

The Quest for the Origins of the *qurrā'* in the Classical Islamic Tradition

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The venerated status enjoyed by Qur'an readers across the formative years of the Islamic tradition is frequently accentuated in the classical *qirā'āt* literature which dutifully records the significance of their contribution to all aspects of the physical preservation of scripture. The first generations of readers were held in esteem for having memorised, promulgated, and excelled in the recitation of the Qur'anic text as a devotional document and over subsequent years they, along with their students, were positively regarded as cynosures of the religious traditions of learning nurtured by the Islamic faith.¹ Yet, citations of the term reader (*qāri'*, pl. *qurrā'*) as attested in primary source material seemingly suggested that the critical sphere of influence ascribed to the earliest generations of readers extended not only to matters of a religious and spiritual nature, but that there also existed unique political and military dimensions to their activity. Critical historical surveys of the Islamic tradition have presented telling distinctions in terms of the genuine identity of these early readers and their religious status, particularly those individuals whose military and political activity were pronounced. Employing an array of etymological arguments coupled with a sophisticated deconstruction of the historical narratives in which the prominence of readers is deemed conspicuous, these studies posit the view that the nexus with scripture and its recitation suggested of many early readers reflects a later doctrinal development. The fact that classical sources emphasised these individuals' pre-eminence as readers (*qurrā'*) is viewed as either an ingenuous oversight on the part of chroniclers of Islamic history or a deliberate attempt to prefigure the historical depth of the religious constitution of Islam. It is presumed that later impressions of religious themes and constructs had undoubtedly impinged upon the integrity of characteristics and mores of an earlier age. Deliberations in this respect also brought under scrutiny the extent to which knowledge of the Qur'an was an established feature of the early Islamic tradition. The quest to locate an alternative identity for individuals and groups among the earliest generations of the *qurrā'* meant that the historical import of a genuine group of readers was obscured, creating the impression that their significance as a class of religious devotees was somewhat contrived.

Reinterpreting the Sources: The Thesis of Shaban

The historian Muhammad Shaban was among the first scholars to raise questions regarding the exact identity of certain groups of individuals traditionally acknowledged in a number of specified citations as being members of the *qurrā'* (readers).² He referred initially to the Wars of Apostasy (11/633) and the importance of references in the historical sources to the loss of life among the *qurrā'*. Chronicles recounting the Wars of Apostasy campaigns relate that numerous readers (*qurrā'*) were killed on the battlefield due to the intensity of fighting. The most significant of these campaigns was conducted in the Yamāma region and culminated in the decisive battle at ʿAqrabā in 12/634. Shaban argued that analyses of the citations which referred to the loss of life among the *qurrā'* were based upon the erroneous assumption that the individuals in question had been skilled readers of the Qur'an.³ He claimed that the *qurrā'* mentioned in these accounts had no connection with those so-called *qurrā'* (readers) who were subsequently acclaimed in the classical sources for their role as luminaries of the tradition of Qur'an reading.⁴ Shaban speculated that citations originally referring to these individuals as *ahl al-qurā* (people of the villages) were misinterpreted by medieval historians and incorrectly rendered *ahl al-qurrā'*. Shaban explained that the men mobilised for the Wars of Apostasy campaigns included people from settled communities who were referred to in the early sources as *ahl al-qurā*.⁵ They originally formed part of a coalition of forces and had been instrumental in suppressing the apostasy rebellion.⁶ He reasoned that the arcing of nominal trajectories as far as the *ahl al-qurā* and the *qurrā'* were concerned was underlined by etymological resemblances between the radical roots of the words. It was proposed that the term *qurrā'* in these citations should have been treated as a derivative of the root *q-r-y*, which denoted a rustic connection. The word should not have been associated with the root *q-r-*, which connotes 'to recite', from which the plural noun *qurrā'* (singular: *qāri'*) was derived. *Ex hypothesi*, a quaint etymological anomaly had purportedly provided them with new identities. The corollary to this was that individuals recognised for their military activity were perceived as accomplished 'readers' of scripture; Shaban had taken the view that the political machinations of these *ahl al-qurā* (who would later be identified as *qurrā'* in the classical historical sources) confirmed that the prevalent view of these individuals as readers of scripture was inaccurate.⁷ He did attempt to offer another explanation for the confusion between the *qurrā'* and the *ahl al-qurā*, arguing that the latter group might have been responsible for encouraging ambiguities concerning their identity; he intimated that they claimed to be readers of scripture.⁸ Notwithstanding the inconsistency in his explanation regarding the reasons for these groups of individuals being designated readers, Shaban was convinced that the *qurrā'* mentioned in these narratives were actually villagers who were neither connected with mastery of scripture nor did they excel in its recitation. The semantic distinction between *ahl al-qurrā'* and *ahl al-qurā* (villagers) formed an

important aspect of Shaban's review of Islamic history, prefiguring his study of the activities of these *qurrāʾ/ahl al-qurā* in the unfolding of political and social events in first-century Iraq. However, the problem with this synthesis is that it ostensibly overshadows the significance of an actual class of readers whose own history was intricately entwined in many of the events and episodes referred to by Shaban. The background of the *qurrāʾ* as readers is not explored in his study, although he clearly doubted whether they would have been so numerous in these early periods.⁹ Crucially, Shaban's views on this subject led to weighty speculation regarding the historical emergence of Qur'an readers and their presence in the early Islamic tradition.

The detailed version of the prolonged *ridda* campaigns in the Yamāma as collated by Ṭabarī (224–310/839–922) does indeed draw attention to the *ahl al-qurā* and their 'intrepid' actions on the battlefield; the statement '*fa'staḥara'l-qatl fī ahl al-qurā*' (fighting has been most intense for *ahl al-qurā*) is used.¹⁰ A similar statement is found in the collection of the Qur'an accounts which refer to the loss of life among readers (*qurrāʾ*) at Yamāma.¹¹ The correspondence in the phrasing of this statement probably caught the attention of Shaban, allowing him to infer that members of the *ahl al-qurā* were consequently designated as being readers (*qurrāʾ*). However, his assertion that medieval historians neglected to distinguish the exact etymology of the *qurrāʾ* appellation and its original meaning overlooks the fact that a number of these narratives had been circulating in the literature of the Prophetic traditions; and the individuals in question are identified as being members of the *qurrāʾ*.¹² It seems unlikely that historians would have made such a rudimentary error.

The question of whether the events described in these historical texts are standard *topoi* which are then permeated by biases and preconceived schema irrevocably played out in the form of narratives has been explored by Albrecht Noth. He maintained the futility of traditional positivist approaches to these early Islamic materials. Nevertheless, he also argued that this fact should not lead to the relinquishing of 'the Arab-Islamic tradition as a source for historical enquiry on early Islamic times'.¹³ Hugh Kennedy meanwhile briefly deals with the issue of the formulaic structure of historical narratives, accepting that many of the details in these accounts of the early campaigns and conquests are discerned as being *topoi*, he tempers this with the view that one should not dismiss all such materials as being mere fabrications.¹⁴ Kennedy remarked that the reality of the Muslim conquests is incontrovertible and the main battles have an undeniable historical relevance.¹⁵ He is also adamant that 'some of the individuals and groups mentioned in the narratives did take part in the campaigns to which they are ascribed'.¹⁶ Yet, the issue raised in Shaban's argument regarding the *ahl al-qurā* relates to their actual identity and not the historicity of the events in question.¹⁷

Shaban extended his thesis to a second group of individuals initially referred to in the sources as *ahl al-ayyām*. He had described them as being undistinguished but loyal tribesmen who had participated in numerous battles fought on behalf of the fledgling Islamic state. As a reward for their loyalty, they were placed in charge of administering the lands and revenues acquired from newly conquered territory in Iraq. Shaban remarked that the *ahl al-ayyām* were also referred to in later sources by the appellative 'the *qurrā'*'.¹⁸ He claimed that the new designation allowed them to be distinguished from those defeated tribes who had been disgraced adversaries in the Wars of Apostasy.¹⁹ These tribes now formed part of veteran forces taking part in raids on Sassanian territories and beyond.²⁰ The suggestion here is that the activity of the *ahl al-ayyām* indicated that they like the *ahl al-qurā* were in all probability given the label *qurrā'* at a later juncture in the chronicling of Islamic history. Shaban reiterated his view that the groups in question (the *ahl al-qurā* and the *ahl al-ayyām*) may have discreetly approved of the ensuing confusion regarding their being identified as members of the *qurrā'*. Interestingly, Shaban does not account for simultaneous references to the *qurrā'* and the *ahl al-ayyām* in citations which imply distinctions between the two groups.²¹ Nevertheless, the principal point developed by Shaban is that the activity of these particular groups was governed by military and political expediencies. The nexus with the mastery of scripture or even its recitation suggested of these so-called *qurrā'* was spurious.

Focusing on the influence of the *qurrā'*/*ahl al-qurā* during the rule of the caliph ʿUmar, Shaban stated that they were 'very bellicose, politically united, with many common interests' and their repute and standing were primarily derived from the fact that they had remained loyal to Medina throughout military campaigns and expeditions.²² The *qurrā'* served as administrators of the fertile plains and rural areas of southern Iraq, known as the Sawād.²³ They roamed these regions collecting moneys on behalf of the treasury from local notables (*dahāqīn*); and they supervised poll-tax payments. Despite the lucrative financial benefits acquired through their administrative roles, the arrangement brought inevitable unpopularity.²⁴ Shaban made the point that the ex-*ridda* tribesmen who settled in Kūfa resented the authority the *qurrā'* were exercising: the former hailed from tribes such as Kinda who considered themselves to be of noble stock, while the latter were, in the words of Shaban, from 'relatively unimportant clans'.²⁵ Shaban maintained that the issue of payments created discontentment and discord among the inhabitants of Kūfa, despite the fact that the *qurrā'* merited greater fiscal reward due to their past military service. Nonetheless, the seemingly innocuous theme of the unpopularity of the *ahl al-qurā* in this defined context is inexplicably extended by a number of researchers to explain the so-called poor standing of readers (*qurrā'*) within the wider confines of the early Islamic tradition, as we shall see.

Shaban remarked that the assassination of the second caliph ʿUmar in 23/644 followed by the advent of ʿUthmān as his successor heralded a dramatic change in the political fortunes of the *qurrāʾ/ahl al-qurāʾ*.²⁶ His treatment of the sources for this ensuing period places emphasis on the manner in which the *qurrāʾ* were compelled to assert themselves politically as a result of ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān’s attempt to wield greater influence in the provinces of Egypt and more crucially in Iraq. ʿUthmān did replace a number of existing governors, including Kūfa’s incumbent Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ. It is maintained that these moves had the effect of undermining the influence of the *qurrāʾ* in their role as administrators of the rural areas of Iraq. This included the Sawād region, which they treated as a personal asset.²⁷ The conquest of the Sawād had been accomplished by veterans who had since returned to Mecca and Medina.²⁸ Shaban noted that ʿUthmān was able to convince the *qurrāʾ* that these veterans had not relinquished their own rights to these lands and he succeeded in negotiating a complex agreement of land exchange with the *qurrāʾ*.²⁹ According to Shaban, relations between ʿUthmān and the *qurrāʾ* were exacerbated when ʿUthmān decided to place *ex-ridda* tribesmen in positions of greater authority. Because of one particular altercation, twelve members of the *qurrāʾ* were expelled to Syria on the caliph’s instructions.³⁰ The key incident for Shaban is the *qurrāʾ*’s preventing ʿUthmān’s appointed governor, Saʿīd ibn al-ʿĀṣ, from returning to Kūfa in 33/653. They instigated the appointment of an alternative figure who was accepted by ʿUthmān: this was Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī. The individual who led this campaign was a certain Mālik ibn al-Ashtar, not apparently renowned for his skills as a reader of scripture.³¹

Shaban commented that following ʿAlī’s succession as caliph, the *qurrāʾ/ahl al-qurāʾ* declared their support for him in his struggle for hegemony, although their role throughout the events leading up to the Battle of Ṣiffīn (37/657) and in the years following its aftermath confirmed to Shaban the historical inconsistencies surrounding their conventional status as accomplished readers.³² The much debated incident in which the beleaguered Syrian forces were instructed to raise individual leafs (*maṣāḥif*) from the Qur’an on their lances as a gesture of their desire for a negotiated resolution (*taḥkīm*) of this conflict induced those *qurrāʾ* fighting alongside the forces of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661) to compel him to accept arbitration.³³ In an account of the ‘raising of the Qur’an’ (*rafʿ al-maṣāḥif*) episode preserved by Ṭabarī, ʿAlī urged his forces to continue fighting, describing the antics of the Syrians as being nothing more than a stratagem.³⁴ Ṭabarī reported that ʿAlī was urged by a group of individuals, including ‘the *qurrāʾ*’ who later emerged as the Khawārij’ to agree to this plea; he reluctantly accepted.³⁵ One further report included among Ṭabarī’s sources claims that ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ (d. 43/663) is said to have advised Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān (d. 60/680) to send a copy of the Qur’an to ʿAlī, inviting him to ‘the book of God’, namely, that he should consider accepting arbitration. Upon ʿAlī’s agreeing to this request, the Khawārij expressed their

disapproval of his decision. The narrative interestingly adds that 'In those days they [the Khawārij] were known as *'al-qurrā'*': their swords rested over their shoulders'.³⁶

While many researchers were prepared to countenance the religious significance of the linkage between the *qurrā'* as readers of scripture and the Khawārij, Shaban took the view that 'it is difficult to accept the idea of thousands of Qur'ān readers, organised into separate contingents, all fighting at Ṣiffīn'.³⁷ Shaban felt that the *qurrā'* mentioned in this and other related historical contexts were not individuals renowned for their skills in the recitation and memorisation of scripture; they, like the *'qurrā'* at °Aqrabā°, were really members of the *ahl al-qurā'*, forming military regiments and units.³⁸ It was his view that once the *qurrā'* realised that their previous financial privileges would not be restored they soon seceded from the ranks of °Alī and, in his words, 'they came to be known as the Khawārij'.³⁹ Shaban did draw the distinction that the so-called early Khawārij had to be 'distinguished' from the later Khawārij, whom he labels 'neo-Khārijites'.⁴⁰ He stated that although many of the *qurrā'*/*ahl al-qurā'* were defeated by °Alī at Nahrawān, the caliph managed to persuade some of them to return to Kūfa, whereas the others took up arms, resulting in many of them being killed. Some of these *qurrā'* (Khawārij) eventually fled to rural areas where they continued to collect revenues from the former Sassanian estates, living in small groups and enjoying an autonomous existence.⁴¹ Shaban highlighted that they were eventually confronted by Mu°āwiya who declared that revenues from the estates (*ṣawāfi*) they controlled should be directed to the state's treasury.⁴² As for those *qurrā'* who were persuaded by °Alī to join him at Kūfa, they were led by Ḥujr ibn °Adī, although Shaban remarked that their political influence diminished with the caliph's assassination in 40/661. Shaban emphasised that the *qurrā'* who remained at Kūfa, and indeed individuals connected with Baṣra, continued to guard zealously their territorial claims. Their attitude created a climate of instability. Mu°āwiya rounded up seven of their leaders, including Ḥujr, and had them sent to Syria where they were executed.⁴³ The remnants of these Kūfan *qurrā'* joined the movement identified in the early Islamic tradition as the *tawwābūn* (penitents), an early Shī'ī faction determined to avenge the death of Ḥusayn ibn Abī Ṭālib, who was slain by Umayyad forces in 61/680. Many of them were killed having marched to confront Syrian forces.⁴⁴ Those who survived returned to Kūfa, joining the revolt of Mukhtār ibn Abī °Ubayd al-Thaqafī (d. 67/687). He led a Shī'ī uprising in the name of one of °Alī's sons, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyya, whom he proclaimed to be the divinely guided Mahdī.⁴⁵ A curious fact is that Ibrāhīm al-Ashtar, whose father led the *qurrā'* at Ṣiffīn and was °Alī's loyal aide, served as one of Mukhtār's military commanders.⁴⁶

According to Shaban, the *qurrā'*, who had pursued their rebellious odyssey in the aftermath of the events of Ṣiffīn, were now active participants in a Shī'ī revolt.

