

Chapter 5

Women in Imāmī Biographical Collections¹

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It is reported on the authority of Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Riḍā that Sa‘īda, the servant of Ja‘far, was among the people of merit and excellence (min ahl al-faḍl). She had learned statements from Abū ‘Abd Allāh [i.e., Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq]. She had in her possession the waṣīyya of the Prophet. Ja‘far said to her, “Beseech God who has made you known to me in this world to marry me to you in the Hereafter.” She used to live near the home of Ja‘far and was not seen in the mosque [of the Prophet] except that she was reciting blessings on the Prophet whether she was leaving for Mecca or returning from it.

And ‘Alī al-Riḍā said that her last words were, “We are satisfied with the reward [that God just gave us] and promised immunity from punishment.”²

This notice about Sa‘īda, a companion of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), the sixth Shī‘ī Imām, provides an intriguing view of female religious learning and authority in early Shī‘ī history. Privileged with access to the Imām’s teachings, Sa‘īda was known to have learned some traditions (*ḥadīth*) from him, including the *waṣīyya* of the Prophet, a text dealing with his will and testament.³ The entry, albeit brief, raises many questions about women’s religious participation in early Shī‘ism. This chapter engages with a few of these questions through a study of selected early and classical Imāmī biographical works, a genre that focuses on transmitters of religious knowledge.

Throughout Muslim history, biographical literature has been a medium through which scholars negotiated and articulated criteria for membership and authority in their respective religious communities.⁴ It is also a genre in which authors have regularly documented women’s contributions, thereby providing valuable sources for understanding their religious participation. While our understanding of Muslim women’s history in the early and classical periods has been enriched by recent analyses of these sources, the research has almost exclusively focused on women in Sunnī

biographical collections.⁵ Devin Stewart's recent study of women in the Imāmī compendium *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā wa-ḥiyāḍ al-fuḍalā'* of Mīrẓā 'Abd Allāh al-Iṣfahānī (d. ca. 1130/1718) is a rare exception to this rule.⁶ My chapter builds on Stewart's findings and considers patterns that emerge when we examine a broader selection of Imāmī biographical literature. These works reflect a range of women's activities, from preservation of the Imāms' teachings to legal and hermeneutical engagement with texts central to Imāmism. The patterns of women's religious engagement in Imāmī works are distinct from those in the Sunnī sources underscoring the necessity of understanding the social histories of each of these sects on their own terms. This chapter first summarizes the evidence from selected early and classical Imāmī biographical compendia and extracts salient characteristics of women's participation. My analysis then looks to developments in Imāmī legal and intellectual history to explain the distinct trajectory of women's religious learning that emerges from the early and classical sources.

Early and Classical Sources: An Overview of the Evidence

Three of the four earliest extant Imāmī *rijāl* works contain entries for women. The *Ikhtiyār ma'rifat al-rijāl*, al-Ṭūsī's (d. 460/1067) abridgement of the earlier *Ma'rifat al-rijāl* of al-Kashshī (fl. early fourth/tenth century), commemorates four women, less than 1 percent of the total entries.⁷ The entries offer anecdotal and vivid snapshots of the women's interactions with various Imāms. In some biographical works, the entries on women are grouped together. In the *Ikhtiyār*, however, they are interspersed with the entries for the male authorities.

The first entry for a woman is devoted to Ḥabāba al-Wālibiyya, whose extended lifespan of over a century attracts attention. She reportedly was a contemporary of the first Imām, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/660), and lived to the time of the eighth Imām, 'Alī al-Riḍā (d. 203/818).⁸ The principal anecdote in this entry concerns a visit to the third Imām, Ḥusayn b. 'Alī (d. 61/680), who greets her warmly and then asks what prevented her from visiting earlier. Ḥabāba points to a mark left by leprosy (*baraḥ*). Ḥusayn puts his hand on the mark and recites a prayer, thereby healing her. In this same encounter, Ḥusayn affirms to her that their community (of Shī'īs) is the only group adhering to the right path (*millat Ibrāhīm*).

A second woman, Umm Khālid, possessed great eloquence (*baligha*).⁹ Her entry describes a meeting between her and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, wherein she inquires about Kuthayr al-Nawwā', whose reliability and character Ja'far al-Ṣādiq denounces.¹⁰ Umm Khālid is identified as a supporter of Zayd b. 'Alī (d. 122/740), and we learn that her hand was amputated, presumably due to her affiliation with his cause. The third woman, Sa'īda, is presented in the introduction of this chapter. She had been a servant of Umm Farwa, the mother of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, and it is likely that her learning traditions from him was incidental rather than the product of a close teacher-disciple relationship.¹¹ Nevertheless, she is noteworthy as it was rare for a servant, likely a former slave, to have learned the text of the *waṣīyya*.¹²

Finally, the entry for Ḥubbā (identified simply as the sister of Muḃassar) describes her as someone who settled in Mecca in total isolation from her family for a period of more than 30 years. Her brother approached Ja‘far al-Šādiq saying, “May I be your ransom! My sister Ḥubbā has continued her residence in Mecca until her close family members have died. Her [remaining] relatives are missing her, and only few of them are left. They fear that they will die just as the others have and they will not see her [again]. If you tell her [to return home], then she will accept your words [of counsel].” Imām Ja‘far is not immediately persuaded. He first tells Muḃassar to leave his sister alone and asserts that it is only through her prayers that the family is prevented from harm. But Muḃassar persists, and the Imām finally approaches Ḥubbā with the words, “What is keeping you from the *muṣallā* of ‘Alī, in which ‘Alī himself used to pray?”¹³ Only through such an appeal to ‘Alī’s memory is Ḥubbā finally persuaded to move from Mecca.

Taken together, these four entries attest to the independence, devotion, and sacrifices of a few women to the Imāms and their cause. Two additional early *rijāl* works also contain a few entries for women. The *Rijāl* of al-Najāshī (d. 450/1058–59) identifies two women out of approximately 1,270 authorities. These are ‘Ulayya bint ‘Alī, the granddaughter of Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī (d. 61/680), and Kulthūm bint Sulaym, who narrated from ‘Alī al-Riḃā.¹⁴ Al-Najāshī notes that both had a written text (*kitāb*) from which they narrated.¹⁵ Al-Najāshī’s work documents those who possessed written texts, and male authorities in al-Najāshī’s compilation are also credited with such collections. The third work, al-Ṭūsī’s *Rijāl*, provides lists of women who narrated from the Prophet and the 12 Imāms (there are a total of 63 such women). Al-Ṭūsī gives little other information about these women aside from a listing of their names.¹⁶ Among those who narrated from Muḃammad, al-Ṭūsī includes women such as ‘Ā’isha bint Abī Bakr (d. 58/678), Asmā’ bint Abī Bakr (d. 73/693), and others who are not authoritative transmitters in the four early authoritative Shī‘ī *ḥadīth* compilations.¹⁷ Thirty-eight women are listed as authorities from Muḃammad and three from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. Most of the other Imāms narrate to only one or two women.¹⁸ Three of the Imāms have no women listed as authorities for their traditions. Finally, al-Ṭūsī’s *Fihrist*, the fourth of the formative *rijāl* works, lists Imāmī scholars who authored written works (e.g., *taṣānīf*, *kutub*, or *uṣūl*) and contains no entries for women.¹⁹

