

IDENTIFYING THE (IBĀDĪ/OMANI) *SIYAR*

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Abstract

The Ibādī *siyar* literature can be considered a classical archive for Omani history and Ibādī thought. Its conception and basic identification are still obscure and ambiguously interpreted. However, there is an increasing interest in the study of Omani *siyar* as historical and theological documents. The concept of *siyar* will be analysed from two main perspectives: linguistic form and content, both of which aim to convey a better understanding of its specific meanings. This article focuses on three aspects of Omani *siyar*: 1) it provides a theoretical framework for examining the content of Omani *siyar* in the context of Arabic literature. Through a survey of existing theoretical scholarship, this article establishes the history and origins of this genre, tracing its development in earlier Arabic literature and its introduction into Oman. 2) This survey provides an opportunity to reassess these early stages of the genre and to introduce observations about the content of the *siyar*. And 3) the variables in the chronological development of the *siyar* literature are analysed in order to illustrate the way in which the texts developed in the context of Omani history.

As soon as a researcher starts reading through Omani historical sources, it is apparent that the primary historical sources of Oman are the Omani *siyar*. These *siyar*, which were written at different times by various writers, constitute a unique source of historical data unparalleled in any other country. These documents reflect the political and social situation in Oman as well as the scholars' ideologies. They also prompt us to look with greater care at the geography of Oman, which has shaped the history of the country. These aspects have influenced the Omani personality and scholarship and have given this part of the Arabian Peninsula a unique character throughout history. This study is designed as a simple introduction to the Ibādī/Omani *siyar*, in order to understand the position of this genre in classical Arabic literature, in place and time, and the various forms the *siyar* take, from the point of view of subject and chronology, clarifying the most important underlying influences in the formation

of this genre, and tracing the manner in which the *siyar* developed, with the aim of facilitating their interpretation as historical documents.

I Omani *Siyar*: History, Origins, and Description

The *sīra* is a fundamental source in classical Arabic literature, particularly when it is understood to be connected with the life of the Prophet Muḥammad.¹ In Arabic, the term *siyar* (essentially: biographies) has several meanings.² First, it is derived from the verb meaning to walk or travel, thus, it has the sense of narrating stories of travel, and hence journeying through life. Second, it also means the *sunna*, conduct, which itself means a way of living. Third, it is also connected to the idea of origin. This sense is found in the Qur'³ ān 20 (*Ṭāhā*):18, which reads: *sanu'iduhā sīratahā al-ūlā*, 'We will restore it to its first state'.³ There, the word *sīra* is used to mean appearance, and the meaning of the verse is that God shall retain His original nature. Fourth, the word has another meaning denoting narration of tales of the older generations. Conventionally, the word has been used to mean going to battles (*maghāzī*), as was pointed out by M. Hinds,⁴ and as one sees it in such books as Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī's *K. al-Siyar*.

The Omani *siyar* take the meaning of the term *sīra* to a new level, whereby it comes to denote political-religious correspondence. The Omani *siyar* usually consist of around twenty to thirty pages each,⁵ and are considered to be among the most important historical and intellectual sources for both Omani political history and Ibādī theological thought, and that for four main reasons. First, they address specific ideational topics, i.e. the points of view of the '*ulamā'*' (religious scholars) who wrote them. Second, they represent exchanges between several parties about certain issues, theological and social,

¹ *EP*, s.v. 'sīra'.

² Muḥammad b. Manzūr, *Lisān al-'arab* (Beirut, 1955), 4:384; Ismā'il b. Ḥammād al-Jawharī, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ fi al-luḡha*, ed. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Ghafūr 'Aṭṭār (Cairo 1957), 2:691; Maḥmūd b. 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās al-balāgha*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥīm Maḥmūd (Cairo 1953), 226; al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ* (Cairo 1911), 2:54.

³ Qur'³ ān, *Ṭāhā* 20:18.

⁴ Martin Hinds, 'Maghāzī and Sīra in Early Islamic Scholarship', in Toufiq Fahd (ed.), *La vie du Prophete Mahomet: Colloque de Strasbourg, 1980* (Paris 1983), 57–66.

⁵ Fārūq 'Umar, *Muqaddima fi maṣādir al-tārīkh al-'umānī* (Baghdad 1979), 55.

which emerged at that time and needed to be discussed. Third, they usually include legal edicts, or *fatwās*, which by themselves reveal prevailing attitudes or opinions about specific issues. Fourth, they often include information about famous people (imams or ‘*ulamā*’). On the origins of the Omani *siyar*. Crone and Zimmermann wrote:

Most *sīras* in the Omani sense of doctrinal epistles are pulpit manifestos (much as St. Paul’s epistles will have been), i.e. they are letters written to a congregation setting out what we should or should not believe or do, to be read aloud by a preacher. The sermons with which such *sīras* begin, often quite long, reflect their original *Sitz im Leben*. The name under which they came to be known in Oman has its roots in the later Umayyad period, when *sīra* seems to have been used in the sense of ‘doctrinal position’ or ‘stance’.⁶

The *siyar* also developed the term *sīra*’s traditional Arabic sense of conduct or position. In a famous poem, the Murji’ī poet Thābit Quṭna (d. 110/728) said: ‘Oh Hind, listen to me, our *sīra* is that we worship God without giving Him a partner. We suspend judgment on things when they are doubtful’.⁷ Here, in setting out the basic tenets of Murji’ism, *sīra* means doctrinal position.⁸ Also, when the Murji’ī rebel al-Ḥārith b. Surayj was fighting against Naṣr b. Sayyār in Khurāsān, he ordered his secretary Jahm b. Ṣafwān to read publicly ‘*kitāb sayyara lahu [bihi?] sīrat al-Ḥārith* (a tract in which he put forward/propagated the *sīra* of al-Ishāq)’. Al-Ḥārith had written his *sīra* and it was read aloud in the streets and mosques of Marw, as another version has it, and, according to another, he ordered Jahm to read aloud to the people his *sīra* and what he was propagating.⁹ Again Crone and Zimmermann set out al-Ḥārith’s position in implicit or explicit contrast with that of the governor Naṣr. The tract in which the *sīra* was recorded was composed for delivery to the public in a mosque.¹⁰ Likewise, Ridwān al-Sayyid through his research on the Zaydī epistles and monographs in Yemen found out that there is a convergence in using the term of *sīra* between the Ibādīs in Oman and the Zaydīs in Yemen in his discussion of the *sīra* by Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakīya and he made a similar deduction to

⁶ Patricia Crone and Fritz Zimmermann, *The Epistle of Sālim ibn Dhakwān* (Oxford 2001), 23.

⁷ Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Cairo 1927–79), 14:270.

⁸ Crone and Zimmermann, *The Epistle of Sālim ibn Dhakwān*, 23.

⁹ Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh* (Beirut, n.d.), 3:248.

¹⁰ Crone and Zimmermann, *The Epistle of Sālim ibn Dhakwān*, 23.

Crone and Zimmerman as regards the *sīra*'s root.¹¹ Al-Ṭabarī also mentions that the term of *sīra* was used by the imām Zayd b. 'Alī and his son Yaḥyā.¹²

The term *sīra*, although it invokes a mutual understanding among Omani Ibādīs to refer to a particular genre, has a different meaning and function when used by non-Omani Ibādī groups, such as those in North Africa. Examples of these non-Omani *siyar* are *al-Siyar wa-akhbār al-a'imma*, known as *Tārīkh Abī Zakariyā*, by Abū Zakariyā Yaḥyā b. Abī Bakr (d. c. 471/1078);¹³ *Siyar mashāyikh Jabal Naffūsa*, by Muqriy b. Muḥammad al-Baghtūrī (sixth/twelfth century);¹⁴ *Siyar al-Wisyanī*, by Abū al-Rabī' Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Salām al-Wisyanī (sixth/twelfth century);¹⁵ *K. Ṭabaqāt al-mashāyikh*, by Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Sa'īd al-Darjīnī (d. c. 670/1271);¹⁶ *K. al-Jawāhir al-muntaqāt fī mā akhalla bihi Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, by Abū al-Qāsim al-Barrādī (d. second half eighth/fourteenth century);¹⁷ and *K. al-Siyar* by Aḥmad b. Sa'īd al-Shammākhī (d. 928/1522).¹⁸ All these authors used the term *sīra* to denote biography or biographical dictionary. Al-Barrādī, however, gives a list¹⁹ of Eastern Mashriqī Ibādī books that includes some of the Omani *siyar*. In 1970, Ennami gave a description of some early Ibādī correspondence which is similar to the early Omani *siyar*.²⁰

¹¹ Riḍwān al-Sayyid, *al-Mujtama' wa-al-umma wa-al-ṣulta*¹, (Beirut 1997), 167–206.

¹² Ṭabarī, *History* (Leiden, 1879–1901), 2: 1687–8.

¹³ Abū Zakariyā Yaḥyā b. Abī Bakr al-Warjalānī, *al-Siyar wa-akhbār al-a'imma*, ed. al-'Arabī Ismā'īl (Algeria 1979); trans. E. Masqueray, *Chronique d'Abou Zakaria* (Algeria 1878); trans. R. Le Tourneau, 'La chronique' d'Abū Zakriyya' al-Warjlani', *Revue Africaine* 104 (1960): 99–176, 322–90.

¹⁴ Tadeusez Lewicki, 'La Repartition géographique des groupements Ibādites', *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 21 (1957), 309–43; 'A. Ennami, 'A Description of New Ibādī Manuscripts from North Africa', *JSS* 15 (1970), 63–87.

¹⁵ Ennami, 'A Description of New Ibādī Manuscripts from North Africa', 85.

¹⁶ Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Sa'īd al-Darjīnī, *Kitāb ṭabaqāt al-mashāyikh*, ed. by Ṭalay Ibrāhīm. (Constantine 1979).

¹⁷ Abū al-Qāsim al-Barrādī, *K. al-Jawāhir al-muntaqāt fī mā akhalla bihi Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt* (Cairo 1302/1885); Roberto Rubinacci, 'Kitāb al-Ġawāhir di al-Barrādī', *Annali Istituto Orientale di Napoli* 4 (1952), 95–110.

¹⁸ Aḥmad b. Sa'īd al-Shammākhī, *al-Siyar*, 1st ed. (Cairo 1301/1884); 2nd ed. (Muscat 1984).

¹⁹ Abū al-Qāsim al-Barrādī, *Risāla fī taqyīd kutub aṣḥābinā: Dirāsa fī tārikh al-ibādīya*, ed. M. 'Azab and 'Awaḍ (Cairo, 1994). Based on a manuscript in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriya, no. 21791.B.

²⁰ Ennami, 'A Description of New Ibādī Manuscripts from North Africa', 65.

Michael Cook tried to assign distinctive features to mainstream religious epistles in Arabic literature,²¹ and proposed a method which might help to further delimit this genre. As far as the early Ibādī tradition is concerned, he says:

[T]he Ibādites seem to have left Iraq before Arabic literature was seriously affected by what one might loosely describe as the onset of *belles lettres*. The Ibādī tradition is thus a relatively unembroidered one. The proliferation of worthless correspondence from ‘Umar II to all and sundry, which we find in the Sunni tradition is not paralleled in the Ibādī record figures of equivalent stature. But by the same token, Ibādī archaism carries its cost for us. It is here that the tradition of religious epistle stayed alive longest with the implication that the art of epistolary forgery probably did so too.²²

When did these *siyar* start to be collected in volumes and who adopted and collected them? Sālim al-Ḥārithī argues that Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan al-Bisyāwī (fl. end of fourth/tenth–beginning of fifth/eleventh century) was the first one to collect the *siyar*.²³ On the other hand, Sayyida Kāshif claims that they were first collected by Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Mūsā al-Kindī (d. c. 557/1161), who wrote *K. al-Ihtidā’* and *K. al-Jawhar al-muqtaṣir*, and who made use of several *siyar*.²⁴ It could be argued that the *siyar* were collected after the third/ninth century on the orders of the Rustāq school, since both al-Bisyāwī and al-Kindī were acolytes of this school. Another, theoretical, possibility is that Abū al-Ḥawārī started to collect them at the beginning of the fourth/tenth century, since we have found a certain *sīra* by Abū al-Mu’thir, which had been examined by Abū al-Ḥawārī.²⁵ But this would be a premature conclusion, since a detailed inspection of the *siyar*, as we shall show, indicates that many of them were written before the third/ninth century and, thus, before the formation of the Rustāq school. In addition, *siyar* continued to be written until the eleventh/seventeenth century.

Before we analyse the Omani *siyar*, it is useful to determine the specific period in which *siyar* developed and relate them to Ibādī thought in Oman. The period that we will cover is the first/seventh–eleventh/seventeenth centuries, for the following reasons:

²¹ For further details, see Michael Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma* (Cambridge 1981), 52.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Sālim al-Ḥārithī, *al-Uqūd al-fiddīya fī tārikh al-ibādīya* (Beirut 1974), 145.

²⁴ *Al-Siyar wa-al-jawābāt*, ed. Sayyida Kāshif Ismā’īl (Muscat 1984), 1:9.

²⁵ *Al-Siyar wa-al-jawābāt*, 1:149.

1. The seminal biography of the Imam Nāṣir b. Muṣṣhid al-Yaʿrubī, the Imam of Oman (from 1034/1624 until 1059/1649), written by ʿAbd Allāh b. Khalfān b. Qayṣar²⁶ did not come into existence until the eleventh/seventeenth century. This *sīra* is considered to be the first biography in Omani literature and the work which developed the idea of *sīra* as biography.
2. The style of Omani historical compilations during this period was developing in new directions.
3. The development of the *siyar* was complete by the end of this period, and much of the work composed thereafter adds little more than embellishment and elaboration on the same themes. In addition, Omani historical works after the eleventh/seventeenth century ceased to use the *sīra* form because it rarely suited their purposes.

In the nineteenth century, Ḥumayd b. Muḥammad b. Ruzayq (d. 1291/1873) wrote a biography of Sultan Saʿīd b. Sulṭān (1804–56), entitled *al-Badr al-tamām fī sīrat al-Sayyid al-Humām Saʿīd b. Sulṭān*. He included it in his book *al-Fath al-mubīn fī sīrat al-Sādat al-Bū Saʿīdiyīn*,²⁷ which is divided into three sections. The first section deals with the tribe of al-Azd²⁸ and their genealogy until the Bū Saʿīdiyīn. In the second section, he gives some biographical details about the imams of Oman, and in the third, a narrative of the Bū Saʿīdiyīn from 1741 until 1856. Furthermore, Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh b. Ḥumayd al-Sālimī (1866–1913) wrote the biography of his teacher Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAlī al-Ḥārithī in his *al-Ḥaqq al-jalī fī sīrat al-Shaykh Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAlī*.²⁹ Like Ibn Ruzayq, he used the *sīra* as a historical principle in his book *Tuḥfat al-aʿyān bi-sīrat ahl ʿUmān*, in which he says: ‘The influence of the Prophet and his Companions in Oman can be seen more than in any other country. My soul longed to write that which could tell the history of prominent leaders so that their history is known to the ignorant and that young scholars may see these as

²⁶ Ibn Qayṣar, *Sīrat al-Imām Nāṣir b. Muṣṣhid*, ed. ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Qaysī (Muscat 1977).

²⁷ Ḥumayd b. Muḥammad b. Ruzayq, *al-Fath al-mubīn fī sīrat al-sāda al-Bū Saʿīdiyīn* (Muscat 1977); trans. Rev. G.P. Badger: Salīl Ibn Ruzayq, *History of the Imams and Seyyids of Oman* (London 1871).

²⁸ Al-Azd are of three types: Azd Shanūʿa, Azd al-Surāt, and Azd ʿUman. See details in Salama b. Muslim al-ʿAwtabī, *Ansāb al-ʿArab* (Muscat, 1981–4), 1:43; Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Qalqashandī, *Nihāyat al-ʿArab fī maʿrifat ansāb al-ʿArab* (n.d.), 90; *EP*², s.v. ‘Azd’.