Shaban noted that the non-Arab clients or *mawālī* are often linked with the rebellion of Mukhtār; in spite of this, he argued that to underline their importance in this figure's movement is misleading.⁴⁷ By implication, the 'neo-Khārijite' revolts, led by individuals such as Nāfi' ibn al-Azraq and Najda ibn 'Āmir, are interpreted by Shaban as being uprisings instigated by tribal factors; they are shaped by their own dynamics. These insurrections were not supported by the early *qurrā'* as defined by Shaban. Indeed, he argued that by the time that Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf (d. 95/714) was the governor of Kūfa, some of these *ex-qurrā'* were actually participating in the fight against these 'neo-Khārijites', although confusingly at other junctures in his analysis he has them fighting alongside 'neo-Khārijites'.⁴⁸

It is evident that Shaban's convoluted treatment of the sources is partly influenced by his attempt to reconcile citations of the term *qurrā'* in these particular reports with the general thrust of his thesis which consistently identifies them as being unassuming villagers (*ahl al-qurā'*) who had no special connection with the recitation or memorisation of scripture. While his attempt to link some of these members of the *qurrā'* with the *ahl al-qurā'* is not entirely implausible, the extension of such a thesis to cover all citations of the *qurrā'* included in his work is questionable. Many of the instances referred to by Shaban indicate that one is dealing with individuals and groups affiliated to a larger constituency of readers. Indeed, the principal examples Shaban used to highlight perceived ambiguities in the historical narratives are given an import far more sweeping than the sources conclusively substantiate. To place this thought into perspective, one needs to appreciate that Shaban's original concern lay in identifying those *ahl al-qurā'* embroiled in the military and political intrigues of the day. He was not dealing with the provenance of the *qurrā'* as readers of scripture, nor had he proffered a view regarding their emergence as a class of scholars. One does sense that in order to sustain his thesis Shaban was compelled to be selective in his use of the sources: he strangely glossed over historical materials which linked the *qurrā'* with the Qur'an and its recitation.⁴⁹ Moreover, Shaban's claim that the *ahl al-qurā'* willingly allowed ambiguities to spread in terms of their being associated with the *qurrā'*, showed that even he implicitly recognised that the latter must have existed as a class of religious devotees in order for their prestige to be manipulated.

One historical episode which underlines the difficulties inherent in discarding the religious distinctiveness of the earliest generations of the *qurrā'* and their import as readers of scripture who are clearly embroiled in the events outlined by Shaban relates to the rebellion led by 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ash'ath (d. 85/704). As one of the leading members of Kūfan notables (*ashrāf*), Ibn al-Ash'ath was appointed by Ḥajjāj as the commander of an army which included not only prominent members of the Kūfan *ashrāf*, but also individuals described by Shaban as 'ex-*qurrā'*/*ahl al-qurā'* who had been present at Ṣiffīn.⁵⁰ Ḥajjāj dispatched this army, which was

known ostentatiously as ‘the Army of the Peacock’, on a gruelling military expedition to Sistān in the east. However, in the face of increased interference in the conduct of this campaign together with disquiet within the camp regarding its original goals, Ibn al-Ash[°]ath disobeyed the orders of Ḥajjāj, initiating a full-scale rebellion.⁵¹ He was given the oath of allegiance and defiantly marched his supporters back to Iraq from the east, defeating an army which was sent to tackle them. Ibn al-Ash[°]ath was joined by many disaffected Iraqis. He entered Kūfa triumphantly where his cause was enthusiastically espoused; it was supported by its many readers (*qurrā'*). Ibn al-Ash[°]ath was even persuaded by the influential *qurrā'* to reject a truce offered by the Umayyad caliph °Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (d. 86/705).⁵² Despite the popularity of this revolt and the momentum it had gathered, a coalition of Ibn al-Ash[°]ath's forces was eventually defeated by Ḥajjāj at Dār al-Jamājim in 82/701.⁵³ Ibn al-Ash[°]ath escaped to the eastern provinces, while Ḥajjāj regained control over Kūfa. He pardoned many who took part in this insurrection, providing they were prepared to admit to the grave nature of their transgression; others were summarily executed.⁵⁴

One of the rebels eventually brought before Ḥajjāj was the eminent Kūfan reader and jurist Sa[°]id ibn Jubayr; he was said to have been in hiding in Mecca. An account of their encounter is preserved in the philological text entitled *al-Kāmil* of the Baṣran linguist Mubarrad (d. 285/898).⁵⁵ The text focuses on Ḥajjāj's rebuke of Ibn Jubayr for joining this insurrection and his listing of favours he had bestowed upon him at Kūfa. Ḥajjāj begins his reprimand by reminding Ibn Jubayr that he retained him as the imām of the main mosque in Kūfa, in spite of his decree that only Arabs should lead the congregational prayers; he is further reminded of his appointment as judge in Kūfa and that although he was relieved of that position following Kūfan objections to a non-Arab (*mawlā*) being their judge, his replacement was directed to retain the counsel of Ibn Jubayr. Continuing this list of favours, Ḥajjāj remarked that he had included him among those who would share his company at evenings along with Arab notables.⁵⁶ Ibn Jubayr is then asked to explain why he supported the insurrection of Ibn al-Ash[°]ath and he responded by saying that he had sworn an oath of allegiance. Incensed by what he believes to be blatant disloyalty, Ḥajjāj ordered his execution. The *Kāmil* preserves an additional statement made by Ḥajjāj, reflecting upon the makeup of the supporters of Ibn al-Ash[°]ath. It states that ‘the majority of those who participated in the insurrection of °Abd al-Raḥmān including the *fuqahā'* and others were of *mawālī* extraction’.⁵⁷ The text adds that Ḥajjāj wished to ‘supplant them from their positions as masters of eloquence and literary discernment’, and integrate them with ‘the *ahl al-qurā* and the *anbā'*’. The narrative refers to Ḥajjāj pronouncing that ‘the *mawālī* are uncivilised ones who have been brought from villages (*qurā*); and only villages are fit for them’. He ordered their transfer from the garrison towns and had Arabs settled in their place. Ḥajjāj further decreed that each *mawlā*'s hand be ‘branded’ with the name of his village.

The literature of the reading tradition confirms that many of its luminaries were of *mawālī* extraction. The account furnished in the *Kāmil* certainly implies that the individuals embroiled in the Ibn al-Ashʿath rebellion were revered luminaries of the religious sciences. Saʿīd ibn Jubayr was considered a respected reader among the early *qurrāʾ*; and he was of *mawālā* origin.⁵⁸ Commenting on this rebellion, Gerald Hawting remarked that Ibn al-Ashʿath's followers were mostly readers (*qurrāʾ*) who were religiously inspired.⁵⁹ Hugh Kennedy observed that the *qurrāʾ* 'were among the most stalwart supporters of the revolt'.⁶⁰ Shaban always maintained that the *qurrāʾ/ahl al-qurā* belonged to 'relatively unimportant clans', but he did not refer to their being of *mawālī* origin, which by implication places such individuals outside the conceptual strictures of his thesis.⁶¹ Shaban's treatment of the Ibn al-Ashʿath rebellion plainly disregarded the finer detail regarding the religious eminence of the *qurrāʾ* involved in this affair. The episode does not sustain the image of such individuals being unassuming villagers unconnected with scripture. The striking data which are reflected upon in this narrative do supply an intriguing link with villages: the *qurrāʾ* expelled by Ḥajjāj to these rustic locations are forcefully integrated with villagers. The religious standing of these particular individuals appears to be quite striking, reflecting their association with the sacred text. One wonders whether such figures should be equated with villagers (*ahl al-qurā*) whose devotion to scripture was supposedly contrived. Notwithstanding the fact that Shaban uncovered intriguing irregularities regarding the activities and demeanour of some members of the *qurrāʾ/ahl al-qurā* in the sources, such findings hardly warrant dismissing the historical reality of a whole class of readers, and care must be taken not to extend Shaban's thesis beyond its plausible limits.

Further Synthesis of the Political Prominence of the *qurrāʾ*

One scholar who was especially fascinated by Shaban's theory regarding the presumed semantic confusion between *qurrāʾ* and *qurā* together with its implications for the history of Qur'an reading within the Islamic tradition was Gautier Juynboll. The conclusion that the *qurrāʾ* were originally 'villagers' who participated in affairs of a military nature as opposed to being Qur'an reciters was endorsed in his examination of the sources. Although Juynboll confined the relevance of this thesis to a specific chronological period of the early Islamic tradition, it was clear that in his estimation the emergence of a class of readers represented a later development with villagers serving as an insidious extension of that history.⁶² Juynboll remarked that there are definite instances in which the term *qurrāʾ* 'should in various early texts be interpreted as referring to "villagers", synonymous with *ahl al-qurā*'.⁶³ He then added that no one will deny that the word especially in later sources refers to 'a reciter of the Qur'an'. Using the episode of the expulsion of twelve members of the *qurrāʾ* from Kūfa to Syria on the instructions of ʿUthmān, Juynboll remarked that these individuals were despised for their conduct

and their low social standing.⁶⁴ In one of Shaban's explanations for the confusion regarding the use of the *qurrā'* label, he reckoned that the *ahl al-qurā* and the *ahl al-ayyām* might have calculatingly encouraged their being associated with readers whose prestige and standing they could manipulate. Juynboll felt that he had uncovered the evidence that proved this was indeed the case. He focused his attention on the composite accounts presented in the *Kitāb al-futūḥ* of Aḥmad ibn A°tham (d. 314/926) in which it is stated that some members of the Kūfan *qurrā'* wrote to the caliph °Uthmān, expressing their dismay at his policies. Juynboll noticed that the authors of the letter were described as being 'from the villages (*qurā*) of *ahl al-Kūfa*'.⁶⁵ Juynboll speculated that the emissary from the *qurrā'* who presented this communication to °Uthmān attempted to imply pretentiously that its authors were 'people from among the pious of the inhabitants of Kūfa: from among its *qurrā'* and its people of religion and merit'.⁶⁶ This instance was identified by Juynboll as a deliberate attempt by these members of the *qurrā'* (*qurā*) to make people think of them as Qur'an readers. The use of the term *qurā* in this given passage apparently revealed that they were villagers; whether the text indicates that this was the actual aim of the individual in question is disputable. Paradoxically, this view itself predicates that the *qurrā'* as readers of scripture were regarded with prestige, signifying that it was this religious esteem which the *ahl al-qurā* sought to manipulate. This is important given that Juynboll believed that the *qurrā'*'s emergence as a class of scholars was a later development.

Juynboll made the apposite point that the *qurrā'* actively implicated in the Kūfan political manoeuvrings of the periods in question are barely mentioned in the classical literature devoted to readings and readers, with the exception of a few individuals such as Ḥārith ibn °Abd Allāh al-A°war and °Alqama ibn Qays.⁶⁷ In contradistinction, Malik al-Ashtar, Ḥujr ibn °Adī, and Yazīd ibn Qays are foremost leaders of the so-called *qurrā'* in Iraq, yet they are not mentioned in the biographical literature, nor are they associated with specific readings of scripture and scholarship therein. However, the fact that the *qirā'āt* literature neglects the mention of these individuals and indeed other figures who are enumerated in historical chronicles as being members of the *qurrā'* is not peculiar. The reading tradition traced its pedigree to leading eponyms among the companions of the Prophet such as °Uthmān ibn °Affān, °Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, °Abd Allāh ibn Mas°ūd, Ubayy ibn Ka°b, Zayd ibn Thābit, Abū Mūsā al-Ash°arī, and Abū Dardā°; these were individuals whose authority and repute were imposing. Later generations of readers were simply collating, selecting, and circulating the stock of readings associated with these earlier authorities.

