



**al-Tanzil**

Al-Tanzil Institute of Quranic Sciences



NARRATIVES ON THE  
SEVEN GREAT READERS

SALEEM GAIBIE

# أَجْمَلُ الْأَخْبَارِ

على

القراء السبعة الكبار

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## Foreword

If one intends to be successful in any field, science or area of expertise, he/she needs to study the lives of those people who excelled in their respective fields; to scrutinise the habits of those earlier personalities and assess what exactly were their practices which made them excel and successful at what they did.

Those who intend to read the Seven and the Ten Qirā'āt should make it a point to study the lives of these great luminaries of the Qur'ān. They should analyse the practices and character of these greats; their efforts in acquiring knowledge, their humility, their piety, their dedication to fulfill the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ, their sacrifices for the Qur'ān, and so forth. We should do a thorough survey of these personalities and more importantly, attempt to inculcate their character into our lives.

In addition to this, it is an honour for those who are able to complete the Seven and Ten Qirā'āt to be linked through scholarly lineage (sanad) from present day to these illustrious personalities who have dedicated their lives to serve the Qur'ān.

Therefore, I've added my link to Imams al-Shāṭibī and Abū 'Amr al-Dānī at the start of the book. The links from Imams al-Shāṭibī and al-Dānī, and ultimately these great Readers to the Prophet ﷺ are given after their biographies in the form of diagrams.

*M. Saleem Gaibie*

## System of Transliteration

Nr	Arabic	English	Nr	Arabic	English
1	أ	ʾ	17	ظ	ṭh
2	ب	b	18	ع	ʿ
3	ت	t	19	غ	gh
4	ث	th	20	ف	f
5	ج	j	21	ق	q
6	ح	ḥ	22	ك	k
7	خ	kh	23	ل	l
8	د	d	24	م	m
9	ذ	dh	25	ن	n
10	ر	r	26	ه	h
11	ز	z	27	و	w
12	س	s	28	ي	y
13	ش	sh	29	أَ	ā
14	ص	ṣ	30	إِ	ī
15	ض	ḍ	31	أُ	ū
16	ط	ṭ	32	أَيَّ	ay
			33	أُوَّ	ou

**N.B.** Arabic words are italicised except in 3 instances:

- 1- When possessing a current English usage.
- 2- When part of a heading or diagram.
- 3- When the proper names of humans.

The “al” of the Arabic lām al-taʿrīf is occasionally omitted to maintain flow of the English.

## Brief History of Qirā'āt

The Qur'ān was revealed verbally. It was taught in the same manner preserving both the text and every minutiae of its pronunciation. During the Prophetic period we find that multiple readings of the Qur'ān existed. The Companions ﷺ learnt these readings directly from the Prophet ﷺ and passed them on to their successors.

From amongst the Companions, those who had memorised the entire Qur'ān were: Ubay ibn Ka'b, Abū Hurayrah, 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbās, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, Zayd ibn Thābit, 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Ali, Abū al-Dardā', 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ūd, 'Ā'ishah, Abū Bakr ibn Ṣiddīq, Ṭalḥah ibn 'Ubayd Allah, Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān, 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ and 'Abd Allah ibn al-Sā'ib ﷺ.

Those who had memorised the Qur'ān from amongst the Successors were: 'Abd Allah ibn 'Ayyāsh, Yazīd ibn Rūmān, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Hurmuz, Shaybah ibn Niṣāḥ, Muslim ibn Jundub, Abū Ja'far, 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr ibn Qatādah, 'Aṭā' ibn Yasār, Mujāhid ibn Jabr, Yaḥyā ibn Ya'mar, Abū al-'Āliyah al-Rayāḥī, Naṣr ibn 'Āṣim, al-Mughīrah ibn Shihāb al-Makhzūmī, 'Ālqamah ibn Qays, 'Abd Allah ibn 'Āmir al-Shāmī, Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, and al-Aswad ibn Yazīd al-Nakha'ī.

It was during the time of the Successors and the period immediately thereafter that there were illustrious individuals who became renowned as teachers of the Qur'ān in the Islamic lands. In Mecca we find Ibn Kathīr. In Medina were Abū Ja'far and Nāfi'. Ibn 'Āmir was from Shām whilst 'Āṣim, Ḥamzah, Kisā'ī and Khalaf were from Kufa. Basra was the home of Abū 'Amr and Ya'qūb.

## The Readers (Qurrā')

Each of the above mentioned ten teachers is known as a *qārī'*.<sup>1</sup> So acclaimed were they that readings (*qirā'āt*) were even ascribed to them. It was said that a person was reciting the Qur'ān according to the Reading of Nāfi' or Ya'qūb, etc. This did not, in any way, mean that these readings were made up or invented by them. But rather that they were noted as people who dedicated all their efforts, abilities, and in fact, their lives to the learning and the teaching of the Qur'ān, to the extent that their names became eponymous with these Qur'ānic readings. In reality all these readings were taught and passed on to them by the Prophet ﷺ as is clearly illustrated by the diagrams in this booklet. It should also be noted that they weren't the only people teaching or practising these readings, but that there were many others. Invariably, it was these 10 teachers who outshone the others. They ultimately became the eponymous Readers and their readings became better known as the *Qirā'āt al-'Ashr* or the Ten Readings.

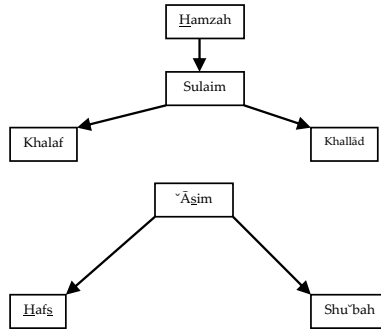
## The Transmitters (Ruwāt)

Similarly, those who narrated these readings from these teachers, whether directly or indirectly, became known as the transmitters, simply because they transmitted the readings of these *qurrā'*. From each one of these *qurrā'* we have two transmitters. It does not mean that only these transmitters existed, but of the many, these were the most outstanding. For the sake of brevity only the two narrators of Ḥamzah and 'Āṣim will be shown:

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<sup>1</sup> *Qurrā'* is the plural of *qārī'*. Literally, it means a reciter of the Qur'ān. Customarily, it has two connotations: any person who is a melodious reciter of the Qur'ān – whether schooled or not; or an expert in the sciences of *Tajwīd* and *Qirā'āt*. Technically, it refers to any one of the Ten or 14 leading reciters mentioned in the field of *Qirā'āt*.



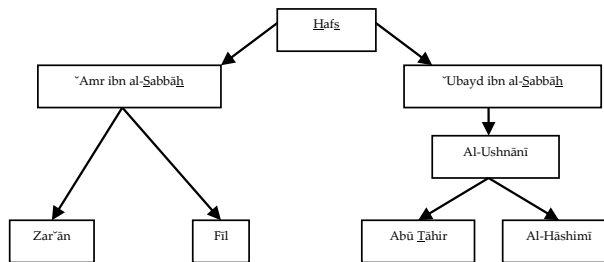


In the first example, the two transmitters of Ḥamzah narrate from him indirectly, via Sulaim, and in the second example, Ḥafṣ and Shuʿbah narrate directly from ʿĀsim. Regardless whether they are narrating directly or indirectly, they are considered as the transmitters.

## The Ways/Paths (Ṭuruq)

Those who narrated from the transmitters were known as *ṭuruq* (ways/paths), whether they narrated directly or indirectly from the transmitters.

The *ṭuruq* may be divided into the *ṭuruq raʿsiyyah/aṣliyyah* (primary *ṭuruq*) and the *ṭuruq farʿiyyah* (secondary *ṭuruq*).<sup>2</sup> From each transmitter of every *qārīʿ* there are four primary *ṭuruq* chosen by Ibn al-Jazarī. The following diagram indicates the primary *ṭuruq* in the narration of Ḥafṣ:



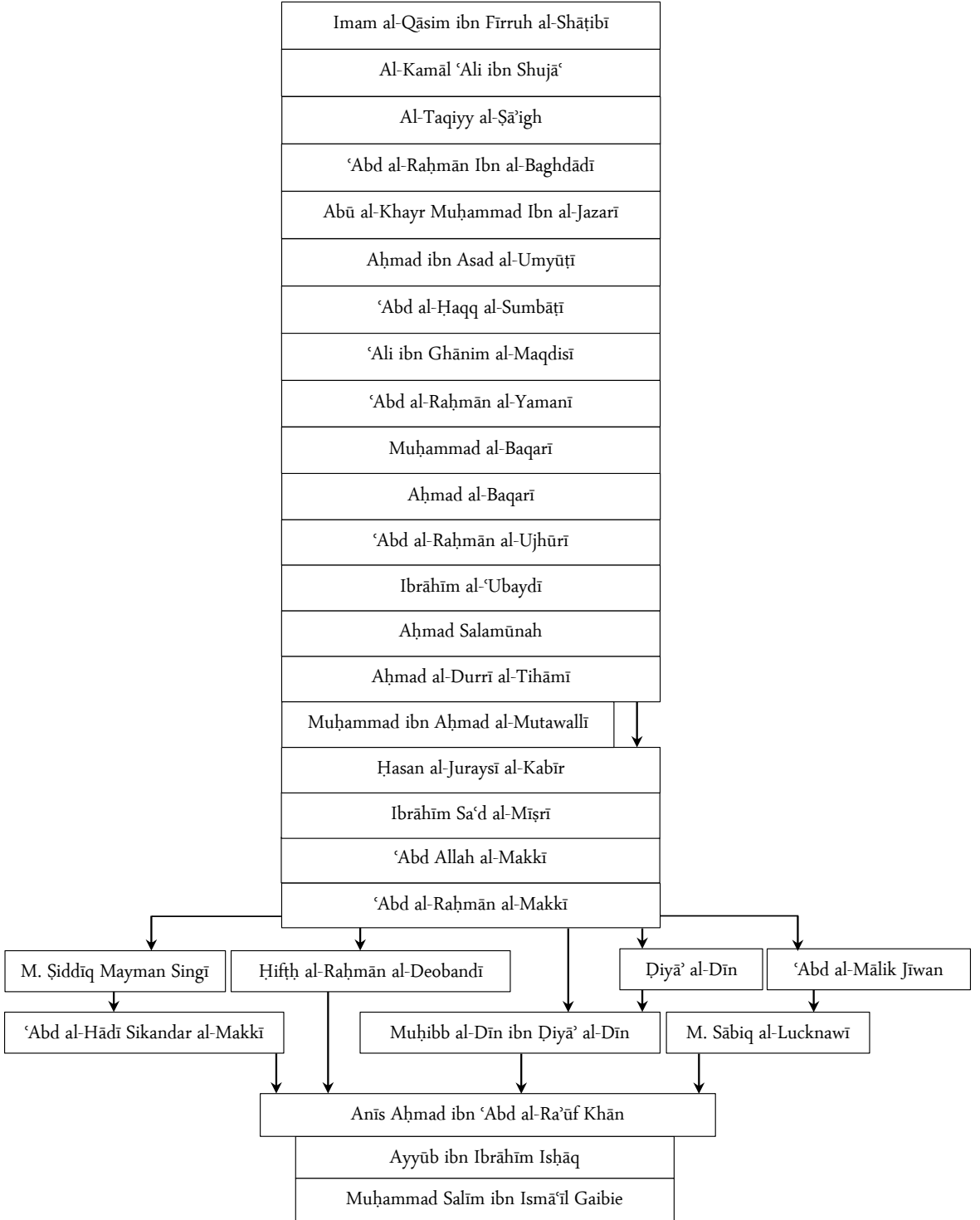
All those who narrate from these primary *ṭuruq* are known as a *ṭarīq farʿī* or a secondary *ṭarīq*. The most well-known reading is the reading of ʿĀsim according to the narration of Ḥafṣ via the *ṭarīq* of the *Shāṭibiyyah*. Imām Shāṭibī

<sup>2</sup> *Murshid al-Ikhwān ilā Ṭuruq Ḥafṣ ibn Sulaymān* by Samannūdi.

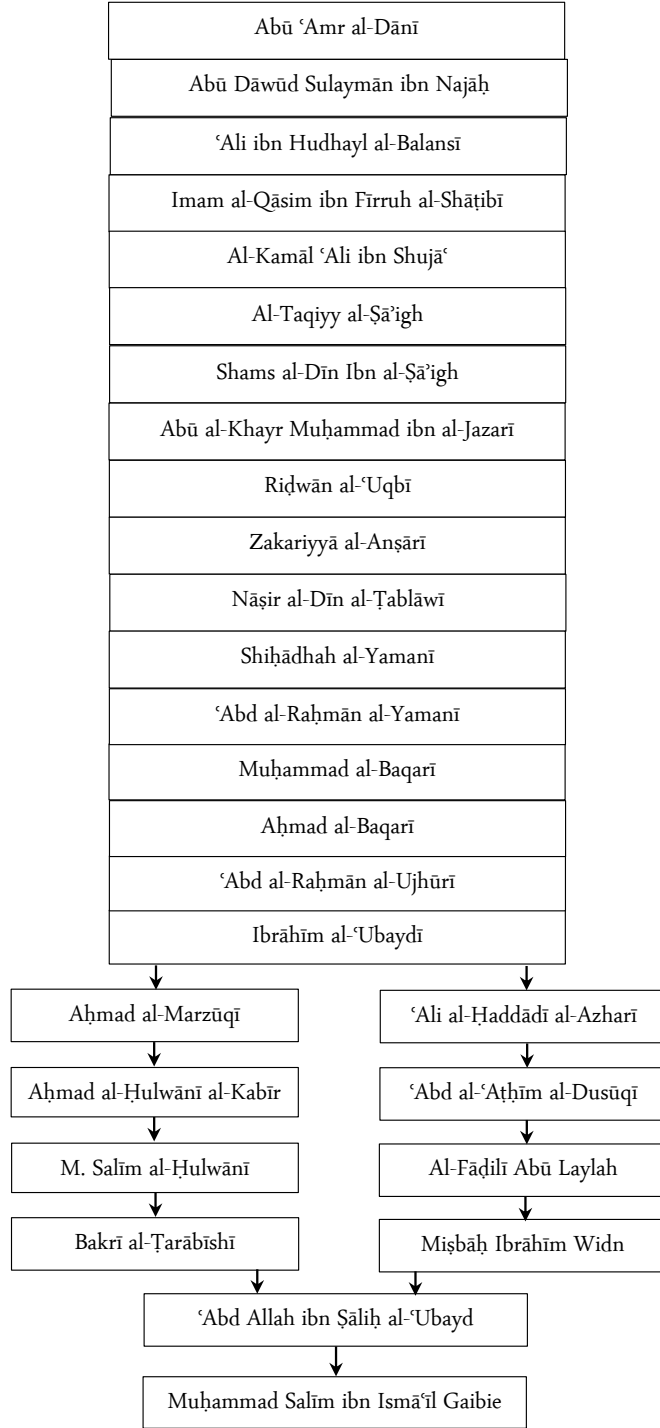
would thus be a secondary *ṭarīq* as he narrates the transmission of Ḥafṣ through al-Hāshimī. Ibn al-Jazarī mentions a total of 52 different *ṭuruq* for Ḥafṣ.

