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Source: *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 116, No. 3 (Jul. - Sep., 1996), pp. 406-417

Published by: [American Oriental Society](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/605146>

Accessed: 30/03/2011 21:03

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AḤMAD B. AL-ŞALT AND HIS BIOGRAPHY OF ABŪ ḤANĪFA

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In the third/ninth century the adherents of ḥadīth attacked Abū Ḥanīfa for his apparent neglect of the ḥadīth of the Prophet Muḥammad in the formulation of doctrine. Around the beginning of the fourth/tenth century some Ḥanafites, including Aḥmad b. al-Şalt, started to write biographies and *musnads* which were aimed at establishing the credentials of the eponym of their school in the discipline of ḥadīth. During his own lifetime, Ibn al-Şalt was regarded as an unreliable scholar and this view was held by most later authorities. The Ḥanafites, however, found his representation of Abū Ḥanīfa attractive and sought to preserve it by concealing its connection to him and by trying to salvage his reputation. Although these efforts were not successful, material from Ibn al-Şalt continued to appear in the biographies of the imām.

THE RESEARCHER WHO STUDIES EARLY ISLAM must pause to wonder at the unparalleled spectacle of six biographies of Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nuḥmān b. Thābit (ca. 80/699–ca. 150/767) appearing at the beginning of the fourth Muslim century.¹ What could cause this sudden surge of interest in the life of the imām of the Ḥanafite school of law, seeing that no one had thought to compose a work on him before this time? We must examine the attendant circumstances for our answer. The third/ninth century was a time of conflict between the religious establishment—primarily composed of Ḥanafites and Muḥtazilites—and their rivals, the “adherents of *ḥadīth*” (*ahl al-ḥadīth* or *aşḥāb al-ḥadīth*). The lines of the struggle were most finely drawn in the first half of the century, when the *mihna*, or “inquisition,” pursued between 218/833 and 234/849, forcibly polarized everyone involved. However, this hasty attempt to persecute the adherents of ḥadīth failed. It became clear to the members of the establishment that the adherents of ḥadīth were there to stay and that they had to be confronted on their own terms.

It was a mental habit of the adherents of ḥadīth to view doctrinal questions genetically: a doctrine, in their view, was only as sound as its originator. This led them to

concentrate their anti-establishment attacks on the person of Abū Ḥanīfa, for to discredit him was to impugn the pedigree of all Ḥanafism. The imām was denounced with astonishing violence from many quarters. In 288/901 Abu ʿl-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Abbār (d. 290/903) listed thirty-five prominent religious figures, most of them scholars of ḥadīth, who spoke against Abū Ḥanīfa.² No hyperbole was too extreme and no accusation was too far-fetched, for Abū Ḥanīfa was less than a handful of dirt. He was part of a non-Arab conspiracy to undermine Islam. It was better for a town to have a wineshop on every street corner than to harbor one of his students. He is called every name in the book: Satan, antichrist, infidel, Jew, Christian. It is said that he could not even speak Arabic properly.³ At the heart of this controversy was the ascription to the imām of certain attitudes which are

¹ Some of the research for this paper was carried out in Cairo in 1991 under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The author would like to acknowledge the help of Dr. Terence Walz, director of the American Research Center in Egypt, and Dr. Muhammad al-Baltagi, Dean of Kulliyat Dār al-ʿUlūm at the University of Cairo.

² Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghḏādī, *Taʾriḫ Baghḏād*, 14 vols. (Cairo, 1349/1931), 13:369–70 (370–71). It should be noted that there are two versions of the thirteenth volume, which contains the entry on Abū Ḥanīfa, of the Egyptian edition of *Taʾriḫ Baghḏād*—the first version of 512 pages and the second of 543. The initial publication caused such outrage that the publishers were obliged to re-issue it with extensive footnotes responding to the material derogatory to Abū Ḥanīfa. The two versions begin to differ only at page 369; in this paper reference will be made to the first version, with the corresponding pages in the second supplied in parentheses.

³ For a generous helping of the opprobrium heaped on Abū Ḥanīfa, see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghḏādī, *Taʾriḫ*, 13:394–421 (413–51).

known to have been current during his lifetime, but later came to be regarded as deviant or heretical in the subsequent evolution of mainstream Islamic thought. Chief among the charges the adherents of ḥadīth leveled against Abū Ḥanīfa was that he impiously ignored the ḥadīth of the Prophet when formulating doctrine. In order to refute this charge, the Ḥanafites produced two kinds of works, books that collected the ḥadīth that Abū Ḥanīfa was purported to have taught and biographies that depicted him in a favorable light, in particular, as an accomplished scholar of ḥadīth. Aḥmad b. al-Ṣalt was one of those who took up a cudgel for the imām. He and his fellow Ḥanafites had waded into treacherous waters, for ḥadīth and biography were disciplines in which the adherents of ḥadīth presided as jealous arbiters over what was acceptable, applying standards that they themselves had established. They steadfastly opposed any attempt to remake Abū Ḥanīfa.

THE MUSNADS OF ABŪ ḤANĪFA

The collections of the ḥadīth attributed to Abū Ḥanīfa are called *musnads*. The ḥadīth contained in them are those that the imām was alleged to have learned from his teachers and passed on to his students. By bringing together these ḥadīth, the Ḥanafites sought to provide documentary evidence to confound the scoffers who maintained that Abū Ḥanīfa knew very few ḥadīth. Abu 'l-Mu'ayyad Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd al-Khwārazmī (593/1197–655/1257), a well-travelled Ḥanafite scholar who ended his career as a teacher in Baghdad, composed a kind of super-*musnad* of Abū Ḥanīfa. He says that in Syria he heard about an “ignoramus” who had condemned Abū Ḥanīfa for his lack of knowledge of ḥadīth, claiming that Abū Ḥanīfa taught only a few ḥadīth and had no *musnad*, in contrast to Shāfi'ī, Mālik and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, all of whom had their many ḥadīth enshrined in renowned collections. On hearing this assertion, Khwārazmī says that he was seized by “holy religious fury and partisan Ḥanafite-Nu'cmanite fervor” which spurred him to gather in his *Jāmi' masānid al-imām al-a'zam* fifteen of the earlier *musnads* of Abū Ḥanīfa.⁴ Khwārazmī's list testifies to a great deal of activity over a long period

of time. Although not all of the works he used were *musnads* in the strictest sense, the fact remains that by Khwārazmī's time a significant number of authors had felt the need to compose a *musnad* of Abū Ḥanīfa and this indicates that it was a constant and pressing problem for Ḥanafites to establish the credentials of the eponym of their school in the field of ḥadīth. Indeed, there are more *musnads* ascribed to Abū Ḥanīfa than to any other figure in the Sunni religious tradition.

The rivals of the Ḥanafites regarded with a great deal of skepticism the claim that Abū Ḥanīfa was a student of ḥadīth and they were not impressed by the evidence in the form of the ḥadīth the imām purportedly taught. To the scholars of the third/ninth century and earlier, the notion that Abū Ḥanīfa was an expert in ḥadīth was absurd. 'Abd Allāh b. al-Mubārak (118/736–181/797) is said to have called Abū Ḥanīfa “a pauper in ḥadīth.”⁵ Not only was the imām negligible as a transmitter, he was the very embodiment of the anti-ḥadīth attitude that the adherents of ḥadīth were fighting. Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Abd Allāh b. Yazīd al-Muqri' (d. 212/828, or 213) claimed that Abū Ḥanīfa ended a session of teaching ḥadīth by declaring to his pupils: “All of what you have just heard is nonsense and false.”⁶ Certainly, the adherents of ḥadīth knew of students who transmitted from him, but they were few in number and, at any rate, these students, according to Bukhārī (194/810–256/870), later came to repudiate both the ḥadīth and the teacher.⁷

Facing a rising tide of Nu'cmanite *musnads*, later adherents of ḥadīth could no longer afford to be so dismissive. Around the beginning of the fourth/tenth century, we find them undertaking researches aimed at dispelling the notion that Abū Ḥanīfa was competent in ḥadīth. They brought to bear on the allegedly Nu'cmanite material the formidable apparatus of criticism their forebears had originally erected to identify the forged and improperly ascribed ḥadīth of the Prophet. When they examined the ḥadīth attributed to Abū Ḥanīfa, they found that he had nothing to do with most of them and that he spoilt many of those that he had taught. Abū Bakr b. Abī Dāwūd (230/844–316/929)—the son of Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, the compiler of one of the canonical ḥadīth collections, *Kitāb al-Sunan*—examined the material ascribed to Abū Ḥanīfa. He concluded that the imām actually taught only one hundred fifty ḥadīth and that he made mistakes in

⁴ Khwārazmī, *Jāmi' masānid al-imām al-a'zam*, 2 vols. (Hyderabad, 1332), 1:4 Ḥājji Khalīfa, *Kashf al-zunūn 'an asāmi 'l-kutub wa-'l-funūn*, ed. Şerefettin Yaltkaya, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1360/1941–1362/1943), 2:cols. 1680–81. The modern scholar Şafwa al-Saqqā gives a similar justification for publishing his edition of Ḥaṣkafī's recension of the *musnad*; see *Musnad al-imām Abī Ḥanīfa* (Aleppo, 1382/1962), 3–4.