²⁹ Including Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAlī al-Ḥārithī, *ʿAyn al-maṣāliḥ fī jawābāt al-Shaykh al-Ṣāliḥ* (Damascus n.d.).

leaders, despite the lack of material [about them] in this area'.³⁰ Because of the diversity in Ibādī thought in Oman, he adds: 'As a result you do not normally find an integrated biography or comprehensive history about them [i.e. prominent leaders]'. He says that he searched as much as he could in the books of history and wrote what he could about the history of Oman.³¹

From this we can conclude that, although the earliest biography written in Oman was thought to have been written in the eleventh/seventeenth century, the first *sīra*, which recorded the history and death of the imams and 'ulamā' of Oman, was in fact written in the early ninth/fifteenth century by Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Maddād. This *sīra* is considered a milestone in the development of the *sīra* in Oman and is a remarkable biography. Nevertheless, the *siyar* had been pronounced as primary sources in the classic writings of Omani historians, such as *al-Ansāb* (fifth/eleventh century) by A. al-Mundhir al-'Awtabī,³² *Kashf al-ghumma: al-Jāmi' li akhbār al-umma* (eleventh/seventeenth) attributed to Sirḥān b. Sa'īd al-Izkāwī,³³ *al-shu'ā' al-shā'ī' bi 'l-lum'ān fī dhikr a'immat 'Umān*³⁴ by Ḥumayd b. Muḥammad b. Ruzayq (d. 1875) and *Tuḥfat al-a'yān bi sīrat ahl 'Umān* by Nūr al-Dīn 'Abdullāh al-Sālimī (1866–1914).

II Introductory Remarks about the Context of the Omani *Siyar*

Before identifying the *siyar* that have survived, we must take into account several factors:

1. The Omani *siyar* were issued as individual manuscripts in Oman; there was no collection or collation of them until the eleventh/seventeenth century. This is the period which witnessed the first of the Omani *siyar* collections in a book entitled *K. al-Siyar al-'umānīya* or *al-Siyar al-ibādīya*. Some of these *siyar* are still in manuscript form, and were written in different times and places.
2. Collections of Omani *siyar* were made at different times.

³⁰ 'Abd Allāh al-Sālimī, *Tuḥfat al-a'yān bi-sīrat ahl 'Uman*, ed. A. Ishāq Aṭfayyish (Cairo 1380/1961).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 1:4.

³² Al-'Awtabī, *Ansāb*.

³³ Sirḥān, 'Annals of Oman', trans. E.C. Ross, *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 1, no. 2 (1874).

³⁴ Ḥumayd b. Muḥammad b. Ruzayq, *al-Shu'ā' al-shā'ī' bi-al-lum'ān fī dhikr a'immat 'Umān* (Muscat 1978). Based on a manuscript in the Cambridge University Library, which consists of 184 lines of poetry on the imams preceding the Bū Sa'īds.

3. Some of the *siyar* which have been included in these differently dated collections are not Omani or Ibādī but general Islamic literature, like the *Sīrat al-nabī ilā al-‘Alā’ b. al-Ḥaḍramī* or *Risālat Abī Bakr ilā ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb*. They have been included in these collections because they give indirect support to the Ibādī sect.
4. Most of the *siyar* have clear aims, and are similar to what we might now refer to as monographs. These *siyar* fall generally into four main categories in terms of the manner by which they are identified: first, by name of the author, as in the *Sīra* of Sālim b. Dhakwān (second/eighth century), and the *Sīra* of Khalaf b. Ziyād al-Baḥrānī (second/eighth century); second by name of writer and the people to whom the letter is addressed, as in the *Sīra* of Imam Muḥannā b. Jayfar (226–37/841–51) to Mu‘adh b. Ḥarb, and the *Sīra* of Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb to Abū Ziyād Khalaf b. ‘Udhra.; third by the subject with which they are concerned, as in the *Sīra* of Abū al-Mundhir Bashīr b. Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb (third/ninth century) *Fī al-ḥadath al-wāqī’ bi-‘Umān*, about the events that took place in Oman, and *Sīrat al-su‘āl* by Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Bisyāwī (late fourth/tenth–early fifth/eleventh century); fourth is by topical title, as in *K. al-Aḥdāth wa-al-ṣifāt* and *K. al-Muwāzana*.
5. Some *siyar* deal with more than one topic and, when this is so, additions are made to the second topic by copyists.³⁵ In other

³⁵ Wilkinson suggests that the problems of identifying the Omani primary sources are:

First, the conventions followed by the ‘*ulamā*’ when citing their sources. The following basic rules seem to apply:

- (a) they usually quote sources when opinions or attitudes are involved;
- (b) they frequently quote a source when it contributes something of special importance;
- (c) they quote when their source is not generally known by scholars or it is questionable;
- (d) conversely, when the material seems to be generally accepted, the sources are not normally given. This, therefore, leaves a major area of unsupported statements, which probably can never be identified.

Second, there is a problem of identifying the shorthand of the quoted source, e.g. ‘Abū Sa‘īd says...’ or ‘in the *Muṣannaḥ* I have found...’ This is relatively easy to overcome if the student is prepared to immerse himself in the scholarly tradition of the Ibādī ‘*ulamā*’. Thus, one soon learns that Abū Sa‘īd is Muḥammad b. Sa‘īd al-Kudamī, and one will not confuse him with Muḥammad b. Sa‘īd al-Qalhātī.

Third, there is the bibliographical problem of establishing the work that an author wrote, what has survived, and whether a direct quotation is in fact from the original source or from a version preserved in some other work.

See: John Wilkinson, “Bio-bibliographical Background to the Crisis Period in the Ibādī Imāmate of Oman,” *Arabian Studies* 3 (1976): 139.

words, the copyists thought it useful to add their own comments about some subject that is dealt with in the *sīra*. An example can be found in the *Sīra* of Abū al-Muʿthir al-Ṣalt b. Khamīs.

In investigating the Omani *siyar*, it was found that a number of manuscripts had been grouped in collections:

1. The copy from the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture (MNHC) in Muscat. *Kitāb al-Siyar* was written in 1299/1881 and collected in three volumes. (MS 1).
2. The copy from the al-Sālimī library in Biddiyya. It was written in 1120/1708 and collected in one volume entitled *Kitāb al-Siyar*. (MS 2).
3. The copy from the collected manuscripts of Aḥmad b. Nāṣir al-Sayfī in Nizwa. It was written in 1141/1728 and collected in three volumes entitled *al-Siyar al-ibādīya*. (MS 3).
4. *Kitāb Taqyīd* by Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh b. Baraka (fourth/tenth century). It is kept in the al-Sālimī library in Biddiyya, and was written in 972/1564. (MS 4).
5. *Al-Sīra al-kalawīya*. There are two manuscript copies belonging to MNHC. The acquisition numbers of these two manuscripts are 138 and 1409. (MS 5).
6. The microfilm manuscript of *al-Siyar* in the Cambridge University Library, Or.1402. The date of this manuscript is unknown.³⁶ (Mc. 1).
7. The microfilm manuscript of *al-Siyar* in the Wilkinson Archive at Exeter University Library. This came from the University of Lwow, and was used by Lewicki in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.³⁷ (Mc. 2)

Published Works Consulted:

1. *K. al-Siyar wa-al-jawābāt*, edited by Sayyida Kāshif Ismāʿil in 1984. This manuscript is in the library of MNHC, and the original manuscript is said by the editor to be dated 7 Jumādā I 1009 (13 November 1600). (Pub. 1).³⁸
2. *Tuhfat al-aʿyān bi-sīrat ahl ʿUmān*, by ʿAbd Allāh b. Ḥumayd al-Sālimī (1284–1332/1875–1913). (Pub. 2).

³⁶ This microfilm was used by Michael Cook in *Early Muslim Dogma* and Crone and Zimmermann in *The Epistle of Sālim ibn Dhakwān*.

³⁷ *EI*², s.v. “Ibādīyya.”

³⁸ *Al-Siyar wa-al-jawābāt*, 1:17.

3. *Ithāf al-a'yān fī tārikh ba'd 'ulamā' 'Umān*, by Sayf b. Ḥammūd b. Ḥāmid al-Baṭṭāshī. (Pub. 3).³⁹
4. *K. Fawākih al-'ulūm fī ṭā'at al-Ḥayy al-Qayyūm*, by Sa'īd b. Aḥmad al-Kharāssīnī (late eleventh/seventeenth–early twelfth/eighteenth century). (Pub. 4).⁴⁰

For convenience, the Omani *siyar* will be studied according to three criteria:

- I- Chronology
- II- Subject
- III- Form

Background debates concerning the authenticity of the *siyar* through a detailed examination of their contents will be explored and developed.

III Chronology and Subject of the *Siyar*

The First Period

This period extends from the beginning of Islam until the first Imamate in Oman (131/748). It is divided into six stages:

1A. The first stage covers *siyar* that were written by neither Ibādī nor Omani writers, consisting in fact of letters from the Prophet or his Companions. Only the Omani writers have collated these letters as *siyar*, possibly because there are parallels and similarities between them and the *siyar* penned by Omani writers. They appear under the rubric *siyar* only in the collection of al-Sayfī in the city of Nizwa (MS 3), and are arranged under the following topics:

I A *sīra* from the Prophet Muḥammad to al-'Alā' b. al-Ḥārith; the Prophet had appointed the latter governor of Bahrain. Sources reckon that this *sīra* was written in the year 4/625.⁴¹

³⁹ Sayf al-Baṭṭāshī, *Ithāf al-a'yān fī tārikh ba'd 'ulamā' 'Umān* (Muscat, 1st ed. 1992, 2nd ed. 1998).

⁴⁰ Sa'īd al-Kharāssīnī, *Fawākih al-'ulūm fī ṭā'at al-Ḥayy al-Qayyūm* (Muscat 1996).

⁴¹ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 1; Mc. 2. In fact, there are some who doubt the authenticity of this *sīra*, because the Prophet began to send his missionaries in the year 8/629; the end of the *sīra* says 'stamped by the ring of the Prophet', whereas the Prophet used the ring only after the year 6/627. Moreover, the *sīra* mentions Mu'āwiyah b. Abī Sufyān among the witnesses, although he only embraced Islam in 8/629. We can also find this *sīra* in the Ibādī tradition of North Africa by al-Jiṭālī (sixth/twelfth century), *Qanāṭir al-khayrāt* (Muscat, 1989), 3:296. Wilkinson adds that, according to the text, this *sīra* could have been quoted by Abū Ishāq al-Ḥaḍramī

II A *sīra* in the form of a letter from the caliph Abū Bakr to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.⁴²

III A *sīra* in the form of a letter from ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.⁴³

IV A *sīra* in the form of a letter from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib to Abū ‘Ubayda ‘Āmir b. al-Jarrāh.⁴⁴

V A *sīra* in the form of a sermon given by ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib on the day Abū Bakr died.⁴⁵

VI A *sīra* in the form of a statement by Abū Bakr addressed to ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb.⁴⁶

1B. The second stage covers *siyar* that reflect important events occurring after the crisis resulting from the assassination of the caliph ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān. The following *siyar* deal with the events of the period 35–45/656–65:

VII An anonymous summary of the accomplishments of ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān during his caliphate, known as *Mukhtaṣar min kitāb ṣifāt aḥdāth ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān*. Al-Barrādī includes it among the first of the Eastern Ibādī compilations that were written in the second/eighth century.⁴⁷

VIII A letter from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib to the people of Nahrawān.⁴⁸

IX A letter from the Muslims of Nahrawān to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.⁴⁹

X A *sīra* in the form of a debate between the Muslims of Nahrawān and ‘Abd Allāh b. al-‘Abbās.⁵⁰

in *The Imamate Tradition of Oman* (Cambridge 1987), 167, 342; Abū Bakr al-Kindī, *al-Ibtidā*, ed. Sayyida Kāshif Ismā‘īl (Muscat 1986), 240–9.

⁴² MS 3.

⁴³ MS 3.

⁴⁴ MS 3.

⁴⁵ MS 3.

⁴⁶ MS 3. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, edited by ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Najār. (Cairo, 1348/1930–1349/1931), 1:8.

⁴⁷ MS 3; Mc. 1. Al-Barrādī mentions this *sīra*; *Risāla fī taqyīd kutub aṣḥābinā*, 53. This *sīra* raises questions about its authenticity. Crone and Zimmermann comment: ‘It cites information from the Kufan Shī‘ite al-A‘mash (d. 148/765) and gives verbatim extracts from Ibn Ishāq (d. about 150/767), mostly without acknowledgement, though it does name him on one occasion. The work is unlikely to have been written much before the 150s/770s’. *The Epistle of Sālim ibn Dhakwān*, 190.

⁴⁸ MS 3. See also Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 3:171.

⁴⁹ MS 3; Mc. 2.

⁵⁰ MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 1. Cf. M. Kafafi, ‘The Rise of Khārijism according to Abū Sa‘īd Muḥammad b. Sa‘īd al-Azdī al-Qalhātī’, *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts* (Cairo) 14 (1952), 29–48.

XI A letter from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib to ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās, when the latter was accused of embezzeling money from Basra when he left from the Hijaz.⁵¹

XII A *sīra* that includes letters written by ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib to ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās.⁵²

XIII An anonymous *sīra* known as *Sīra fī al-radd ‘alā ahl al-shakk*. This *sīra* was composed in response to those who harboured doubts about the people of Nahrawān, and attempts to explain why the latter had rejected the arbitration between ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiya.⁵³

1C. The third stage is a collection of *siyar* which reflect the organization of the Ibādī movement and the communications between its centre in Basra and several other groups of Ibādīs. It also presents political, theological and legal issues among Islamic sects. The third stage includes the following *siyar*:

XIV A *sīra* from ‘Abd Allāh b. Ibād (the eponym of the Ibādīya) to ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān.⁵⁴ The first of two, it is specifically about ‘Uthmān and Mu‘āwiya. As such, it is a well-known correspondence and is considered to be one of the first Ibādī works that clarifies Ibādī thought as it stood in the first/seventh century.⁵⁵

⁵¹ MS 3; Mc. 1. See Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh*, 2:1131.

⁵² MS 3; Mc. 1.

⁵³ MS 3; Mc. 1.

⁵⁴ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 1; Mc. 2; Pub. 1, 2:325.

⁵⁵ Michael Cook devotes a chapter to discussing the authenticity of the letters of ‘Abd Allāh b. Ibād to ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān. Ibn Ibād’s first letter is about ‘Uthmān and Mu‘āwiya, and his second one concerns ‘Alī and his son al-Ḥasan. Cook believes that one cannot accept the first letter as a genuine composition of Ibn Ibād. It is probably a copy of a letter from Jābir b. Zayd to some of his students at the end of the second/eighth century. Cook adds that if we accept the authenticity of the letter, we would consider that the letter is actually from Jābir b. Zayd to ‘Abd al-Malik b. al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra. He states that the form of the first letter is characteristic of letters dating to the end of the Umayyad period. Cook tries in his arguments to cast some doubts on the existence of Ibn Ibād. Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma*, 51–67. See also Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur Supplementband* (Leiden 1936–42), 1:104; L. Sachau, ‘Über die religiösen Anschauungen der Ibādītischen Muhammedaner in Oman und Ostafrika’, *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen* 4 (1898), 61–82; Josef van Ess, *Anfänge muslimischer Theologie* (Beirut 1977), 7, 12, 151; R. Rubinacci, ‘Il califfo ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān egli Ibādite’, *Annali dell’ Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli* 5 (1953), 106–21; van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, (Berlin and New York 1992–7), 2:187–90.