All the differences mentioned in a particular *ṭarīq* have been documented in books containing these multiple readings. For example, any difference in the *ṭarīq* of the *Shāṭibiyyah* for the narration of Ḥafṣ would be mentioned in his book *Ḥirz al-Amānī wa Wajhu al-Tahānī*, better known as *al-Shāṭibiyyah*.

## Sanad to Imam al-Shātibī



# Sanad to Abū ‘Amr al-Dānī



## Nāfi<sup>3</sup>

He is Nāfi' ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Nu'aym. There is difference of opinion regarding his patronym, the most well known being Abū Ruwaym. Others include Abū al-Ḥasan, Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān, Abū 'Abd Allah, Abū Nu'aym, Abū Muḥammad, and Abū Bakr. Born in 70 A.H./690 C.E., he was a client of Ja'wanah ibn Sha'ūb al-Laythī, the ally of Ḥamzah ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. There is difference of opinion as to whether he is from the second or third generation. Those who say that he met some of the Companions include him in the second generation while others regard him to be from the third generation. Most are of the second opinion, in spite of Abū 'Amr al-Dānī mentioning that certain Companions stood behind Nāfi' in ṣalāh. However, most of Nāfi's reports are from the Successors and none are from the Companions, thus including him in the third generation. Allah knows best.

He is the first of the seven *qurrā'*, originally from Asbahan. Nāfi' had a dark complexion with handsome features, jovial, and had an outstanding character and personality. It was once said to Nāfi': "What a handsome face you have, and what excellent character." He replied: "How can it be otherwise when I have shaken hands with the Prophet ﷺ and have read the Qur'ān to him?" (in a dream). From amongst people, he had the purest disposition, was the most beautiful in recitation, and was an ascetic who prayed for 60 years in the Mosque of the Prophet ﷺ.

Imam Mālik is reported to have said: "The reading of the people of Medina follows the *Sunnah*." He then conveyed that this was the reading of Nāfi'. Mālik also stated that Nāfi' was the Imam of all people regarding recitation.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 2 pg. 330, *Ma'rifah al-Qurrā' al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 107, *Aḥāsīn al-Akhhbār*, pg. 215.

Aḥmad ibn Ḥambal was asked by his son: which reading is most beloved to you? He replied: “The reading of the people of Medina, and if not, then the reading of ‘Āṣim.”

Whenever he spoke, a sweet scent of musk emanated from his mouth. He was questioned: “Do you put on sweet scents every time you sit to teach?” He replied that he saw the Prophet ﷺ in a dream and he ﷺ recited into the very mouth of Nāfi‘. From that incident, every time Nāfi‘ spoke, the sweet fragrance of musk radiated from his mouth.

It is reported that Nāfi‘ stated: “I have read to 70 of the Successors” (*Tābi‘īn*). He further stated that he studied all the *qirā’āt* of the Successors that he had read to, and kept whatever is supported by another, while leaving those *qirā’āt* which were isolated, until he had gathered his vast knowledge of *qirā’āt*. This Imam was a renowned master in the field of *qirā’āt* and an ardent follower of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ.

A student once travelled to read to Nāfi‘. He was amazed to find him teaching all the different *qirā’āt*. He asked Nāfi‘: “O Abū Ruwaym, do you teach the people all the *qirā’āt*?” Nāfi‘ replied: “Why should I deprive myself of the reward of the Qur’an? I teach all the various *qirā’āt*, except if one wishes to recite my readings.” Therefore, it is mentioned that he was not strict upon his students, allowing all to read to him, except if they requested to learn his particular synthesis of readings. For if one wanted to learn his readings then he would show some measure of concern and particular strictness. He taught the people of Medina for approximately 70 years.

He was extremely polite with his students, and with anyone who sat to learn from him. None was given preference over another, regardless of stature, family ties, or influence amongst the people. All were allowed to read to him as long as they waited their chance.

On his deathbed, his sons asked him for advice. He replied:

اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَصْلِحُوا ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

“Be wary of Allah, correct all matters of difference among you, and obey Allah and his Messenger ﷺ if you are believers.”

#### Teachers:

- Abū Ja‘far Yazīd ibn al-Qa‘qā‘ - Nāfi‘ mentions that I recited to Abū Ja‘far from the age of 9.
- Shaybah ibn Niṣāḥ.
- ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Hurmuz.
- Muslim ibn Jundub.
- Yazīd ibn Rūmān.

#### Students:

- Imam Mālik ibn Anas.
- Ismā‘īl ibn Ja‘far.
- ‘Īsā ibn Wardān.
- Sulaymān ibn Muslim ibn Jammāz.
- Qālūn.
- Warsh.

He died in 169 A.H./786 C.E.

## Qālūn<sup>4</sup>

He is ʿĪsā ibn Mīnā ibn Wardān ibn ʿĪsā ibn ʿAbd al-Ṣamad ibn ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd Allah al-Zuraqī. He was nicknamed Qālūn by his teacher, Nāfiʿ, which meant good or excellent in the Roman tongue. He was named thus due to his excellent recitation. His forefathers hailed from Rome and came to Medina as Roman captives during the caliphate of ʿUmar رضي الله عنه. He was born in 120 A.H./738 C.E. It is said that he was raised in the very household of Nāfiʿ, who was married to the mother of Qālūn.

He continued reciting to Nāfiʿ until he became an expert of the Qurʾān, eventually emerging into a skilled teacher of Qurʾān and a master of the Arabic language. Qālūn read numerous *khatms* to Nāfiʿ and also documented the readings in a book of his. Later, Nāfiʿ seated him by a column and sent students to recite to him. When he was asked how many times he had rendered the Qurʾān to Nāfiʿ, he replied that he had read countless *khatms* to Nāfiʿ, and thereafter spent 20 years studying under him. Qālūn was deaf, and would look at the lips of the reciter to correct their errors. Others relate that he could not hear if worldly things were discussed, but if someone recited the Qurʾān he could hear it and corrected the person's errors.

### Teachers:

- Nāfiʿ.
- ʿĪsā ibn Wardān.

### Students:

- Abū Nashīṭ Muḥammad ibn Hārūn.

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<sup>4</sup> *Maʿrifat al-Qurrāʾ al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 155, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 1 pg. 615, *al-Wāḍiḥat al-Khaḍrāʾ*, pg. 45.



Al-Dhahabī states that he died in 220 A.H./835 C.E. Al-Ahwāzī and others say he died in 205 A.H./821 C.E. The former opinion is the most accepted. Allah knows best.

## Warsh<sup>5</sup>

He is Abū Saʿīd ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd ibn ʿAbd Allah ibn ʿAmr ibn Sulaymān ibn Ibrāhīm. His patronym is also given as Abū ʿAmr and Abū al-Qāsim, though the first is the most common. Others mention his name as ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd ibn ʿAdī ibn Ghazwān ibn Dāwūd ibn Sābiq al-Qibṭī. He was born in Qafat, upper Egypt in 110 A.H./729 C.E. His origin was from Qayrawān.

He was fair of complexion with blue eyes, short, and had a solid build. He would also wear short clothes so that his calves were visible at times. It is said that his teacher, Nāfiʿ, nicknamed him Warsh due to his fair complexion. The word “warsh” itself indicates to something made from milk. Others proffer that Nāfiʿ nicknamed him Warshān, a name of a well known bird, and later shortened it to just Warsh. Warsh himself liked the nickname and was proud of it, stating at times: “My *ustādh*, Nāfiʿ, named me with this!” Some also suggest that he was nicknamed Warsh due to his excellent recitation.

In 155 A.H./772 C.E. he left Egypt and travelled to Medina for the sole purpose of reciting to Nāfiʿ. Upon reaching Medina he immediately went to the mosque, intending to recite to Nāfiʿ. However, due to the many students desiring to recite to Nāfiʿ, he was not able to recite to him and sat at the back of the *ḥalqah* (learning circle). Because of the many students, Nāfiʿ allowed each one to recite only 30 verses at a time so that all could have a chance to recite to him. Initially Warsh got no opportunity to read to him. He therefore asked one who was close to Nāfiʿ to intercede on his behalf so that he may start reciting to Nāfiʿ. He told Nāfiʿ that he had come all the way from Egypt to Medina for no other reason but to recite to him. Nāfiʿ then told him to sleep in the mosque and the next day he may start reciting. After the *Fajr* Prayer, Nāfiʿ immediately asked for Warsh because he had slept in the mosque and was therefore entitled to read first. Warsh’s recitation was so meticulous and so beautiful that all were captivated by his excellent recitation. It is mentioned that whoever listened to him reciting

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<sup>5</sup> *Maʿrifat al-Qurrāʾ al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 152, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 1 pg. 502, *al-Wāḍiḥat al-Khadrāʾ* pg. 47.

would never tire of his recitation, nor want him to stop. After he had rendered his 30 verses, someone from the *ḥalqah* stood up and said: “He (Warsh) may recite 10 of my verses and I will only recite 20 verses.” So Warsh read another 10 verses, after which someone else from the *ḥalqah* stood up and offered Warsh 10 of his verses too. In this manner it continued until everyone in the *ḥalqah* had stood up and gave Warsh 10 of their verses to recite. It is said that it continued in this manner until Warsh completed the Qur’ān by Nāfi‘ in 50 days. Eventually, Warsh completed a *khatm* to Nāfi‘ every seven days, thus reciting four *khatms* in a month to him.

Warsh was an expert regarding the Qur’ān and the Arabic language. Once he had mastered the intricate details of Arabic, he held a circle of learning (*ḥalqah*) for it, and named it the *maqra’* (place of learning) of Warsh (مَقْرَأُ وَرَشٍ).

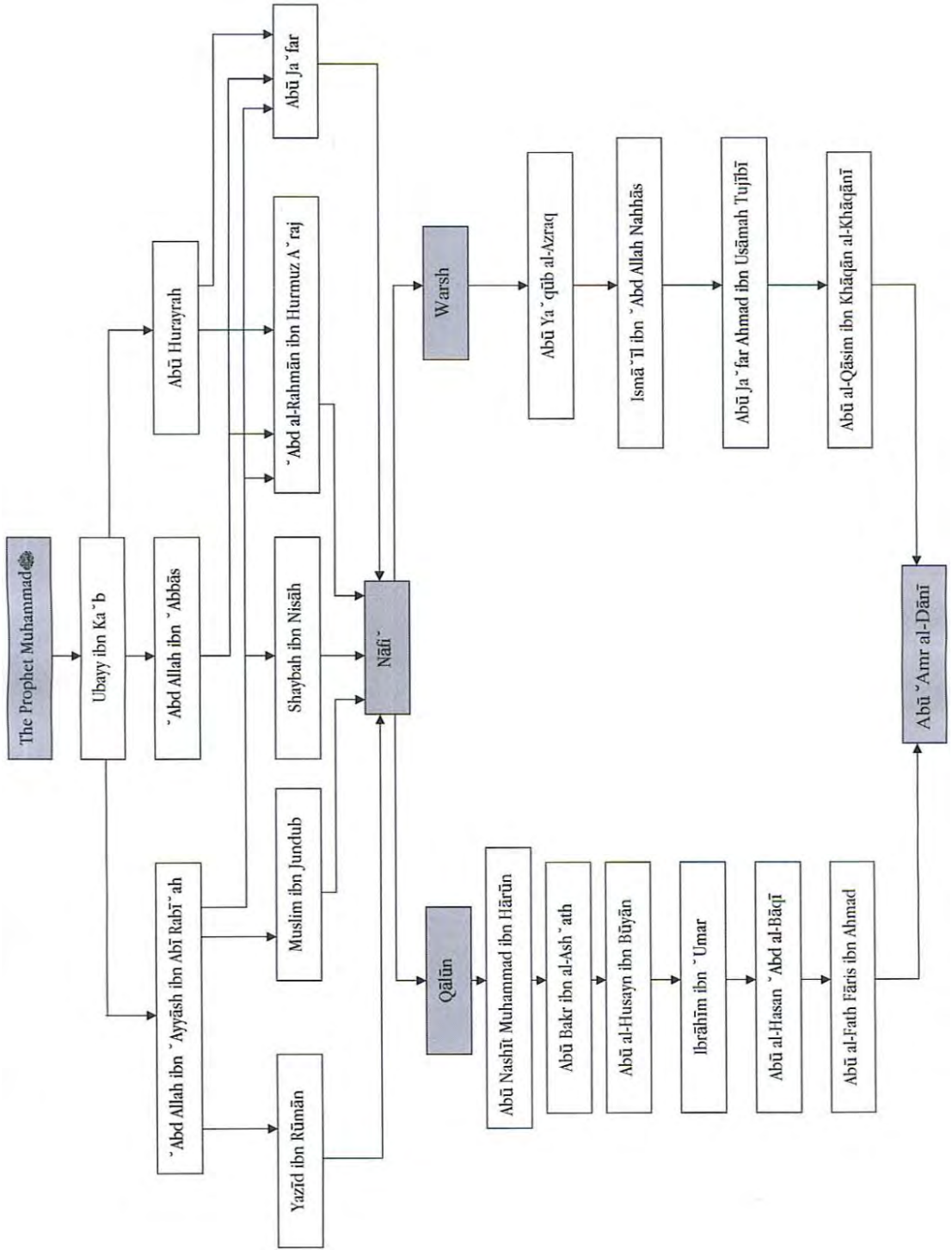
He later returned to Egypt where he became renown for his skill and knowledge of the Qur’ān, becoming the *Sheikh al-Qurrā’* there. He died in Egypt in 197 A.H./813 C.E. at the age of 87. Ibn al-Jazarī mentions that when he visited Egypt, he was informed regarding the whereabouts of Warsh’s grave and had the opportunity to visit it.

