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Analysis on the Contributions and Dedication of Amrah binti Abdul Rahman as a *Muhaddithah* in Seeking Knowledge

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ABSTRACT

Muhaddithat refers to female hadith transmitters who were equally skilled as their male counterparts in narrating and transmitting hadith collections. Their invaluable contributions to the preservation and transmission of the Prophetic Hadith have been widely acknowledged, including by Western scholars. While previous discussions on *Muhaddithat* have been extensive, studies focusing on specific female scholars, such as Amrah binti Abdul Rahman, remain limited. This research aims to fill this gap by exploring Amrah's biography, her intellectual journey, and her significant role as a *Muhaddithah*. Employing a qualitative methodology, the study analyses historical texts, biographical dictionaries, and hadith compilations to construct a comprehensive understanding of her life and contributions. The findings reveal Amrah's exceptional dedication to seeking and disseminating knowledge, her scholarly influence, and her vital role in maintaining the authenticity of the Prophetic traditions. This study highlights the importance of recognizing female scholars like Amrah binti Abdul Rahman in Islamic intellectual history and their enduring legacy in the field of hadith studies.

1. Introduction

Women's participation in the transmission of hadith constitutes a noteworthy element of early and medieval Islamic women's history, characterized by a wealth of source material. Given the significance of hadith in Islamic culture, scholars have scrutinized the tradition and its transmitters across the entire span of Islamic history. The continuity or disruption observed among female transmitters within particular historical contexts underscores the significance of women's involvement in transmitting hadith.

Amrah bint 'Abd al-Rahman was a renowned female hadith narrator from the generation of the Successors (*al-Tabi'in*). She belongs to the third generation of Successors (*tabaqah al-wusta min al-tabi'in*), and was recognized as the most knowledgeable authority in narrating hadiths from 'Aishah RA and other notable sources [1-3]. Her narrations are extensively documented in the Six Canonical Hadith Collections and other major hadith compilations.

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According to Hassan [4], Amrah bint Abd Al-Rahman made significant contributions to Islamic knowledge comparable to those of her male peers, and she also played a vital role within the community in addressing the specific needs and issues of women. Amrah's extensive knowledge validated her hadith narrations as credible accounts of the practices of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Additionally, her opinions and actions carried significant weight and were highly respected by both her contemporaries and future generations of Muslim scholars.

1.1 Biography of Amrah bint Abd al-Rahman

Her full name is Amrah bint Abd al-Rahman ibn Sa'ad ibn Zurarah ibn 'Udus al-Ansariyah al-Najjariyyah. She was born in the 29H, which is equivalent to 650M. Amrah's lineage can be traced back to As'ad ibn Zurarah ibn 'Udus ibn 'Abid ibn Sa'labah ibn Ghanem ibn Malik ibn Najjar. She hailed from Madinah and belonged to the Ansari tribe known as the Najariyyah [1]. She was known for her extensive knowledge of the hadiths of Aishah, making her an authority in the field of hadith. Amrah, a prominent woman of the *tabi'in*, was well-known for her knowledge and achievements.

Hassan [4] comprehends the notable stature of 'Amrah bint Abd al-Rahman as a scholar and jurist, it is essential to recognize the influence her immediate family might have had on her academic journey. She was born in Medina during the first/seventh century, belonging to a lineage of Ansar descendants. Amrah lived a few generations after the Prophet Muhammad, in the era of the *tabi'in*, who were the followers of the companions of the Prophet.

Therefore, Ibn Sa'ad [1] mentioned Amrah's mother as Salimah bint Hakim ibn Hashim ibn Qawwalah but provides no additional information about her life. Likewise, there are only a few brief mentions of Amrah's father, Abd al-Rahman, in biographical sources, offering limited details. Her father was known as Abd al-Rahman ibn Sa'ad ibn Zurarah mentioned in the version of Malik's *Muwatta'* compiled by Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani (d. 189/805), the disciple of Abu Hanifah (d. 150/767). Sa'ad ibn Zurarah was her grandfather [4,5].

