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THE MEDINAN WIVES OF 'UMAR B. AL-KHATTĀB AND
HIS BROTHER, ZAYDPeople, Tribes and Society in Arabia
Around the Time of Muḥammad

For Franz Rosenthal on his eighty-fifth birthday

VIII The Medinan Wives of 'Umar b. al-Khattāb and
his Brother, Zayd
Oriens 36. Leiden, 2001

242-247

Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi Kütüphanesi	
Dem. No:	286323
Tas. No:	953 LEC-D

01 Temmuz 2021

MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN

The Arabic genealogical literature, which is the outcome of the well-known Arab preoccupation with genealogy, is one of the best sources for the study of early Islamic history. This short paper analyzes several interesting genealogical details relating to the second of the Righteous Caliphs, 'Umar b. al-Khattāb, and his brother, Zayd. It will be shown that two of 'Umar's wives belonged to the Aws, more precisely, to the 'Amr b. 'Awf (who were inhabitants of the village of Qubā' to the south of Medina). Interestingly, 'Umar's elder brother, Zayd, also had two wives from among the 'Amr b. 'Awf. Two of these four marriages are especially notable: after the Hijra, 'Umar married the granddaughter of the Prophet's arch-enemy, Abū 'Āmir, nicknamed *al-rāhib*, or "the God-fearing", while *before the Hijra* Zayd married Abū 'Āmir's daughter.¹

1. 'Umar b. al-Khattāb

1.1. *Su'ayda bint Rāfi'*

Let us begin with the least known of these marriages. The list of 'Umar's sons in Muṣ'ab al-Zubayrī's *Nasab Quraysh* is concluded with 'Abdallāh

¹ See already T. Nagel, "Some considerations concerning the pre-Islamic and the Islamic foundations of the authority of the caliphate", in G.H.A. Juynboll (ed.), *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society*, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982, 177-97, at 183-84 ('Umar married Jamila bint Thābit of the 'Amr b. 'Awf, Zayd married her sister Ḥabība [*sic*], 'Umar had a second wife from the same clan). Nagel refers to Muṣ'ab b. 'Abdallāh al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, ed. E. Lévi-Provençal, Cairo 1953, 349 ('Umar and Jamila), 350 ('Umar's son, 'Abdallāh *al-aṣghar*, was born by Su'ayda bint Rāfi') and 363 (Zayd married Lubāba bint Abi Lubāba). I could not find the reference to Ḥabība, and it may be a misprint; read: Lubāba bint Abi Lubāba.

Hampshire 2005
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