XV A *sīra* by Jābir b. Zayd (d. c. 93/711).⁵⁶ Jābir is considered to be the first Ibādī leader in Basra. This *sīra* is mentioned only by the author of *Jāmi' Ibn Ja'far* and has not yet been found.⁵⁷

XVI A *sīra* which records the sayings of Jābir b. Zayd. This *sīra* is known only from a quotation in the aforementioned *Jāmi' Ibn Ja'far*.⁵⁸

XVII A *sīra* by Abū 'Ubayda Muslim b. Abī Karīma (d. c. 158/775)⁵⁹ and Abū Ayyūb Wā'il b. Ayyūb al-Ḥaḍramī.⁶⁰ Abū 'Ubayda was the second Ibādī imam who organized the Ibādī movement in Basra after Jābir b. Zayd. Abū 'Ubayda and Abū Ayyūb, who were originally from the Ḥaḍramawt, were regarded as third- and fourth-generation Ibādīs respectively. This *sīra* talks about the nature of those human beings who insist on committing sins; as such it is considered to be the first Ibādī theological tract. The *sīra* explains the concept of reward and punishment earned by human actions, pointing out that, while the performance of good deeds leads to paradise, people who insist on committing sins will reside permanently in hellfire.⁶¹

XVIII A *sīra* by Abū 'Ubayda Muslim b. Abī Karīma and Abū Mawdūd Ḥājib b. Mawdūd al-Ṭā'ī to al-Faḍl b. Kathīr. Abū Mawdūd died in Basra between 136/753 and 148/764, and certainly before Abū 'Ubayda.⁶² He was also considered as a second-generation Ibādī and one of the political organizers of the movement in Basra. This *sīra* discusses Ibādī opinions on the theological issue of free will and predestination.⁶³

XIX A *sīra* by Abū 'Ubayda Muslim b. Abī Karīma. This *sīra* consists of advice given to the followers of the Ibādī sect, encouraging them to continue their work and activities in a more discrete way.⁶⁴

XX A *sīra* in the form of a letter from Abū Mawdūd to Abū al-Ḥurr b. al-Ḥusayn. Abū al-Ḥurr, regarded as second-generation, was a member of the Ibādī delegation that went to the Caliph 'Umar

⁵⁶ *EI*², s.v. 'Djābir b. Zayd'; van Ess, *TG*, 2:190.

⁵⁷ Ibn Ja'far, *Jāmi'*, MNHC, (Muscat 1981), 1:158.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:93.

⁵⁹ *EI*², s.v. 'Ibādiyya'; van Ess, *TG*, 2:193. Abū 'Ubayda seems to have died after 150/760, because Abū 'Ubayda ordered the killing of Ma'n b. Zā'idah al-Shaybānī after Ma'n killed Zājir al-Ḥaḍramī. Ma'n was killed in Sistān in 150/760. Al-Shammākhī, *al-Siyar*, 1:107.

⁶⁰ Al-Darjīnī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mashāyikh*, 2:278.

⁶¹ MS 3; Mc. 1.

⁶² Van Ess, *TG*, 2:196.

⁶³ MS 3.

⁶⁴ MS 3; Mc. 1.

b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (99–101/717–720). This *sīra* sheds light on the events which caused its author to leave Basra, and records the problems that he encountered, such as fear and expulsion.⁶⁵

XXI A *sīra* by Imam ‘Abd Allāh b. Yaḥyā Ṭālib al-Ḥaqq (d. 131/748). Ṭālib al-Ḥaqq was the Ibādī leader of Yemen and Ḥaḍramawt who revolted against the Umayyads in 129/746. This *sīra* has been mentioned by al-Barrādī, but has not yet come to light.⁶⁶ It is, perhaps, the sermon given by Ṭālib al-Ḥaqq when he occupied Yemen.⁶⁷

XXII A *sīra* from Maḥbūb b. al-Raḥīl⁶⁸ to Imam ‘Abd Allāh b. Yaḥyā Ṭālib al-Ḥaqq. This *sīra* was written when Ṭālib al-Ḥaqq rebelled in Yemen. It is recorded by al-Darjīnī.⁶⁹

XXIII A *sīra* by Abū Mawdūd Ḥājib b. Abī Mawdūd al-Ṭā’ī. This *sīra* is in the form of an invitation to the Ibādī people to organize themselves for *jihād* and revolution in order to establish the Imamate. As such, it illustrates the fundamental principles of Ibādī political thought: equality among the people and the principle of consultation (*shūrā*).⁷⁰

XXIV A *sīra* by Abū Ayyūb Wā’il b. Ayyūb al-Ḥaḍramī. This *sīra*, for which the author has chosen the title *Nasab al-islām* (The Genealogy of Islam), is a summary of the main Islamic teachings. It also illustrates the Ibādī position on the doctrine of divine unity (*tawḥīd*), refuting both anthropomorphism and the notion of the vision of God on the Day of Resurrection. The *sīra* supports the idea that Islam consists of both faith and deeds.⁷¹

XXV A *sīra* by Sālim b. Dhakwān al-Hilālī. Ibn Dhakwān was a member of the Ibādī delegation which went to the Caliph ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (reg. 99–101/717–20). This *sīra* is considered to be the most important Ibādī document of the first half of the second/eighth century. Cook argues that it could be dated between 72/680 and 73/681,⁷² while Crone and Zimmermann suggest a date in the range of 133–77/750–93.⁷³ This *sīra* discusses several ways in which Ibādī beliefs might be maintained. Additionally, it clarifies the differences

⁶⁵ MS 3.

⁶⁶ Al-Barrādī, *Risāla fī taqyīd kutub aṣḥābinā*, 61.

⁶⁷ Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 23:236.

⁶⁸ *EP*, s.v. ‘Maḥbūb b. al-Raḥīl’; van Ess, *TG*, 2:201.

⁶⁹ Al-Darjīnī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mashāyikh*, 2:279; al-Barrādī, *Risāla fī taqyīd kutub aṣḥābinā*, 56.

⁷⁰ MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 1.

⁷¹ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 2; Pub, 2:46.

⁷² Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma*, 20, 89, 103.

⁷³ Crone and Zimmermann, *The Epistle of Sālim ibn Dhakwān*, 299.

in theological opinion between the Ibādīs and other Islamic sects, specifically the Murjī'a. The *sīra* rejects all Khārījī opinions of the Azāriqa, the Najdīya and the Ṣufrīya, and their followers 'Aṭīya b. 'Āmir, Abū Dāwūd and Abū Fudayk. It also expresses opinions on the issue of predestination, divine decree, and free will.⁷⁴

XXVI A *sīra* from Abū 'Ubayda and Abū Mawdūd Ḥājib to the people of the Maghrib (North Africa). This is in the form of a letter to the Ibādī people of Tripoli (Libya), advising them to remain united and to eschew division and sectarianism.⁷⁵ A secondary aim of this *sīra* was to interpret three fundamental principles of Islamic dogma (*uṣūl al-dīn*) held by the Ibādīs, namely association (*walāya*), dissociation (*barā'a*), and suspended judgment (*wuqūf*). The authors advise the Ibādīs to adopt the principle of *wuqūf* with regard to the murder of 'Uthmān.⁷⁶

XXVII A *sīra* in the form of a letter from Abū 'Ubayda Muslim b. Abī Karīma and Abū Mawdūd Ḥājib al-Ṭā'ī to the people of Oman. The date is unknown. This *sīra* was written and sent in order to quell the sedition in Oman caused by Qutaybah b. Dirham and Sadūs b. Yūsuf, who were responsible for buying a free man from Thābit b. Juhri and enslaving him. This led the Ibādī '*ulamā*' to proclaim dissociation (*barā'a*) from what they had done. This crisis demonstrated a lack of control in the internal affairs of Oman on the part of the authorities, and also led to confusion among scholars and some tribes at that time. Internal evidence in the *sīra* points to its having been penned after the imamate of al-Julandā b. Mas'ūd in 134/750.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 1. This *sīra* is translated and studied by Crone and Zimmern in *The Epistle of Sālim ibn Dhakwān*. It is also studied by Cook in *Early Muslim Dogma*. Also see 'A. K. Ennami, 'Studies in Ibādism' (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Cambridge, 1971); van Ess, *TG*, 1:174; 2:661.

⁷⁵ The year 132/748 witnessed the murder of al-Ḥārith b. Talid al-Ḥaḍramī and 'Abd al-Jabbār b. Qays al-Murrādī. The people found the corpses of 'Abd al-Jabbār and al-Ḥārith, each with the other's sword in his body. Some blamed their deaths on 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Ḥabīb, who was the Abbasid governor (*wālī*) of North Africa, claiming that he murdered them because he was afraid of the gradual extension of Ibādī influence into North Africa. The murders were not connected with the attempt to establish the first Ibādī Imamate in North Africa (140–4/758–62) by Abū al-Khaṭṭāb 'Abd al-A'lā b. al-Samḥ al-Ma'āfirī. Cf. Muḥammad Khalifāt, *Nash'āt al-ḥaraka al-ibādīya* (Amman 1978), 139–42; Werner Schwartz, *Die Anfänge der Ibadin in Nordafrika* (Wiesbaden 1983), 129–36; Ulrich Rebstock, *Die Ibaditen im Magrib (2/8–4/10)* (Berlin 1983), 53.

⁷⁶ MS 3.

⁷⁷ MS 3.

XXVIII A *sīra* from Abū 'Ubayda al-Maghribī to Imam 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān, the second Rustamid Imam of Tāhart (168–208/784–823), whose accession to power sparked the Nukkār schism. This letter, which concerns the imam's election, should be treated cautiously: if genuine, it provides a new *terminus a quo* for Abū 'Ubayda's death.⁷⁸ At the end of the document there are several passages on Quranic exegesis. In fact, as it is well known that Abū 'Ubayda's death was in the 150s/770s, there are doubts concerning the *sīra*'s authenticity. In this regard, compare this work with the *sīra* from al-Rabī' b. Ḥabīb to the people of the Maghrib (XXXIII).⁷⁹

XXIX A *sīra* by Hilāl b. 'Aṭīya al-Khurāsānī (d. 134/751). Hilāl was a judge in the service of Imam al-Julandā b. Mas'ūd (132–4/749–51), hailing originally from Khurāsān. This *sīra* has yet to be found.⁸⁰

XXX A *sīra* by Khalaf b. Ziyād al-Baḥrānī (second/eighth century). Khalaf was among the companions of Imam al-Julandā b. Mas'ūd. He was originally from Bahrain before going to Oman and joining *al-Shurāt*, meaning the people who follow the idea of 'selling' oneself in God's cause. He later became one of the leaders of *al-Shurāt*. His *sīra* outlines the underlying structure of *al-Shurāt* and illustrates Ibādī political and theological thought as it stood in the first half of the second/eighth century. The particular issue discussed in this *sīra* is the unity of words and deeds. It also includes a response to the Khawārij, whom the author considers dissenters on account of the fact that they arrogated to themselves the authority to kill and take the property of any Muslim who disagreed with their ideas.⁸¹

XXXI A *sīra* by Shabīb b. 'Aṭīyah al-Khurāsānī. Shabīb was one of the army commanders of Imam al-Julandā b. Mas'ūd during the latter's fight against the Abbasids in 134/752. He was among the migrants from Khurāsān, although Ibn Baraka identifies him as an Omani.⁸² He later lived in Oman, where he was known as a market

⁷⁸ Wilkinson, 'The *Fiqh* and other Early Manuscripts in the Muscat Collection', *Arabian Studies* 4 (1978), 191–207. However, al-Bārūnī claims that this *sīra* was a letter from Abū 'Ubayda Muslim to Imam 'Abd al-Wahhāb. See Sulaymān al-Bārūnī, *al-Azhār al-riyādīya* (Cairo 1324/1905), 2:611. On the other hand, 'Alī Dabbūz argues that this *sīra* could be attributed to Abū 'Ubayda 'Abd al-Ḥamid al-Jināwanī, who was a scholar from Jabal Naffūsa at the end of the second/eighth century. 'Alī Dabbūz, *Tārīkh al-maghrib al-kabīr* (Cairo 1963), 3:181. On al-Jināwanī, see *EI*², s.v. 'Djanāwanī'; al-Darjīnī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mashāyikh*, 2:291.

⁷⁹ MS 1; Mc. 2; Pub. 1, 2:320.

⁸⁰ Pub. 1, 1:300; Pub. 4, 3:241.

⁸¹ MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 1.

⁸² Pub. 1, 2:313.

inspector (*muhtasib*), and he collected taxes. He continued this work after the death of al-Julandā up until shortly before the establishment of the imamate of Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī ‘Affān (177–9/793–5). Shabīb wrote this *sīra* after the death of Imam al-Julandā. We could consider this *sīra* to stem from the period 140–65/756–81. The *sīra* talks about a very important issue, namely that faith includes a combination of both words and deeds. The writer also calls for *jihād* in order to affect a revolution designed to re-establish the principles of early Islam, namely justice, equality, and *shūrā*.⁸³

XXXII A *sīra* by Shabīb b. ‘Aṭīya to ‘Abd al-Salām, a replication of *al-Shakkāk min al-murji’a* (those who had doubted the righteousness of the people of Nahrawān). This *sīra* was probably written in the 160s/780s, because Shabīb died before the establishment of Imam Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī ‘Affān in 177/793.⁸⁴ The *sīra* shows the different theological positions taken in debates at that time among the various Islamic sects. This *sīra* is a response to the Murji’ī stance on the definition of faith as a combination of words and deeds. It also includes a reply to *al-Shakkāk*, which claimed that ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, and Mu‘āwiya had made mistakes.⁸⁵

XXXIII A *sīra* from al-Rabī’ b. Ḥabīb (75–175/694–792)⁸⁶ to the people of the Maghrib. This *sīra* takes the form of a letter from Imam al-Rabī’ to the Ibādīs of Tāhart, in southern Algeria, after they fell into disagreement and schism over Imam ‘Abd al-Wahhāb b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Rustam (171–208/788–824), the second Rustamid imam. Al-Rabī’ had supported the imamate of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb; however, a conflict arose at that time among the Ibādīs, spearheaded by Yazīd b. Fandīn and his followers, who were known as al-Nukkār (the deniers) as a result of their rejection of Imam ‘Abd al-Wahhāb.⁸⁷ Van Ess, however, does not accept that al-Rabī’ had a role in this schism.⁸⁸

XXXIV A *sīra* by Mūsā b. Abī Jābir (d. 181/797). He was one of four people who were *ḥamalat al-‘ilm* (missionaries) from Basra to Oman. He was also one of the most influential people in the imamate of Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī ‘Affān al-Yaḥmadī (177–9/793–5)

⁸³ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 1; Mc. 2; Pub. 1, 2:346. See also the comments on this *sīra* by Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma*, 57, 179.

⁸⁴ Al-Sālimī, *Tuḥfat al-‘ayān*, 1:111.

⁸⁵ MS 3; Mc. 1. Al-Barrādī mentions it as among the early Eastern Ibādī compositions. See *Risāla fī taqīd kutub aṣḥābinā*, 54.

⁸⁶ Cook suggests that Rabī’ died after 200 AH. *Early Muslim Dogma*, 56, 179.

⁸⁷ MS 1.

⁸⁸ Van Ess, *TG*, 2:198.

in Oman. Mūsā was *mufī* of Oman after Imam al-Julandā b. Mas'ūd until Imam Ghassān b. 'Abd Allāh al-Fajhī (192–207/808–23). This *sīra* is a political statement explaining the reasons behind the removal of Imam Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Abī 'Affān from the Imamate. One of these reasons was his severity in running the country's affairs.⁸⁹

1D. The fourth stage covers the *siyar* that were written during the imamates of Ghassān b. 'Abd Allāh al-Fajhī (192–207/808–23) and 'Abd al-Malik b. Ḥumayd (208–26/823–41). The Imamate in Oman during their time was stronger because the Omanis succeeded in restoring it.

