Imāmiyya and Sīra Writing in the Second and Fourth Centuries AH

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Abstract

Sīra writing (that is, works about life and practices of the Prophet), which emerged in the Islamic world from mid-second century AH onwards, was not limited to a particular sect but rather was practiced by various Islamic factions, including the Imāmiyya. Sources have pointed to an impressive number of sīras written by Imāmi scholars. These works have been written in different categories, including the Prophet’s battles (al-maghāzī), his virtues (fadāʾil), evidence of his prophethood (dalāʾil), delegations of the Prophet (wufūd), narrations or hadiths, and the like. An analysis of the available texts from these categories’ points to the emergence of a model among Imāmi sīra writers, followed by a content analysis of their available works to explain and clarify the fact that within the period in question, sīra writing was a common tradition among the Imāmiyya, which has sustained through different forms and models.

Keywords: Sīra, Imāmi sīra authors, sīra writing, al-maghāzī, faḍl al-nabī.

Statement of the Problem

The fact that a large number of Imāmi monographs on sīra are not available to us today has led to the notion that Imāmiyya has neglected writing on the subject of the Prophet’s life (i.e., sīra and al-maghāzī). Nevertheless, in spite of many limitations, Imāmi scholars wrote more than fifty-one texts about the Prophet and peripheral issues related to him (Dadashnezhad 2014, 62). However, in his book The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and their Authors and his study on the first authors of al-maghāzī (the

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Prophet’s battles), Horovitz (1931)\(^1\) fails to present any information on Shiite sīra authors, and, hence, about those of the Imāmi sect. Marsden Jones\(^2\) has followed the same approach in his Introduction to al-Wakidi’s Al-Maghazi where he ignores mentioning the Imāmi sīra authors. It has also been overlooked in the article about "Sira" in Leiden’s Islamic Encyclopedia. Gregor Schoeler\(^3\) also aimed at analyzing the validity of the narratives in Prophet’s biographies in his book, The Biography of Muhammad: Nature and Authenticity\(^4\), yet even he does not address Imāmi authors of sīra and their narratives. Maher Jarrar’s\(^5\) efforts in his article, "Sirat Ahl al-Kisa: Early Shi‘i Sources on the Biography of the prophet,” which focuses on the biography of the Prophet by Abān b. ‘Uthmān al-Aḥmar, is worthy of acclamation. However, it is still a beginning step in this approach. Therefore, the present article aims to introduce the Imāmi authors of the Prophet’s sīra and their monographs through the use of rijāl and cataloging sources, and whenever possible, the available parts of these works.

The main question addressed by the present research is as follows: What are the works that have been produced by Imāmi authors of sīra from the second to the fourth centuries AH/eighth to tenth centuries CE? This question will be answered by analyzing such sources as al-Najāshī’s Rijāl and al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī’s Al-Fihrist and other rijāl and cataloging sources within the above-mentioned period. Before introducing the sīra authors, there are a few points worth mentioning.

A. An Analysis of the Concept of Sīra and its Subcategories

Although the term sīra has been used about the life and practices of all of the Fourteen Infallibles (that is, the Prophet, his daughter, and the twelve Shiite Imams), in this research it refers to biographies of the Prophet (s).

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1. One of the two volumes of selected essays by the German Orientalist Horovitz (1874-1931). The four parts were published separately, the first two in the Hyderabad journal of Islamic Culture in 1927 and 1928. An extensive account of his life and work is contained in the sister volume, Studies on Early Islam. The publication is in collaboration with the Magnes Press.
3. Gregor Schoeler is Professor and Chair of Islamic Studies in the Orientalisches Seminar at the University of Basel.
4. This book was first published in German in 1996 and its translation was published in 2011 by Routledge.
5. Professor at the American University of Beirut, both at Civilization Studies & at the Department of Arabic.
The word *sīra* literally means a continuous movement or a current (Azharī 1421 AH, 13:34). Other scholars refer to *sīra* as a method, approach, condition, and trait (either positive or negative) (Fayyūmī 1414 AH, 299). This trait can be innate or acquired (Rāghib al-İṣfahānī 1412 AH, 433). Therefore, the pivotal element in the concept of *sīra* is continuance and flow. As a result, it does not apply to an accidental instantaneous action. Nevertheless, the functional definition of the term refers to those works that report the life and history of Prophet Muhammad (Raven 1997, 9:660). This definition is mostly based on the works that have focused on the historical aspects of the Prophet’s life, while the literal definition of the word *sīra* refers to the manners and methods of his life, traces of which are certain to be found in the historical reports.