Having contemplated the possibility that the *qurrā'* mentioned in the contexts outlined by Shaban were originally villagers, Juynboll then sought to explore why such individuals were held in disdain and referred to in the sources as 'stupid,

ignorant, and lowly', reasoning that this would help shed light on their historical roots in the Islamic milieu.⁶⁸ The citations alluding to them in unfavourable terms primarily emanate from the exchanges of correspondence which occurred because of °Uthmān's ordering their expulsion from Kūfa. Juynboll took the view that the appellative *ahl al-qurā* (villagers) possessed a pejorative meaning due to its historical connection with the nomadic way of life. Shaban had previously hinted at their unpopularity, although this was supposedly because of the itinerant role of the *qurrā'*/*ahl al-qurā* as administrators and tax collectors. Juynboll claimed that their nomadic way of life was viewed with contempt and considered inferior to its sedentary counterpart.⁶⁹ He stated that nomads who had converted to Islam were assigned various places in the *qurā* of Medina, including the settlements vacated by Jewish tribes because of their exile. Despite their conversion to Islam and the fact that they gradually attained a higher social status than nomads, Juynboll suggested that these members of the *ahl al-qurā* were never able to discard the negativity engendered by their humble backgrounds; and this applied to those who settled in the *qurā* of Kūfa.⁷⁰ Juynboll cited the Qur'an to show that the term *qurā* was mostly used in a negative context, although the extent to which this has a bearing on the status of the *ahl al-qurā* or *qurrā'* is debatable.⁷¹ He even suggested that this was true of the earlier usage of the term *madīna* in the Qur'anic context, mentioning that its occurrence in the Qur'an was less frequent than the term *qurā* and that it managed to discard its pejorative tag.⁷² The inferences made by Juynboll in respect of the negative connotation acquired by the term *qurā* are admittedly interesting, and although they remain highly speculative they form the basis of his explanation as to why the term *ahl al-qurā* 'received a derogatory connotation'. When such individuals assumed the identity of the *qurrā'* (reciters of scripture), as suggested by Juynboll, this negativity supposedly encompassed their namesakes, tarnishing their image as readers.⁷³ However, it is difficult to see how this finding might be extended to our understanding of the reading tradition in a wider historical sense, given that one is dealing with confined examples. The overstated theme of the unpopularity of the *qurrā'* does feature in further studies of their influence, although according to Juynboll's hypothesis, these individuals are not actually readers.

One final thought offered by Juynboll on the possible reason why 'villagers' were confused with 'readers' draws its inspiration from the ill-fated expedition of Bi'r Ma'ūna (4/626), when around 70 of the Prophet's companions were ambushed and killed.⁷⁴ A composite account of the narratives is preserved in the *Kitāb al-maghāzī* compiled by the third century historian Muḥammad al-Wāqidi.⁷⁵ He reported that the expedition had its origins in a visit made to Medina by a tribal elder by the name of °Āmir ibn Mālik who offered a gift to the Prophet. This was rejected because of this individual's inclination to polytheism; however, the Prophet used the occasion to invite him to accept the new faith. °Āmir is said to have been neither averse to the faith nor fully receptive to it, and he persuaded the Prophet to send a delegation of

learned individuals to his fellow tribesmen situated in the Najdī region that they might be encouraged to espouse the new religion.⁷⁶ Given the Prophet's concerns about the hostility of tribes towards his followers in this region, ʿĀmir promised to guarantee their safe passage.⁷⁷ Wāqidi's text states that those individuals whom the Prophet sent were readers (*qurrāʾ*) from the ranks of the *anṣār*.⁷⁸ They are described as being renowned for their austere religiosity and piety, spending the nights in devotion and remembrance.⁷⁹

Juynboll argued that the reference to these slain individuals being members of the *qurrāʾ* was an intrusive embellishment introduced into the original narrative. He dismissed the notion that they were skilled readers of the Qur'an.⁸⁰ In his view the Biʿr Maʿūna narrative served as a conscious attempt to invigorate the religious symbolism of the early Islamic tradition, providing the tradition's pedigree with greater historical depth. Reports of this nature intentionally situated the *qurrāʾ* and indeed scripture as established elements of its religious constituency.⁸¹ Juynboll was curious that fatalities from that expedition, and only nineteen are mentioned, were not recorded in the biographical dictionaries as having matchless knowledge of the Qur'an nor were they renowned for its recitation.⁸² He argued that most of them were late converts to Islam and would not have realistically memorised the holy text. This very fact tempted Juynboll to propose that many among these so-called readers were probably villagers, providing further evidence of the 'plausibility of the interpretation of the term *qurrāʾ* as villagers'. Juynboll moved on to argue that abrogated verses of the Qur'an poignantly associated with the Biʿr Maʿūna episode were remnants of the last words of these martyrs articulated in the oracle-like vein of the pre-Islamic *kuhhān* or soothsayers.⁸³ This led to the view that the 'villagers' in question were so lamented by the Prophet and his companions that their preserved utterances permeated the realm of Qur'anic revelation before being conveniently relegated to the confines of abrogated verses.⁸⁴ Hence, the original context of their expedition and their status were inexorably entwined; the nexus with recited verses, albeit abrogated ones, endured and these humble villagers disappeared in time to be confused with Qur'anic readers.⁸⁵ Juynboll had cautiously used the Biʿr Maʿūna narrative to explore why and how villagers were confused with readers. Nevertheless, this notion of confusion is highly suppositional. It is likewise unconvincing to argue that subsequent misunderstandings regarding the historical context of abrogated verses of the Qur'an would be sufficient to recast the identity of those partaking in this expedition. On a more general note, there is no evidence to prove that the Biʿr Maʿūna narrative was used to enhance the historical pedigree of the tradition of Qur'an reading or any other of the religious institutions of early Islam. Even if one were to accept the various hypotheses regarding this episode and its importance, they do not necessarily negate the existence of an early class of readers.

The role of Qurʾan reciters on the battlefield during the early years of the Islamic tradition was reviewed in a successive study of readers conducted by Juynboll. Based on the assumption that certain individuals referred to as *ahl al-qurā* had pretended to be readers of scripture, Juynboll seized upon a reference to *ḥamalat al-Qurʾān* which occurs in one of the reports speaking of ʿUmar’s concern for the loss of life among the *qurrāʾ* at ʿAqrabāʾ.⁸⁶ The term appeared to have been used interchangeably with the word *qurrāʾ* and *ahl al-Qurʾān* in the literature of the traditions describing this episode, although it was Juynboll’s view that the term did not necessarily mean ‘those who know (part) of the Qurʾān by heart’.⁸⁷ Juynboll argued that the *ḥamalat al-Qurʾān* were inextricably linked with the *ahl al-qurā*: and that they were in fact members of ‘the low social order of villagers’ as originally discovered by Shaban; they were not skilled readers of the Qurʾan.⁸⁸ He argued that due to their low status, even in the eyes of the ‘*muhājirīn waʾl-anṣār*’, these villagers were placed in ‘the front ranks’ of the battlefield and received the brunt of enemy assaults.⁸⁹ Again, this does not prove that a class of readers was not already in existence. Interestingly, Juynboll’s assumptions do not take into account nor deal with the profusion of Prophetic traditions and historical reports in which the equating of the *qurrāʾ* with the *ahl al-qurā* (villagers) is not supported contextually. He does propose, however, that ‘twenty-five years after the Battle of ʿAqrabāʾ the term *ḥamalat al-Qurʾān* was generally understood as indicating those who had memorised (part of) the Qurʾān, synonymous with *qurrāʾ*’. He argued that the ‘expression originally had another connotation’ which was ‘conveniently forgotten in the course of time’.⁹⁰ Thus where Shaban had refrained from classifying the chronological scope of the so-called connection between the *ahl al-qurā* and the *qurrāʾ*, Juynboll spoke of defined strictures in relation to perceptions of the term reader. Nevertheless, his study of the origins of the *qurrāʾ/ahl al-qurā* led him to conclude that the genuine extent of knowledge of the Qurʾan within the early Islamic community was misconstrued not only by classical Muslim scholarship but also in Western circles. This is a bold assertion given that not only is the synthesis of the sources initially employed to propose a theory about the role of villagers in the early tradition highly speculative, but the sources themselves are somewhat fragmentary.

A different approach to exploring the meaning of the term *qurrāʾ* in the early Islamic tradition was attempted by Norman Calder.⁹¹ He supported the general thrust of Shaban’s explanation regarding the misapprehension of certain references in the historical sources to the *qurrāʾ* and his suggestion that in these specified contexts the term did not connote individuals engaged in the recitation and memorisation of scripture. Calder sought to substantiate Shaban’s explanation further by adducing supplementary etymological proofs; he noted that Shaban’s attempt to place lexical distance between *ahl al-qurrāʾ* and *ahl al-qurā* together with his contention that the latter had been mistaken for skilled readers of scripture, was dismissed by modern scholarship as being morphologically unproven.⁹² He wanted to demonstrate that the

word *qurrā'* had a plausible derivation which distinguished it from the more conventional meaning of 'reader'. Calder's explanation was formulated using one of the homonymous meanings derived from the root of the verb *q-r-* (*qar'*), which denotes 'cyclical and recurrent phenomena'.⁹³ Applied in the context of the military activity of the early *qurrā'*, Calder suggested that it connoted temporary or seasonal troops as opposed to full-time professionals.⁹⁴ These members of the *qurrā'* (seasonal troops) were spending defined but shorter periods of service in the field.

Whether one can definitively reconcile this particular appraisal of the lexicographical facts with the numerous narratives found in the primary source material remains a disputable point, but this was not the purpose of Calder's study.⁹⁵ He did argue that it was inevitable that the historical narratives of the events of °Aqrabā', Bi'r Ma'ūna, and Şiffin had systematically developed over a long period. Taking into account contextual constraints, in the oldest layers of these narratives the word *qurrā'* meant 'periodical troops'. Thus in the case of the *qurrā'* at Bi'r Ma'ūna, the military aspect of their endeavours was misinterpreted and given a spiritual veneer: they were cast into being a group of 'pious and dedicated missionaries'. Despite the originality of Calder's argument, it does rely on an intense paraphrasing of the words employed in these narratives. This is demonstrated by the manner in which he deals with the phrasing found in one of the traditions '*kunnā nusammihim fi zamānihim al-qurrā'*'; the *zamānihim* phrase is translated as 'during their period of service' as opposed to 'in their day'. This then allows a translation of the whole sentence as 'we used to call such people during their period of service *qurrā'*'. Calder proposed that the word's semantic import was subsequently misunderstood, prompting a profusion of further explanatory glosses which became embedded in the original narrative, resulting in its organic growth through interpretive glosses.⁹⁶ It should be said, however, that the corpus of material to which such a synthesis of the data might be applied is nominal. It would presumably affect only those narratives in which literary accretions were discerned in the given versions of a story or narration. Judgements therein are based on the premise that the term *qurrā'* does not connote reader of scripture and that the emergence of readers is a later development; both points are debatable.⁹⁷ Calder's analysis presupposes that one is essentially dealing with the tangible development of the narratives and not the actual historicity of the events they recount; his belief that references to the *qurrā'* in certain narratives should be taken to mean periodical troops has to be understood with this provision in mind. It is difficult to see how his arguments impinge upon the vitality of the reading tradition given its extensive historical constituency.

Preserving the Connection with Readers

The research carried out by Martin Hinds on the subject of Kūfan political alignments in the seventh-century provides a survey of the *qurrā'*'s prominence in

this garrison town. Hinds's scrutiny of the role of the *qurrāʾ* attached greater religious significance to their political endeavours. Indeed, while Shaban's conclusions regarding the activity of the *qurrāʾ/ahl al-qurā* divested them of their role as readers of scripture, Hinds' separate study never seriously questions their original background as readers.⁹⁸ It has been suggested that Hinds drew 'an entirely new picture of the *qurrāʾ*', but one has to bear in mind that the canvas upon which this is sketched is one belonging to readers of scripture.⁹⁹ He was convinced that the term *qurrāʾ* possessed an emotive value even within the confines of the historical texts he explored. Hinds cited a reference in Ṭabarī's chronicles referring to the recitation of *Sūrat al-Anfāl* by a reader (*qārīʾ*) before the commencement of hostilities on the occasion of the Battle of Qādisiyya.¹⁰⁰ He concluded that these practices had their origins in the age of the Prophet.¹⁰¹ Hinds explained that the decision of the caliph ʿUmar to institute annual stipends of 2,000 dirhams for those who learnt the Qurʾan helped consolidate the emergence of a class of readers.¹⁰² It is interesting to note that although ʿUmar instituted the idea, he was then informed that people who had no motives other than financial ones had taken advantage of this scheme. Remarking that the first references to this group in Kūfa occurred in the context of the emerging discord among the garrison town's inhabitants due to the influx of newcomers, Hinds spoke at length of their modest backgrounds and the fact that their claim to status rested upon their military involvement in the conquest of Iraq. He explained that they were viewed by some within the establishment as being parvenus and that there prevailed a contemptuous attitude towards them. Similar points were raised by Shaban and Juynboll.¹⁰³

Hinds, along with Shaban, accepted that the variable changes in the population of Kūfa constituted a potential threat to the financial benefits enjoyed by the *qurrāʾ*. His exposition of the historical sources describing the endeavours of the *qurrāʾ* at Kūfa confirms their impact upon the fortunes of the patriarchal caliphate; and he spoke of a militant dimension to their endeavours; many of these *qurrāʾ* were implicated in the murder of ʿUthmān. They helped organise the opposition movement which led to his being besieged in the Prophet's mosque at Medina.¹⁰⁴ Hinds commented that the *qurrāʾ* were subsumed within the emergent Khārijī and Shīʿī movements.¹⁰⁵ He estimated that during ʿAlī's time they were more numerous, forming 'para-tribal elements' who were attached to fighting formations at battles such as Ṣiffin.¹⁰⁶ Yet, the essence of Hinds' conclusions was that Khārijī and Shīʿī opposition during these periods was aimed not against the central dominion of the caliphate, but against the increasing authority of tribal leaders 'through whom that central authority was exercised'.¹⁰⁷ The references to the *qurrāʾ* in Hinds' study are always anchored to a context which is Iraqi in provenance and hence his findings therein have a confined bearing as far as the general history of the reading tradition is concerned; this tradition does not rest solely on a Kūfan-Baṣran axis; its roots are more diverse and sophisticated. The *qurrāʾ* as a class of religious devotees were

predominant in locations external to Iraq such as Mecca, Medina and Damascus. A select review of the literature which scrutinised the stock of Qur'anic readings, including texts such as Farrā's *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān* and Ibn Mujāhid's *Kitāb al-sab'a*, confirms these cities' substantial contribution to the development and consolidation of the tradition of readings. Equally, the sources suggest that many Kūfan and Baṣran luminaries were trained by individuals in the Ḥijāz.¹⁰⁸

A Consensus Regarding the Identity of the *qurrā'*

The question of the identity of the *qurrā'* in the early Islamic tradition continues to intrigue modern scholarship. The traditional view of the *qurrā'* from these periods as readers who were prominent in all the episodes recounted by Shaban, but who were also noted for their status as pious reciters of scripture, remains an accepted opinion. Fred Donner sensed that Shaban's explanation claiming that the term *qurrā'* meant 'settled' villagers was suggestive if applied contextually. Nonetheless, he still felt inclined to endorse the traditional meaning of the term on the basis that the historical evidence cited for its reinterpretation was somewhat confined.¹⁰⁹ Other historians such as Michael Morony noted that many of the opponents of ʿUthmān were from the ranks of the *qurrā'* (Qur'an reciters), commenting that the exodus of a large number of these readers from Kūfa following the arbitration episode in the spring of 658 gave the movement its name (*khawārij*).¹¹⁰ Similar conclusions were reached by Hugh Kennedy who accepted that these readers were an important 'element in ʿAlī's army' and that some of them 'later became the nucleus of the Khārijite movement', a view recently echoed.¹¹¹ Wilferd Madelung's monograph devoted to reviewing the issue of the succession to the Prophet consistently defines the *qurrā'* as distinguished readers of scripture, particularly in the instances highlighted by Shaban, Juynboll and Calder. He stated that Qur'an reciters 'were for the most part among ʿAlī's most vigorous supporters'; oddly, Madelung made no mention of the disagreements regarding the meaning of the term and its disputed etymology.¹¹² Mahmoud Ayoub meanwhile remonstrated that Shaban's whole approach to the interpretation of the sources of Islamic history neglected their moral and religious significance; he suggested that it led to a theory about the *qurrā'* which had neither historical nor linguistic bases.¹¹³ Ayoub appears to see Shaban's analysis as focusing on the identification of the political opposition to ʿUthmān's caliphate and his description of it. Ayoub construed this opposition as representing something far more sophisticated and profound. It should be said, however, that Shaban's assessment of this period is much broader in its historical sweep and the caliphate of ʿUthmān is just one of many focal points in its sights.

