THE KUFAN QURRA’ IN EARLY ISLAM

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SYNOPSIS

The conquest of Iraq served not only to force a new geographical strategy on the Arab military forces but at the same time to change the social and economic life of the Arab conquerors. The enormous wealth, particularly land and property acquired by the conquest during ‘Umar b. al-Khattab’s caliphate were together one of the most important reasons for Arab settlement in the town of Kufa. This also became the vital issue in the study of the qurra’ and from whose ranks the Khawarij belonged. This paper attempts to establish a link between the disputes over some of the occupied territories in the Sawād (Iraq) and the emergence of the qurra’ and the Khawarij respectively. It also attempts to redefine the qurra’ according to the early Arab sources.

Recently M. Hinds (1969) wrote a doctoral thesis entitled “The Early History of Islamic Schism in Iraq” in which he tried to analyse the history of the qurra’. He was greatly influenced by J. Welhăusen (1975: 11–15) in interpreting the qurra’. Both of them define the qurra’ as Qur’an readers. Apart from this, M. Hinds tried to adopt a new approach by lying greater
emphasis on the social differences between tribal leaders and non-tribal leaders; yet he still maintained that the *qurrā*’, to whose ranks the *Khawārij* belonged, were Qur’ān readers. He believed that the *qurrā*’ possessed no tribal standing; therefore they claimed for themselves religious stature or what M. Hinds called “Islamic priority”

Our present article is intended to take a rather different look at the history of the *qurrā*. One of our particular concerns is to try to redefine the *qurrā*’ according to their interests and activities in the Sawād (Iraq). Another concern is to try to establish the link between the economic system, particularly the system of the abandoned land in the Sawād, and the emergence of the *qurrā*’ and the *Khawārij* afterwards.

During the Arab conquest of Iraq in 12 H/633 M a group of people from Madīna called *ahl al-qurā*, i.e. the villagers, were present at the battle of ‘Aqrāb against *ahl al-riddah*, i.e. the apostates. The same narrative in Tabarî (Tarīkh, v.1:1946) reports that there was another group called *ahl al-badiyyah*, i.e. the nomads, who also appeared among the Madinan forces in this campaign. These two groups were arguing among themselves. *Ahl al-qurā* told *ahl al-badiyyah* that they were more skilled at fighting other *ahl al-qurā* (Hanafites in al-Yamamah) than *ahl al-badiyyah* .... On the same occasion, Bālādhurî (Futūh:241,340) reports that a group of people called *al-qurā* were found among the Madinan forces at ‘Aqrāb, and according to this account, many of them were killed in battle.

From these two narratives of Tabarî and Bālādhurî, however, two important points can be noticed. First, the word *qurā*, singular *qaryatun* is contrasted with the word *bawādit*, singular *badiyah*, i.e. villages V desert. Second, is that we distinguish between *qurrā’,* singular *qāri*’ from the root *QR*, meaning “to read” and *qurrā’,* singular *qārin* from the root *QRY*, meaning to dwell in (villages). A third alternative in this context may also be mentioned. According to Ibn Manẓūr (Līsān, v.V: 130) and Fayruzabādī (Basa‘ir, v.IV: 263), *qāri*’ can also means “a pious Muslim”, *mutanassik*, its plural is *qara‘ah* like ‘amīl, plural ‘amalāh. The word *qurā*’ can also be used as singular and its plural *qurā‘un*, to mean pious Muslims, *mutanassikān*. Confusion between *qurrā’,* villagers, and *qara‘ah*, or *qurrā‘un*, pious Muslims, did not occur, since there is no single occasion in the history of the *qurrā’ of this period that the term *qara‘ah* and *Qurrā‘un* are mentioned. But the principal confusion arises most between the terms *qurrā’,* villagers, and *qurrā‘* which has been taken to mean “Qur’ān reciters”, a term which frequently occurs in the sources. This confusion has, unfortunately, led to the misunderstanding of the history of the *qurrā’* and the *Khawārij* respectively.