XXXV The *sīra* of Abū Mawdūd Ḥabīb b. Ḥafṣ al-Hilālī. He is believed to have been an Ibādī scholar operating in Oman in the second/eighth century. This *sīra* is in the form of a letter of advice to Imam Ghassān b. 'Abd Allāh al-Fajhī upon the latter's accession to the Imamate. The author recommends that the imam strengthen the Imamate in Oman by promoting justice and equality among the people.⁹⁰

XXXVI A *sīra* from Munīr b. al-Nayyir al-Riyāmī al-Ja'lanī⁹¹ to Imam Ghassān b. 'Abd Allāh. Munīr was one of the aforementioned quartet of missionaries (*ḥamalat al-'ilm*) sent from Basra to Oman to help in the establishment of the Imamate in Oman after Imam al-Julandā was overthrown. This *sīra*, like the preceding one, lauds the righteousness of the previous imams and the Ibādī 'ulamā'. The author informs Imam Ghassān about a band of pirates who were attacking ships in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean. The pirates' latest

⁸⁹ MS 3; Mc. 1.

⁹⁰ MS 3; Mc. 1.

⁹¹ Al-Baṭṭāshī gives an account of his genealogy as Munīr b. al-Nayyir b. 'Abd al-Malik b. Wassār b. Wahab b. 'Ubayd b. Ṣalt b. Yaḥyā b. Ḥaḍramī b. Riyām al-Riyāmī; Pub. 3, 1:171. However, there is a debate about the date of his death and about whether they were one or two persons, because he has been mentioned twice. First, he is mentioned among the *ḥamalat al-'ilm* from Basra to Oman. See Al-Sālimī, *al-Lum'a al-murḍīya min ashi'at al-ibādīya* (Muscat 1983), 12. Second, he is mentioned as having been killed in 280/893 at Damā. See Al-Sālimī, *Tuhfat al-a'yān*, 1:260. Thus his existence is unclear. Cf. Crone and Zimmermann, *The Epistle of Sālim ibn Dhakwān*, 341. It can be deduced that there is only one figure named Munīr b. al-Nayyir (d.c. 220s) and this deduction emerges for two reasons: 1. Munīr is not mentioned in Omani Ibādī tradition since 220s, 2. he was not among the scholars who elected the Imamate in Oman since the Imam 'Abd al-Malik b. Ḥumayd. See further 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sālimī, *Isbkālat ta'wḥīq al-shakhsīyāt al-'Umānīya al-mubākira: Munīr b. al-Nayyir al-namūdhajā*, Nizwā magazine, Muscat, v44.

atrocities were the slaughter of more than fifty people in the region between Basra and western Oman. No one had been able to capture them. Consequently, the Imam built the first fleet in Oman to destroy them. This mission was completed successfully during the imamate of ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥumayd (208–26/823–41). This in turn led to the expansion of the Imamate outside the Indian Ocean and helped to spread Ibādī thought in Asia and East Africa. As such, this is an extremely significant event in the history of Oman, signalling the achievement of independence for Oman from the Abbasid caliphate.⁹²

XXXVII A *sīra* from Hāshim b. Ghaylān al-Sijānī to Imam ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥumayd (208–26/823–41). Hāshim was a powerful member of the ‘*ulamā*’ during the imamate of ‘Abd al-Malik. In this *sīra*, he answers some questions posed by the imam about the battle of Ṣiffīn, ‘Alī, Mu‘āwiya, and the people of Nahrawān.⁹³

XXXVIII A *sīra* from Hāshim b. Ghaylān al-Sijānī to Imam ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥumayd. This *sīra* concerns the Qadarīya and the Murjī‘a, whose missionaries had established footholds in the cities of Sohar and Tuwām.⁹⁴ At this time, theological debates between the various Islamic sects was on the rise. Oman had become a main centre for the influx of new theological ideas, since it was in close contact with the Abbasid capital of Baghdad. Ibādī thought comes into greater focus after the establishment of the Imamate in Oman and its independence from the Abbasid caliphate.⁹⁵

XXXIX A *sīra* addressed to Imam ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥumayd from Hāshim b. Ghaylān, Muḥammad b. Mūsā, al-Azhar b. ‘Alī, al-‘Abbās b. al-Azhar, Mūsā b. Muḥammad, Mūsā b. ‘Alī, Muḥammad b. ‘Alī, and Sa‘īd b. Ja‘far. All of these third/ninth century scholars hailed from Izkī.⁹⁶ This *sīra* is in the form of a letter of advice to the imam concerning some of the people around him.⁹⁷

XL A *sīra* addressed to Imam ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥumayd from Mūsā b. ‘Alī and Hāshim b. Ghaylān and the people of Izkī. This *sīra*

⁹² MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 1; Pub. 1, 1:229.

⁹³ MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 1; Pub. 1:36.

⁹⁴ Shams al-Dīn al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fi ma‘rifat al-aqālīm*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden 1906), 93. Tuwām is present-day Buraymī.

⁹⁵ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3.

⁹⁶ Local tradition has it that Izki (in pre-Islamic times, Jurnān, from the name of the idol worshipped there) is the oldest settlement in Oman, pre-dating Nizwā by fifty years. See J. Wilkinson, ‘The Origins of the *Aflāj* of Oman’, *Journal of Oman Studies* 6 (1978), 177–94.

⁹⁷ MS 3; Mc. 1.

is very similar to the preceding one, consisting of advice to the imam on the necessity of adherence to Islamic jurisprudence.⁹⁸

XLI A *sīra* from Mūsā b. ‘Alī b. ‘Uzra (177–230/784–845) to Imam ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥumayd. This *sīra* is a reply to the imam concerning the issue of *jihād*. Mūsā was the grandson of Mūsā b. Abī Jābir and a student of Hāshim b. Ghaylān. He was a powerful figure in Oman at the end of the imamate of ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥumayd whom some of the Ibādī scholars wanted to remove from the Imamate because of his failure to run the affairs of the country successfully, and on account of his advancing years. Mūsā, however, was against the idea of isolating the imam. His role increased in importance during the imamate of Muhannā b. Jayfar al-Fajhī (226–37/841–51), because he was considered among the *ahl al-ḥall wa-al-‘aqd* (those who loosen and bind, i.e. the decision-makers).⁹⁹

XLII A *sīra* from Mūsā b. ‘Alī to ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥumayd. In this *sīra*, Mūsā advises the imam not to appoint certain men to his government. As such, it demonstrates the role of the ‘*ulamā*’ in the first Imamate of Oman.¹⁰⁰

XLIII A *sīra* from Mūsā b. ‘Alī to the ‘*ulamā*’ and *al-Shurāt*. In this *sīra*, Mūsā divides people into three groups: unbelievers, Muslims, and ingrates (*kuffār al-nī‘am*). The relationship between the Ibādīs and the non-Ibādīs is clarified, and the concepts of *walāya* and *barā‘a* are discussed.¹⁰¹

1E. The fifth stage covers the *siyar* which appeared during the imamate of Muhannā b. Jayfar al-Fajhī (226–37/841–51). The Ibādī movement had at this point succeeded in extending the Islamic state. The Imamate of the Rustamids in North Africa was in a stronger position, especially after having established trade routes through the Sahara. The two also exchanged opinions on theological issues such as the creation of the Qur’ān. The *siyar* of this stage are:

XLIV A *sīra* from Imam Muhannā b. Jayfar (226–37/841–51) to Mu‘ādh b. Ḥarb. Originally this was a letter from the imam designed as a response to some *fatwās*. Ibn Ja‘far notes that this *sīra* was written by the judge to Imam Abū ‘Alī Mūsā b. ‘Alī (d. 237/851).¹⁰² The imam discusses issues related to various theological and legal positions held

⁹⁸ MS 3; Mc. 1; Mc. 2.

⁹⁹ MS 3; Mc. 1.

¹⁰⁰ MS 3.

¹⁰¹ MS 3.

¹⁰² Ibn Ja‘far, *Jāmi‘*, 2:46.

by the Ibādīs. All of the responses outlined in this document reflect the basic differences which existed then between the Ibādīs and the other Sunnīs, and which still exist today. These differences are: rejection of the notion of God as a corporeal entity or thing; opposition to the idea of man's ability to see God on the Day of Resurrection; rejection of the practice of raising the hands when commencing prayer and clasping the hands over the abdomen during prayer, a practice known as *sadal* or *isbāl*; and rejection of the idea that the name of God in *sūrat al-Fātiḥa* (Qur'ān, ch.1) is not a part of it. There are also opinions included in this *sīra* that relate to the *qunūt* during the prayer and the issue of truncated prayers during a journey. The imam was also advised, according to Ibādī ethics, to forbid slavery. The only reason to allow slavery, it was claimed, was to invite the slave to Islam; otherwise, slavery was prohibited.¹⁰³

XLV A *sīra* from Abū Sufyān Maḥbūb b. al-Raḥīl to Imam Muḥannā b. Jayfar about Hārūn b. al-Yamān.¹⁰⁴ The author was the last Ibādī leader in Basra, and died at the beginning of the third/ninth century.

XLVI A *sīra* from Abū Sufyān Maḥbūb b. al-Raḥīl to the people of Ḥaḍramawt concerning Hārūn b. al-Yamān.¹⁰⁵

XLVII A *sīra* from Hārūn b. al-Yamān to Imam Muḥannā b. Jayfar regarding Maḥbūb b. al-Raḥīl.¹⁰⁶

The three *siyar* cited above help to explain Ibādī thought on Islamic theological issues such as anthropomorphism, the vision of God on the Day of Resurrection, and the definition of faith whether or not it is combination of words and deeds. These *siyar* are of great importance to those studying the dynamics of interaction between the various Islamic sects. The author of *Tuḥfat al-a'yān*¹⁰⁷ gives more information on these issues, stating that the people of Oman and Ḥaḍramawt followed Maḥbūb b. al-Raḥīl while the people of Yemen followed Hārūn b. al-Yamān, who was also a member of the Shu'aybiya sect.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ MS 3; Mc. 1.

¹⁰⁴ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 2; Pub. 1, 1:273.

¹⁰⁵ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 2; Pub. 1, 1:305.

¹⁰⁶ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 2; Pub. 1, 1:323.

¹⁰⁷ Al-Sālimī, *Tuḥfat al-a'yān*, 1:157-158; Crone and Zimmermann, *The Epistle of Sālim b. Dhakwān*, 309-15.

¹⁰⁸ Abū Ishāq Aṭfayyish (the editor of *Tuḥfat al-a'yān*) says that the founder of this sect (al-Shu'aybiya) was Shu'ayb b. Muḥammad, who followed the 'Ajārīda of the Khawārij. This sub-sect had similar views to the Qadariya on predestination. See *Tuḥfat al-a'yān*, 1:157-8; Sa'īd al-Qalhātī, *al-Kashf wa-al-bayān*, ed. Sayyida Kāshif Ismā'īl (Muscat 1980), 2:233; al-Shahraṣṭānī, *al-Milal wa-al-niḥal*, 1:204.

In contrast, al-Baṭṭāshī argues that the dispute between Hārūn and Maḥbūb took place during the reign of Ghassān b. ‘Abd Allāh (192–207/808–23).¹⁰⁹

XLVIII The *sīra* of *Da’wa*. The author is unknown, and the *sīra* is known only from a quotation in Ibn Ja’far’s *Jāmi’*.¹¹⁰ It is possible to argue that the *sīra* was written at the end of third/ninth century, since it mentions the issue of Maḥbūb and Hārūn.

1F. The sixth stage covers those *siyar* dating from the imamate of al-Ṣalt b. Mālīk al-Kharūṣī (237–72/851–86). At this time, Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb (d. 260/874), son of the aforementioned Maḥbūb b. al-Raḥīl, had arrived in Oman. The centre of Ibādī thought in Iraq had come to an end, causing the Ibādīs in general to split into two schools: the Mashāriqa, or Eastern Ibādīs (in Oman, Yemen, and East Africa) and the Maghāriiba, or North African Ibādīs (in Libya, Tunis, and Algeria). The *siyar* of this stage are:

XLIX A *sīra* from Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb to Abū Ziyād Khalaf b. ‘Udhra. This is in the form of a legal *fatwā*, based on Ibādī opinions concerning ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī, Mu‘āwiya, and the Nahrawān issue.¹¹¹

L A *sīra* from Imam al-Ṣalt b. Mālīk and Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb to Aḥmad b. Sulaymān, the imam of the Ḥaḍramawt. This *sīra* was addressed to the Ibādī people of Ḥaḍramawt who had fallen into dissent and schism, resulting in opposition on the part of some of them to the rule of the imam. From this letter it appears that the root cause of the problem was the fact that the imam of Ḥaḍramawt had abandoned *jihād*, the Friday prayer, and had sold some military equipment.¹¹²

LI A *sīra* from Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb to the people of the Maghrib. Muḥammad wrote this *sīra* in response to questions posed by the North Africans concerning *zakāt* (the fourth pillar of Islam), particularly whether *zakāt* should be paid to a government that offers them no protection. Muḥammad advises them not to pay *zakāt* to any government or person unless the conditions of protection are fulfilled. This *sīra* was intended only for the Ibādī people of Tripoli (Libya), because at that time the Imamate of the Rustamids was established (171–297/788–909) in Tāhart. Not without justification can this *sīra* be considered tantamount to an invitation to the people

¹⁰⁹ Pub. 3, 2: 217–19. Also see further M. al-Kindī, *Bayān al-shar’*, (Muscat 1988), 28: 83–5, 140; 68: 307.

¹¹⁰ Ibn Ja’far, *Jāmi’*, 1:226.

¹¹¹ MS 3.

¹¹² MS 2; MS 3.

to rise up in rebellion against the central government. The *sīra* also outlines reasons for rejecting belief in anthropomorphism.¹¹³

LII A *sīra* from the people of the Maghrib to Imam al-Ṣalt b. Mālik. This is a letter defining the relationship of the Ibādīs with other Islamic sects and with non-Muslims as well, especially with regard to the concepts of association (*walāya*), dissociation (*barā'a*) and suspended judgment (*wuqūf*).¹¹⁴

LIII A *sīra* by Imam al-Ṣalt b. Mālik. Others, however, attribute authorship of this *sīra* to Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb.¹¹⁵ This *sīra* is in the form of a proclamation to the Omani army, despatched to the island of Socotra to wage a *jihād* against the Ethiopian Christians who had occupied it in the third/ninth century. The *sīra* outlines the Ibādī ethics of *jihād*. The imam writes on correct conduct in warfare, and advises his army on how they should treat others, regardless of whether they are Muslim or Christian. In addition, this *sīra* documents the powerful role of the Imamate of Oman in the Indian Ocean.¹¹⁶

LIV A *sīra* from Imam al-Ṣalt b. Mālik to Ghassān b. Khulayd, advising the latter, who was governor of the city of Rustāq, on certain points of state policy. It also includes guidelines on how Ibādīs should treat non-Ibādī Muslims, the People of the Book, and non-Muslims.¹¹⁷

LV A *sīra* by 'Azzān b. al-Ṣaqar al-Yaḥmadī (d. 268/882) on the creation of the Qur'ān. 'Azzān is considered to have been the first Ibādī scholar (*ālim*) from the Banū Kharūṣ, and was among the students of Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb. This *sīra* is arguably the oldest surviving Islamic theological monograph dealing with the issue of the created or uncreated nature of the Qur'ān, written in refutation of those who held that the Qur'ān was created in time. This led to a long debate among the Eastern Ibādīs who, in the eighth/fourteenth century, eventually adopted the belief that the Qur'ān was created.¹¹⁸ The Ibādī scholars of the Maghrib had already accepted this position. In principle, the Ibādī creed advocates neither anthropomorphism nor the uncreatedness of the Qur'ān, holding that belief in the latter

¹¹³ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3.

¹¹⁴ MS 1; MS 2; Mc. 2.

¹¹⁵ Al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥawārī, *Jāmi'* (Muscat 1985), 3:207; al-Sālimī, *Tuḥfat al-a'yān*, 1:186.

¹¹⁶ MS 2; Pub. 2, 1:168.

¹¹⁷ Pub. 2, 1:184.