⁵ Ibn Abī Ḥatīm al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-'l-ta'dīl*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Yaḥyā al-Mu'allimī al-Yamānī, 4 vols. (Hyderabad, 1371/1952–1373/1953), 4.1:450.

⁶ Ibn Abī Ḥatīm, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-'l-ta'dīl*, 4.1:450.

⁷ *Al-Ta'rikh al-kabīr*, 4 vols. (Hyderabad, 1361–65), 4.2:81.

half of these.⁸ The sum of one hundred fifty ḥadīth appears insignificant when compared with the thousands known to the true experts. Later, Ibn ʿAdī (277/891–365/976) studied the ḥadīth of Abū Ḥanīfa in order to determine the level of his expertise in the discipline, and this led to the publication of a volume of Abū Ḥanīfa's ḥadīth. He estimated that Abū Ḥanīfa actually taught only about three hundred ḥadīth in total and all but ten or twenty of them were defective in some way. He concluded that Abū Ḥanīfa was no scholar of ḥadīth.⁹ Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī (270/884–354/965) was a contemporary of Ibn ʿAdī and, as we will see, their interests and attitudes often ran parallel. His monograph on the allegedly Nuʿmānite ḥadīth was entitled *Kitāb ʿIlal maʿstanada ilayhi Abū Ḥanīfa*.¹⁰ He, like Ibn ʿAdī and Abū Bakr b. Abī Dāwūd, concluded that Abū Ḥanīfa had never taught most of the material that bore his name: “He taught 130 ḥadīth with the records of their transmission—other than these he did not have another ḥadīth in the world—[and] he made mistakes in 120 of them.” Ibn Ḥibbān's assessment: “His métier was not ḥadīth.”¹¹

THE BIOGRAPHIES OF ABŪ ḤANĪFA

The upsurge in interest in the biography of Abū Ḥanīfa at the turn of the fourth/tenth century is exemplified by the works of Zakāriyāʾ b. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥārith al-Nisābūrī, Ibn al-Ṣalt, Ṭaḥāwī, Ibn Kās, Ibn ʿUqda, and ʿAbd Allāh al-Ustād al-Ḥārithī.¹² (The last two of these authors also

compiled *musnads* of Abū Ḥanīfa.) None of the biographies of this era has come down to us intact; it appears that *Akhbār Abi Ḥanīfa wa-aṣḥābihi* (completed in 404/1014) of Ṣaymarī (351/962–436/1044) is the earliest extant example of the genre. Of the earlier works, Ibn al-Ṣalt's was one of the most influential and an apprecia-

Aḥmad b. al-Ṣalt: Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden, 1967), 1:410, 438; Akram Diyāʾ al-ʿUmārī, *Mawārid al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī fi Taʾriḥ Baghdad* (Damascus, 1395/1975), 181–82.

Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Salāma al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/933), *Manāqib Abi Ḥanīfa*: Ṣaymarī, *Akhbār Abi Ḥanīfa wa-aṣḥābihi* (Hyderabad, 1394/1974), 25, 56; Ibn Quṭlūbughā, *Tāj al-tarājim*, ed. Muḥammad Khayr Ramaḍān Yūsuf (Damascus, 1413/1992), 101; Sakhāwī, *al-Jawāhir wa-l-durar*, in Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2d ed. (Leiden, 1968, 590); Ṭashkubrīzāda, *Miftāḥ al-saʿāda wa-miṣbāḥ al-siyāda fi mawḍūʿāt al-ʿulūm*, ed. Kāmil Kāmil Bakrī and ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Abu ʿl-Nūr, 3 vols. (Cairo, 1968), 2:276; Ḥājji Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn*, 2:cols. 1836–37; Riyāḍizāda, *Asmāʾ al-kutub*, ed. Muḥammad al-Tūnǰī (Cairo, 1977), 158; Laknawī, *al-Fawāʾid al-bahiya fi tarājim al-Ḥanafiya*, ed. Muḥammad Badr al-Din Abū Firās al-Naʿsānī (Cairo, 1324), 32.

ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Kās al-Nakhaʿī (d. 324/935), *Kitāb al-Khiṣāl*: Sakhāwī, *al-Jawāhir wa-l-durar*, 590; Ḥājji Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn*, 2:col. 1838 (where the work is erroneously referred to as “*Tuḥfat al-sulṭān fi manāqib al-Nuʿmān*,” the title of a work by another author, see 1:col. 367, 2:cols. 1895–96); ʿUmārī, *Mawārid*, 183–84.

Abu ʿl-Abbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Saʿīd b. ʿUqda al-Kūfi (d. 333/944), *Akhbār Abi Ḥanīfa wa-musnaduhū*: Najāshī, *Rijāl al-Najāshī*, ed. Muḥammad Jawād al-Nāʾini, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1408/1988), 1:240; Ṭūsi, *Fihrist al-Ṭūsi*, Muḥammad Ṣādiq ʿAlī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm (Najaf, 1380/1960), 57; Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Maʿālim al-ʿulamāʾ fi fihrist kutub al-Shiʿa wa-asmāʾ al-muṣannifin minhum qadīman wa-ḥadīthan*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣādiq ʿAlī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, 2d ed. (Beirut, n.d.), 17; Quḥpāʾi, *Majmaʿ al-rijāl*, ed. al-ʿAllāma al-Iṣfahānī, 7 vols. (Isfahan, 1384–87), 1:145–46; Baḥrānī, *Luʿluʾat al-baḥrayn fi ʿl-ijāzāt li-qurrat al-ʿayn*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣādiq ʿAlī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm (Najaf, n.d.), 433; Ismāʿīl Bāshā, *Kitāb Idāḥ al-maknūn fi ʿl-dhayl ʿalā Kashf al-zunūn*, ed. Şerfettin Yalıtıkaya and Kilisli Rifat Bilge, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1364/1945–1366/1947), 1:col. 39.

Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Ḥārithī (258/871–340/952), *Kashf al-āthār* (or *al-asrār*) *al-sharifa fi manāqib Abi Ḥanīfa*: Khwārazmī, *Jāmiʿ masānid*, 1:29; Ibn Quṭlūbughā, *Tāj al-tarājim*, 176; Sakhāwī, *al-Jawāhir wa-l-durar*, 590; Ḥājji Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn*, 2:cols. 1485, 1837; Taqī al-Din al-Tamīmī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-saniya fi tarājim al-Ḥanafiya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥilw, 4 vols. to date (Riyadh, 1403/1983–), 4:234; Laknawī, *al-Fawāʾid al-bahiya*, 105.

⁸ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾriḥ*, 13:416 (446).

⁹ Ibn ʿAdī, *al-Kāmil fi ḍuʿafāʾ al-rijāl*, 8 vols. (Beirut, 1404/1984), 7:2479. Khwārazmī lists Ibn ʿAdī as the compiler of one of the fifteen *musnads* he consulted; *Jāmiʿ masānid*, 1:5, 72–73; Ḥājji Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn*, 2:col. 1681.

¹⁰ Yāqūt, *Kitāb Muʿjam al-buldān*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, 6 vols. (Leipzig, 1866–73), 1:616.

¹¹ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Kitāb Majrūḥin min al-muḥaddithin wa-ʿl-ḍuʿafāʾ wa-ʿl-matrūkin*, ed. Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm Zāyid, 3 vols. (Mecca, n.d.), 3:63.

¹² *Zakāriyāʾ b. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥārith al-Nisābūrī* (d. 298/910): Abu ʿl-Muʿayyad al-Muwaffaq b. Aḥmad al-Makkī al-Khwārazmī, *Manāqib al-imām al-aʿẓam* (Hyderabad, 1321), 1:53; Ḥājji Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn*, 2:col. 1839. It appears that Ismāʿīl Bāshā—or Qārī, whom he may be relying on—is confounding Zakāriyāʾ b. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥārith al-Nisābūrī with Zakāriyāʾ b. Yaḥyā b. Iyās al-Sijzī (d. 289/901), the famous “Khayyāt al-Sunna,” when he refers to a biography of Abū Ḥanīfa belonging to “Zakāriyāʾ b. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥārith al-Sijzī al-Nisābūrī” in *Hadiyat al-ʿarifin: asmaʾ al-muʿallifin wa-āthār al-muṣannifin*, ed. Kilisli Rifat Bilge and İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1951–55), 1:col. 373.

ble number of reports ascribed to him have reached us, in the form of quotations in later works.

