlal* specifies that Sufyān b. ʻUyaynah's teacher Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd had frequently witnessed people consulting ʻAmrah on such legal matters. In *al-Muwatta⁠ʾ*, Mālik utilizes ʻAmrah's actions to establish a legal precedent regarding a particular aspect of contracting a sale. As a central figure of the Ḥanafi school of law, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī comments upon this legal precedent in his recension of *al-Muwatta⁠ʾ* with the approving words, “This [position] is what we adopt.” Although al-Shāfiʿī disagrees with the conclusions reached by Mālik on this particular topic, he too discusses ʻAmrah’s actions as an important piece of legal evidence to be considered carefully.

ʻAmrah's personal actions also became a legal precedent on the question of what should be sacrificed at the culmination of one's performance of the pilgrimage. Her female servant Ruqayyah details how ʻAmrah performed Ḥajj:

ʻAmrah entered Makkah on the Day of Deliberation [*Yawm al-Tarwiyyah*, the eighth of Dhūl-Ḥijjah], and I was with her. She circumambulated the House (of God) and [traversed between] al-Ṣafā and al-Marwah; then she entered the suffah of the mosque [either the back part or the roofed gallery of the mosque according to the ḥadīth commentator al-Bājī] and said, “Do you have a pair of scissors,” to which I said, “No.” So she said, “Go find some.” So I found some and brought them to her, and she cut off some hair from her braids. And when it was the Day of Sacrifice [*Yawm al-Naḥr*, the tenth of Dhūl-Ḥijjah], she slaughtered a sheep.

On the basis of this description, Mālik concludes that ʻAmrah had performed Ḥajj Tamattuʿ and therefore points to her slaughtering a sheep at the end of her pilgrimage as the advisable interpretation of the relevant Qur’ānic text, “mā ‘staysara min al-hady” (Q. 2: 196). In his commentary on this narration,

69 ʻAbd Rabbih, Saʿd, and Yaḥyā, the sons of Saʿīd b. Qays al-Anṣārī, ʻAmr b. Dīnār (d. 126/744), and Ismāʿīl b. Umayyah (d. 144/761) are among the links between ʻAmrah and Sufyān b. ʻUyaynah. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʻAsqalānī, *Tahdhīb*, 2:59–60.
72 Muwaṭṭaʾ Mālik Ṯawīyāt Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī, 269.
al-Shaybānī indicates that ‘Amrah’s interpretation represents the position of Abū Ḥanīfah as well as that of the majority of Muslim scholars, and he explicitly states that her precedent applies to both male and female pilgrims.75 On the subject of pilgrimage, Yahyā b. Saʿīd also sought ‘Amrah’s legal counsel on some procedural details regarding the state of ritual sanctity (iḥrām), and, in his commentary on this tradition, Muḥammad al-Zurqānī (d. 1122/1710) cites her response as the majority position of subsequent jurists.76

The classical Islamic sources indicate that ‘Amrah also served as a resource in the Muslim community for the private concerns of women. Several reports discuss the criteria that ‘Amrah used to determine the end of a woman’s menstrual cycle, whereupon she would perform full ritual ablution (ghusl) and could resume participating in ritual prayer, fasting, and sexual relations with her husband. Relating one such instance of consultation, Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad recounts:

A woman from Quraysh sent a piece of cotton (kursufat quṭn) on which was yellowishness (fiḥā ka’l-ṣufrah) in a small purse (bi-durj) to ‘Amrah asking her, “Do you think that when a woman sees only this left of her menstruation that she has become clean [from it]?” She said, “No, not until she sees pure white.”77

Other reports from ‘Amrah’s servant, whom many sources identify as Rayṭah, state that “‘Amrah used to order the women not to perform the full ablution [after their menstrual cycle] until the piece of cotton (al-quṭnah) came out white.”78 Versions of this account find their way from the ḥādīth collections of Ibn Abī Shaybah (d. 235/849) and al-Dārimī (d. 255/869) into important Ḥanafī legal works, such as Naṣb al-Rāyah of al-Zaylaʿī (d. 762/1361), Fatḥ al-Qadīr of Ibn al-Humām (d. 861/1460), and al-Baḥr al-Rāʾiq of Ibn Nujaym (d. 970/1563), all of which continue to be studied until this day. In tracing an ongoing textual trajectory, ‘Amrah’s instructions also eventually entered a late twentieth-century encyclopedia of Islamic jurisprudence.79 Similar accounts of