¹¹⁸ Cf. al-Sālimī, *Tuḥfat al-a'yān*, 1:156; Nūr al-Dīn al-Sālimī, *Rawḍ al-bayān 'alā fayḍ al-mannān fī al-radd 'alā man idda'a qidam al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sālimī (Muscat 1994).

is to accept another entity as co-eternal with God. It is the belief of al-Sālimī, however, that when this issue arrived in Oman during the reign of Imam Muḥannā b. Jayfar, the Ibādī scholars took the position that they did because they were afraid that the opinions of the Jahmīya on this issue would cause unnecessary conflict among them. Compare this issue with *sīra* XXXVIII.¹¹⁹

LVI A *sīra* from Imam Abū al-Yaqzān Muḥammad b. Aflāḥ, the fourth Rustamid imam in Tāhart (208–58/823–71), to the people of Oman. In this *sīra*, the imam attempts to settle the issue of the nature of the Qurʾān among the Maghrib school once and for all. The *sīra* also illustrates the exchange of knowledge between Ibādī schools. In particular, this *sīra* formalizes the opinions of Ibādī theological thought on divine unity. This issue caused a schism among the Islamic sects known as the *fitnat khalq al-Qurʾān* between 198/813 and 232/847.¹²⁰

LVII A *sīra* known as *K. al-Radīf wa-ḥudūth al-ʿālam* by Abū al-Mundhir Bashīr b. Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb (d. 278/887). He studied with his father, Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb. The author has been considered to be among the earliest Ibādī scholars who wrote on the fundamentals of Islamic jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). Some scholars call this *Sīrat al-Mustaʿnaf*. Resembling a monograph on Islamic theology, this *sīra* survives as the oldest Omani compilation of its type. It includes a complete account of Mashāriqa Ibādī theological opinions on divine unity. There are seven chapters: 1) on creation and causality, 2) on divine unity, 3) on the rules of the Qurʾān, 4) on the divine names and attributes, 5) on the *sunna*, 6) on the duty to establish the Imamate, and 7) on *dār al-islām* and *dār al-ḥarb*¹²¹ and their rules.¹²²

LVIII A *sīra* entitled *K. al-Muḥāraba* (Book of Warfare) by Abū al-Mundhir Bashīr b. Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb. This monograph deals with the defensive war of *jihād*, and includes three chapters: 1) the kinds of people who have the obligation to fight, 2) the concept of commanding right and forbidding wrong, and 3) the fight against oppressors. This *sīra* reveals two things about Omani history. First, it clarifies the relationship between the central power of the Ibādīs in Oman with other Muslims and non-Muslims; second, it shows a change towards greater sophistication on the part of *sīra* writers when dealing with the state.¹²³

¹¹⁹ MS 2; MS 3.

¹²⁰ MS 3.

¹²¹ Referring to three elements: place of Muslims, place of *kuffār*, and place of mediation. See *EP*², s.v. ‘Dār al-Islām’; ‘Dār al-Ḥarb’; ‘Dār al-Ahd’.

¹²² MS 2.

¹²³ MS 1; MS 2; Mc. 2.

The Second Period

The second period of Omani *siyar* contains those documents composed during the civil war. In 272/886, Imam al-Ṣalt b. Mālik was removed from the Imamate, and Rāshid b. al-Nazar al-Fajhī was installed in his place (272–7/886–90), with support from Mūsā b. Mūsā (the son of Mūsā b. ‘Alī) and al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥawārī. This episode destroyed the monolithic structure of the Omani community and the Ibādī movement after the end of the second and third generation of Ibādī scholars. This is seen by historians as something of a disaster in Omani history, with three major effects. First came the overthrow of Rāshid b. al-Nazar and the appointment of ‘Azzān b. Tamīm al-Kharūṣī to the Imamate (277–80/890–3). This led to a civil war between the Arab clans of Nizār and Qaḥṭān, bringing in its wake five major battles and the deaths of Mūsā b. Mūsā, al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥawārī, and Rāshid b. al-Nazar. Second, the first Imamate in Oman was destroyed by Muḥammad b. Nūr (Ibn Būr or Thūr?), the Abbasid governor of Bahrain, when he killed Imam ‘Azzān b. Tamīm in 280/893. Consequently, the Abbasids gained dominance over Oman; they were followed by the Carmathians and then the Buyids. This heralded the start of a long period of foreign involvement in the internal affairs of the country. Thirdly, a schism occurred amongst the Omani Ibādī scholars, causing them to split along political and theological lines, resulting eventually in the foundation of three schools of political thought:

- 1 The Rustāq School. This faction supported Imam al-Ṣalt b. Mālik and attacked those revolutionaries who were the root cause of him being removed from the Imamate. Additionally, they were involved in fundamental discussions on the nature of the Ibādī Imamate. This school played a more active role in the second Imamate of Oman.
- 2 The Nizwā School. This faction dissociated itself from the confrontation between Imam al-Ṣalt and the opposition. Scholars of this school tried to achieve a balance between all the different opinions on this issue.
- 3 The revolutionary faction, whose views were expressed in arguments forwarded by individuals such as Mūsā b. Mūsā and al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥawārī to oppose Imam al-Ṣalt.

This stage heralds a new approach in the style and method adopted by the writers of the *siyar* and other works. The designation *siyar* is still used, but some of these works have individual titles. In addition, there are basically four formats of the *siyar* in this stage:

letters between scholars, monographs, statements or proclamations, and *fatwās*. The later *siyar* display the conflicting arguments among all three parties about the aftermath of the overthrow of Imam al-Ṣalt b. Mālik. These *siyar* cannot be limited to the second Imamate of Oman, because scholars continued to investigate and verify the opinions on this matter until the seventh/thirteenth century. The *siyar* are divided into three groups, which correspond to the three aforementioned factions.¹²⁴

2A. The Rustāq School

LIX *K. al-Aḥdāth wa-al-ṣifāt* by Abū al-Muʿthir al-Ṣalt b. Khamīs al-Kharūṣī (d. 280s/890s), who had been a student of Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb, and who established the Rustāq school. This document is one of the earliest examples of the development of the *sīra* style towards the monograph format. In it, the author attempts to defend Imam al-Ṣalt against the criticisms of his opponents. The importance of this *sīra* is that it provides a comprehensive outline of the Imamate system and the essential qualities that an imam ought to have.¹²⁵

LX *K. al-Bayān wa-al-burhān fī al-radd ʿalā man qāla bi-al-shāhidayn* by Abū al-Muʿthir al-Ṣalt b. Khamīs al-Kharūṣī. It is clear that the author wrote this *sīra* after *K. al-Aḥdāth wa-al-ṣifāt* because of the references he makes to it. The *sīra* deals with the defects and mistakes of the opposition, and the fundamental error they are deemed to have made in championing Rāshid b. al-Nazar as the future imam. He discusses only one argument of those two witnesses (*shāhidayn*) who elected the imam. The author lists the points of his opponents and refutes them in turn. In this *sīra*, the dogma of Ibādī theology shows that it is consonant with the general theology and politics of Islamic thought.¹²⁶

LXI *A sīra* by Abū al-Muʿthir al-Ṣalt b. Khamīs al-Kharūṣī. This *sīra*, which was written in the early part of the second half of the third/ninth century, includes Ibādī positions on theological issues that were current at the time, as well as insights into Ibādī opinions on other Islamic sects. It also reveals the opinions of the Mashāriqa Ibādīs. It comprises eleven chapters: 1) on the Jahmīya and the Jabrīya, 2) on the Qadarīya, 3) on divine unity, 4) on divine decree and determination

¹²⁴ These schools are described in more detail in al-Kudamī, *al-Istiqāma* (Muscat 1984); Abū Bakr al-Kindī, *al-Ihtidāʾ*; al-Sālimī, *Tuhfat al-aʿyān*, 1:197; Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition of Oman*, 166.

¹²⁵ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 2; Pub. 1, 1:21.

¹²⁶ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 2; Pub. 1, 1:149.

(*qadā' wa-qadar*), 5) on the unity of the divine names and attributes, 6) on fighting dissenters, 7) on the diversity of the Prophet's Companions, 8) on the Islamic sects, 9) on the imams among the Prophet's Companions and those who came after them, 10) on obedience to those in authority and the unlawfulness of disobedience, and 11) on association and dissociation. This *sīra* includes the opinions of Abū Mālik Ghassān b. al-Khaḍar, who succeeded Abū al-Mu'thir in the same school. One should exercise caution when citing these opinions, for many writers have added the opinions of other scholars, resulting in some confusion about the identities of the scholars and the attributions of their opinions.¹²⁷

LXII A *sīra* in the form of a letter from Abū al-Mu'thir al-Ṣalt b. Khamīs to Abū Jābir Muḥammad b. Ja'far (third/ninth century), a powerful figure in the Nizwā school. Both of them were taught by Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb. In this missive, Abū al-Mu'thir castigates his friend for supporting the opposition and advises him to eschew dissent. This *sīra* clearly reflects the influence of Omani political thought among the scholarly class during the aftermath of the overthrow of Imam al-Ṣalt.¹²⁸

LXIII A *sīra* by Abū al-Mundhir Bashīr b. Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb (d. 273/887) entitled *Fī al-ḥadath al-wāqī' bi-'Umān*. Bashīr was the son of Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb, and also contributed to the field of fundamentals of Islamic jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) with works such as *al-Bustān*, *al-Raḍīf wa-ḥudūth al-'alām* (on divine unity, LVII) and the 70-volume *K. al-Khizāna*. Abū al-Mundhir was somewhat less fanatical in his disagreement with the opposition than Abū al-Mu'thir. In this *sīra*, he attempts to respond to the arguments and opinions of the revolutionary faction, and also endeavours to evaluate the causes of the civil war in Oman.¹²⁹

LXIV A *sīra* by Abū al-Mundhir Bashīr b. Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb. This *sīra* is a short *fatwā* encapsulating his opinion on the civil war.¹³⁰

LXV A *sīra* by Abū al-Mundhir Bashīr b. Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb, consisting of an abridgement of a book of his that remains otherwise unknown. The *sīra* is in the form of a *fatwā* produced in response to questions concerning the downfall of Imam al-Ṣalt. It adopts a narrative style, outlining the story of the imam's fall from power, and

¹²⁷ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Pub. 1, 2:269–317.

¹²⁸ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 2; Pub. 1, 1:251–72.

¹²⁹ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 2.

¹³⁰ MS 3; Mc. 2.

the accession of his replacement, Rāshid b. al-Nazar. Bashīr was able to adopt a comfortable, credible narrative style on account of the fact that he was a contemporary of those who deposed Imam al-Ṣalt.¹³¹

LXVI A *sīra* by Abū Qaḥṭān Khālīd b. Qaḥṭān. Abū Qaḥṭān was one of the Ibādīte scholars operating in the first half of the fourth/tenth century. He wrote *Jāmi' Abī Qaḥṭān*, most of which has been lost. This *sīra* has numerous references to the Omani history of that time. The author, after rejecting the opinions of the opposition, and especially those of Mūsā b. Mūsā, introduces two topics. First, he deals with the internal conflicts in Oman after the civil war and the invasion of Muḥammad b. Nūr. Second, he looks at the imams who took power during the confrontation in Oman, concentrating in particular on the rule of the Carmathians. The *sīra* also includes a quotation from a letter written by Imam al-Ṣalt b. Mālīk to Muḥammad b. Sinjah, in which he explains the opposition's plans to depose him from the Imamate.¹³²

LXVII A *sīra* in the form of a letter from Abū Qaḥṭān Khālīd b. Qaḥṭān to al-Azhar b. Muḥammad b. Ja'far, who succeeded his father in the Nizwā School. This fourth/tenth-century *sīra* is a missive from the leader of one dogmatic school to another, and as such is similar in style and format to *sīra* LXII. It differs, however, in that Abū Qaḥṭān gives the opinions of some scholars of the Rustāq school in addition to those of his father.¹³³

LXVIII A *sīra* in the form of a letter from Mālīk b. Ghassān b. Khulayd to Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Rawḥ (first half of the fourth/tenth century). The author recounts the news of the civil war and the aftermath of the overthrow of Imam al-Ṣalt, and records some of the opinions of Omani scholars on the civil war. It is clear from the information in this *sīra* that Abū al-Ḥawārī al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥawārī supported Rāshid b. al-Nazar and Mūsā b. Mūsā, and that he died in battle against Imam 'Azzān b. Tamīm, although this *sīra* reveals different opinions from those of Abū al-Ḥawārī, which are very similar to those of the Rustāq school.¹³⁴

LXIX A *sīra* by Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh b. Baraka (fourth/tenth century). Ibn Baraka was one of the famous jurists and exponents of the fundamentals of Islamic law, and his book, *Jāmi' Ibn Baraka*, is one of the earliest important books on this subject in the

¹³¹ MS 3.

¹³² MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Pub. 1, 1:81–148.

¹³³ MS 2.

¹³⁴ MS 3.

Mashāriqa school.¹³⁵ His teachers were Imam Saʿīd b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb and Abū Mālik Ghassān b. al-Khaḍar. This school had a greater role in the second Imamate of Oman. Ibn Barakah also authored many other works, including *al-Taḡyīd*, *al-Taʿāruḥ*, *al-Mubtadaʿ*, and *al-Iqlīd*.¹³⁶ During Ibn Baraka's time, Abū Saʿīd Muḥammad b. Saʿīd al-Kudamī (305–55/917–66) appeared from the Nizwā school and was called by eastern Omani scholars *Imām al-Madhbhab*. Although both men were jurists of equal standing, they disagreed about the ousting of Imam al-Ṣalt, and both founded schools and sought logical evidence with which to refute other rival schools. Abū Saʿīd al-Kudamī also attempted to conciliate divergent opinions on this issue, and he had greater success in finding a solution to satisfy all concerned parties in his book *K. al-Istiḳāma*. This *sīra* is a reply to an anonymous petitioner who had asked for advice on this issue. The author confirms the logical evidence for rejecting the Nizwā school. Ibn Baraka sent this *sīra* to his friend to refute Abū Saʿīd's opinions.¹³⁷

LXX A *sīra* entitled *K. al-Muwāzana* (Equilibrium) by Ibn Baraka. This *sīra* is in the form of a monograph in which the author tries to balance all the points on this issue, hence the title, but in which he is unable to hide the fanaticism inherent in his party. The distinctive thing about this *sīra* is that it illustrates the author's excellence in the fundamentals of jurisprudence.¹³⁸

LXXI A *sīra* by Ibn Baraka. This *sīra* is a *fatwā* that reveals the scholarly opinions of Ibn Baraka's teacher, Abū Mālik Ghassān b. al-Khaḍar, on Imam al-Ṣalt.¹³⁹

LXXII A *sīra* entitled *al-Suʿāl fī al-ḥadath al-wāqīʿ bi-ʿUmān*, or, alternatively, *Sīrat ḥujjah ʿalā man abṭala al-suʿāl fī al-ḥadath al-wāqīʿ bi-ʿUmān* by Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan al-Bisyāwī (al-Bisyānī) (end of the fourth/tenth century). Abū al-Ḥasan was a student of Ibn Baraka and was greatly influenced by the opinions of his teacher. He wrote many books, the most famous being *Jāmiʿ Abī al-Ḥasan al-Bisyāwī*, summarized as *Mukhtaṣar al-Bisyāwī*.¹⁴⁰ The author considers the critical approach to be the basic principle in studying the creed; only then should one attempt to seek the truth. This is because

¹³⁵ *ET*², s.v. 'Ibn Baraka'.

¹³⁶ Al-Sālimī, *Lumʿa*, 23.

¹³⁷ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 2.

¹³⁸ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 1; Mc. 2.

¹³⁹ MS 3; Pub. 1, 2:384.