The brevity of the entries in the early *rijāl* works and their limited quantity permit fairly limited conclusions about the scope of women’s participation and the nature of their religious authority in this period of Shī‘ī history. We discern, for example, that the Imāms engaged directly with several women, giving them advice, knowledge, and comfort. We can also ascertain that some of them were considered authoritative with respect to the preservation and transmission of traditions within the Shī‘ī community. However, we cannot always know whether these women were actually considered scholars (or just deemed reliable transmitters of a few traditions). It is also not possible to understand how these women went about learning or disseminating knowledge (e.g., were there assemblies of learning in which they participated as students and teachers; did their sympathies with ‘Alid causes affect the ways in which they learned or disseminated traditions?). Here it is worth noting how issues of gender impact our analysis. The entries for many of the men in the

early dictionaries are also anecdotal and brief. Nevertheless, because there are many more entries for men and because these entries can be supplemented with information about these men from other historical sources, we are able to emerge with a more complete composite picture of male participation in the early Shī'ī tradition than is possible for women.

Imāmī scholars after the fifth/eleventh century recognized that the objectives and scope of early *rijāl* works rendered them useful for identifying close associates of the Imāms and a number of other early authorities and for knowing the extremist tendencies (*ghuluww*) of some partisans of the Imāms. However, these works proved of limited utility for another important legal endeavor, namely, the systematic assessment of narrators who appeared in chains of transmission (*isnāds*) of the numerous traditions in circulation. The proliferation of traditions after the Occultation (*ghayba*) (260/874) made the task of assessing their reliability an even more urgent one.²⁰ By the eleventh/seventeenth century, this realization as well as the ideological impetus to rely more on authenticated traditions of the Imāms in the derivation of law led to greater study of the narrators found in *isnāds* of the major Shī'ī collections.²¹ Biographers cast their nets wider to scrutinize all transmitters of traditions included in the Shī'ī *ḥadīth* corpus. The *Jāmi' al-ruwāt* of Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Ardabilī (d. 1001/1593) is a well-known representative of this trend. Eighty-eight women are listed in al-Ardabilī's compendium.²² Yet, here as well, the entries for women are limited to one or two lines on each woman's significance or transmission activity. Chronological information is not provided; however, many of them can be readily identified as belonging to the first few generations of Muslims.²³ Twenty-two of the eighty-eight women are actually narrators who appear in the four most important early Shī'ī collections. Women such as 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr and various wives of Muḥammad are among those listed; as in the case of al-Ṭūsī's *Rijāl*, these women are included not because of their significant transmission activity insofar as Shī'ī sources are concerned but to identify them as Companions. Finally, some women are mentioned as being associated with an Imām but are not known for *ḥadīth* transmission.²⁴ Two other eleventh/seventeenth-century *rijāl* works, *Naqd al-rijāl* of al-Tafrīshī (fl. ca. mid-eleventh/seventeenth century) and *Majma' al-rijāl* of 'Īnāyat Allāh al-Quhpā'i (fl. early eleventh/seventeenth century), do not meaningfully change this picture of rather limited roles for women as *ḥadīth* transmitters in the Imāmī tradition.²⁵

Given the brevity of information about women in the compendia considered thus far, the *Riyād al-'ulamā' wa-ḥiyāq al-fuḍalā'* of Mīrzā 'Abd Allāh al-Iṣfahānī emerges as an unusual testament to women's religious participation in Imāmī Shī'ism. Unlike the eleventh/seventeenth-century works discussed earlier, which focused on *ḥadīth* transmitters, al-Iṣfahānī's work includes jurists and other notable Imāmī scholars from the rise of Islam up to the early twelfth/eighteenth century. Further, his section on women gives us colorful glimpses of women's lives. Since this section has been translated and analyzed in detail in the aforementioned article by Devin Stewart, I present only a summary and refer readers to Stewart's study where relevant.

Al-Iṣfahānī's section on women contains 19 entries, a small fraction of the total of 2,491 entries. Stewart remarks that the low representation of women may be

because al-İşfahānī did not complete this section. Indeed, as Stewart points out, al-İşfahānī ends his last entry mid-sentence suggesting that he may have intended to augment this section. In spite of this drawback, al-İşfahānī preserves an extraordinary record of the active participation of Imāmī women in various fields of religious learning. Three of the 19 women date from early Islam. Among them, Sukayna bint al-Ḥusayn (d. 117/736) is praised for her beauty, high character, and literary and poetic talents; her various marriages are referenced as well.²⁶

Al-İşfahānī's selection gives greater attention to women who lived sometime between the fifth/eleventh and twelfth/eighteenth centuries. Strikingly, up to 15 of the 19 women are praised for their legal discernment (four of them are described as "*faqīha*," i.e., female jurist) and/or hermeneutical engagement with various texts central to the Imāmī tradition.²⁷ For example, the sister of the scholar Raḥīm al-İşfahānī wrote out a commentary (*sharḥ*) of the *Lum'a al-Dimashqīyya*. The *Lum'a al-Dimashqīyya*, composed by al-Shahīd al-Awwal Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Makkī al-Āmilī (d. 786/1384), ranks among the most influential in Imāmī legal scholarship. The commentary that Raḥīm al-İşfahānī's sister copied out was the *Sharḥ al-Lum'a* of al-Shahīd al-Thānī Zayn al-Dīn al-Āmilī (d. 966/1559). Al-İşfahānī relates that he himself saw the commentary, that this woman had beautiful handwriting, and that she had studied with her father and brothers.²⁸

Not surprisingly, nearly all the women are related to prominent male scholars who likely provided these women with educational access and training. Āmina Khātūn, the daughter of jurist Muḥammad Taqī al-Majlisī (d. 1070/1659) and the sister of the renowned Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1111/1699), excelled in her religious learning such that her husband (a jurist in his own right) would seek her help in understanding passages of *Qawā'id al-ahkām*, 'Allāma al-Ḥillī's (d. 726/1325) legal text.²⁹ In a similar vein, Umm 'Alī, the wife of al-Shahīd al-Awwal, and Fāṭima, his daughter, are rendered as exemplary for the women of their community; they exhibit piety, uprightness, and are so knowledgeable in law that al-Āmilī encourages other women to seek their counsel.³⁰ Through these and other examples of women's religious learning, al-İşfahānī expands our understanding of the opportunities that Imāmī women availed, particularly in the era between the Greater Occultation (329/941) and the Safavid period contemporary with his life (up to the early twelfth/eighteenth century).

A Distinctive Imāmī Pattern: Analysis of the Data

This survey reveals that women's religious learning in Imāmī Shī'ism followed a distinct trajectory. While women's religious learning is documented from the time of the early Imāms onward, it does not appear that *ḥadīth* transmission evolved as a central arena for women's learning in the manner that it did in Sunnī communities. Rather, from the fourth/tenth century through al-İşfahānī's time, it is women's legal discernment and commentarial contributions that attract the attention of biographers. The analysis below examines this trajectory in greater detail. I incorporate

comparisons with early and classical Sunnism to call attention to how divergent approaches to *ḥadīth* transmission in turn impacted the activities of women as well as their representation in the two sectarian milieus.