The terms *faḏā'il* and *manāqib* are applied to Ibn al-Ṣalt's work and are substantially synonymous in this case. Both refer to depictions of character traits and deeds, always of a praiseworthy nature. All of the Nu^cmānite reports we have from Ibn al-Ṣalt bear out this categorization and in them we find the imām's piety, probity and gravity portrayed. To judge by these surviving fragments, one of the principal themes of Ibn al-Ṣalt's work was that Abū Ḥanīfa was a devoted scholar of ḥadīth. He has Abū Ḥanīfa say:

When a *ḥadīth* related by reliable transmitters comes from the Prophet, we adopt it. When it comes from his Companions, we do not deviate from their words. When it comes from the Followers, I vie with them.¹³

This, oddly enough, is the procedure advocated by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, the hero of the adherents of ḥadīth. The only difference is in the last element concerning the Followers. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal insisted on submission to their views when the Qur^ʿān, the Prophet and his Companions had nothing to say on a particular legal or theological issue.¹⁴ This procedure illustrates the belief, widely held by Sunnites, that the first two generations of Muslims possessed a special kind of authority in doctrinal matters by virtue of their proximity to the Prophet. The behavior and attitudes of the Companions, those who knew the Prophet, were held to be in conformity with his will even in instances where precise documentation was lacking. The Followers, the students and associates of the Companions, possessed this innate sensibility in a more attenuated form, commensurate with the greater distance between them and the Prophet. Their views were to be respected in the cases where more authoritative guidance was lacking. Although some later historians would continue to delineate the boundaries of the succeeding generations, it appears that this special authority had largely dissipated with the passing of the Followers.

What kind of presumption could lead Abū Ḥanīfa to question the views of the Followers? The answer, according to Ibn al-Ṣalt, is quite simple: Abū Ḥanīfa was himself a Follower. In a touching tale Ibn al-Ṣalt tells how the sixteen-year-old Abū Ḥanīfa, while performing the pilgrimage with his father, came upon the elderly ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥārith b. Jaz^ʿ. Upon Abū Ḥanīfa's

approach, the crowd surrounding the Companion parted and the kindly old man taught the young imām a ḥadīth, thereby conferring on him the prestigious status of Follower. Ibn al-Ṣalt also claims that the young Abū Ḥanīfa heard a ḥadīth from the Companion Anas b. Mālik.¹⁵ Probably no other element of Nu^cmānite hagiography provoked the adherents of ḥadīth as much as the claim that he was a Follower. Dāraquṭnī, when asked by Ḥamza b. Yūsuf al-Sahmī—the author of the famous *Ta^ʿrikk Jurjān*—whether Abū Ḥanīfa had studied with Anas b. Mālik, replied: “No, and he never saw him. Abū Ḥanīfa had no connection to any of the Companions.”¹⁶ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī concedes that Abū Ḥanīfa *saw* Anas, but does not acknowledge that he actually heard ḥadīth from any of the Companions.¹⁷ In addition to depicting Abū Ḥanīfa as a scholar of ḥadīth—indeed a superior one by virtue of his attaining the exalted status of Follower—Ibn al-Ṣalt propagated, if he did not invent, the fall-back argument to account for the minor role ḥadīth seem to play in the doctrines of the imām: Abū Ḥanīfa was a master scholar of ḥadīth, particularly well versed in the study of the abrogating and abrogated ḥadīth. He could not bring himself to use dubious ḥadīth and his standards were so exacting that few could meet them.¹⁸ Presumably this argument was for use against those who were not persuaded by the *musnads*.

IBN AL-ṢALT AND THE ACCOUNTS OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Who was Ibn al-Ṣalt? It is difficult to say, for the sources provide a richer account of his *Nachleben* than his actual life. The biographical information about Abū 'l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Ṣalt al-Ḥimmānī is scanty and can be quickly rehearsed. By his own account he was a nephew of Jubāra b. al-Mughallis, an undistinguished Kūfan scholar of doubtful reliability who died in 241/855 at, it is said, the age of nearly one hundred.¹⁹ Ibn al-Ṣalt is described as an inhabitant of

¹⁵ Ṣaymarī, *Akhbār Abi Ḥanīfa*, 4–5.

¹⁶ *Su^ʿālāt Ḥamza b. Yūsuf al-Sahmī li-'l-Dāraquṭnī wa-ghayrihi min al-mashāyikh fi 'l-jarḥ wa-'l-ta^ʿdil*, ed. Muwaffaq b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Qādir (Riyadh, 1404/1984), 263; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta^ʿrikk*, 4:208.

¹⁷ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta^ʿrikk*, 13:324.

¹⁸ Ṣaymarī, *Akhbār Abi Ḥanīfa*, 66–67.

¹⁹ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta^ʿrikk*, 4:207. For the little that is known about Abū Muḥammad Jubāra b. al-Mughallis al-Ḥimmānī, see Bukhārī, *al-Ta^ʿrikk al-ṣaghīr*, ed. Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm Zāyid, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1406/1986), 2:345 (where the date of his death is given as 201, in conflict with all the other sources that

¹³ Ṣaymarī, *Akhbār Abi Ḥanīfa*, 10–11.

¹⁴ See, for example, Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiḳī, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1371/1952), 2:15–16.

al-Sharqīya, a quarter of Baghdad on the western bank of the Tigris,²⁰ and the *nisba* “Sharqī” was, apparently, applied to him.²¹ As was customary in his day, Ibn al-Ṣalt travelled to study and teach. A remark from one of his students places him in Egypt at some point in his career,²² and Ibn ʿAsākir maintains that he studied in Damascus.²³ The date of his death is given variously as either Muḥarram 302 (July or August 914) or Shawwāl 308 (February or March 921).

We cannot go much beyond these few facts. One of Ibn al-Ṣalt’s *nisbas*, “Ḥimmānī,” suggests an ancestral link with the city of al-Kūfa, where the Banū Ḥimmān of the tribe of Tamīm had settled and maintained a mosque bearing their name. This surmise is strengthened by the fact that the man he claims as his uncle, Jubāra b. al-Mughallis, was certainly a Kūfan and indeed was the imām of the Ḥimmānite mosque in the city. Al-Kūfa was a center of Ḥanafism and Shīʿism, and Ibn al-Ṣalt’s interest in promoting Ḥanafism is indisputable. Reports bearing his name glorify not just Abū Ḥanīfa, but also other Ḥanafite luminaries. In addition, Ibn al-Ṣalt has a documented connection to Shīʿism. A report in Najāshī’s *Kitāb al-Rijāl* indicates that in 297/910 he taught Abū Ṭālib ʿUbayd Allāh b. Aḥmad al-Anbārī (d. 356/966) what is laconically called “the book” of the imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq. This text Ibn al-Ṣalt claimed to have received from the Zaydite imām al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm (169/785–246/860).²⁴

provide a date); Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-l-taʿdīl*, 1:1:550; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Majrūhin*, 1:221; Dhahabī, *Mizān al-iʿtidāl fi naqd al-rijāl*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1382/1963), 1:387; id., *al-Mughnī fi l-ḍuʿafāʾ*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn ʿItr, 2 vols. (Aleppo, 1391/1971), 1:127; id., *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, ed. Shuʿayb al-Arnaʿūṭ, 25 vols. (Beirut, 1401/1981–1409/1988), 11:150–51; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 12 vols. (Hyderabad, 1325–27), 2:57–59; Qurashī, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍīya fi ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafīya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥilw, 3 vols. (Cairo, 1398/1978–1399/1979), 2:9; Taqī al-Dīn, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-saniya*, 2:274.

²⁰ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾriḫ*, 4:207.

²¹ Samʿānī, *al-Ansāb*, 5 vols. (Beirut, 1408/1988), 3:418; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 3:279; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Lubāb fi tahdhīb al-ansāb*, 3 vols. (Beirut, n.d.), 2:192–93. Although I respectfully defer to the authority of these experts, I have not yet come across an instance, outside of their books, where Ibn al-Ṣalt is actually referred to by the *nisba* “Sharqī.”

²² Ṭabarānī-, *al-Muʿjam al-ṣaghīr*, ed. Kamāl Yūsuf al-Ḥūt (Beirut, 1406/1986), 52.

²³ Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾriḫ madīnat Dimashq*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid et al. (Damascus, 1951–), 7:323.

