He is Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī b. Ahmad b. Saʿīd b. Ḥazm b. Ghālib b. Ṣāliḥ b. Khalaf b. Maʿdân b. Sufyān b. Yazīd al-Fārisī al-Andalusi al-Qurṭubī al-Lablī al-Yazīdī. Al-Fārisī and al-Yazīdī indicate descent from a Persian mawlā of Yazīd. The genealogy gives his earliest Muslim ancestor as Yazīd, who had a son named Sufyān, which seems to fit the walaʿ relation very appropriately and neatly. Yazīd (the patron) was possibly, given the son Sufyān, Yazīd al-Khayr b. Abī Sufyān, who was a brother of the first Umayyad caliph Muʿāwiya and died of the plague in 18/639 (leaving the way open for his brother to succeed him as governor in Syria and subsequently, as caliph, to found the Umayyad dynasty). Alternatively, he was a second Yazīd, Muʿāwiya’s son and successor as caliph, who died in 64/683. If the genealogy is not just authentic but also true and complete (and we have both known ancestors close to our man in the fourth/tenth-fifth/eleventh centuries and the eponymous mawlā of the caliph or the caliph’s brother in the first/seventh century, which makes it at least look complete, if not therefore true) then every single generation of his ancestors from Yazīd (the client) down to and including his father Ahmad had a son in this line of descent on average no earlier than when he was 39 years old (for the later Yazīd) or 40 (for the earlier one). It looks improbable.

See al-Dhahabi, Siyar, vol. 18, pp. 184–212 # 99, with references to other sources. Saʿīd of Toledo, Ṭabaqāt al-umam, p. 75, trans. Blachère, Ṣāʿid al-Andalusí, Kitāb Ṭabakāt al-Umam, p. 139 (referring oddly to ʿAbd aš-Sams), a contemporary of Ibn Ḥazm, has the same genealogy, which appears also in a note at the end of an 8th/14th-century copy of an early 6th/12th century copy of Ibn Hazm’s K. al-Iḥkām fi uṣūl al-Aḥkām (see Abdelilah Ljamaï, Ibn Hazm et la polémique islamono-chrétienne dans l’histoire de l’Islam, Leiden 2003, p. 23). Does the early date of Saʿīd (early in relation to the life of Ibn Ḥazm himself) suggest that we should accept this as containing some element of truth? Or merely as showing that the claim to this genealogy goes back to approximately the time of our Ibn Ḥazm?

Al-Dhahabi (Siyar, vol. 18, p. 185) claims that Khalaf entered al-Andalus with ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Dākhil, hence around 756. Given the average ages of his descendants at the birth of their sons suggested above, this, if true, complicates the matter still further for the succeeding period. To put this another way: if Khalaf was, say, 20 in 756, then the average age at procreation is raised by several years still further, to something like 43.

Improbable is not the same as impossible: Molina (“El estudio de familias de ulemas”) shows that more than 40% of his sample were born when their fathers were above the
tells us of his own sexual interests as a teenager, and we should not expect his ancestors to have been all that different. A local Iberian Christian background, as surmised by many, is a reasonable assumption.

If the genealogy is largely invention that need not surprise. Time and place make it likely. If Yazid is invention, though, then the nisba al-Fārisī is invention also, and along with them probably most of the other names of soi-disant ancestors. Al-Qurṭubī and al-Lablī are different, and, along with his own name and that of his father, are the bits of information that we can trust the most here, not least because we actually know them to be true: he had a connection with Cordoba, and a connection also with age of 40, over sixty percent when their fathers were above the age of 35. This suggests the possibility of widespread late fatherhood (not necessarily, it should be noted, fatherhood of first offspring). His figures, and the conclusions that he derives from them, appear to stand in contradiction to what I suggest here. However, his sample is small (53 examples, derived—some, like mine, by dividing up periods for which we have no direct data—from what appears to be the very large entirety of the evidence available for the period from the 2nd/8th century to the 8th/14th century [see pp. 168–169, especially n. 10, for the detail]); as he shows, there is a bell-curve range, going from 22 to 75, for the fathers’ ages at procreation; and the high point of his curve, at ages 36–40—more precisely, at ages 37–39—is lower than the average age in the genealogy of Ibn Ḥazm, which thus represents, at best, a series of “outliers.” His conclusions show, at most, the varying likelihood, or probability, that an individual born somewhere in his six-centuries-long period all over al-Andalus would have a father belonging to a particular age, or age-group. There can be no guarantee that such an age, or age-group, would be maintained, even on average, from generation to generation in a single descent-group over a quarter of a millennium. The material in the present case, by contrast, allows us to establish as a certainty the average age at which every single member of the group in question here (if it represents a true record of an authentic descent) must have had the son listed in the genealogy. although the two sets, and the conclusions derivable from them, appear similar, they are in fact distinct. (Molina’s ages refer to lunar years, mine to solar ones: converting solar to lunar years raises the necessary average age for the ages at procreation of each of Ibn Ḥazm’s Andalusī ancestors still higher, to over 44—to an age-range when only one-third of Molina’s sample had their sons.)

See the Ṭawq. All of Ibn Ḥazm’s children seem to have been born fairly late in his life, to judge from the little that we know of their careers. The only child whose date of birth we know was Abū Usāma Ya’qūb, born in 440/1048–49, when he was 56 (lunar) years old. But the little that we know of all of them places their activity fairly late in the fifth/eleventh century.

Reasonable but not therefore universally acceptable even today: Ijamai, Ibn Ḥazm, pp. 18–29, considers all known versions of the genealogy, including that given by the man himself, and suggests that a man like Ibn Ḥazm would not have lied about his own background. In fact, it is entirely possible for the Persian ancestry to be an invention and for Ibn Ḥazm not to have lied about it: it could have been an invention by someone at a slightly earlier stage in his genealogy, one that our Ibn Ḥazm did not know to be an invention; or he could have been faced with a choice between a vague and unimpressive Spanish ancestry, devoid of detail, and a richly detailed Persian one, linked to Yazid, and, with no way of deciding between them, opted for the latter. Who would have chosen otherwise?