The evidence presented above can be analyzed according to three chronological phases: the pre-Occultation period (up to 260/874), from the beginning of Occultation to the Safavid period (260–907/878–1502), and the Safavid period itself (907–1135/1502–1722). This chronological breakdown does not do justice to numerous intellectual and political evolutions in Shī'ī history.³¹ Nevertheless, it provides a basis for highlighting factors that are likely to have produced the aforementioned patterns in the selected biographical literature.

As the early *rijāl* literature reveals, in the pre-Occultation period, when the Imāms were able to provide direct guidance for their community, women did not figure prominently as authoritative transmitters of their traditions. During this era, the dispersion of religious authority in the early Shī'ī context was more closely regulated than in post-Occultation phases, and the transmission of reports was the province of a more limited set of disciples of the Imāms.³² Norms in early and classical Muslim societies that restricted interaction between the sexes would have meant fewer women would rank among the Imāms' close associates.³³ In these contexts, and given the widespread persecution of those sympathetic to the Imāms, the public dissemination of Shī'ī traditions is not likely to have been a task charged to many women.³⁴ In the few cases where women did indeed have close relationships with the Imāms, it may have been more difficult for biographers to gather information about them. As Stewart has noted, features such as the absence of full names of women (and references to them only in terms of their relations to male scholars, e.g., sister of X or mother of Y), may result from a desire to shield women from public attention.³⁵ The tendency may have been more pronounced in the minority Shī'ī community wherein secrecy about one's affiliation was a survival strategy.

A different view of early Shī'ī women's *ḥadīth* participation emerges from some Sunnī sources that indicate that women loyal to the 'Alid cause were known for narrating traditions. The fact that these traditions were ultimately not included in authoritative Imāmī compilations reinforces the notion of the strict regulation of religious authority during the period of the Imāms. Sunnī biographical and *ḥadīth* literature records that a number of female descendants of 'Alī and other women sympathetic to his cause narrated reports. These include women such as Umm Salama, a favored wife of Muḥammad, who was well known for her alliance with 'Alī and who is also one of the most authoritative of female Companions in the Sunnī sources. Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/845), in his *Ṭabaqāt*, includes biographies of several descendants of 'Alī b. Abi Tālib in his "listing of women who did not narrate from the Prophet but from his wives and from others." Among them are 'Alī's daughters, Umm Kulthūm and Zaynab, and his granddaughters, Fāṭima bint al-Ḥusayn and Sukayna bint al-Ḥusayn.³⁶ Of these women, only Zaynab bint 'Alī (d. 62/682) appears as an authority in the major early Shī'ī collections (she is credited with only a few traditions). Nafisa bint al-Ḥasan (d. 208/824), Prophet Muḥammad's great-great-granddaughter, extolled as an ascetic learned woman in both Sunnī and Shī'ī historical literature, is another outstanding example of a female 'Alid religious authority. Such was her fame that her tomb became and remains a popular visitation site in Cairo. According

to Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282), the leading Sunnī jurist al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 205/820) acquired *ḥadīth* from her.³⁷ Yet, she does not appear as a narrator in the Imāmī sources consulted here (nor is she numbered among the authoritative transmitters in the six canonical Sunnī collections).³⁸ Most importantly, Fāṭima, the daughter of Muḥammad and wife of ‘Alī, a figure who looms large in Shī‘ī hagiography and other literary and historical traditions, does not figure prominently in the four main Imāmī collections either. This is notwithstanding other, shorter collections of traditions on her authority.³⁹

The picture of closely regulated control over transmission authority during the period of the Imāms in the Shī‘ī context contrasts significantly with the early history of Sunnī *ḥadīth* transmission. Indeed, in the Sunnī sources, the first phase of significant female participation encompassed the decades immediately after the death of Muḥammad. During this time, numerous female Companions contributed reports about Muḥammad arising from their interactions with him. The canonical Sunnī collections record the contributions of approximately 112 female Companions to varying degrees. These women related their traditions in the unregulated, ad hoc environment that prevailed after the death of Muḥammad during which knowledge seekers accepted the authority of Companions primarily on the basis of their first-hand experiences rather than on the depth of their religious knowledge or their legal discernment. Among these, ‘Ā’isha bint Abī Bakr stands out as one of the three most prolific transmitters and is credited with close to 1,400 traditions.⁴⁰

The diffusion of *ḥadīth* transmission authority accompanied by widespread oral transmission of traditions (as witnessed among Sunnīs soon after the death of Muḥammad) does not appear to have occurred among the Imāmīs even after the Occultation. Al-Ṭūsī’s *Rijāl*, for example, lists comparatively fewer transmitters for post-Occultation eras (ca. 260/873 up to al-Ṭūsī’s life in the mid-fifth/eleventh century) than for earlier periods.⁴¹ Rather than promoting *ḥadīth* transmission and its ancillary disciplines, Imāmī ‘*ulamā*’ of the post-Occultation eras until the early Safavid period (260–907/878–1502) inclined toward theological and legal concerns and discourses—a predilection reflected in the scholarly production of this period.⁴² With respect to women’s religious learning, just over half of the female scholars documented by al-İṣfahānī in his *Riyāḍ* date to these centuries. All of them claim scholarly genealogies with many emerging from families of leading Imāmī scholars such as al-Ṭūsī, Ibn Ṭāwūs, and al-Shahīd al-Awwal. As noted above, these women are generally praised as scholars (*‘ālimas*) and a few of them as jurists (*faqīhas*). In this cohort of pre-Safavid women, none is termed *muḥadditha*, though several are said to have received certificates (*ijāzas*) of learning.⁴³ Thus, it appears that while men of the scholarly elite were increasingly engaging the women of their homes in religious learning, it was not *ḥadīth* transmission that prevailed as the primary arena for women’s involvement. As I discuss in greater detail later, these patterns in women’s religious education were a by-product of prevailing theological and legal inclinations in the Imāmī scholarly circles of those centuries.

The trend of educating women continued into the third phase, namely, the Safavid period, wherein women’s scholarly participation increased in the areas of legal learning, *ḥadīth* sciences, and commentarial production. Thus, al-İṣfahānī remarks on the insightful notes and exegetical activity of women such as Ḥamīda

(d. ca. 1087/1676), the daughter of Muḥammad al-Rūydashtī, and Āmina Khātūn (fl. eleventh/seventeenth century), the daughter of Muḥammad Taqī al-Majlisī, both profoundly engaged with legal texts central to the Imāmī tradition.⁴⁴

In these two phases as well, the Imāmī pattern differs significantly from what has been observed in classical Sunnī communities wherein *ḥadīth* transmission evolved as the central arena for women's religious education.⁴⁵ From the fifth/eleventh to the early tenth/sixteenth century, as Sunnī traditionalism prevailed over other theological and legal inclinations, women's participation in this arena experienced a major revival in urban centers such as Baghdad, Damascus, and Cairo.⁴⁶ Here it is important to briefly distinguish between the terms "traditionalism" and "traditionism." "Traditionism" is more apt for Imāmī Shī'ism where it designates a tendency to favor traditions (*ḥadīth* of the Prophet and Imāms) and has significance primarily for the derivation of Islamic law. "Traditionalism," on the other hand, connotes a worldview, and I use it to designate a broader intellectual, theological, and cultural movement among Sunnīs from the fourth/tenth to the tenth/sixteenth century. In Sunnī contexts, *ḥadīth* transmission served to maintain cohesion and continuity within Sunnī 'ulamā' family networks. Furthermore, it was an activity that allowed Sunnī rulers, men and women of the scholarly elite, and the lay classes to forge socially valuable bonds rooted in the common pursuit of religious knowledge. Their activities are a characteristic marker of urban centers of the Seljūk, Ayyūbid, and Mamlūk eras (ca. fifth/eleventh to ninth/fifteenth centuries).

