

Sneaker's Corner presents

Did A'isha and Fatima exist?



Who was A'isha according to the Islamic tradition?

- She supposedly was Muhammad's youngest wife.
- She is referred to as the "Mother of the Believers". [A role uncannily similar to the Virgin Mary, see John 19:26-27]
- She is alleged to have spread Muhammad's message for 44-50 years after his death. [Yet she left no written biography of Muhammad.]

A'isha is a very important part of the Islamic tradition

- A'isha is mentioned **55** times in Ibn Hisham's Sirah Nabi or biography of Muhammad
- For example: 'Abdullah b. Abu Bakr via 'Amra daughter of 'Abdu'l-Rahman Sa'd b. Zurara told me that **'A'isha said**: 'I saw the leader of the elephant and its groom walking about Mecca blind and crippled begging for food.'
- Al-Zuhri related from 'Urwa b. Zubayr that **'A'isha told him** that when Allah desired to honour Muhammad and have mercy on His servants by means of him, the first sign of prophethood vouchsafed to the apostle was true visions, resembling the brightness of daybreak, which were shown to him in his sleep. And Allah, she said, made him love solitude so that he liked nothing better than to be alone.

According to Islamic tradition, A'isha is the source for 2,210 hadiths!

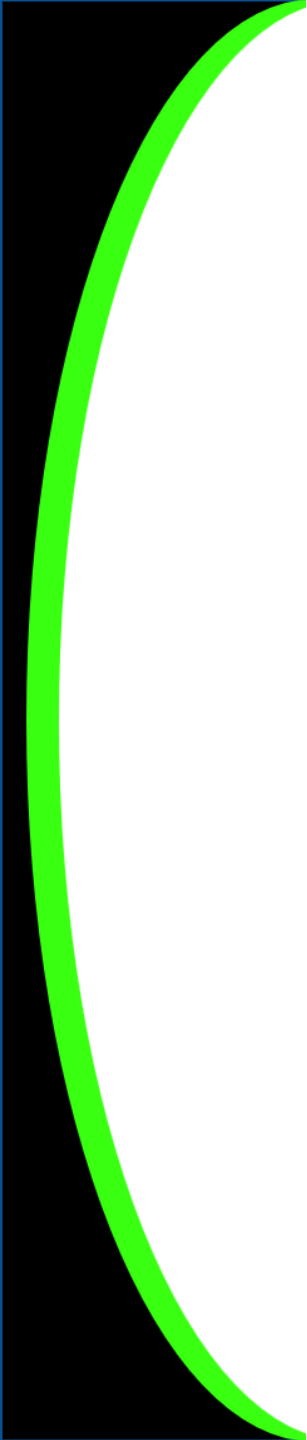
She is also known for narrating **2,210 hadiths***, not just on matters related to Muhammad's private life, but also on topics such as inheritance, pilgrimage, and eschatology.

*Maqrīzī, *Imtā' al-asmā'*, vol. 6, p. 43



Sahih al-Bukhari contains around 2,600 ahadith without repetitions and 7,563 ahadith with repetitions.

- The word “A’isha” appears 1373 times in 952 hadiths in Sahih Al-Bukhari.
- This equates to 12.5% of those Sahih hadiths, whose veracity depend on A’isha’s existence.



A'isha is a very convenient source for the Islamic tradition as her youth helps to bridge the huge gap between Muhammad's time and the late 8th century when the Sirah was written.

Who was Fatima according to the Islamic tradition?

- Fatima was the **youngest** daughter of the Muhammad and Khadijah, according to Sunni Muslims, but according to Shia Muslims, their only child who lived to adulthood, and therefore part of Muhammad's household.
- Her husband was **Ali**, the last of the Rightly Guided Caliphs and the first Shia Imam, and her children include Hasan and Husayn, the second and third Imams, respectively.
- Her name is one of the most popular for girls throughout the Muslim world.

- As we can see a lot of the tradition's veracity hinges on her being a real person that existed in the early 7th century.

Fatima is an important part of the Islamic tradition

- Fatima appears 44 times in Ibn Hisham's Sirah.
- The name "Fatima" appears 96 times in 74 hadiths in Sahih Al-Bukhari.
- For example, Narrated Abu Hazim: Sahl bin Sa'd As-Sa'idi, was asked by the people, "With what was the wound of the Prophet treated? Sahl replied, "None remains among the people living who knows that better than I. 'Ah used to bring water in his shield and **Fatima** used to wash the blood off his face. Then straw mat was burnt and the wound was filled with it." (Book [#4](#), Hadith [#244](#))
- [Fatima appears to be taking the role of Veronica wiping the face of Jesus with a cloth which is found in some Christian traditions.]

