

## Who Killed Imam al-Husayn (as)?

One of the accusations often raised against the Shi'ahs in recent times is that they themselves were the killers of Imam al-Husayn (as). The accusers say that the majority of the soldiers who were recruited in the army of 'Umar ibn Sa'd to fight with Imam al-Husayn (as) were people from Kufah, and the people of Kufah at that time were all Shi'ahs of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (as).

The fault-finders say that the reason the Shi'ahs hold mourning ceremonies for Imam al-Husayn (as) is to show penance for the actions of their predecessors. They believe that the Shi'ahs cry in order to express remorse at why their forefathers killed the Prophet's grandson.

In his book entitled, "*Al-Husayn*", the Egyptian writer, Sayyid 'Ali Jalal Husayni writes, "A surprising thing about Imam al-Husayn (as) is that his own Shi'ahs killed him, and then started holding mourning ceremonies for him every year in all countries of the Muslim World."<sup>1</sup>

We intend to analyze this accusation to show who the real killers of Imam al-Husayn (as) were.

### The different aspects of the Shi'ah Islam

The Shi'ism has different aspects and forms, but we will only mention the four main ones here:

#### 1. Political Shi'ism

Political Shi'ism [*tashayyu'-e siyasi*] signifies belief in the superiority and preference of Imam 'Ali (as) over all the other companions of the Holy Prophet (S), including the caliphs. Political Shi'ism denotes belief that in the battles against the Khawarij and the companions at Siffin and Jamal, truth and justice was on the side of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (as).

Political Shi'ism refers to the presence of a group of people in the history of Islam who had determined a definite political point of view. They had accepted the leadership of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as) not because they believed that the fourteen Infallibles were appointed by Allah, but because they understood the *Ahl al-*

*Bayt* (as) to be the most learned and virtuous of all the people on earth. This view was prevalent among most of the people who lived after the Holy Prophet (S). Many specialists in *hadith* and jurists held this view. They preferred the judgement of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, especially in political affairs, over the verdicts of anyone else. It is for this reason that they are called Political Shi'ahs. This group opposed the group which was following the caliphs in political affairs.

This point of view has been extended to books written by scholars of Sunni *hadith*. It can be seen in history that some people in the first, second and third centuries of the Islamic era [*hijrah*] were endowed with the Shi'ism, and a large number of them became popularly known as '*fihī tashayyū' yasir*'.

They regarded Imam 'Ali (as) to be superior over all the other caliphs, especially 'Uthman. Again, the people with these beliefs are called Political Shi'ahs.

## **2. Ideological Shi'ism based on religious conviction**

The Shi'ism of Faith [*tashayyū'–e 'aqidati*] is belief in the Imamate, caliphate, administratorship and religious authority of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as) as ordained by Allah, the Exalted, and that the forerunner and first of them is 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (as). This point of view was a prevalent opinion among the people beginning during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (S). These were people who followed the instructions of the Qur'an strictly.

They obeyed the Prophet's commands to the letter. They were some of the most pious and sincere companions of the Holy Prophet (S) who followed the explicit wording of holy texts and the Prophet's directives and did not practice religious jurisprudence or inference. It is these people who accepted Imam 'Ali (as) as the heir and successor of Allah's Prophet (S).

They believed that following Imam 'Ali (as) was in accordance with Allah's orders and the Holy Prophet's (S) directives. This line of thought continued to exist among the Holy Prophet's (S) companions, the *tabi'in* and the generations which followed them.

These pious Shi'ahs knew that even though the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as) had been sidelined and unjustly pushed aside from political authority, their identity as religious and scholarly jurists and authorities had become manifest right from the beginning.

Aban ibn Taghlab, who was one of Imam al-Sadiq's and Muhammad al-Baqir's (as) companions, describes the Shi'ahs in this way: "The Shi'ahs are people who, whenever people differ about a matter which has reached us from the Holy Prophet (as), refer to Imam 'Ali (as) and adopt his verdict, and whenever a disagreement appears about a matter which has reached us from Imam 'Ali (as), the Shi'ahs refer to the words of Ja'far ibn Muhammad (as)."<sup>2</sup>

### 3. The Shi'ism of love and affection for the Ahl al-Bayt (as)

The third aspect of the Shi'ism seen among Muslims is what has been called the Shi'ism of Love [*tashayyu'-e hubbi*]. When the term Shi'ism is applied in this sense, many Sunnis will also be considered as Shi'ahs because a lot of people, even among the Sunnis themselves, possess strong love and affection for the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as).