According to some records, 'Abd al-Rahman described as visiting the Prophet's wife, Aishah RA during her illness, accompanied by Isma'il ibn Abi Bakr and both of whom Aishah had tasked with finding a remedy. This narration indicates a close connection to the Prophet's household, even though classical biographical sources do not definitively establish whether her father lived during the time of the Prophet Muhammad SAW [4]. But Amrah's grandfather, Sa'ad, held a significant position as one of the earliest companions of the Prophet and was also the brother of As'ad Ibn Zurarah, a renowned figure among the Ansar in Medina who held the esteemed title of *nuqaba'* [6].

There is limited information available about 'Amrah's husband, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Harithah ibn al-Nu'man in the biographical literature. His name is mentioned primarily in Ibn Sa'ad's account of Amrah and in the well-documented genealogy of their son [1]. Amrah had a son called Abu al-Rijal ibn Abd al-Rahman, who primarily transmitted hadiths through his mother. On the other hand, Amrah's father-in-law, Harithah ibn al-Nu'man, was a notable figure. He is remembered for his participation in all the early battles of the Muslim community, witnessing the angel of Gabriel in the company of Prophet Muhammad SAW, and earning a place in heaven due to his exceptional kindness to his mother [4]. Amrah bint Abd al-Rahman passed away in the year 103 A.H. at the age of 77 [7].

In this study, it aims to explore Amrah's intellectual journey and her significant role as a *muhaddithah*, and to reveal her exceptional dedication to seeking and disseminating knowledge. These are important to make Amrah as an inspiration and role model for Muslim women today especially in an endless journey of seeking knowledge.

2. Methodology

As a qualitative study, the focus is on exploring the significant role played by Amrah bint Abd al-Rahman in the field of Islamic knowledge, particularly hadith studies. She was known as a prominent figure among the *muhaddithat* and was renowned for her deep commitment to seeking and disseminating knowledge. Thus, this study employs several approaches.

First, historical texts serve as important sources for understanding the broader social, cultural, and political context in which Amrah bint Abd al-Rahman lived and pursued her scholarly endeavors. These texts provide insights into the environment that shaped her education, access to knowledge, and interactions within the intellectual community during her time as a *tabi'in*.

Second, biographical dictionaries are vital for documenting her lineage, highlighting her connection to important figures who may have influenced her access to education and reputable teachers. It also covers her educational journey in detail, including the scholars under whom she studied and her students. This information helps to trace Amrah's role in the transmission of hadith and preservation of the Prophetic teachings.

Third, hadith compilations provide direct evidence of Amrah's contributions as a female scholar of hadith. These sources recorded all the Prophetic traditions transmitted by Amrah which clearly emphasized her role in disseminating authentic hadiths. By examining the chains of narration (*isnad*) in which her name appears, her reliability can be accessed and be recognized by her generations and after. Her contributions in hadith transmission underscored the significant role women played in the Islamic scholarly tradition.

3. Results

This study found that Amrah bint Abd al-Rahman is an excellent female scholar of her time, and her contributions remain important to this present day. Therefore, the result will discuss both her general and specific contributions, her dedication in seeking knowledge, and her importance as a role model for today's generation.

3.1 Contributions of Amrah bint Abd al-Rahman

In many sources, most of Amrah's contributions were specific to the field of hadith. Ibn al-Madini emphasized her reliability, identifying her as one of the most trustworthy transmitters of 'Aishah's hadith. Ibn Hibban's remarks further underline her significance: "She was recognized for narrating hadiths from 'Aishah, and she was considered the most knowledgeable among those who transmitted 'Aishah's hadiths." Ibn al-'Imad (d. 1089 H) affirmed Amrah's trustworthiness and precision in narration [19].