#### **Teachers:**

- Nāfi‘.

#### **Students:**

- Abū Ya‘qūb al-Azraq.



## ‘Abd Allah ibn Kathīr al-Makkī<sup>6</sup>

He is Abū Ma‘bad al-Makkī al-Dārī, ‘Abd Allah ibn Kathīr ibn ‘Amr ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn Zādān ibn Fīrūzān ibn Hurmuz. There are 6 different opinions concerning his patronym: Abū Ma‘bad, Abū Bakr, Abū ‘Abbād, Abū Muḥammad, Abū al-Muṭṭalib and Abū Sa‘īd. The first is the most well-known. He was named al-Dārī since he was a perfume trader who imported his merchandise from Dārayn, a place in Bahrayn. Others say he is linked to the Companion of the Prophet ﷺ, Tamīm al-Dārī ﷺ. He is commonly known as Ibn Kathīr al-Makkī, the second imam from the seven *Qurrā’*.

Though he was born in Mecca in 45 A.H./665 C.E., his origins lay in Persia. During his time, he was the imam of Mecca in *qirā’at* as well as one of its judges. Imam al-Shāfi‘ī mentions that during his time he found the peoples of Mecca reciting the *Qirā’ah* of Ibn Kathīr. He met some of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, ‘Abd Allah ibn Zubayr ﷺ, Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī ﷺ and Anas ibn Mālīk ﷺ. Therefore he is counted as a Successor. He travelled to Iraq and settled there for awhile. Later he returned to Mecca and stayed there until his demise.

He was extremely eloquent, articulate, and had an excellent command of Arabic expression. Ibn Kathīr was tall, well-built, and brown-skinned with bluish-black eyes. He also had a white beard and would dye his hair with henna. Ibn Kathīr was well-composed, possessed an aura of piety, and a personality which commanded respect from all who met him.

He was extremely pious and humble, often crying profusely while supplicating Allah. He held a great deal of respect for the poor, and shunned those who sought material and worldly gains.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ma‘rifat al-Qurrā’ al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 86, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 1 pg. 443, *al-Wāḍiḥat al-Khaḍrā’*, pg. 56, *Aḥāsīn al-Akḥbār*, pg. 198.

It is said that Ibn Kathīr was the first who started the practice of allowing the first to come to the lesson, to recite first. This practice was later adopted by many *qurrā'*, including Imam al-Shāṭibī. He was asked one day concerning his *Qirā'ah* and the fact that it was not strong grammatically. To this he replied that "I do not teach according to what is rationally correct, but according to what I have been taught by my predecessors." Before he commenced his lesson for the day, he would always start by giving his students advice. He would also end his lesson with an advice.

#### Teachers:

- 'Abd Allah ibn al-Sā'ib al-Makhzūmī – Abū al-'Alā' al-Hamadhānī (d. 569 A.H./1173 C.E.) is of the opinion that Ibn Kathīr did not read to 'Abd Allah ibn al-Sā'ib. Abū 'Umar al-Andarābī (d. after 500 A.H./1106 C.E.) does not include 'Abd Allah ibn al-Sā'ib as a teacher of Ibn Kathīr. Al-Dhahabī does include him in *Ma'rifat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār*, and Ibn al-Jazarī mentions that it was quite possible considering that Ibn Kathīr had met some of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ. Ibn Mujāhid (d. 324 A.H./939 C.E.) also forwards a text, transmitting via Imam al-Shāfi'ī, that Ibn Kathīr did in fact read to 'Abd Allah ibn al-Sā'ib. Abū 'Amr al-Dānī (d. 444 A.H./1052 C.E.) lists him as a teacher of Ibn Kathīr in *al-Taysīr*. The author of *Aḥāsīn al-Akhbār*, 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Mizzī al-Ḥanafī (d. 768 A.H./1366 C.E.), also lists him as a teacher of Ibn Kathīr mentioning that when 'Abd Allah ibn al-Sā'ib died, Ibn Kathīr was 30 years old. Therefore the possibility that Ibn Kathīr read to him is strong. Allah knows best.
- Mujāhid ibn Jabr.
- Dirbās al-Makkī.

#### Students:

- Ismā'īl ibn 'Abd Allah al-Qusṭantīn.
- Shibl ibn 'Abbād.

- Ma'rūf ibn Mushkān.
- Abū 'Amr al-Baṣrī, the third imam from the seven *qurrā'*.

He died in 120 A.H./738 C.E.

## Al-Bazzī<sup>7</sup>

He is Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bazzī. His full name is Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Qāsim ibn Nāfi‘ ibn Abī Bazzah, originally from Hamadhān, Persia. Al-Bukhārī gives his name as Bashshār, the client of ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Sā’ib al-Makhzūmī, by whom he also embraced the fold of Islam. He is more commonly known as Aḥmad al-Bazzī or just al-Bazzī, the narrator of Ibn Kathīr al-Makkī.

He was born in 170 A.H./787 C.E., and became the teacher of the Qur’ān in Mecca as well as the *mu’adhdhin* (caller to prayer) of the *Ḥaram* for 40 years. Bazzī was known as a proficient and precise teacher and reciter of the Qur’ān.

The ḥadīth regarding the *takbīr* from *Sūrat al-Duḥā* is transmitted via al-Bazzī.

### Teachers:

- ‘Abd Allah ibn Ziyād.
- ‘Ikrimah ibn Sulaymān.
- Wahb ibn Wāḍiḥ.

### Students:

- Qumbul – narrates *qirā’āt* from him.
- Abū Rabī‘ah al-Raba‘ī.

He died in 250 A.H./864 C.E. at the age of 80.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ma‘rifat al-Qurrā’ al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 173, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 1 pg. 119, *al-Wāḍiḥat al-Khadrā’* pg. 59.



## Qunbul<sup>8</sup>

He is Abū ‘Umar al-Makhzūmī, Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khālid ibn Muḥammad ibn Sa‘īd ibn Jurjah<sup>9</sup>, better known as Qunbul, the narrator of Ibn Kathīr. Some have given his patronym as Abū ‘Amr.

He was born in 195 A.H./811 C.E. The reason for calling him Qunbul was because he was famous for using a certain medication on animals named Qunaybil. It was later shortened to Qunbul, by which he was known. Others say he was named Qunbul since he came from the tribe al-Qanābilah.

Qunbul was selected as an integral part of the police force in Mecca by its people due to his justness and superior character. During his leadership of the police force, the people of Mecca lived in harmony, peace and security.

In the last seven years of his life he was forced to give up the teaching of the Qur’ān due to old age.

### Teachers:

- Ahmad al-Bazzī – transmits *qirā’āt* from him.
- Abū al-Ḥasan Aḥmad ibn ‘Alqamah al-Qawwās.

### Students:

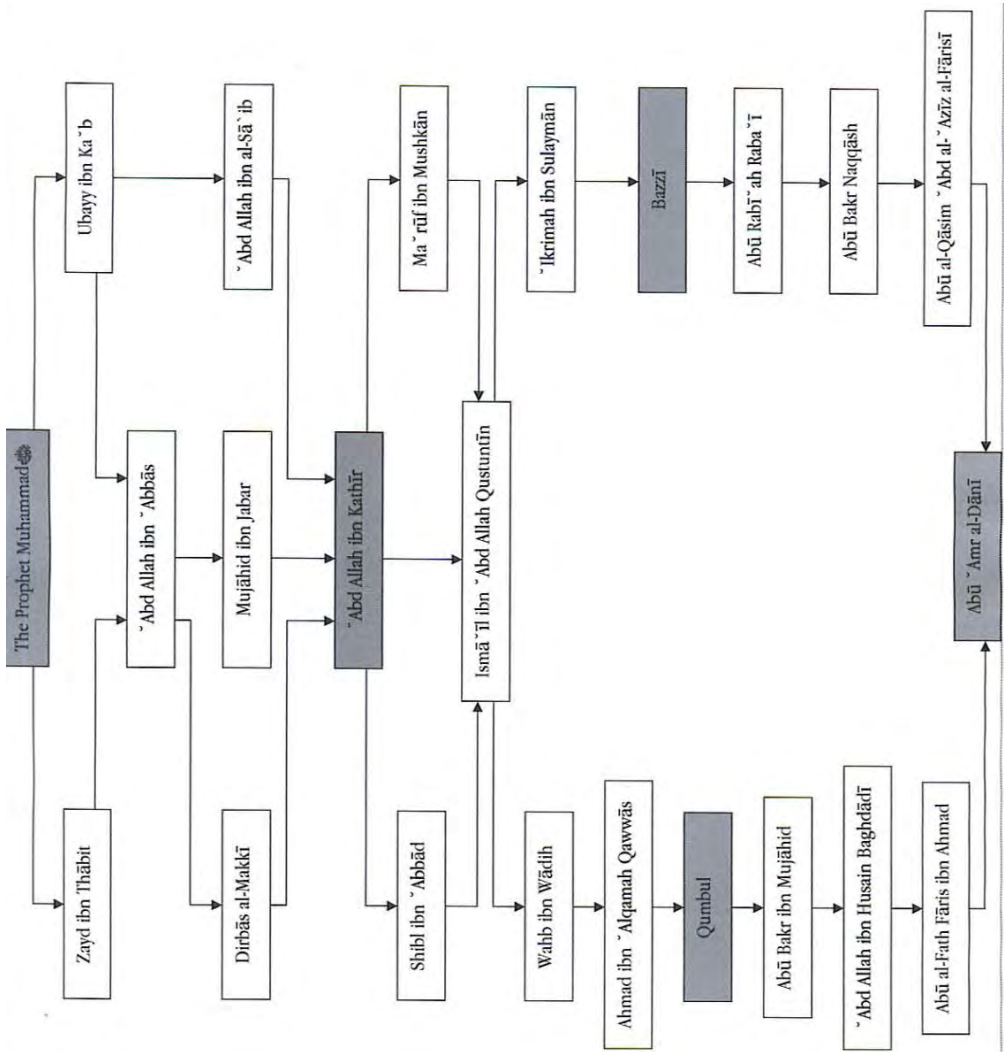
- Abū Bakr ibn Mujāhid.
- Abū al-Ḥasan ibn Shanabūdh.

He died in 291 A.H./904 C.E. at the age of 96.

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<sup>8</sup> *Ma‘rifat al-Qurrā’ al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 230, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 2 pg. 165, *al-Wāḍiḥat al-Khaḍrā’* pg. 62.

<sup>9</sup> *Al-Wāḍiḥat al-Khaḍrā’* has it as Jarḥah instead of Jurjah.



## Abū ‘Amr al-Basrī<sup>10</sup>

Zabbān ibn al-‘Alā’ ibn ‘Ammār ibn al-‘Uryān ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥārith ibn Jalhamah ibn Ḥajar ibn Khuzā‘ī ibn Māzin ibn Mālik ibn ‘Amr ibn Tamīm ibn Murr ibn Ād ibn Ṭābikhah ibn Ilyās ibn Muḍar ibn Ma’d ibn ‘Adnān. He is more commonly known as Abū ‘Amr al-Basrī, the third imam from the seven *qurrā’*. Some have said that his name and patronym are the same, Abū ‘Amr. Ibn al-Jazarī relates that there are more than 20 opinions regarding his name: al-‘Uryān, Yaḥyā, Maḥbūb, Junayd, ‘Uyaynah, ‘Uthmān, ‘Ayyāḍ, amongst others. Al-Dhahabī also mentions Abū ‘Amr ibn al-‘Alā’ ibn ‘Ammār ibn al-‘Uryān as his name.

There is also difference of opinion regarding his lineage: some link him to Banī al-‘Ambar, or Banī Abū Ḥanīfah or in Persia, from a place named Kāzarūn.

He was born in 68 A.H./688 C.E. or 70 A.H./690 C.E. Others say he was born in 55 A.H./675 C.E. or 65 A.H./685 C.E. It is said that he was born in Mecca, raised in Basra and died in Kufa. Abū ‘Amr was brown skinned and tall. Besides being of the nobility of the Arabs, Abū ‘Amr was also the most learned regarding *qirā’āt*, Arabic, *Fiqh*, poetry, and history. In spite of his vast knowledge, whenever he spoke to laymen, he spoke in a plain and simple manner. His home was filled with his notebooks to the extent that they reached the roof of his house. He later devoted himself to the worship of Allah and strictly adhered to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ. It is said that if the knowledge of Abū ‘Amr was split and given to 100 people, all of them would be considered an *‘ālim* (a person with great knowledge). Abū ‘Amr said: “If I were to give (the knowledge) in my chest to you, I would do so. However, I have studied and memorised such details about the Qur’ān, that if it were written, none would be able to bear it.”

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<sup>10</sup> *Mā‘rifat al-Qurrā’ al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 100, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 1 pg. 288, *al-Wāḍiḥat al-Khaḍrā’* pg. 65, *Aḥāsīn al-Akhbār* pg. 367.

Many scholars said that they have not met anyone with more knowledge than Abū ‘Amr. Asma’ī said: “My eyes have not seen the likes of Abū ‘Amr. If I sat with him, it seemed as if I sat before a huge ocean with no shore-line in sight.” A great poet, Dhū al-Rummah, said: “I never sat with Abū ‘Amr except that when I left, my book was filled with knowledge.” Once they asked Abū ‘Amr 8000 questions about the Qur’ān, poetry and Arabic. He answered them all with ease. He surpassed many of his teachers, to the extent that after Abu ‘Amr had read to some of his teachers, they later came to study the Qur’ān by him. The people and scholars of Basra would boast about Abu ‘Amr to others. In spite of his knowledge and supremacy above others, he disliked to lead the people in ṣalāh.