Returning to the Imāmī context, we can readily point to the persistent persecution faced by Shī'īs as one explanation for the fact that *ḥadīth* transmission did not evolve into a communal activity providing social cohesion as it did for the Sunnīs. Shī'ī communities, aside from those under Shī'ī rule, generally did not have the liberty to convene public *ḥadīth* assemblies and create a deep-rooted, well-endowed institutional infrastructure for the propagation of Shī'ī *ḥadīth* studies.⁴⁷ This explanation, however, cannot fully account for the trends, as it is clear that some Shī'ī families of 'ulamā' produced female scholars (albeit not *muhaddithas*) in the pre-Safavid period. Furthermore, even Shī'ī communities that enjoyed the protection of the Safavid state did not develop a public, communal tradition of *ḥadīth* transmission that mobilized women.

In light of these factors, we must consider the possibility that other variables influenced the *social culture* of *ḥadīth* transmission, even among the scholarly classes where *ḥadīth* transmission was an important arena of religious learning and where several women are known to have received religious education. The contests between Imāmī traditionists and rationalists are a vital avenue for exploring this question of the social values associated with types of religious learning because the two ideologies assigned different weight to the importance of traditions in the derivation of Shī'ī law.⁴⁸ Whereas rationalists asserted the primacy of reason in ascertaining the validity and application of traditions, traditionists tended to eschew such human agency favoring instead a reliance on the apparent meaning of reports. The rationalist position necessitated a higher level of hermeneutical engagement with texts and independent reasoning whereas the traditionist position focused more on faithful transmission of texts.

In Imāmī Shī'ism, rationalists generally prevailed in the struggle between these groups. Imāmī traditionism exercised significant influence for two relatively short

periods: from approximately the mid-third/ninth century until the mid-fourth/tenth century and then again from eleventh/seventeenth century till the second half of the twelfth/eighteenth century. The latter period is generally referred to as the era of the Akhbārī revival. The long, complex history of the interaction and struggle between traditionism and rationalism in Imāmī Shī'ism has generated significant scholarly analysis, particularly with respect to its impact on the central enterprise of Shī'ī law and theology.⁴⁹ It is relevant to this chapter in terms that have not yet attracted scholarly attention, namely, the social history implicated in this struggle and its impact on the community beyond the male scholars who directly engaged in the disputes.

In an insightful analysis focusing on Sunnism, Ahmed El Shamsy notes that a complex social process entailing the dissemination, reception, and promulgation of ideas must occur for a theological vision (be it traditionalist, rationalist, or otherwise) to be established as orthodox.⁵⁰ The process cuts across social strata and implicates the ruling elite and scholarly classes, as well as ordinary believers. In Shī'ī contexts as well, the disputes between traditionalists and rationalists, two dominant, opposing theological-legal visions, reverberated beyond 'ulamā' circles and likely impacted the broader culture of religious education. The strength of rationalist influence for much of Imāmī history bolstered education consistent with the rationalist view, namely, a focus on legal, hermeneutical engagement with texts and a view that *ḥadīth* were important to the legal enterprise, but that transmission of them was not an end in and of itself.

In the absence of direct discussions about the influence of the traditionist/rationalist debates on women's education, the analysis below is inferential, but nonetheless consistent with developments outlined above. As previously discussed, *Jāmi' al-ruwāt* of al-Ardabīlī and the *Riyād al-'ulamā'* of al-Iṣfahānī were both composed in the context of the Akhbārī revival. Yet, neither dwells on the achievements of women as transmitters of reports. Al-Ardabīlī reflects Akhbārī concerns insofar as he provides a more complete list of female narrators than early authors of *rijāl* works. However, he does not venture further. His entry for Fāṭima, the Prophet's daughter, is likewise brief. He acknowledges her exalted, infallible status and states that her sayings constitute absolute proof and that she is above comparison with other women. Reference to collections of her traditions is missing thus leaving readers unaware of the extent of Fāṭima's contributions to the Shī'ī *ḥadīth* corpus.⁵¹ While Fāṭima is rendered thus, Umm Salama is simply identified as the wife of the Prophet and a Companion.⁵² Though Umm Salama did not narrate in any of the four canonical Shī'ī collections, she is among the most revered of Muḥammad's female Companions, ranking second only to Khadīja, Muḥammad's first and beloved wife.

Al-Ardabīlī's stark minimalism in the women's entries reflects a different project from that of some classical traditionalist Sunnī biographers such as Yūsuf b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mizzī (d. 742/1341) and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348). Al-Ardabīlī confined himself to legally oriented works. As a genre, these are sparser than works that include reports with more detailed narrative content in genres such as *faḍā'il* (virtues of Prophet Muḥammad and other notable Muslims) and *siyar* (biographical/historical traditions). His databank for women, therefore, would not have been extensive. By contrast, al-Mizzī and al-Dhahabī

drew on a broad range of compilations, and their biographies for women are noticeably richer and more evocative. The efforts of such Sunnī biographers shed light on the contributions of a number of female Companions and Successors and ultimately cast them as *muḥaddithas par excellence*. These early generations of women are precursors to Sunnī *muḥaddithas* of the Seljūk, Ayyūbid, and Mamlūk periods. During these eras, Sunnī traditionalism (in contradistinction to Imāmī traditionism) was limited not just to demanding priority for traditions as a source of law but rather articulated a culture and worldview that promoted the age of Prophet Muḥammad and the pious early generations as the Golden Age.⁵³ Sunnī traditionalism's emphasis on the importance of *ḥadīth* transmission, veneration and emulation of esteemed Companions and Successors, and ascetic piety drew in various social strata including rulers and 'ulamā' (male and female), as well as peddlers and small merchants.⁵⁴ As such, it was a broader social enterprise than Imāmī traditionism which was largely restricted to the plane of legal discourse about the sources of Shī'ī law. In the Sunnī context, the endeavors of scholars such as al-Mizzī and al-Dhahabī lent strength to traditionalism by casting early generations of men and women in terms that promoted traditionalist values.