There are numerable accounts about the virtues and spiritual accomplishments of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as) in the Prophet's sayings which are recorded in Sunni Books of *hadith*. For examples, we can mention Ibn 'Abd Rabbah Andulusi, the author of the book entitled, *Al-'Aqd al-Farid*, and Muhammad ibn Idris Shafi'i.

Muhammad ibn Idris Shafi'i has recited a wonderful poem in which he says,

إن كان حبّ الولي رفضاً فأنّني أرفض العباد

*"If love of the wali (the temporal and spiritual guardian Imam 'Ali) makes a person a heretic, then, I am surely the most heretical of all of Allah's servants."*<sup>3</sup>

### 4. Religious Shi'ism

The fourth aspect of Shi'ism is interpreted as religious and cultural Shi'ism [*tashayyu'-e dini*]. These people believe that the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as) are the only legitimate religious authorities on earth.

That is, the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as) are the source of religious edicts and the only people who have been entrusted with interpreting the Holy Qur'an. They believe that, within this religious and cultural aspect, it is the duty of every person in the community to seek guidance and refuge in the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as) when the need arises.

They hold this belief, but at the same time follow the Sunnis (the caliphs) in political and governmental affairs. They do not believe in divine appointment of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as) as explicitly expressed in religious texts, the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's (S) sayings.

Instead, they consider the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as) to be superior over the rest of the people in knowledge and general religious affairs. An example of such people is Shahrestani, the author of the book entitled, "*Al-Milal wa al-Nihal*".

### Who is a real Shi'ah?

We find many people in the world who claim to hold certain beliefs but do not act upon their professed convictions at all. These people are not steadfast in their beliefs. They claim to belong to a certain

religious group, but are not faithful to the basic teachings of the religious sect they profess.

They may not even know much about the fundamental beliefs of their own religious order. They sometimes even go so far as to trample the basic beliefs of their professed religious denomination underfoot due to lack of real faith and piety.

We cannot seriously consider such people as really belonging to a particular sect, even though they may apparently appear to belong to that sect. In reality, they are a deadly army of hypocrites posing the greatest danger against the very religion or sect they claim to adhere to. Even the opponents of that particular religion or sect do not take such people seriously, and do not fear them.

In reality, they do not consider them to be members of that sect at all. On the contrary, the real people belonging to a particular religion or sect are the people who are faithful and steadfast to the basic teachings of that group. They are the people that are ready to sacrifice their lives and property for their beliefs that are genuinely considered to be members of a particular group.

The same can be said about the Shi'ism and the Shi'ahs; in the sense that even though many may claim to be 'Ali's (as) Shi'ahs and followers of the Prophet's *Ahl al-Bayt* (as), if their profession of belief has not gone beyond mere words and has not settled in their hearts, they are not dedicated to the basic beliefs of the Shi'ah Islam and cannot be considered to be real Shi'ahs.

We cannot consider such people to be pious Shi'ahs, and neither can we judge the Shi'ism by their actions. A real and pious Shi'ah is a person who certainly would not dare kill an *imam* who he professes to love and follow.

On the contrary, he sacrifices his life and soul for his *imam*, in the same way that many real Shi'ahs sacrificed their lives on the day of 'Ashura in order to assist Imam al-Husayn (as). The real Shi'ahs reached out to their Imam lovingly, and sincerely gave their lives up in his way as martyrs.

We can ask those who doubt and dispute these questions: Can we say that all the people living in Islamic countries are real and pious Muslims? Are they all steadfast to their professed beliefs? Who are the people living in Islamic countries that are busy working for world imperialists and by doing so are helping destroy and wipe out Islam?

Are there not people in Islamic societies who are abject slaves and servants of the unbelievers [*kuffar*] and are working with the colonizers against Islam and the Muslims? It is certainly not possible for reasonable persons to consider such people to be real Muslims. On the contrary, such people only possess Islamic names and identities.

It is also possible to find some 'Shi'ahs' who are like this and there is nothing unusual at all about it. They call themselves pious or believing, but are not steadfast to their basic beliefs of their professed religion.

Religious instructor, Shaykh ‘Ali Al Muhsin, says, “There is open contradiction and discrepancy in the words of those who accuse the Shi‘ahs of killing of Imam al–Husayn (as) because the very word Shi‘ah means someone who follows and loves the Imam.