‘Abd al-Wārith mentions that he performed hajj with Abū ‘Amr al-Basrī. They reached a certain point and it was time for ṣalāh. It was such a barren place that no water was nearby. Abū ‘Amr told him to wait there and he left. He waited for a long time and eventually went to look for Abū ‘Amr. When he found him, he was in shock to find Abū ‘Amr taking ablution (*wuḍū’*) from water which was gushing from the ground in this barren place. He further relates that Abū ‘Amr made him promise not to tell anyone what he had witnessed. ‘Abd al-Wārith says: “I have not told anyone this story until after the demise of Abū ‘Amr.”

Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah relates that he saw the Prophet ﷺ in a dream and said to him ﷺ: “I find so many (different) *qirā’āt*, which one do you instruct me to read?” The Prophet ﷺ replied: “Recite the *Qirā’ah* of Abū ‘Amr ibn al-‘Alā’.”

Shu‘bah said: “Hold onto the *Qirā’ah* of Abū ‘Amr, for it will become a pillar and link for the people.” Ibn al-Jazarī later adds that how true is this statement of Shu‘bah, that today I have found the peoples of Shām, Hijāz, Yemen and Egypt are reciting the *Qirā’ah* of Abū ‘Amr. This is surely due to the miraculous foresight of Shu‘bah.

Abū ‘Amr al-Basrī said: “If it were not for the fact that I can only recite what I read (to my teachers), then I would recite in such and such a manner.”

He fled with his father from the subjugation of Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf. Therefore he was able to read to teachers from Mecca, Medina, Kufa and Basra. When Abū ‘Amr travelled to Medina and to Kufa, the people flocked around him to learn from him, leaving the scholars in their own town. There is no one else from amongst the seven *qurrā’* who had as many teachers as Abū ‘Amr al-Basrī.

Ibn Shanabūdh relates that some traditionists said they dreamt about the day of judgement. On that day two individuals were raised above all others. They asked who the two were? It was said that they are Abū ‘Amr al-Basrī and Ḥamzah ibn Ḥabīb al-Zayyāt.

#### Teachers:

- Yaḥyā ibn Ya‘mar.
- Abū al-‘Āliyah al-Riyāḥī – Al-Dhahabī mentions that Abū ‘Amr did not read to him. However, others like Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Hamadhāni and Ibn al-Jazarī have authenticated this link, since they were both in the same city for a period of twenty years. It therefore seems most likely that he did read to him. With this *sanad* there are only two links between Abū ‘Amr and the Prophet ﷺ; Abū ‘Amr to (1) Abū al-‘Āliyah al-Riyāḥī, to (2) ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ, to the Prophet ﷺ. His other *sanads* will have 3 links between him and the Prophet ﷺ.
- Ḥasan al-Basrī.
- Shaybah ibn Niṣāḥ.
- ‘Āṣim.
- ‘Abd Allah ibn Kathīr al-Makkī.
- ‘Aṭā’ ibn Abī Rabāḥ.
- Mujāhid ibn Jabr.

- Ibn Muḥaysin.
- Naṣr ibn ‘Āṣim.
- Abū Ja‘far Yazīd ibn al-Qa‘qā‘.

**Students:**

- Yaḥyā al-Yazīdī.
- Abū al-Mundhir Sallām ibn Sulaymān al-Ṭawīl.
- ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Mubarak.
- Sībway – he transmits some *qirā’āt* from him.
- Khalīl ibn Aḥmad – he transmits some *qirā’āt* from him.

He would complete a *khatm* of the Qur’ān every three days. Abū ‘Amr died in 154 A.H./771 C.E. or 155 A.H./772 C.E. in Kufa.

## Al-Dūrī<sup>11</sup>

He is Ḥafṣ ibn ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Ṣahbān ibn ‘Adī ibn Ṣahbān, better known as al-Dūrī, the narrator of Abū ‘Amr al-Basrī and Kisā’ī. His patronym is Abū ‘Umar. Al-Dūrī links him to the place al-Dūr in eastern Baghdad.

He was born in 150 A.H./767 C.E. and traveled in the pursuit of studying *qirā’āt*. Al-Dūrī is regarded as one of the first to collect *qirā’āt* from various lands in a book. Al-Ahwāzī mentions that in his travels to gain knowledge, al-Dūrī collected many *qirā’āt*, including those that were authentic and others that were anomalous (*shādhah*). People flocked to study under him due to his knowledge in *qirā’āt* and his high *sanads*. The traditionist, Ibn Mājah, also transmits ḥadīth from him. He was heard saying: “I lived in the time of Nāfi‘, and if I possessed 10 dirhams, I would have traveled to him.” Some state that he did eventually read to Nāfi‘.

### Teachers:

- Ismā‘īl ibn Ja‘far, the student of Nāfi‘.
- Al-Kisā’ī.
- Yahyā al-Yazīdī.
- Sulaym, the student of Ḥamzah.
- Ya‘qūb ibn Ja‘far, the student of Ibn Jammāz.
- Ya‘qūb al-Ḥaḍramī, the ninth imam found in the Ten *Qirā’āt*.

### Students:

- Aḥmad ibn Ḥambal – he was a contemporary to al-Dūrī, and was seen in the company of him and writing down what he learnt.
- Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad.

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<sup>11</sup> *Mā‘rifat al-Qurrā’ al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 191, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 1 pg. 255, *al-Wāḍiḥat al-Khaḍrā’* pg. 71.

- Abū al-Za‘rā’ ibn ‘Abdūs.

Towards the end of his life he lost his eyesight. He died in 246 A.H./860 C.E. at the age of 96.



## Al-Sūsī<sup>12</sup>

He is Ṣālīḥ ibn Ziyād ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn Ismā‘īl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Jārūd ibn Maṣrah al-Rustubī al-Raqī, more commonly known as al-Sūsī, the narrator of Abū ‘Amr al-Basrī. Al-Sūs is a town in al-Ahwāz and al-Raqī links him to al-Riqqah, a village on the Euphrates. His patronym is Abū Shu‘ayb.

He was born in al-Riqqah in approximately 171 A.H./788 C.E. and was known for his trustworthiness, reliability and precision. His reading was commonly found in Egypt, Hijāz, Maghrib and Iraq. It is presumed that his narration was widespread since because its reading was so easy.

### Teachers:

- Yaḥyā al-Yazīdī.

### Students:

- Al-Nasā‘ī, the traditionist.
- Abū ‘Imrān ibn Jarīr al-Naḥwī.

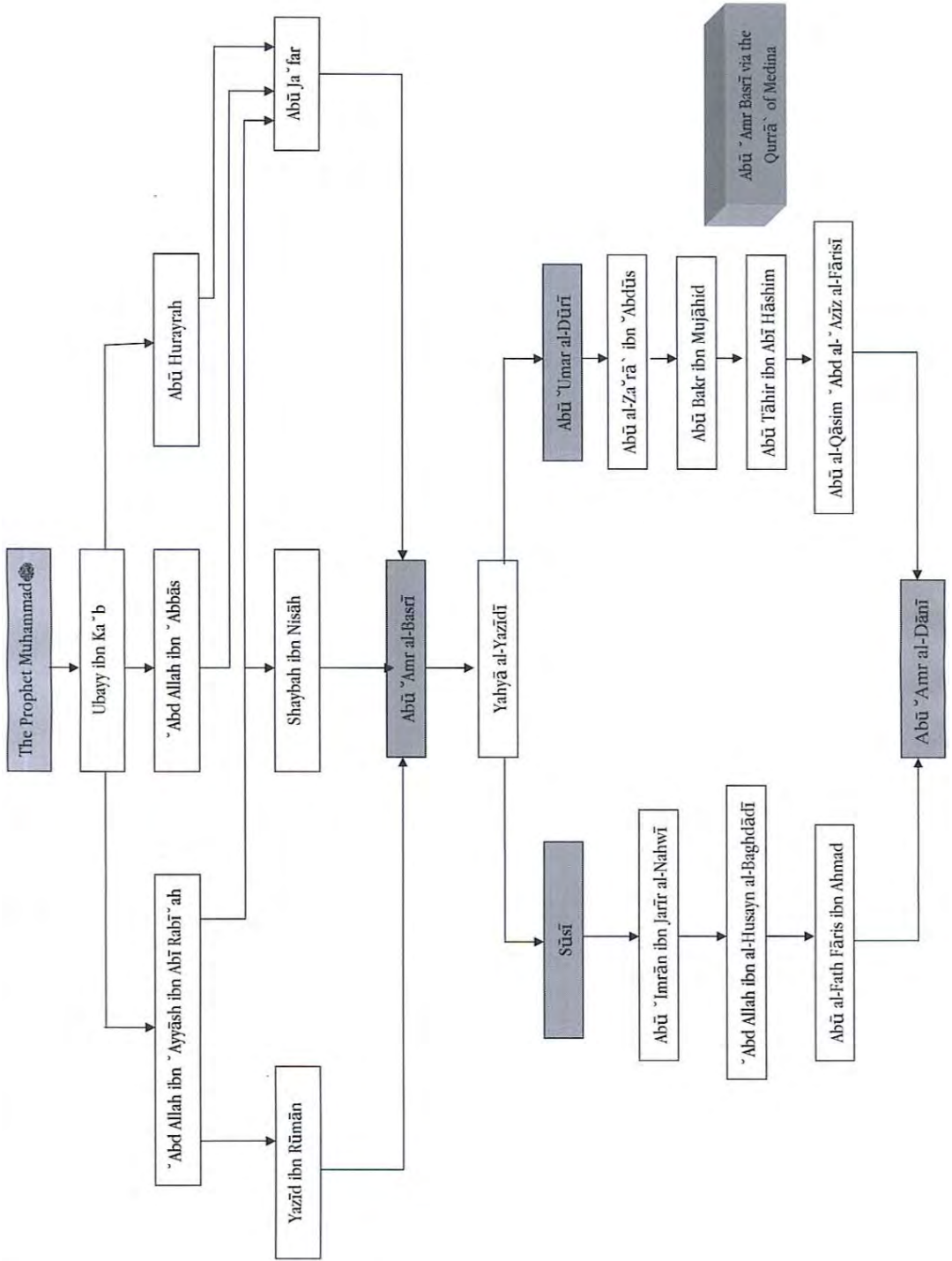
He died at the beginning of 261 A.H./875 C.E., his age being almost 70 years.

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<sup>12</sup> *Mā‘rifat al-Qurrā’ al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 193, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 1 pg. 332, *al-Wāḍiḥat al-Khaḍrā’* pg. 73.







## ‘Abd Allah Ibn ‘Āmir al-Shāmī<sup>13</sup>

He is ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Āmir ibn Yazīd ibn Tamīm ibn Rabī‘ah ibn ‘Āmir ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Imrān al-Yaḥṣubī, better known as ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Āmir al-Shāmī. Al-Yaḥṣubī links him to Yaḥṣub ibn Dahmān ibn ‘Āmir ibn Ḥimyar ibn Saba’ ibn Yashjab ibn Ya‘rab ibn Qaḥṭān ibn ‘Āmir. The ‘Āmir mentioned at the end here according to some historians is Hūd عليه السلام. There are many views concerning his patronym, the most famous being Abū ‘Imrān. Others include Abū ‘Āmir, Abū Nu‘aym, Abū ‘Ulaym, Abū ‘Ubayd, Abū Muḥammad, Abū Mūsā, Abū Ma‘bad, and Abū ‘Uthmān. He is the fourth imam of the seven *qurrā’*

Ibn ‘Āmir was born in 21 A.H./642 C.E. He was heard saying: “On the demise of the Prophet ﷺ, I was two years old, and I went to Damascus when I was nine years of age.” He was tall, with a sparse beard, and walked with a limp in one leg.

Abū al-Dardā’ رضي الله عنه was sent to teach the people in Shām the Qur’ān by ‘Umar رضي الله عنه. After his demise, his student, Ibn ‘Āmir, took his position due to his exceptional prowess and brilliance in his knowledge of the Qur’ān.

In this manner he became the *Sheikh al-Qurrā’* in Damascus during his time, as well as one of its judges. The people of Shām continued the *Qirā’ah* of Ibn ‘Āmir up till the fifth century *hijrī*. He heard the Qur’ān being recited as well as ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ from a few of the Companions, and therefore is counted by many as being one of the illustrious Successors.

He died in 118 A.H./736 C.E.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ma‘rifat al-Qurrā’ al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 82, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 1 pg. 423, *al-Wāḍiḥat al-Khaḍrā’* pg. 78, *Aḥāsīn al-Akḥbār* pg. 248.

## Teachers:

- Abū al-Dardā' – some scholars deem his reading to Abū al-Dardā' as implausible. Ibn al-Jazarī mentions that many *qurrā'* confirm his reading to Abū al-Dardā', in spite of Ibn Jarīr's criticism.
- Al-Mughīrah ibn Abū Shihāb al-Makhzūmī – his recitation to Mughīrah is established, in spite of Ibn Jarīr's criticism.
- 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه – some say he read the entire Qur'ān to him while others say he only read half of the Qur'ān to him. Ibn al-Jazarī deems the former improbable and the latter as probable. However, both can not be established with certainty. Others say he heard 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه reading in ṣalāh, which is also probable.<sup>14</sup>
- Mu'āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān – Ibn al-Jazarī says that Ibn 'Āmir's link to him is incorrect. However, he relates ḥadīth from him and therefore it is not impossible for him to have read parts of the Qur'ān to him, especially since other scholars like Abū 'Umar al-Andarābī (d. after 500 A.H./1106 C.E.) have established this link. Allah knows best.
- Mu'ādh ibn Jabal – Ibn al-Jazarī deems this view as weak. Abū al-Qāsim al-Hudhalī affirms that Ibn 'Āmir did read to Mu'ādh ibn Jabal.<sup>15</sup>
- Wāthilah ibn al-Asqa' – Ibn al-Jazarī says that there is no reason to deem this as unlikely.<sup>16</sup>
- Faḍālah ibn 'Ubayd – Ibn 'Āmir himself mentions that he would sit with a *muṣḥaf* before Faḍālah while he recited for him the *qirā'ah* which he gained from the Prophet ﷺ.

