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**Some notes concerning the *qurrā*' issue**

It has been noticed that some scholars in their attempt to discover something new in their researches, deplorably distort the clear facts of history. An example of this is their dealing with the *qurrā*' issue in the early Islamic history. M.A. Shaban, followed by G.H.A. Juynboll, assumes that the term *qurrā*' "should be understood no more than another derivation from the root *qry* and meaning the same as *ahl al-qurā* (those of the villages)"<sup>1</sup>. His reference to Al-Balāḍurī (*Futūḥ*, 88) to confirm his assumption cannot, however, be traced. Basing himself on this assumption, he tries to interpret accordingly the events of the rebellion against 'Uṭmān, as an issue between the *qurrā*' and the unfortunate caliph, and explain accordingly their role played in these and the following events until they became either Šī'a or Ḥawāriġ. Here Shaban is supported by Martin Hinds, who also tries to ascribe the causes of discontent in the later days of 'Uṭmān to self-interest among these *qurrā*'.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this article is not to discuss the issues at stake between 'Uṭmān and his opponents, but to shed more light on the *qurrā*' and their actual role in those events.

The term *qurrā*' (sing. *qāri*') is usually taken to mean reciters or readers of the Qur'ān. Rendering it to mean otherwise is unusual and baseless. Suffice to say with F.M. Donner that historians in general adopt this traditional meaning of the term.<sup>3</sup> The *qurrā*' as Arabic lexicons confirm are

<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. A. Shaban, *Islamic History A.D. 600–750 (A.H. 132)*, Cambridge 1971 and G.H.A. Juynboll, *The qurrā' in Early Islamic History*, "Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient", Vol. XVI, Parts II-III, 1973, pp. 113-129. Another example, though irrelevant here, is found in *Al-Gharaniq al-'Ula—the twilight of the Arabian goddess*, p. 18, in: *A Miscellany of Middle Eastern Articles*, where R. W. J. Austin cites the mistaken impression, that the ritual expression *Allāhu akbar* (الله أكبر) was really "Allāh wa-Kubar" or God and Venus!

<sup>2</sup> Martin Hinds, *Kufan political alignments and their background in the mid-seventh century A.D.*, "International Journal of Middle East Studies" II, 1971, pp. 346-367.

<sup>3</sup> F.M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, Princeton, 1981. E.L. Petersen (in *Alī and Mu'āwiya*) and Dūrī (in *Al-Muqaddimah fī tāriḥ 'aṣr ṣadr al-islām*) adopt this traditional concept of the term.

Qur'ān reciters or readers and the term as such is still in use. It comes from the root قرأ as an active participle قارئ while the nomen relativum (نسبة) to قرية (village) is قروي and not قارئ. Associating أهل القرى with *qurrā'* is misleading. In the Qur'ān we often read of أهل القرى (people of villages)—for example : وما أرسلنا من قبلك (LIX:7) ما أفاء الله على رسوله من أهل القرى : وإلا رجالاتنا من أهل القرى (XII:109).

Here أهل القرى is not قراء (*qurrā'*) and never meant to be that. It could be associated with the *qurrā'* only if it denoted those *qurrā'* who, after the conquests, were in charge of the conquered villages, that is, employed by the authorities (the caliph and his *amṣār* governors) to supervise the administration of the conquered land. But the *qurrā'* involved in such employments were not a group. They were small in number chosen and employed for their credit as pious and conscientious, coming from what Gibb calls “the religious personalities whose activities and decisions were motivated by a complete inward acceptance of Islamic spirit and principles”<sup>4</sup> and eventually they were always controlled by the caliph himself through his enquiries and brought into account annually. We hardly hear of any of these as seeking self-interest when this was in conflict with his own piety and welfare in the Hereafter.

We first hear of the *qurrā'* as a group in the early days of the Prophet at Medina. Aṭ-Ṭabarī relates, “when ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Umm Maktūm finally emigrated to Medina shortly after the battle of Badr, he stayed in *dār al-qurrā'* (the house of the *qurrā'*). This was the house of Maḥramah Ibn Nawfal, who was then one of the two *mu'addins* there”.<sup>5</sup> Al-Buḥārī relates that “the first (Muslim Meccans) to come to Medina (before the Hiğra) were Muṣ'ab Ibn 'Umayr and Ibn Umm Maktūm. They used to teach the Qur'ān to the people” (i.e. the Muslim converts there) (وكانا يقرئان الناس).<sup>6</sup> Muḥammad sent them with the early Medinese converts to preach Islam at Medina and to pave the way for his hiğra. They were both remarkable *qurrā'*, and, particularly Muṣ'ab did this job well and consequently many Medinese accepted Islam. Both men had got a remarkable knowledge of the sunna and what had already been revealed of the Qur'ān at Mecca. Muslims there were then a minority but they were interested in the new religion and in learning the Qur'ān. They considered it as a kind of worship thereby obeying the word of Allāh, Who says: “فاقرأوا ما تيسر منه” “So recite of it that which is easy (for you)” (LXXIII:20) and the advice of His Prophet, who on many

<sup>4</sup> Hamilton A.R.Gibb, *Studies on the Civilisation of Islam*, p.5, London 1962.

<sup>5</sup> Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Annals*, vol.I, p.2347; Al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol.II, p.337. Yet Hinds (op.cit., p.358) says: “the actual term *qurrā'* does not occur in the sources until the year 30/650-1”.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Buḥārī, vol.III, pp.232 ff.; Ibn Ḥağar, *Iṣāba*, vol.IV, p.160.

occasions encouraged reading and learning it تعلموا القرآن فقرأوه وأقرووه وأقرئوه “Learn the Qur’ān, read it and teach it to others”; تصلي الملائكة على القارئ; “Angels pray for the reader and the teachers of the Qur’ān”; من يقرأ; “He who reads the Qur’ān well (will be gathered in the Hereafter) with the pious”.

Learning the Qur’ān and the sunna urged Muslims to act accordingly. This was a means for the aim which was رضى الله which led to their being requited with the Paradise in the Hereafter. The Prophet’s mosque at Medina became a place for those enthusiastic Muslims (youngsters شباب in particular) to gather, pray and teach each other what had lately been revealed to the Prophet. These were called أهل الصفة (the people of the ledge). Circles of Qur’ān-reciting حلقات القرآن were held there and on one occasion the Prophet joined these readers أصحاب القرآن saying: بهذا المجلس أمرت (I am ordered to join such a gathering). He also said: خيركم من تعلم القرآن وعلمه “the best among you is he who learns and teaches the Qur’ān” and: الله به خيرا<sup>7</sup> يفقهه في الدين من يرد.