²⁴ Najāshī, *Rijāl al-Najāshī*, 2:181; Quhpāʿī, *Majmaʿ al-rijāl*, 5:44; Ardabili, *Jamīʿ al-ruwāt wa-izāḥāt al-ishṭihāḥ ʿan al-*

Ordinarily one would feel little anxiety in inferring additional details of a scholar’s career, in particular the names of his teachers, from the *isnāds*, or records of transmission, attached to the material he transmitted. However, in the case of Ibn al-Ṣalt this common procedure—a favorite with the compilers of the early biographical dictionaries—is especially fraught with peril since he is repeatedly accused of ascribing material to people he never met. Indeed, it was the impression that he was a liar that struck most forcefully some of those who encountered him. We are fortunate that three outstanding scholars of the fourth/tenth century met Ibn al-Ṣalt. It was in 297/909 that the twenty-year-old Ibn ʿAdī attended a class of Ibn al-Ṣalt. He provides this account of him in his famous book on unreliable ḥadīth transmitters, *al-Kāmil fi ḍuʿafāʾ al-rijāl*:

Abu ʿl-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Ṣalt used to live in al-Sharqīya in Baghdad. In 297 I saw him teaching *ḥadīth* from Thābit al-Zāhid, ʿAbd al-Ṣamad b. al-Nuʿmān and other early shaykhs, people who had died long before he was born. I never saw a more shameless liar than he. He used to stop at the book dealers (*aṣḥāb al-kutub*) and carry away bundles [of books]. Then he taught their contents, ascribing them to the man whose name was on the book—including those I mentioned, Thābit al-Zāhid, ʿAbd al-Ṣamad b. al-Nuʿmān and their contemporaries—not paying any attention to when that man had died. Perhaps [the man] had died before [Ibn al-Ṣalt] was born. When I saw [Ibn al-Ṣalt] I estimated his age to be around seventy years. I think that Thābit al-Zāhid died a little before or after [2]20 and ʿAbd al-Ṣamad at about the same time. They had died long before [Ibn al-Ṣalt] was born.²⁵

To understand the substance of Ibn ʿAdī’s charge that Ibn al-Ṣalt was the most shameless liar he had ever seen, the

ṭuruq wa-l-isnād, 2d ed., 2 vols. (Beirut, 1403/1983), 2:15; Aghā Buzurg al-Ṭihirānī, *Ṭabaqāt aʿlām al-Shīʿa: al-qarn al-rābiʿ*, ed. ʿAlī Naqī Munzawī (n.p., 1390/1971), 58. Najāshī refers to Ibn al-Ṣalt as “Aḥmad b. al-Mughallis Abu ʿl-ʿAbbās al-Ḥimmānī.” For a discussion of this, see below.

²⁵ Ibn ʿAdī, *Kāmil*, 1:202; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾriḫ*, 5:34; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾriḫ*, 7:325; Dhahabī, *Mizān*, 1:140; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-mizān*, 6 vols. (Hyderabad, 1329–31), 1:270. (I have translated the passage as it appears in *Taʾriḫ madīnat Dimashq* due to some problems in the printed text of *Kāmil*.) The versions of the report in *Taʾriḫ Baghdād* and *Mizān al-iʿtidāl* give Aḥmad b. al-Ṣalt’s age as sixty. See Ibn Ḥajar’s criticisms of Dhahabī in this regard in *Lisān*, 1:271. Through some mishap a garbled version of this report ended up in the entry on Aḥmad b. Ṭāhir b. Ḥarmala in Ibn Ḥibbān’s *Majrūhin*, 1:152.

conventions of the transmission of knowledge in the early Islamic world must be considered. For a scholar to be qualified to teach a book, he had to have been taught the work in some fashion that involved the oral recitation of the text. This was required, if for no other reason, by the nature of the Arabic script, which necessitated that the student hear a text in order to make certain its intended pronunciation and meaning. In writing, the indications for short vowels were almost always omitted and the points which distinguish many of the consonants were also often left unwritten. Ibn ʿAdī accuses Ibn al-Ṣalt of pretending that he had heard certain works directly from their authors, when in reality he had merely read them. To the mind of Ibn ʿAdī, it was Ibn al-Ṣalt’s comparatively youthful appearance that belied his claim of having been the student of Thābit b. Mūsā al-Zāhid, ʿAbd al-Ṣamad b. al-Nuʿmān, and their contemporaries. If Ibn al-Ṣalt’s career had followed a more or less conventional course—that is, if we assume that he was at least fifteen years old when he studied with these individuals—he would have to have been around ninety years old when Ibn ʿAdī met him. Ibn ʿAdī’s assertion that Ibn al-Ṣalt had taken these ḥadīth from written texts, rather than orally from intermediate informants whose names he failed to mention, was perhaps based on his detection of certain misreadings of the Arabic script by Ibn al-Ṣalt.

Like Ibn ʿAdī, Ibn Ḥibbān also encountered Ibn al-Ṣalt, and he reached similar conclusions about him. Again, we find Ibn al-Ṣalt in the dubious company of other unreliable transmitters of ḥadīth, in this case, as described by Ibn Ḥibbān in his *Kitāb al-Majrūḥin*. Ibn Ḥibbān says he was an inhabitant of Baghdad who taught the ḥadīth of “the Iraqis,” i.e., the Ḥanafites. Ibn Ḥibbān relates that once when he was in Baghdad his companions “seduced” him into attending one of the classes of Ibn al-Ṣalt. He brought some ḥadīth with him with the intention of asking Ibn al-Ṣalt to transmit them to him. When he arrived at the class, he found him teaching material that convinced him that he was a liar and he never went back. Like Ibn ʿAdī, Ibn Ḥibbān mentions that he taught ḥadīth from people whom he could never have possibly met, namely Ismāʿil b. Abī Uways, Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām, and Musaddad b. Musarhad al-Asadī, all of whom died shortly after 220. To this he adds the accusation that he forged or falsely ascribed ḥadīth (*yaḍaʿu ʿl-ḥadīth*). Ibn Ḥibbān was led to this conclusion by two ḥadīth (actually two versions of the same ḥadīth) that Ibn al-Ṣalt claimed to have learned from Hannād b. al-Sarī (d. 243/857) and Yūsuf b. Sulaymān b. Naḍla (d. first half of third/ninth cent.).²⁶

²⁶ *Majrūḥin*, 1:153; Dhahabī, *Mizān*, 1:140–41; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 1:270.

Our third account of Ibn al-Ṣalt is from *al-Muʿjam al-ṣaḡhir* (p. 52) of Ṭabarānī (260/873–360/971). This work was Ṭabarānī’s *curriculum vitae*. In it he lists the teachers he had studied under and cites one or two of the ḥadīth of each. Ṭabarānī merely records that he attended a class of Ibn al-Ṣalt in Egypt and supplies one of the ḥadīth he learned there. He offers no judgment on Ibn al-Ṣalt’s reliability as a transmitter of ḥadīth, and this is hardly surprising since to criticize one of his own teachers here would have been alien to the spirit of the genre in which he was operating. While he does appear to have doubts about the authenticity of the ḥadīth he learned from Ibn al-Ṣalt, he seems to suspect one of its earlier transmitters. Another scholar of this generation who speaks about Ibn al-Ṣalt is ʿAbd al-Bāqī b. Qānīʿ (265/879, or 266–351/962), a rare example of a Ḥanafite critic of ḥadīth. His opinion of him—he considered him unreliable—is preserved in later sources. There is nothing to indicate whether or not he met Ibn al-Ṣalt.²⁷

It must be admitted that our three eyewitnesses do little to help us understand Ibn al-Ṣalt. Ibn ʿAdī and Ibn Ḥibbān arrived at the conclusion that he was a liar from the ḥadīth he taught, rather than on the basis of a first-hand analysis of his character. The conventions of ḥadīth criticism did not require the ascription of plausible motives for falsehood and once Ibn ʿAdī and Ibn Ḥibbān had satisfied themselves that he was unreliable, their interest in him was exhausted. We may note that most of the non-Ḥanafite material of Ibn al-Ṣalt that has come down to us is of a markedly homiletic flavor, for instance: “The poor will enter heaven five hundred years before the rich,”²⁸ and “Be indifferent to the world and God will love you.”²⁹ The ḥadīth from Hannād b. al-Sarī and Yūsuf b. Sulaymān b. Naḍla that so outraged Ibn Ḥibbān was: “To refuse a sixth of a dirham of illegitimately obtained monies (*dāniq min ḥarām*) is superior in the eyes of God to making seventy blessed pilgrimages” (or “to one hundred thousand spent in good works”). What Ibn Ḥibbān objected to was not the relatively innocuous sentiment expressed in the ḥadīth, but rather that Ibn al-Ṣalt had taken the text without acknowledgment from the Egyptian Ishāq b. Wahb al-Ṭuhurmūsī (ca. 200/815–259/873), who was responsible for forging it. Ibn al-Ṣalt altered the text and gave it two new *isnāds*. This, he may have hoped, would put the critics off the scent of the spurious origin of the ḥadīth, and it did endow it with some novelty that would make it more

²⁷ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾriḫ*, 4:209; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾriḫ*, 7:326; Dhahabī, *Mizān*, 1:140; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 1:270.