As far as the connotation of the word *qurrā’* is concerned, there have been two fairly recent studies interpreting the *qurrā’* as referring to villagers rather than Qur’ān reciters. These two studies are made by Shaban and Juynboll. Shaban in his “Islamic History” (1971: 23,51) has introduced the idea, but with minimum details about the subject concerned. Juynboll
in his article “The Qurā’ in Early Islamic History” (1973: 113–129) agrees with Shaban that the qurā’ were not Qur’ān reciters, yet his argument about the qurā’ is limited to the very early development, without giving any clue to understanding the later qurā’ (Kufan qurā’) who afterwards became Khawārij. He tries to discuss the situation of Madina where the Arab and Jewish tribesmen were found in its villages; they are sometimes referred to as al-munāfiqūn, the hypocrites, whom Juynboll considers to be the early qurā’. He assumes that these early qurā’ might be identified with the Kufan qurā’, saying “a city such as Kufa must have had its qaryas (villages) like Madina”, and he adds that “the people who drifted from Madina”, to Kufa were settled in different villages around Kufa”.¹

Without denying the fact that a group of people called qurā’ had already emerged by the time of the Prophet in Madina, it is very hard indeed to believe that the same qurā’ might have appeared again in the same manner and with the same motive in a different area with a different situation like Kufa. We would not expect Kufa to be in the same situation as Madina, divided into city centres and villages, as Juynboll assumes. It was merely a garrison town, where all Arab fighting-men were gathered and organised on tribal basis. No villages had ever been planned around Kufa at that time. This by no means denies the existence of villages in the Sawād. The second point here is that there was no question at all about the hypocrites after the death of the Prophet. Abu Bakr’s short reign (11 H/643 M) was occupied to a large extent with the Ridda War, and his successors, Umar b. Khattab, Uthmān b. ‘Affān, and ‘Ali b. Abi Tālib’s reigns were also occupied with conquests and civil wars respectively. So, the question about the hypocrisy had nothing to do with the emergence of the qurā’ in Iraq.

Notwithstanding, we agree with the fact that the term qurā’ as it occurs in the sources, particularly during the Arab Conquest of Iraq, is the derivation from the root QRY that is “villagers” rather than from the root QR that is “Qur’ān reciters”.

A group of people called qurā’ had already appeared in Islamic History as early as the year 4 of the Hijra in the expedition of Bir Ma‘īna sent by the Prophet from Madina, in which some of them were massacred (Waqqādī, Maghāzi, v.1: 346–352). This expedition has been discussed by historians but no full agreement has been reached.² The difficulty lies in the aim and motive of the expedition; the composition of the participants is also disputed and stated in divergent tradition. Among the earliest authorities only Waqqādī (Maghāzi, v.1: 347) and Ibn Sa’d (Tabaqāt, v.11, pt.1:36,38) have called some of them the qurā’ while Ibn Hishām (Sirāh: 648), Khalifah b. Khayyāt (Tārikh, v.1: 38), and Tabarī (Tārikh, v.1: 1443) refer to them as min khīyār al-muslimin, i.e. from the best Muslims. According to Waqqādī (Maghāzi, v.1: 347, 352–353), the massacred were shabābatun yusammawna al-qurā’; i.e. young men called the qurā’, and all of them were Muhājirūn (Makkans) and Anṣār (Madinans). All these names are also mentioned by Ibn
Hajar (Iṣbah, v.II: 256; v.III: 543), according to which only two of them, 'Amir b. Fuhayra and Nafi' b. Budayl, embraced Islam early: the majority were converted probably after the Hijra (Juynboll 1973: 127). It is however, unlikely that there were as many as sixteen people of Madina in those days who could recite all the Qur'an. According to Busti Mashāhīr: 10,12, 15,20,26) there were only seven of the people of Madina who could recite all or much of the Qur'anic revelation in a way that earned them the title Qur'an reciters. Of these seven Qur'an reciters, none was involved in the expedition of Bi'r Maʿūna. Thousands of other Qur'an reciters are also mentioned in Jazari's Ghayāh al-Nīnayah fi Tabaqāt al-qurrā'; yet none of them is among the qurrā’ listed by Wāqīdī (Maghāzī, v.L: 346–352). It is, however, implausible that the Prophet would have risked the lives of Qur'an reciters together in this dangerous mission “though he realised the riskiness of doing so”, as assumed by Watt (1956: 32).