- Apart from this, Fatima is central to the story of how Shiism began.



I've not seen any 7th century source mention the existence of either A'isha or Fatima.

The Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

- When Robert Hoyland published his book “Seeing Islam as Other Saw It” in 1997, this Targum was widely wrote off as written in Islamic times.
- He asks whether we should consider it “a post-Islamic compilation, drawing on earlier materials and engaged in a rebuttal of Islam's pretensions?”
- Most secular academics held to that view.
- However, a more recent analysis by Beverly Mortensen dates Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to the **4th century** and regards it as a manual for kohanim. She argues that it was written by priests for priests. Her work came out in 2006, almost 10 years after Seeing Islam as Others Saw it. It was a very scholarly tome, coming out in 2 volumes.

A note from Joe

“the Targums are a kind of Midrashic material because they translate scripture while drawing from Mishnah and designed as Manuals from the Levitical Priesthood.”

The Mishnah were the first major written collection of the Jewish oral traditions known as the Oral Torah.

An excerpt from the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

Arise, take the boy and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him." The Lord uncovered her eyes, and a well of water was revealed to her, and she went and filled the water-skin with water and gave the boy a drink. The Memra of the Lord was at the assistance of the boy and he grew up. He dwelt in the wilderness and became a skilled bowman. He [Ishmael] dwelt in the desert of Pharan and took as wife Adisha. But he divorced her and his mother took Fatima as wife for him from the land of Egypt.

A quick aside: “Muhammad” was intentionally made to be like Ishmael (amongst others).

- Re. [Ishmael] dwelt in the desert of Pharan, Thomas Artsruni in the late 9th century writes that “At that time, in a place of Petrea Arabia **Pharan**, named Makka - The Mecca – he [Muhammad] showed himself to brothers bandits, warriors and band chiefs, who were worshiping in a temple the idols of Ammonites, Samam and Kabar.”
- This would indicate there was an attempt to identify Muhammad with Ishmael.

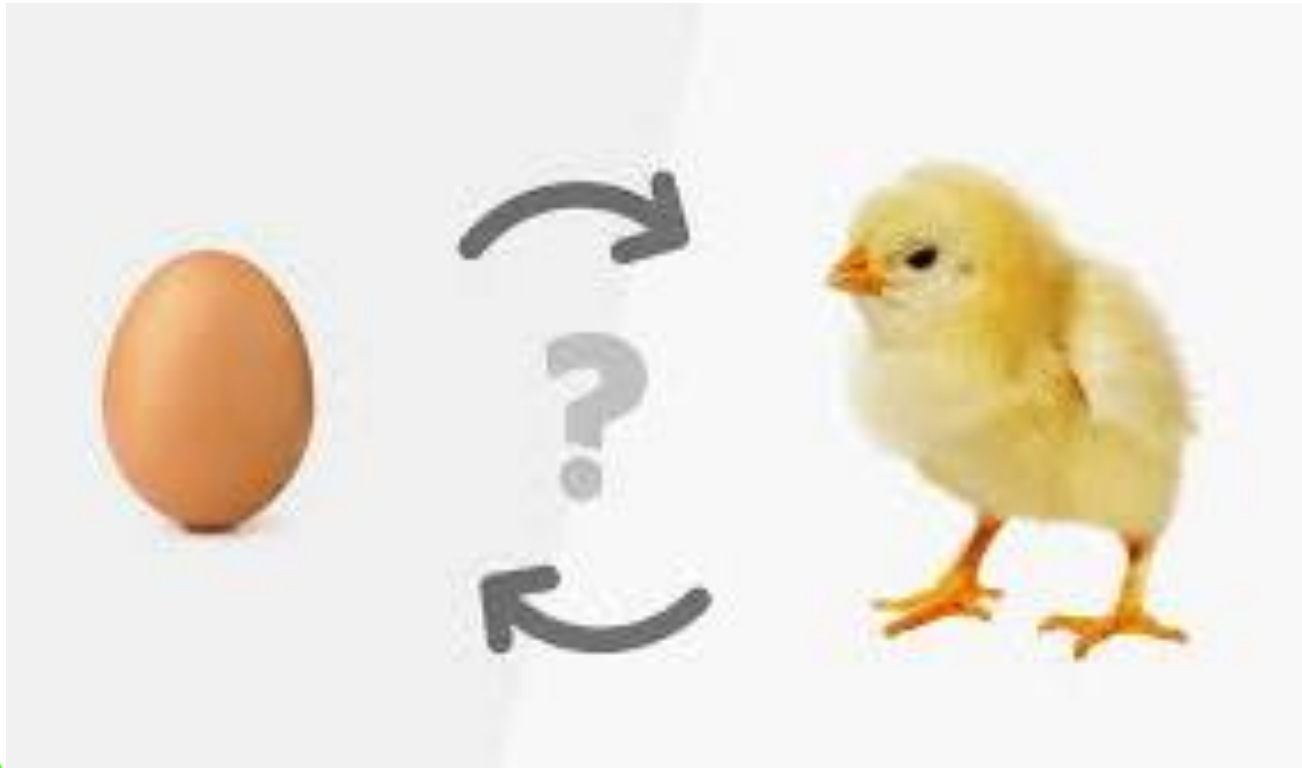
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If Beverly Mortensen's dating is correct, then A'isha and Fatima are a borrowed motif...