This certainly urged the more enthusiastic Companions not only to learn the Qur’ān but also to stick to the Prophet to acquire a knowledge of the religion from him personally. Ibn Mas‘ūd and Abū Hurayra are examples of these. Ibn Mas‘ūd once boasted that he “had taken 70 *sūras* directly from the mouth of the Prophet” that is, as soon as they were revealed to him. According to Al-Buḥārī, one of the Companions once said: ما نرى ابن مسعود “We considered Ibn Mas‘ūd and his mother as members of the Prophet’s family because of their sticking to the Prophet”. His collection of the Qur’ān, that is his version of the Qur’ān, differed a little from the standard one called مصحف عثمان (‘Uṭmān’s Qur’ān) and therefore ‘Uṭmān, unfortunately, ordered it together with all other collections to be destroyed, allowing only his version to survive as the standard one. Although ‘Uṭmān’s intention was purely religious: to prevent different readings of the text as sources indicate, this has been interpreted by some scholars as a policy followed by ‘Uṭmān to restrict the influence of the *qurrā’* such as Ibn Mas‘ūd in the amṣār resulting in more dissatisfaction there.

*Ahl aṣ-Ṣuffa* were among these enthusiastic *qurrā’*. *Aṣ-Ṣuffa* (the ledge) was a part of the Prophet’s mosque where these *qurrā’* and possibly new Muslim emigrants where sheltered. Some were poor and received alms

<sup>7</sup> Al-Buḥārī, vol.III, p. 228: أصحاب النبي ﷺ and 298; and the *ḥadīṭ*: القرآن من أربعة: عبد الله بن مسعود وسالم ومعاذ وأبي بن كعب خذوا القرآن مادبة الله (*Buḥalā’*, p.213); *Iṣāba*, vol.IV, p.160; Al-Iṣfahānī, *Hilyat al-awliyā’*, vol.I, p.130, Beirut, 1405/1985.

(صدقات), others like ‘Imrān Ibn al-Ḥuṣayn were not. Their aim was worship and Qur’ān-reciting. The young amongst them used to bring water and firewood to the Prophet’s quarters to gain his delight (رضى) which they regarded would lead to Paradise. They also used to work for the help of other needy Muslims. Sources say<sup>8</sup> that the Prophet allowed a number of them later to join a mission to preach Islam among the powerful tribe of Banū ‘Āmir in Naǧd under the covenant protection, *ǧiwār*, of Abū Bara’, who was known then as the undisputed sayyid of that tribe. However, they were ambushed and massacred at Bi’r Ma‘ūna by Abū Bara’’s nephew, ‘Āmir Ibn aṭ-Ṭufayl. The issue has raised some doubts among some scholars as to the authenticity of the episode; but these doubts are exaggerated. ‘Āmir Ibn aṭ-Ṭufayl broke his uncle’s promise of protection partly because Abū Bara’ was then an old man and ‘Āmir sought to take his place as the leader of the tribe and partly because, through his ambition, ‘Āmir was opposed to the activities and leadership of Muḥammad at Medina. ‘Āmir was proud of himself and his powerful tribe and sources say that he once proposed to Muḥammad to share power with him in the area, which proposal the latter rejected out of hand”.<sup>9</sup> Those who supported ‘Āmir in ambushing the emissaries at Bi’r Ma‘ūna, were tribesmen mainly from Banū Sulaym. None was from Banū ‘Āmir who were loath to break Abū Bara’’s promise. The Sulamis did so to avenge the death of some Sulami tribesmen killed earlier by some Muslims.<sup>10</sup> That the number of the unfortunate emissaries killed at Bi’r Ma‘ūna was rather high—thirty, forty or seventy—should not be an excuse to doubt the whole report. Banū ‘Āmir, to whom these emissaries were sent, was a big tribe stretching along a wide area from Naǧd westward to Aṭ-Ṭā’if in Al-Ḥiǧāz. The mission was regarded as a سرية (expedition) like other Muslim expeditions sent or led by Muḥammad against other non-Muslim tribes around Medina and farther. The number could not even be less than that for security purposes, since this expedition had to cross land dominated by hostile clans like Zi’b, Ri’l, Ḍakwān, ‘Usayya, of Banū Sulaym. An account in Wāqidī’s *Maǧāzī*<sup>11</sup> says the expedition was led by a prominent Anṣārī Companion named al-Munḍir Ibn ‘Amr of Banū Sā’ida and included Anṣārīs and others like ‘Amr Ibn Umayya of Ḍamra (of Banū Kināna) and the Meccan Nāfi‘ Ibn

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 123; *Maǧāzī*, pp.346 ff.; *Sīra*, vol.II, pp.183 ff.; Al-Buḥārī, vol.III, p.27; Al-Bakrī, *Mu’ǧam*, p.1245 (بئر معونة): وكنا نسئهم القراء: (بئر معونة).

<sup>9</sup> Al-Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, vol.IV, p.32: فاجعل لي الأمر بعدك says ‘Āmir Ibn aṭ-Ṭufayl to Muḥammad.

<sup>10</sup> This is indicated in the verse of Anas Ibn ‘Abbās of Sulaym cited in *Sīra* II, p.188. Abū ʿĀr-Rayyān, Anas’s nephew, was one of the Sulamis killed earlier by the Muslims.

<sup>11</sup> *Maǧāzī*, p.353

Budayl of Ḥuzā'a, a prominent Companion known to be among the *qurrā'* (and it looks as if he was teacher at *aṣ-ṣuffa*). The one who survived the Bi'r Ma'ūna massacre was 'Amr Ibn Umayya of Ḍamra. Another account related also by Wāqidi denies the participation of Muslims other than Anṣāris in this expedition, but the poetry said on this occasion by Abd Allāh Ibn Rawaha and Anas Ibn 'Abbās of Banū Sulaym cited in Al-Wāqidi's *Maḡāzī*, refutes this report and confirms the former. In his *Ṣaḡīḥ*<sup>12</sup>, Al-Buḡārī relates on the authority of the Anṣāri Companion, Anas Ibn Mālik, that seventy Anṣāris called *al-qurrā'* were sent by the Prophet at the request of the Sulami clans Ri'l, Ḍakwān, 'Usayya and Banū Liḡyān to help these against an unspecified enemy. The account here while admitting that *qurrā'* were betrayed and massacred at Bi'r Ma'ūna makes no mention of 'Āmir Ibn aṭ-Ṭufayl. It continues to say that the Prophet on hearing the news of the massacre, announced it to his Companions saying: إن أصحابكم قد أصيبوا وأنهم سألوا ربهم فقالوا: ربنا أخبر عنا إخواننا بما رضىنا عنا ورضيت عنك "Your fellow men have been attacked and murdered; and before they died they said: «O Our Lord! Inform our brothers (in faith) that we are pleased with You as You are pleased with us.»" Now, if we accept this account mentioned in Al-Buḡārī's *Ṣaḡīḥ*, authentic as it is known to be, then what is related in *Maḡāzī* and some other sources as an apocryphal revelation is in fact a ḥadīṭ, something said by the Prophet on the occasion, and should be taken as such.