Abū Shāmmah (d. 665 A.H./1268 C.E.) has established Ibn 'Āmir's recitation to four of the Companions; Mu'āwiyah, Faḍālah, Wāthilah and Abū al-Dardā'.

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<sup>14</sup> See also *al-Kāmil* of al-Hudhalī pg 55.

<sup>15</sup> See also *al-Kāmil* of al-Hudhalī pg 55-56.

<sup>16</sup> See also *al-Kāmil* of al-Hudhalī pg 55.

Students:

- Yahyā ibn al-Ḥārith al-Dhimārī.

### Discussion

Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī has scriticised Mughīrah's recitation to 'Uthmān based on the following:

1. No one had claimed that 'Uthmān ؓ taught them the Qur'ān. Those who have read the Qur'ān to him only read a few sections or a few *qirā'āt*. If 'Uthmān ؓ was known as a teacher of the Qur'ān then surely others would also have read to him besides Mughīrah, especially those close to him, or his relatives.
2. The person who relates this is 'Irāq ibn Khālīd who is unknown. Hishām ibn 'Ammār is the only one who relates this from him.

The student of Imam Shāṭibī (d. 590 A.H./1194 C.E.), Abū al-Ḥasan al-Sakhāwī (d. 643 A.H./1245 C.E.), argues:

1. To say that none had claimed to have learnt the Qur'ān from 'Uthmān ؓ is incorrect, since Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī learnt the Qur'ān as well as certain *qirā'āt* from 'Uthmān ؓ. Others who have read to 'Uthmān ؓ include Zirr ibn Ḥubaysh and Abū al-Aswad al-Du'alī. Even if Mughīrah was the only student of 'Uthmān, it would not be uncommon, as many a time it is found that a teacher has only one outstanding student who continues his legacy. As for giving preference to teaching of his relatives, how many *qurrā'* have exceptional students from far and distant places, yet their close relatives do not learn from them?
2. Concerning 'Irāq ibn Khālīd, though he is not known by al-Ṭabarī, it is sufficient that Hishām relates from him since Hishām is trustworthy and reliable. Moreso, Hishām would not be negligent and mention an incorrect *sanad* to something as great as the Qur'ān – the Book and Speech of Allah.

## Hishām<sup>17</sup>

He is Abū al-Walīd al-Sulamī, Hishām ibn ‘Ammār ibn Nuṣayr ibn Maysarah al-Dimashqī. He was better known as Hishām, the transmitter of Ibn ‘Āmir al-Shāmī.

He was one of the most prominent scholars of Damascus during his time, the *mufti* of its people, their *khaṭīb* (orator), their teacher of the Qur’ān and their traditionist. Many traditionists transmit ḥadīth from him, including al-Bukhārī, Abū Dāwūd al-Nasā’ī, and Ibn Mājah. Al-Tirmidhī transmits from him via one link. He was born in 153 A.H./770 C.E. He was an avid seeker of knowledge, eventually becoming a master of numerous sciences. Many scholars have stated that the world had not seen another scholar the likes of Hishām.

Hishām met Imam Mālik. Mālik requested that he recite the Qur’ān while Hishām requested that Mālik relate some ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ. Due to Hishām’s persistence, Mālik ordered that they eventually beat Hishām, like a teacher would beat his student. They beat him 15 times. Hishām then said to Mālik: “You have oppressed me and I will not forgive this.” Mālik then asked: “What is the atonement for this beating?” Hishām replied: “Relate to me 15 ḥadīths of the Prophet ﷺ.” After Mālik had finished relating 15 ḥadīth, Hishām remarked: “Why do you not increase my beating so that you may relate more ḥadīth to me.” Mālik laughed at this and Hishām left.

Hishām was well known for the knowledge he transmitted and his clarity of expression. People flocked from all over to learn from him, especially *qirā’āt* and ḥadīth.

Hishām relates that he asked Allah to fulfill seven of his needs, of which six was fulfilled and one remains pending. The one pending was that Allah forgives him and his parents. The remaining six which Allah granted was that he performs

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<sup>17</sup> *Ma’rifat al-Qurrā’ al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 195, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 2 pg. 354.



hajj, that Allah allows him to live for more than 100 years, that Allah grants him truthfulness in what he relates concerning the Prophet ﷺ, that he be allowed to conduct the *khutbah* (sermon) from the *minbar* (pulpit) of Damascus, and that Allah grants him 1000 dinars and that people flock to him to study knowledge.

#### Teachers:

- 'Irāk ibn Khālīd, a student of Yaḥyā al-Dhimārī.
- Ayyūb ibn Tamīm, a student of Yaḥyā al-Dhimārī.

#### Students:

- Aḥmad ibn Yazīd al-Ḥulwānī.
- Abū 'Abd Allah Hārūn ibn Mūsā al-Akhfash.
- Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām – he transmits some *qirā'āt* from Hishām.

He died in 245 A.H./860 C.E. Others say 244 A.H./859 C.E.

## Ibn Dhakwān<sup>18</sup>

He is ‘Abd Allah ibn Aḥmad ibn Bishr. It is also said that his name is Bashīr ibn Dhakwān ibn ‘Amr ibn Ḥassān ibn Dāwūd ibn Ḥasanūn ibn Sa‘d ibn Ghālib ibn Fihri ibn Mālik ibn al-Naḍr. His patronyms are given as Abū ‘Amr and Abū Muḥammad al-Qurashī al-Dimashqī. He is more commonly known as Ibn Dhakwān, the narrator of Ibn ‘Āmir al-Shāmī.

He was born in 173 A.H./790 C.E. Abū Zur‘ah states that during his time there was none in Iraq, Hijāz, Shām, Egypt, or Khurāsān, as learned concerning *qirā’āt* than Ibn Dhakwān. Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Mājah also relate ḥadīth from him. It is said that while Hishām would deliver the Friday sermons, Ibn Dhakwān would lead the people in prayer.

### Books:

- *Aqsām al-Qur’ān wa Jawābuhā* – The Divisions of the Qur’ān and its answers.
- *Ma Yajib ‘alā Qārī’ al-Qur’ān ‘inda Ḥarkah Lisānihī* – That which is incumbent upon the reciter of the Qur’ān when he is reciting.

### Teachers:

- Ayyūb ibn Tamīm al-Tamīmī.
- Al-Kisā’ī – it is also said that he read to al-Kisā’ī when he came to Damascus. Al-Naqqāsh relates that Ibn Dhakwān said: “I stayed with al-Kisā’ī for 7 months (and according to other reports 4 months) and completed numerous *khatms* by him.” Al-Dhahabī has criticised this report of al-Naqqāsh. Upon this, Ibn al-Jazarī mentions that if Ibn Dhakwān traveled to Iraq then it could be possible since there are no references of al-Kisā’ī travelling to Shām. He (Ibn al-Jazarī) later mentions that it is quite possible based on what he (Ibn al-Jazarī) heard from some

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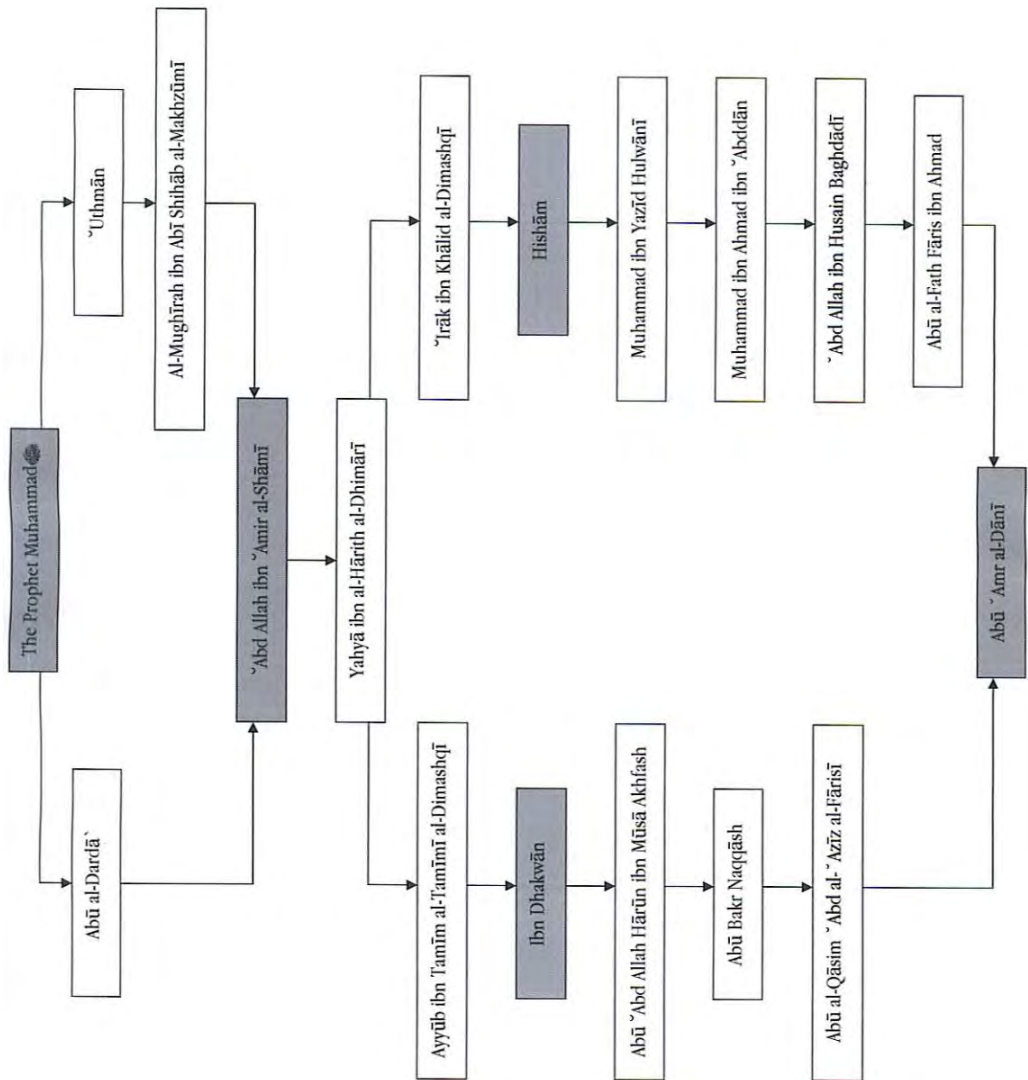
<sup>18</sup> *Ma‘rifat al-Qurrā’ al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 198, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 1 pg. 404.

of his teachers, the fact that al-Kisā'ī did travel to various lands and that it is also mentioned by scholars the like of Ṭāhir ibn Ghalbūn. Allah knows best.

**Students:**

- **Abū 'Abd Allah Hārūn ibn Mūsā al-Akhfash.**
- **Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Sūrī.**

**He died in 242 A.H./857 C.E.**



## ‘Āṣim<sup>19</sup>

He is ‘Āṣim ibn Bahdalah Abū al-Najūd. Bahdalah is the name of his mother and Abū al-Najūd is the patronym of his father. The name of his father is said to be ‘Abd Allah. His patronym is Abū Bakr. His date of birth is not known, though it is mentioned that he grew up in Kufa. He is the fifth imam from the seven *qurrā’*.

He was an outstanding Successor, and considered as the most learned regarding *qirā’āt* as well as possessing the most beautiful of voices when he recited. The people in Kufa loved to listen to his recitation. ‘Āṣim became the *Sheikh al-Qurrā’* in Kufa after the demise of Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī. He was well versed in the Arabic language, a grammarian, and also extremely eloquent, to the extent that when he spoke, it was as if the listener was entranced. Some mention that ‘Āṣim was also a tailor.

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal was asked by his son: “Which reading is most beloved to you?” He replied: “The reading of the people of Medina, and if not, then the reading of ‘Āṣim.”

‘Āṣim became ill for a period of two years, after which he recovered. He mentions that upon his recovery he recited the entire Qur’ān without any errors.

As he was blind, he was one day being guided by another, when his guide caused him to fall. Yet, because of his humility, he did not reprimand the guide. He was also an ascetic and an ardent adherent to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ. When he performed Prayer, he stood upright and completely still, almost like a stick. On the day of *Jumu’ah*, he would remain in the mosque after prayer until the *‘Aṣr* Prayer. In fact, whenever ‘Āṣim passed by a mosque, he would enter and pray in it, and then continue on his way.

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<sup>19</sup> *Ma’rifāt al-Qurrā’ al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 88, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 1 pg. 346, *Aḥāsīn al-Akḥbār*, pg. 430.

Ḥafṣ asked him why his reading differed to what he taught Shu‘bah. ‘Aṣim replied: “That which I teach you is what I read to Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī according to what he read to ‘Alī عليه السلام, and that which I teach Shu‘bah is what I read to Zirr ibn Ḥubaysh according to what he read to ‘Abd Allah ibn Mas‘ūd عليه السلام.” Ḥafṣ also mentions that if one recited to ‘Āṣim, he would extend his hand and count the verses. ‘Āṣim would allow the tradesmen to recite to him first, so that they may leave and see to their livelihood.

‘Āṣim would not teach from one point only, but would travel around so that he many could benefit from his expertise. However, he disliked teaching those who did not understand, appreciate, or endeavour to learn the Qur’ān.

He said: “Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān said to me: O my son, busy yourself with teaching and learning.” ‘Āṣim would give the same advice to his students.

#### **Teachers:**

- **Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī.**
- **Zirr ibn Ḥubaysh.**
- **Abū ‘Amr Sa‘d ibn Iyyās al-Shaybānī.**

#### **Students:**

- **Sulaymān ibn Mihrān al-A‘mash.**
- **Abū Bakr ibn ‘Ayyāsh, better known as Shu‘bah.**
- **Ḥafṣ ibn Sulaymān.**
- **Abū ‘Amr al-Basrī.**
- **Ḥamzah.**
- **Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī.**
- **Sufyān al-Thourī.**
- **Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah.**

- Sallām ibn Sulaymān Abū al-Mundhir.
- Imam Abū Ḥanīfah – he read *qirā'āt* to 'Āṣim, as well as al-A'mash and 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Laylā, the teacher of Ḥamzah and al-Kisā'i.<sup>20</sup> Abū al-Faḍl al-Khuzā'i has written a book on the *Qirā'āt* of Abū Ḥanīfah, which is also mentioned by Abū al-Qāsim al-Hudhalī in his book, *al-Kāmil*. However, most scholars are of the view that this book is a fabrication. Sheikh 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṭarābulusī mentions that if Abū al-Faḍl's *sanad* to this book were void of criticism and doubt, then surely this would be of the most authentic *qirā'āt*.<sup>21</sup> Allah knows best. He also transmits ḥadīth from 'Āṣim, amongst others.