Shortly, after the expedition of Bi'r Ma'ūna, another expedition of seven men was sent by the Prophet to al-Rajī, and the participants of this expedition were not called qurrā’, though some of them are reported to have received some knowledge of the Qur'an (Wāqīdī, Maghāzī, v.I: 354).

Although it was true that some early Muslims in Madina were Qur'an reciters and participated in the expedition of 'Aqrabā', “it is difficult to accept the idea of thousands of Qur'an readers, organised into separate contingents, all fighting at Siffin a few years later. If they were some latent form of clergy, as some historians see them, one is astonished to see them so numerous, especially at this early stage” (Shaban 1971: 50). Such a large number could not be expected to exist during the period between the year 12 H/633 M ('Aqrabā') and 38 H/659 M (Siffin), during which time the entire Arab population was occupied in wars. So, to interpret the word qurrā’ as referring to Qur'an reciters in this context is very doubtful. Again, in connection with the participants of Bi'r Ma'ūna and 'Aqrabā', neither could they possibly be identified with the Kufan qurrā’. As for those of Bi'r Ma'ūna particularly, the majority of them were Qurayshites, whose base of operation was Madina. This is in contrast with the later qurrā’ of Kufa, whose field of action was Iraq; and none of them was Qurayshite. It would, however, premature to decide the identity of the Kufan qurrā’, whether they were Qur'an reciters or villagers without firstly investigating the people of al-ayyām, i.e. the earliest conquerors of Iraq, to whose ranks the Kufan qurrā’ belonged.

The Arab fighting-men in the earliest campaign of Iraq were – with the exception of Muhājirūn and Ansār – made up of tribesmen of little tribal standing, who had fought against the apostates in the Ridda War, and had been earlier, before the arrival of Khalid b. al-Walīd, in Iraq fighting against the Sasanians. All of them were taken on Khalid’s expeditions. It was to their participation in these expeditions that the term ahl al-ayyām, i.e. the earliest conquerors, was subsequently applied, in distinguishing them from the people of Makka and Madina (Muhājirūn and Ansār) (Tābarī,
The people of al-ayzm mainly belonged to comparatively unimportant Arab clans, or afnā' (splinter groups) of Arab clans. Despite this, they had an equitable share of the gains, and were privileged by being ahl al-ayzm which was of great value for them in the future. They came mainly from Eastern-Arabian clans of Rabī'ī: 6,000 of Shaybān/Bakr b. Wā'il, and 2,000 of other Rabī'ī clans, which represented the core of the Islamic forces in Iraq during the time of 'Umar b. Khattāb (Tabarī, Tārīkh, v.I: 2021, 2221). Some others were from the Arab clans of Ṭayy, Muzayna, Dabba, Kināna, Asad, Dhuḥl, 'īl, Aslam and splinter groups of Tāmūm clans such as al-Ribāb, Sa'd, Hanza and 'Amr. They were actively involved in the campaign of Iraq before the arrival of Sa'd b. Abī Waqṣās (Ṭabari, Tārīkh, v.I: 2183, 2187-8, 2189, 2207, 2221, 2236, 2239); all of them were taken by Sa'd to Qādisiyah. At Qādisiyah, they were joined by their families; 1,000 of their women were from Bajila and 700 from Nakha' who married men of the afnā'; splinter groups, just before and after the battle of Qādisiyahb, (Tabari, Tārīkh, v.I: 2362–2364).

The battle of Qādisiyah took place at the end of 15 H/636 M and the approximate number of its participants was 30,000 of different Arab clans, ridda and non-ridda, including the followers of al-Ash'ath b. Qays al-Kindī and Qays b. al-Makshūh al-Murāḍī (Tabarī, Tārīkh, v.I: 2218-9, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2330). The participation of ridda forces at Qādisiyah had its significance: the Arabs were able to defeat the Sasanians and their empire in Iraq began to decline. All Arab warriors were given their share of the booty gained on the battlefield (Ṭabari, Tārīkh, v.I: 2356; Khalīfa, Tārīkh, v.I: 101). To their participation in this great battle the term ahl-al-Qādisiyah was subsequently applied and due 'aṭā', stipends, were given. It was the first time that ridda and non ridda tribesmen had been placed on an equal footing under the newly acquired term ahl al-Qādisiyah.