From all accounts on this issue we understand that the *qurrā'* were Qur'ān readers and reciters. If some had later come from certain villages in Arabia as emigrants to Medina as recommended at the time by Muḡammad and the Revelation, it does not mean that the *qurrā'* were أهل القرى (villagers). Nor can we apply the term أهل القرى to the *qurrā'* as a substitute. Certainly there were in pre-Islamic Arabia villages and small towns where sedentary Arab tribes settled in Al-Ḥiḡāz, Naḡd, and Al-Baḡrayn. Many individual or groups of converts deserted, or were driven out as صباة<sup>13</sup> by their non-Muslim tribes whether sedentary or bedouin, and joined the *umma* at Medina. This ḡiḡra was appreciated by the Revelation: ومن يهاجر في سبيل الله يجد في الأرض مراغماً كثيراً وسعة فالذين هاجروا وأخرجوا من ديارهم وأوذوا في سبيلي وقاتلوا وقتلوا لأكفرن عنهم سيئاتهم ولأدخلنهم جنات "So those who fled and were driven from their homes and suffered damage for My cause, and fought and were slain, verily I shall remit their

<sup>12</sup> Al-Buḡārī, vol.III, p.28 seq.; vol.IV, p.174.

<sup>13</sup> الصباة in the dialect of the Hijaz for الصابئون, a nickname given to the first Muslims' (Robert Smith in Wright, *Arabic Grammar*, vol.I, p.208). This has nothing to do with الصابئون often mentioned in the Qur'ān.

evil deeds from them and verily I shall bring them into Gardens” (III:195) and: والذين آمنوا ولم يهاجروا ما لكم من ولايتهم من شيء حتى يهاجروا (VIII:72) Muhammad also appreciated their *hiġra* to consolidate his Umma until Mecca finally surrendered to Islam. He then announced: “لا هجرة بعد الفتح: “No emigration is permitted after the conquest (of Mecca)”. With the conversion of Arabia many *qurrā*’ came from Arabian villages. Sources speak of Ṣa’ṣa’a Ibn Ṣawḥān of ‘Abd al-Qays as a villager. He was like many others a *qārī*’: قارى and a villager قروي. Juynboll<sup>14</sup> in his attempt to confirm the assumption that the *qurrā*’ were villagers (أهل القرى) quotes Ibn A’tam in his report on the group of Kūfan *qurrā*’ deported to Syria at the orders of Caliph ‘Uṭmān that these were من قرى أهل الكوفة (from the villages of the Kūfan people). These words could mean only من قرى أهل الكوفة (from the *qurrā*’ of Al-Kūfa), possibly an error in writing the word *qurrā*’ as قرى in the manuscript. This is confirmed by Ibn A’tam himself when he says in the same sequence: وعندما سأل الخليفة عثمان عنهم عرف أنهم من صلحاء أهل الكوفة من القراء: (And when Caliph ‘Uṭmān enquired about them, he was informed that they were from among the pious inhabitants of Al-Kūfa, from the *qurrā*’, the people of religion and piety). They cannot be من قرى أهل الكوفة and simultaneously من صلحاء أهل الكوفة. Moreover, Al-Kūfa was established in a place distant from the villages of the Sawād to isolate its Muslim Arab inhabitants from the natives of the Sawād. Arabs were not allowed in those days to live in these villages.

Another unfortunate misinterpretation of the text by Juynboll is found in his translation of Al-Balāḍurī’s quotation: وسكن (أبو موسى) الناس as “Abū Musa (Al-Aṣṣārī) made them (i.e. المسيرون those exiled to Syria when they returned to Al-Kūfa) settle again (in Al-Kūfa)”, thus mistaking the verb سكن for the verb أسكن. This is obviously wrong. The verb سكن here must mean “to calm” or “appease”, whereas أسكن is the verb suitable for Juynboll’s wrong translation of the text. He makes this mistake here possibly to confirm his views in his article in the same way as Shaban takes قرى as the root for *qurrā*’.

With the conquest of Mecca in 8 A.H. Arabian tribes began to send delegations to Medina to announce their acceptance of Islam and the supremacy of the Islamic Umma. In a sense this seems to be a transference of their allegiance from pre-Islamic Mecca to Muslim Medina and to link themselves with the powerful, Muḥammad. The Prophet was well aware of this fact which is expressed in a verse in the Qur’ān: قالت الأعراب آمنا قل لم تؤمنوا ولكن قولوا أسلمنا ولما يدخل الإيمان في قلوبكم (XLIX:9).

He therefore attempted to strengthen and deepen their belief through a number of emissaries well-qualified for the job and were قراء محدثون of the

<sup>14</sup> Juynboll, op. cit., pp.117, 123.

type of Ma‘ād Ibn Ġabal. These *qurrā’ muḥaddiṭūn* (readers-traditionists) stayed among the tribesmen teaching them Islam until the *ridḍa* war when they returned or were taken hostages or even killed by the Apostates. Muslim armies manned largely by *qurrā’*, were, however, able to defeat the Apostates and restore the supremacy of Islam in Arabia and the caliph then ordered for expansion outside Arabia. The *qurrā’* played an important part in bringing about victory to the Muslim armies and shortly these were the masters of Syria, Iraq, Iran, Egypt and North Africa. They believed that this was a holy war *الجهاد* which would bring them either a profitable victory or *الشهادة* (martyrdom) and *الجنة* (Paradise). They could easily make this the aim of their followers in battles and this was certainly a factor in bringing about the Muslim victory over the great powers of the time, the Byzantines and the Sassanids in a relatively short time. In these early days, Muslims, whether early-comers to the *amṣār* or *rawādif* (late-comers), were intended to live in Iraq in two camps: Al-Kūfa and Al-Baṣra, newly founded for them to isolate them as a warrior class from the native (Persian) people and this policy continued under the Umayyads for some time. During the conquests, the *qurrā’* formed an important part in each Muslim army. Before the battle each group of fighters had a *qārī’* to read for them verses of the Qur’ān, particularly Sūra VIII, *سورة الأنفال* (The Spoils of War) called also *الجهاد* since a great number of its verses urged these fighters to fight bravely and fearlessly as death in battle against the enemy of Islam meant martyrdom *الله* and rewarded by Allāh with Paradise in the Hereafter. The *qurrā’* themselves were usually marked in the sources for their bravery in battle. They often brought victory to the Muslim army through their valour and belief in victory or martyrdom. So the Revelation promised : *أنفسهم : بأن لهم الجنة يقاتلون في سبيل الله فيقتلون ويقتلون وعدا عليه حقا إن الله اشترى من المؤمنين يقاتل في سبيل الله فيقتل أو يغلب فسوف نؤتيه أجرا عظيما جنات (IX:111) وأموالهم (IV:74) ومن*

Aṭ-Ṭabarī relates<sup>15</sup> that (before the battle) “Sa‘d (Ibn Abī Waqqās) ordered the youth *الغلام* who was sent by ‘Umar (I) and was himself one of the *qurrā’*, to read *Sūrat al-ġihād* (i.e. Sūra VIII) and all Muslims used to learn it. This *sūra* was read in every *كتيبة* (small contingent). Then the hearts of the Muslim (fighters) were stable and so were their eyes; and they felt calm with reading it.” After campaigning for some time (not exceeding six months in the days of ‘Umar I), they returned with the armies to Al-Baṣra or Al-Kūfa, leaving behind small garrisons on the front lines. None was allowed to stay in the Sawād villages unless employed by the authorities. Some Muslims (including the *qurrā’*) were then advantaged by their acquired literacy, abil-