Additional support for the idea that the Akhbārī revival had a different social impact from Sunnī traditionalism can be found in the *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā'*. The term "muḥadditha," among the more common honorifics for female scholars in the classical Sunnī biographical literature, is mentioned only once, in the entry of Bint al-Shaykh 'Alī al-Mīnshār. Even as al-Iṣfahānī notes her *ḥadīth* transmission, it is but one of the many qualities that he praises.⁵⁵ A similar approach characterizes his description of Ḥamīda, the learned daughter of Muḥammad al-Rūydashtī, one of al-Iṣfahānī's teachers.⁵⁶ She is commemorated in superlative terms for her religious learning, mystical insights, and the fact that she taught other women. It is clear from al-Iṣfahānī's comments that Ḥamīda was well-versed in 'ilm al-rijāl; it is the demonstration of this knowledge through her critical engagement with the texts that elicits his praise. Thus he notes that she authored commentaries on works of *ḥadīth*, such as the *Istibṣār* of al-Ṭūsī, and states that his own father referred to Ḥamīda's glosses and found them beneficial.⁵⁷ Ḥamīda stands out further as one of the few women to be credited with her own composition—in her case a work on *ḥadīth* transmitters entitled *Rijāl Ḥamīda*.⁵⁸ Thus, al-Iṣfahānī's *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā'* suggests that even during the stable, secure Safavid era that witnessed the Akhbārī revival, *ḥadīth* transmission did not gain traction as an enterprise that provided social cohesion and mobilized women in significant numbers.

Two modern compendia, the *A'yān al-Shī'a* of Muḥsin Amīn al-Āmilī (d. 1371/1952) and the *Mu'jam rijāl al-ḥadīth* of Abu'l-Qāsim b. 'Alī al-Khū'ī (d. 1413/1992), provide a final avenue for exploring the value associated with *ḥadīth* transmission as compared with other types of religious engagement.⁵⁹ The *A'yān al-Shī'a* of al-Āmilī is a monumental effort at documenting thousands of notable persons in Shī'ī historical memory from the first decades of Islam through the early twentieth century. As such, the work provides a fuller range of the accomplishments of women and adds to our knowledge in several respects. There are approximately 197 women commemorated by al-Āmilī who generally fall into one or more of the following categories: members of the *ahl al-bayt* (descendants of 'Alī or one of the

other Imāms), narrators of *ḥadīth*, scholars who demonstrated legal knowledge or contributed commentary, members of the ruling elite, female Companions, and finally, rhetoricians devoted to the Shī'ī cause.

If we chronologically plot the women included in the *A'yān*, we note that those credited with legal discernment lived after the fourth/tenth century with several of them thriving in the Safavid era. In the pre-*ghayba* period, high praise is generally accorded to women whose rhetorical skills and strong personalities made them symbols of Shī'ī resistance and devotion. Thus, in this cohort, Zaynab, the daughter of 'Alī and Fāṭima, emerges as the most impressive exemplar.⁶⁰ In an entry replete with lengthy, evocative descriptions, 'Āmilī describes Zaynab's fortitude in the face of persecution and tragedy. She was known as "*Umm al-maṣā'ib*" (the bearer of calamities), as she had to suffer the death of her grandfather, the Prophet, followed closely by the trials and death of her mother, the murder of her father, the poisoning of her brother, al-Ḥasan, and the martyrdom of her brother al-Ḥusayn and his supporters at Karbala. After the Battle of Karbala, Umayyad attempts to humiliate her and other prisoners were met with her unrelenting defiance articulated through her eloquent speeches in which she denigrates those who deserted the Shī'ī cause and upholds the honor of the martyred. Furthermore, the survival of 'Alī Zayn al-Ābidīn, the only one of al-Ḥusayn's sons to survive Karbala, is owed to her courageous and strategic maneuvering as she physically protected him after the Umayyad governor Ibn Ziyād ordered his execution. Her bravery thus ensured the continuation of the line of Imāms after the death of al-Ḥusayn. Further, there are some women about whom little is known except that they spoke eloquently in the face of Sunnī oppressors. Thus, first/eighth-century women such as Āmina bint Shurayd, Asmā' bint 'Aqīl, and Bakkāra al-Hilāliyya are commemorated through excerpts of their eloquent, poetic defenses.⁶¹

Al-Khū'ī's *Mu'jam*, encompassing 23 volumes with a total of 15,676 entries, ranks among the most comprehensive treatments of narrators in the Shī'ī tradition. Al-Khū'ī meticulously collates evidence from major Shī'ī *ḥadīth* and *rijāl* works and also corrects and clarifies ambiguities with respect to narrators who appear in *isnāds* under alternative names. His section on women contains 134 entries, again less than 1 percent of the total.⁶² Not surprisingly, his list overlaps with those of earlier biographers and mentions only ten additional women as narrators of traditions who do not have entries in al-Ardabīlī's *Jāmi' al-ruwāt*. Zaynab bint 'Alī, Umm 'Alī, and Fāṭima Umm Muḥammad are three women on whom al-Khū'ī bestows comparatively higher praise.⁶³ Here too, Zaynab bint 'Alī is commended for her staunch, outspoken criticism of tyranny against her brother and their family during the Battle of Karbala. Umm 'Alī and Fāṭima Umm al-Ḥasan, also mentioned by al-Iṣfahānī, are praised for their *fiqh*. Strikingly, even in this work devoted to *ḥadīth* transmitters, al-Khū'ī accords greater praise to the three women whose reputations are not in this arena while he uses more neutral terms to describe women who were known to narrate reports. The works of al-'Āmilī and al-Khū'ī show that up through the modern period, Imāmi Shī'īs have inclined toward elevating the model of the *faqīha*. In keeping with this trend, Iran has produced dozens of *mujtahidas* (high-ranking female jurists) equipped to issue rulings on a range of topics in Islamic law.⁶⁴ Further, the praise of Zaynab bint 'Alī's eloquent defiance of her oppressors

highlights a different avenue for Imāmī women's religious participation. Her exemplary conduct forged a new model of a female rhetorician who could compose, in short order, articulate, passionate defenses of the Imāms, their families, and of the Shī'ī cause in general.

Conclusions

This analysis sheds light on the range of women's religious participation in early and classical Shī'ī history. A comparison with Sunnī history reveals that trends in women's religious education and authority differed significantly in the two sectarian milieus. While the minority and persecuted status of Shī'īs is one factor that helps account for these divergences, we must also look to the reverberations of legal-theological debates within Shī'ism. Those debates likely shaped the social perceptions of different types of religious learning and extolled women who evinced legal discernment and critical, interpretive engagement with texts. In keeping with these inclinations, the genre of *'ilm al-rijāl* in Imāmism did not function to glorify and perpetuate the female *ḥadīth* transmitter as an exemplar in the manner of classical Sunnī literature. The evidence from early and classical Imāmī biographical works, though sparse, enables a more nuanced understanding of the development of Imāmī women's religious participation than was heretofore available through consultation only of hagiography and devotional literature.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Hossein Modarressi for his comments on an earlier draft of this chapter and for sharing his own notes on one of the women examined here. This chapter constitutes a *dhayl* of my doctoral dissertation on Sunnī women's *ḥadīth* transmission written under the guidance of Professor Modarressi. All mistakes, of course, remain my own.
2. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067), *Ikhtiyār ma'rifat al-rijāl* (abridgement of *Rijāl al-Kashshī* (d. ca. 368/978) (Qum: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmi, 1427/2006).
3. See Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1110/1699), *Biḥār al-anwār* (Tehran: Maṭba'at Ḥaydarī, 1956–70), 22:455–503 for an extensive collection of reports on the *wasīyya* of the Prophet Muḥammad and its variant texts.
4. There has been a steady stream of literature on the biographical genre since the mid-twentieth century. For an overview, see *EP*, s.v. "Ridjāl" (G. H. A. Juynboll). For a study of how this genre functioned across diverse intellectual, sectarian, and political milieus of early and classical Islam, see Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs to the Prophet in the Age of al-Ma'mūn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). For a more focused examination of biography and the construction of religious authority in Shī'ism, see Liyakat Takim, *Heirs of the Prophet* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006).
5. The following studies have analyzed Sunnī female *ḥadīth* participation: Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 161–81; Omaira Abou-Bakr, "Teaching the Words of the Prophet: Women Instructors of the *Ḥadīth* (Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries)," *Hawwa* 1, no. 3 (2003),