He died in 127 A.H./745 C.E. Others say 128 A.H./746 C.E., amongst other opinions.

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<sup>20</sup> *Nihāyat al-Ghāyah*, Vol. 2 pg. 187.

<sup>21</sup> *Nihāyat al-Ghāyah*, Vol. 2 pg. 187, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 2 pg. 110.

## Shu'bah<sup>22</sup>

He is Shu'bah ibn 'Ayyāsh ibn Sālim al-Ḥannāṭ al-Asadī. His patronym is Abū Bakr. There are about 17 different opinions as to his name. The most correct is Shu'bah. Others include Aḥmad, 'Abd Allah, Sālim, Qāsim, Muḥammad, amongst others. He was born in 95 A.H./714 C.E.

He read the Qur'ān three times to 'Āṣim. He also read to 'Aṭā' ibn al-Sā'ib and Aslam al-Minqarī. Even so, his student Yaḥyā ibn Ādam relates that Shu'bah said: "I learnt the Qur'ān from 'Āṣim, like a child would learn from his master." He also said that he learnt five verses at a time from 'Āṣim. Shu'bah was extremely punctual in his lessons with 'Āṣim, going to him in extreme heat or cold, and even when it rained heavily. He stated: "I completed three *khatms* to 'Āṣim." Subsequently, Shu'bah stated that by the time he left 'Āṣim, he knew precisely how every letter should be read according to his *Qirā'ah*.

Shu'bah was an extremely learned scholar, as well as an ardent follower of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ. Some scholars stated that they have not seen someone more eager to practice upon the *Sunnah* than Shu'bah. Other scholars were fortunate to be able to perform hajj with him. They remarked that they have not seen one more pious than Shu'bah. It was well known that for forty years he did not sleep during the night, spending it instead in the worship of Allah. Some say it was fifty years.

Many studied under him, and not only in the field of the Qur'ān. However, about seven years before his demise, he stopped teaching Qur'ān. Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah was once in a gathering with Shu'bah. Some came and asked him a question regarding ḥadīth. He replied: "You cannot ask me about ḥadīth as long as this sheikh (Shu'bah) is amongst us." This clearly indicates that he was not only an expert in Qur'ān, but an expert in ḥadīth as well.

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<sup>22</sup> *Ma'rifat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 134, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 1 pg. 325, *al-Wāḍiḥat al-Khadrā'*, pg. 78.



It is said that for forty years he would make a *khatm* of the Qur'ān every day. He once advised his son: "O my son, never transgress the laws of Allah in this room, for in it I read 12 thousand *khatms*." On his deathbed, his sister could not stop crying. Shu'bah asked her: "For what reason are you crying? Take a look at that corner, in it I have made 18 thousand *khatms* of the Qur'ān."

**Teachers:**

- 'Āṣim.

**Students:**



- Yahyā ibn Ādam.

He died in *Jamād al-Ūlā*, 193 A.H./809 C.E.

## Ḥafṣ<sup>23</sup>

He is Ḥafṣ ibn Sulaymān ibn al-Mughīrah ibn Abī Dāwūd al-Asadī al-Kūfī al-Bazzāz. He was also known as Ḥufayṣ. His patronyms are Abū ʿUmar and Abū Dāwūd. He was born in 90 A.H./709 C.E.

He was the stepson of ʿĀṣim, after ʿĀṣim married Ḥafṣ's mother. This outstanding teacher of the Qurʾān was raised and trained by ʿĀṣim, the *Sheikh al-Qurrā'* of Kufa during his time. He read the Qurʾān countless times to his mentor, ʿĀṣim. Many scholars state that Ḥafṣ is the most accurate transmitter of ʿĀṣim's *Qirā'ah*. Ḥafṣ settled in both Baghdad, and later in Mecca, until his demise. During his stay in both these places, many learnt from him what he transmitted from ʿĀṣim. He was trustworthy in what he transmitted regarding the Qurʾān, but is considered a weak transmitter in ḥadith.

Ḥafṣ asked ʿĀṣim why his reading differed to what he taught Shuʿbah. ʿĀṣim replied: "That which I teach you is what I read to Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī according to what he read to ʿAlī , and that which I teach Shuʿbah is what I read to Zirr ibn Ḥubaysh according to what he read to ʿAbd Allah ibn Masʿūd .

Ḥafṣ also mentions that if one recited to ʿĀṣim, he would extend his hand and count the verses. He also relates that he never differed in anything that he gained from ʿĀṣim except in the word *صَف* of *Sūrat al-Rūm*, verse 54, that he read with a *ḍammah* while ʿĀṣim taught him with a *fathah*.

Teacher:

- ʿĀṣim.

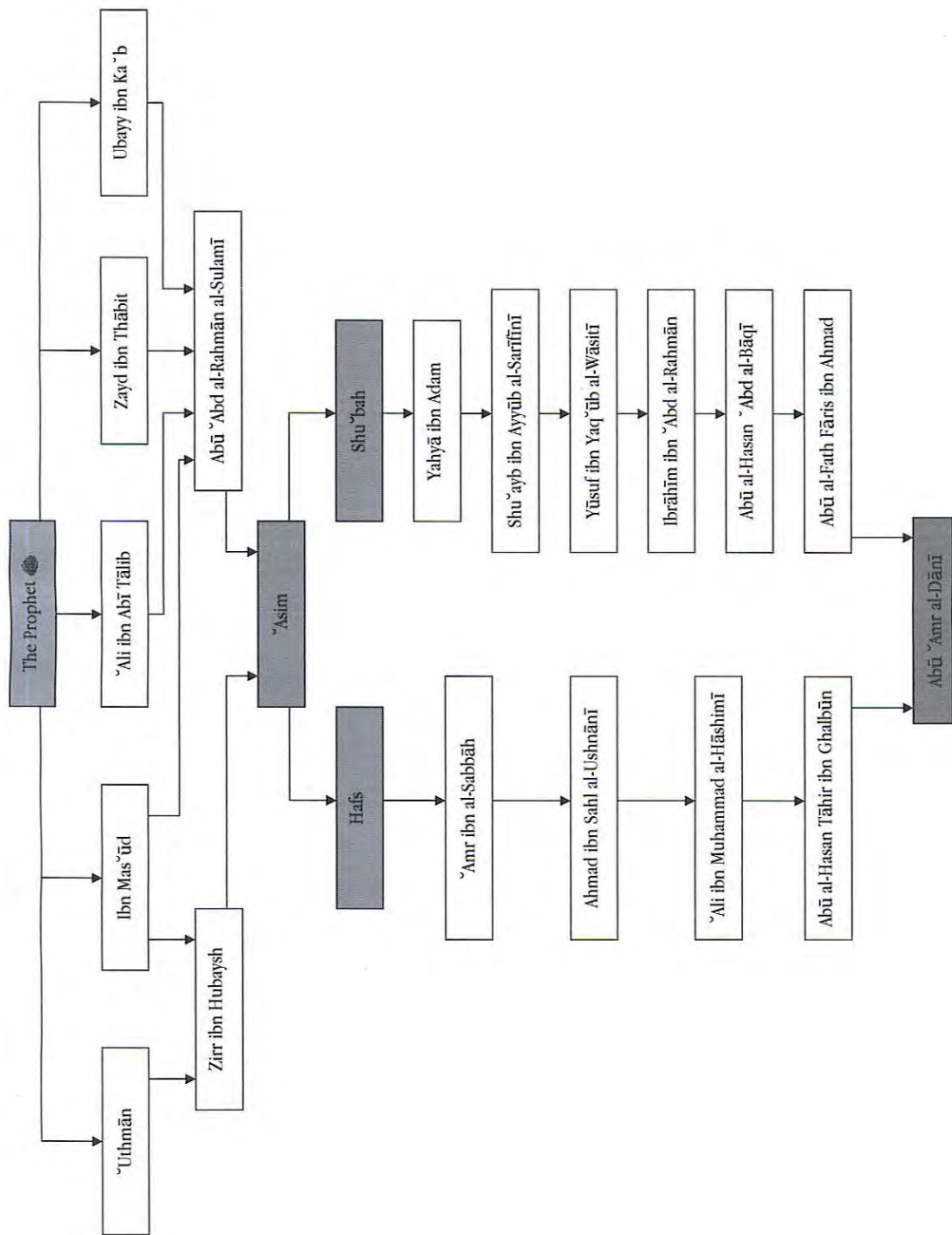
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<sup>23</sup> *Maʿrifat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 140, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 1 pg. 254.

**Students:**

- 'Amr ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ.
- 'Ubayd ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ.
- Hubayrah.
- Abū Shu'ayb al-Qawwās.

He died in 180 A.H./796 C.E.



## Ḥamzah<sup>24</sup>

He is Ḥamzah ibn Ḥabīb ibn ‘Umārah ibn Ismā‘īl al-Zayyāt, the sixth imam from the seven *qurrā’*. His patronym is Abū ‘Umārah. He was the *Sheikh al-Qurrā’* in Kufa during his time; after ‘Āṣim and al-A‘mash. This great imam was born on 80 A.H./699 C.E. in Ḥulwān, Iraq, during the caliphate of ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān. He is considered a Successor to the Successors (*Tābi‘ al-Tābi‘īn*), though it is possible that he saw some Companions during their old age. After ‘Āṣim’s demise, most of the people of Kufa started reading the *Qirā’ah* of Ḥamzah because Shu‘bah became frail and stopped teaching before his demise, and Ḥafṣ settled in Baghdad. Thus only a handful of students of ‘Āṣim remained in Kufa teaching his *Qirā’ah*.

His student, Sulaym, relates that when Ḥamzah initially went to al-A‘mash’s circle to learn, everyone looked at him wearily. When it was his turn, he had to recite *Sūrah Yūsuf* (القصص). Usually, al-A‘mash would stop and rectify those who recited in his circle, but he did not stop Ḥamzah anywhere. All listened attentively and with awe to his recitation. By the time he had completed the *juz*, those present had become welcoming and affable to him.

He was an ascetic, a person of great piety and extremely learned concerning the Qur’ān. In the year 100 A.H., he started leading the people of Kufa in prayer. Those who stood behind him in prayer mention that when he read, every letter and vowel was clearly audible. He would teach all who came to his circle to learn. And after all had dispersed, he would perform 4 *rak‘ahs* of prayer. Thereafter, he would pass his time in prayer between *Ṭuḥr* and *‘Aṣr*, as well as between *Mahgrīb* and *Ishā’*. Ḥamzah would constantly be reciting the Qur’ān, and anyone who gazed upon him would find him busy with its recitation. It is said that he would complete 20 or 29 *khatms* every month. His neighbours related that he never slept at night since they would hear his recitation

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<sup>24</sup> *Mā‘rifat al-Qurrā’ al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 111, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 1 pg. 261, *al-Wāḍiḥat al-Khaḍrā’*, pg. 103, *Aḥāsīn al-Akḥbār*, pg. 303.

throughout the night. His student, Sulaym, once found Ḥamzah weeping uncontrollably while he was reciting the Qur'ān. When Sulaym asked him about his weeping, he replied that how could he not weep when in his dream he read the Qur'ān to Allah himself, after which Allah rewarded him with the most beautiful of jewellery and a crown of splendour. It is also related that he cried because he dreamt of the Prophet ﷺ. In the dream he requested to recite the Qur'ān to him ﷺ. He then recited the entire Qur'ān to him and the Prophet ﷺ said to Ḥamzah: "In this manner the Qur'ān was revealed to him." Some said that the only reason Allah kept calamities away from Kufa was due to Ḥamzah.

The first person who came to the Ḥamzah's circle of learning would be allowed to read first, followed by the second person, and so forth. Once a person of authority sent their children to recite to Ḥamzah, but because they came late they never got a turn to recite. Afterwards they told Ḥamzah that they boy was the son of a notable man. Ḥamzah replied that his wealth and money could not buy him a place in his circle of learning.

Ḥamzah would never accept any gifts from his students. On one occasion, an influential man completed a *khatm* by Ḥamzah and sent him one thousand dirhams. To this Ḥamzah replied: "I thought that he was a man of intellect? How can I accept remuneration for the teaching of the Qur'ān? I hope instead for a high place in paradise (*al-firdous*)." Once Ḥamzah passed by Jarīr ibn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd and asked for some water to drink. When he brought the water, Ḥamzah never drank because he realised that this person was one of his students. It is related that once Ḥamzah fell in a ditch in Kufa. All the people of Kufa came to help him out. Ḥamzah asked every person that came: "Have you read to me?" If they had, he would refuse their assistance, until none in Kufa remained who could help him out. Eventually Allah sent a lioness to help Ḥamzah out of the ditch.

None could compare with Ḥamzah's knowledge regarding the Qur'ān. When his teacher, al-A'mash would meet him, he would say: "هَذَا حَبْرُ الْقُرْآنِ" (This is an authority on the Qur'ān). Al-A'mash also said: "If you want to meet one more learned than me regarding the Qur'ān then look at this youth," and he pointed at Ḥamzah. Imam Abū Ḥanīfah said to Ḥamzah: "In two things you will overpower us, and we will not attempt to challenge you: your knowledge of the Qur'ān and the laws of inheritance." Once when reading to his teacher, Ibn Abī Laylā, he made an error. He then inquired why his teacher had not corrected him? Ibn Abī Laylā replied: "خِفْتُ اللَّهَ، أَنْ تَكُونَ أَنْتَ الْمَصِيبُ وَأَنَا الْمَخْطِئُ" (I fear Allah that perhaps you are correct and I am the one mistaken). No *qirā'ah* was read by Ḥamzah except that he knew its chain of transmission (*sanad*) from the Prophet



Ḥamzah once mentioned that he was alone in his house, half asleep, when he opened his eyes to find two people sitting by him. They told him: "Do not be afraid, we are your brothers from amongst the jinn." They informed Ḥamzah that they had a dispute concerning who was more learned regarding the Qur'ān and they came to him for judgement.