²⁸ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾriḫ*, 5:34.

²⁹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 1:272.

attractive for students.³⁰ All of the commentators on the behavior of the collectors of ḥadīth inveigh against their mania for acquiring strange and rare specimens. By claiming that he had studied directly with certain transmitters of the generation that died around 220, Ibn al-Ṣalt was again catering to the *recherché* tastes of the connoisseurs, who preferred the versions of ḥadīth with the shortest *isnāds*. Ibn al-Ṣalt ensured his *isnāds* were shorter than those taught by his peers by omitting names of the transmitters intervening between himself and the scholars he claimed to have met. In these cases, Ibn al-Ṣalt's sins were of a technical rather than doctrinal character. He probably received no negative comment from the majority of his students, who, one imagines, would have been glad that he taught them material they could find nowhere else. However, sharp-eyed young professionals like Ibn ʿAdī and Ibn Ḥibbān were able to expose his deceptions in their first encounter with him.

LATER ACCOUNTS OF IBN AL-ṢALT

It is interesting to note that none of Ibn al-Ṣalt's contemporaries mention his connection to the biography of Abū Ḥanīfa. This omission of any remark on what was to become the central aspect of later discussions of Ibn al-Ṣalt is particularly surprising in the case of Ibn Ḥibbān, who wrote a (now-lost) work, *Kitāb al-Tanbih ʿala ʿl-tamwīh*, on the biographical reports concerning Abū Ḥanīfa.³¹ One can only suppose that our indignant informants did not tarry long enough in Ibn al-Ṣalt's class to hear his entire repertoire. The view that Ibn al-Ṣalt was

a liar was further propagated by the scholars of succeeding generations. Dāraquṭnī, al-Ḥākim al-Nisābūrī, Ibn Abī ʿl-Fawāris, Barqānī, and Abū Nuʿaym al-ʿIṣfahānī all deem him an unreliable transmitter of ḥadīth.³² Dāraquṭnī is the first to note Ibn al-Ṣalt's involvement with reports about Abū Ḥanīfa. When a student asked his opinion about Mukarram b. Aḥmad's collection (*jamʿ*) of reports on the merits (*faḍāʾil*) of Abū Ḥanīfa, he replied: "[It is] forged. All of it is lies. Aḥmad b. al-Mughallis al-Ḥimmānī—a relative of Jubāra [b. al-Mughallis]—forged it. He used to be in al-Sharqīya."³³

This passage leads us to two important matters, the first of which concerns the form of Ibn al-Ṣalt's work. The conversation between Dāraquṭnī and his student indicates that by this time Ibn al-Ṣalt's reports had been incorporated into a composition of the Baghdadi judge and former pupil of Ibn al-Ṣalt, Mukarram b. Aḥmad (d. 345/956). The principal biographical sources have little to say about Mukarram, although he would appear to have been a prominent figure in his day and his centrality in the Nuʿmānite biographical tradition was noted by Khwārazmī in *Jāmiʿ masānid* (1:6). Unfortunately, we know very little about the original shape of Ibn al-Ṣalt's work. By the time of this first mention of it, its form had already been altered. Reconstructions of lost works, even in the cases where detailed descriptions have come down to us, are bound to be speculative to a degree. The sources tell

³⁰ See Ibn ʿAdī, *Kāmil*, 1:337; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Majrūḥīn*, 1:139. The most complete discussion of this ḥadīth is found in Suyūṭī, *al-Laʿālī al-maṣnūʿa fi ʿl-aḥādīth al-mawḍūʿa*, 2 vols. (Cairo, n.d.), 2:301–2, where it is noted that a certain “al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAbbās al-Marāwiḥī” is said to have also transmitted it from Yaḥyā b. Sulaymān b. al-Naḍla. However, it would be difficult to prove that this individual ever actually existed; see Ibn ʿArrāq, *Kitāb Tanzīh al-sharīʿa ʿan al-akḥbār al-shanīʿa al-mawḍūʿa*, ed. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ʿAbd al-Latīf and ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad al-Ṣiddīq, 2 vols. (Cairo, n.d.), 2:298.

³¹ Ibn Ḥibbān mentions this work in *Majrūḥīn*, 3:64 and provides excerpts of its contents. Perhaps it is identical with the one Yāqūt refers to as *Kitāb ʿIlal manāqib Abī Ḥanīfa wa-mathālibihī* in *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 1:616. Ibn Ḥibbān was anticipated in this subject by Abū Yaḥyā Zakāriyā b. Yaḥyā al-Sājī (220/835–307/920)—the biographer of Shāfiʿī—who included a chapter on Abū Ḥanīfa in his *Kitāb al-ʿIlal*; see Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *al-Intiqāʾ fi faḍāʾil al-thalātha al-aʿimma al-fuqahāʾ Mālik wa-ʿl-Shāfiʿi wa-Abī Ḥanīfa* (Cairo, 1350), 150.

³² *Abu ʿl-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. ʿUmar al-Dāraquṭnī* (305/918, or 306–385/995): *Kitāb al-Duʿafāʾ wa-ʿl-matrūkin*, in *al-Majmūʿ fi ʿl-duʿafāʾ wa-ʿl-matrūkin*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ʿIzz al-Dīn Shīrwān (Beirut, 1405/1985), 277; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrikh*, 4:209, 5:34, 105; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrikh*, 7:325–26; Abu ʿl-Faraj b. al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-Duʿafāʾ wa-ʿl-matrūkin*, ed. Abu ʿl-Fidāʾ ʿAbd Allāh al-Qāḍī, 3 vols. (Beirut, 1406/1986), 1:86; Dhahabī, *Mizān*, 1:141; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 1:270–72.

Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Bayyīʿ al-Ḥākim al-Nisābūrī (321/933–404/1014): Dhahabī, *Mizān*, 1:141; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 1:270–71.

Abu ʿl-Faṭḥ Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abī ʿl-Fawāris (338/949–412/1022): al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrikh*, 4:209; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrikh*, 7:326; Dhahabī *Mizān*, 1:140; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 1:270.

Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Barqānī (336/948–425/1034): al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrikh*, 4:209; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrikh*, 7:326; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 1:271.

Abū Nuʿaym Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-ʿIṣfahānī (336/948, 330 or 334–430/1038): *Kitāb al-Duʿafāʾ*, ed. Fārūq Ḥammāda (Casa-blanca, 1405/1984), 65; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrikh*, 7:326; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 1:271.

³³ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrikh*, 4:209.

us nothing about the shape of Ibn al-Ṣalt's work, and it is impossible to establish whether Ibn al-Ṣalt ever made a "book" out of his reports. It may be that he merely put the reports into circulation by teaching them to Mukarram and his other students. All of the authors who explicitly state that he wrote a "book" are late and none of them claims actually to have seen it.³⁴

The second thing that strikes us about the report of Dāraquṭnī is that he refers to Ibn al-Ṣalt as "Aḥmad b. al-Mughallis al-Ḥimmānī." Here we get some inkling of how Ḥanafite scholars intended to pass on the reports of Ibn al-Ṣalt even after he had been thoroughly discredited as a transmitter. The problem confronting the Ḥanafites was that the reports of Ibn al-Ṣalt held an irresistible appeal for them, but recognition of his unreliability was so widespread that to transmit the reports under his name was tantamount to admitting that they were false. The Ḥanafites attempted to disguise his connection to the reports. It was not uncommon, according to early accounts, for scholars to mask their reliance on disreputable informants by referring to them in ways which concealed their identity. It is said, for instance, that the great Sufyān al-Thawrī used to refer to unreliable transmitters in his *isnāds* by their *kunya*, rather than the accepted form of their name.³⁵ Ibn Ḥibbān says that Sufyān al-Thawrī referred to the controversial transmitter Muḥammad b. al-Sā'ib al-Kalbī (d. 146/763) simply as "Abu 'l-Naḍr" in order that his students would mistakenly believe that he was transmitting from either Sa'īd b. Abī 'Arūba or Jarīr b. Ḥāzim, more reliable transmitters who shared that

same *kunya*.³⁶ Similarly, we are told that Baqīya b. al-Walīd (d. 197/812) used the *ism* of weak transmitters better known by their *kunya* and used the *kunya* of those known by their *ism*.³⁷