Akram Nadwi [2] also recorded that 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz held Amrah in high regard, asserting that no one of his time had a greater understanding of 'Aishah's hadiths than her. 'Umar greatly valued her counsel. Al-Zuhri recounted that Qasim ibn Muhammad advised him to seek knowledge from Amrah, describing her as having been under the tutelage of 'Aishah RA. Upon consulting her, Al-Zuhri likened Amrah to an "ocean" — a boundless source of knowledge.

Abu 'Ubaydah [8] highlighted that many scholars consistently regarded Amrah as a trustworthy (*thiqah*) narrator. Ibn Ma'in affirmed her as both trustworthy and reliable (*thiqah hujjah*), while Al-'Ijli described her as a *Madiniyyah*, a *Tabi'iyah*, and trustworthy. Thus, she was regarded as the most eminent female narrator of hadith from the generation of the *Tabi'in*. She was known to have narrated 333 hadiths [9], but some report said 310 hadiths [10], and her narrations are included in

nine esteemed collections of hadith known as *Kutub Tis'ah*. These collections include *Sahih al-Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, *Sunan al-Nasa'i*, *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, *Sunan Ibn Majah*, *Musnad al-Darimi*, *Muwatta' Malik*, and *Musnad Ahmad*.

In this study, hadiths transmitted by Amrah will be presented from one hadith collection only, which is *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, as in Table 1 below. There are a total of 42 hadiths narrated by Amrah in *Sahih Al-Bukhari*.

Table 1
Hadiths of Amrah in *Sahih al-Bukhari*

Book (<i>Kitab</i>)	Chapter (<i>Juz'</i>)	No. of Hadith
Menstrual Periods	<i>Al-Istihadah</i> (bleeding in between the periods is from a blood vessel)	327
	If a woman gets her menses after <i>Tawaf-al-Ifada</i>	328
Prayers (<i>Salat</i>)	Mentioning about sales and purchases on the pulpit in the mosque	456
Call to Prayers (<i>Adhaan</i>)	If there is a wall or a Sutra between the Imam and followers	729
	The waiting of the people for the religious learned Imam to get up (after the prayer to depart)	867
Friday Prayer	The time for the Jumu'ah (prayer) is due when the sun declines (i.e. just after mid-day)	903
Eclipses	To seek refuge with Allah from the torment in the grave during eclipse	1049,
	To offer the eclipse prayer in the mosque	1050,
		1055,
		1056
	The first Rak'at of the eclipse prayer is longer	1064
Prayer at Night (<i>Tahajjud</i>)	To offer two Rak'at before the Fajr prayer	1171
Funerals (<i>Al-Janaa'iz</i>)	The statement of the Prophet ﷺ : "The deceased is punished because of the weeping (with wailing) of some of his relatives, if wailing was the custom of that dead person".	1289
	Whoever sat down and looked sad when afflicted with a calamity	1299
	The forbiddance of wailing and crying aloud	1305
Pilgrimage (<i>Haji</i>)	To twist (and make) the garlands for the Budn	1698
	The garlands round the necks of the Hady	1700
	To slaughter on behalf of wife	1709
	What is to be eaten of Budn and what to be distributed	1720
Retiring to a Mosque for Remembrance of Allah (<i>I'tikaf</i>)	Women's I'tikaf	2033
	Tents in mosque	2034
	I'tikaf in the month of Shawwal	2041
	Whoever intended I'tikaf and then changed his mind	2045
Representation, Authorization, Business by Proxy	To depute someone to sacrifice <i>Budn</i> (camels for sacrifice) and to look after them	2317
<i>Makaatib</i>	The selling of a <i>Mukatab</i> on his agreement	2564
Witnesses	To give witness concerning lineage, foster suckling relations and dead persons	2646
Peacemaking	Should the Imam suggest reconciliation?	2705
Conditions	<i>Al-Mukatab</i> conditions which contradict Allah's Laws	2735
Fighting for the Cause of Allah (<i>Jihaad</i>)	Setting out in the last part of the month	2952

Table 1 (Continued)