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75 For example, he concludes, wa-bi-hādhā na’khudh li’l-mu’tamir wa’l-mu’tamirah. Mawaṭṭa’ Mālik Riḍwāyat Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī, 154.
77 Ibn Sa’d, al-Ṭabaqāt, 8:358; al-Dārimī, Sunan, 1:214 (with the omission of the word bi-durj).
78 al-Dārimī, Sunan, 1:213. For the specific mention of Rayṭah’s name, see the following footnote.
women consulting Asmāʾ bint Abī Bakr, the sister of the Prophet's wife ‘Āʾishah, corroborate that it was common for learned women to instruct others in matters of personal jurisprudence.⁸⁰

Perhaps the most intriguing example of ‘Amrah’s exercise of juridical authority involves her interference in a case of theft during the administrative tenure of her nephew Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. ‘Amr b. Ḥazm. When ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Azīz became governor of Medina in 87/707, he appointed Abū Bakr as its judge. And when the Umayyad caliph al-Walīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 86–96/705–15) recalled ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Aliz from his post in 93/712, Abū Bakr temporarily assumed the governorship for a few months. In 96/715, Abū Bakr was reappointed as Medina’s governor by the Umayyad caliph Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 86–99/715–717) and served in office for the next five years, remaining in his position throughout the caliphate of ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Aliz (r. 99–101/717–720).⁸¹ According to some sources, ‘Amrah by that time was in her seventies.⁸² As Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd discusses the occurrence of theft in Medina:

Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. ‘Amr b. Ḥazm informed me that he arrested a Nabatean who had stolen rings made of iron and detained him in order to cut off his hand. So ‘Amrah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān sent a female servant of hers called Umayyah. Abū Bakr explained, “She came to me while I was among the people and said, ‘Your maternal aunt ‘Amrah says to you, ‘O son of my sister, you arrested a Nabatean on a light matter, as I was told, and you want to cut off his hand.’ I said, ‘Yes.’ She said, ‘Amrah tells you that there is no cutting off [of the hand] except in [what is worth] a fourth of a dīnār and up.’ Abū Bakr said, ‘So I released the Nabatean.’”⁸³

⁸⁰ al-Dārimī, Sunan, 1:214.
⁸² Ibn al-Qaysarānī, Kitāb al-Jam‘, 2:610; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, Tahdhib, 4:683.
⁸³ Mālik, Muwatta‘, 2:840.
Another account, in the *Musnad* of Ahmad b. Hanbal, relates that ‘Amrah sent her female servant to dissuade her nephew from inflicting the unduly harsh punishment until she was able to come in person and inform him of what ‘A’ishah had told her about the Prophet’s own pronouncement on matters of theft.84 All the various accounts of this incident85 indicate that ‘Amrah’s judgment was so authoritative that one of the leading male scholars and administrators of Medina was compelled to act upon it. Significantly, Abū Bakr has been described as the most knowledgeable of his age regarding the issue of Islamic judicial rulings (kāna ‘alam ahl zamānih fi’l-qaḍā’).86 And the judge Abūl-Walīd al-Bājī (d. 494/1081) comments on Abū Bakr’s actions concerning this case, “His releasing the Nabatean upon hearing ‘Amrah’s statement is evidence for the validity of women’s issuing legal opinions and the validity of adopting their positions if they are learned.”87

As an important legal precedent establishing the weight of female juridical positions, ‘Amrah bint Abd al-Raḥmān’s role in the critical formation of Islamic knowledge should not be interpreted as a woman’s solitary incursion into an exclusively male domain. To the contrary, ‘Amrah’s participation in these networks of scholarship reveal the fluidity with which the early generation of Muslims conceived of the potential for women to contribute to the community’s overall understanding of its religious obligations. Moreover, as influential as ‘Amrah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān may have been, she was one of many early Muslim women who shaped these foundations of Islamic knowledge for generations to come. In *al-Iḥkām fi Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) pointedly acknowledges the debt owed to many such learned women, including the Prophet’s wives, his female contemporaries, and subsequent generations of female Muslims.88 By exploring the case of ‘Amrah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, we are better able to appreciate the interweaving of personal and scholarly networks that established the framework for one of these women’s diverse and significant contributions across fluid and permeable gender boundaries. For the purposes of Ibn Ḥazm’s inquiry into the workings of Islamic legal theory, however,

the example of ‘Amrah bint ‘Abd al-Rahmān was essential to illustrating another point – that the words of divine revelation are directed towards men and women alike.\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 324–9.