

THE KUFAN QURRA' IN EARLY ISLAM

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SINOPSIS

Pembukaan negeri Iraq bukan hanya memperlihatkan suatu strategi geografi baru bagi tentera-tentera Arab tapi ia juga mengakibatkan perubahan sosial dan ekonomi hidup mereka. Kekayaan yang begitu banyak dari tanah dan harta benda yang diperolehi dari pembukaan di zaman 'Umar b. al-Khattab adalah antara lain sebab-sebab penetapan orang-orang Arab di kota Kufah. Hal ini juga telah menjadi suatu isu penting bagi kajian asal usul keturunan orang-orang qurrā' dan dari merekalah datangnya puak Khawarij. Kertas ini adalah suatu usaha untuk menghubungkan diantara perbalahan antara orang-orang Arab di sekitar kekayaan yang di takluk di daerah-daerah Sawād (Iraq) dengan kebangkitan orang-orang qurrā' dan kaum Khawarij di zaman Khalifah 'Uthmān dan Khalifah 'Alī. Dalam kertas ini juga penulis akan cuba memberikan definisinya tentang perkataan "qurrā'" dengan berdasarkan sumber-sumber klasik.

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-Khattāb'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 qurrā' and from whose ranks the Khawārij 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 qurrā' and the Khawārij respectively. It also attempts to redefine the qurrā' 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 qurrā'. He was greatly influenced by J. Welhausen (1975: 11-15) in interpreting the qurrā'. Both of them define the qurrā' 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'an 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 Madina called *ahl al-qurā'*, i.e. the villagers, were present at the battle of 'Aqrabā' against *ahl al-riddah*, i.e. the apostates. The same narrative in Tabarī (*Tārīkh*, v.I:1946) reports that there was another group called *ahl al-bādiyah*, 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-bādiyah* that they were more skilled at fighting other *ahl al-qurā'* (Hanafites in al-Yamamah) than *ahl al-bādiyah* On the same occasion, Balādhurī (*Futūh*:241,340) reports that a group of people called *al-qurrā'* were found among the Madinan forces at 'Aqrabā', and according to this account, many of them were killed in battle.

From these two narratives of Tabarī and Balādhurī, however, two important points can be noticed. First, the word *qurā'*, singular *qaryatun* is contrasted with the word *bawādī'*, singular *badiyah*, i.e. villages V desert. Second, is that we distinguish between *qurrā'*, singular *qārī'* 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 Manzūr (*Lisān*, v.V: 130) and Fayrūzabādī (*Basā'ir*, v.IV: 263), *qārī'* can also mean "a pious Muslim", *mutanassik*, its plural is *qara'ah* like *'amil*, plural *'amalah*. The word *qurrā'* can also be used as singular and its plural *qurrā'ūn*, to mean pious Muslims, *mutanassikūn*. Confusion between *qurrā'*, villagers, and *qara'ah*, or *qurrā'ūn*, 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'ūn* are mentioned. But the principal confusion arises most between the terms *qurrā'*, villagers, and *qurrā'* which has been taken to mean "Qur'an 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'an 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 *Qurrā'* in Early Islamic History" (1973: 113–129) agrees with Shaban that the *qurrā'* were not Qur'an reciters, yet his argument about the *qurrā'* is limited to the very early development, without giving any clue to understanding the later *qurrā'* (Kufan *qurrā'*) 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 *qurrā'*. He assumes that these early *qurrā'* might be identified with the Kufan *qurrā'*, 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 *qurrā'* had already emerged by the time of the Prophet in Madina, it is very hard indeed to believe that the same *qurrā'* 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. Khaṭṭāb, 'Uthmān b. 'Affān, and 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib'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 *qurrā'* in Iraq.

Notwithstanding, we agree with the fact that the term *qurrā'* 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'an reciters".

A group of people called *qurrā'* had already appeared in Islamic History as early as the year 4 of the Hijra in the expedition of Bi'r Ma'ūna sent by the Prophet from Madina, in which some of them were massacred (Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, v.I: 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 Wāqidī (*Maghāzī*, v.I: 347) and Ibn Sa'd (*Ṭabaqāt*, v.II, pt.i:36,38) have called some of them the *qurrā'* while Ibn Hishām (*Sīrah*: 648), Khalīfah b. Khayyāt (*Tārīkh*, v.I: 38), and Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh*, v.I: 1443) refer to them as *min khiyār al-muslimūn*, i.e. from the best Muslims. According to Wāqidī (*Maghāzī*, v.I: 347, 352–353), the massacred were *shabābatun yusammawna al-qurrā'*, i.e. young men called the *qurrā'*, and all of them were *Muhājirūn* (Makkans) and *Anṣār* (Madinans). All these names are also mentioned by Ibn