- 306–28; Bulliet, “Women and the Urban Religious Elite in the Pre-Mongol Period,” in *Women in Iran from the Rise of Islam to 1800*, ed. Guity Nashat and Lois Beck (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 68–79; Asma Sayeed, “Shifting Fortunes: Women and *Ḥadīth* Transmission in Islamic History,” unpublished PhD diss., Princeton University, 2005; and Mohammad Akram Nadwi, *Al-Muhaddithat: The Women Scholars in Islam* (London: Interface, 2007).
6. Devin Stewart, “Women’s Biographies in Islamic Societies: Mirzā ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥṣḥānī’s *Riyāḍ al-‘Ulamā’*,” in *Rhetoric of Biography: Narrating Lives in Persianate Societies*, ed. Louise Marlow, 106–39 (Boston: Ilex Foundation, 2011).
 7. There are 494 entries for individuals in the *Ikhtiyār*. Additionally, there are entries for groups of people (such as an entry for the Zaydiyya and an entry for “*ghulāt* during the time of Abū Muḥammad al-‘Askarī”).
 8. Al-Ṭūsī, *Ikhtiyār*, 107–108.
 9. Al-Ṭūsī, *Ikhtiyār*, 208–209.
 10. See Majlisī, *Biḥār*, 46:250 for a report about the sectarian inclinations of Kuthayr al-Nawwā’ (he was affiliated with the Batriyya sect, who did not acknowledge the sole authority of the Imām. See *EP*², s.v. “Batriyya” for an overview and a brief mention of Kuthayr al-Nawwā’s role in this sect). For a brief biography of Kuthayr, see ‘Alī al-Namāzī al-Shāhrūdī, *Mustadrakāt ‘ilm rijāl al-ḥadīth* (Tehran: Maṭba‘at Ḥaydari, 1994), 6:301–302.
 11. For the identification of Sa‘īda as the *mawla* (servant) of Umm Farwa, see Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Kulaynī (d. 329/941), *Kāfī* (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1983), 6:232 (in the second report of the section “*Bāb Idrāk al-Dhakāh*”).
 12. Al-Ṭūsī, *Ikhtiyār*, 308. See Maria Dakake, *Charismatic Community* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), 220–22 for comments on women as trustees of testaments and other valued documents in early Islam.
 13. This is a reference to Kufa, Ḥubbā’s hometown.
 14. For their entries, see Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Najāshī, *Rijāl al-Najāshī* (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwā’, 1988), s.v. “‘Ulayya bint ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan,” 2:830, and s.v. “Kulthūm bint Sulaym,” 2:189.
 15. For a discussion of the existence and survival of early written records (termed “*kitāb*” or “*asīl*”), see Hossein Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003), xiv–xv.
 16. Al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl al-Ṭūsī* (Qum: Mu‘assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1994). For male narrators as well, al-Ṭūsī provides only their names in many cases. The entries are arranged chronologically according to the lifetimes of the Imāms. The women’s entries follow the men’s entries in each section.
 17. See al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 51–53. Other such women whom al-Ṭūsī lists and who are known for transmitting in the Sunnī canonical collections but *not* in the Shī‘ī ones are Zaynab bint Jaḥsh and Sawda bint Zam‘a.
 18. Imāms who narrate to one or two women and the page references for the lists of women in al-Ṭūsī’s *Rijāl* are as follows: al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī (d. 49/669) (p. 96); al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī (d. 61/680) (p. 102); ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (d. 95/713) (p. 120); Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Bāqir (d. 114/733) (p. 151); Mūsā b. Ja‘far al-Kāzīm (d. 183/799) (p. 347); Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Jawād (d. 220/835) (p. 380); and ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Hādī (d. 254/868) (p. 394). Imāms ‘Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (d. 203/818) and Ḥasan b. ‘Alī al-‘Askarī (d. 260/874) have no women listed as narrating from them. There is also one woman, namely, Fāṭima bint Hārūn, who is included as an authority who narrated in the post-Occultation period (p. 452). Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq narrated to thirteen women (pp. 327–28), and as noted earlier, ‘Alī narrated to three women.
 19. Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Fihrist* (Qum: Mu‘assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1996).