It is fairly certain that the name that Ibn al-Ṣalt went by during his lifetime was "Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Ṣalt," since all three of the scholars who met him and wrote about him call him this. The form "Aḥmad b. al-Mughallis" used by Dāraquṭnī was inspired by Ibn al-Ṣalt's claim of being a nephew of Jubāra b. al-Mughallis. We also find the form "Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Mughallis," which, by inserting a name between Jubāra's father and Ibn al-Ṣalt, neatly straightens out the genealogy. The hybrid form "Aḥmad b. al-Ṣalt b. al-Mughallis" presumably addresses the same genealogical problem but leaves out "Muḥammad" in favor of the more distinctive "al-Ṣalt." Also popular with later biographers of Abū Ḥanīfa who relied on Ibn al-Ṣalt were abridged forms such as "Abu 'l-Abbās," "Aḥmad b. Muḥammad," and even "Aḥmad," which rendered Ibn al-Ṣalt virtually anonymous by their ubiquity. The conventions of Arabic permit a good deal of latitude in name usage and all of these forms of his name are more or less legitimate. However, when we encounter an author ringing all of the changes, as Ṣaymarī does in his *Akhbār Abi Ḥanīfa wa-aṣḥābihi*, we are entitled to think that his intent—and he was well aware of the doubts about Ibn al-Ṣalt's reliability³⁸—was to convey the impression that he was not as heavily indebted to him as he was.

AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ AND IBN AL-ṢALT

None of these elementary evasions was likely to deceive al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (392/1002–463/1071) when he wrote on Ibn al-Ṣalt for his *Ta'rikh Baghdād*. Al-Khaṭīb is the author who undertook the most profound researches on Ibn al-Ṣalt, as preparation, no doubt, for his notorious entry on Abū Ḥanīfa. The famous Shāfi'ite always relished using his hammer-like scholarship to shatter the pretensions of his colleagues from competing law schools. The incensed Ḥanbalite Abu 'l-Faraj b. al-Jawzī (ca. 510/1116–597/1200) responded to al-Khaṭīb's perceived slights against Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal with a work called *al-Sahm al-muṣīb fi 'l-radd 'ala 'l-Khaṭīb*, which

³⁴ The ascription to Ibn al-Ṣalt of the few pages of manuscript entitled *Faṣl fī manāqib Abi Ḥanīfa* in the Egyptian National Library (Ṭal'at, maj. 432, see Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:410, 438) is uncertain. While many of the reports contained in this MS are attributed in other sources to Ibn al-Ṣalt, some are not. Furthermore, only a fraction of the reports elsewhere ascribed to Ibn al-Ṣalt are found in the text. The presence of verses explicitly credited in the text to al-Ustādh al-Adīb Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb b. Aḥmad is very problematic, since he died in 474/1082. If the copyist's intention was to ascribe all of the material to Ibn al-Ṣalt—and not just the first report, an interpretation which is possible—it is likely that the text represents a collation by a later hand of reports ascribed to Ibn al-Ṣalt from other sources with further additions, rather than a recension or abridgment of an original work from Ibn al-Ṣalt.

³⁵ Fasawī, *Kitāb al-Ma'rifā wa-'l-ta'rikh*, ed. Akram Diyā' al-'Umarī, 2d ed., 3 vols. (Beirut, 1401/1981), 3:145–46; al-Ḥākim al-Nisābūrī, *Su'ālāt Mas'ūd b. 'Alī al-Sijzi ma'a as'īlat al-Baghdādiyīn 'an aḥwāl al-ruwāt*, ed. Muwaffaq b. 'Abd Al-lāh b. 'Abd al-Qādir (Beirut, 1408/1988), 88–89.

³⁶ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Majrūhin*, 1:91; 2:262–63.

³⁷ Fasawī, *Kitāb al-Ma'rifā wa-'l-ta'rikh*, 2:424.

³⁸ Ṣaymarī quotes—from Marzūbānī, also a biographer of Abū Ḥanīfa—'Abd al-Bāqī b. Qānī's statement that Ibn al-Ṣalt was unreliable; Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh*, 4:209; Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh*, 7:326.

contained, among other things, the scurrilous story that al-Khaṭīb was expelled from Damascus over a charge of homosexuality.³⁹ Later, the Egyptian Suyūṭī (849/1445–911/1505) loosed his bolt against al-Khaṭīb in *al-Sahm al-muṣīb fī naḥr al-Khaṭīb*.⁴⁰ The Ḥanafites objected, with considerable justification, to al-Khaṭīb's treatment of their imām. In one of the longest entries in the whole of *Taʾriḫ Baghdad* (13:323–423 [323–454]), al-Khaṭīb dredges up and puts on display many of the old reports hostile toward Abū Ḥanīfa. In a disclaimer (13:369 [370]), he does innocently plead that he is merely repeating what others have said, but this has appeased no one. Al-Khaṭīb's attack on Abū Ḥanīfa elicited the somewhat labored rejoinder, *al-Sahm al muṣīb fī kabid al-Khaṭīb*, ascribed to the Ayyubid ruler of Damascus, al-Malik al-Muʿazzam Sharaf al-Din ʿĪsā b. Abī Bakr b. Ayyūb (r. 615/1218–624/1227). This prince had renounced the traditional Shāfiʿism of his dynasty to become a Ḥanafite and was a zealous patron of all things pertaining to his new school. It is possible that the book was actually ghostwritten by Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī (581 or 582/1185–654/1256), a protégé whom the prince had persuaded to convert from Ḥanbalism to Ḥanafism and who happened to be the grandson of the author of the Ḥanbalite polemic against al-Khaṭīb.⁴¹ At all

³⁹ See *al-Sahm al-muṣīb fī kabid al-Khaṭīb* (printed under the title *Kitāb al-Radd ʿalā Abī Bakr al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī*; Cairo, 1351/1932), 177–78. Fedwa Malti-Douglas discusses the treatment of al-Khaṭīb by later biographers in “Controversy and its Effects in the Biographical Tradition of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī,” *Studia Islamica* 46 (1977):115–31.

⁴⁰ Suyūṭī, *Kitāb al-Taḥadduth bi-niʿmat Allāh*, in Elizabeth Sartain, *Jalāl al-Din al-Suyūṭī*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1975), 2:124; Ḥājji Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn*, 2:col. 1010.

⁴¹ The questions of the authorship and title of *Kabid* have been unnecessarily confused by erroneous speculation. The notion of a monarch as an author raises suspicions in many minds. In his *Tāj al-tarājim* (p. 226), Ibn Quṭlūbughā says that some people asserted the work was written by a certain “Abu ʿl-Muẓaffar,” and the modern editor suggests in a footnote that Hannād b. Ibrāhīm al-Nasafī (384/994–465/1072) is the “Abu ʿl-Muẓaffar” meant here. This can be rejected on chronological grounds since *Kabid* was written in 621 (see *Kabid*, 115). Rūdānī (d. 1094/1683) also knows the author of the work as an “Abu ʿl-Muẓaffar,” although he guesses that this is a reference to the prince's brother Mūsā, i.e., al-Malik al-Ashraf; *Ṣilat al-khalaf bi-mawṣūl al-salaf*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥijji (Beirut, 1408/1988), 268. Al-Ashraf—who was actually “Muẓaffar al-Din,” not “Abu ʿl-Muẓaffar”—is a singularly improbable choice since he was responsible for the reinstatement of Shāfiʿism in Damascus after the reigns of al-Malik al-Muʿazzam and his son, and thus cannot be considered

events, Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī did write under his own name a *Kitāb al-Intiṣār li-imām aʿimmat al-amṣār*, which covered some of the same ground.⁴² The dispute over al-Khaṭīb's representation of Abū Ḥanīfa has extended into the present century. The publication in 1931 in Cairo of the thirteenth volume of *Taʾriḫ Baghdad*, where the offensive entry is found, caused a considerable amount of controversy.⁴³

Al-Khaṭīb says that Ibn al-Ṣalt forged reports and falsely ascribed them to earlier authorities. After providing a list of those Ibn al-Ṣalt claimed to have studied with, he writes: *yaḥkī ayḍan ʿan Bishr ibni ʿl-Ḥārith wa-Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn wa-ʿAlī ibni ʿl-Madīni akhbāran jamaʿahā baʿda an ṣannafahā fī manāqib Abī Ḥanīfa*.⁴⁴ The translation is problematic: “He also relates from Bishr b. al-Ḥārith, Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn and ʿAlī b. al-Madīni some reports about the virtues of Abū Ḥanīfa which he collected after he had arranged them.” It is not entirely clear what al-Khaṭīb means when he says that Ibn al-Ṣalt first “arranged” the reports and then “collected” them. This would seem to make the chronology run backwards. The replacement of *ṣannafahā* with *ṣanaʿahā* or *waḍaʿahā*, as occurs in some versions of the passage,⁴⁵ does afford some help. In this more natural sequence of events, Ibn al-Ṣalt first “fabricated” the reports and afterwards “collected” them. Either way, the gist of the entry in *Taʾriḫ Baghdad* is that Ibn al-Ṣalt made up reports lauding Abū Ḥanīfa and ascribed them to earlier authorities.

a Ḥanafite partisan. “Abu ʿl-Muẓaffar” was the *kunya* of Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī and he, one would think, would have been the most likely candidate for authorship of the work, if the prince did not write it himself. Rūdānī further muddies the waters by confusing the title of the work, attributing *Kabid* to Abu ʿl-Faraj b. al-Jawzī and *Radd* to the prince or his ghostwriter. Ḥājji Khalifa regards *Radd* and *Kabid* as a single work bearing two different titles; *Kashf al-zunūn*, 2:col. 1010. The matter of the titles can be easily settled. The author of *Kabid* (p. 178) twice explicitly refers to Abu ʿl-Faraj b. al-Jawzī's work as “*Radd*.”

