

# islam & women (iii)

re-examining ḥadīths

# overview

- terms, authority & importance
- authentication & criticism
- islamic-feminist approaches: Fatima Mernissi (d.2015)
- digital islamic feminism

# terms

**Ḥadīth (tradition): "Report of the words and deeds of Muhammad and other early Muslims; considered an authoritative source of revelation, second only to the *Quran* (sometimes referred to as sayings of the Prophet)."**

*The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*

**Sunna: "...the generally approved standard or practice introduced by the Prophet as well as the pious Muslims of olden days."**

*EI2*

# authority

**“He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah...” (Q. 4.80)**

**“And obey Allah and the Messenger that you may obtain mercy.” (Q. 3.132)**

**“...And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from...” (Q. 59.7)**

**“...And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought.” (Q.16.44)**

# ḥadīth & *sunna*

- not all *sunna* is initially identified by ḥadīth, but all *sunna* is later recorded within the ḥadīth corpus
- a *sunna* need not be obligatory upon Muslims to perform
- some ḥadīths do not constitute a practice (*sunna*)
- comparable to the Christian gospels?
- *sunna* increasingly knowable & identifiable with time from ḥadīth
- qur'an or ḥadīth? differences in degree of importance
- ḥadīth in shī'ism and sufism

# importance

importance in theology / doctrine, law & politics; issues pertaining to:

- law: prayer / what is prayer (how)
- theology: concerning the qur'anic nature of god's attributes
- bulk of the exegesis (*tafsīr*) corpus
- important political role during the time of the *fitna* (killing of Ammar ibn Yassir)
- doctrine: what is Islam? who is a muslim / believer?

# authentication: ḥadīth fabrication

- prophetic prohibition against writing of ḥadīth
- time & geography
- the time of the *fitna* & the serious divisions of the community (*umma*)
- the rise of the different schools of thought
- the qur'an as a source for these schools of thought, but conflicting views
- not all fabrications were made with ill-intention
- the birth of *isnād*

# *isnād*

**"Chain of authority. Refers to the line of transmitters of a particular saying or doctrine, particularly with respect to hadith. Developed as a science in hadith study, since the chain of transmitters indicates the authority of a given hadith. Sunnis and Shi'is have different *isnad*. Sufis also use term to refer to the chain of mystical initiation by renowned spiritual masters."**

*The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*

**“Whoever (intentionally) ascribes to me what I have not said then (surely) let him occupy his seat in Hell-fire.”**

<https://sunnah.com/bukhari:109>

example for an chain of transmitters (*isnād*) & the text of a prophetic saying (*matn*) in a ḥadīth

Sulaymān ibn Da'ūd al-Mahrī handed down to us: Ibn Wahb has narrated that Sa'īd ibn Abī Ayyūb had told from Sharāḥīl ibn Yazīd al-Mu'āfirī, from Abū 'Alqama, and from Abū Hurayra, who came to know that the Messenger of God — God's blessing be upon him and salvation — said:

**'Allah will raise for this community at the end of every hundred years the one who will renovate its religion for it.'**

Abū Da'ūd, Kitāb al-Sunan, *kitāb al-malāḥim*, ḥadīth 1 (4291), grade: Sahih (Al-Albani)  
(<https://sunnah.com/abudawud/39>)

# the six (sunni) collections

**1) Muhammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (d. 870 CE)**

**2) Muslim ibn al-Ḥajāj (d. 875 CE)**

**3) ibn Māja (d. 887 CE)**

**4) abū Dāūd (d. 888 CE)**

**5) al-Tirmidhī (d. 892 CE)**

**6) al-Nasā'ī (d. 915 CE)**

# criticism

- early muslim criticism
  - modern muslim criticism
  - modern western criticism
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- problem of ḥadīth in modernity
  - ḥadīth criticism: feminism
  - pre-modern: *isnād* only, modern: *isnād* & *matn*

Once Allah's Apostle went out to the Musalla (to offer the prayer) of 'Id-al-Adha or Al-Fitr prayer. Then he passed by the women and said, "O women! Give alms, as I have seen that the majority of the dwellers of Hell-fire were you (women)." They asked, "Why is it so, O Allah's Apostle ?" He replied, "You curse frequently and are ungrateful to your husbands. I have not seen anyone more deficient in intelligence and religion than you. A cautious sensible man could be led astray by some of you." The women asked, "O Allah's Apostle! What is deficient in our intelligence and religion?" He said, "Is not the evidence of two women equal to the witness of one man?" They replied in the affirmative. He said, "This is the deficiency in her intelligence. Isn't it true that a woman can neither pray nor fast during her menses?" The women replied in the affirmative. He said, "This is the deficiency in her religion."