From the very early centuries, the term *al-maghāzī* was also used alongside *sīra* to refer to the works devoted to the Prophet’s biography. The functional meaning of *al-maghāzī* is different from its literal meaning: *al-maghāzī* comes from the root *ghazw*, which means to request something (Ibn Fāris 1404 AH, 4:423). It is also used to mean leaving one’s land in order to confront the enemy and fight in a war (Rāghib al-İṣfahānī 1412 AH, 606). It is also used to refer to places where battles take place and to the virtues of the warriors and their battles (Farāhīdī 1409 AH, 4:434). However, although at first the term *al-maghāzī* mostly referred to the battles and activities of the Prophet (s) and his companions, it later began to be used to refer to the whole life of the Prophet (Horovitz 2001, 9).

In the present study, the two words *sīra* and *al-maghāzī* are used in the general sense of the term as intended by the biographers. Nevertheless, some works written by Imāmi scholars have been titled *dalāʾil al-nabī* (evidence of the Prophet), *faḍl al-nabī* (the Prophet’s virtue), and other similar titles that, due to their relation to the Prophet (s), will be analyzed under the category of *sīra*.

**B. Criteria for Identifying Imāmi Authors of Sīra**

As Imāmi authors of *sīra* are the focus of the present article, it should be noted that the term “Imāmiyya” refers to those who believe in the necessity of Imamate, the infallibility of an Imam, and the legitimacy of his leadership (Mufīd 1413 AH, 296). Although the concept and application of the term “Imāmiyya” during the presence of the Imams were different, there is no discrepancy in the application of the term after the demise of the elven Imams and in the era of the occultation of the Twelfth Imam (Alemi
In the occultation era, “Imāmiyya” refers to people who believe in the legitimacy of Imam ʿAlī (a) and eleven of his descendants as the twelve Imams. The term also applies to people who shared the belief in the minor occultation (al-ghaybat al-ṣughrā).

We rely on al-Najāshī’s *Rijāl* to identify the authors of Imāmiyya sect; although he does not explicitly use the term Imami or other similar terms to refer to these authors (Najāshi 1407 AH, 114), the frequent use of the term “our companions” (aṣḥābunā) has been a great help in identifying them. A review of this phrase shows that it is used to refer to the followers of Imāmiyya, as it is also pointed out by other scholars (Ḥillī 1403 AH, 151; Khūʾī 1372 Sh, 1:96). In al-Najāshi’s book, the term “of our companions” alone is used to describe a person associated with the Imāmi denomination (Najāshi 1407 AH, 175, 232, 236, 306, 307). This is because he does not use this term to address people accused of corruptions, nor does he use it to refer to those whose Imāmi affiliation was not been proven (Najāshi 1407 AH, 122, 240). Moreover, in cases where he uses this term to refer to a non-Imāmi person, he would explain it immediately. For instance, he describes ʿAlī b. Ḥasan b. Faḍḍāl as one “of our companions,” but he immediately notes that he was a Faṭaḥī, rather than Imāmi (Najāshi 1407 AH, 257-58). On this account, it is plausible to consider the phrase “of our companions” in sources of Shiite *rijāl* as indicating that the hadith transmitter in question was an Imāmi. Furthermore, application of the term “Imāmi” and similar terms in Sunni sources of *rijāl* can imply that the person in question was an Imāmī (Samāni 1962, 6:248, 9:376; Dhahabī 1993, 20:282, 28:316). Also, the application of the negative descriptive word Rāfiḍī (a pejorative term for Shias) and its derivatives or Shīʿa Ghāl (exaggerative Shia) in Sunni sources can be seen as a sign of the Imāmi affiliation of the relevant individual (Tustarī 1415 AH, 1:22). A number of Sunni scholars consider the term Rāfiḍī as synonymous with Imāmiyya and apply it to those who believed in the legitimacy of Imamate (Khwārazmī 2008, 42; Dhahabī 1993, 7:436). Therefore, use of the phrase “of our companions” in Shiite sources of *rijāl* and use of Rāfiḍī, Shīʿa Ghāl, and the like in Sunni sources are indications of the Imāmi affiliation of the people these terms refer to. Moreover, terms such as “Imāmi” in Shiite and Sunni sources might refer to the Imāmi affiliation of the addressee. Accordingly, in this paper those authors of *sīra* will be introduced whose Imāmi identity has been proven by one of the above-mentioned criteria.
Abān b. ‘Uthmān al-ʿAḥmar