- Note Ishmael is married to Adisha, and then Fatima.
- Adisha in Aramaic becomes A'isha in Arabic.
- "Fatima" has been switched from being the wife of Ishmael to the daughter of Muhammad, who plays the role of the archetypal Ishmael.
- Additional note from Joe: "this Mishnah is no-doubt part of the origin behind the Islamic ideas concerning Fatima. At the very least the Targum shows that the community that named Fatima had access to the Mishnah and is yet more evidence concerning the Judaic origins of Islam and more importantly how much of an influence the Targums were on that community meaning that it is no coincidence that the Quran looks like a mish-mash of the remnants of a Judaic manual for Idumean Priests too. I believe Aisha is another confused mish-mash so Adisha could be a component of her as well as the word Eishah meaning woman/wife."

Weighing up which came first



- It is conceivable that the Jewish writings had an influence on the later religion of Islam, but not vice versa.
- It is much more likely that Adisha became A'isha, than that the A'isha of the Islamic tradition entered the Jewish tradition as Adisha. This also fits in with a host of other evidence of borrowing of religious vocabulary from Hebraic and Syriac sources.

Constructing the A'isha myth:

1) Zenobia

There was an obvious need to have a female figure on a par with Queen Zenobia (3rd century).

She had tried to turn Palmyra into a center of culture and learning. To do so, she hired one of the most prominent philosophers of the age, Cassius Longinus, who had taught philosophy at Athens. (Source: Trevor Bryce, *Ancient Syria*, p. 301).

Likewise, A'isha's intellect and knowledge in various subjects, including poetry and medicine, were highly praised by early luminaries such as al-Zuhri and Urwa ibn al-Zubayr.



Constructing the A'isha myth:

1) Zenobia

While Zenobia fled the Romans on the back of a camel after being defeated, A'isha attempted to lead an equally disastrous battle on the back of a camel – the supposed battle becoming known as the “Battle of the Camel.”

Source: <https://www.ancient.eu/zenobia/>





Constructing the A'isha myth:

2) Queen Mavia (4th -5th century AD)

Māwiyya (Mavia)

- Historically confirmed
- Queen of the Saracens
- Mavia was a warrior
- She rose to power after the death of her husband

A'isha

- A myth
- Mother of the Believers
- A'isha was a warrior
- She rose to power after the death of her husband



Constructing the A'isha myth:

3) Mu'awiya

Mu'awiya

- Historically confirmed
- Name echoes Māwiyya, Queen of the Saracens
- Went to war against Ali
- Political power –Governor of Syria (640-661), Caliph (661-680).
- Amir al-Mu'minin (leader of the Believers)

A'isha

- A myth
- Name echoes Adisha, Ishmael's wife
- Went to war against Ali
- Political power according to SIN from 44 to 50 years after Muhammad died, ie 632-682.
- 'umm al-mu'minīn (Mother of the Believers).

The Islamic House of Cards has come crashing down!



- The stories of A'isha and Fatima appear to be based on a 4th century Targum that mentions these as Ishmael's wives. This calls into question the historical reliability of the hadiths themselves and the isnad they are built upon. If these were fictional, what else was made up?