<sup>15</sup> *Annals*, vol.I, pp.2095, 2182, 2294, 2749.

ity to read, write and count. On the eve of Islam a number of *kuttābs* existed in Al-Ḥiǧāz (and possibly other places) to teach the art of reading, writing and counting necessary for the economic elite at Mecca, Aṭ-Ṭā'if and Yaṭrib. The *kuttāb* of Aṭ-Ṭā'if, for example, was mastered by Ġubayr Ibn Ḥayya and there Ziyād Ibn Abī Sufyān and Muǧīra Ibn Šu'ba learnt this art<sup>16</sup>. Those who were so advantaged and were possessed of Islamic priority were often employed by the caliph or his amšār-governors, as tax-collectors, land-surveyors, spoils-dividers and other administrative jobs. At the beginning, some early Companions qualified for such jobs. Bahšal says<sup>17</sup>: “‘Umar (I) employed Ḥuḍayfa Ibn al-Yaman (as tax-collector) on all the land watered by the Tigris; and he sent ‘Uṭmān (b. Ḥunayf) to measure the Sawād (for tax purposes). He also appointed Nu‘mān Ibn Muqarrin on Tustar but the latter resigned and was sent to Nihawand”. All three were early Companions and *qurrā*’, also qualified and were employed for such administrative jobs. Bahšal also says: “وكان العشارون يومئذ القراء مسروق وزيايد بن حدير: ‘The collectors of the tithes then were the *qurrā*’ Masrūq and Ziyād Ibn Ḥuḍayr”. According to Abū Yūsuf, ‘Umar I appointed ‘Ammār Ibn Yasir to lead the Muslims (of Al-Kūfa) in prayer and war (على الصلاة والحرب), and ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Mas‘ūd as a judge and keeper of the treasury (*bayt al-māl*) (على القضاء). (وبيت المال).

The *qurrā*’ made high profile under ‘Umar I, who had much interest especially in the Companion-*qurrā*’ in his employments. Abū Mūsà al-Aš‘arī was his governor of Bašra. Abū Hurayra governed Baḥrayn for him. Šurayḥ of Kinda was his *qāḍī* of Al-Kūfa and Ka‘b Ibn Sūr of Azd his *qāḍī* of Bašra. This latter was killed while trying to mediate between the combatant parties before the battle of the Camel later. ‘Umar also employed Nāfi‘ Ibn al-Ḥāriṭ of Ḥuzā‘a on Mecca and later approved Nāfi‘’s *mawlā* and deputy, ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān Ibn Abzà to govern the people of the holy town, Mecca. All these were *qurrā*’ who were also *faqīhs*, knowers of the teachings of Islam and the sunna. Ibn Ḥaǧar<sup>18</sup> relates that the afore-mentioned ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān Ibn Abzà was a *mawlā*, but he was قارئ لكتاب الله عالم بالفرائض أقرأهم: “a reader of the Qur’ān, knowing the religious duties, the best reader and learner of the Book and knower of Allāh’s *dīn* (among the people of Mecca)”. ‘Umar’s governor of Al-Bašra, Abū Mūsà al-Aš‘arī, a well-known Companion-*qāri*’ was also interested in the

<sup>16</sup> Baladhuri, *Ansāb al-ašraf*, vol.II, (folio) 1216 (ms. Süleymaniye Kutuphanesi Nos. 597, 598, İstanbul). See also Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Ibar*, vol.I, p.49.

<sup>17</sup> *Tārīḥ Wāsiṭ*, pp.38, 42; also Abū Yūsuf, *Ḥarāǧ*, pp.26, 32, 37

<sup>18</sup> *Iṣāba*, vol.II, p. 389; Ibn Ḥaǧar, *As-Sawā‘iq al-muḥriqa*, p.18: يوم القوم أقرؤهم لكتاب الله.



*qurrā'* and took them for company. While in Al-Kūfa Ibn Mas'ūd, another well-known *qāri'*, used to teach the Qur'ān and sunna to the new comers there. When he resigned and left for Medina in the days of 'Uṭmān, the Kūfans bade him farewell saying: فقد علمت جاهلنا وثبت عالمنا وأقرأتنا القرآن "May Allāh requite you well! You have taught the ignorant (among us), supported the learned and taught us the Qur'ān and the *dīn*".<sup>19</sup> When 'Umar I had noticed that the majority of *qurrā'* lived in Iraq and only a minority were in Syria, he was worried and ordered a number of *qurrā'* including the Anṣāris Abū ād-Dardā' and 'Ubāda Ibn as-Samit, to leave Medina for Syria to teach the Qur'ān to the Muslim tribesmen living there. Umar consistently laid stress on the Qur'ān-learning among Muslims and, as recommended by his general Sa'd Ibn Abī Waqqās, a fixed annual stipend, of 2,000 dirhams was given to each *qāri'*: إن سعدا فرض لمن قرأ القرآن ألفين ألفين; for certainly Sa'd had observed their efforts at war. Consequently, and through piety, encouragement by the authorities, or opportunism and self-interest, the *qurrā'* increased in number especially among the *rawādif*; and thus we hear of Tamīmi, Ḥanafī, Bakri and other *qurrā'* tribesmen taking part later in battles and the events which led to the murder of caliph 'Uṭmān. While the majority of 'Umar's *qurrā'* employees continued to reject worldly pleasures and profits, some were not so pious. Šahr Ibn Hawšab al-Aš'arī is an example of these. An account by Ibn Qutayba says that Šahr took for himself illegally some of the collected monies of the public treasury (بيت المال) and hence a poet slashed both him and the *qurrā'* in a verse saying:

لقد باع شهر دينه بخريطة فمن يأمن القراء بعدك يا شهر؟

"Surely, Šahr had exchanged his piety for a bag of money. Now can the *qurrā'* be trusted any more, O! Šahr?"<sup>20</sup>

This, however, could, be an isolated incident ; for the credit of the *qurrā'* continued to be high. Many *qurrā'* were anxious not only to learn the Qur'ān but also to acquire a wide knowledge of the ḥadīṭ and sunna of the Prophet and to act accordingly in daily life.

The *qurrā'* involved in the events of 'Uṭmān's caliphate and later, whose names are recorded in the sources came from different tribes. What united them was a strong adhesion to the Islamic teachings, worship, and belief in what they regarded as ideal in behaviour which would lead to Paradise in the

<sup>19</sup> Al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb*, vol. V, p.36; cf. Al-Iṣfahānī, op. cit; and *Iṣāba*, nos. 4898, 4954.

<sup>20</sup> Ibn Qutayba, *Ma'ārif*, p.448.