It is worth noticing that during the battle of Qādisiyah a group called qurri' appeared again, but with the precise task of reciting the Qur'an. Sayf's account in Ṭabari (Tārīkh, v.I: 2182) refers to these qurri' as Qur'an reciters. According to this, these qurri' were asked to recite some verses of the Qur'an from sûrah al-Anfāl, in order to boost the morale of the Arab fighting-men in this battle. All of them were encouraged to learn the sûrah (wa-kāna al-muslimūm yata'alamūnahā kulluhum). At this point, one is inclined to doubt if the qurri' of Qādisiyah were really Qur'an reciters, as Sayf has emphasised. It is, however, illogical to conclude that all of the Arab fighting-men (30,000) at Qādisiyah were Qur'an reciters. According to Ṭabari cited by Ibn Ishāq (Tārīkh, v.I: 2182), there was only one Qur'an reciter, qārī', named Mu'āḍh of Banu Najjār of Madina emerged in the year 13 H/634 M at al-Qarqas, Iraq, but since then this Mu'āḍh is not mentioned in the sources. Another account in Ṭabari (Tārīkh, v.I: 2749) gives no more than two Qur'an reciters who appeared in Iraq in the year 14 H/635 M.

Having succeeded at Qādisiyah, Sa'd and his Arab forces moved to al-
Mada'in, making their base in Iraq, and living in deserted houses which had been left by Yazdajird, the Sasanian King, and his family and officials after their defeat. By this time, many people of Madina and Makka had returned home with their families (Tabarî, Tarîkh, v.1: 2400, 2451, 2362–3; Balâdhurî, Futûh: 256). The rest of Sa'd's troops were brought to Kufa and only some of them preferred to stay behind.

During the period of settling at al-Mada'in some important campaigns were launched to the east and north, aiming at establishing masâ'îh, garrisons, in those regions. Some of the people of al-'ayyam were recruited for these campaigns. The defeat of the enemy at Hulwan, Jalulâ', Masâ'badhân and Takrit, respectively marked the end of the Sasanian empire in Iraq, and again a vast amount of fertile land was occupied by the Arabs (Balâdhurî, Futûh, v:265–266).

Sa'd and his forces then moved to Kufa to make their new base there. In connection with alh al-'ayyâm, the majority of them had followed Sa'd to Kufa under their own leaders (Tabarî, Tarîkh, v.1: 2222, 2236, 2356). Only a few of them preferred to stay at al-Mada'in, where their houses and property had already been established (Tabarî, Tarîkh, v:1:2471; Balâdhurî, Futûh: 265–266). Those on the new front, Hulwan, Jalulâ', Masâ'badhân and Takrit, were also left to look after these areas. These people were sometimes referred to by Sayf as afnâ' al-nâs, i.e. splinter groups of people (Tabarî, Tarîkh, v.1: 2473). Some of them had their appointment from al-Mada'in and others from Kufa when the Arab base moved to Kufa. The names of their leaders who were involved on these new fronts are mentioned in Tabarî (Tarîkh, v.1:2463, 2474, 2485, 2497). The point to be noted here is that these new fronts have been regarded by our sources as villages like Kufa. The conclusion is inevitable, therefore that those who were involved and in authority over these villages came to be called al-qurrâ', the villagers.