Another time, he was reciting the Qur'ān when he heard one calling to him to keep silent. This person then requested to recite to him. He recited *Sūrat al-Najm*. While he was reciting, Ḥamzah thought that this person was reciting according to my *Qirā'ah*. On completion Ḥamzah asked him: "Who are you?" He replied: "I am from the jinn. I used to come to Kufa and sit on your right side to learn from you."

Ḥamzah mentions that he was once on travel to perform hajj. On route his camel had gone astray. While searching for it he stumbled on some high land with a sheikh sitting on top of it. The sheikh asked him: "Who are you?" He replied: "Ḥamzah ibn Ḥabīb." The sheikh asked, "The reciter?" "Yes," replied Ḥamzah. The sheikh asked: "Recite for me a portion of the Qur'ān." Ḥamzah then recited from *Sūrat al-Aḥqāf* until he reached:

وَإِذْ صَرَفْنَا إِلَيْكَ نَفَرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقُرْآنَ

“And remember when we sent to you (Muḥammad) a group of jinn listening to the Qur’ān.”

The sheikh then stopped Ḥamzah and said, “Do you know how many of us there were? There were six of us. We were messengers of the Prophet ﷺ sent to the jinn. Five had died and I am the only one remaining.” The sheikh then asked him what he was doing there. He explained that he had lost his camel and while searching for it he landed up by the sheikh. The sheikh then said: “Here’s your camel.” And Ḥamzah suddenly found his camel. He then told Ḥamzah to get on the camel and in moments he was amongst the people performing hajj.

Ibn Shanabūdh relates that some traditionists said they dreamt about the day of judgement. On that day two individuals were raised above all others. They asked that who are those two raised above the rest of us? It was said that they were Abū ‘Amr al-Basrī and Ḥamzah ibn Ḥabīb al-Zayyāt.

### Teachers:

- Sulaymān ibn Mihrān al-A‘mash – some say that he did not recite the entire Qur’ān to al-A‘mash, but learnt certain *qirā’āt* from him. Ḥamzah also relates that during *Ramaḍān* he would go to al-A‘mash with a *muṣḥaf* and al-A‘mash would read to him while he marked the *qirā’āt* in his *muṣḥaf*.<sup>25</sup> However Sulaym, as well as Kisā’ī relate that they saw Ḥamzah reading to al-A‘mash on more than one occasion.<sup>26</sup> The latter opinion is more correct.
- Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Laylā – Ḥamzah relates that he read the Qur’ān four times to Ibn Abī Laylā.
- Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq.
- Ḥumrān ibn A‘yan.

<sup>25</sup> *Ma‘rifat al-Qurrā’ al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 118.

<sup>26</sup> *Aḥāsīn al-Akḥbār*, pg. 352.



- Abū Ishāq al-Sabīʿī.
- Maṣṣūr ibn al-Muʿtamir.

**Students:**

- Al-Kisāʿī.
- Sulaym ibn ʿĪsā.
- Sufyān al-Thourī – he revised the Qurʾān with Ḥamzah four times.
- Yaḥyā ibn Ādam.
- Yaḥyā ibn Ziyād al-Farrāʾ.

He died in a place named Bāʿ in Kufa on 156 A.H./773 C.E.

## Khalaf<sup>27</sup>

He is Khalaf ibn Hishām ibn Tha‘lab ibn Hashīm ibn Tha‘lab ibn Dāwūd ibn Miqsam ibn Ghālib. His name is also given as Khalaf ibn Hishām ibn Ṭālib ibn Ghurāb. He was better known as Khalaf al-Bazzār. He disliked that people called him al-Bazzār and would tell them to call him “al-Muqri’” – teacher of the Qur’ān. His patronym is Abū Muḥammad. He was born in 150 A.H./767 C.E.

At the age of ten he had memorised the Qur’ān. He started seeking further knowledge at the age of thirteen. Khalaf said: “I memorised the Qur’ān by the age of ten, and starting teaching it when I was thirteen.” He became an exemplary scholar, as well as a staunch upholder of the *Sunnah*. He was a man of utmost piety. Khalaf was well known for the fact that he always fasted. He once said that he found a chapter in Arabic grammar difficult, and spent 80 thousand dirhams until he mastered that particular chapter. Some scholars state that they have not seen one more honoured than Khalaf. When he taught, he let the people of the Qur’ān read first, then the traditionists. He was also a transmitter of ḥadīth, appearing in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim, the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd, in al-Nasā’ī, and many other works of ḥadīth.

Some scholars would say to him: “You are the most learned in Kufa, O Khalaf.” Khalaf mentions that I came to Kufa and went to Sulaym who asked me what I wanted by him. I informed him that I wanted to recite to Shu‘bah. Sulaym then wrote a note and sent me with it to Shu‘bah. He initially looked down upon me, but after reading the note he asked: “Are you Khalaf? Are you the one who has left none in Baghdad more learned than you?” I remained silent. He then said: “Sit, come closer, and recite.” I asked: “Recite to you?” He replied: “Yes.” I then remarked: “I take an oath in Allah’s name that I will not recite to one who belittles another ordained with the Qur’ān in his chest.” He later said that he regretted not reading to Shu‘bah. Instead he transmitted the *Qirā’ah* of ‘Āṣim via Yaḥyā ibn Ādam, the student of Shu‘bah.

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<sup>27</sup> *Ma‘rifat al-Qurrā’ al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 208, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 1 pg. 272.

Khalaf transmits the *Qirā'āt* of all seven *qurrā'*: the *Qirā'ah* of Nafi' via al-Musayyibī, the *Qirā'ah* of Ibn 'Āmir via Hishām, the *Qirā'ah* of Ibn Kathīr via Ibn 'Aqīl, the *Qirā'ah* of Abū 'Amr via Abū Zayd, the *Qirā'ah* of al-Kisā'i directly from him, the *Qirā'ah* of 'Āṣim via Yaḥyā ibn Ādam, and the *Qirā'ah* of Ḥamzah via Sulaym.<sup>28</sup>

#### Teachers:

- Sulaym – he read the Qur'ān many times to Sulaym.
- Ishāq al-Musayyibī.
- Hishām.
- 'Ubayd ibn 'Aqīl.
- Abū Zayd.
- Al-Kisā'i – al-Kisā'i read the entire Qur'ān to Khalaf while he noted all the changes and the *qirā'āt*.
- Yaḥyā ibn Ādam.

#### Students:

- Idrīs ibn 'Abd al-Karīm.

Khalaf died in *Jamād al-Ākhirah*, 229 A.H. in Baghdad./844 C.E.

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<sup>28</sup> *Aḥāsīn al-Akḥbār*, pg. 363.

## Khallād<sup>29</sup>

He is Khallād ibn Khālīd al-Shaybānī al-Ṣayrafī al-Kūfī. His patronym is Abū ʿĪsā or Abū ʿAbd Allah. He was born in 119 A.H./737 C.E. He is considered of the most outstanding and honoured students of Sulaym. Al-Dānī regards him as one of the most precise students of Sulaym in what he transmitted from him. He dedicated his life in serving the Qurʾān and was known for his piety.

Ḥamzah read the Qurʾān to him in his *Qirāʾah*. However, he did not read directly to Ḥamzah.<sup>30</sup>

### Teachers:

- Sulaym.
- Al-Kisāʾī.

### Students:

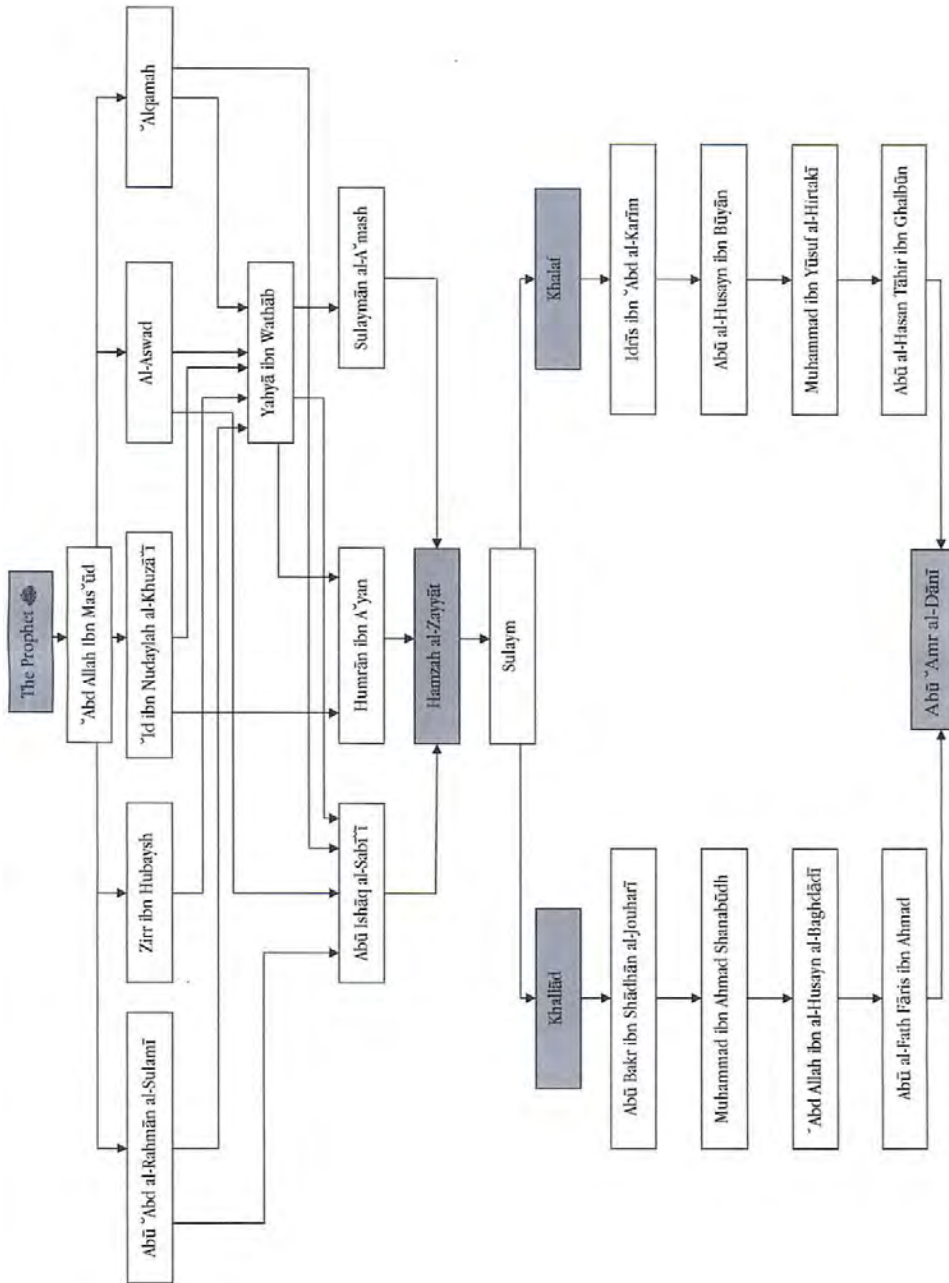
- Abū Bakr ibn Shādhān al-Jouharī.

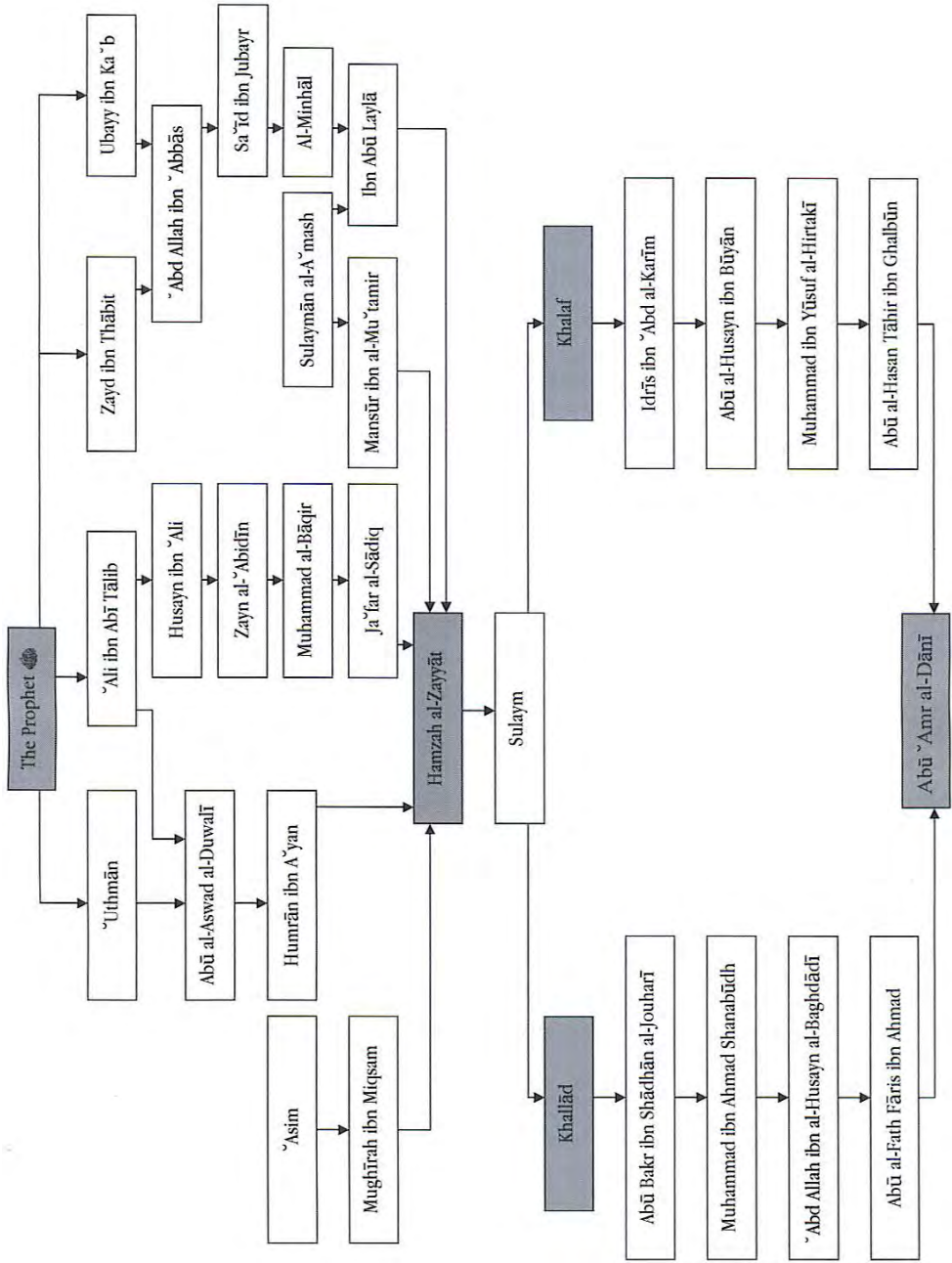
He died in 220 A.H./835 C.E. in Kufa.

