

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 (*faḍā'il*), evidence of his prophethood (*dalā'il*), 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 authors, which was different from the common Sunni tradition in terms of context and method. Accordingly, in this article we adopt a descriptive approach to introduce the famous 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 Jones² 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 Schoeler³ 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's⁵ 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)

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.

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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.

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only. 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-Iṣfahānī 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-Iṣfahānī 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 *dalā'il 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 eleven Imams and in the era of the occultation of the Twelfth Imam (Aleml

and Safari Furoushani 1395 Sh, 109-10). In the occultation era, “Imāmiyya” refers to people who believe in the legitimacy of Imam ‘Alī (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 Imāmiya sect; although he does not explicitly use the term Imami or other similar terms to refer to these authors (Najāshī 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 (Hillī 1403 AH, 151; Khū’ī 1372 Sh, 1:96). In al-Najāshī’s book, the term “of our companions” alone is used to describe a person associated with the Imāmi denomination (Najāshī 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 (Najāshī 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 ‘Alī b. Ḥasan b. Faḍḍāl as one “of our companions,” but he immediately notes that he was a Faṭaḥī, rather than Imāmi (Najāshī 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 (Samānī 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 *Shī‘a 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 (Khawārazmī 2008, 42; Dhahabī 1993, 7:436). Therefore, use of the phrase “of our companions” in Shiite sources of *rijāl* and use of *Rāfiḍī*, *Shī‘a 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-Aḥmar

Abān b. ‘Uthmān al-Aḥmar (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-Kashshī has placed Abān within the Nāwūsi¹ Sect (Kashshī 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 (Ḥā’irī 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 hadīth 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 hadīth 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 (Khu’rī 1372 Sh, 1:146). Furthermore, a number of Sunni scholars have mentioned Abān as an Imāmi Scholar (Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 2002, 1:226; Zirikli 1989, 1:27).

Abān authored a book titled *al-Mubtadā wa-l-mab‘ath 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 Ishāq, which also contained three sections on *al-mubtadā* (beginning), *al-mab‘ath* (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 Ishāq, 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 ‘Alī (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 ‘Alī (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 “Nāwūsi” after their leader Nāwūs or as an attribution to a village called Nāwūs (Shahristānī 1993, 1:195).

(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, ‘Alī (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 (‘Āmilī 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. Wāqidi 1989, 1:290-92 and 1:334-39). Another example is the Battle of Mu’ta, which, apart from some details such as the number of injuries inflicted on Ja’far ibn Abī Ṭālib’s body, is consistent with the Sunni reports (Ṭabrisī 1417 AH, 1:212-15; cf. Wāqidi 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 Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad bin ‘Īsā al-Ash‘arī’s debate with Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī al-Washshā’, in which Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad asks Ḥasan to show him the books of ‘Alā’ bin Zarrīn and Abān bin ‘Uthmān and to give him the permission to transcribe them. Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī 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 *I’lām al-warā bi-a’lām 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-Kāzīm (a), and a renowned Imāmī theologian (Ibn al-Ghaḍā’irī 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 Hādith approach (Gerami 2017, 117). Al-Najāshī mentions a book titled *al-Mi'rāj* 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 'Āmir (d. 217 AH) and cited in *Tafsir 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-Mi'rāj* 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 'Abd 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 Sa'd 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 (*rak'as*) on a suggestion of Prophet Moses (a).

Muḥammad ibn Abī 'Umayr

Muhammad ibn Ziyād ibn 'Īsā, also known as Ibn Abī 'Umayr, is another Imāmī biographer of the Prophet. Ibn Abī 'Umayr was a companion of Imām al-Kāzīm (a) and Imām al-Riḍā (a). He was described as “glorified in the status” (*jalīl al-qadr*) and “high-ranking” (*aẓīm al-manzila*) in the Shiite books of *rijāl* (Kashshī 1409 AH, 589; Najāshī 1407 AH, 326). Al-Jāhiz describes him as a Rāfiḍī (a pejorative term to refer to Imāmī Shias) leader (Jāhiz 2002, 1:88) and Ziriklī refers to him as an “Imāmī scholar” (Ziriklī 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 'Umayr. One such hadith was about the Battle of Banī Qurayza (Majlisī 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 'Alī'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 Rakim (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 'Alī'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 'Umayr's work is no exception.

Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā al-Ash'arī

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 'Īsā al-Ash'arī (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-'Aṭṭār 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 'Īsā'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 'Īsā. 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

Abu l-Qāsim Hārūn ibn Muslim ibn Saʿdān al-ʿAnbarī (alive in 260 AH) is another Imāmī 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-Thaqafī

Another writer of *sīra*, who also chose the *al-maghāzī* format, is Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Thaqafī (d. 283 AH). Ibrāhīm was first a member of

the Zaydi Sect but later converted to Imāmiyya (Najāshī 1407 AH, 17; Ṭūsī, n.d., 4-5). Because of his strong passion for Shiism, some Sunni scholars of *rijāl* referred to him as “ghālī fi l-rafd,” meaning “the one who goes on extremes about *rafd* (a pejorative term to refer to Shias)” (Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 2002, 1:351) or “yaghlū fi l-rafd” (Sam‘ānī 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 ‘Uthmān, which completely mirrors the nature of his belief in Imāmiyya. This hadith, possibly originating from Ibrāhīm’s *al-Maghāzī*, refers to ‘Alī’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).

