

Validating and Dating the Tradition "al-Mar'atu 'Awrah" in Ḥadith Sources

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Introduction

Traditions concerning women, particularly those adopt an authoritarian and un-empathetic approach towards them; have always been a subject of dispute in Islamic sources, with varying interpretations of their texts. Despite this, throughout the history of Islamic thought and in formal religious domains such as jurisprudence, these texts have been extensively exploited against women.

It seems that one reason for the lack of serious critical engagement with such texts is the traditional methodology of Muslim scholars, who have approached such themes cautiously and have not subjected them to rigorous criticism. One example of these themes is the tradition "lockup women in their homes, women are 'Awrah, and..." attributed to Ibn Mas'ūd.

The essence of this tradition is the effect of the stimulating female body on men, causing arousal in them. Because religious individuals believe that the ethical and psychological balance of men is disturbed by the presence of women in society, they have concluded that women should be kept perpetually in their homes.

This tradition, which forms a basis for reducing the personality of women and a form of promoting violence against them, is the subject of this article, which validates it using the Isnad-matn dating method.

Materials and Methods

By employing methods in the critique of sources, the critique of Isnads, and the analysis of the texts of Islamic traditions, orientalists examine the time, place, and authors of a tradition within its historical context. They explore the evolution, development, and conditions of emergence of that tradition, and, in technical terms, date it.

This article, using the dating and simultaneous analysis of Isnads and matn, first re-examines the Isnads of the tradition, then examines the content of the text, and finally examines the simultaneous evolution of the Isnads and matn in various sources.

In the dating of the tradition's Isnads, by drawing a spider web network, from the time of the text's appearance in the first ḥadith source (Ibn Abī Shaybah and ‘Abdul Razzāq Ṣan‘ānī) to the last source with an independent chain of transmission (Ibn Kathīr), the main and secondary common links of the tradition are identified, and the biographical data of the main individuals in the chain of transmission and their lifespans are determined.

The analysis of the narrative text begins with an examination of the term "‘Awrah" in religious and literary texts, followed by its emergence in the earliest official ḥadith sources up to the latest ones. It also considers various textual versions and the evolution of the text across different sources. Furthermore, it analyzes the timing of the use of this term in jurisprudential texts as a religious commandment, and investigates the time and process of its introduction from Sunni to Shia sources.

The combined analysis of Isnads and matn involves identifying the main common link and the disseminator of the ḥadith, determining the time and place of the original speaker, and examining the personalities of the main and secondary common links throughout the entire diagram. The reasons for presenting such a text from the beginning of the chain of transmitters (Isnād) to the last transmitters, and the evolution and gradual expansion of the text from one source to another and from one Isnād to another, are analyzed. The responsibility of individuals for additions to the texts throughout the history of the ḥadith's dissemination is also identified.

Results and Findings

Dating the ḥadith "al-Mar’atu ‘Awrah..." using the combined method of Isnad – matn analysis reveals that, despite the use of the term "‘Awrah" in the Holy Quran, it has Persian and Hebrew precedents. The concept of women being considered "‘Awrah" gained attention in Arab society with cultural interactions following the conquests, to the extent that this idea was elevated to an ḥadith in the Islamic community in the third century AH. The main common link of this text is Abul Aḥwaṣ Jushamī, which was disseminated through two secondary common links, Ḥumayd ibn Hilāl (d. between 105-120 AH) and Qatāda (d. 110 AH), although Ṭabarānī attributes the main responsibility for its dissemination to Qatāda.

The first official sources of this text in Sunni Islam are al-Muṣannaf of ‘Abdul Razzāq and Ibn Abī Shaybah, and the last source with an independent Isnād is Tafsir Ibn Kathīr in the eighth century AH, but the main text was disseminated through Tirmidhī.

The content of this ḥadith gradually made its way into Zaydi sources, and then in the seventh century AH, through Allamah Ḥillī, into Shia sources.

The word ‘Awrah in pre-Islamic texts, specifically in Genesis, means "Spy," and in Exodus, it refers to "Genitals."

Considering that there are no depictions of women on the walls of Persepolis or other ancient Iranian artifacts, except for a few depictions with complete coverage in the Pazyryk carpet and a bas-relief in the Istanbul Museum,

Some researchers consider this an example of the ancient Iranian culture's view of women as 'Awrah, believing that the term 'Awrah, with the meaning of veiled or hidden women, existed in ancient Iranian culture.

This is also seen in post-Islamic texts like the *Shahnameh*, *Mawlawi's Masnavi*, and in colloquial Iranian culture.

The word 'Awrah appears in two verses of the Quran meaning "Protection" and "Time of nakedness," and in one verse with its modern-day meaning. However, in jurisprudential texts, this word is used in discussions of the boundaries of women's hijab.

The evolution of the text of the tradition can be traced from the 3rd to the 8th centuries AH, and in Sunni texts, it is consistently associated with the word "Satan."

These texts indicate that earlier, in the initial centuries, the concept of women as 'Awrah was a contemporary discourse, which became closer to Arabic culture with the conquests. It then gained attention from Muslim scholars and was redefined from text to text.

Since Iraq had greater intellectual proximity to the newly conquered lands, especially Iran, this view was first seen among the Kufians and Basrians and their strict jurists, and then spread to other Islamic regions.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis in this research, the phrase "al-Mar'atu 'Awrah" is a description of the Iraqi perspective on women, and its first proponents in the second century AH, without attributing the text to the Prophet (PBUH), were the jurists of Kufa and Basra, who were influenced by the strict views of Ibn Mas'ūd regarding women.

This tradition is found in the Sunni Hadith collection, *Sunan Tirmidhī*, ascribed to the Prophet (PBUH), although Tirmidhī himself considered its chain of transmission to be *Gharīb* (unfamiliar).

The emergence of this tradition dates back to the second half of the first century in Kufa, with its growth occurring in the second half of the second century in Basra. It was definitively recorded in the 4th to 8th centuries AH in the narrative sources, marked by an inverse growth of the chain of tradition (*Isnād*) and the expansion of the text (*Matn*), and it became widespread in all Islamic regions.

Keywords: 'Awrah, Dating, Ibn Mas'ūd, Kufa, Basra.