When Iraq was conquered a vast amount of land fell into Arab hands. This area is known as al-Sawad and it stretches from the head of the Persian Gulf to Mawsil in the north and from the borders of the Syrian-Iraq to Hulwan in the east. With regards to these occupied lands, our sources do not tell us exactly how they were organised. Modern historians such as Gibb (1953:42) have pointed out that because the Arab leaders were at that time unfamiliar with the structure of an agricultural economy the Caliph 'Umar decided to leave the administration of these lands in the hands of the former officials who were familiar with it. Gibb's explanation is rather vague, partly because he made no clear distinction between the abandoned land and the rest of the occupied lands in the Sawâd, and partly because he assumed the Sasanian officials, rather than peasants, were still there administrating these lands. The same mistake has been made by Dennett (1950: 13–15). In fact the Sasanian King and many court and government officials fled eastwards in the hope of later regaining their position, but the vast majority of the population and the local nobility remained on the land. Those Sasanian sub-
jects who went over to Islam posed no problems. Considerable numbers of the Sasanian army did accept Islam, joined the Arab armies, were warmly welcomed and given the highest pay. A few of the local nobility, *dahhāqīn*, also accepted Islam and were allowed to keep their property. “Since the Arabs were comparatively few, economic necessity dictated that the conquered population should be free to cultivate the land” (Shaban 1971: 47). From this it is obvious that the essential point at issue regarding the occupied territories in the Sawād was not concerned with the administration of the land as much as with the cultivation of the land. In order to keep these lands under cultivation the Arabs decided to leave the peasants on the land to continue their work, provided that due taxes were paid to the Arabs. The revenue of these taxes was divided among the conquering tribesmen (*Ṭabarî, Tārikh*, v.1: 2467–2468). A fifth of the taxes was not sent to Madina, and any *fāḍl*, surplus, was to be distributed among the conquerors (*Ṭabarî, Tārikh*, v.1: 2418; *Balūdhurî, Futuh*: 384)⁵. The most important part of the conquered land in the Sawād was the abandoned, the land which belonged to those who were killed during the battles, those who fled, all the land of Khusrāw, the Sasanian King, and his family and relatives, and the huge holding of the fire-temple (*Qurashi, Kharāj*: 60–61; *Balūdhurî, Futuh*: 272–273). The revenue of these lands at the time of ‘Umar b. al-Khattāb was 7,000,000 dirham (*Abū Yūsuf, Kharāj*: 63).

There was some disagreement between the conquerors in dealing with these abandoned lands. Some of them had proposed that the land should be divided, considering it the booty of the war as usual, whilst others disagreed with this proposal. For *ahl al-ayyām*, they would have been strongly opposed to the division of the land because they knew that if the land was divided the greater part of it would go to the apostates, *ahl al-riddah*, whose numbers were continually increasing. Some of the *Muhājrūn* and *Ansār* of the Arab army in Iraq had returned to Madina (*Ṭabarî, Tārikh*, v.1: 2180, 2362–3, 2451, 2456, 2596, 2400). The Caliph ‘Umar, at first, is reported to have agreed with the first opinion, namely to distribute the land among the conquerors and to allow them to settle on it as they wished, provided that one-fifth of its revenue was set aside to be sent to Madina. Significantly, this distribution did not come about for several reasons; firstly, the abandoned land was scattered all over the Sawād. If the land were divided, the Arab fighting-men would practically be divided too; the military system would collapse (*Ṭabarî, Tārikh*, v.1: 2371–2372). Secondly, the possibility of unrest among the competitors involved was greater if the land were distributed (*Ibn al-Athīr, Kāmil*, v.II: 522). In addition to this, such a prominent companion as ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib perceived the advantage of the land not being divided, saying “let them (the abandoned lands) to be a permanent source of revenue of the Muslims” (*Qurashi, Kharāj*: 40). Being undivided, the land soon went into collective ownership, and the owners of this land were called by Sayf *ahl al-fay*, i.e. those who were involved in the conquest
of Iraq, including the ridda and non-ridda tribesmen (Ṭabarî, Tārīkh, v.i: 2371, 2372, 2375, 2468). Sayf (Ṭabarî, Tārīkh, v.i: 2414) has also emphasised that ahl al-fay' were ahl al-Madâ‘în, i.e. those who had participated in the conquest of al-Mada‘în, and those who had helped them; some of them were living in towns and some others were in villages; and some of them were in the frontiers defending the territory.

From this, two important facts can be noticed. Firstly, the transference of the abandoned land into collective ownership must have occurred after the conquest of al-Mada‘în (16 H/637 M). Secondly, it is obvious that ahl al-fay' were composed of a wide variety of people, which can be specified into three main groups: ahl al-riddah, Makkans and Madinans, and ahl ayyâm.