Hereafter. These religious personalities were careless about personal as well as tribal interests. Hinds' conclusions that these *qurrā'* lacked status as clan leaders are exaggerated and can easily be refuted. 'Imrān Ibn al-Ḥuṣayn is an example. He was a *qārī'* and the *sayyid* of Banū 'Adī at Al-Baṣra. That a number of *qurrā'* took part in the rising against 'Uṭmān, regarding some of his policies as non-Islamic and "maintaining the cause of Allāh against an unjust caliph" reveals their concern for the future of Islam and the Umma. Many other Muslims shared this anxiety, in the *amṣār* as well as in the Ḥiğāz and Medina in particular, They regarded the rule of Abū Bakr and 'Umar as an ideal pattern, a rule in accordance with the teachings of Islam and its founder and considered any divergence from this pattern of rule as intolerable. 'Uṭmān himself was elected only after he had promised to rule accordingly. Later when he began to rule in what seemed to them as to many others to be a divergence from that pattern of rule, particularly in the last six years of his Caliphate, many Muslims including the *qurrā'* openly protested and criticised this change. They were supported by almost all the religious personalities in Medina whose concern was solely for the welfare of Islam and the Community. They regarded 'Uṭmān's rule as non-Islamic. The Qur'ānic verse says *ومن لم يحكم مما أنزل الله فأولئك هم الفاسقون* (V, 47) which meant for them that when the caliph deviated from the Islamic teachings, the Qur'ān and the sunna, he was no more qualified to head the Umma and should either resign or face rebellion.

Shaban and Hinds ascribe the rising against 'Uṭmān to the latter's policy which collided with the interests of the *qurrā'* in particular, in regards to the *ṣawāfi* land and the stipends (العطاء). These scholars do not take into consideration the piety of these *qurrā'*, their adhesion to the teachings of Islam, and their care for the welfare of the Umma. Contrary to Hinds conclusions in his afore-mentioned article, and taken for granted in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* "Ḳurra", the *qurrā'* who were at first favoured by Sa'id, 'Uṭmān's governor of Al-Kūfa, and later deported to Syria were described in all sources as *من أهل الصلاح*<sup>21</sup>. In fact the *qurrā'* in general were very religious, as the sources confirm, and because "their activities and decisions were motivated by a complete acceptance of the spirit and principles of Islam", they could not tolerate 'Uṭmān's novelties in policy towards the *ṣawāfi* lands, the *bayt al-māl* or his appointments to the *amṣār*. The *ṣawāfi* lands and the monies of the *bayt al-māl* were all Muslims' interest and not solely the *qurrā'*s. 'Uṭmān's policy of favouring his family with appointments to the *amṣār* also worried the religious personalities whether in the *amṣār* or in Al-Ḥiğāz. Sources con-

<sup>21</sup> Ref. to their biographies in *Iṣāba*, nos. 486: الأكرد اللخمي; 1217: جندب; 2795: بن زهير الغامدي; 5833: زرارة النخعي; 7501: عمرو بن زرارة; and cf. *Ansāb*, vol.V, pp.40, 41, 45.

firm that the Anṣār in general and some Meccans were among the religious personalities who protested against these policies considering them as a divergence from those followed by his predecessors and hence, a danger to the future and welfare of Islam, allowing some Meccans and other profiteers to exploit the conquests and the tribesmen who made these conquests and who now backed these protests. Many *qurrā'* were *rawādif* tribesmen who, through their contact with such religious personalities and Companions as Ibn Mas'ūd, Abū Ḍarr, 'Ammār and others, had learnt the spirit and principles of Islam but through their simplicity of thinking could not perceive the change in the society introduced by the conquests and expansion of Islam outside Arabia. They rejected any development or such policies as followed by 'Uṭmān and the younger-generation of governors employed by him, despite the efficiency shown earlier by these governors. Protests against Meccan and other profiteers were heard of even in the days of 'Umar I when a tribesmen, Abū ʾl-Muḥtār, pointed to him in a famous poem the Baṣrans were exploited by these profiteers saying: نوؤب إذا أبوا ونغزو إذا غزوا: فاني لهم وفر وليس لنا وفرهم "We (i.e. the tribesmen) return (from war) as they (i.e. the profiteers) do, and go to war as they do; how can it be that they are so rich and we are not?"<sup>22</sup> 'Umar could bring these profiteers into account and confiscate half their accumulated wealth, but 'Uṭmān had a different character and through his leniency turned a blind eye on profiteers and this added to the indignance of his people.

It seems that protests in Al-Kūfa, Al-Baṣra and Egypt led to a consensus among the Muslims there to send under the cover of pilgrimage delegations to Medina to talk to Caliph 'Uṭmān. They all heard from him and were satisfied. Al-Wāqidi<sup>23</sup> relates that Al-Aṣṭar then retired with the Kūfans followed by Ḡabala Ibn Ḥukaym al-'Abdī and the Baṣrans: (في أهل الكوفة) فاعتزل جبله بن حكيم (في أهل البصرة) فاعتزل الأشتر. They took no part in the murder of the Caliph later. Sources relate that when 'Uṭmān had heard of the arrival of the Egyptians he came to meet them outside the Medinan *ḥaram*. They asked him to open the Qur'ān and read the seventh *sūra* (*Sūrat Yūnus*). He read until he reached verse 59 which says: قل الله أذن لكم أم على الله تفترون؟ (X,59). They stopped him and asked: "Why did you expand the *ḥimā* (the area protected for the *ṣadaqāt* cattle)? Did Allāh order you (in His Book) to do so?" 'Uṭmān's answer was convincing. Sources say that the Egyptians continued to ask him with reference to the Qur'ānic diction and his replies

<sup>22</sup> The poem is cited in Al-Balāḍurī, *Futūḥ*, p.377, Cairo 1959.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Annals*, vol.I, pp.2949, 2963, 2999; *Ansāb*, vol.V, p.59.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, vol.IV, p.41; *Annals*, vol.I, 2964 seq; Ḥalīfa Ibn Ḥayyāt, *Tārīḥ*, p.148, An-Naḡaf 1386/1967.

were accepted by the Egyptians who finally left for home satisfied that 'Uṭmān was not doing wrong especially after he had asked God's forgiveness استغفر ربه and promised to improve his policies.<sup>24</sup> What the tradition here reveals is that nothing was mentioned about the rebels' own interests. They did not present the caliph with special demands apart from their demand that lazy Meccans and Medinese should be deprived of their usual stipends as long as they did not participate in the campaigns of the conquests. Their main demand was that the caliph should abide by the Qur'ān and the sunna. The tradition also shows how learned in the Qur'ān these rebels were and how anxious they were that the caliph should observe the teachings of the Qur'ān. It seems however that the inner circles of the unfortunate caliph, particularly his cousin Marwān Ibn al-Ḥakam and other Umayyads, who considered the caliphate as a *mulk* the rebels wanted to rob them of, were not satisfied with 'Uṭmān's promises and ascribed them to his weakness and a letter, apparently signed by 'Uṭmān, which he later denied writing or signing, was discovered by the Egyptians while on their way home, ordering the governor of Egypt to punish their leaders on their return to Egypt in accordance with the Qur'ānic verse الذين يحاربون الله ورسوله ويسعون في الأرض فساداً أن يقتلوا أو يصلبوا إنما جزاء (V:33). They furiously returned, entered Medina and besieged 'Uṭmān's dar and finally murdered him.<sup>25</sup>