John Wansbrough proposed the idea that the early *qurrā'*, such as those who are mentioned in the context of Bi'r Ma'ūna and Ṣiffīn, may have been 'bearers of the Qur'an' in the literal sense of the word, although this view is predicated on the

devotional and cultic function of scripture as an instrument of exhortation; it emphasises the talismanic importance of scripture. Wansbrough deduced that the *qurrāʾ*'s conspicuous presence in later literary narratives plainly served doctrinal purposes.¹¹⁴ The term *qurrāʾ* was seen by Gerald Hawting as acquiring 'a significant religious hue'. He remarked that historical narratives presented them as religious enthusiasts; nonetheless, in his guarded approach to the treatment of the sources, the nature of these texts' composition and transmission remains a point of contention.¹¹⁵ Researchers such as Tilman Nagel and Jan Retsö were prepared to identify the *qurrāʾ* as originally being villagers as opposed to readers, particularly in the historical episodes highlighted by Shaban.¹¹⁶ It was even suggested that to maintain otherwise would be absurd.¹¹⁷ This may well be the case for confined instances, but when such examples are awarded broader significance complications do arise.¹¹⁸

The *qurrāʾ* and the Tradition of Linguistic Thought

The *qurrāʾ* as a group of religious devotees are also linked to developments in the tradition of Arabic linguistic thought. The rudimentary forms of linguistic analysis, which were closely tied to orthographical improvements relating to the text of the Qur'an, are said to have been pioneered by scholars from among their ranks. Readers had established the traditions of Qur'anic readings (*variae lectiones*) and studies of the sacred text associated with the centres and garrison towns of the early Islamic tradition. They fashioned a very functional approach to exploring linguistic constructs, developing rudimentary models and techniques of analysis which were adapted to the service of scripture, especially in terms of its physical preservation.¹¹⁹ The earliest generations of grammarians and philologists, who are credited with having placed linguistic thought on a more systematic and abstract plane, are identified as having been initially trained in the discipline of Qur'anic readings by individuals among the *qurrāʾ*.¹²⁰ The extensive network of scholarship within the field of Qur'anic readings brought many of these individuals into contact. There were also common areas of scholarship which intrinsically linked the two traditions. An awareness of basic linguistic concepts and scholarship is not restricted to Kūfa and Baṣra, although traditional histories of linguistic thought always begin with the Iraqī milieu as their point of focus. The Baṣrans are typically portrayed as being influential and innovative in terms of their linguistic accomplishments. The revolutionary approach to a theory of language refined by Sībawayhi (d. 177/793) is accentuated as an accomplished achievement in the field of Arabic linguistic thought.¹²¹ His work entitled *al-Kitāb* is the oldest surviving text of Arabic grammar. It utilised a rich stock of existing linguistic concepts and grammatical terminology, although, in the words of one writer, this would not have detracted from the unique status of the *Kitāb* and its unparalleled conceptual refinements.¹²² In contrast, Kūfan linguists are depicted as being less inventive and creative.¹²³ A formidable rivalry

did exist between the two cities, serving as a template for later attempts to accentuate the notions of linguistic competition among Kūfan and Baṣran luminaries.¹²⁴ Against this setting, it is implied that readers were associated with espousing antiquated approaches to the study of language and that 'grammarians viewed the pious reciters (*qurrā'*) as amateurs lacking in linguistic competence'.¹²⁵

Structuring an argument around these observations, Kees Versteegh examined attitudes among Baṣran and Kūfan grammarians towards the *qurrā'* and Qur'anic readings in their respective traditions of linguistic thought.¹²⁶ Versteegh concluded that Baṣran grammarians such as Sībawayhi adopted a negative attitude towards the linguistic ideas of readers, even those who were associated with his home city.¹²⁷ He asserted that Baṣran attempts to develop a general theory of language did not accord Qur'anic readings the importance awarded to them by Kūfan grammarians, whom he viewed as being close to the tradition of grammatical thought associated with the *qurrā'*. Versteegh remarked that the 'negative reputation of the readers in the Baṣran mainstream' should not be seen as a consequence of the 'general unpopularity of the readers in society at large', but rather there existed an alternative explanation for their unpopularity.¹²⁸ The notion that readers (who are defined as experts on the recitation of scripture) were unpopular in society is rather illusory, especially if it is based upon the explanations presented by Shaban, Juynboll and Calder. This is because the gist of these explanations rests on the axiom that these individuals were 'villagers' and not 'readers'.¹²⁹ There are chronological strictures underpinning these explanations. The recurrent motif of the unpopularity of the *qurrā'*, as recorded in these assessments, has little bearing on attitudes to readers within the traditions of linguistic thought and Qur'anic readings. Juynboll emphasised the low social standing of these individuals, but he is referring to those villagers who were masquerading as readers. Such 'villagers' were purportedly detested for their propensity to rebellion and disorder. Notwithstanding the restricted context to Juynboll's analysis, the so-called unpopularity which results from the antics of these readers (villagers) can hardly be said to reflect upon the reading tradition as a whole. Similar strictures govern Shaban's references to the unpopularity of the *ahl al-qurā'*. Individual readers from indigenous locations such as Mecca, Medina, Baṣra, Kūfa and Damascus were distinguished for their élite roles as luminaries of the reading tradition and the literature of *qirā'āt* is principally concerned with these individuals' contributions in this respect. Criticism of certain readers does occur in the literature of the grammarians and philologists, although this is articulated in the context of the latter group's defence of grammatical theories and ideas which infringed upon established readings of the Qur'an defended by the *qurrā'*; the character of this criticism is of an entirely different disposition.

Versteegh indicated that it was possible to seek another explanation for the so-called 'unpopularity' of the *qurrā'*, particularly in terms of attitudes towards their linguistic

thought within the Baṣran grammatical tradition. He stated that 'they overstepped their bounds, so to speak, by claiming on the basis of their ability to memorise and recite the text of the Qur'an a position they had no right to.' He then reasoned that 'the Baṣrans put an end to their pretensions by pointing out the silly linguistic mistakes they made'; he went on to add, 'the Kūfan grammarians, who were stupid enough to regard the readers as authorities in linguistic matters, underwent the same fate'.¹³⁰ This view overlooks not only the linguistic criticism of readers as found in extant Kūfan grammatical texts, but it also disregards the fact that Baṣran readers continued to be closely associated with the Baṣran tradition of linguistic thought throughout its history; indeed, they are directly identified with its inception.¹³¹ Despite the paucity of the surviving legacy of early Kūfan linguistic sources and the arguments regarding the historicity of the notion of schools, it is evident that a rational schema of linguistic thought was expounded upon by individuals subsequently associated with the Kūfan tradition.¹³² They made telling contributions to linguistic discourse. While Versteegh's study of the sequence of trends in the early grammatical tradition represents a resourceful and instructive way of exploring the genesis of its constructs along with attitudes to the linguistic thought of readers, the issue of the so-called unpopularity of the *qurrā'* is seemingly immaterial and serves as an inappropriate setting for its paradigms.¹³³ Attitudes towards the linguistic thought of readers together with the nature of their influence and endeavours are far more complex than hitherto implied.

Conclusions

The debate regarding the religious identity of the *qurrā'* and their relative expertise in the recitation and memorisation of scripture is governed by preconceptions regarding the imposing significance of the political events of the early years of the caliphate as defined by the Iraqi milieu. This situation tends to obscure a much broader setting which encompasses the historical roots of the reading tradition. Despite that, one must ask where do theories regarding the political and military machinations of these particular *qurrā'* leave those individuals categorically associated with expertise in scripture. Perceptions of the early *qurrā'* will always be ingenuously shaped by the practical and theoretical accomplishments of later generations of readers who devoted themselves to collating, verifying, and synthesising the stock of *qirā'āt*, developing the linguistic constructs to facilitate such aspirations. Yet, such realities should not detract from the fact that the earliest generations of readers were already distinguished by virtue of their close connection and involvement with the memorisation and recitation of scripture; they are symbolic individuals as far as the classical tradition is concerned. Shaban was not preoccupied with readers as scholars of scripture nor was he concerned with their exclusive historical roots in the Islamic tradition. He focused on those individuals among the so-called *qurrā'ahl al-qurā'* whose political meandering and military

involvement left an indelible print on the political landscape of the early Islamic caliphate. Once he identified members of the *qurrā'* with villagers (*ahl al-qurā'*), the inferred distinction was applied for the rest of his treatment of this early period.¹³⁴ This was a somewhat reductive approach. Accordingly, Shaban was perfunctorily connected with the equating of all members of the *qurrā'* from this early period with the so-called *ahl al-qurā'* and cast as being an iconoclast.¹³⁵ He appositely asked some compelling questions of the sources; however, he did not satisfactorily deal with the issues his questions raise. Indeed, therein lay the flaws in Shaban's thesis: it had failed not only to account for the true classes of readers and their provenance within the same tradition, but it also neglected to define critically the range of instances governed by his own thesis. Even if one were to disentangle the so-called *ahl al-qurā'* from the *qurrā'*, maintaining a distinction between the two groups, this does not strictly undermine the historical existence of a concomitant class of readers. Indeed, the presence of a class of readers is the *sine qua non* for key aspects of Shaban's thesis: the *ahl al-qurā'* and the *ahl al-ayyām* to whom he referred were said to have manipulated the prestige of their namesakes who were readers in order to buttress their waning prestige.¹³⁶ Juynboll's radical extension of Shaban's thesis was governed by chronological strictures; he acknowledged that in the aftermath of the caliphate of ʿAlī, references to the *qurrā'* incontrovertibly implied readers of scripture.¹³⁷ The conclusions reached by Calder were based on a literary analysis of citations in specific instances. Thus, where Juynboll and Calder used confined examples to propound a theory about the meaning of the term *qurrā'*, surmising that it originally connoted either villagers or periodical troops, the indistinct evidence which is adduced to support their arguments fails to dislodge readers from their historical berth within the Islamic tradition. It is evident that the socio-political events of Iraq had paradoxically deflected attention from an inveterate tradition of reader scholarship which sources indicate had its origins in the Ḥijāz. A rich and sophisticated tradition of Qur'anic readings was developed in the garrison towns of the Islamic state but it drew its inspiration from the legacy of precedents and conventions defined by the first generations of readers. The fact that the flourishing and advancement of the reading tradition were able to take place against the backdrop of political and social upheaval ironically intimates that current scholarship far from overestimating the true state of knowledge of the Qur'an during these earlier periods has undervalued the levels of perfection achieved within the early tradition.¹³⁸ The denouement posits that the intricacy, precision and rigour which had been qualities of the developed tradition of Qur'anic readings served as testimony to a much earlier legacy of sustained and devout interest in the sacred text.

NOTES

1 See the introductions to the following works: Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *Maʿrifat al-qurrā' al-kibār*, ed. M. Jād al-Ḥaqq, 1st edn (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1968); Muḥammad ibn

Muhammad al-Damashqī ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr fī'l-qirā'āt al-ʿashr*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Dabbāʿ (2 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, n.d.); Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qaṣṭalānī, *Latāʾif al-ishārāt li-funūn al-qirā'āt*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr Shāhīn and ʿĀmir al-Sayyid ʿUṭhmān (2 vols. Cairo: Lajnat Ihya' al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1972). See also Paul Kahle, 'The Arabic Readers of the Qurʾān', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 8 (1949), pp. 65–71; W. Montgomery Watt, *Introduction to the Qurʾān*, Islamic Surveys (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 47. He described them as 'a special class of men, who specialised in memorising the sacred text'; Daniel A. Madigan, *The Qurʾān's Self-Image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture* (New York: Princeton, 2001), p. 25, p. 68; Marshall Hodgson's *The Venture of Islam* (3 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), vol. 1, pp. 161f, p. 199, p. 209, p. 213, p. 215, p. 254; Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 99, who describes them as private students of religion who were without office and institutional means of support; cf. Julius Wellhausen, *The Religio-Political Factions in Early Islam*, ed. R.C. Ostle, trans. R.C. Ostle and S.M. Walzer (Amsterdam, Oxford: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1975), pp. 1–15; Jan Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their History from the Assyrians to the Umayyads* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p. 49, p. 50, p. 51, p. 61. T. Nagel, art. 'Qurʾān' in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), vol. 5, pp. 499–500; C. Melchert and A. Afsaruddin, art. 'Reciters of the Qurʾān', in J.D. McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004), vol. 4, pp. 386–93; cf. Fred Leemhuis' 'The Koran and its Exegesis: From Memorising to Learning' in Jan Wimmem Drijvers and Alasdair A. MacDonald (eds), *Centres of Learning: Learning and Location in Pre-Modern Europe and the Near East* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), pp. 91–102. See also William Graham 'Qurʾān as Spoken Word: An Islamic Contribution to the Understanding of Scripture' in R. Martin (ed.), *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (University of Arizona Press: 1985), pp. 23–40; Michael Cook, *The Koran, A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 73f; F. Denny, 'Exegesis and Recitation: Their Development as Classical Forms of Qurʾānic Piety' in Frank E. Reynolds and T. Ludwig (eds), *Transitions and Transformations in the History of Religion: Essays in Honour of Joseph M. Kitagawa* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980) pp. 91–123; F. Denny 'The Adab of Quran Recitation: Text and Context' in A. Johns (ed.), *International Congress for the Study of the Qurʾān* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1982), pp. 143–60.