⁴² Khwārazmī, *Jāmiʿ masānīd*, 1:40; Sakhāwī, *al-Jawāhir wa-l-durar*, 590. Ḥājji Khalifa asserts that Sibṭ wrote two defenses of Abū Ḥanīfa; *Kashf al-zunūn*, 2:col. 1837.

⁴³ Kawtharī provides some fascinating notes on the history of the publication of al-Khaṭīb's entry on Abū Ḥanīfa in *Taʾnīb al-Khaṭīb ʿalā mā sāqahū fī tarjamat Abī Ḥanīfa min al-abāṭil* (Beirut, 1401/1981), 21–22 and *al-Tarḥīb bi-naqd al-Taʾnīb* (printed with *Taʾnīb*), 298.

⁴⁴ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾriḫ*, 4:207.

⁴⁵ Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾriḫ*, 7:324; Samʿānī, *al-Ansāb*, 3:418; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 1:271.

Al-Khaṭīb devotes a good deal of attention to a particular report from Ibn al-Ṣalt preserved by Ṣaymarī. In it Sufyān b. ʿUyayna (107/725–196/811) declares Abū Ḥanifa to be the foremost scholar of his age: “The [leading] *ʿulamāʾ* are Shaʿbī in his time, Ibn ʿAbbās in his time, Abū Ḥanifa in his time and [Sufyān] al-Thawrī in his time.” Ibn ʿUyayna was a respected forebear of the adherents of ḥadīth and by citing him Ibn al-Ṣalt was engaging in the common polemical practice of spurious reference to the authorities of one’s opponents to buttress one’s own case. Al-Khaṭīb was familiar with another version of the report which lacked the reference to Abū Ḥanifa. He describes his version of the report as “well-preserved” (*maḥfūz*) and says about Ibn al-Ṣalt’s: “The mention of Abū Ḥanifa in this relation is an addition from Ḥimmānī [i.e., Ibn al-Ṣalt].” Against those who would maintain that Ibn al-Ṣalt’s version was authentic and his was defective, al-Khaṭīb makes two points. Ibn ʿUyayna was known from other sources to have disapproved of Abū Ḥanifa and as evidence of the truth of this he cites another statement of his: “There was no more harmful birth in the history of Islam than Abū Ḥanifa.” This would seem to leave no room for doubt about Ibn ʿUyayna’s attitude toward the imām. Al-Khaṭīb also brought up Ibn al-Ṣalt’s well-known creativity. Ibn al-Ṣalt, he says, “put additions into what he related and fabricated what he taught.”

Lest anyone be misled into thinking that the various permutations of Ibn al-Ṣalt’s name represented different individuals, al-Khaṭīb went to the trouble of listing Ibn al-Ṣalt under three different names in *Taʾriḫh Baghdād*: “Aḥmad b. al-Ṣalt b. al-Mughallis” (4:207–10, no. 1896), “Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Ṣalt b. al-Mughallis” (5:33–34, no. 2382) and “Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Mughallis” (5:104, no. 2504). More puzzling than these forms of Ibn al-Ṣalt’s name were the references to a transmitter called “Aḥmad b. ʿAṭīya” which al-Khaṭīb came across in studying the material on Abū Ḥanifa. Al-Khaṭīb regards Aḥmad b. ʿAṭīya—usually given as just “Ibn ʿAṭīya,” but sometimes supplemented by the *nisbas* “Kūfī” or “ʿAwfī”—as a dummy transmitter created for the purpose of putting some of the reports of Ibn al-Ṣalt into circulation under a different name. Imaginary transmitters were by no means unheard of, but they usually owed their quasi-reality to a misreading or miswriting of the Arabic script or some other species of unintentional confusion, rather than to deliberate chicanery. For instance, the negligence of a copyist created “Sumayṭ b. ʿAjlān,” whom Bukhārī supposed to be separate from the real transmitter Shumayṭ b. ʿAjlān. Another slip of the pen provided “Sumayṭ” with a son named “ʿAbd Allāh,” who corresponded to ʿUbayd Allāh, the actual son of Shu-

mayṭ.⁴⁶ The custom of referring to the same person by different parts of his name also caused some confusion. Ibn ʿUqda determined that Bukhārī had split certain Syrian transmitters into two because of this. When asked to compare Bukhārī with his chief rival Muslim, he said:

Sometimes Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl [al-Bukhārī] erred with regard to the Syrians, because he took their books and looked in them [only cursorily]. Occasionally he mentions one of [the Syrian transmitters] by his *kunya* and he mentions him again in another place by his *ism*, mistakenly believing that [the two parts of his name refer to] two [different people].⁴⁷

Ibn ʿUqda believed Muslim had avoided this error because he had been better acquainted with the Syrian material. For scholars of ḥadīth, rectifying this kind of fault was one of the most challenging aspects of their discipline. *Jamʿ* was the term they applied to the erroneous compression of two or more individuals with similar names into a single transmitter; *tafriq* was its opposite, the division of a single transmitter into two or more. Al-Khaṭīb’s operose *Kitāb Mūdiḥ awḥām al-jamʿ wa-l-tafriq* amply testifies to his virtuosity in ferreting out and correcting these misapprehensions.

There is, in fact, no evidence that Ibn ʿAṭīya was a real person; his name seems to be unknown to the major biographical dictionaries as anything other than a posthumous alias of Ibn al-Ṣalt.⁴⁸ It appears that al-Khaṭīb regards the creation of Ibn ʿAṭīya as a deliberate attempt to mislead, although he does not fix the blame for this on any specific individual. The potential advantage of assigning some of Ibn al-Ṣalt’s reports to Ibn ʿAṭīya would be twofold. In addition to letting the reports circulate without the tarnished name of Ibn al-Ṣalt, it created the impression that they were being taught at the same time by more than one scholar, which made it less likely that they had been forged. The cases of a single scholar being turned into two were exposed by examining the ḥadīth transmissions circulating under the two names. Al-Khaṭīb detected Ibn ʿAṭīya’s fictitious existence by comparing the reports he was alleged to have taught with those bearing the various forms of Ibn al-Ṣalt’s name and discovering them to be identical.

⁴⁶ Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Bayān khaṭaʾ Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī fi Taʾriḫhihi*, ed. ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. Yahyā al-Muʿallimī al-Yamānī (Hyderabad, 1370/1961), 44, no. 199 and 57, no. 262.

⁴⁷ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾriḫh*, 13:102.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 1:222, no. 690.

Parallel to the effort to conceal Ibn al-Ṣalt's involvement with the reports about Abū Ḥanīfa was an abortive campaign to rehabilitate Ibn al-Ṣalt's reputation as a scholar. Al-Khaṭīb is the first to mention the report in which Abū Khaythama Zuhayr b. Ḥarb (160/777–234/848) tells his son Aḥmad, the renowned Ibn Abī Khaythama (185/801–279/892): “Son, write down [the ḥadīth] of this shaykh! For the past seventy years, he has been writing down [ḥadīth] with us in classes.”⁴⁹ It was ʿAlī b. al-Muḥassin al-Tanūkhī (365 or 370/981–447/1055), a scion of an illustrious family of Ḥanafite judges, who brought this report to the attention of al-Khaṭīb.