In connection with the murder of 'Uṭmān, three traditions are related by Aṭ-Ṭabarī, Al-Balāḍuri and Ḥalīfa Ibn Ḥayyāṭ but fail to specify unanimously the actual murderer. This left 'Uṭmān's successor, 'Alī, unable to bring into account any specific person or group. It is said that he started an investigation with Muḥammad Ibn Abī Bakr, who denied the charge of murdering 'Uṭmān and was supported by 'Uṭmān's widow, Nā'ila, who said: صدق، ولكنه أدخلهما "Yes. This (i.e. that Muḥammad Ibn Abī Bakr did not murder 'Uṭmān) is true, but he has allowed them (i.e. the two who murdered 'Uṭmān) in (and they killed him)".<sup>26</sup> These two were however not specified and in one tradition they were killed inside 'Uṭmān's house. Consequently 'Alī considered the murder as committed by an unspecified group (قتيل الجماعة) but he promised to re-open the investigation when things would calm down. This position was however, unacceptable to a group of Meccans led by

<sup>25</sup> *Annals*, vol.I, pp.2940, 3175: Marwān Ibn al-Ḥakam addresses the rebels saying: جئتم تريدون أن تنزعوا ملكنا من إن شئتم حكماً والله بيننا وبينكم السيف أيدينا.

<sup>26</sup> *Ansāb*, vol.V, p.71. In a word to Mu'āwiya, 'Alī wrote: وما أعرف قاتلاً بعينه ("I am at present unable to specify 'Uṭmān's murderer") (*Ansāb*, vol.II, p.281, Beirut 1394/1974). Ibn Ḥazm (*Al-Milal wa-āl-ahwā' wa-āl-nihal*, vol.IV, p.163) considers the duty to punish the murderers of 'Uṭmān (القوم من قتلة عثمان) as not obliging to 'Alī due to the large number of those who took part in the event.

Ṭalḥa, Az-Zubayr and the Prophet's widow, 'Ā'īša, as well as to the Umayyad Mu'āwiya and his Syrian supporters. In fact the Syrians did not unanimously support Mu'āwiya against 'Alī, especially at the start of the conflict. Well-known Syrian *qurrā'* like Abd ar-Raḥmān Ibn Ġanm al-Aš'arī did not even question 'Alī's position and his capability as a caliph when Ġarīr Ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Baġalī, 'Alī's envoy, tried to secure for 'Alī the allegiance of the Syrians before Ṣiffīn. Sources say that some notable *qurrā'* tried to prevent bloodshed by stepping to mediate between the two parties first before the battle of the Camel and later before Ṣiffīn. This is in compliance with Allāh's order in the Qur'ān: *فإن تنازعتم في شئ فردوه إلى الله وأن طائفتان من المؤمنين اقتتلوا فأصلحوا بينهما* (IV, 59) and: *فإن تنازعتم في شئ فردوه إلى الله وأن طائفتان من المؤمنين اقتتلوا فأصلحوا بينهما* (XLIX:9). Through their attempted mediation they wanted to implement Allāh's order in this particular dispute. But the call for an immediate punishment of 'Uṭmān's murderers, which in fact was only a pretext to shake 'Alī's position as a caliph, led to the war. At the battle of the Camel where the Meccans were defeated, the majority of the *qurrā'* supported 'Alī while a number of them were reluctant to fight other Muslims and consequently retired the conflict. Later on, the battle of Ṣiffīn where the *qurrā'* also played a remarkable part on the side of 'Alī, ended with arbitration (التحكيم). Again the sources do not unanimously specify the party which forced 'Alī to accept the arbitration. Here Hinds' conclusions might be correct that the Kūfan leaders led by Aš'aṭ and the *qurrā'* who later became Ḥawāriġ, saw in Mu'āwiya's raising of the *masāḥif* المصاحف, a call for peace, a peace in which 'Alī would be recognised as *amīr al-mu'minīn* by both Syrians and Iraqis, while in fact it was a trick to isolate as much of 'Alī's Kūfan following as possible.<sup>27</sup> Aš'aṭ and an important section of 'Alī's *qurrā'*-followers at once halted the fighting and asked 'Alī to follow suit since this was in accordance with the Qur'ānic verse: *فاجنح لها وتوكل على الله فإن جنحوا للسلم*. The trick was discovered from the beginning by 'Alī and some *qurrā'* who supported him like Aštar and shortly after by other Iraqi *qurrā'*; but 'Alī had already accepted the arbitration and could not go back on his word. Dissatisfied with this, these *qurrā'* deserted 'Alī and became Ḥawāriġ (i.e. deserters of 'Alī's camp) while others remained on his side as his Šī'a (i.e. his followers and supporters). Thus the arbitration was an important factor which divided the activist *qurrā'* into Šī'a and Ḥawāriġ.

<sup>27</sup> Hinds, op.cit. Cf. also Duri, op.cit., pp.59ff. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī represents a moderate critical position towards 'Alī's acceptance of the arbitration (التحكيم) when he says commenting on that event: *فلم يزل أمير المؤمنين رحمه الله يتعرفه النصر حتى: فلم تحكموا الحق معك؟ الا تمضي قدما وأنت على الحق؟* (Al-Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, vol.III, p.316).

While some traditions accuse the *qurrā'* of forcing 'Alī to accept arbitration, others deny this allegation. But we are sure that a number of the *qurrā'* took a hostile attitude towards arbitration once they heard Aš'at of Kinda reading the arbitration treaty. They rejected it out of hand saying: لا حكم الا لله ولو كره المشركون ("Sovereignty is Allāh's even though this is detested by the idolators"); and: لا نرضي ولا نحكم الرجال في دين الله: (We do not accept or authorise men to judge in Allāh's *dīn*, i.e. in what He has already ordered in the Qur'ān, viz. Sura XLIX:9). 'Urwa Ibn Udayya, a prominent Tamīmi *qāri'*, addressed Aš'at saying: فأين قتالنا، لا حكم الا لله، يا أشعث؟ (Why do you accept men's judgment in what Allāh has ordered? No judgment is to be observed other than that of Allāh. Then where will our men who have fallen on the battlefield, go? i.e. Are they martyrs or murderers?)<sup>28</sup> The last part of 'Urwa's exclamations is interesting for it sums up the *qurrā'*'s position.

Surely these were not *qurrā'* who took part in murdering Caliph 'Uṭmān. An explanation of this hostile position towards arbitration which led to their deserting 'Alī's camp and thus becoming Ḥawāriġ, lay in their belief that they had rebelled against 'Uṭmān because of his policies considered as a divergence from the pattern followed by his two predecessors. If they accepted arbitration and negotiations with the Syrians, it meant that they accepted Mu'āwiya's claim that 'Uṭmān was an innocent victim and his murderers were to be punished. In their view these were on the right and 'Uṭmān met his right fate. Moreover, they had supported 'Alī and killed other Muslims at the Camel and Šiffīn because they regarded these Muslims as فتنة باغية (oppressive party) who should be fought until they reverted to Allāh's order في أمر الله in accordance with the Qur'ānic verse: فإن بغت إحداهما على الأخرى فقاتلوا التي تبغى حتى تنفيء إلى أمر الله (XLIX:9).