20. For a greater elaboration of this point, see the article by Liyakat Takim, "The Origins and Evaluations of Hadith Transmitters in Shi'i Biographical Literature," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 24, no. 4 (Fall 2007), 26–49. See also Ja'far al-Subḥānī's useful introduction to the evolution of the genre of *'ilm al-rijāl*, which prefaces the *Rijāl al-Najāshī*, pp. "alif" to "yā".
21. This eleventh/seventeenth-century traditionist tendency is labeled as the Akhbārī revival in modern studies. I discuss the tendencies of rationalism and traditionism in greater detail below.
22. Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Ardabīlī, *Jāmi' al-ruwāt* (Qum: Maktabat Āyat Allāh al-'Uzmā al-Mar'ashī al-Najafī, 1982). The women's entries are listed at the end of the work (see al-Ardabīlī, 2:455–59). Al-Ardabīlī's two-volume compendium is not indexed, and I have not counted the male transmitters.
23. Although birth and/or death dates for the women are not given, al-Ardabīlī names the Imāms from whom they transmitted. These classifications, in turn, provide an approximate chronological framework.
24. These include women such as Ghanīma bint al-Azdī and Qanwā bint Rashīd, both of whom were associated with Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (see Ardabīlī, 2:458). It is likely that such women were in the household of the Imāms as servants.
25. Muṣṭafā b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥusaynī al-Tafrīshī, *Naqd al-rijāl* (Qum: Mu'assasat Āl al-Bayt, 1998) and 'Ināyat Allāh al-Quhpā'i, *Majma' al-rijāl* (Iṣfahān: n.p., 1964). *Al-Taḥrīr al-Ṭāwūsī*, another classical compendium, contains what survives of the *rijāl* work entitled *Hall al-ishkhāl* of the classical *ḥadīth* scholar Aḥmad b. Mūsā al-Ṭāwūs (d. 673/1274f). Compiled by the scholar Ḥasan b. Zayn al-Dīn (Ibn al-Shahīd al-Thānī) (d. 1011/1602), the *Taḥrīr al-Ṭāwūsī* is a close study of the narrators documented in al-Ṭūsī's *Ikhtiyār* with a view to a more definitive classification of their authority. As such, its entries for women are limited to the aforementioned four who have entries in the *Ikhtiyār*.
26. Mīrzā 'Abd Allāh al-Iṣfahānī, *Riyād al-'ulamā' wa-ḥiyād al-fuḍalā'* (Qum: Maktabat Āyat Allāh al-Mar'ashī al-Āmma, 1980–81), 5:409–10. Sukayna bint al-Ḥusayn is among the better-known early Muslim women (for an overview, see *EP* s.v. "Sukayna bint al-Ḥusayn"). For a contemporary Sunnī biography of her, see 'Ā'isha 'Abd al-Raḥmān (Bint al-Shāṭi'), *Sukayna bint al-Hasan* (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, n.d.). See also Jean-Claude Vadet, "Une personnalité féminine du Ḥiğāz au Ier/VIIe siècle: Sukayna, petite-fille de 'Alī," *Arabica* 4 (1957), 261–87.
27. In some cases, it is difficult to ascertain the extent of a woman's legal learning. One such case is that of Fāṭima, the daughter of Ḥamīda, who did not author any works but is praised for being knowledgeable. See al-Iṣfahānī, *Riyād*, 5:405.
28. Al-Iṣfahānī, *Riyād*, 5:409. The *sharḥ* of al-Shahīd al-Thānī is entitled *al-Rawḍa al-bahīyya fī sharḥ al-Lum'a al-Dimashqīyya*.
29. Al-Iṣfahānī, *Riyād*, 5:407. For a biography of Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf b. 'Alī b. Muṭahhar al-Hillī, among the most renowned Imāmī scholars, see *EP*, s.v. "al-Hillī."
30. Al-Iṣfahānī, *Riyād*, 5:403–404. For these notices, al-Iṣfahānī likely relies on their biographies as provided by al-Hurr al-Āmilī (d. 1104/1693) in his *Amal al-āmil fī 'ulamā' Jabal Āmil* (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Andalus, 1965), 1:193. (In this biographical dictionary, the entries on Umm 'Alī and Fāṭima bint al-Shahīd al-Awwal appear to be the only two entries accorded to women.)
31. See Hossein Modarressi's outline of Shī'i law according to eight phases for a more detailed analysis of the history and development of this legal tradition. Modarressi, *Introduction to Shī'i Law* (London: Ithaca Press, 1984), 24–58.

32. For discussions of qualifications of early Shī'ī transmitters, see Takim, *Heirs of Prophet*, chapter 4; and Etan Kohlberg, "Shī'ī Ḥadīth," in *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, ed. A. F. L. Beeston et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 299–303.
33. This is notwithstanding the possibility that gender norms were more relaxed in the earliest periods of Islamic history, as suggested in recent studies. Indeed as we see in the anecdotes recorded in the *Ikhtiyār* of al-Ṭūsī, these women interacted with Imāms. Yet we cannot conclude from these limited incidents that normative interactions between the sexes were completely unrestricted.
34. See Dakake, *Charismatic Community*, 213–35 for her analysis of early Muslim women's identification with the cause of the 'Alids.
35. Stewart, "Women's Biographies," 124–25.
36. References to their biographical entries in Ibn Sa'd's *Tabaqāt* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1904–18) are as follows: Umm Kulthūm, 8:339–41; Zaynab bint 'Alī, 8:341; Fāṭima bint al-Ḥusayn, 8:347–48; Sukayna bint al-Ḥusayn, 8:349. Ibn Sa'd also mentions a number of other women who narrated from 'Alī. See the following entries in Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*: Umm Mūsā, 8:356; Umm Khidash, 8:356; and 'Amra bint al-Ṭibbikh, 8:358.
37. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut, 1968), 5:423–24.
38. Her absence as a prolific transmitter may be due to her residence in the area of modern-day Cairo. During her lifetime (in the mid–late second/eighth century), this area was far from other, more prominent centers of learning such as Damascus, Basra, Kufa, and Baghdad, making it less likely that transmitters would encounter her and study traditions with her.
39. See Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival*, 17–22 for a list of compilations of traditions on the authority of Fāṭima as well as those about her life and virtues.
40. For a more detailed discussion of the participation of female Companions and Successors in *ḥadīth* transmission, see Sayeed, "Shifting Fortunes," chapters 1 and 2 (see pp. 33–43 for an analysis of 'A'isha's *ḥadīth* transmission).
41. See al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 408–52 in his section "*Bāb man lam yarwi 'an wāḥid min al-a'imma.*" Here al-Ṭūsī lists 509 transmitters. There are 5,290 in the centuries before the Occultation; Ja'far al-Ṣādiq alone is said to have narrated to 2,224 individuals (for the section on those who narrated from Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, see al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 153–328).
42. Modarressi, *Introduction to Shī'ī Law*, 32–50. This is notwithstanding the relatively short-lived period of traditionist influence in Qum from approximately the mid-third/ninth to the mid-fourth/tenth century. As I discuss below, from the Occultation until the early Safavid period, factions favoring deeper engagement with *ḥadīth* as a legal source did not exercise extensive influence in Imāmism.
43. It is unclear whether these are certificates for legal learning or for *ḥadīth* transmission. Here it is worth noting that terms employed by biographers include "*ālīma*," "*fādila*," and "*faqīha*" and are intended to convey rank as well as the level and types of learning acquired by the subjects of the biographies. The term *fādila* is one that occurs frequently in the biographies of women. Due in part to its generic connotations (as a person of preference) and also due to evolving understandings of religious education, it is difficult to precisely translate "*fādila*." In al-Iṣfahānī's work, "*fādila*" seems to distinguish women who are not at the highest rank of scholarship (signified for male scholars by terms such as *'allāma*, *'ālim kabīr*, or *muḥaqqiq*). Ḥamīda bint Muḥammad al-Rūdashī, one of the most accomplished female scholars in al-Iṣfahānī's work, is designated "*allāmata*" (al-Iṣfahānī, *Riyāḍ*, 5:404–405). Also see Stewart, "Women's Biographies," 119–23, for his insightful comments on the terms that occur in women's biographies and the importance of being sensitive to their multiple connotations.