For the purpose of collecting and distributing the revenue of the abandoned land, a system of trusteeship had to be established, and the trustees would be chosen from ahl al-fay' (Ṭabarî, Tārīkh, v.i: 2469). The first group of ahl al-fay', that is ahl al-riddah, would be excluded, because the definite policy of the Caliph 'Umar was to exclude them from any responsible positions, either in the military or in the conquered territories (Ṭabarî, Tārīkh, v.i: 2225, 2327, 2457). The second group, that is the people of Makkâ and Madîna (the Muḥājirūn and Ansâr), were not on the land. So, it automatically fell to the third group, that is ahl al-ayyâm, to take up the responsibility as trustees, or what Sayf (Ṭabarî, Tārīkh, v.i: 2469, 2496) calls umanā' or umarā'. They established the abandoned land as an inalienable, mawqûf, for them, and were put in charge of it. This newly acquired gain was very important for them in the future. Determined to keep their distinction and because of their trusteeship responsibilities, they eventually acquired a new nomenclature, the qurrā'. By calling themselves the qurrā' this may have served not only to distinguish them from ahl al-riddah, but also to identify them with their field of action in the villages of the Sawād, where the abandoned land was to be found. To put it differently, whether they were inhabitants of the villages or not, their authority extended over these villages.

For the purpose of financial administration, the stipends were paid to the tribal leaders, who in return made them over to the umanā', i.e. trustees (qurrā'), who duly paid them to those who were entitled to them (Ṭabarî, Tārīkh, v.i: 2495–2496). The 'arafah became a unit for the distribution of 100,000 dirhams in the following ways:— (i) a 'arafah of ahl al-ayyâm, received 100,000 dirhams for 20 men (3,000 each) 20 women (300 each) and it is assumed that the children 340 received (100 each). (ii) a 'arafah of ahl al-Qâdîsîyyah, received 100,000 dirhams for 43 men (2,000 each) 43 women (200 each) and 500 children (100 each). (iii) a 'arafah of rawâdîf, i.e. new-comers to Iraq, received 100,000 dirhams for 60 men (1,500 each) 60 women (100 each) and 40 children (100 each) (Ṭabarî, Tārīkh, v.i: 2495; Hinds 1971: 349)

From the figures, it is obvious that ahl al-ayyâm had received propor-
tionately bigger stipends than any other group. When a diwān, the list of the Arab warriors entitled to stipends, was established in 20 H/641 M, the stipends of ahl al-ayyām were still in the top grades and higher than those of ahl al-Qādisiyyah and rawādīf, which the figures below show:

(i) Muhājirūn and Ansār, received 3,000 – 5,000 dirhams per annum.

(ii) ahl al-ayyām, received 3,000 dirhams per annum.

(iii) The people of Yarmuk and Qādisiyyah, received 2,000 dirhams per annum, and

(iv) rawādīf, i.e. new-comers to Iraq after the battles of Yarmuk and Qādisiyyah, received between 1,500, to 2,000 dirhams per annum according to the time of their arrival (Ṭabarî, Tarikh, v.1: 2412–2413; Mawardî, Ahkām: 199–201)

The people of al-ayyām were not only to have large shares from the abandoned lands, and the surplus of their revenue, but also to have exclusive enjoyment of the authority over the occupied land in the Sawād. Moreover, it is hard indeed to believe that the diwan of 20 H/641 M was put into effect immediately, and it is very clear from Ibn Sa‘d (Tabaqāt, v.III, pt.i: 144, 214), Taḥbīrī (Ṭarīkh, v.1: 2752), and Bilād al-‘Arab (Futūh: 452) that by the time of ‘Umar b. al-Khattāb’s death 23 H/644 M the diwān was still incomplete. According to Hinds (1971: 350–351) “it was only at the tail-end of ‘Umar’s caliphate that the beginning of administrative organisation in Iraq appeared; and by then early-comers (ahl al-ayyām) had enjoyed what amounted to a free run of the area for five years or more”, a period which started from the time of the establishment of the trusteeship of the abandoned land, which took place after the conquest of al-Madā’in 16 H/637 M until the death of the Caliph ‘Umar in 23 H/644 M. In fact, not all original conquerors had enjoyed the authority over the occupied land in the Sawād, particularly that of the abandoned land, as Hinds has seen (1971: 350) but only those of ahl al-ayyām, the trustees, to whom the Caliph ‘Umar entrusted it.