One-fifth of Booty to the Cause of Allah (<i>Khumus</i>)	The houses of the wives of the Prophet PBUH	3105
Prophets	Souls are like recruited troops	3336
Military Expeditions led by the Prophet SAW (<i>Al-Maghaazi</i>)	The expedition of Mu'tah to the land of Syria	4263
Wedlock, Marriage (<i>Nikaah</i>)	"...your foster-mothers who gave you suck"	5099
Al-Adha Festival Sacrifice (<i>Adaahi</i>)	What may be eaten of the meat of sacrifices and what may be taken as journey food	5570
Medicine	The <i>Ruqya</i> of the Prophet PBUH	5745, 5746
Good Manners and Form (<i>Al-Adab</i>)	To recommend being kind to one's neighbour	6014
Limits and Punishments set by Allah (<i>Hudud</i>)	"Cut off the hand of the thief, male or female..."	6789, 6790, 6791
Oneness, Uniqueness of Allah (<i>Tawheed</i>)	The Prophet SAW inviting his followers to Tauhid of Allah	7375

Based on this compelling evidence, it shows that 'Amrah held an esteemed position in the field of hadith studies and was widely respected and trusted by her contemporaries and subsequent scholars. To be included in the *Sahih al-Bukhari*, it is a great recognition and acknowledgement of her expertise in hadith transmission. It is because *Sahih al-Bukhari* is a compilation of hadiths by Imam al-Bukhari which is widely acknowledged by the vast majority of the Muslim community as one of the most credible compilations of the Prophetic traditions.

3.2 Dedication of Amrah bint Abd al-Rahman in Seeking Knowledge

According to Asma Sayeed [11], Amrah had a reputation in history for her extensive network and influence, indicating that she approached the acquisition of hadiths in a more organized and systematic manner compared to many other women of her time who were also part of the successor generation. Her passion for knowledge and her exceptional skills in the field make her a significant figure to pay attention to and to admire as a Muslim. She stands out as someone worth knowing and appreciating for her dedication to learning and expertise.

Amrah bint Abd al-Rahman was brought up under the guardianship and mentorship of a prominent figure in Islamic history. As a result, much of her narration pertained to the authority of *Umm al-Mu'minin*. She was considered as the second most authoritative figure in the field of hadith after the companions [12]. The teacher who imparts knowledge to her holds a prominent position among great educators. Among her great teachers are:

- i. 'Aishah bint Abu Bakr. It was reported that Amrah had a close relationship with 'Aishah, serving as her secretary and managing correspondence, while also being recognized as an authoritative hadith scholar who often surpassed her male contemporaries. Consequently, most of Amrah's narrations are attributed to Aishah's authority. Al-Dhahabi [13], in his renowned work *Siyar 'Alam al-Nubala'*, stated that "Amrah bint Abd al-Rahman was a scholar, legal expert, and student of Aishah RA and was also brought up under Aishah's guardianship."

- ii. Umm Salamah. She lived a long life and was the last of the Prophet's wives to pass away. Amrah also narrated from Umm Salamah alongside 'Aishah [6].
- iii. Ummu Hisham binti Harithah. She is the stepsister of Amrah bint Abd al-Rahman. Ummu Hisham pledged allegiance to the Prophet Muhammad SAW during the Bai'ah Ridwan, and played the role of a narrator who transmitted the recitation (*Qira'ah*) [14]. The hadiths that Amrah transmitted from her are four hadiths.
- iv. Hamnah bint Jahsy. She is the sister of the Prophet's wife, Zainab bint Jahsy. She narrated hadith about the rules of worship for women experiencing *istihadah* (irregular non-menstrual bleeding), and Amrah narrated this one hadith from Hamnah [3].