2 Muhammad Shaban, *Islamic History: A New Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 23, pp. 50–1.

3 Earlier attempts to examine this issue included R. Brünnow's examination of the political significance of the early Khārījī movement within the context of the Umayyad dynasty. He did attempt to qualify the role of the *qurrā'* within this political movement; however, his views were summarily dismissed by Julius Wellhausen, who retained the historical background of readers as being skilled readers inspired in their politics by scripture. R. Brünnow, *Die Charidschiten unter der ersten Omayyaden* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1884); cf. Nagel, art. 'Qurʾān', p. 499; cf. Wellhausen, *The Religio-Political Factions in Early Islam*, pp. 11–13. See also Wellhausen's *The Arab Kingdom and its Fall*, republished (London: Curzon, 1986); Reynold Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1998), pp. 209–11.

4 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 22.

5 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 22. The caliph Abū Bakr had assertively launched a series of campaigns against tribes who had refused to pay alms to the state's treasury. The wide-scale nature of the rebellion was reflected in the fact that key tribes from central, north-eastern, and southern parts of the Arabian peninsula were involved in its instigation. See Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century*, 6th imp. (London: Longman, 1986), pp. 50–7. Note also E. Shoufani, *Al-*

Riddah and The Muslim Conquest of Arabia (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972). See the entry on *Ridda* in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*; cf. Albrecht Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994), pp. 28–30. The translations of these accounts are found in *The History of Ṭabarī Volume X, The Conquest of Arabia*, translated and annotated by Fred M. Donner (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 105–45.

6 See Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul waʾl-mulūk*, 2nd edn (8 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1990), vol. 2, pp. 253–305; Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. Raḍwān Muḥammad Raḍwān (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1983), pp. 103–15. These included the tribes of Ghaṭafān, Asad, Tamīm, and Banū Ḥanifa.

7 Lexicographical evidence adduced by Shaban included a reference to the supra-commentary on *Taʾrīkh al-Yamīnī* containing the phrase *jāʿanī kullu bād wa-qār*, referring to those who alight in villages and Bedouin encampments; the plural of *qār* is *qurrāʾ*. *Hadhā sharḥ al-Yamīnī al-musammā biʾl-Faṭḥ al-wahbī ʿalā taʾrīkh al-Yamīnī* (2 vols. Cairo, 1286 A.H.), vol. 2, p. 207. See Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 51, n.1. It is difficult to accept the authority of this reference.

8 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 23.

9 Shaban, *Islamic History*, pp. 51f.

10 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul waʾl-mulūk*, vol. 2, p. 281. See p. 123 of Donner's translation: 'The killing became intense among the people of the settlements.' See also Fred Donner, 'The Role of Nomads in the Near East in Late Antiquity (400–800 C.E.)' in F.E. Peters (ed.), *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam, The Formation of the Classical Islamic World Series* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 21–33.

11 A number of writers had been sceptical of the traditional accounts of the collection of the Qur'an and the reference to fatalities among readers at Yamāma. Leone Caetani had cast doubts as to the qualification of these individual *qurrāʾ*, contending that the majority among many of those killed in the decisive battles such as those at Yamāma and ʿAqrabāʾ were not necessarily noted in the subsequent classical literature as having memorised the Qur'an nor had they excelled in its exposition: L. Caetani, *Annali dell' Islam* (10 vols. Milan: 1905–26), vol. 2 and 3 (years 11–12 A.H.). A similar conclusion was reached by Theodore Nöldeke and Friedrich Schwally in *Geschichte des Qorāns*, 2nd edn (Leipzig, 1909–38), p. 20. Schwally recalled that only two so-called readers from among those killed at Yamāma were noted for having memorised the text. John Burton argued that the collection reports were a means of placing distance between the Prophet and the actual editorship of the Qur'anic text: *The Collection of the Qur'an* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 118–21. The materials are said to have been generated by legal arguments; cf. Harald Motzki, 'The Collection of the Qur'an: A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments', *Der Islam* (2001), pp. 2–34, see pp. 7–9 for a discussion of the Yamāma account. See also John Burton's article on 'The Collection of the Qur'an' in the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an* vol. 1, pp. 351–61, pp. 355f, p. 358. See Fred Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 82–90. The role of readers in the collection story is defended by Abū Bakr ibn Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī in *al-Intiṣār liʾl-Qurʾān*, ed. M. al-Quḍāh (2 vols. Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2001), vol. 1, pp. 64–5, p. 89. See Wilferd Madelung's *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 28–56. Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 45, p. 50, p. 51, p. 67. Abū Bakr's collection is said to have been retained by the caliph. See H. Motzki, 'The Collection of the Qur'an', pp. 7–10, for a discussion of Abū Bakr's putative collection; cf. Montgomery Watt's *Introduction to the Qur'an*, pp. 40–2.

12 See Ibn Abī Dawūd al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1985), pp. 12–13; cf. the accounts of the collection in Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī's *al-Jāmiʿ*

al-musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ, incorporated in *al-Kutub al-sitta: mawsū'at al-ḥadīth al-sharīf*, ed. Ṣāliḥ ibn °Abd al-°Azīz Āl-Shaykh (Riyādh: Dār al-Salām, 1999). See the chapter on *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* (*B. Jam' al-Qur'ān*), traditions 4986 and 4987, pp. 432–3. Also see Ibn Ḥajar's commentary *Fath al-bārī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (15 vols. Riyādh, Damascus: Dār al-Salām, Dār al-Fayḥā, 2000, based on edited manuscripts of °Abd Allāh ibn Bāz and Fu'ād °Abd al-Bāqī), vol. 9, pp. 14–28. See Michael Cook, *Studies in the Origins of Early Islamic Culture and Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2004), part 10: 'The Opponents of the Writing of Tradition in Early Islam', pp. 437–530, especially pp. 489–91; cf. Harald Motzki (ed.), *Hadīth: Origins and Development*, The Formation of the Classical Islamic World Series (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), pp. xiii–liii. His most recent study is Harald Motzki, 'Dating Muslim Traditions: A Survey', *Arabica* 52:2 (2005), pp. 204–53; cf. Herbert Berg (ed.), *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins*, Islamic History and Civilization, Studies and Texts, Vol. 49 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2003). The articles by Berg and Motzki offer opposing views regarding the authenticity of traditions. See also Gregor Schoeler, 'Mündliche Thora und Ḥadīth im Islam, Überlieferung, Schreibverbot, Redaktion', *Der Islam* 66 (1989), pp. 213–51, translated in the aforementioned volume, pp. 67–108; cf. Harald Motzki, 'The Author and His Work in the Islamic Literature of the First Centuries: The Case of °Abd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaḥ*', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 28 (2003), pp. 171–201. Scott Lucas, *Constructive Critics, Ḥadīth Literature, and the Articulation of Sunnī Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004), pp. 9–13, pp. 113–56. Somewhat pertinent is Andrew Rippin's judgement regarding the relative authenticity of early technical nomenclature: speculation regarding the significance of these terms could prove to be of little value if their phrasing had been subjected to editorial reformulation and interpolation over ensuing centuries. Andrew Rippin (Miscellen), 'Studying Early *Tafsīr* Texts', *Der Islam* 72:2 (1995), pp. 310–23, reprinted in *The Qur'ān and its Interpretive Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2000).

13 Albrecht Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994), p. xi.

14 Hugh Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs: Military and Society in the Early Islamic State* (London, New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 3–6, especially p. 3.

15 Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs*, p. 3. The narratives for many of the episodes in early Islamic history are invariably sourced to the works of individuals who were credited with having compiled their own *sīra* or *maghāzī* monographs, such as °Urwa ibn al-Zubayr (d. 94/713), Abān ibn °Uthmān (d. 105/723), Shuraḥbīl ibn Sa'd (d. 123/740), Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri (d. 124/742), Mūsā ibn °Uqba (d. 141/758), Ma'mar ibn Rāshid (d. 150/767) and Muḥammad ibn Ishāq (d. 150/767). See Muḥammad ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, ed. R. Tajaddud, 3rd edn (Beirut: Dār al-Masīra, 1988), pp. 101–15. Later historians such as °Awāna ibn al-Ḥakam (d. 147/764), Abū Mikhnaḥ (d. 157/774), Sayf ibn °Umar (d. 180/796), Haytham ibn °Adī (ca. 130–209/748–824), Muḥammad ibn °Umar al-Wāqidi (d. 207/822), Madā'ini (d. 215/830), Muḥammad ibn Sa'd (d. 230/845) and Khalifa ibn Khayyāt (d. 240/854) appeared as the authors of monographs devoted to specific themes and events in Islamic history, relying on the materials of earlier authorities while also 'supplementing' sources. These historical materials served as a matrix of sources utilised by historians of the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries, including writers such as Balādhuri (d. 279/892), Ya'qūbi (d. 284/897), Dīnawari (d. 296/908), Ibn al-A°tham (d. 314/926), Mas°udi (d. 345/956) and Ṭabarī. In the case of Ya'qūbi, Dīnawari, and Mas°udi, syntheses of the materials and narratives were presented discarding the use of *asānīd*. Ṭabarī preserved verbatim large-scale quotations from earlier materials to the extent that many original texts are known only through secondary citation.

16 Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs*, p. 3.

17 See Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 30–2. A more cautious approach to the early

authorship of such works is set out by Chase Robinson in *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 23–5. The implication is that such writers were operating against a backdrop of opposition to writing. See pp. 28–35 for a discussion of the way in which earlier historical thought and literature were subsumed in later works. Also see R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History* (London and New York: I.B. Taurus, 1997), pp. 69–103; Stefan Leder, 'Authorship and Transmission in Unauthored Literature: The *Akhbār* Attributed to al-Haytham ibn 'Adī', *Oriens* 31 (1988), pp. 67–81; Martin Hinds, 'Sayf ibn 'Umar's Sources on Arabia' in *Sources for the History of Arabia*, Part 2 (Riyadh: University of Riyadh Press, 1979), pp. 3–16, reproduced in G. Hawting, J. Bere, P. Crone (eds), *Studies in Early Islamic History*, pp. 143–59. In this Hinds assessed Sayf's reliability as a transmitter; he also reviews Tabarī's use of his sources. Landau Tasserou, 'Sayf ibn 'Umar in Medieval and Modern Scholarship', *Der Islam* 67 (1990), pp. 1–26. See also Marianne Engle Cameron, 'Sayf at First: the Transmission of Sayf ibn 'Umar in al-Ṭabarī and Ibn 'Asākir' in *Ibn 'Asākir and Early Islamic History* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 2001), pp. 62–77. Wilferd Madelung, 'Abū 'Ubayda Ma'amar B. Muthannā as a Historian', *Journal of Islamic Studies* 3:1 (1992), pp. 47–56.

18 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 50.

19 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 51. See also p. 23. It was the decision of the second caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb to allow these previously out of favour tribes to take part in the conquests, reversing the policy of his predecessor.

20 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 50, p. 51, p. 67. Shaban remarked that these tribes were not placed in positions of leadership and authority.

21 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, vol. 2, p. 634. In one report reference is made to *wujūh ahl al-ayyām*, *wa-ahl al-qādisiyya*, *wa-qurrā' ahl al-Baṣra* in the same passage; this distinction is maintained in other citations: see vol. 2, p. 613. See also *al-Tamhīd wa'l-bayān fī maqāt al-shahīd 'Uthmān* by the Andalusian scholar Muḥammad ibn Yahyā (d. 741/1340) (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1964), p. 47. On p. 55 of the same text the phrase *qurrā' ahl al-Miṣr* is used in place of *Baṣra*. The historical sources also state that some of their opponents are referred to as *ahl al-qurā*. See Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 23. Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, vol. 2, p. 283, p. 286. Also see Ira Lapidus's review of this work and his comments regarding the *qurrā'* in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5:3 (1974), pp. 374–7; cf. Sir Hamilton Alexander Gibb, 'An Interpretation of Islam' in Stanford J. Shaw and William R. Polk (eds), *Studies on the Civilisation of Islam* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Limited, 1962), pp. 3–33.

22 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 51.

23 Al-Khaṭṭāb al-Baghdādī's review of the Sawād in the introduction to *Ta'rikh Baghdād* (14 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.). See also the section on the Sawād in *Kitāb al-kharāj* by the Kūfan reader Yahyā ibn 'Ādam (d. 203/829), ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, n.d.), pp. 48–52.

24 This is a recurrent theme in Juynboll's study of the *qurrā'*. Shaban, *Islamic History*, pp. 53f.

25 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 53; cf. Fred Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, pp. 221–50. The settlement of these areas was encouraged as part of the state's policy to provide bases for further conquests. The new arrivals in Kūfa, who are referred to in the sources as the *rawādif*, did not receive the levels of payment conferred on the *qurrā'*.

26 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 55.

27 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, vol. 2, p. 637. The historical sources show they were most perturbed to find 'Uthmān's governor describe the Sawād as the precincts (*bustān*) of the Quraysh.

28 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 67.

29 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 67.

30 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul waʾl-mulūk*, vol. 2, pp. 637–8.

31 He was later selected to represent ʿAlī at the arbitration talks resulting from the impasse at Šiffin. Shaban, *Islamic History*, pp. 68f. Note Noth's comments regarding the recurrent motifs inherent in narratives which refer to the replacement of governors and the difficulties in identifying the kernel of truth in such reports. Noth, *The Early Historical Tradition*, pp. 21–2.