This made the *qurrā'* sure of their position and recognised that their dead were martyrs killed for the cause of Allāh. Hence 'Urwa's exclamation: فأين قتالنا، يا أشعث؟. With their rejection of arbitration these *qurrā'* asked 'Alī to follow suit if he was to receive their support again. When he refused

<sup>28</sup> 'Urwa and other fellow-*qurrā'* saw in the call for arbitration disobedience to Allāh's order (أمر الله) that those who rebelled against 'Alī, a caliph who had received allegiance البيعة at Medina, were oppressive dissidents (فتنة باغية). Allāh's order or judgment (حكم الله) concerning them was that they should be fought until they reverted to the fold الله إلى أمر الله. These *qurrā'* rejected any other judgment proposed by men. Cf. Naṣr Ibn Muzāḥim, *Waq'at Šiffīn*, p.589. Reference is made to Salīm al-Nu'aymī's article *Zuhūr al-ḥawāriġ* in "Maġallat al-Maġma' al-'Ilmī al-'Irāqī", Vol. XV, 1967/1387, pp. 10-38, and to Muḥammad Dayf Allāh al-Baṭāyina's *Qatalat 'Uṭmān bayna 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib wa-mu'āriḍihī* in "Al-Maġalla al-'Arabiyya li-'Ulūm al-Insāniyya" vol.IV, no.13, 1984, pp.23-40.

they left his camp and became Ḥawāriğ. ‘Alī, however, considered their desertion as *خروج عن الجماعة* (secession from the Muslim Community) to be opposed and fought. At first he discussed with them their secession *خروج* from this point of view, thereby gaining back a considerable number of them. The more obstinate were fought and massacred at the battle of An-Nahr (or An-Nahrawān).

In the wake of these events, arbitration proved to be a trick or a plot which weakened ‘Alī’s position and enhanced Mu‘āwiya’s. ‘Alī was later killed by one of the Ḥawāriğ-*qurrā*’ and Mu‘āwiya became caliph a few months later, in 41 A.H.; but the issue remained for these Ḥawāriğ: their duty was to fight against *الباغي* (the oppressor), now Mu‘āwiya, a usurper not eligible by any standard for the caliphal post as modelled by Abū Bakr and ‘Umar I. These *qurrā*’-Ḥawāriğ were now regarded as the enemy of the new authorities, the Umayyads, as well as the ‘Alīd Šī‘a for murdering ‘Alī, and much bloody effort was spent to hunt them down throughout the Umayyad era.

So much for the activist *qurrā*’. Those who retired this war among Muslims did so, despite their acknowledgement of ‘Alī as caliph, because they believed that shedding the blood of innocent Muslims was illegal, disapproved and punishable by Allāh. The Qur’ān says to this effect: *ولا تقتلوا* and *ومن يقتل مؤمنا متعمدا فجزاؤه* (IV:29) “and kill not one another” and (IV:93) *جهنم خالدا فيها وغضب الله عليه ولعنه وأعد له عذابا عظيما* “Whoso slayeth a believer of set purpose, his reward is hell”. A considerable number of Companions, some even with Islamic priority, like Sa‘d Ibn Abī Waqqās, Muğira Ibn Šu‘ba, Abū Mūsà al-Aš‘arī, ‘Imrān Ibn Ḥuṣayn of Ḥuzā‘a, Abū Barza of Aslam and Ibn ‘Umar, retired the conflict. They were all *qurrā*’ Companions. Abū Mūsà tried unsuccessfully to persuade the Kūfans not to take sides in the conflict between ‘Alī and his opponents. ‘Imrān Ibn Ḥuṣayn while secluding himself from this war (or *fitna* فتنة) asked the Baṣrans and particularly his own clan there to follow suit, quoting the Prophet as saying that such a bloody strife among Muslims was unholy and disapproved by Allāh: *لا ترجعوا بعدي* and *إذا التقى المسلمان بسيفيهما فالقاتل والمقتول في النار*: *كفاراً يضرب بعضهم رقاب بعض*.<sup>29</sup>

Abū Barza likewise denounced the war among Muslims as *fitna* and accused ambitious Qurashis and some *qurrā*’ of instigating dissensions among Muslims for worldly purposes and personal gains instead of observ-

<sup>29</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IV, 186, 187, 224, 225 Sa‘d Ibn Abī Waqqās and Usāma Ibn Zayd when asked by ‘Alī to join his campaign against Talḥa and Az-Zubayr, refused to fight other Muslims. Sa‘d replied: *اعطني سيفاً يفرق المسلم من الكافر* and Usāma answered: *من الخروج معك في هذا الوجه فليني عاهدت الله ان لا أقاتل من يشهد أن لا إله إلا الله اعفني* (Dūrī, op. cit., p.61).

<sup>30</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol.IV, p.230; Al-Iṣfahānī, op.cit., vol.II, p.32.

ing the welfare of Islam and the Umma. Al-Buḥārī<sup>30</sup> quotes him as saying indignantly: *إنني أحتسب عند الله عز وجل أني أصبحت ساخطا على أحياء قريش. وإن هذه الدنيا هي التي أفسدت بينكم. وإن ذلك الذي بالشام والله أن يقاتلوا الا على الدنيا. وإن الذين حولكم الذين تدعونهم قراءكم والله أن يقاتلوا الا على الدنيا*. Although this quotation is cited to comment on the events of the civil strife between the Marwanids and Ibn Zubayr, it sums up Abū Barza's position towards sedition, *fitna*, among Muslims. He condemns those who have engaged themselves in these dissensions, shedding Muslim blood, be it Mu'āwiya, Marwān or the *qurrā'*-Ḥawāriḡ, as seeking wordly self-interests. He and other non-aligned (*mu'tazila*) *qurrā'* had sworn allegiance to 'Alī as Caliph but did not, and were not forced to, join his campaigns against his opponents, simply because they did not approve such strife among Muslims. Generally speaking, this position was maintained by them during the Sufyanid and the Marwanid periods. During the repressive rule of Al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ in Iraq, however, the *mu'tazila-qurrā'* joined a wide unsuccessful revolt of Iraqis led by Ibn al-Aṣ'at against Al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ. Their aim was to protest against the continuous breach by the authorities there of Islamic justice as seen by them and surely preached by Islam. They wanted the Marwanid Caliph to check Al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's oppressive policies towards Muslim and non-Muslim subjects in Iraq. These and particularly non-Arab peasants there had suffered much injustice at the hands of Al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ, and the overwhelming revolt there was an opportunity to demonstrate their indignance and demand for a return to Islamic justice. Their aim was therefore religious. It was not to defend their own interests. Unfortunately, the revolt was short-lived. It was crushed by Al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ and a large number of these *qurrā'* were ruthlessly put to death.<sup>31</sup>

The *qurrā'*, whether Ḥawāriḡ, Šī'a, or non-aligned (*mu'tazila*), sought *šaraf* (الشرف) not through tribal status but through their interest in Islam and its teaching. They were assimilated by Islam and were consequently united under it rather than their tribal links. They cared little for tribal links or interests. A Tamimi was ready to fight against another Tamimi for the cause of Islam as he would see it. Their strong belief in the rewards of the Hereafter (الآخرة) made them careless of wordly interests. In war against their opponents, they fought bravely, as Aṭ-Ṭabarī<sup>32</sup> puts it: *وهم أساد الناس لا يشبههم الليل دوي* while at night they prayed and recited the Qur'ān loudly:

<sup>31</sup> *Annals*, vol.II, pp.1086, 1122

<sup>32</sup> *Annals*, vol.I, pp.2366, 3298; *Iṣāba*, vol.II, p.7; Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Usd al-ḡāba*, vol.III, p.422: *وكان من القراء من رفعه القرآن*.