44. For Ḥamīda's biography, see al-Iṣfahānī, *Riyāḍ*, 5:404–405. For Āmina Khātūn's biography, see al-Iṣfahānī, *Riyāḍ*, 5:407.
45. This is notwithstanding the important role of Islamic mysticism in incorporating women. Two studies that focus on mysticism, Sufism, and women are Annemarie Schimmel, *My Soul Is a Woman* (New York: Continuum, 1997) and Rkia Cornell, *Early Sufi Women* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 1999). Additionally, some early Muslim women, such as Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuġhrā (d. ca. 81/700), 'Amra bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 98/716), and Ḥafsa bint Sīrīn (d. 101/719) acquired reputations for legal learning and Qur'ānic interpretation. Biographical references for them are as follows: for 'Amra bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān's biography, see al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1981), 4:507–508; for that of Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuġhrā, see al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 4:277–79; and for that of Ḥafsa bint Sīrīn, see al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 4:508–509.
46. With respect to historical trends, the level of female *ḥadīth* transmission among Sunnīs had declined in era of the Successors (ca. early second/eighth century) and continued to be negligible till the mid-fourth/tenth century. I've analyzed these trends in my dissertation "Shifting Fortunes," chapters 2 and 3.
47. Here I refer to the well-known practice of endowing institutions, professorships, and student stipends for the study of *ḥadīth*, which became more widespread during the Seljūk, Ayyūbid, and Mamlūk periods. See, for example, Stephen Humphreys, "Politics and Architectural Patronage in Ayyubid Damascus," in *Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times*, ed. C. E. Bosworth et al., 151–74 (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1989). Stewart makes similar observations with respect to the training and qualifications of the women in *Riyāḍ al-ulamā'* and notes that there was greater interest in *ḥadīth* learning under the Safavids.
48. For a historical overview of the debate, see Hossein Modarressi, "Rationalism and Traditionalism in Shī'ī Jurisprudence: A Preliminary Survey," *Studia Islamica* 59 (1984), 141–58. See also *EP*, s.v. "al-Akhbāriyya" (Wilferd Madelung), and *Encyclopedia Iranica*, s.v., "Akḥbārāya" (Etan Kohlberg).
49. A few of these studies include Juan Cole, "The Akhbari-Usuli Controversy Reconsidered," *Iranian Studies* 18 (1985), 3–34; Robert Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbārī Shī'ī School* (Boston: Brill, 2009); Etan Kohlberg, "Aspects of Akhbārī Thought in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Eighteenth-Century Renewal and Reform in Islam*, ed. N. Levtzion, 133–60 (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1987); Andrew Newman, "Development and Political Significance of the Rationalist (*Uṣūlī*) and Traditionalist (*Akhbārī*) Schools in Imāmī Shī'ī History from the Third/Ninth to the Tenth/Sixteenth Century," unpublished PhD diss., UCLA, 1986; Newman, "The Nature of the Akhbārī/Uṣūlī Dispute in Safawid Iran. Part I: 'Abdallāh al-Samāhijī's *Munyat al-Mumārīsīn*," and "Part II: The Conflict Reassessed," in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 55 (1992), 22–51 (for part I) and 250–61 (for part II); Devin Stewart, "Genesis of the Akhbārī Revival," in *Safawid Iran and her Neighbors*, ed. Michel Mazzoui, 169–93 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003).
50. Ahmed El Shamsy, "The Social Construction of Orthodoxy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 97.
51. See note 39 for a reference to compilations on the authority of Fāṭima.
52. A notation after her entry [the Arabic letters mīm and ḥā'] signifies that her name also appears in the *rijāl* work composed by Muḥammad Mīrzā al-Astarābādī (d. 1028/1619).
53. See Asma Afsaruddin, "Reconstituting Women's Lives: Gender and the Poetics of Narrative in Medieval Biographical Collections," *Muslim World* 92, no. 3/4 (Fall 2002), 461–80, for her observations on the selectivity of medieval Muslim biographers.

54. The literature on Sunnī traditionalism is extensive. See, for example, George Makdisi, "The Sunni Revival," reprinted in *History and Politics in Eleventh Century Baghdad* (Aldershot, UK: Variorum, 1991). William A. Graham, "Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23, no. 3 (Winter 1993), 495–522, and Jonathan Berkey, *The Formation of Islam* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), chapters 15, 20, and 23.
55. Al-İşfahānī, *Riyād*, 5:407.
56. Al-İşfahānī, *Riyād*, 5:404–405.
57. Al-İşfahānī, *Riyād*, 5:405.
58. The work is listed among the *'ulūm al-rijāl* works in Āghā Buzurg al-Tīhrānī, *Dhari'a ilā taṣānif al-Shi'a* (Tehran: Maṭba'at al-Gharī, 1936–), 10:114. See also Āghā Buzurg al-Tīhrānī, *Muṣaffā al-maqāl fi muṣannaḫī 'ilm al-rijāl* (Tehran: n.p., 1959), 162–63 for al-Tīhrānī's biographical notice on Ḥamīda, which draws primarily on al-İşfahānī's *Riyād*.
59. Muḥsin al-Amīn al-Āmilī, *A'yān al-Shi'a* (Beirut: Dār al-Ta'āruḫ, 1986) and Abu 'l-Qāsim al-Mūsawī al-Khū'i, *Mu'jam rijāl al-ḥadīth wa taḥṣīl tabaqāt al-ruwā* (Qum: Markaz Nashr Āthār al-Shi'a, 1989). The modern *Qāmūs al-rijāl* of al-Tustarī also devotes considerable attention to women and gathers information from a range of sources (201 entries for them can be found toward the end of the twelfth volume of his work). However, his focus is on the early (pre-*ghayba*) period and thus does not provide the expanded view available in al-Āmilī's *A'yān*. Further, al-Tustarī also evinces a more polemical tone and a concern to place women of early Islam with respect to their sectarian inclinations. His entry for 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr, for example, dwells on her betrayal of 'Alī (12:290–305); with respect to Umm Khālid, who is granted an entry in the *Ikhtiyār*, he points out that she was likely a Zaydī rather than an Imāmī (See al-Tustarī, *Qāmūs al-rijāl* [Qum: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1989], 12:201–202). Another modern work that contains a section of brief biographies of prominent early women (not all of them *ḥadīth* transmitters) is 'Alī al-Namāzī al-Shāhrūdī's *Mustadrakāt*, 8:544–602. Two modern biographical works focusing only on Shī'i women are Muḥammad Ḥassūn, *A'lām al-nisā' al-mu'mināt* (Qum (?): Intishārāt-i Usva, 1990) and Zābih Allāh Maḥallātī, *Rayāḥin al-shari'a dar tarjumah-i dānishmandān-i bānūān-i Shi'ah* (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1954). The more recent interest in uncovering Shī'i women's *ḥadīth* participation is also evinced in the following two-part article: Mahdī Mahrizī, "Sahm zanān dar nashr-i ḥadīth," *'Ulūm-i ḥadīth* 26: vol. 7, no. 3, 52–68 (Part I) and 26: vol. 7, no. 4, 140–62 (Part II).
60. Al-Āmilī, *A'yān*, 7:137–42.
61. Their entries in al-Āmilī's *A'yān* occur as follows: Āmina bint Shurayd, 2:95; Asmā' bint 'Aqīl, 3:305, and Bakkāra al-Hilāliyya, 3:589. Much of the material about women's eloquence in early Shī'i contexts is drawn from the early work of Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr (d. 280/893), *Balāghāt al-nisā'*, which commemorates the rhetorical skills of several early Muslim women.
62. For the section on women, see al-Khū'i, *Mu'jam*, 23:170–201. The total number of entries does not account for the entries numbered separately for both men and women, but which ultimately refer to the same narrator.
63. The entries for the three women in al-Khū'i's *Mu'jam* are as follows: Zaynab bint 'Alī, 23:190–191; Umm 'Alī, 23:179; and Fāṭima Umm al-Ḥasan, 23:196.
64. See, for example, Mirjam Kunkler and Roja Fazaeli, "The Life of Two *Mujtahidas*: Female Religious Authority in 20th Century Iran" (forthcoming).