Abān b. ‘Uthmān al-ʿAḥmar (alive in 170 AH) was a second-century AH scholar who probably passed away at the end of this century (Jarrar 2000, 103). Despite the fact that al-Kashshāḥ has placed Abān within the Nāwūsi Sect (Kashshāḥ 1409 AH, 352), he must be considered an Imāmi Scholar. According to a large number of scholars, Nāwūsi here originates from an erroneous reading of the word Qādisiyya (Ḥāʾirī Māzandarānī 1416 AH, 1:138). In addition, al-Najāshī has placed him among the companions of Imam al-Kāẓim (a), referring to al-Kulaynī who cites a hadith retold by Abān, retold by Abān (see Kulaynī 1429 AH, 8:298). This gives credit to the view that “Nāwūsi” is indeed a misspelling of “Qādisiyya” since if Abān was a Nāwūsi, he would not retell a hadith by Imam al-Kāẓim (a) because Nāwūsis believed in the termination of Imamate by Imam al-Ṣādiq (a), and hence, they do not believe in Imam al-Kāẓim (a). This supports the view that Abān was an Imāmi (Khuʾī 1372 Sh, 1:146). Furthermore, a number of Sunni scholars have mentioned Abān as an Imāmi Scholar ( Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2002, 1:226; Zirikli 1989, 1:27).

Abān authored a book titled al-Mubtadā wa-l-mabʿath wa-l-maghāzī wa-l-wafāt, al-Saqīfa, al-ridda” (Ṭūsī, n.d, 18). Al-Najāshī does not mention the title of this book but considers it a comprehensive book in which “the beginning, the battles, the demise, and apostasy” are mentioned (Najāshī 1407 AH, 13). Abān started writing his book when the sīra writing movement had already started and a few sīras had just been written. One of the most famous among these is the Sīra by ibn Isḥāq, which also contained three sections on al-mubtadā (beginning), al-mabʿath (prophetic mission), and al-maghāzī (the Prophet’s wars). It seems that Abān tried to use the Shiite approach to revise and complete the structure designed by Ibn Isḥāq, and hence, he added the three sections on “the demise, Saqīfa, and apostasy.” As with other Imāmi biographers, Abān sought to fill the gaps in the works concerning the period of the Prophet’s life. They aimed to show the role of Imām ʿAlī (a) in this period. Besides this, discussion of the events following the Prophet’s demise was also intended for the same goal. Narratives such as the silence of Imām ʿAlī (a) for the protection of Islam, his similarity to Aaron and the similarity of Muslims to the Israelites.

1. Nāwūsis were a sect that believed in the termination of Imamate with Imam al-Ṣādiq (a). Indeed, they believed that he was not martyred but he was the promised Mahdī (a). They were called “Nāwūs” after their leader Nāwūs or as an attribution to a village called Nāwūs (Shahristānī 1993, 1:195).
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(see Kulaynī 1429 AH, 15:667, 668), the complaint of Fāṭima (a) to the Prophet (s) at the side of one column of al-Nabī Mosque when her husband, ʿAlī (a), was forced to pledge his allegiance to Abū Bakr (Kulaynī 1429 AH, 15:824), the Prophet’s refusal to greet back Abū Bakr in his dream (ʿĀmilī Nabāṭī 1384 AH, 2:259) are all mentioned in this regard. Nevertheless, a significant portion of Abān’s narratives are concerned with the period covering the life of the Prophet (s) and the events associated with him. While these narratives rely on the Shiite sources, they are still consistent with the historical traditions and events narrated in Sunni sources. An example of this is Ṭabrisī’s narration of the events of the battles of Uḥud and Ḥamrā al-Asad, which does not differ much from the Sunni sources (Ṭabrisī 1417 AH, 1:179-85, cf. Wāqidī 1989, 1:290-92 and 1:334-39). Another example is the Battle of Muʿta, which, apart from some details such as the number of injuries inflicted on Jaʿfar ibn Abī Ṭālib’s body, is consistent with the Sunni reports (Ṭabrisī 1417 AH, 1:212-15; cf. Wāqidī 1989, 2:755-68).