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<sup>29</sup> *Māʿrifat al-Qurrāʾ al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 210, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 1 pg. 274.

<sup>30</sup> *Aḥāsīn al-Akhhbār*, pg. 364.





## Al-Kisā'ī<sup>31</sup>

‘Ali ibn Ḥamzah ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Uthmān was the seventh imam from the seven *qurrā’*. His patronym was Abū al-Ḥasan. He was better known as al-Kisā'ī which means cloak or shawl because when on hajj, he wore it as his *iḥrām*. Therefore Imam al-Shāṭibī says about him:

وَأَمَّا عَلِيٌّ فَالْكِسَائِيُّ نَعْنُهُ \* لِمَا كَانَ فِي الْإِحْرَامِ فِيهِ تَسْرِيلاً

“As for ‘Alī, he was referred to as al-Kisā'ī because he donned it (shawl) when in Iḥrām.”

Others say that he wore a shawl (kisā'ī) to class, and Ḥamzah would tell some of the other students to read to the one wearing a kisā'ī – the one wearing a shawl. Another opinion states that he was called al-Kisā'ī because he used to sell shawls in his youth. It is also mentioned that he came from a village in the rural areas of Iraq name Bākusāyā. His nickname, al-Kisā'ī, therefore indicates towards this village. It is also related that when al-Kisā'ī travelled to read to Ḥamzah, he wore a nice shawl. It was the practice of Ḥamzah that he would not allow anyone to read more than thirty verses at a time. Upon reading to Ḥamzah, when al-Kisā'ī reached the thirtieth verse, Ḥamzah told him to continue. Al-Kisā'ī then read until he completed 60 verses and Ḥamzah again told him to continue further. In this manner al-Kisā'ī read to Ḥamzah a hundred verses in one sitting. In the following days, al-Kisā'ī could not immediately return to Ḥamzah to continue his recitation, and Ḥamzah, looking for al-Kisā'ī, asked his other students: “Where is the one who wore the nice shawl?” Thereafter, everyone referred to him as al-Kisā'ī – the one who wore the shawl. The first opinion, which is also hinted at by Imam al-Shāṭibī, is the most well-known opinion.

He was from the *Tābi'ī al-Tābi'īn*, and born in Kufa in approximately 180 A.H./796 C.E. This great imam of *qirā'āt* was originally from Kufa, and later settled in Iraq. Al-Kisā'ī became the imam of *qirā'āt* in Kufa after the demise of Ḥamzah. He later traveled to Basra to study Arabic under the expert Khalīl ibn

<sup>31</sup> *Ma'rifat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 120, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 1 pg. 535, *al-Wāḍiḥat al-Khaḍrā'*, pg. 116, *Aḥāsīn al-Akhhbār*, pg. 410.

Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī. One day, he asked Khalīl how he acquired so much knowledge of Arabic. He replied that he learnt it from the bedouins of Hijāz. Al-Kisāʾī then traveled to them to learn from them. After some time with them, he returned to Khalīl, only to find that he had died and his student Yūnus ibn Ḥabīb had taken his place in teaching Arabic. They then had a debate to see who had more knowledge of the Arabic tongue, after which Yūnus declared that al-Kisāʾī was clearly more knowledgeable than him. He then handed his position as Arabic instructor to al-Kisāʾī. Having an unquenchable thirst for knowledge, he often traveled and stayed amongst the bedouins to study and understand their usage of the Arabic tongue. While with them, he would document many of their expressions and word usages. This resulted in him disappearing for many days on end, until eventually people would see him again. He also had the most knowledge regarding odd word usages and expressions of Arabic. Some of his students professed that they have not found anyone more eloquent than al-Kisāʾī. Others went as far as stating that when he spoke, it was as if an angel was speaking through al-Kisāʾī, due to his brilliance in expression. Imam al-Shāfiʿī said that if anyone wanted to become a specialist in Arabic, he should devote himself to al-Kisāʾī. His student, the famous grammarian, al-Farrāʾ mentions that he discussed something concerning Arabic with al-Kisāʾī one day and he found himself like a small bird drinking from the huge ocean. Al-Farrāʾ also relates: “We thought that if we asked al-Kisāʾī about *Tafsīr*, he would not be able to give a satisfying answer. So we asked him, and he clarified our question in such a manner which astounded us regarding his brilliance.”

When people came to his circle to learn the Qurʾān, he would sit on an elevated chair while they sat on the floor with their *maṣāḥif*. He would then recite the Qurʾān from the beginning till the end while they marked his *Qirāʾah*, the places of stopping and starting, the verse-ends, and so forth. His student, Abū ʿUbayd Qāsim ibn Sallām says that he did not meet anyone more knowledgeable than al-Kisāʾī regarding the Qurʾān. The Khalīfah, Hārūn al-Rashīd would only choose the best in every field, and in the field of the Qurʾān, he chose al-Kisāʾī to



accompany him. He also stated: “I have not seen one more virtuous, more pious and with more insight in the Qur’ān and Arabic as al-Kisā’ī.”

The two sons of Hārūn al-Rashīd, Amīn and Ma’mūn, would vie to straighten the shoes of al-Kisā’ī. Upon this, Hārūn one day asked: “Who is the most honoured these days?” They replied: “The Amīr (Hārūn) and his family.” He then replied: “Nay, but al-Kisā’ī is the most honoured, for even my sons compete in serving him.”

On one occasion, he led the prayer while the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd followed. He states that he then made a mistake that not even a child would make. Instead of reading *يَرْجِعُونَ* he read *يَرْجِعِينَ*. On another occasion al-Kisā’ī and Yaḥyā al-Yazīdī met with the caliph, Hārūn al-Rashīd. When the time for prayer came, al-Kisā’ī was pushed forward as the imam and he faltered in *Sūrat al-Kāfirūn*. At this Yaḥyā al-Yazīdī sneered that the Qārī of Kufa made an error in such a simple *sūrah*. Al-Yazīdī was made imam in the following prayer, and he erred in *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*. At this al-Kisā’ī remarked that one should not be too swift to reproach another’s errors, for he will then be tried by the same thing for which he reproached another.

During the month of *Sha’bān*, a *mimbar* (pulpit) would be prepared for him. He would then sit on the *mimbar* and recite two *khatms* for the people during this month.

Al-Kisā’ī relates that while teaching the people in the *miḥrab* of Damascus, he dozed off. He then dreamt that he saw a man approach the Prophet ﷺ in a dream and asked him: “Whom should we follow in recitation?” The Prophet ﷺ then pointed to me (al-Kisā’ī). It is related after his demise, al-Kisā’ī was seen in a dream. It was said to him: “What has Allah done with you?” He replied: “Allah has forgiven me due to the Qur’ān.”

### Teachers:

- Ḥamzah – it is said that he read the Qurʾān to Ḥamzah four times.
- Muḥammad ibn Abī Laylā.
- Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq – he heard the Qurʾān from him.
- Al-Aʿmash – he heard the Qurʾān from him.
- Shuʿbah – he transmits *qirāʾāt* from him.

### Students:

- Abū al-Ḥārith al-Layth.
- Ḥafṣ ibn ʿUmar al-Dūrī.
- Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām – he heard the Qurʾān from him.
- Yaḥyā ibn Ādam.
- Khalaf.
- Khallād.
- Yaḥyā ibn Ziyād al-Farrāʾ.
- Yaʿqūb – he transmits certain *qirāʾāt* from him.
- Ibn Dhakwān, the narrator of Ibn ʿĀmir al-Shāmī – this has been criticised by some. However, Abū ʿAmr al-Dānī (d. 444 A.H./1052 C.E.) also mentions that Ibn Dhakwān himself said that he read to al-Kisāʾī when he came to Damascus. Ṭāhir Ibn Ghalbūn (d. 399 A.H./1008 C.E.) also relates that he did read to al-Kisāʾī when he came to Damascus. This is also supported by Ibn al-Jazarī, in spite of it being criticised by al-Dhabābī (d. 748 A.H./1347 C.E.) and not being mentioned by Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571 A.H./1176 C.E.).

He also authored many works regarding *qirāʾāt* of the Qurʾān and Arabic. Al-Kisāʾī died while on route to Khurasan with Hārūn al-Rashīd in 189 A.H./805 C.E. He was the last of the seven *qurrāʾ* to pass on.

## Abū al-Ḥārith<sup>32</sup>

He is Al-Layth ibn Khālīd al-Baghdādī, better known by his patronym, Abū al-Ḥārith. He devoted many years in studying from al-Kisā'ī, becoming one of his most noted students. He not only studied *qirā'āt* by him, but became a master of the Arabic language and an expert in analyzing various *qirā'āt* and its origins. Al-Kisā'ī would place him before his other students, and he was known amongst other scholars for his reliability in transmission and his extreme piety.

### Teachers:

- Al-Kisā'ī.
- Yaḥyā al-Yazīdī – he transmits certain *qirā'āt* from him.

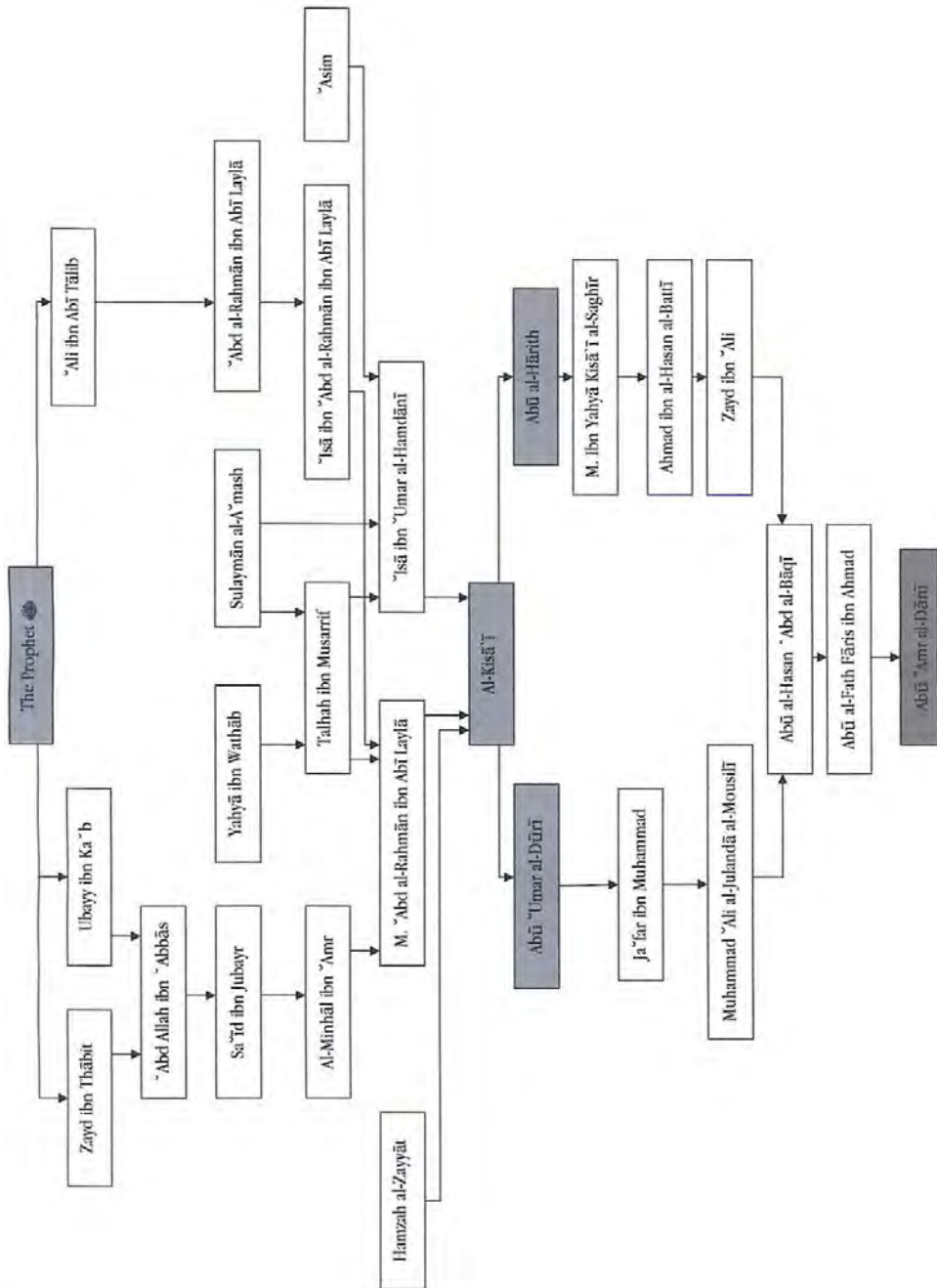
### Students:

- Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā, also known as al-Kisā'ī al-Ṣaghīr.
- Al-Faḍl ibn Shādhān.

He died in 240 A.H./855 C.E.

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<sup>32</sup> *Ma'rifāt al-Qurrā' al-Kibār*, Vol. 1 pg. 210, *Ghāyat al-Nihāyah*, Vol. 2 pg. 34.



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