Amrah bint Abd al-Rahman was very cautious in teaching and conveying the hadith. The majority of her students were her family members, as she greatly limited her interactions with men who were not her *mahram*. Among those who narrated her hadith were her son, Abu al-Rijal, her nephew, her grandchildren, and other relatives [3]. Thus, this study will acknowledge about four famous students among huge number of Amrah's students, and they are:

- i. 'Urwah ibn al-Zubair ibn 'Awwam. He is a son of Asma' bint Bakar, and a nephew of 'Aishah. He was one of the narrators who narrated the hadith of Amrah that was among her family members [3].
- ii. Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri. He transmitted 63 of Amrah's hadiths. After studying for seven years with another prominent jurist, Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib (died after 90 AH), al-Zuhri then began learning from 'Urwah ibn al-Zubair, and he discovered that Urwah was like Amrah, was an abundant source of knowledge. Subsequently, he would often corroborate the hadiths of 'Urwah with Amrah. Indeed, half of al-Zuhri's narrations through Amrah in the nine foremost collections of hadith is attributed to both Amrah and 'Urwah [4].
- iii. Abu Bakr ibn Hazm. He was Amrah's nephew who transmitted 36 of her hadiths. He was a renowned judge of Medina, was ordered by the caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz to write down all the traditions known by her authority [1,15].

3.3 Amrah bint Abdul Rahman as a Role Model

The characteristics that make a person a role model is essential as the different forms that a role model can take in different aspects of life. This chapter will also explore how role models can influence behaviour, ambitions and decision-making, highlighting the significance of representing diverse individuals in this role. This section also depicts the life of a woman from the era of the *tabi'in* because of her remarkable character. These outstanding and admirable qualities position Amrah bint Abd al-Rahman as an exemplar for Muslim women in the 21st century.

3.3.1 Endeavor to find a genuine mentor

During Amrah's quest for knowledge, she embarked on a journey of learning from her mentor, Aishah RA. She encountered the early loss of her father, which left her orphaned. However, despite this hardship, she was invited to live in the home of a renowned Islamic scholar, Aishah bint Abu Bakr. Following the passing of Prophet Muhammad SAW, many Muslims sought knowledge from Aishah, as she was the closest person to the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Due to this, Amrah was privileged to live with such an extraordinary and highly respected individual, and she absorbed a great deal from Aishah, especially her narrated hadiths [16].

Amrah was educated by outstanding teachers and eventually became a legal scholar. She played a crucial part in making influential decisions with far-reaching consequences. She gained the confidence of the community through her intelligence and her capacity to distinguish between right and wrong. She diligently studied the teachings of Prophet Muhammad SAW and applied that wisdom to make ethical and wise decisions.

In present day, women in the 21st century should acknowledge and strive to embody the characteristics of an individual like Amrah bint Abd al-Rahman. She actively sought out excellent mentors to learn from and utilized her knowledge to elucidate and expand upon the hadiths conveyed by the Prophet Muhammad SAW through her teachings to others. Moreover, in today's context, it is evident that numerous hadiths are being circulated without proper authentication. The widespread sharing of unverified hadiths on social media and the propagation of religious narratives without known original sources is highly inappropriate. This dissemination could lead individuals lacking in-depth knowledge to believe and accept these unverified narratives as true.

Thus, the solution is to seek a mentor and acquire authentic knowledge. By seeking knowledge from a mentor, people can distance themselves from misguidance and ignorance and also apply the knowledge in life. As Allah SWT says in Surah al-Nahl, verses 43: "(O Muhammad), whenever We raised any Messengers before you, they were no other than human beings (except that) to them We sent revelation. So, ask those who possess knowledge if you do not know".

3.3.2 Exhibit caring characteristics

Amrah bint Abd al-Rahman exemplified a caring personality through her dedication to preserving and transmitting knowledge with empathy and kindness. She was concerned about people and considered the impact of her actions on others. The welfare of others held such significance for her that as she approached the end of her life, she requested her brother to dig her grave separately from others. She wanted to prevent any accidental disturbance to adjacent graves. The remarkable personal character of Amrah is evident in her thoughtful consideration for others, as she consciously avoids actions that might disrupt their well-being [13].