There are reports that highlight the importance of this work and the efforts of narrators to duplicate it. Al-Najāshī speaks of Ahmad ibn Muḥammad bin ʿĪsā al-Ashʿarī’s debate with Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī al-Washshā, in which Ahmad ibn Muḥammad asks Ḥasan to show him the books of ʿAlā’ bin Zarrīn and Abān bin ʿUthmān and to give him the permission to transcribe them. Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī requires him to first make a copy of the text and then hear its content from him (Najāshī 1407 AH, 39-40). This event not only implies the significance of Abān’s book among narrators, but also indicates their carefulness in recording the narratives. Al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī’s report shows that this book is in fact a work on al-maghāzī (the Prophet’s battles) (Ṭūsī, n.d., 19). The book was available up to the sixth century AH, as al-Ṭabrisī cited it and included many of its sections in his Iʿlām al-warā bi-aʿlām al-hudā (Ṭabrisī 1417 AH, 1:179, 218, 246). Sources prior to al-Ṭabrisī also cite some of his narratives without any reference to Abān’s book (Qummī 1363 Sh, 1:170, 255).

Hishām bin Sālim al-Jawālīqī

Another Imāmī sīra author is Hishām bin Sālim al-Jawālīqī (alive in 183 AH). He was a well-known figure in Kufa, who transmitted hadiths from both Imām al-Sādiq (a) and Imām al-Kāẓim (a), and a renowned Imāmī theologian (Ibn al-Ghaḍā’īrī 1364 AH, 117; Najāshī 1407 AH, 434). Hishām was so honored by other companions of Imām Sādiq (a) that some have
identified him as the leader of a popular Hādīth approach (Gerami 2017, 117). Al-Najāshī mentions a book titled al-Miʿrāj by Hishām. The original book is not available, but its content is available, which is a detailed account by Imām al-Sādiq (a) about the Ascension of the Prophet (s) to the sky, quoted by Ibn Abī ʿĀmir (d. 217 AH) and cited in Tafsīr al-Qummī by Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (alive in 307 AH) (Qummī 1363 Sh, 2:3-12). The hadith cited in this book is only about ten pages long. For this reason, it was liberal on the part of al-Najāshī to describe such a small-sized text as “a book,” unless it is assumed that al-Miʿrāj was larger in volume than what is cited by al-Qummī, but this is difficult to prove. However, this indicates the efforts of the Imāms (a) to provide a reading of the prophet's ascension different from the common Sunni readings. As an example, this narrative suggests that adhān (the call for the prayer) was taught to the Prophet (s) by an angle with a powerful voice (Qummī 1363 Sh, 2:11). However, some Sunni sources recount that ʿAbd Allāh ibn Yazīd al-Khazrajī was taught how to call for the prayer in his dream, who further presented it to the Prophet (s), which he confirmed (Ibn Hishām, n.d., 1:508; Ibn Saʿd 1990, 1:190). This narrative describes the manner of the Prophet’s ascension to heaven, his dialogue with angels and some of the divine prophets, his reception of the ruling of the prayer, and his request for the reduction in the number of its units (rakʿas) on a suggestion of Prophet Moses (a).

**Muḥammad ibn Abī ʿUmayr**

Muḥammad ibn Ziyād ibn Ṭūsā, also known as Ibn Abī ʿUmayr, is another Imāmī biographer of the Prophet. Ibn Abī ʿUmayr was a companion of Imām al-Kāẓīm (a) and Imām al-Riḍā (a). He was described as “glorified in the status” (jalīl al-qadr) and “high-ranking” (ʿaẓīm al-manzila) in the Shiite books of rijāl (Kashshī 1409 AH, 589; Najāshī 1407 AH, 326). Al-Jāḥiẓ describes him as a Rāfiḍī (a pejorative term to refer to Imāmī Shias) leader (Jāḥiẓ 2002, 1:88) and Zīrīkli refers to him as an “Imāmī scholar” (Zīrīkli 1989, 6:131). He wrote many books, including al-Maghāzī (Najāshī 1407 AH, 326). Some believe that copies of his narratives were circulated among people even during his lifetime, and he referred to them after his imprisonment (Gerami 1396 Sh, 288). Nevertheless, his works, including al-Maghāzī, have not survived. Evidently, the hadiths about the Prophet’s biography were quoted by Ibn Abī ʿUmayr. One such hadith was about the Battle of Banī Qurayza (Majlīsī 1403 AH, 15:200) and is consistent with the title al-Maghāzī (battles by the Prophet). The rest of
the hadiths are also consistent with the general sense of the term, which according to writers of *sīra* included the whole life of the Prophet (s) (Dadashnezhad 1973, 9). Some of these hadiths express the events of the Prophet's lifetime in Mecca, including the Prophet's companionship with Abū Ṭālib during his journey to the Levant (Majlisi 1403 AH, 15:200), the story of purchasing Zayd ibn Hāritha from the 'Ukāz market and his adoption by the Prophet (s) (Qummī 1363 AH, 2:172), and the story of Imām ʿAlī’s conflicts, during his adolescence, with the children of Mecca who bothered the Prophet (s) at the order of their fathers (Qummī 1363 AH, 1:114) and the Prophet’s answers to the inquiries of the Quraysh infidels about the companions of the cave and Al Rakīm (Qummī 1363 AH, 2:31-32). Some of these hadiths are about the Prophet’s presence in Medina, including the Prophet’s supplication and weep at the house of Umm Salama (Qummī 1363 AH, 74-75), Imām ʿAlī’s debate of (as) with Abū Bakr and the Prophet’s arbitration between them (Ṣaffār 1404 AH, 1:274), a detailed account of Ḥudaybiyya peace process (Qummī 1363 AH, 1:309-13) and the report of the Prophet’s letters to the kings of the world (Qummī 1363 AH, 2:152). Shiite *sīra* tradition is characterized by its emphasis on the Shiite beliefs along with the historical accounts, and Ibn Abī ʿUmayr’s work is no exception.

**Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā al-Ashʿarī**

Imāmī scholars were among the first authors to compose independent books about the virtues of the Prophet (s). A case in point is Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā al-Ashʿarī (d. 250 AH). He was a great scholar who lived in the city of Qom, and was particularly well-known for his steadfastness and cautiousness in the transmission of hadiths. His book about the virtues of the Prophet (s) is titled *Faḍl al-Nabī* (Najāshī 1407 AH, 81-82; Ṭūsī, n.d, 25). Although this book is not available anymore, there are hadiths he cites about the virtues of the Prophet (s), which are likely to have been taken from his book. Al-Najāshī considers Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-ʿAṭṭār al-Qummī as a transmitter of the books of Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad (Najāshī 1407 AH, 82). Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā has cited 824 hadiths from Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā’s sources of hadiths, some of which are about the virtues of the Prophet (s).

This can be a sign that these hadiths originate from the book *Faḍl al-Nabī* by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā. Among them is a hadith by Imām al-Ṣādiq (a) transmitted by Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā from Aḥmad ibn
Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā, who also mentions the details of its chain of transmission. This hadith reflects the honor and dignity of the Prophet's household, their generous welfare, and the high status of the Prophet with the Lord (Kulaynī 1429 AH, 2:449-52).

**Hārūn ibn Muslim ibn Saʿdān**

Abū l-Qāsim Hārūn ibn Muslim ibn Saʿdān al-ʿAnbarī (alive in 260 AH) is another ʿImāmī author of sīra. Hārūn was a companion of Imām al-Hādī and Imām al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (a), who lived in Samarra. Apart from his numerous compilations, he wrote the book al-Maghāzī about the Prophet’s life (Najāshī 1407 AH, 438). Al-Najāshī considers him a trustworthy narrator who believed in determinism (jabr) and assimilation (tashbīh) (Najāshī 1407 AH, 438). Al-Majlisī proposes that Hārūn ibn Muslim is believed to advocate determinism and assimilation because of his citation of certain hadiths in his books, which has led the theologians to the assumption that he believed in determinism and assimilation, and thus, it confused al-Najāshī and later scholars (Majlisī 1406 AH, 14:264). On these grounds, al-Najāshī’s word here is not acceptable. No information is available about Hārūn’s al-Maghāzī. However, in sources of hadiths, there are hadiths about the Prophet’s battles, which are not irrelevant to the title of his book (see Kulaynī 1429 AH, 3:313-14, 9:413).

**Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Khālid al-Barqī**

Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Khālid al-Barqī (274 or 280 AH) also selected the al-maghāzī template to write about the Prophet’s sīra. He was a companion of Imām al-Riḍā and Imām al-Jawād (a), and Shiite scholars of rijāl have acclaimed him and identified him as a great Imāmī scholar in the city of Qom (Najāshī 1407 AH, 76; Ṭūsī, n.d, 20-21). Al-Barqī is the author of the famous work al-Mahāsin. He also wrote al-Maghāzī on the battles of the Prophet (s). He also compiled the book Banāt al-Nabī wa-azwajuh about the Prophet’s daughters and wives (Najāshī 1407 AH, 76-77; Ṭūsī, n.d, 20-21), neither of which has survived and there are no citations of them in any sources.

**Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Thaqafi**

Another writer of sīra, who also chose the al-maghāzī format, is Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Thaqafi (d. 283 AH). Ibrāhīm was first a member of
the Zaydi Sect but later converted to Imāmiyya (Najāshī 1407 AH, 17; Tūsī, n.d., 4-5). Because of his strong passion for Shiism, some Sunni scholars of rijāl referred to him as “ghālī fi l-rafḍ,” meaning “the one who goes on extremes about rafḍ (a pejorative term to refer to Shias)” (Ibn Ḥajar al-’Asqalānī 2002, 1:351) or “yaghlū fi l-rafḍ” (Samʿānī 1962, 3:144), which gives a credit to him as a steadfast Imāmī Shia. The original al-Maghāzī by Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad is missing, but in Tafsīr al-Qummī, a hadith is transmitted from him by Abān ibn ʿUthmān, which completely mirrors the nature of his belief in Imāmiyya. This hadith, possibly originating from Ibrāhīm’s al-Maghāzī, refers to ʿAlī’s companionship with the Prophet (s) in seven instances, three of which belong to the Prophet’s ascension to the heaven (Qummī 1363 Sh, 2:335).

Saʿd ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ashʿarī

Another Imāmī scholar who wrote a book about the Prophet (s) is Saʿd ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ashʿarī (d. 301 AH). He was a famous scholar and a well-known figure in Qom, to whom Najāshī refers as “Shaykh al-Ṭāʾfa” (master of the Shiite sect), attributing to him a book titled Faḍl al-Nabī (the Prophet’s virtue) (Najāshī 1407 AH, 177-78; Tūsī, n.d., 75-76). Sources of hadiths cite many hadiths by al-Ashʿarī on the virtues of the Prophet (s). Although it cannot be precisely concluded that these hadiths were taken from his Faḍl al-Nabī, given that some of them are consistent with topic of the Prophet’s virtues, one might as well assume that they have originated from that book. One of these hadiths is about the meaning of the term “Ummī” that is used to describe the Prophet (s). Saʿd ibn ʿAbd Allāh transmits this hadith from Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā, who quotes it from Imām al-Jawād (a) through his own chain of transmission. Imām al-Jawād rejects the interpretation of “Ummī” as illiterate based on the Quranic verse in which the Prophet is said to teach people (see Q 62:2). He argues how the Prophet could be able to teach reading and writing to others if he was illiterate himself. In this hadith, Imām al-Jawād continues to emphasize that the Prophet (s) was able to read and write in seventy-two or seventy-three languages. In the end, Imām al-Jawād (a) says that “Ummī” is an attribution to the Prophet’s city of origin, Mecca, which was also known as “Umm al-Qurā” (Ṣadūq 1403 AH, 53-54). Additionally, the content of some of the hadiths transmitted by Saʿd ibn ʿAbd Allāh confirms the special position of Imām ʿAlī (a) to the Prophet (s).
Among these cases is the hadith of Umm Salama about the last moments of the Prophet’s life. It suggests that the Prophet (s) had asked the people around him to bring his friend (khalīl) to his presence. ʿĀʾisha informed her father, but when Abū Bakr arrived, the Prophet (s) turned his head away and asked for his friend again. Hafṣa bint ʿUmar called for her father. Again, the Prophet (s) turned his head away and called for his friend. This time, Fāṭima (a) called for her husband ʿAlī (a). When ʿAlī (a) arrived, the Prophet (a) welcomed him and shared a number of hadiths with him in private (Ṣadūq 1362 Sh, 2:643). In the series of hadith transmitted by Saʿd ibn ʿAbd Allāh, Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-Qummī frequently appears. That is the reason why Ṭūsī refers to Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā as the transmittre of Saʿd ibn ʿAbd Allāh’s works (Ṭūsī, n.d., 76). It is not clear whether Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā transmitted those hadiths from Saʿd’s book or personally heard them from him. However, the text of the hadiths indicates their closeness to the topic of Saʿd’s Faḍl al-Nabī (the Prophet’s virtue).

Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Azdī

Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Azdī was a third-century AH scholar. He authored a book titled al-Wufūd ʿalā al-Nabī (Najāshī 1407 AH, 65). Scholars of rijāl describe Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad as “a reliable companion of ours” (thiqa min aṣḥābinā) and knowledgeable in the fields of sira, hadiths, and poetry (Ibn al-Ghaḍāʾirī 1364 AH, 121; Ibn Dāwūd 1383 AH, 127). However, not much information is available about him.