النحل وكانوا يدوون بالقرآن إذا جن عليهم. They were so hard on themselves that they were described as : سود الجباه رهبان الليل They were brave and daring at the battle welcoming death and regarding as shame to run away from an opportunity to martyrdom الله الشهادة في سبيل. One of them, Salim, Abū Hudayfa's *mawlā* once said: and joined the battle and was killed. Again Aṭ-Ṭabarī describes a group of these *qurrā'* arriving at the battlefield of Ṣiffīn, saying: وصل ابن بديل ومعه ٢٠٠ أو ٣٠٠ من: القراء قد لصق بالارض. The quotation implies that in war, the *qurrā'* sought either victory or martyrdom; no other alternative was considered. This explains why a small group of the Ḥawāriğ-*qurrā'* were able to resist and often defeat larger number of Umayyad forces sent against them. Šī'a-*qurrā'* remained loyal to the Prophet's family particularly to the 'Alīds. They supported their claim to the Caliphal post and their revolts against the authorities; and in remarkable secrecy planned with them and later with the Abbasids to bring about the downfall of the Umayyads in 132 A.H./750 A.D. Notable among these *qurrā'* were Sulaymān Ibn Ṣurād and Sulaymān Ibn Kaṭīr both from Ḥuzā'a. They were not as turbulent as the Ḥawāriğ-*qurrā'* and therefore they often escaped the vengeance of the authorities. Non-aligned, or mu'tazilah-*qurrā'* remained passive; although they sympathized with 'Alī and his family, they cared for their own welfare أحبوا العافية; they saw this particularly in refraining from unholy bloodshed. They maintained a murğ'i'ite position: to obey and wait, and accepted the Umayyad caliph in accordance with the hadit that Muslims should obey their amir (or caliph) even if they did not agree with his actions and policies<sup>33</sup> اسمعوا وأطيعوا ومن رأى من أميره شيئا فكرهه فليصبر فإنه ليس أحد يفارق الجماعة شبرا فيموت إلا مات ميتة جاهلية. Consequently they interested themselves in peaceful activities such as trade, land cultivation and studying and teaching the Qur'ān and tradition. Through this and in the long run, other studies related to this and connected with the language, history, jurisprudence and scholastic theology flourished in the *amṣār* and the Ḥiğāz. Aṭ-Ṭabarī, Al-Mas'ūdī, and Ibn Kaṭīr are examples of *qurrā'* who were historians, readers of, and commentators on, the Qur'ān, as well as jurisprudence scholars. Those who excelled in these subjects were often employed as qadis and many were recommended to teach the children of the caliphs, the ruling families, and the rich class. Since the days of 'Umar I, the *qurrā'* had acquired a distinguished status among the Muslims in Baṣra and Kūfa. This is clear from the attitude of the authorities towards them as recorded in the sources: بعث أبو موسى إلى قراء البصرة، جمع أبو موسى القراء فلما امتلأت الدار من قراء الناس. This shows that the *qurrā'* were then of significant importance there.

<sup>33</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol.I, pp.128, 129; vol.IV, pp.222, 234.

Al-‘Alī suggests that they gradually became a distinguished entity, a league رابطة, with a political role.<sup>34</sup> Sources speak of them sometimes as having special dress and appearance: shaving their heads and moustaches in a special way, wearing clean long cloaks (*barānis*, pl. of *burnus*) or short sleeved gowns, with a turban (عمامة) on the head, a *muṣḥaf* tied round the neck, and a walking stick in the hand. Al-Hasan al-Baṣrī addressing a number of *qurrā’* in his presence says: أحفيتم شواربكم وحلقتم رؤوسكم وقصرتم أكمامكم: ما لي أراكم جلوسا قد عليه عمامة. Halīfa Ibn Ḥayyāt says of ‘Abd al-Mālīk Ibn Marwān, who was then one of the *qurrā’* عليه عمامة... سوداء قد أرخاها من بين يديه ومن خلفه كما يفعل القراء فدخل عليه رجل آدم...

Extreme piety, hard worship, vigils and constant prayers left their marks on their foreheads and hands. This is confirmed by the sources. Mubarrad says<sup>35</sup>: فرأى منهم جباها قرحة (مشققة) لطول السجود وأيديا كثفنت الابل وعليهم قمص مرحضة (مغسولة نظيفة). While this is true of the early *qurrā’* who became Ḥawārīḡ, it can hardly be said of the *qurrā’* of later ages and especially of our times. Al-Mubarrad<sup>36</sup> quotes Ibn Hammām as-Salūlī saying that the *qurrā’* of his day attack worldly pleasures (ذم الدنيا) while they actually indulge in them:

إذا نصبوا للقول قالوا فأحسنوا ولكن حسن القول خالفه الفعل  
وذموا لنا الدنيا وهم يرضعونها أفاويق حتى ما يدر لها ثعل

The problems created by the lack of real application of Islamic justice throughout the Caliphate later made these *qurrā’* (and others) look for their own interest. They found it in lucrative positions and nowadays the *qārī’* enjoys a remarkable position in the society. His profits from the Qur’ān reading which takes place on many occasions such as Ramaḍān, religious feasts, festivals, funeral ceremonies etc. made him care much for his appearance in a special elegant way. Qur’ān reading has become a profitable profession, a trade, and schools specializing in teaching the Qur’ān and some of its *‘ulūm* grant the graduates diplomas as *qurrā’*. This was never intended at the beginning when reciting and teaching of the Qur’ān meant only a search for Allāh’s approval.

<sup>34</sup> التنظيمات الاجتماعية والاقتصادية في البصرة. p.57, Bagdad 1953.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Al-Mubarrad, op.cit., III, pp. 211, 320; Ibn Qutayba, *Ma‘ārif*, p.587; *Iṣāba*, III, p.305; *Annals*, I, p. 2366; *Lisān al-‘Arab*, فلطح; Halīfa Ibn Ḥayyāt, *Tārīḡ*, p. 258; Ibn Ḥaḡar (*Iṣāba*, no. 6359) says of ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Wahb ar-Rāsībī: وكان عجباً في كثرة العبادة حتى لقب ذا الثفتات. كان لكثرة سجوده صار في يديه وركبتيه كثفنت البعير (callus of the camel).

<sup>36</sup> Op.cit, I, p.55.