32 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 73. The events which followed the assassination of ʿUthmān allow Shaban to locate in these political manoeuvrings a minor religious role for these individuals, although it would seem to have little to do with their presumed status as readers of scripture. In one instance, Shaban refers to the *qurrā'* in the context of their expedient interpretation of the Qur'an. Classical sources maintain that a sizable contingent of the *qurrā'* was present at Šiffin. They are said to have been represented in both camps as they are referred to in the narratives as '*qurrā' ahl al-ʿIrāq*' and '*qurrā' ahl al-Shām*'. Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul waʾl-mulūk*, vol. 3, p. 79, p. 82, p. 88, p. 89, pp. 90f, p. 94. It is even suggested that due to their strategic position on the battlefield, serving in the front ranks of the respective warring parties, they initially formed a human barrier preventing the escalation of skirmishes while discussions among the disputants ensued. See Abū Fidā' al-Ḥāfiẓ ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya waʾl-nihāya*, ed. A. Muḥim, A. ʿAṭwī, F. Sayyid, M. Nāṣir al-Dīn and A. ʿAbd al-Sātir (8 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1986), vol. 4 (7–8), part 7, pp. 269–70; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, part 7, pp. 283ff. See his section devoted to *raf' ahl-Shām al-maṣāḥif*, p. 284. Ibn Kathīr quotes Ṭabarī's sources along with other works: cf. Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul waʾl-mulūk*, vol. 3, pp. 101–8. In one report narrated by Imām Aḥmad on the authority of Ḥabīb ibn Abī Thābit, who was said to have been at the battle, it is explained why the fighting came to an abrupt end; he mentioned the raising of the *muṣḥaf* incident: Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, part 7, pp. 283f. Ṭabarī mentions the role of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ in suggesting the raising of the *maṣāḥif*: Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul waʾl-mulūk*, vol. 3, p. 101. Abū Mikhnaf is the source for these reports. On that day 20,000 Syrians were said to have been killed; while the Iraqis lost 40,000 men. As for the numbers involved, 85,000 were said to have been on Muʿāwiya's side and ʿAlī's army included some 90,000 men. See Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa maʿādin al-jawhar*, ed. Qāsim al-Rifāʿī (4 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1989), vol. 2, pp. 374–5. It was the *qurrā'* among ʿAlī's forces who called for a positive response, p. 285. The contradiction here is that the *khawārij* are equated with the *qurrā'*; yet the former are said to have been against arbitration and the latter for it. Wellhausen explains the *volte face* in terms of their realising the futility of the arbitration agreement, thus dismissing the objections of Brünnow. Wellhausen, *The Religio-Political Factions in Early Islam*, p. 14. The Arabic text devoted to this battle is the work ascribed to Naṣr ibn Muẓāḥim al-Minqārī *Waqʿat Šiffin*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Ḥārūn (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1962). See Martin Hinds's article entitled 'The Šiffin Arbitration Agreement', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 17 (1972), pp. 93–113, republished in Jere Bacharach, Lawrence I. Conrad and Patricia Crone (eds), *Studies in Early Islamic History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 56–96. A synthesis of the account of Šiffin is presented in E.L. Peterson's '*Alī and Muʿāwiya in Early Arabic Tradition*' (Copenhagen, 1964); see also his earlier article 'ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya: The Rise of the Umayyad Caliphate 656–661', *Acta Orientalia* 23 (1959), pp. 157–96. Note the comments regarding Peterson's findings in Humphreys' *Islamic History*, p. 77. Noth maintains that it is possible to link the raising of the *muṣḥaf* episode at Šiffin with *topoi* borrowed from the Sasanian tradition. He refers to the fact that in a battle between two parties a contract is impaled on lances. See Albrecht Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition*, p. 172.

33 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul waʾl-mulūk*, vol. 3, p. 101. Also Naṣr ibn Muẓāḥim, *Waqʿat Šiffin*, p. 188, p. 222, p. 499. See Aḥmad ibn Dāwūd al-Dīnawarī, *al-Akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, ed. ʿAbd al-

Mun'im °Āmir (Cairo: n.p., 1959), p. 192, also his entry in Abū °Abd Allāh Ya°qūb ibn °Abd Allāh Yāqūt al-Ĥamawī, *Mu°jam al-udabā°* (5 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-°Ilmiyya, 1991), vol. 1, pp. 352–6. We read about their gathering to read the Qur'an from a *muṣḥaf* before choosing arbitrators; cf. Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, *Waq°at Siffīn*, p. 499, see Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, part 7, pp. 283ff. Mu°āwiya fears that all the *qurrā°* among his ranks will pledge allegiance to °Alī. See Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). The English translation of Ṭabarī's account of this event can be viewed in selections from *The First Civil War: From the Battle of Ṣiffīn to the Death of °Alī A.D.656–661/A.H.36–40 (Ta°rikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk)*, translated and annotated by G.R. Hawting (New York: State University of New York, 1996). See Hawting's comments regarding the meaning attached to the term *muṣḥaf* at this juncture in history; one needs to bear in mind that the nature of variances was ever so slight and thus °Uthmān's promulgation of his *textus receptus* of the Qur'an does not present a logistical difficulty of the type implied by Hawting. See p. 78, n. 319.

34 See the *Musnad* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, ed. S.T. Majdhūb (10 vols. Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1992), vol. 1, pp. 104–5. The decision to accept arbitration had profound, social, political and theological implications. See Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Ash°arī's *Maqālāt al-Islamiyyīn*, ed. Muḥammad °Abd al-Ḥamīd (2 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Ma°ārif, 1987), vol. 1, pp. 60–4. See the section on the *Khawārij*, pp. 167–85. °Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-firaq*, ed. Ibrāhīm Ramaḍān (Beirut: Dār al-Ma°rifa, 2001), pp. 78–96.

35 Ṭabarī, *Ta°rikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, vol. 3, p. 101. Abū Mikhnaf was considered a specialist in the history of Iraq. He had numerous works attributed to him, including a text on the Wars of Apostasy and a work on the Battle of Ṣiffīn. Refer to Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu°jam al-udabā°*, vol. 5, pp. 29–30.

36 Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, part 7, pp. 283ff. A similar expression, 'swords over their shoulders', is found in the work of the medieval historian Mas°ūdī; °Amr ibn al-°Āṣ is the figure who advised the Syrians to raise their *maṣāḥif* and 500 copies were used to do this. Mas°ūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, vol. 2, pp. 375f, p. 387; Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, *Waq°at Siffīn*, pp. 478–90. Hamilton Gibb described the *qurrā°* as constituting the 'religious party'. See Sir Hamilton Alexander Gibb, 'An Interpretation of Islam', pp. 3–33.

37 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 51.

38 This contrasts with the analysis provided by Wellhausen who sees Qur'an readers as being prominent at all these major junctures in Islamic history. Wellhausen, *The Religio-Political Factions in Early Islam*, pp. 13f.

39 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 51.

40 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 89; cf. Keith Lewinstein, 'The Azāriqa in Islamic Heresiography', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 54:2 (1991), pp. 251–68; cf. Gerald Hawting's *The First Dynasty of Islam* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 28–9; Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, pp. 78–9.

41 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 76.

42 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 77.

43 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 89. He describes these executions as the first political ones of their kind.

44 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 94; cf. Hawting's *The First Dynasty of Islam*, pp. 51f; Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphate*, pp. 94–9.

45 Shaban, *Islamic History*, pp. 94f; Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliph*, p. 25, pp. 36–8; Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphate*, pp. 95–7; Aḥmad ibn Dāwūd al-Dīnawarī, *al-Akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, pp. 288–308.

46 Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliph*, pp. 38f.

47 Shaban, *Islamic History*, pp. 95f.

48 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 103, note also pp. 104–5. He mentions that remnants of the *qurrā*³, who survived Nahrawān and fled to Mawṣil, in due course revolted during the rule of °Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān. This group led by Shabīb ibn Yazīd ibn Nu°mān entered Kūfa, and he prayed in its main mosque, reciting from the Qur'an its two largest chapters. This hints that expertise on the recitation and memorisation of scripture was common among this group. See pp. 107f. For a review of the main Khārījī sects see °Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milāl wa'l-nihāl*, ed. A.F. Muḥammad (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-°Ilmiyya, 1992). Note Patricia Crone and Fritz Zimmermann, *The Epistle of Sālim ibn Dhakwān* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 186–94, pp. 195–217, for an analysis of the development of the different Khārījite groups: see pp. 84–97 for an account of the early *fitna*; cf. Patricia Crone, *God's Rule* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 54–64.

49 Dīnawarī stated that following the decision to accept arbitration, Syrian and Iraqī members of the *qurrā*³ congregated at Šiffīn, reading scripture. Dīnawarī and the historian of Šiffīn, Naṣr ibn Muẓāḥim (d. 203/818–9) mention that around 400 *qurrā*³ from the companions of °Abd Allāh ibn Mas°ūd asked °Alī's permission to be excluded from the fighting at Šiffīn, expressing their disapproval of the turn of events. Why would such pro-°Alid sources highlight such objections? Aḥmad ibn Dāwūd al-Dīnawarī, *al-Akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, see p. 165, p. 192.

50 Ibn al-Ash°ath's father was a leading *ridḍa* rebel. Ṭabarī, *Ta°rīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, vol. 3, p. 81; Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 107, pp. 110–11, cf. p. 51; Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphate*, p. 101; Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliph*, p. 34, p. 40; Gerald Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam*, pp. 67–8.

51 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī tā°rīkh al-umam wa'l-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad °Abd al-Qādir Aṭā° and Muṣṭafā °Abd al-Qādir Aṭā° (17 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-°Ilmiyya, 1992), vol. 6, p. 318; vol. 7, pp. 7–10.

52 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 6, pp. 211–49.

53 Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa'l-nihāya*, vol. 5 (part 9), pp. 43–5. Wāqidi serves as the source of this account. In one report it is stated that on the day of the battle, Ibn al-Ash°ath placed Jabala ibn Zaḥar in charge of the *qurrā*³ and included in their ranks were Sa°id ibn Jubayr, °Āmir al-Sha°bī, and °Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Laylā; all eminent readers and scholars. See p. 44.

54 Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa'l-nihāya*, vol. 5 (Part 9), pp. 101–3. See Gerald Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam*, p. 69.

55 Abū'l-°Abbās Muḥammad ibn Yazīd al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil*, ed. Muḥammad al-Dālī (4 vols. Beirut: Mu°assasat al-Risāla, 1986), vol. 2, p. 622; cf. Shihāb al-Dīn ibn °Imād al-Ḥanbalī's *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*, ed. Maḥmūd al-Arna°uṭ (14 vols. Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1998), vol. 1, pp. 382–7. See also Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī tā°rīkh al-umam*, vol. 6, p. 318; vol. 7, pp. 7–10; pp. 211–49 of vol. 6 include an account of the rebellion. Finally Harald Motzki, 'The Role of Non-Arab Converts in the Development of Early Islamic Law', *Islamic Law and Society* 6:3 (1999), pp. 293–317. Ibn Jubayr was said to have spent a number of years evading the authorities.

56 The term *summārī* is used and it refers to entertainers and distinguished evening company. It is actually stated that the *qurrā*³ were also among the so-called *summārī* in other narratives. See Aḥmad ibn Yahyā al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, ed. S.D.F. Goitein (Jerusalem: University Press, 1936), vol. 5, p. 40. It states that the governor treated the *qurrā*³ in much the same way. Note the parallels with the fact that °Umar enjoyed the evening company (*samar*) of the *qurrā*³.

57 Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 2, p. 622: 'al-mawālī' is the apodosis of the main clause and not 'al-fuqahā' wa-ghayrihim'.

58 See Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-nihāya fī ṭabaqāt al-qurrā'*, vol. 1, pp. 305–6. See Mustafa Shah, 'Exploring the Genesis of Arabic Linguistic Thought: Readers and Grammarians of the Baṣran Tradition (Part 2)', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 5:2 (2003), pp. 1–48, p. 23.

59 Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam*, p. 68.

60 Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliph*, p. 40.

61 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 45, p. 54.

62 G.H.A. Juynboll, 'The *qurrā'* in Early Islamic History', *Journal of the Economical and Social History of the Orient* 16:2/3 (1973), pp. 113–29. He widened the scope of his own study, examining citations from *ḥadīth* literature. The issue inspired two further studies by Juynboll on the subject of the *qurrā'*; 'The Position of Qur'ān Recitation in Early Islam', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 19 (1974), pp. 240–51, and 'The Qur'ān Reciter on the Battlefield and Concomitant Issues', *Zeitschrift der deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 125 (1975), pp. 11–27.

63 G.H.A. Juynboll, 'The Position of Qur'ān Recitation in Early Islam', pp. 240–51.

64 Juynboll, 'The *qurrā'* in Early Islamic History', pp. 114f, pp. 125f. Shaban has previously alluded to their unpopularity.

65 Juynboll, 'The *qurrā'* in Early Islamic History', pp. 116–17. See Aḥmad ibn A'ṭham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-futūḥ*, ed. Muḥammad Khān, 1st edn (5 vols. Hyderabad: Maṭba'at Majlis Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-^oUthmaniyya, 1979), vol. 2, pp. 180–4.

66 Juynboll, 'The *qurrā'* in Early Islamic History', pp. 116–17. Aḥmad ibn A'ṭham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-futūḥ*, vol. 2, p. 183; cf. Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, ed. Wilferd Madelung (Beirut: Dār al-Nashr in commission with Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2003), part 2, pp. 532–5. ^oUthmān is disgusted that the individual sent by the Kūfans to complain about his policies has the audacity to present himself as a *qāri'*.

67 Juynboll, 'The *Qurrā'* in Early Islamic History', pp. 117–18. See Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Jazarī al-Damashqī, *Ghāyat al-nihāya fī ṭabaqāt al-qurrā'*, ed. Gotthelf Bergsträsser und Otto Pretzl (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sa'āda, 1935), vol. 1, p. 201, p. 516. Both individuals are described as being eminent jurists.

68 Juynboll, 'The *Qurrā'* in Early Islamic History', pp. 118–19.

69 Juynboll, 'The *Qurrā'* in Early Islamic History', pp. 118–19.

70 Juynboll, 'The *Qurrā'* in Early Islamic History', p. 114. See William Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1998. Reprint of the 1973 edition), pp. 253–78.

71 Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity*, p. 48. He takes the same line as Juynboll, suggesting that references to villagers and villages are notably negative in Meccan chapters of the Qur'an.