¹⁴⁰ Al-Sālimī, *Lumʿa*, 28.

the truth does not come without searching for it and linking it to analytical endeavours.¹⁴¹

LXXIII A *sīra* by Abū Ḥasan al-Bisyāwī in the form of a reply to one Muḥammad b. Saʿīd, most probably Abū Saʿīd Muḥammad b. Saʿīd al-Kudamī (fourth/tenth century). It would appear that this *sīra* was written at the order of his teacher Ibn Baraka because of the rivalry and conflict among the schools.¹⁴²

LXXIV A *sīra* by an anonymous author, written in the form of a letter to one Abū ʿAlī. Internal evidence suggests that it was written after the *sīra* of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bisyāwī, and probably at the end of the fifth/eleventh century. The recipient appears to be Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad al-Hijārī (d. 502/1108). The author of the *sīra* advises Abū ʿAlī to retain his allegiance to his school and stay firm in his opinions on the issue.¹⁴³

LXXV A *sīra* in the form of a *fatwā*. Both author and recipient(s) are unknown. The edict was written in response to questions submitted concerning the opinions and views of the Rustāq school.¹⁴⁴

2B) Nizwā School

LXXVI A *sīra* by al-Azhar b. Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar (end of the third/ninth beginning of the fourth/tenth century). Al-Azhar was the son of Ibn Jaʿfar, author of the seminal legal work, *Jāmiʿ Ibn Jaʿfar*, one of the earliest compilations to reach us from the school of the Mashāriqa Ibādīs. Ibn Jaʿfar was among the scholars who established the Nizwā school, and he became the most powerful figure in it, Al-Azhar succeeding his father. This *sīra* is a statement issued by al-Azhar advising the Omani people to remain calm and to stay neutral with regard to the debate concerning the removal from the Imamate of Imam al-Ṣalt b. Mālik. The beginning of the *sīra* includes the opinions on this issue of Omani scholars such as the author's father and Abū al-Muʿthir.¹⁴⁵

LXXVII A *sīra* in the form of a letter from Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Rawḥ b. ʿArabī (end of the third/ninth century) to Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb (a member of the Rustāq school and father of Imam Saʿīd b. ʿAbd Allāh). Both

¹⁴¹ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 2; Pub. 1, 2:62.

¹⁴² MS 1; MS 2; Mc. 2.

¹⁴³ MS 1; MS 3.

¹⁴⁴ MS 1; Pub. 1, 1:373.

¹⁴⁵ MS 3.

author and recipient are considered first generation scholars of their respective schools. This *sīra* was written after the death in battle of Imam ‘Azzān b. Tamīm in 280/893, and describes the reaction of powerful figures to the imam’s demise. This *sīra* is significant because Ibn Rawḥ collected the opinions of all the people who participated in the discussions and sought a reasonable explanation for the imam’s overthrow.¹⁴⁶

LXXVIII A *sīra* from Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Rawḥ to ‘Umar b. Muḥammad b. ‘Umar. This document is a *fatwā* dealing with the concepts of association (*walāya*) and dissociation (*barā’a*).¹⁴⁷

LXXIX A *sīra* by Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Rawḥ. This is a *fatwā* on the removal from office of Imam al-Ṣalt. Ibn Rawḥ stresses the idea that the root of the creed must be based on knowledge, which is the only way to the truth.¹⁴⁸

LXXX A *sīra* from Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Abī al-Ḥasan to Muḥammad b. Sinja (end of the third/ninth century). This *sīra* is a *fatwā*, in which Abū al-Ḥasan explains that removing Imam al-Ṣalt should not be considered a theological matter but mainly as a matter of public opinion.¹⁴⁹

2C. The ‘Revolutionary Faction’, namely those in support of Imam Rāshid b. al-Nazar and Mūsā b. Mūsā

LXXXI A *sīra* attributed to al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥawwārī (third/ninth century), who is considered to be one of the scholars who caused the civil war in Oman. He was also a member of the influential ‘*ulamā*’, the *ahl al-ḥall wa-al-‘aqd*. In this *sīra*, he expresses his ideas about supporting the imamate of Rāshid b. al-Nazar, and the reasons for removing Imam al-Ṣalt b. Mālīk and opposing Imam ‘Azzān b. Tamīm.¹⁵⁰

LXXXII A *sīra* in letter form from al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥawwārī to Rāshid b. al-Nazar. This *sīra* attempts to prove that the recipient was elected to the Imamate through proper procedures. It also documents the reasons for ousting Imam al-Ṣalt b. Mālīk.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ MS 2; MS 3.

¹⁴⁷ MS 2.

¹⁴⁸ MS 2.

¹⁴⁹ MS 2; MS 3.

¹⁵⁰ MS 2.

¹⁵¹ MS 2.

The Third Period

The third period of the Omani *siyar* includes those texts that were written between the years 320/923 and 549/1154, during the period of the second Imamate of Oman. The distinctive characteristics of this period of Omani history are:

- 1 The interference of foreign forces in Oman. First came the Abbasid Caliphate (280–320/893–922), then Carmathians, who dispatched armed expeditions to seize and occupy Oman on three occasions. The first invasion, headed by Abū Saʿīd al-Jinnābī, came in 294/905–6, the second in 305/917, and the third and largest campaign, spearheaded by Abū Ṭāhir al-Jinnābī, occurred in 318/930; this occupation continued until 375/985. During the 57 years of the third Carmathian occupation, the Buyids also sent three expeditions: the first in 354/965, the second a year later, and the third in 363/973, after the revolution and election of the new imam in Oman. The final foreign invasion was that of the Saljuqs in the fifth/eleventh century. They remained in Oman for almost 80 years. However, these foreign invasions gained only partial control over Oman, essentially the coast.
- 2 Maritime trade in Oman grew and the merchants flourished. The Omani cities thrived and attracted vital commercial trade. Sohar (Ṣuḥār) was described at that time in the following terms: ‘The capital is Sohar which is on the sea; here reside many sea merchants who trade in ships with other countries. It is the most popular and wealthy town in Oman and it is not possible to find on the shore of the Persian Sea nor in all the land of Islam a city more rich in fine buildings and foreign wares than Sohar’.¹⁵² Oman produced several commodities that were significant in traditional Asian trade: dates and dried fruits, horses, copper from the mountains, and ambergris from the seashore. Sohar’s importance stemmed principally from its role in the trade of luxuries and spices between the Far East and India on the one hand and the Near East and Europe on the other.¹⁵³ Other ports on the Omani coast, such as Damā,¹⁵⁴ Sur, and Qalhāt,¹⁵⁵ had particular

¹⁵² Andrew Williamson, *Sohar and Omani Seafaring in the Indian Ocean* (London 1973), 3.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁵⁴ Damā was the main centre on the lower Bāṭina in medieval times, and was a pre-Islamic *sūq al-ʿarab*, today represented by Seeb City. See Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, (Beirut 1961), 3:461.

¹⁵⁵ *EI*², s.v. ‘Qalhāt’.

roles to play in this trade. Certainly, the trade influenced Omani community life through interaction with the outside world and other civilizations overseas.

- 3 The Imamate in Oman was weakened by conflict within the country, and was not able to regain the strength it enjoyed during the previous Imamate. Consequently, most of the imams employed the policy of *difā'* (defence) rather than *zuhūr* (open manifestation).

Significantly, there was also flexibility with regard to the community as a whole. *Masālik al-dīn*, or the ways (or stages) of religion, refers to the four possible relationships between the Ibādīs, the rest of the Islamic lands, and the world as a whole, which were allowed to exist under virtually any circumstances. These were: 1) *zuhūr*, open manifestation of the Imamate, 2) *difā'*, militarily defensive and restricted Imamate, 3) *shirā'*, literally "selling" oneself in Allah's cause, in open opposition to tyranny, and 4) *kitmān*, concealment, or lapse of the Imamate under impossible conditions.

The *siyar* documented below show that the Rustāq and Nizwā schools continued in the same style among the Omani scholars during this time. The Rustāq school had greater influence in appointing imams. At times, the rival schools appointed different imams at the same time, causing conflicts and occasional wars between the numerous imams and their supporting scholars. The *siyar* of this third period are divided into further smaller periods.

3A) The period between the imamate of Abū al-Qāsim Sa'īd b. 'Abd Allāh (320–8/932–40) and the imamate of al-Khalīl b. Shādhān (407–25/1016–33).

LXXXIII A *sīra* from Abū Ibrāhīm Muḥammad b. Sa'īd b. Abī Bakr al-Azkawī to al-Ḥawārī b. 'Uthmān. I have not found a biography for the author, but al-Ḥawārī was a figure of the Omani '*ulamā'*' who lived at the end of third/ninth century and the beginning of the fourth/tenth century.¹⁵⁶

LXXXIV A *sīra* in letter form from Abū al-Ḥawwārī Muḥammad b. al-Ḥawārī b. 'Uthmān (end of the third/ninth beginning of the fourth/tenth century) to Abū 'Abd Allāh, Abū 'Āmir, Abū Yūsuf Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh, Aḥmad b. Sulaymān, Muḥammad b. 'Umar, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Yūsuf, and the people of the Ḥaḍramawt. Abū al-Ḥawwārī is regarded as one of the most famous Omani authors

¹⁵⁶ Ibn Ja'far, *Jāmi'*, 1:177.

at the end of the third/ninth century. He wrote *Tafsīr khamsimī* 'at *āya*, an exegesis of five hundred legal verses from the Qur'ān, and *Jāmi' Abī al-Ḥawārī*. This *sīra* is a response to questions about the legality of action against the Julandānīs (the royal family in Oman),¹⁵⁷ who revolted against Imam 'Abd al-Malik b. Ḥumayd and Imam al-Muḥannā b. Jayfar, as well as to questions about the wealth of oppressors.¹⁵⁸

LXXXV A *sīra* from Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan to Abū al-Qāsim 'Umar b. al-Qāsim b. al-Yamān. Ibn Ja'far has preserved it in part. The *sīra* appears to be a legal edict, written in response to questions posed by Abū al-Qāsim.¹⁵⁹

LXXXVI A *sīra* in letter form from Imam Abū al-Qāsim Sa'īd b. 'Abd Allāh (320–8/931–40), grandson of Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb, to Yūsuf b. Wajīh, the amir of Oman. In it, the imam writes about Ibādī war ethics. When the imam had gained a victory in Nizwā, a soldier looted the padlock on Yūsuf b. Wajīh's door. The imam had the soldier arrested and forced him to return the padlock to Ibn Wajīh, on the grounds that it is prohibited to take any Muslim property.¹⁶⁰

LXXXVII A *sīra* from Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Zā'ida (or Ziyād?) (first half of the fourth/tenth century) to Abū Ibrāhīm Muḥammad b. Sa'īd b. Abī Bakr al-Azkawī. The author was among those scholars who elected Imam Abū al-Qāsim Sa'īd b. 'Abd Allāh.¹⁶¹

LXXXVIII A *sīra* by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bisyāwī concerning Imam Ḥafṣ b. Rāshid's war with al-Muṭahhar b. 'Abd Allāh. Al-Muṭahhar was the leader of a Buyid military campaign to Oman, which, according to Ibn al-Athīr, had been sent by 'Aḍud al-Dawla in the year 363/974.¹⁶² Imam Ḥafṣ b. Rāshid (455–72/1063–79) is not mentioned in the Omani sources of the time;¹⁶³ according to al-Sālimī, it is possible that he was a son of Imam Rāshid b. Sa'īd (425–55/1033–63). This *sīra* brings out three points. First, Imam Ḥafṣ b. Rāshid came to the Imamate after the Nizwan Imam Rāshid b. al-Walīd (328–42/940–54) and is evidence of the continued Imamate at this time, for Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bisyāwī was a contemporary of Imam Ḥafṣ b. Rāshid in

¹⁵⁷ John.C. Wilkinson, 'The Julandā of Oman', *Journal of Oman Studies* 1 (1975), 97–108.

¹⁵⁸ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 2.

¹⁵⁹ Ibn Ja'far, *Jāmi'*, 1:206.

¹⁶⁰ Pub. 2, 1:289.

¹⁶¹ Not found nor consulted by the author, but it is mentioned in Pub. 1, 1:380; Pub. 3, 1:435.

¹⁶² Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 7:57.

¹⁶³ Al-Sālimī, *Tuhfat al-a'yān*, 1:315.

the fourth/tenth century. Second, Ḥafṣ b. Rāshid was appointed to the Imamate twice, and Abū al-Ḥasan seems to throw doubt on the validity of Ḥafṣ b. Rāshid's first Imamate. Third, the Omanis opposed the Buyids from the start. This *sīra* is valuable because it records the period between Imam Rāshid b. al-Walīd and Imam al-Khalīl b. Shādhān (407–25/1016–33).¹⁶⁴

LXXXIX A *sīra* entitled *Fī al-tawḥīd wa-al-imāma kayfa hiya* (On Divine Unity and the Imamate: A Commentary), by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bisyāwī (end of the fourth/tenth century). This *sīra* is a treatise on the creeds and dogmas of the various Islamic sects. It also alludes to the differences between the Ibādī creed and the creed of other Muslim groups such as the Khawārij, Murji'a, Qadariya, and Mushabbiha (anthropomorphists).¹⁶⁵

XC A *sīra* from Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bisyāwī to an unknown missionary in the Ḥaḍramawt. In it, Abū al-Ḥasan offers his opinion to the people of the Ḥaḍramawt concerning their inquiry about pawning property. It also reveals that the Imamate in Ḥaḍramawt was in a state of *difā'* (defence).¹⁶⁶

3B) In 407/1016, the Imamate of *zuhūr* (manifest Imamate) appeared in Oman upon the accession of al-Khalīl b. Shādhān, who was the grandson of Imam al-Ṣalt b. Mālik. The Imamate was powerful, expanding overseas on account of the thriving maritime commerce of Oman at that time. This improvement in fortune had spread to other Ibādī groups, especially those in East Africa, on the Indian coastline, in the Ḥaḍramawt, and in Yemen. This became obvious during the imamate of Rāshid b. Sa'īd al-Yaḥmadī.

XCI A *sīra* from Mūsā b. Aḥmad, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad, 'Umar b. Muḥammad, and Rāshid b. Muḥammad to Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ṣulhām (the vizier for Imam al-Khalīl b. Shādhān). In this *sīra*, a group of Omani scholars complain to the vizier about the corruption of some of the imam's governors, who are unnamed.¹⁶⁷

XCII A *sīra* in the form of a letter written by Abū al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad (a judge for Imam al-Khalīl b. Shādhān), addressed to an unknown person. Internal evidence suggests that the judge penned this *sīra* in response to the above letter of complaint (XCI).¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 2; Pub. 1, 2:5–9.

¹⁶⁵ MS 2.

¹⁶⁶ MS 2.

¹⁶⁷ Pub. 2, 1:300.

¹⁶⁸ Pub. 2, 1:302.

XCIII A *sīra* to the people of Khwārazm. This *sīra*, written in the fourth/tenth century, is a letter from the people of Oman to their co-religionists in Khwārazm, explaining the Omani opinions on certain theological issues, especially on *wilāya* (association) and *barāʿa* (dissociation).¹⁶⁹

XCIV A *sīra* to the people of Khurāsān. This is a letter written by a group of Omani scholars in the fourth–fifth/tenth–eleventh century, including an exposition of the general principles of the Islamic faith.¹⁷⁰

XCv A *sīra* by Abū al-Mundhir Salama b. Muslim al-ʿAwtabī (late fifth/eleventh–early sixth/twelfth century). Salama has been considered primarily an Omani historian, although he also wrote the 24-volume *al-Diyāʿ* on Islamic jurisprudence, *al-Ansāb* on genealogy, and *al-Ibāna* on the Arabic language. This *sīra* constitutes a commentary on *Takālif al-sharīʿa*.¹⁷¹

XCvi A *sīra* from Abū al-Mundhir Salma b. Muslim al-ʿAwtabī to ʿAlī b. ʿAlī and his brother, al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī, after the conflict between them in Kilwa (a city on the East African coast) had escalated. This *sīra* sheds some light on the role of Omani scholars in East Africa.¹⁷²

XCvii A *sīra* bearing the title *al-Suʿāl fī al-wilāya wa-al-barāʿa* (Questions Concerning Association and Dissociation), by an unknown writer. This *sīra* was probably written in the fifth/eleventh century, and appears in some sources as *K. al-Ṣulḥ*. The *sīra* reviews opinions concerning the caliphs ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān, Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān, and Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya, among others. It also discusses the causes of dissociation (*barāʿa*) in Islam.¹⁷³

XCviii An untitled *sīra* by an anonymous writer. Based on the style and tenor of the *sīra*, it seems to have been written in the fifth/eleventh century, most likely by an author from the Rustāq school. The significance of the *sīra* lies in its coverage of the events of the civil war, and its lucid attempt to define the concepts of association and dissociation.¹⁷⁴

XCix A *sīra* entitled *al-Wilāya wa-al-barāʿa* (Association and Dissociation). This treatise was written in 512/1118 by Yūsuf b. Saʿīd

¹⁶⁹ MS 4.