Bukhari: <https://sunnah.com/bukhari/6/9>

Imam Ali: O' ye peoples! Women are deficient in Faith, deficient in shares and deficient in intelligence. As regards the deficiency in their Faith, it is their abstention from prayers and fasting during their menstrual period. As regards deficiency in their intelligence it is because the evidence of two women is equal to that of one man. As for the deficiency of their shares that is because of their share in inheritance being half of men. So beware of the evils of women. Be on your guard even from those of them who are (reportedly) good. Do not obey them even in good things so that they may not attract you to evils. *Nahj al-Balagha*, sermon 80 (<http://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-1-sermons/sermon-80-o-people-women-are>)

# islamic-feminist ḥadīth criticism



**narrated Abu Bakra:** During the battle of al-Jamal, Allah benefited me with a word (I heard from the Prophet). When the Prophet heard the news that the people of the Persia had made the daughter of Khosrau their queen (ruler), he said, “Never will succeed such a nation as makes a woman their ruler.”

Bukhari: <https://sunnah.com/bukhari/92/50>

Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite*. Basic Books (1992)

[https://librarysearch.uwtsd.ac.uk/permalink/44WHELF\\_UWTSD/1ir6fgh/cdi\\_umichiganpress\\_fulcrum\\_MIU0100000000000005850671](https://librarysearch.uwtsd.ac.uk/permalink/44WHELF_UWTSD/1ir6fgh/cdi_umichiganpress_fulcrum_MIU0100000000000005850671)

**“And those who launch a charge against chaste women, and produce not four witnesses (to support their allegations),- flog them with eighty stripes; and reject their evidence ever after: for such men are wicked transgressors.” (Q: 24:4)**

translation: quran.com

**Abu Huraira reported:** The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: A woman, an ass and a dog disrupt the prayer, but something like the back of a saddle guards against that.

Muslim: <https://sunnah.com/muslim/4/301>

**narrated 'Aisha:** The things which annul the prayers were mentioned before me. They said, "Prayer is annulled by a dog, a donkey and a woman (if they pass in front of the praying people)." I said, "You have made us (i.e. women) dogs. I saw the Prophet praying while I used to lie in my bed between him and the Qibla. Whenever I was in need of something, I would slip away, for I disliked to face him."