72 Juynboll, 'The *Qurrā'* in Early Islamic History', pp. 118–24.

73 Juynboll, 'The *Qurrā'* in Early Islamic History', pp. 123–4. This he confirms in 'The Qur'an Reciter', p. 16.

74 Joseph Kister, 'The Expedition of Bi'r Ma'ūna' in George Makdisi (ed.), *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honour of Hamilton A.R. Gibb* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), pp. 337–57, reproduced in *Studies in Jāhiliyya and Early Islam* (London: Variorum, 1980). This occurs in the fourth year of the Hijra. Differences over the numbers killed vary: one companion states that 40 individuals were killed; however, the context of this companion's allusions to this event as cited in the Prophetic traditions relates to its legal tenor; cf. Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *Ta'riḫ al-Islām wa-wafāyāt al-mashāhīr wa'l-a'lam*, ed. ^oUmar A. Tadmurī (45 vols. Beirut:

Dār al-Kitāb al-°Arabī, 1982), 'K. *al-Maghāzī*', pp. 235–41. The episode is described in a number of early compilations, including the collection of *maghāzī* texts ascribed to °Urwa ibn Zubayr; the abridged *sira* of Muḥammad ibn Ishāq; the *Kitāb al-ṭabāqāt al-kabīr* of Muḥammad ibn Sa°d; and the *Kitāb al-ta°rīkh* of Khalifa ibn Khayyāt. For conversion of dates see *Conversion Tables: Hijri-Anno Domini and Perpetual Calendars*, prepared by Rana Y. Khoury, ed. Y. Ibish, K. Yasushi and Y. Khoury, Kyoto: Islamic Area Studies (Beirut: Turāth, 2002).

75 Muḥammad ibn °Umar al-Wāqidi's *Kitāb al-maghāzī*, ed. Marsden Jones (3 vols. London: Oxford University Press, 1966), vol. 1, pp. 346–53. They are said to have spent the night in prayer and acts of religious devotion. See °Abd al-Malik ibn Hishām's recension of Muḥammad ibn Ishāq's *al-Sira al-nabawiyya*, ed. Ṭaha °Abd al-Ra°ūf (2 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Jil), vol. 2, pp. 103–8; the *maghāzī* collection of °Urwa was published by Muṣṭafa al-A°zamī under the title *Maghāzī rasūl Allāh bi-riwāwat Abī'l-Aswad* (Riyāḍh: Maktab al-Tarbiyya al-°Arabī li-Duwal al-Khalīj, 1981), pp. 178–81; cf. Rizwi Faizer, 'The Issue of Authenticity Regarding the Traditions of al-Wāqidi as Established in his *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 58 (1999), pp. 97–106. Khalifa ibn Khayyāt, *Kitāb al-ta°rīkh*, ed. Akram Diyā° al-°Umarī (2 vols. Najaf: n.p., 1967). Muḥammad ibn Sa°d, *Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (7 vols. Beirut: Dār Beirut, 1957). Ṭabarī, *Ta°rīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, vol. 2, pp. 80–3; cf. the translation of Ṭabarī's account by Montgomery Watt and M.V. M°Donald, *The History of Ṭabarī Volume VII, The Foundation of the Community* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1982), pp. 151–6.

76 Cf. Alfred Guillaume, *The Life of Muḥammad, A Translation of Ibn Ishāq's sīrat rasūl Allāh* (Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 433–7. He is described as being the 'player of spears' (*lā°ib al-asinna*).

77 It is stated that 70 (some informants speak of 40) were killed at B°ir Ma°ūna, just as 70 were killed at the Battle of Yamāma: Wāqidi, *Kitāb al-maghāzī*, vol. 1, pp. 350–1.

78 Wāqidi, *Kitāb al-maghāzī*, vol. 1, pp. 350–1. The statement of Abū Sa°id al-Khudrī in which he says that 70 were killed on the battlefields (*mawāṭin*) of Uḥud, Bi°r Ma°ūna, Yamāma and Yawm Jisr Abī °Ubayd is highlighted by Wāqidi (p. 350), although as Kister points out Wāqidi believed that the figure of 40 was more accurate: Joseph Kister, 'The Expedition of Bi°r Ma°ūna', p. 340. The Prophet was so indignant upon hearing of their murder that for fifteen days during ritual prayers he invoked the wrath of God against their killers, although other accounts refer to his spending a month imploring the Almighty to avenge their murder. Regarding the prayer (supplication), it was associated with the *fajr* (morning prayer) in a which a special collective prayer is appended to the standard ritual (*qunūt*). See *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 'B. *Istihbāb al-qunūt fī jamī° al-ṣalāt*'.

79 The *ḥadīth* scholar Bukhārī (194–256/810–870) has several traditions relating to the same incident. In one telling allusion to this event he reported that members of a number of clans visited the Prophet at Medina purporting to be converts. They were seeking assistance against their people. The Prophet responded to this request by sending 70 men from among the *anṣār* who were called '*al-qurrā'*'; upon their arrival at Bi°r Ma°ūna, these 'readers' were surrounded and slaughtered. Bukhārī, *al-Jāmi° al-musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ*, incorporated in *al-Kutub al-sitta*, *ḥadīth* 3064 (section 184), 'K. *al-Jihād*', 'B. *al-°Awn bi'l-madaḍ*', p. 246. A second version exists in *Bāb du°ā° al-imām °alā man nakatha °ahd(an)*, *ḥadīth* 3170, section 8, p. 256. The traditions are used to highlight juridical issues: the first tradition deals with the requisition of aid and assistance, while the second treats the subject of the permissibility of an imām invoking God's wrath against those who contravene pacts. The Prophet is said to have implored God to avenge those *qurrā'* killed by three clans affiliated to the Banū Sulaym: Ri°l, Dhakwān, and Banū Liḥyān. Anas ibn Mālik is the companion who provides the details about these readers, stating that verses of the Qur'an were revealed honouring them. Kister argued that the sources recounting this expedition and its significance suggested that ambiguities

regarding its original purpose along with the seemingly inscrutable nature of its circumstances were redolent of a conscious attempt to obscure the identity of its participants, although the role of the *qurrā'* in the unfolding of events was not an important part of his study. See Joseph Kister, 'The Expedition of Bi'r Ma'ūna', pp. 337–8. Its inclusion in Wāqidi's text which was devoted to military expeditions (*maghāzī*) is telling, although Martin Hinds argued that *maghāzī* is essentially the technical equivalent of *sīra* in these early contexts: namely it embodies history and biography. Martin Hinds, 'Maghāzī and Sīra in Early Islamic Scholarship' in Toufic Fahd (ed.), *La vie du Prophète Mohomet: Colloque de Strasbourg, Octobre 1980* (Paris: Presses University de France, 1983), pp. 57–66.

80 Juynboll, 'The *Qurrā'* in Early Islamic History', p. 125, p. 128. Norman Calder did sense that the narrative implies that military help was sought; cf. 'The *Qurrā'* and the Arabic Lexicographical Tradition', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 36:2 (1991), pp. 297–307, p. 306.

81 Juynboll, 'The *Qurrā'* in Early Islamic History', p. 126.

82 Juynboll, 'The *Qurrā'* in Early Islamic History', pp. 126f.

83 Wāqidi, *Kitāb al-maghāzī*, vol. 1, pp. 350–1. Anas ibn Mālik stated that verses of the Qur'an were revealed, describing their plight: '*Ballighū qawmannā annā laqīnā rabbanā fa-raḍīya 'annā wa- raḍīnā 'anhu.*' He added that the verses were abrogated. The words were preserved by survivors of that day.

84 Juynboll, 'The *Qurrā'* in Early Islamic History', pp. 127f.

85 Juynboll, 'The *Qurrā'* in Early Islamic History', pp. 128–9.

86 Juynboll, 'The Qur'an Reciter on the Battlefield', see p. 15, p. 16, p. 20, pp. 22f.

87 Juynboll, 'The Qur'an Reciter on the Battlefield', p. 21.

88 Juynboll, 'The Qur'an Reciter on the Battlefield', pp. 23f.

89 Juynboll, 'The Qur'an Reciter on the Battlefield', p. 22. His own analysis of the instances in which the military significance of the *qurrā'*/*ahl al-qurā'* appeared salient led him to dismiss their supposed expertise in the recitation and memorisation of scripture. One does sense that Juynboll qualifies his findings in suggesting that they are confined to certain reports containing references to the *qurrā'*; however, at other times in his papers he posits a much greater magnitude to his inferences. Juynboll had to deal with a report in the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal (164–241/780–855) in which the term *ḥamalat al-Qur'ān* is used in the distinct context of the sacred text and knowledge of it. Such examples demonstrate the pitfalls of trying to draw broad conclusions from such data. Juynboll, 'The Qur'an Reciter on the Battlefield', pp. 23ff.

90 Juynboll, 'The Qur'an Reciter on the Battlefield', p. 25. The suggestion is that in ensuing periods those individuals who enjoyed the honourable reputation of being among the *ḥamalat al-Qur'ān* and the *qurrā'* were responsible for this. The semantic distinctions which are presumably inherent in the early meaning of the term *qurrā'* are given further synthesis in his subsequent study of the literature of the traditions. See G.H.A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition: Studies in Chronology, Provenance and Authorship of Early Hadīth*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilisation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 26.

91 Norman Calder, 'The *Qurrā'* and the Arabic Lexicographical Tradition', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 36:2 (1991), pp. 297–307; cf. p. 305. He surprisingly remarked that Juynboll gave Shaban's thesis only a nuanced acceptance; yet, the former's own treatment of the issue shows his thorough endorsement of Shaban's thesis. See Hawting, Mojaddedi and Samely (eds), *Studies in Islamic and Middle Eastern Texts and Traditions in Memory of Norman Calder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

92 See Calder, 'The *Qurrā'* and the Arabic Lexicographical Tradition', p. 297.

- 93 See Calder, 'The *Qurrā*⁷ and the Arabic Lexicographical Tradition', p. 305: namely *qar*⁷ and *qur*⁷ on the basis that the term itself was designated to be one of the *addād* (antonyms). See Mustafa Shah, 'The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the *tawqif-iṣṭilāḥ* Antithesis and the *majāz* Controversy (Parts I and II)', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 1:1 (1999), pp. 27–46, and 2:1 (2000), pp. 44–66.
- 94 Calder, 'The *Qurrā*⁷ and the Arabic Lexicographical Tradition', p. 305.
- 95 Calder, 'The *Qurrā*⁷ and the Arabic Lexicographical Tradition', p. 306.
- 96 Calder, 'The *Qurrā*⁷ and the Arabic Lexicographical Tradition', pp. 306–7.
- 97 Calder, 'The *Qurrā*⁷ and the Arabic Lexicographical Tradition', pp. 305f. There are numerous other reports from the primary sources in which the term *qurrā*⁷ occurs once only in the course of narratives.
- 98 Martin Hinds, 'Kūfan Political Alignments and their Background in the Mid-Seventh Century A.D.', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2 (1971), pp. 346–67. Republished in Jere Bacharach, Lawrence I. Conrad, and Patricia Crone (eds), *Studies in Early Islamic History* (Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 1–28. He shares some of the conclusions reached by Shaban. He confirmed that the *qurrā*⁷ were the smallest group among the 'early-comers' and observed that they were concerned about the subsequent waves of Arab settlement (*rawādif*) and the gradual ascendancy of the *ashraf* in Kūfa; all of which threatened their status.
- 99 Nagel, art. 'Ḳurrā⁷', p. 499. Nagel overlooked the fact that although Hinds stated that the term *qurrā*⁷ first occurs in the sources in the context of the expulsion of the governor Sa'īd, he was referring to the Kūfan milieu. See also Juynboll, 'The *Qurrā*⁷ in Early Islamic History', p. 113.
- 100 Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, vol. 2, p. 410. Juynboll concluded that this was not a characteristic practice established in the Prophet's lifetime nor was it a convention adopted in later times. Juynboll, 'The Qur'an Reciter on the Battlefield', pp. 11f. There is a profusion of materials from the Prophetic traditions which impinge upon the import of historical data from the accounts Shaban reinterpreted. It is the case that arguments regarding the authenticity of these sources and their design and purpose have meant that an important contextual source is often discarded or viewed as having a canonical function as far as the historical data is concerned. Nevertheless, one still needs to account for such materials in terms of their provenance and whether they simply prefigure the historical narratives. For example, the tradition narrated in the *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* collection of *aḥādīth* in which Abū'l-Aswad al-Du'alī (d. 69/688), the putative founder of Arabic grammar, reported that Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī was sent to the *qurrā*⁷ of *ahl al-Baṣra*; three hundred men who had read (learnt) the Qur'an entered his presence. He said to them: 'You represent the finest (*khiyār*) of the people of Baṣra and its *qurrā*⁷', *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 'K. al-Zakāt', section 119, *ḥadīth* 2419, p. 843, incorporated in *al-Kutub al-sitta: mawsū'at al-ḥadīth al-sharīf*. The son of Abū'l-Aswad, Abū'l-Ḥarb relates this anecdote. It is reported that the celebrated Abū'l-Aswad al-Du'alī accompanied a legion of 1,700 men sent to bolster the army the caliph 'Alī was mobilising in order to confront the secessionist *Khawārij*; thus he appears active as both a reader and he has a military role. Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, vol. 3, p. 101. Also Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim *Waq'at Ṣiffīn*, p. 188, p. 222, p. 499. See Aḥmad ibn Dāwūd al-Dīnawarī, *al-Akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, pp. 165, 192. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, part 7, p. 242, pp. 298f. Also Aḥmad ibn Dāwūd al-Dīnawarī, *al-Akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, p. 205. Ṭabarī also referred to his confronting a party of the *Khawārij* of Baṣra. See Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad*, p. 160, p. 272, p. 277; cf. Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-nihāya*, vol. 1, pp. 345–6. Abū'l-Aswad's role as a judge is underlined; he acquired his readings from 'Uthmān and 'Alī; cf. *Ṭabaqāt al-naḥwiyyūn*, pp. 22ff. This text offers an account of his role in the inception of grammar. Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-nihāya*, vol. 1, pp. 442–3, pp. 253–4. Is it inconceivable that the same individuals were present at Ṣiffīn,

confirming a continuum in their religious and political activities? Interestingly, the term *khiyār* is used to describe the individuals sent to Bi'r Ma'ūna. °Abd al-Malik ibn Hishām's recension of Muḥammad ibn Iṣḥāq's *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, vol. 2, pp. 103–8; cf. Juynboll, 'The *Qurrā*' in Early Islamic History', p. 125, p. 128. The historical accounts explored by Shaban showed that Abū Mūsā was held in esteem by the *qurrā*² at both Baṣra and Kūfa. His distinction as a reader appears incontestable, yet he was also influential in the unfolding of the political events recounted by Shaban.