Sa‘d ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ash‘arī

Another Imāmī scholar who wrote a book about the Prophet (s) is Sa‘d ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ash‘arī (d. 301 AH). He was a famous scholar and a well-known figure in Qom, to whom Najāshī refers as “Shaykh al-Ṭā‘fa” (master of the Shiite sect), attributing to him a book titled *Faḍl al-Nabī* (the Prophet’s virtue) (Najāshī 1407 AH, 177-78; Ṭūsī, n.d., 75-76). Sources of hadiths cite many hadiths by al-Ash‘arī 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). Sa‘d ibn ‘Abd Allāh transmits this hadith from Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Īsā, 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 Sa‘d ibn ‘Abd Allāh confirms the special position of Imām ‘Alī (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. 'Ā'isha informed her father, but when Abū Bakr arrived, the Prophet (s) turned his head away and asked for his friend again. Ḥaḥṣa bint 'Umar 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 'Alī (a). When 'Alī (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 Sa'd ibn 'Abd Allāh, Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-Qummī frequently appears. That is the reason why Ṭūsī refers to Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā as the transmittre of Sa'd ibn 'Abd Allāh's works (Ṭūsī, n.d., 76). It is not clear whether Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā transmitted those hadiths from Sa'd's book or personally heard them from him. However, the text of the hadiths indicates their closeness to the topic of Sa'd'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-Wuḥūd 'alā 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-Ghaḍā'irī 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-Qābūsī was his pupil and al-Qābūsī was among Ibn 'Uqda elders (d. 333 AH), Āqā Buzurg Ṭihirānī has categorized al-Azdī as a scholar in the third century AH (Āqā Buzurg Ṭihirānī 1408 AH, 1:313). The title of the book suggests its dedication to the issue of *wuḥūd*, 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-Qābūsī

The next book we consider is the one titled *Wuḥūd al-'Arab Ilā al-Nabī* (Arabs' visits to the Prophet) by Mondhir ibn Muḥammad al-Qābūsī, 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 Ṭīhrānī identifies al-Qābūsī as contemporaneous with Muḥammad ibn Ya‘qūb al-Kulaynī (d. 329 AH) (Āqā Buzurg Ṭīhrānī 1408 AH, 25:122). Al-Qābūsī is known to be a historian and a senior figure of Ibn ‘Uqda (Subḥānī 1418 AH, 4:486). Scholars of *rijāl* have recorded Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Azdī as a well-known teacher of al-Qābūsī (Ibn Ghaḍā‘irī 1364 AH, 121-22; Najāshī 1407 AH, 66). 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 ‘Uqda 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-Athīr 1989, 1:61, 75, 388), five in *al-Iṣāba* (Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 1995, 5:377, 6:58, 6:100-101), and a single hadith is cited in both sources (Ibn al-Athīr 1989, 2:103; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 1995, 2:465). The texts of those hadiths show that Ibn al-Athīr (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 ‘Umar 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.

‘Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī

‘Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (alive in 307 AH) also wrote a book on the the Prophet’s *sīra*, titled *al-Maghāzī*, in addition to his transmission of Ibn Abī ‘Umayr’s hadiths in his *Tafsīr al-Qummī* (Najāshī 1407 AH, 260; Ṭūsī, n.d., 89; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 1995, 5:477). This book is not available today. Still, ‘Alī ibn Ibrāhīm cites many hadiths about the Prophet’s *sīra*, mostly transmitted by Ibn Abī ‘Umayr (Qummī 1363 AH, 2:172, 309). Meanwhile, hadiths from al-Qummī are cited in sources of hadiths about

1. ‘Umar ibn Aḥmad, known as 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 *I'lām 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).

‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Yaḥyā al-Jalūdī

‘Abd al-‘Azīz 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 “Akhhbārī” (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 *Qīṭa ‘al-Nabī* and the book *Akhhbār wufūd al-Nabī wa-‘Abī Bakr wa-‘Umar wa-‘Uthmān* (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 *Khaṣā‘iṣ 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 Wabhān al-Dabīlī

Another Imāmī writer of *sīra* is Muḥammad ibn Wabhān al-Dabīlī (d. 385 AH). Al-Dabīlī was from Basra, and Shiite scholars describe him as “a reliable companion of ours” (thiqa min aṣḥābinā), which expresses his association with Imāmiyya (Najāshī 1407 AH, 396). Ibn Shahrāshūb mentions a book titled *A'lām 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 *Mu'jizāt al-nubuwwa* (Miracles of prophethood) (Ibn Shahrāshūb 1379 AH, 2:302; ʿĀmilī al-Nabāʿī 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 *A'lām nubuwwat al-Nabī* or *Mu'jizāt al-nubuwwa* (Najāshī 1407 AH, 396; Ṭūsī 1427 AH, 444). References to this book in Ibn Shahrāshūb (1379 AH, 2:305), al-ʿĀmilī al-Nabāʿī (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-waṣīyya*, al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī mentions al-Dabīlī's *A'lām 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 Uḥūd in Abān ibn ʿUthmān's book and Wāqidi'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-maghāzī* (battles), hadiths about the reasons of prophethood or miracles (*dalā'il al-nubuwwa*), hadiths about the Prophet's virtues (*faḍā'il*), 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 ʿUthmān'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 *I'lām al-warā bi-a'lām al-hudā*.

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