¹⁷⁰ MS 4.

¹⁷¹ MS 2; Mc. 2; Pub. 1, 2:39.

¹⁷² MS 5.

¹⁷³ MS 1; MS 2; Mc. 2; Pub. 1, 1:373–80.

¹⁷⁴ MS 2; Pub. 1, 1:393.

b. Yūsuf al-'Umānī, probably for the Nizwā school. In the *sīra*, the author calls for unity and harmony among them to avoid the kinds of disputes that led to the civil war.¹⁷⁵

C A *sīra* by Imam Rāshid b. Sa'īd al-Yaḥmadī concerning Imam al-Ṣalt b. Mālik, Mūsā b. Mūsā, and Rāshid b. al-Nazar. This *sīra* comes in the form of a manifesto, issued by the imam and a group of influential people after they had convened in the village of Sūny (present-day al-'Awābī) on Thursday 14 Shawwāl 443 (17 March 1052). This *sīra* represents the most important attempt to find a solution to the splits and differences of opinion responsible for causing the civil war. Unanimously, the signatories to the manifesto declare in no uncertain terms that the absolute blame for the civil war lies with Mūsā b. Mūsā, who supported the overthrow of al-Ṣalt b. Mālik. The signatories listed are: Abū 'Alī Mūsā b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī, Abū Al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. 'Umar, Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Khālid, Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan b. Sa'īd b. Quraysh, Abū Ḥamza al-Mukhtār b. 'Isā, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Tamām, and Abū al-Nazar Rāshid b. al-Qāsim.¹⁷⁶

CI A collection of three *siyar*¹⁷⁷ from Imam Rāshid b. Sa'īd to his governors:

- 1 Abū al-Ma'ālī Muḥammad b. Qaḥṭān b. al-Qāsim, on the occasion of his election to the governorate of Sohar.
- 2 Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh b. Sa'īd, on his election to the governorate of Manaḥ (a town in the interior of Oman).
- 3 Mūsā b. Nijād, on the occasion of his election to the governorate of Manaḥ, Adam, and Sināw.

These *siyar* are basically statements outlining the administrative policies of the Imamate, including the imam's special orders to his governors always to be on their best behaviour, to foster equality among the people under their jurisdiction, and to refrain from injustice and cruelty. They are, therefore, predominantly ethical in tone.

CII A *sīra* from Imam Rāshid b. Sa'īd al-Yaḥmadī to the people of Manṣūra, the capital of Sind, written to enlighten its recipients with regard to Ibādī opinions on various issues of Islamic theology. This *sīra* mentions the Ibādī scholars in Manṣūra: Abū al-'Abbās b. Murayj, al-Muhannad b. Sadhā, and Abū 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Barūzān. It is valuable because it adds to our information on

¹⁷⁵ MS 2; Mc. 2.

¹⁷⁶ Pub. 2, 1:312.

¹⁷⁷ Pub. 2, 1:308–12.

the evolution of Ibādī thought in South Asia. It also sheds light on the role of the second Omani Imamate in the Indian Ocean.¹⁷⁸

CIII A *sīra* entitled *Tawba* (Repentance), written on behalf of Imam Rāshid b. ‘Alī (471–513/1078–1119) by his judge Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. Naṣr al-Hijārī (472/1079). It was written on 11 Rabī’ II 472 (10 October 1079). In it, the imam expresses regret for the behaviour of his governor, Mūsā b. Nijād al-Manaḥī. The *sīra* carries the signatures of the following witnesses: Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ‘Umar b. Abī Jābir, Abū Jābir Muḥammad b. ‘Umar, ‘Alī b. Dāwūd, and ‘Abd Allāh b. Ishāq al-Minqalī.¹⁷⁹

CIV A *sīra* from Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Īsā al-Sirrī to Imam Rāshid b. ‘Alī. In this *sīra*, Abū ‘Abd Allāh replies to the imam after being asked about his repentance in 501/1107. This work discusses at length the link between repentance and the right way, highlighting the need for consistency between repentance and deeds.¹⁸⁰

CV A *sīra* composed by Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Īsā al-Sirrī for Imam Rāshid b. ‘Alī. This *sīra* advises the imam about various issues in Islamic ethics, including the duties and responsibilities of the imam, the relationship between the imam and those whom he rules based on *shūrā*, and the circumstances in which the imam is justified in resorting to military action inside the country.¹⁸¹

CVI A *sīra* entitled *Fī al-farq bayna al-imām al-‘ālim wa-ghayr al-‘ālim* (The Difference between the Learned Imam and the Unlearned Imam), by Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Īsā al-Sirrī (d. 472/1079). It appears that this *sīra* was written after the appearance of imams who were intellectually weaker than their predecessors. However, the document has an overtly political flavour, being for the most part a set of guidelines for potential governors in the Islamic state. Three main topics are addressed: the status of the imam if his position is in doubt or suspicion, the characteristics required of an imam, and the manner in which an imam ought to discharge his judicial and legislative duties.¹⁸²

CVII A *sīra* from Abū Zakariyā Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd b. Quraysh al-Hijārī (d. 502/1108) to ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Ṭālūt. Abū Zakariyā is among the most famous Ibādī scholars and writers of the fifth/eleventh century. His *magnum opus* is the 5-volume work of

¹⁷⁸ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 2.

¹⁷⁹ MS 1; MS 2; Mc. 2; Pub. 1, 1:423.

¹⁸⁰ MS 1; MS 2; Mc. 2; Pub. 1, 1:427.

¹⁸¹ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 2; Pub. 1, 1:413.

¹⁸² MS 1; MS 3; Mc. 2; Pub. 1, 1:399.

jurisprudence, *K. al-Īdāh fī al-aḥkām*, although he also wrote *K. al-Imāma* on the office of the Imamate. This *sīra* refutes Ibn Ṭālūt's criticisms of the Imamate. It is not clear in the *sīra* who the imam was at the time, although it was possibly written during the imamate of either Ḥafṣ b. Rāshid (455–72/1054–79) or Rāshid b. 'Alī (472–513/1079–1119). The end of the *sīra* is missing.¹⁸³

CVIII A *sīra* from Abū Zakariyā Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd b. Aḥmad (d. 472/1079) to Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad and Abū Bakr Aḥmad, the sons of al-Nu'mān b. Muḥammad, and the people of Ḥaḍramawt. From the contents of this *sīra*, it appears that the people of the Ḥaḍramawt had encountered certain problems with other sects at the end of the fifth/eleventh century, when Ibādī thought in the Ḥaḍramawt had started to decline. The Ibādīs of the Ḥaḍramawt thus wanted advice on how to save their sect. The significance of this particular *sīra* lies in the fact that the author counsels the people of Ḥaḍramawt to have recourse to dissimulation (*taqīya*) whenever they are afraid for their sect — a remarkable piece of advice, given the fact that the practice of dissimulation had never before been specifically encouraged in Ibādī thought.¹⁸⁴

CIX A *sīra* by Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. 'Umar al-Manaḥī (d. 496/1103). This *sīra* is a *fatwā* concerning the issue of election to the Imamate. Its main thrust is that if a candidate for leadership already enjoys the informal acceptance and support of the people, he does not need to be elected formally to the Imamate. In all of the collections, this *sīra* is found immediately after *sīra* LXXXVIII. Al-Sālimī believes that this *fatwā* pertains to the election to the Imamate of Ḥafṣ b. Rāshid.¹⁸⁵

CX A *sīra* by Nijād b. Mūsā b. Nijād al-Manaḥī (d. 513/1119), who was the son of Mūsā b. Nijād and the grandfather of Imam Mūsā b. Abī al-Ma'ālī b. Mūsā b. Nijād (594–7/1197–1200). This family played a prominent role in the Rustāq school. Mūsā wrote *K. al-Akilla fī ḥaqā'iq al-adilla*. The *sīra* is a theological monograph written to refute *Risālat al-isti'dād fī mā lā yasa' al-mukallaḥ jahlahu* by Ibn al-Tāj, a treatise of Ash'arī dogma. The Ibādī scholars at the time were concerned with the theological debates taking place among the various Islamic theological groups.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 2; Pub, 2:30.

¹⁸⁴ MS 2; MS 3.

¹⁸⁵ MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 2; al-Sālimī, *Tuḥfat al-a'yān*, 1:315–17.

¹⁸⁶ MS 1.

CXI A *sīra* in the form of an *athar* (tradition) and letters from the spokesman of the people of Nizwā, Abū Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Walīd (sixth/twelfth century). The Nizwān provenance of this *sīra* seems assured, since all the *fatwās* included therein are from the Nizwā school, most of these being extracts and citations from other *siyar*, such as the *sīra* of Muḥammad b. Rawḥ mentioned above (LXXVII, LXXVIII, or LXXIX).¹⁸⁷

CXII A *sīra* entitled *K. al-Takhṣīṣ*, by Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Mūsā al-Kindī (d. 557/1162). Abū Bakr al-Kindī is a very famous Omani writer of the sixth/twelfth century. He wrote *al-Muṣannaḥ*, an encyclopaedic work of Islamic jurisprudence in 42 volumes, *Jawhar al-muqtaṣar*, on the elements, *al-Ihtidā’*, *al-Dhakhīra*, on theology, and various other books.¹⁸⁸ Al-Kindī’s family produced many other scholars and writers, especially in the fifth–sixth/eleventh–twelfth centuries, including Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Kindī, author of the 72-volume *Bayān al-Shar’*, and Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Kindī, who wrote *al-Kifāya* in 51 volumes. Abū Bakr was from the Rustāq school, which appeared in the fifth and sixth/eleventh and twelfth centuries. In this *sīra*, the author attempts to expound the concepts of *wilāya* and *barā’a*. Attributed to Abū Bakr is the method of interpreting Quranic verses through logical analogy in order to derive both particular and universal proofs.¹⁸⁹

CXIII A *sīra* entitled *Fī idā’ al-mutawallī li’l-wilāya*, on the concepts of *wilāya* and *barā’a*. This dates from the sixth/twelfth century, but the writer, who is clearly affiliated with the Nizwā school, is unknown. It seems to be an excerpt of a longer work and is without either an introduction or a conclusion.¹⁹⁰

CXIV A *sīra* from Imam Muḥammad b. Abī Ghassān advising the people of al-‘Aqar.¹⁹¹ The Omani writers regard this *sīra* as an epic, because, as far as the contents are concerned, it is more of an artistic and literary work than a religious treatise. Initially, it appeared from our study of the sources that this *sīra* was actually written in 576/1181 by Muḥammad b. Mālīk¹⁹² to advise Imam Mūsā b. Abī al-Ma’ālī b. Mūsā b. Nijād before war broke out in 579/1184. However, the history of this period is too chaotic to enable us to identify the author with certainty.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁷ MS 2.

¹⁸⁸ Al-Sālimī, *Lum’a*, 20.

¹⁸⁹ MS 2.

¹⁹⁰ MS 2; Pub. 1, 2:113.

¹⁹¹ MS 1; Mc. 2.

¹⁹² MS 2; Pub. 2, 1:343.

¹⁹³ For more details, see Pub. 3, 1:298.

CXV A *sīra* from Muḥammad b. Mālik b. Shādhān (the amir or imam mentioned above?) to Saʿīd b. Rāshid b. ʿAlī, who was probably the son of Imam Rāshid b. ʿAlī (first half of the sixth/twelfth century). The writer of the *sīra* reproaches its recipient for his deeds, describing him as mendacious. Such invective reflects the divisions existing in the feudal system of Oman at that time between the amirs and the imams.¹⁹⁴

CXVI A *sīra* by Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Šāliḥ (d. 546/1151). The scholars of Abū Bakr's family had significant influence in the Nizwā school; he himself was the teacher of the author of *al-Muṣannaf*. This *sīra* presents the author's opinions about Imam Muḥammad b. Abī Ghassān, who had fought his way into the Nizwān village of al-ʿAqar when the villagers opposed him. Here the author opposes the imam's action. This *sīra* includes some quotations from the *sīra* of Abū al-Ḥawārī, the *sīra* of Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Sirrī and the discourse of Abū Ḥamza al-Shārī.¹⁹⁵

CXVII A *sīra* by Abū Bakr ʿAbd Allāh b. Mūsā al-Kindī, written to refute his teacher's *sīra*. (CXVI) The author rejects his teacher's opinions about the imam's fight against the people of al-ʿAqar and castigates him for writing the above *sīra*. On the whole, this *sīra* reflects the Ibādī stance on *jihād* and warfare.¹⁹⁶

CXVIII A *sīra* in the form of a statement issued by the people of al-Bāṭina (a region in northeastern Oman) in support of the preceding *sīra*. In it, the imam's actions are defended and his approach praised.¹⁹⁷

CXIX A *sīra* from Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Khālīd to the people of Manaḥ. It is in the form of a *fatwā* on the civil war and the opposition of Mūsā b. Mūsā and Rāshid b. al-Nazar. The author appears to be affiliated with the Rustāq school, since he includes quotations from Rustāq scholars about the issue.¹⁹⁸

CXX A *sīra* by an unknown writer, addressed to the people of the Ḥaḍramawt. It was recorded by Ibn al-Nazar who lived in the sixth/twelfth century. The author is anonymous but is clearly from the Rustāq school. He discusses various topics and advises his readers to be more objective and responsible to the Imamate.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ Pub. 3, 1:296; al-Kindī, *al-Ihtidāʾ*, 187–9.

¹⁹⁵ MS 2; MS 3; al-Kindī, *al-Ihtidāʾ*, 190–5.

¹⁹⁶ MS 1; MS 2; MS 3; Mc. 2; al-Kindī, *al-Ihtidāʾ*, 195–234.

¹⁹⁷ MS 2; Pub. 2, 1:339.

¹⁹⁸ MS 2.

¹⁹⁹ MS 2.

CXXI A *sīra* that discusses the concepts of *wilāya* and *barāʿa* and their classifications. The author is unknown, as is the date, although the writer appears to be aware of the Nizwā school.²⁰⁰

CXXII A *sīra* by Abū al-Maʿālī Kahlān b. Mūsā b. Nijād (first half of the sixth/twelfth century). Kahlān was the father of Imam Mūsā b. Abī al-Maʿālī (594–7/1197–1200). The subject of this *sīra* is repentance.²⁰¹

The Fourth Period

4A) The fourth period of Omani *siyar* covers the Nabhānī state (549–1034/1154–1624). There is a general consensus among historians that this state spanned five centuries in Oman, with the dynasty's rule divided into two distinct stages. The first stage is known as the Early Nabhānīs, whose rule began after the death of Imam Abū Jābir Mūsā b. Abī al-Maʿālī in 549/1154 and ended after Sulaymān b. Sulaymān al-Nabhānī was expelled in 906/1500. The second stage, known as the Later Nabhānīs, continued from 906/1500 to 1034/1624,²⁰² and was witness to the Portuguese invasion of the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula. Another distinguishing characteristic of this period is the atmosphere of conflict between scholars and governors on political issues. However, the period as a whole remains largely unexplored by scholars, and it is the task of Omani historians to discover the reasons for the collapse of both Omani overseas trade and Oman as an important maritime power. The *siyar* from this period are the following:

CXXIII A *sīra* entitled *al-Sīra al-Kilwīya*, by Abū Saʿīd Muḥammad b. Saʿīd al-Qalhātī (late sixth/twelfth early seventh/thirteenth century). Al-Qalhātī is among the most famous Omani writers of his time, noted for his distinguished prose style in works such as *al-Kashf wa-al-bayān*, a treatise on Islamic sects and dogmas. This particular *sīra* reflects the beginning of a new stage in the art of the composition of *siyar*, for now we see the appearance of *siyar* in the form of the *maqāma*. In this *sīra*, the author tells the story of an earlier mission to Kilwa in East Africa, where extremist Shīʿī propaganda was being preached on how the Kilwans were brought back into the fold. The formalized art of the *maqāma* represents a turning point in the writing of the Omani *siyar*. This *sīra* was glossed by Rāshid b. ʿUmar

²⁰⁰ MS 2.