In view of the fact that Mundhir ibn Muḥammad al-Qābūṣī was his pupil and al-Qābūsī was among Ibn ʿUqda elders (d. 333 AH), Āqā Buzurg Ṭihrānī has categorized al-Azdī as a scholar in the third century AH (Āqā Buzurg Ṭihrānī 1408 AH, 1:313). The title of the book suggests its dedication to the issue of wufūd, which is the plural form of wafd, which literary means paying a visit to a king or an Emir by a great persona or an envoy sent from another nation (Jawharī 1376 AH, 2:53).

Mondhir ibn Muḥammad al-Qābūṣī

The next book we consider is the one titled Wufūd al-ʿArab Ilā al-Nabī (Arabs’ visits to the Prophet) by Mondhir ibn Muḥammad al-Qābūṣī, who is referred to by al-Najāshī as “One of our companions” (min aṣḥābinā) (Najāshī 1407 AH, 418; Ibn Dāwūd 1383 AH, 273). Sources of rijāl do not provide much information about his life. Therefore, there is uncertainty about the dates of his
birth and death. Āqā Buzurg Ţihrānī identifies al-Qābūsī as contemporaneous with Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī (d. 329 AH) (Āqā Buzurg Ţihrānī 1408 AH, 25:122). Al-Qābūsī is known to be a historian and a senior figure of Ibn ʿUqda (Subḥānī 1418 AH, 4:486). Scholars of rijāl have recorded Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Azdī as a well-known teacher of al-Qābūsī (Ibn Ghaḍāʾirī 1418 AH, 4:486). Al-Qābūsī is known to be a historian and a senior figure of Ibn ʿUqda (Subḥānī 1418 AH, 4:486). This indicates al-Azdī’s influence on al-Qābūsī.

Within the Shiite sources, no hadiths about wufūd have been cited as transmitted from al-Azdī or al-Qābūsī. The only hadiths from them are theological hadiths (Ibn ʿUqda 1424 AH, 14). It is only in Usd al-ghāba and al-Iṣāba that nine hadiths about wufūd are narrated by these two scholars. Three hadiths are cited in Usd al-ghāba (Ibn al-At hīr 1989, 1:61, 75, 388), five in al-Iṣāba (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 1995, 5:377, 6:58, 6:100-101), and a single hadith is cited in both sources (Ibn al-At hīr 1989, 2:103; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 1995, 2:465). The texts of those hadiths show that Ibn al-At hīr (d. 630 AH) and Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852 AH) did not have access to the original version of these books and have produced these hadiths through intermediaries, including a series of documents by Ibn Shāhīn.1 The existing hadiths have historical aspects and are devoid of theological viewpoints. On the other hand, no hadiths about wufūd were transmitted from Shiite Imāms by al-Azdī or al-Qābūsī, while they have transmitted hadiths from Sayf ibn ʿUmar al-Tamīmī (d. 200 AH), who was a hadith fabricator and was accused of deceitfulness (Dhahabī 1993, 11:161-62; Khoei 1993, 11:207; Tustarī, n.d, 5:376). It seems that the commitment of al-Azdī and his pupil, al-Qābūsī, to historical methods, and their refusal to quote the words of the infallible Imāms (a) was a reason why Shiite scholars expressed disapprovals of their works.

ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī


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1. ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-Azīz ibn Shāhīn (297-385 AH), was a scholar of hadith from Baghdad. He is said to have composed more than three hundred books (Ziriklī 1989, 5:40).
the Prophet’s *sīra* and *al-maghāzī* (wars), but it is not clear if they came from his *al-Maghāzī* or his *Tafsīr*. Jarrar has examined six hadiths in the book titled *Iʿlām al-warā*, and has shown that four of these hadiths are present, albeit in elaborated forms, in *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, while two of them cannot be found there, which implies that their source could be al-Qummī’s *al-Maghāzī* (Jerrār 2000, 113-14).

‘ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Yaḥyā al-Jalūdī

ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Yaḥyā al-Jalūdī (d. 332 AH) is another Imāmī writer of *sīra*, whom Najāshī regards as “Shaykh Baṣra” (Basra’s senior figure) and considers an “Akhbārī” (Najāshī 1407 AH, 240). Al-Ḥillī describes him as “Imāmī al-madhhab” (of Imāmī denomination) (Ḥillī 1381 AH, 116). Al-Jalūdī was a prolific author and Najāshī attributes about two hundred books to him, more than half of which are historical works (Najāshī 1407 AH, 240-44). His works about the Prophet’s *sīra* and other related issues include *Kitāb nasab al-Nabī*, *Khuṭab al-Nabī*, *Kutub al-Nabī* and *Qiṭaʿ al-Nabī* and the book *Akhbār wufūd al-Nabī wa-ʿAbī Bakr wa-ʿUmar wa-ʿUthmān* (Najāshī 1407 AH, 240-44). However, these works are not available, because Shiite scholars did not like him. Moreover, no hadiths from al-Jalūdī are cited in the relevant sources.

Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Duwul al-Qummī

Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥusayn ibn Ḥasan ibn Duwul al-Qummī (350 AH) was a great author in the fourth century AH, to whom Najāshī attributed about one hundred books, including *Khaṣāʾiṣ al-Nabī* (the Prophet’s characteristics) (Najāshī 1407 AH, 89-90). He is also described as an “Imāmī scholar” (fāḍil Imāmī) in some Sunni sources (Ziriklī 1989, 1:208). Nevertheless, in sources of hadiths, no hadith is cited as transmitted by him about the Prophet’s characteristics.

Muḥammad ibn Wahbān al-Dabīlī

Another Imāmī writer of *sīra* is Muḥammad ibn Wahbān al-Dabīlī (d. 385 AH). Al-Dabīlī was from Basra, and Shiite scholars describe him as “a reliable companion of ours” (thiqā min aṣḥābinā), which expresses his association with Imāmiyya (Najāshī 1407 AH, 396). Ibn Shahrāshūb mentions a book titled *Aʿlām nubuwwat al-Nabī* (signs of the Prophet’s prophethood) by him (Ibn Shahrāshūb 1380 AH, 116). Some of the sources
have recorded the title of this book as *Muʾjizāt al-nubuwwa* (Miracles of prophethood) (Ibn Shahrāshūb 1379 AH, 2:302; ʿĀmilī al-Nabāṭī 1384 AH, 1:96; Baḥrānī 1413 AH, 1:284). Ibn Shahrāshūb and some of the later scholars cite hadiths about the reasons of prophethood based on his book. Nevertheless, in the sources preceding Ibn Shahrāshūb, there is no mention of a book titled *Aʿlām nubuwwat al-Nabī* or *Muʾjizāt al-nubuwwa* (Najāshī 1407 AH, 396; Ṭūsī 1427 AH, 444). References to this book in Ibn Shahrāshūb (1379 AH, 2:305), al-ʿĀmilī al-Nabāṭī (1384 AH, 1:96), al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī (1425 AH, 152:156), and others confirm the authenticity of its attribution to al-Dabīlī. The words of Ibn Shahrāshūb show that he saw the original version of the book. Moreover, in the introduction of his book, *Ithbāt al-waṣiyya*, al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī mentions al-Dabīlī’s *Aʿlām al-nubuwwa* as one of his sources, which shows his direct citation of the initial version of the book (Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī 1384 AH, 1:58).

**Conclusion**

Although early and late scholars were indifferent to the Imāmī efforts in writing the Prophet’s *sīra*, a study of sources of *rijāl* and bibliography reveals that they were active in this field. Drawing on these sources as references for the present study, we have introduced fourteen Imāmī scholars and hadith transmitters and their works. The scholars in the study were selected on the positive evidence of their Imāmī belief. While other authors are also mentioned in sources of *rijāl*, we did not mention them because there are disagreements over whether they are Imāmīs. An analysis of the relevant sources reveals that the Prophet’s *sīra* was compiled more seriously since the middle of the second century AH/eighth century CE. This was the time when some Imāmī scholars also started to produce similar works in this field. Most of these works relied on Shiite sources and, in rare cases, they cited Sunni transmitters of hadiths. However, apart from cases where beliefs are concerned or in certain hadiths about some details, there is a consistency between some of the historical reports and the reports in the Sunni sources. An example of this is seen through a comparison between the report of the events of the Battle of Uḥud in Abān ibn ʿUthmān’s book and Wāqidī’s *al-Maghāzī*. This interest in the Prophet’s *sīra* continued in the next centuries, and was presented by the end of the fourth century AH in formats such as *al-magḥāzī* (battles), hadiths about the reasons of prophethood or miracles (*dalāʾil al-nubuwwa*), hadiths about the Prophet’s virtues (*faḍāʾil*), and other minor subjects covered by
Imāmī scholars and hadith transmitters. Nevertheless, due to various elements and within a brief period, the original copies of these works went missing. The only exception is Abān ibn ‘Uthmān's book, which although it dated back to the second century AH, it was available until the sixth century AH/twelfth century CE, and was cited in al-Ṭabrisī’s book *Iʾlām al-warā bi-aʾlām al-hudā*.

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