Bukhari: <https://sunnah.com/bukhari/8/158>

**Question: I was praying Maghrib & a rabbit passed in front of me. Is my prayer interrupted because of that?**

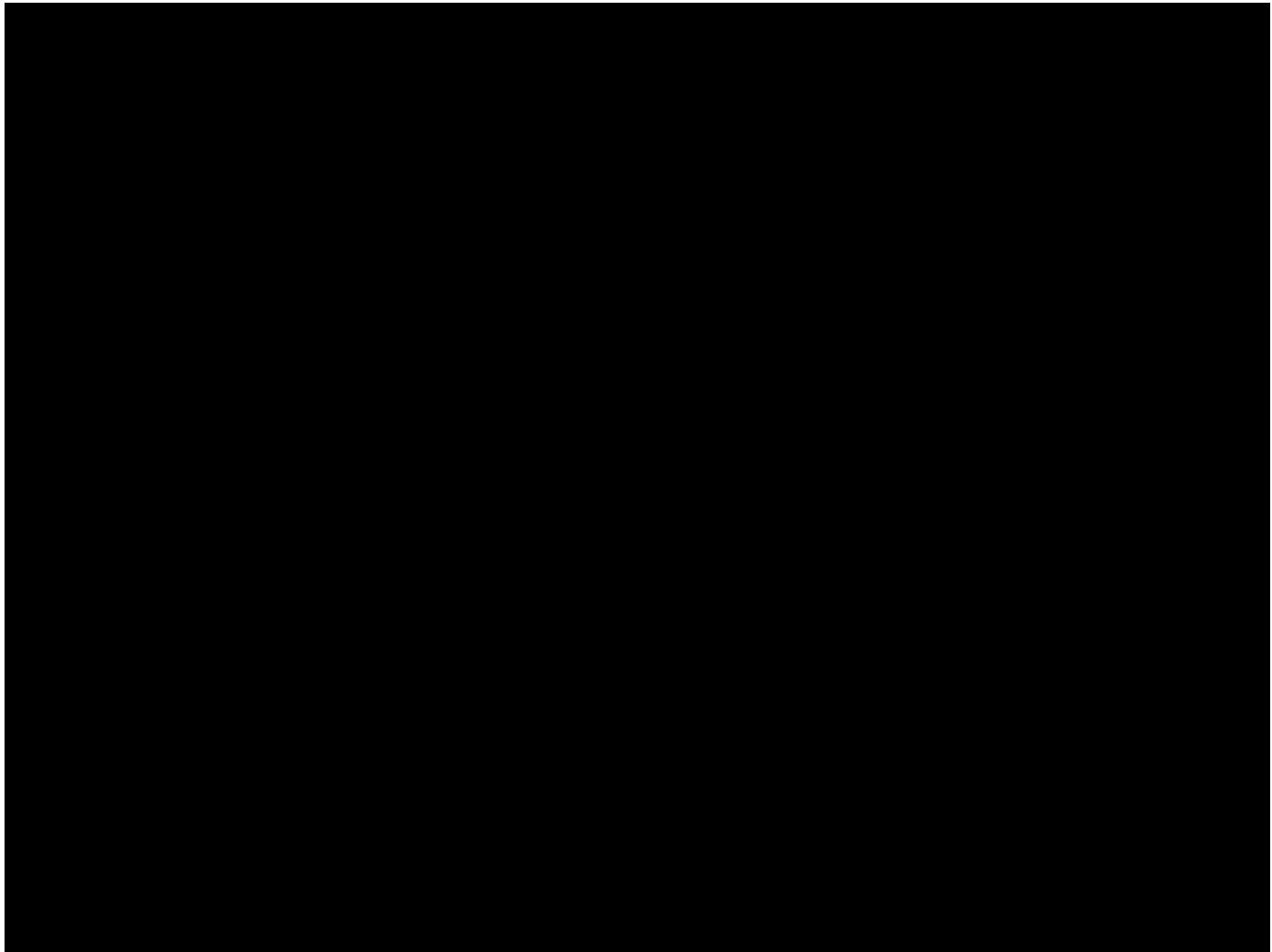
**Answer: Praise be to Allaah. If a rabbit or any other animal walks in front of the person who is praying, it does not interrupt the prayer. Rabbits, goats and other animals do not interrupt the prayer. Rather the prayer is only interrupted by three things according to the correct scholarly opinion: an adult woman, a black dog and a donkey. This is what is narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), that he said: “Three things interrupt a man’s prayer [by passing in front of him] if he does not have in front of him something the height of the back of a saddle: a woman, a donkey and a black dog.” It was said: O Messenger of Allah, why black and not red or yellow? He said: “The black dog is a devil.”**

**What is meant is that these three are the things that interrupt the prayer according to the correct scholarly opinion. There is some difference of opinion among the scholars, but the correct view is that prayer is only interrupted by one of these three things, either a woman, or a donkey in general, or a black dog specifically. As for other kinds of animals, such as dogs that are not black, or camels, goats, rabbits, cats and so on, none of these interrupt the prayer. But if it is possible not to let them walk in front, and the worshipper tries not to let them pass in front of him that is better. So he should not let anything pass in front of him.**

# digital islamic feminism

- **exercising online resistance:**
  - internet as a tool / weapon against silencing & stigmatizing them (islamophobia)
  - 'voice to the voiceless' to amplify and spread their message
  - #CanYouHearUsNow
- **expressing diverse identities**
  - hijabistas: wearing hijab as a means to assert muslim identity
- **solidarity & support**
  - online forums increase uniformity, solidarity & cohesion
  - provide emotional, spiritual, religious & social support





# **mipsterz** ([www.mipsterz.com](http://www.mipsterz.com))

- **reflections?**
- **religious & cultural identities portrayed by women?**
- **images & understandings are they attempting to counter?**
- **what are they saying about themselves?**
  - are they able to claim a position within US society & forge political autonomy through use of popular culture, fashion trends & urban lifestyles?
- **what might be traditionalist Muslim responses / criticisms?**
- **differences from traditional commercial videos? and what does this suggest about the power of dominant voices to shape popular culture & the possibility that minority voices can be heard in popular culture?**