Hajar (*Iṣābah*, v.II: 256; v.III: 543), according to which only two of them, ‘Āmir b.Fuhayra and Nāfi’ 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 *Mashāhūr*: 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 Ma’ūna. Thousands of other Qur’an reciters are also mentioned in Jazari’s *Ghāyah al-Nihāyah fī Tabaqāt al-qurrā’*; yet none of them is among the *qurrā’* listed by Wāqidī (*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 (Wāqidī, *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 (Ṣiffīn), 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, be 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 *Anṣār* – 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 Khālīd 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 *Anṣār*) (Ṭabarī,

Tārīkh, v.I: 2021). The people of *al-ayyām* 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-ayyām* which was of great value for them in the future. They came mainly from Eastern-Arabian clans of Rabī'a: 6,000 of Shaybān/Bakr b. Wā'il, and 2,000 of other Rabī'a clans, which represented the core of the Islamic forces in Iraq during the time of 'Umar b. Khaṭṭāb (Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, v.I: 2021, 2221). Some others were from the Arab clans of Ṭayy, Muzayna, Dabba, Kināna, Asad, Dhuhl, 'Ijl, Aslam and splinter groups of Tamīm clans such as al-Ribāb, Sa'd, Hanzala and 'Amr. They were actively involved in the campaign of Iraq before the arrival of Sa'd b. Abī Waqqās (Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, v.I: 2183, 2187-8, 2189, 2207, 2221, 2236, 2239); all of them were taken by Sa'd to Qādisiyyah. At Qādisiyyah, 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 Qadisiyyah, (Tabari, *Tarikh*, v.I: 2362–2364).

The battle of Qādisiyyah 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-Murādī (Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, v.I: 2218-9, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2330). The participation of *ridda* forces at Qādisiyyah 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 (Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, v.I: 2356; Khalīfa, Tārīkh, v.I: 101). To their participation in this great battle the term *ahl-al-Qādisiyyah* was subsequently applied and due '*atā'*', 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-Qādisiyyah*³.

It is worth noticing that during the battle of Qādisiyyah a group called *qurrā'* appeared again, but with the precise task of reciting the Qur'an. Sayf's account in Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh*, v.I: 2182) refers to these *qurrā'* as Qur'an reciters. According to this, these *qurrā'* were asked to recite some verses of the Qur'an from *sūrah al-Anfāl*, in order to boost the morale of the Arab fighting-men in this battle. All of them were encouraged to learn the *sūrah (wa-kāna al-muslimūm yata'alamūnahā kulluhum)*. At this point, one is inclined to doubt if the *qurrā'* of Qadisiyyah 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 Qadisiyyah were Qur'an reciters. According to Ṭabarī cited by Ibn Ishāq (*Tārīkh*, v.I: 2182), there was only one Qur'an reciter, *qāri'*, named Mu'ādh of Banu Najjār of Madina emerged in the year 13 H/634 M at al-Qarqas, Iraq, but since then this Mu'ādh is not mentioned in the sources. Another account in Ṭabarī (*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 Qādisiyyah, 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 (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, v.I: 2400, 2451, 2362–3; Balādhurī, *Futūh*: 256). The rest of Sa'd 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 *masālih*, garrisons, in those regions. Some of the people of *al-ayyam* were recruited for these campaigns. The defeat of the enemy at Hulwān, Jalulā', Māsābadhān and Takrīt, respectively marked the end of the Sasanian empire in Iraq, and again a vast amount of fertile land was occupied by the Arabs (Baladhurī, *Futūh*, v:265–266).

Sa'd and his forces then moved to Kufa to make their new base there. In connection with *ahl al-ayyām*, the majority of them had followed Sa'd to Kufa under their own leaders (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, v.I: 2222, 2236, 2356). Only a few of them preferred to stay at al-Mada'in, where their houses and property had already been established (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, v.I:2471; Balādhurī, *Futūh*: 265–266). Those on the new front, Hulwān, Jalulā', Māsābadhān and Takrīt, were also left to look after these areas. These people were some times referred to by Sayf as *afnā' al-nās*, i.e. splinter groups of people (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, v.I: 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 Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh*, v.I: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.⁴ The conclusion is inevitable, therefore that those who were involved and in authority over these villages came to be called *al-qurrā'*, 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 Sawād, 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 (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, v.I: 2467–2468). A fifth of the taxes was not sent to Madina, and any *fadl*, surplus, was to be distributed among the conquerors (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, v.I: 2418; Balādhurī, *Futūh*: 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 Khusrau, the Sasanian King, and his family and relatives, and the huge holding of the fire-temple (Qurashī, *Kharāj*: 60–61; Balādhurī, *Futūh*: 272–273). The revenue of these lands at the time of 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭab 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 Muḥājirun and Anṣār of the Arab army in Iraq had returned to Madina (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, v.I: 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 (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, v.I: 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" (Qurashī, *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 (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, v.I: 2371, 2372, 2375, 2468). Sayf (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, v.I: 2414) has also emphasised that *ahl al-fay'* were *ahl al-Madā'in*, i.e. those who had participated in the conquest of al-Mada'in, 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'in (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 ayyām*.