101 Hinds, 'Kūfan Political Alignments', p. 358 (p. 17 in *Studies in Early Islamic History*). See Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, vol. 2, p. 410. This refers to the Battle of Qādisiyya in 16/637 when a force of 12,000 men led by the companion Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ (d. 55/674–5) overwhelmed a larger Persian army. Details of this encounter are furnished in Ṭabarī's work and he records that preceding the commencement of warfare, Sa'd instructed a young man, who was sent to accompany him by the caliph °Umar (d. 23/644), to recite *Sūrat al-Jihād (al-Anfāl)*. The young man, who is described as being from the *qurrā*², began to recite the chapter to a contingent of soldiers nearest to him. The chapter was recited among all the other battalions. It is said to have had an inspirational effect upon their hearts. That the caliph °Umar is mentioned as having dispatched this reader is important. Tradition associates this caliph with the regular institution of the ritual communal prayers of Ramaḍān (*ṣalāt al-tarāwīḥ*) and he appointed members of the *qurrā*² to carry out that function. A tradition narrated by Bukhārī records that the *qurrā*² from among the old and young featured prominently in °Umar's select gatherings and consultations. Bukhārī, *al-Jāmi' al-musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ*, incorporated in the *Kutub al-sitta*, *ḥadīth* 4642 (section 5), 'K. *al-Tafsīr*', 'B. *Khudh al-afw wa-ḥurūf wa-urūf wa-urūf wa-urūf* 'an al-Jāhillīn', p. 384. The same tradition occurs in vol. 11, pp. 440–1 of the *Muṣannaf* of °Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī, ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-°Azamī (12 vols. Beirut: al-Maktab al-Ilmiyya, 1972).

102 See Mālik ibn Anas, *al-Muwatta'*, 'K. *al-Ṣalāt fī Ramaḍān wa-bāb mā jā'a fī qiyām Ramaḍān*', *aḥādīth* 3 and 4. °Umar is reported as having instructed Ubayy ibn K'ab and Tammīm al-Dārī to lead the prayers; reference is made to readers reciting chapters comprising 200 verses to the extent that members of the congregation would rest on their canes due to the long periods they spent standing. Also useful in providing context to readers' function in the early tradition is Ṣan'ānī, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 4, pp. 258–66; vol. 6, p. 326; vol. 11, pp. 440–1. Martin Hinds, 'Kūfan Political Alignments', p. 358 (p. 17 in *Studies in Early Islamic History*); cf. Abū °Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām, *Kitāb al-amwāl*, ed. Muḥammad Khalīl Harās (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-°Ilmiyya, 1986), p. 275.

103 Hinds, 'Kūfan Political Alignments', pp. 358–9 (pp. 17–18 in *Studies in Early Islamic History*). See Wael Hallaq, *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). See references to Kūfa: pp. 57–78.

104 Hinds, *The Murder of the Caliph °Uthmān*, pp. 29–55; cf. Shaban, *Islamic History*, pp. 68–71.

105 Hinds, 'Kūfan Political Alignments', p. 352 (p. 9 in *Studies in Early Islamic History*) and p. 357 (p. 16 in *Studies in Early Islamic History*).

106 Hinds, 'Kūfan Political Alignments', p. 363 (p. 24 in *Studies in Early Islamic History*).

107 Hinds, 'Kūfan Political Alignments', p. 347 (p. 2 in *Studies in Early Islamic History*).

108 Ibn Mujāhid, *Kitāb al-Sab' a fī'l-qirā'āt*, ed. Shawqī Ḍayf, 2nd edn (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1400/1980). See my 'The Early Arabic Grammarians' Contributions to the Collection and Authentication of Qur'anic Readings: The Prelude to Ibn Mujāhid's *Kitāb al-sab' a*', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 6:1 (2004), pp. 72–102.

109 Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, p. 80, p. 300. Note Wellhausen, *The Religio-Political Factions in Early Islam*, pp. 13–14. Nagel has argued that it is absurd to equate such

individuals with readers given the evidence presented by Shaban and others regarding the *qurrā'*'s political activity and sees much merit in Shaban's thesis. See Nagel, art. 'Ḳurrā'', p. 499.

110 Michael G. Morony, *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). Note his section on religious communities, part 3, pp. 468–506; for the *qurrā'* see pp. 469ff.

111 Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs*, p. 9, p. 11, p. 40. Kennedy refers to a 'general consensus' in this regard. He had earlier noted that the word *qurrā'* was 'a term of disputed etymology, probably meaning (Qur'an) readers' and that it was used of the early Muslim settlers in Iraq, some of whom later joined the Khawārij. See p. 399, p. 74 of *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*; Ersilia Francesca, art. 'Khārijīs' in the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol. 3, pp. 84–90, p. 84. Levi Della Vida located them among the early Khārijī movement, refer to his entry in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Shaban's explanation is dismissed in Aḥmad °Alī al-Imām, *Variant Readings of the Qur'ān: A Critical Study of their Historical and Linguistic Origins* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1998), p. 48.

112 Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad*, p. 219. He regularly translates the term as 'Qur'an readers' in his text. See p. 115, p. 118, p. 210, p. 232, p. 238, p. 241. He also mentions the Kūfan Qur'an readers' (*qurrā'*) role in conveying correspondence calling for the removal of Sa'īd ibn al-Āṣ. See pp. 114f.

113 Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Crisis of Muslim History: Religion and Politics in Early Islam* (Oxford: One World Publishers, 2003), pp. 79–80.

114 John Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 69, p. 119. In the latter citation Wansbrough saw the sources as addressing doctrinal exigencies through a process of historical projection. See Martin Hinds 'The Banners and Battle Cries of the Arabs at Ṣiffīn (A.D. 657)', *Al-Abḥāth* 24 (1974), pp. 3–42.

115 Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam*, p. 28, p. 68, p. 70. In his translation of sections of Ṭabarī's history, Hawting referred to the dissatisfaction among some scholars with the translation of the term *qurrā'* as Qur'an reader; he retains the traditional translation in his text. See *The First Civil War: From the Battle of Siffīn to the Death of °Alī A.D.656–661/A.H.36–40 (Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk)*; translated and annotated by G.R. Hawting, p. 19 (see n. 83), p. 31, p. 36, p. 40, p. 45, p. 51, p. 60, p. 71, p. 72 (*qāri'*), p. 76, p. 79, p. 120. Martin Hinds, 'The Ṣiffīn Arbitration Agreement', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 17 (1971), pp. 93–129.

116 Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity*, p. 50. See Nagel, art. 'Ḳurrā'', p. 499.

117 Nagel, art. 'Ḳurrā'', p. 499.

118 Indeed, one notes that Daniel Madigan seems to have countenanced a far-reaching interpretation of the arguments of Shaban and Calder. See Madigan, *The Qur'ān's Self-Image*, p. 25 (n. 43).

119 R. Talmon, 'An Eighth-Century Grammatical School in Medinah: The Collection and Evaluation of the Available Material', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 48 (1985), pp. 224–36. R. Talmon, *Arabic Grammar in its Formative Age, Kitāb al-°Ayn and its Attribution to Khalīl ibn Aḥmad* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997).

120 The connection is regularly highlighted in the standard classical biographies of Arabic grammarians.

121 See Mustafa Shah, 'Exploring the Genesis of Early Arabic Linguistic Thought: Qur'anic Readers and Grammarians of the Kūfan Tradition (Part 1)', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 5:1 (2003), pp. 47–78; 'Exploring the Genesis of Early Arabic Linguistic Thought: Qur'anic Readers and Grammarians of the Baṣran Tradition (Part 2)', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 5:2 (2003), pp. 1–48. See also the Review Article by Michael Carter entitled 'Writing the History

of Arabic Grammar' in *Historiographia Linguistica* 21:3 (1994), pp. 385–414. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qiftī, *Inbāh al-ruwāt 'alā anbāh al-nuḥāt*, ed. Muḥammad Abū'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (4 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1956), vol. 1, pp. 2–18. Abū'l-Barakāt ibn al-Anbārī, *Nuḥat al-alibbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-udabā'*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Samarā'ī (al-Zarqā': Maktabat al-Manār, 1985), pp. 54–8; °Abd al-Wāhid ibn °Alī Abū Ṭayyib, *Marātib al-naḥwiyyīn*, ed. Muḥammad Abū'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Maktabat Naḥdat Miṣr, 1955), pp. 27–41. Abū Sa'īd al-Sīrāfi, *Akhbār al-naḥwiyyīn al-Baṣriyyīn*, ed. Muḥammad al-Bannā (Cairo: Dār al-I'tisām, 1985), pp. 63–5. Also, see the introduction to Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Zubaydī, *Ṭabaqāt al-naḥwiyyīn*, ed. Muḥammad Abū'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1973).

122 Michael G. Carter *Sibawayhi*. Makers of Islamic Civilization Series (London and New York: Oxford University Press and I.B. Taurus, 2004), p. 29–32.

123 See Mustafa Shah, 'Exploring the Genesis of Early Arabic Linguistic Thought: Qur'anic Readers and Grammarians of the Kūfan Tradition', p. 47–78.

124 Ibn al-Nadīm mentioned that the historian Haytham ibn °Adī was the author of a treatise which extolled the virtues of the people of Kūfa over their Baṣran compatriots, curiously entitled *Kitāb fakhr ahl al-Kūfa 'alā ahl al-Baṣra*. Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, p. 112.

125 Melchert and Afsaruddin, art. 'Reciters of the Qur'ān', p. 388. See also Asma Afsaruddin, 'The Excellences of the Qur'an', *Journal of American Oriental Studies* 122 (2002), pp. 1–24, pp. 7–8.

126 Kees Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar and Qur'anic Exegesis in Early Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), pp. 174–7. For the whole chapter see pp. 160–90; cf. Kees Versteegh, 'Tawahhum: An Ambiguous Concept in Early Arabic Grammar', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (1982), pp. 233–44; Kees Versteegh, 'Grammar and Exegesis: The Origins of Kūfan Grammar and the *Tafsīr Muqātil*', *Der Islam* 67:2 (1990), pp. 206–42.

127 Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar and Qur'anic Exegesis*, pp. 174–7.

128 Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar and Qur'anic Exegesis*, p. 178.

129 This also applies to Hinds' study for although he maintains their status as readers, his remarks about their unpopularity are confined to the Iraqi milieu and are not a reflection on individuals from the wider reader tradition.

130 Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar and Qur'anic Exegesis*, p. 178.

131 Farrā° describes Ḥamza ibn Ḥabīb as ill-informed of the characteristics of the Arabs' speech; Ḥamza was a key reader in Kūfa; despite being a Kūfan reader, he was censured by Farrā°. See Farrā°, *Ma'ānī*, vol. 3, p. 266; cf. Ramzi Baalbaki, 'The Treatment of *qirā'āt* by the Second and Third Century Grammarians', *Zeitschrift für arabische Linguistik* 15 (1985), pp. 11–32. The ideological contrast of Kūfan and Baṣran approaches to linguistic thought is fleshed out in Rafael Talmon, *Eighth-Century Iraqi Grammar: A Critical Exploration of Pre-Khalilīan Arabic Linguistics* (Winona Lake: Harvard Semitic Publications, 2003), pp. 14–15; Kinga Dévényi, 'al-Farrā° and al-Kisā'ī: References to Grammarians and Qur'ān Readers in the *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān* of al-Farrā°' in Kinga Dévényi and Tamas Ivanyi (eds), *Proceedings of the Colloquium on Arabic Grammar* (Budapest, 1991), pp. 159–76. See Abū Zakariyyā° Yaḥyā ibn Ziyād al-Farrā°, *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, ed. M. Najjār and A. Najātī (3 vols. Cairo: n.p., 1980), vol. 2, p. 240. N. Kinberg, *A Lexicon of al-Farrā°'s Terminology in his Qur'an Commentaries, with Full Definitions, English Summaries, and Extensive Citations* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996).

132 Michael Carter, 'The Struggle for Authority: a Re-examination of the Baṣran Kūfan Debate' in Lutz Edzard and Mohammed Nekroumi (eds), *Tradition and Innovation: Norm and Deviation in Arabic and Semitic Linguistics* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), pp. 55–70.

133 There does exist a selection of Prophetic traditions which presage the fall from grace of certain members of the *qurrā'*. Yet, these are individuals who are portrayed as having

forsaken the devout conduct and spiritual purity expected of them. The apocalyptic tone of these traditions is not redolent of negative attitudes towards readers in general but has a didactic function. See David Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, Studies in Late Antiquity and Islam (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 2002). Cook's study of the role of the apocalyptic in Muslim tradition has suggested that the admonishment of the *qurrā'* (readers), *quṣṣāṣ* (story tellers), and *khuṭabā'* (preachers) is invoked to exhibit social sickness and decay in society, but he also surmises that competition for the attention of adherents might also be a factor in its expression (p. 252). Readers are also portrayed as following the whims of their leaders (p. 240), although it is religious leadership with which they are synonymous. Somewhat relevant is the fact that this censure implies an abuse of the religious prestige and eminence attained by earlier readers.

134 His equating of the *qurrā'* with villagers has been described as being 'fanciful'. See Melchert and Afsaruddin, art. 'Reciters of the Qur'an', p. 386.

135 Again, see Melchert and Afsaruddin, art. 'Reciters of the Qur'an', p. 386.

136 Shaban, *Islamic History*, p. 51.

137 Juynboll, 'The Qur'an Reciter on the Battlefield', p. 25.

138 Some writers described the later generation of readers as comprising the religious scholars of the Islamic tradition, including the traditionists and jurists, while the first generation of readers are viewed as individuals, who like so many among their peers in the early Islamic tradition were devotees who aspired to the service of scripture. See 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Ismā'īl Shalabī, *Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī, ḥayātuhu wa-makānatuhu bayn a'immat al-luḡha wa-atharuhu fī'l-qirā'āt wa'l-naḥw* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa, A.H. 1377) pp. 21ff; Maḥdī Makhzūmī, *Madrasat al-Kūfa wa-manhajuhā fī dirāsāt al-luḡha wa'l-naḥw*, 2nd edn (Cairo: Maṭba'at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī, 1958), pp. 18–22; Estelle Whelan, 'Forgotten Witness: Evidence for the Early Codification of the Qur'an', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118 (1998), pp. 1–14. The issue of the sophistication of the early tradition is aptly reflected upon in the conclusions offered by this author. One might tentatively use the same idea as a basis for explaining the relative sophistication of disciplines such as grammar and philology in these early periods.