Besides, according to Mehfooz and Shabana [6], Abu al-Rijal Muhammad, the son of Amrah, primarily conveyed the hadiths transmitted by his mother. Thus, it can be inferred that affection and proper upbringing are also conveyed and practiced within the family and for the children. A woman's nurturing demeanour is also evident when she assumes the responsibility of leading and overseeing a family. Indeed, Amrah was a great mother, and her contributions are not influencing her family members only, but to many Muslim community.

Moreover, women in the 21st century should look to Amrah as an example and inspiration in life, emulating her caring nature and dedication to the well-being of others, as well as the affection she bestowed upon her family. Fatmawati [17] explained that Islam has elevated the position of a woman as a wife and considers fulfilling the rights and responsibilities of family life as a form of jihad in the path of Allah. Women are also the primary and first educators for their children. Islam provides guidance that women are best suited to play the role of responsible and providers of affection within their households.

Women are considered the cornerstone that strengthens and preserves the integrity of the family. Women serve as a fortress upholding faith and morality, as well as playing a role in managing children's education and imparting strong Islamic influence and impact. This is reflected in a mother's example of becoming a role model and conducting and observation of her children [18]. However, children will be easily influenced by the behaviour shown by their parents. As a parent, refrain from

setting negative precedents for children, as this could lead to the cultivation of a negative environment from an early age.

3.3.3 Brilliant at resolving problems

Amrah's leadership qualities demonstrate her extensive knowledge and ability to solve diverse problems. She excelled not only in her primary field but also very well in other fields. Asma Sayeed [11] mentioned that she was one of the few women mentioned in medieval biographies as a *faqihah*, possessing the capacity for independent legal reasoning and judgment, beyond simply conveying knowledge.

There are occasions where Amrah provides a distinctly clever and effective solution. For example, there was a case involving a Christian thief from Syria who had stolen something. The judge had ordered that his hand be cut off. Upon hearing the judge's decision, Amrah immediately instructed one of her students to inform the judge that he could not punish the man because he had stolen something with a value less than a gold coin (*dinar*). After the judge heard what Amrah had conveyed, he ordered the man to be released without questioning his authority. The judge also did not seek a second opinion from other scholars who were quite numerous in Medina at that time [5].

Amrah's life and knowledge greatly benefited those around her. That was one of the pieces of evidence that knowledge and wisdom significantly influence a woman's ability to lead and resolve issues towards a better outcome by speaking the truth.

In today's modern world, many problems are often encountered and occur in life. Among the problems faced by women are the issue of covering the '*aurat*', household issues, reduced personality manners and others. A woman of extraordinary character will courageously and thoughtfully address and resolve challenges. Addressing these issues should commence with personal growth through strengthening faith in Allah SWT, seeking knowledge from experts and upholding relationships with family, community, and the state.

Furthermore, the participation of women in contributing to leadership is crucial. Most importantly, it involves instilling good morals and the ability to solve various problems from an early age, so that women understand position and capabilities. By recognizing the position and abilities or skills, conflicts and disputes can be avoided [17].

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, Amrah bint Abd al-Rahman stands out as an extraordinary figure for her huge contributions to hadith narration, which remain relevant to present day. Her efforts in teaching and transmitting hadith as well as her dedications in preserving Islamic knowledge, and her exemplary personal character have left an enduring legacy in the subject of Islamic scholarship. As one of the most respected female scholars of her era, Amrah became a role model for Muslim women intellectually, spiritually, and socially, and going to be inspiration for ongoing efforts to uphold Islamic teaching based on the authoritative sources of the Quran and Sunnah. It is essential to acknowledge Amrah bint Abd al-Rahman's unwavering dedication to Islam and to introduce her legacy to younger generations by adapting her methods and contributions to modern contexts. Recognizing her impacts highlight the importance of appreciating and celebrating the valuable contributions of women in Islamic history.

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