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'* (Ṭabarī, *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 (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, v.I: 2225, 2327, 2457). The second group, that is the people of Makka and Madina (the *Muhājirūn* and *Ansār*), were not on the land. So, it automatically fell to the third group, that is *ahl al-ayyām*, to take up the responsibility as trustees, or what Sayf (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, v.I: 2469, 2496) calls *umanā'* or *umarā'*. They established the abandoned land as an inalienable, *mawqūf*, 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 (*qurra'*), who duly paid them to those who were entitled to them (Ṭabarī, *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-ayyām*, 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-Qādisiyyah*, received 100,000 dirhams for 43 men (2,000 each) 43 women (200 each) and 500 children (100 each). (iii) a *'arafah* of *rawādif*, 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) (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, v.I: 2495; Hinds 1971: 349)

From the figures, it is obvious that *ahl al-ayyām* had received propor-

tionately bigger stipends than any other group. When a *dīwān*, the list of the Arab warriors entitled to stipends, was established in 20 H/641 M,⁶ the stipends of *ahl al-ayyām* were still in the top grades and higher than those of *ahl al-Qādisiyyah* and *rawādif*, 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) *rawādif*, i.e. new-comers to Iraq after the battles of Yarmuk and Qādisiyyah, received between i, 500, to 2,000 dirhams per annum according to the time of their arrival (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, v.I: 2412–2413; Mawardī, *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 (*Ṭabaqāt*, v.III, pt.i: 144, 214), Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh*, v.I: 2752), and Balādhurī (*Futūh*: 452) that by the time of 'Umar b. al-Khattāb's death 23 H/644 M the *dīwān* 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-Mada'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 "*qurrā'*" 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 *qurrā'* began to emerge. Throughout the reign of 'Uthmān the *qurrā'* 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 'Alī b. Abī Tālib was recognised as Caliph, all the *qurrā'* supported him at first but then the majority of these *qurrā'* turned against him after his acceptance of the arbitration (*tahkīm*) at Šiffīn, 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 'Alī's army, *al-qurrā' alladhīna šārū Khawārij fī mā ba'd* (Minqarī, *Waq'at Šiffīn*: 572; Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, v.I: 3333), and declared war on both 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah. These *Khawārij* were described by Tabarī (*Tārīkh*, v.I: 3568) and Balādhurī (*Ansāb*, v.I: 394) as *laysū bi qurrā' al-Qur'ān, 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 'Alī was murdered by Ibn Muljam, one of the *Khawārij*, in 40 H/661 M. Kharijite opposition continued throughout the reigns of Mu'āwiyah 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 Balādhurī (*Ansāb*, v.V: 47) "*wa-sakkana Abū Mūsā al-nās*", and reads the word "*sakkana*" as standing for settlement "Abū Mūsā made them settle again (in villages)". 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 misinterpreted the word *qurrā'* 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 *qurrā'* as referring to the *munāfiqūn*.
- 2 See for example Kister (1965: 337–357), where he has studied and discussed the expedition of Bi'r Ma'una.
- 3 During the time of Abū Bakr none of the *ridda* tribesmen was to be found in the earliest campaign, *fa lam yashhad al-ayyām murtaddūn* (Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, 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 Sasanians.
- 4 See for example Ya'qūbī (*Tārīkh*, v.II: 151) where he refers to Jalūlā' as *qaryatun min qurā' al-Sawād*, i.e. one of the villages in the Sawād.
- 5 Also Balādhurī (*Futūh*: 454), for an example of the distribution of surplus.
- 6 Only Sayf b. 'Umar's account in Tabarī (*Tārīkh*, v.I: 2412) that the *diwān* was established in 15 H/636 M, but according to others, such as Balādhurī (*Futūh*: 450), Ya'qūbī (*Tārīkh*, v.II: 153), it was established in 20 H/641 M.

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