²⁰¹ MS 2; Mc. 2.

²⁰² *Oman in History* (London 1995), 165.

b. Aḥmad b. Abī al-Ḥasan b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. al-Nazar towards the end of the seventh/thirteenth century.²⁰³

CXXIV A *sīra* from Ward b. Aḥmad to Imam Abū al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Khamīs b. ‘Āmir (839–46/1436–43). It is a letter from Ward to the imam advising him to remain firm and to endeavour not to be overthrown from the Imamate following the rebellion of Banū al-Ṣalt al-Kharūṣī.²⁰⁴

CXXV A *sīra* by Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Sulaymān b. Aḥmad b. Mufarraǰ, a judge and *muftī* for the imam. It is a legal declaration, ordered by Imam ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb al-Kharūṣī (885–94/1480–8) and issued in order to confiscate the property of the Nabhānī family. The *sīra* was written on 7 Jumādā II 887 (23 July 1482). The declaration closes with a statement of approval signed by the judicial committee.²⁰⁵

CXXVI A *sīra* by Imam Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl (906–24/1500–18). It is also a legal edict issued by the imam in 909/1503. Again, the edict was issued in order to confiscate property, this time belonging to the Banū Rawāḥa, who had given help and support to Sultan Sulaymān b. Sulaymān al-Nabhānī.²⁰⁶

CXXVII A *sīra* by Imam Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl (906–24/1500–18). It comprises a legal ruling issued by the imam for the confiscation of the property of the Nabhānī family on a Friday in 917/1511. The document ends with the signatures of the judicial committee.²⁰⁷

CXXVIII A *sīra* by Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Maddād (d. 917/1511). The Maddād family enjoyed considerable influence with the Mufarraǰ family at the end of the Nabhānī state. This is the first Omani *sīra* to be written about the Omani imams and ‘*ulamā*’ that goes into such depth and detail concerning their lives and works. It is at this stage, then, that the Omani *siyar* begin to expand their coverage to include biography and bibliography.²⁰⁸

²⁰³ MS 5. Also see further studies on this text by John C. Wilkinson, ‘The Omani and Ibādī background to the Kilwa Sira: the Demise of Oman as a Political and Religious Force in the Indian Ocean in the 6th/12th Century’, in A.K. Irvine, R.B. Serjeant and G.R. Smith (eds), *A Miscellany of Middle Eastern Articles in Memoriam Thomas Muir Johnstone 1924–1983* (London 1989). ‘Oman and East Africa: New Light on Early Kilwan History from the Omani Sources’, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, v.6 (1981).

²⁰⁴ Pub. 3, 2:119.

²⁰⁵ Pub. 2, 1:372; Pub. 3, 2:13.

²⁰⁶ Pub. 2, 1:379; Pub. 3, 2:71.

²⁰⁷ Pub. 2, 1:373; Pub. 3, 2:16.

²⁰⁸ MS 3; Mc. 2.

CXXIX A *sīra* by Imam Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl in the form of a statement concerning the practice of optional sale (*bay' al-khiyār*). It is dated Wednesday 6 Jumādā II 918 (18 August 1512). The Omani scholars unanimously supported the resolution to prohibit the practice of optional sale and to consider it usurious.²⁰⁹

CXXX A *sīra* by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Maddād concerning Imam Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl (906–24/1500–18) and his son Barakāt b. Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl. In this *sīra*, Ibn Maddād proclaims dissociation from the imam and his son. This was to be expected, since the imams were collecting the *zakāt* from the people without protecting them.²¹⁰

CXXXI A *sīra* by 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar b. Ziyād b. Aḥmad (980s/1570s), a contemporary of Imam Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl and his son Barakāt. The *sīra* seems to have been written in the 950s/1540s for Imam Barakāt when he was about to prepare the *fulaj* (irrigation channel)²¹¹ of Maythā in the city of Bahlā. This *sīra* discusses the construction of this channel.²¹²

4B) This period of *siyar* starts at the beginning of the Ya'arībī period (1034/1624). It marks the beginning of modern Oman: power had shifted from the dynasty to the imams and the state of Oman had begun to flourish. It is possible to argue that only those *siyar* that were written in the first Imamate of Ya'arībāh until the death of Imam Nāṣir b. Murshid in 1059/1649 should be considered. Yet it can be argued that this period should be extended until the end of the first half of the eleventh/seventeenth century, when 'Abd Allāh b. Khalfān b. Sulaymān, who was known as Ibn Qaysar, wrote the first biography in Omani literature, the *sīra* of Imam Nāṣir b. Murshid. The style of writing demonstrated in the Omani *siyar* of this period clearly exhibits the dominant style of writing common among the Arabs in general at this time. It is a style replete with rhetorical devices, embellishment, and ornamentation. The *siyar* from this period are the following:

CXXXII A *sīra* from an unknown writer among the people of Nafūsa (a region in Libya). This *sīra* is essentially a monograph on divinity, translated from the original Berber; however, it is unclear

²⁰⁹ Pub. 2, 1:381; Pub. 3, 2:74.

²¹⁰ MS 1; Mc. 2; Pub. 2, 1:384; Pub. 3, 2:78.

²¹¹ Cf. Wilkinson, *Water and Tribal Settlement in South-East Arabia: A Study of the Aflāj of Oman* (Oxford 1977).

²¹² Pub. 3, 2:198.

whether it was translated in Oman or in Nafūsa before the Ibādīs sent it to Oman. It was basically written to teach the fundamentals of Islamic faith and Ibādī dogma to the Berber people.²¹³

CXXXIII A *sīra* attributed to Sulaymān b. al-Qāsim al-Maghribī, written to the Mashāriqa Omanis. This *sīra* was probably written prior to, or at, the beginning of the imamate of Nāṣir b. Murshid (1034–59/1624–49), because the writer mentions scholars of that time but does not name Imam Nāṣir. The *sīra* sheds some light on the situation of the Ibādīs in the Maghrib, especially concerning the problems between the people of Naffūsa and Mizab.²¹⁴

CXXXIV A *sīra* from Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Kharāssīnī to Sulaymān b. Abī al-Qāsim and the people of the Maghrib and Nafūsa. This *sīra* is a reply to the preceding one, written at the behest of Imam Nāṣir b. Murshid. The imam invites those addressed by the document to unite with others and to be more pragmatic about their problems.²¹⁵

CXXXV A *sīra* from Khamīs b. Saʿīd al-Shaqṣī to the Banū Muṣʿab (Mizab) in southern Algeria. Khamīs b. Saʿīd was the powerful figure behind the appointment of Imam Nāṣir, who was his son-in-law. He is also the author of one of the most famous jurisprudential works of this period in Oman, *Manhaj al-ṭālibīn*. Like the preceding *sīra*, this *sīra* was written on the orders of Imam Nāṣir b. Murshid. It appears that the imam attempted to use his prestige in Oman to encourage the Ibādīs of North Africa to settle their differences and live in harmony.²¹⁶

CXXXVI A *sīra* by Saʿīd b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Kharāssīnī. This *sīra* is a monograph, similar in style and content to ʿĀmir b. ʿAlī al-Shammākhī's (d. 792/1389) *Risālat al-diyānāt*.²¹⁷ The author of this *sīra* gives a brief description of the Ibādī movement and its creed. It is noteworthy that he includes a whole chapter on *taqlīd* (emulation) and those sects that allow it. The last chapter in the *sīra* is a biographical index of Ibādī and Omani scholars.²¹⁸

The final four *siyar*²¹⁹ come in the form of orders and counsels of advice from Imam Nāṣir b. Murshid (First Yaʿrubī Imam 1624–49) to his governors concerning the correct way of conducting political affairs.

²¹³ Pub. 4, 1:189–97.

²¹⁴ Pub. 4, 1:198–202.

²¹⁵ Pub. 4, 1:203–12.

²¹⁶ Pub. 4, 1:213–19.

²¹⁷ Ennami, 'Studies in Ibādism', 249.

²¹⁸ Pub. 4, 1:220–48.

²¹⁹ Pub. 3, 2:24–34; Pub. 4, 1:256–65.

CXXXVII A *sīra* to Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Aḥmad b. ‘Uthmān, governor of Liwā, Ḥattā, Diyār al-Ḥuddān, al-Jaww, Buraimi oasis area, Najirān and Dimā, written in Dhū al-Ḥijja 1050/April 1641.

CXXXVIII A *sīra* to Ṣāliḥ b. Sa‘īd al-Ma‘marī, governor of Sur and Ibrā in eastern Oman.

CXXXIX A *sīra* to Abū ‘Abd Allāh Sulaymān b. Rāshid b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Kindī, governor of al-Ṣīr (also known as Julfar or present-day Ra’s al-Khaymah).

CXL A *sīra* to Sulṭān b. Sayf al-Ya‘rubī, written after the latter had excused himself from the duties of the Imamate. He had been governor of the Bahla area. He succeeded Nasir as Imam in 1649 and ruled until 1680.

Conclusions

In the above, the Omani *siyar* have been presented as a cultural and intellectual phenomenon in classical Arabic literature, rather than merely as a large number of epistles and letters scattered throughout numerous Omani compilations. As such, they form an archive of primary sources for twelve-hundred years of Omani history. The study also adds a new dimension to the conventional definition of *sīra*. This point allows us to make two conclusions. First, the Omani *siyar* consist of various expressions that reflect the periods in which each *sīra* was written. Therefore, one cannot find a consistent theme for all Omani *siyar*. Second, the appearance of sub-divisions of Omani *siyar* is related to the progressive development of the Ibādī intellectual movement in the East and the internal events of Omani history up to the eleventh/seventeenth century. So, it is clear that the *siyar* first appeared in the Ibādī centre in Basra and were written by the Ibādī leaders. Later, however, the writers were Omanis, who adopted this kind of writing style.

On a constructive level, this approach permits one to draw the conclusion that the Omani *siyar* have been shaped by three factors. First, all the *siyar* express and are formed by Ibādī ideology. At the beginning, as Wilkinson says about the *siyar*, ‘Ibādī theological literature really came into existence when personal communication was difficult. At one level they constitute what is little more than fragmentary correspondence, inter-scholarly and inter-community opinions and advice offered individually or collectively to imams and other ‘*ulamā*’.²²⁰

²²⁰ John. C. Wilkinson, ‘Ibādī Theological Literature’, in M. Young, J. Latham, and R.B Serjeant (eds), *Religion, Learning and Science in the ‘Abbasid Period* (Cambridge 1992), 2:35.

Therefore, is it beneficial to use the *siyar* to study Ibāḍī intellectual and theological opinions and their development within the Ibāḍī movement. Afterwards, the *siyar* changed to express the ideology of the Mashāriqa Ibāḍīs in Oman. Second, the *siyar* are connected especially with Oman as their origin and historical context. Third, the variation and development in Omani policy prompted the recording and writing of the *siyar*. Thus it is necessary when Omani history is divided into periods that it be noted how these correspond to similar stages or periods in the *siyar*.

The evolving needs of the Omani community throughout the periods of its history influenced the style and content of the *siyar* that the community's scholars composed. In the first period, most of the *siyar* were epistles containing the Ibāḍī scholars' opinions. In the second period, there was an exchange of letters between the rival Rustāq and Nizwā schools, especially about their chief concern, namely the nature of the Imamate. During this period, the *siyar* started to take a specifically Omani form, and it can be said that this period has shaped the style of Omani writers. In the third period, most of the *siyar* were monographs and *fatwās*, which deal with the internal politics of Oman rather than with Ibāḍī ideological opinions. The Omani writers of the third period were influenced by the style of Arabic literature outside Oman, like the *sīra* of Nijād b. Mūsā al-Manaḥī that refutes Ibn al-Tāj's *Risālat al-isti'dād fi mā lā yasa' al-mukallaf jahluhu*, and the epic *sīra* of Imam Muḥammad b. Abī Ghassān to the people of al-'Aqar. In the fourth period, the *maqāma* and the judgment manifesto became part of the *sīra* genre. At the beginning of the Ya'āriba state, it was fashionable to use rhymed prose in their writings. This development took a clear line of greater specialization, reflecting the increased consciousness of Omani communities. The *sīra* had developed into an extremely adaptable and flexible form.

To sum up, the *sīra* as a style of writing adopted by the Ibāḍī 'ulamā' was at first restricted to doctrinal polemics, and then became used for wider concerns in Oman. One cannot find writers of *siyar* who could be specifically described as being Omani poets like Ibn Durayd, al-Sitālī or al-Kidhāwī, or writers who adopted Ibāḍī ideology like al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad²²¹ and Abū 'Ubayda Ma'mar b. al-Muthannā.²²² These *siyar* are primarily concerned with the doctrine of Ibāḍism. This point leads us to conclude that, although the formulation of these *siyar* is based on the framework of the 'aqīda (creed)

²²¹ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-udabā'* (Cairo, n.d.), 11:72.

²²² *Ibid.*, 19:156.

form, they are significant as sources for the history of Ibāḍī doctrine and also of Oman. The recording of Omani history was greatly influenced by Omani *siyar*, since these were written by religious scholars. Some researchers have believed that some events in Omani history may have been ignored, in particular the ‘*ulamā*’ focused mainly on writing about their ideology, while considering other literature as merely the evil state of *jabābira*, the oppressors.²²³ In their opinion, the ‘*ulamā*’ have tended, therefore, to overlook the historical events and figures in Oman that are not directly relevant to their ideology, such as the rule of the Banū Makram, the Banū Wajīh and the Nabhānīs, who were Omanis, or foreign powers such as the Carmathians and the Buyids. Addressing this point, one could make the following observations. First, all the Omani historical compilations that have survived were written after the twelfth/seventeenth century, and their compilers wrote about Oman as an independent state, whereas it appears that Oman was a semi-independent state in the early days of Islam, and became an independent state only after the establishment of the imamate of al-Julandā b. Mas‘ūd in 132/749. This could be the reason why the Omani historians regarded the other states as imperialistic foreign states, and why they ignored them. For example, Yāqūt (seventeenth/thirteenth century) refers to the city of Sohar as ‘the greatest city in the Chinese sea’, and Sohar was well known to be under the rule of the Imamate and yet Omani historians did not record anything about it. Second, the non-Ibāḍī Omani writers did not record their history, so we do not hear of non-Ibāḍī people. As a result, Oman’s history is largely Ibāḍī history. Third, as Wilkinson has noted, ‘a complete study of the background to this period (the early Imamate history) must involve use of the external as well as the internal sources because without them the general historical framework cannot be reconstructed’.²²⁴ Overall, the Omani *siyar* can be described as a phenomenon that is the archive of the early history of Oman and is a distinctive feature both of early Ibāḍīs and Omani historical writing.

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²²³ See Fārūq, *Muqaddīma fī maṣādir*, 16; *Oman in History*, 265.

²²⁴ Wilkinson, ‘Sources for the Early History of Oman’, in *Studies in the History of Arabia*, (Riyadh 1979), 91.