We must not be distracted here by the figure of “seventy years.” If taken literally, the report endows Ibn al-Ṣalt with a longevity that is scarcely human. The “seventy years” is an instance of the rhetorical figure called *tasbiʿ* and simply means an unspecified, long period of time.⁵⁰ Although the report is not very original, it is a plausible and well-conceived forgery.⁵¹ Abū Khaythama and his son were Kūfans, so Ḥanafite tendencies were not unexpected. In fact, the son is the source of a number of laudatory Nuʿmānite reports preserved in later works. Both the father and the son were highly esteemed by the adherents of ḥadīth and al-Khaṭīb was a great admirer of Ibn Abī Khaythama.⁵² Nevertheless, al-Khaṭīb hastily dismisses the report:

I do not regard it as unlikely that this story is forged. There is more than one unknown person in its *isnād* and the case of Ibn al-Ṣalt is too clear for there to be any doubt or obscurity about it.

Al-Khaṭīb attacks the report from the standpoint of the soundness of its transmission and the implausibility of any respectable scholar endorsing Ibn al-Ṣalt's trustworthiness, rather than on the basis of Ibn al-Ṣalt's being at least 140 years old at the time of his death—if he had actually studied with Abū Khaythama for seventy years.

⁴⁹ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾriḫ*, 4:209; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾriḫ*, 7:324–25.

⁵⁰ For the notion of *tasbiʿ*, see Lawrence I. Conrad, “Seven and the *Tasbiʿ*,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 31 (1988): 42–73.

⁵¹ The report itself was modelled after a well-known defense of Muḥammad b. Iṣḥāq in which Sufyān b. ʿUyayna is made to declare that he had studied with the historian for over seventy years, during which time none of the Medinese found fault with him; see my doctoral dissertation, “The Development of Early Muslim *Ḥadīth* Criticism” (Yale University, 1992), 116.

⁵² See *Taʾriḫ*, 4:162–64.

THE SUCCESSORS OF AL-KHAṬĪB

Al-Khaṭīb's treatment is the watershed in the discussion of Ibn al-Ṣalt, for it summarizes most of the relevant earlier material and all later writers rely heavily on it. The mainstream biographical works echo his judgments.⁵³ None of the Ḥanafites who wrote about Ibn al-Ṣalt was entirely able to emerge from the shadow cast by the great Shāfiʿite. The Ḥanafite biographical tradition had a late start and as a consequence the Ḥanafites were often dependent on authors from other schools for information about their own early representatives.⁵⁴ For this reason, we will never know what Ibn al-Ṣalt's Ḥanafite students had to say about him. Khwārazmī, who devotes a good deal of space in *Jāmiʿ masānid* (1:38–69) to refuting al-Khaṭīb's attack on Abū Ḥanīfa, does nothing but copy some of the remarks from *Taʾriḫ Baghdād* when he comments on Ibn al-Ṣalt (2:398). ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Qurashī (696/1297–765/1363) gives Ibn al-Ṣalt a brief entry in his famous Ḥanafite biographical dictionary *al-Jawāhir al-muḍīya* (1:174–75). He tactfully avoids the question of Ibn al-Ṣalt's unreliability. Given Ibn al-Ṣalt's prominent role in the production of the biography of Abū Ḥanīfa, it is somewhat surprising that in only one of the published Ḥanafite biographical dictionaries is any defense of him mounted, and it is rather unconvincing. Taqī al-Dīn al-Tamīmī al-Dārī (d. 1010/1601), in a confused entry in his *al-Ṭabaqāt al-saniya* (1:360–61), admits that Ibn al-Ṣalt exaggerated greatly in his book on Abū Ḥanīfa, but does not feel that al-Khaṭīb was justified in calling him unreliable and accusing him of forging ḥadīth. Al-Khaṭīb, he says, “went overboard in disparaging him, as was his wont with the imāms of the Ḥanafites. Others followed al-Khaṭīb in that.” As an argument, this is feebleness itself. The assertion that al-Khaṭīb was prejudiced against the Ḥanafites is undoubtedly true, but surely Taqī al-Dīn

⁵³ Samʿānī, *al-Ansāb*, 3:418 (s.v. Sharqī); Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾriḫ*, 7:323–27, no. 158; Abu ʿl-Faraj b. al-Jawzī, *Ḍuʿafāʾ*, 1:86, no. 244; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 3:279 (s.v. al-Sharqīya); Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Lubāb*, 2:192–93 (s.v. Sharqī); Dhahabī, *Mizān*, 1:105, no. 410; 1:140–41, no. 555; id., *Mughnī*, 1:42, no. 312; 1:55, no. 426; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 1:188, no. 595; 1:222, no. 690 (s.v. Aḥmad b. ʿAṭīya); 1:269–72, no. 829; 1:312–13, no. 938.

⁵⁴ There were isolated early attempts at recording the history of the school, but it does not appear that these beginnings were followed up until the eighth/fourteenth century when interest in the subject suddenly exploded—much as interest in the biography of Abū Ḥanīfa had centuries earlier—with at least six authors composing Ḥanafite biographical dictionaries.

was being disingenuous, for, having read the material on Ibn al-Ṣalt in *Taʿrīkh Baghdād*, he must have been aware that the grave suspicions about his trustworthiness did not originate with al-Khaṭīb. Even the Ḥanafite ʿAbd al-Bāqī b. Qānī^c had said that he could not be depended upon.

CONCLUSION

After reading the accounts in the biographical dictionaries, one cannot but conclude that, when the dust had settled, the Ḥanafites had lost the battle over Ibn al-Ṣalt. Their attempt to improve his reputation fizzled. The report, ascribed to Abū Khaythama, praising Ibn al-Ṣalt was inspired, but by itself could not stand up against the judgment of every other scholar of note. The Ḥanafite efforts to loosen the bonds between Ibn al-Ṣalt and the material he had taught—either by referring obscurely to him or by assigning some of his material to the fictitious “Ibn ʿAṭīya”—were equally ineffectual, for their opponents rapidly detected and exposed them. The great al-Khaṭīb had rebuffed the Ḥanafites at every turn and had reason to expect that he had quashed Ibn al-Ṣalt’s rehabilitation of Abū Ḥanīfa once and for all. Ibn al-Ṣalt himself seems to have become an embarrassment and one senses that some Ḥanafite biographers felt that his existence was best decently hushed up. Ibn Quṭlūbughā (802/1399–879/1474) omits any mention of Ibn al-Ṣalt in his *Tāj al-tarājīm*. Later, Ṭāshkubrīzāda (901/1495–968/1561) in *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahāʿ*³ (ed. al-Ḥajj Aḥmad Nayla [Mosul, 1954]) and Laknawī (1264/1847–1304/1886) in *al-Fawāʿid al-baḥīya* also ignore him. Hardly a meet fate for the author of one of the earliest biographies of Abū Ḥanīfa.

Yet, it is the vitality of Ibn al-Ṣalt’s vision which is most impressive. The controversy over Abū Ḥanīfa endured through most of the classical period, fueled by the rivalry between the schools of law and the continual competition for official preferment. Inspection of the later biographies of Abū Ḥanīfa shows that long after al-Khaṭīb and his colleagues had branded Ibn al-Ṣalt as

unreliable and corralled him with the teeming herds of *ḍuʿafāʾ*², his teachings still formed a core element of the biography of Abū Ḥanīfa. The scale of his achievement seems even more impressive when we consider his competition. Where is Ṭaḥāwī’s biography of Abū Ḥanīfa? Compared to Ibn al-Ṣalt, Ṭaḥāwī was a more accomplished scholar and his reputation was much better, both in Ḥanafite circles and among their rivals. Modern researchers must mourn the nearly complete loss of what must have been a more historical portrait of the imām. Only enough fragments of Ṭaḥāwī’s biography survive to confirm that there actually was such a work and that it was available to later scholars. Ṭaḥāwī’s Abū Ḥanīfa withered and Ibn al-Ṣalt’s thrived. From this, we can infer that the reputation of the transmitter was not the decisive determinant of the success of the work. It seems clear that Ibn al-Ṣalt struck a chord in the Ḥanafite psyche and that the overwhelming appeal of his teachings was proof against the concerted efforts aimed at discrediting them. His perennial influence, if he could have foreseen it, would no doubt have gratified Ibn al-Ṣalt. As for his own fate at the hands of later scholars, it appears that he had some presentiment of it. One of the reports he taught depicts the youthful Abū Ḥanīfa pondering the career paths open to intellectually inclined young men. He considers ḥadīth, poetry, philology, grammar, and Qurʾān recitation, finding fault with each of these before finally settling on his eventual choice, law. When the discipline of ḥadīth popped into his head, Abū Ḥanīfa thought to himself:

If I attain the utmost [competence] in that, I would seek to treat children to it. But if a group assembles around me or comes to me, and I then bring out the unusual reports (*ṭaraʿif*) that I have collected, they would say, “Liar!” and it would disgrace me until the Day of Judgement.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Ṣaymari, *Akhbār Abi Ḥanīfa*, 5.