Generally speaking, the situation in the Sawād (Iraq) was dominated by ahl al-ayyām who considered the abandoned land their own property, and were very sensitive to any change of the system. They were called al-qurra’ for the purpose not only of distinguishing themselves from ahl al-riddah, the apostates, but also identifying themselves with villages, and their authority over them. It is no coincidence therefore that the account of Ibn A’tham (Futūh) often refers to them as “the people of the villages”.

The term “qurra’” was not actually used until the time of the Caliph ‘Uthmān (23 H/644 M – 35 H/656 M). The latter interfered with the abandoned land in the Sawād by allowing the Qurayshites and tribal leaders to possess this land, and by then the actual qurra’ began to emerge. Throughout the reign of ‘Uthmān the qurra’ were very unhappy and they felt upset and had a sense of loss of prestige in the Sawād because they refused to hand over
their authority over the abandoned land in the region. This tendency and hard feeling towards the Caliph developed and culminated in the year 35 H/656 M when he was murdered.

When 'Ali b. Abī Talib was recognised as Caliph, all the qurrah' supported him at first but then the majority of these qurrah' turned against him after his acceptance of the arbitration (takhkūm) at Siffin, because they realised that the Caliph was not interested in restoring their privileges lost in the Sawād during the time of the Caliph 'Uthmān. In the hope of regaining their lost ground in the Sawād they became Khawārij, i.e. those who secede from 'Ali's army, al-qurrah' alladhīna sāri Khawārij fima ba'id (Minqārī, Waq'at Siffin: 572; Ṭabarī, Tāriḥk, v.I: 3333), and declared war on both 'Ali and Mu'āwiya. These Khawārij were described by Ṭabarī (Tāriḥk, v.I: 3568) and Baladhurī (Anṣāb, v.I: 394) as lāysā bi qurrah' al-Qurān, wa la fuqahā' fī al-dīn, i.e. those who had no knowledge of the Qur'an and religion. As a result of this opposition 'Ali was murdered by Ibn Muljam, one of the Khawārij, in 40 H/661 M. Kharijite opposition continued throughout the reigns of Mu'āwiya and Ibn al-Zubayr and was finally crushed by the Syrian army during the time of al-Hajjāj.

Footnotes

1 In justifying the existence of the villages around Kufa Juynboll (1973: 123) quotes Baladhurī (Anṣāb, v.V: 47) 'wa-sakkana Abū Musā al-nās', and reads the word "sakkana" as standing for settlement "Abū Musā made them settle again (in villages)".

2 In fact, Juynboll was confused between the two Arabic verbs: sakkana, to quieten or to stabilise, and askana, to settle or to accommodate. As a result of this confusion, he misrepresented the word qurrah' and applied it to the wrong area. See also his "The Position of Qur'an Recitation in Early Islam" (1974: 240–251), where he has discussed the qurrah' as referring to the munāfiqūn.

3 See for example Kister (1965: 337–357), where he has studied and discussed the expedition of Bīr Ma'una.

4 During the time of Abū Bakr none of the ridda tribesmen was to be found in the earliest campaign, ja lam yashhid al-a'yām murtaddun (Ṭabarī, Tāriḥk, v.I: 2021). The Caliph Abū Bakr had put his full trust in non-ridda tribesmen, either Qurayshites or non-Qurayshites, for the campaign against the Sassanids.

5 See for example Ya'qūbī (Tāriḥk, v.II: 151) where he refers to Jalūla' as qarayatu'm in qurrah' al-Sawād, i.e. one of the villages in the Sawād.

6 Also Baladhurī Fuṭūḥ (454), for an example of the distribution of surplus.

7 Only Sayf b. 'Umar's account in Ṭabarī (Tāriḥk, v.I: 2412) that the divān was established in 15 H/636 M, but according to others, such as Baladhurī (Fuṭūḥ: 450), Ya'qūbī (Ṭabarī, v.II: 153), it was established in 20 H/641 M.

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