How is it possible to compromise this meaning with fighting against and killing an *imam*? Does a real Shi‘ah kill an *imam*? If the accusation that Imam al–Husayn’s (as) killers were Shi‘ah is right, their treacherous action would certainly expel them from the fold of the Shi‘ism.”<sup>4</sup>

While responding to this unfair and unfounded accusation, Sayyid Muhsin Amin ‘Amili says, “I seek refuge in Allah that the real Shi‘ahs should be the killers of al–Husayn (as)!

The people who martyred Imam al–Husayn (as) were of various categories; some were people drowned in worldly appetites and pleasures who had nothing to do with religion whatsoever, others were low, mean and wicked people of the flesh, and the rest consisted of those people lacking religious conviction and pursuing their worldly dreams. Love of this world persuaded all these people to commit such a great crime.

None of Imam al–Husayn’s (as) lovers and Shi‘ahs took part in killing him. On the contrary, all the sincere and real Shi‘ahs accompanied and helped Imam al–Husayn (as). They stood by their Imam to the last drop of their blood, devoting and sacrificing their lives for him until they attained martyrdom.

They stayed at the service of their Imam despite the insurmountable hardships which lay in the way and never gave up on him to the very last moments of their lives. Many of these people did not expect any financial reward from Imam al–Husayn (as) for their loyalty, so they were definitely not motivated by money when they decided to sacrifice for him and take part in his hardships.

In order to escape and join their beloved Imam (as), others took such high risks as tearing down the fortification which Ibn Ziyad had raised around Kufah, and made their escape.

These steadfast Shi‘ahs underwent every kind of hardship imaginable to join their beloved Imam. The fallacious accusation that even one of Imam al–Husayn’s (as) Shi‘ahs and lovers took part in killing him is something that never took place in reality...”<sup>5</sup>

## [The Shi‘ism of the people of Kufah](#)

With recourse to history, especially after the death of Imam ‘Ali (as) and during the time of Imam al–Husayn (as), and with careful examination of the beliefs of the people of Kufah, we come to the conclusion that the predominant type of Shi‘ism which existed in Kufah at that time was Political Shi‘ism. The Shi‘ism of Kufah was not founded on religious conviction.

The people of Kufah only believed in the superiority of ‘Ali (as) over ‘Uthman and the other companions. They did not believe in the Divine Guardianship [*wilayat wa imamat*] of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (as) or the other

Infallibles by way of divine appointment as has been explicitly stated in holy texts (the Holy Qu'ran and *hadiths*). Furthermore, we cannot consider political Shi'ahs in the same light as the pious Shi'ahs who believed in the Divine Guardianship of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as).

In order to prove this, we will cite an example:

In his book called "*Mukhtasar Tarikh Damishq*" (*The Short History of Damascus*), Ibn 'Asakir Damishqi Shafi'i narrates on an authentic chain of transmission that Harith ibn Abi Matar said, "I heard Salmah ibn Kuhayl saying, 'Musayyib ibn Najbah Fazari and I were once seated in the Mosque of Kufah.

There were many Shi'ahs in the Mosque. I did not hear any of them speak about anyone of the companions of the Prophet (S) save 'Ali (as), and they spoke about him with lots of praise and laudation. All their talk was about 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (as) and 'Uthman'." [6](#)

The Sunnis praise all the Prophet's companions without exception. They believe that all of the Prophet's companions were just and equitable people. The people they consider to be political Shi'ahs are those who later believed in the superiority of Imam 'Ali (as) over 'Uthman. There were people in Kufah who held this belief. There were, though, others who did not believe in Imam 'Ali (as) to this extent, as we have shown from the *hadith* (tradition) recounted by Ibn 'Asakir.

## [The exile of religious and pious Shi'ahs from Kufah](#)

Ibn Abi al-Hadid recounts that Abu al-Hasan Mada'ini said, "Mu'awiyah issued these orders to his governor generals in a letter he had circulated to them, 'I have acquitted myself from any obligation regarding anyone who recounts the virtues of Abu Turab (Imam 'Ali) and his *Ahl al-Bayt*.' It has been narrated that Mu'awiyah went so far as to declare that whoever would transmit a *hadith* in praise of the virtues of the Household of the Prophet (S) would have no immunity or protection concerning his life, property and merchandise.

After this command, the governor generals gave orders to their state preachers to start cursing and insulting Imam 'Ali (as) and his pure *Ahl al-Bayt* (as) from the pulpits. The people most affected by this misfortune were the people of Kufah because at that time there were many Shi'ahs in that city.

Then, Mu'awiyah ibn Abu Sufiyan appointed Ibn Ziyad to be the governor general of Kufah and Basrah because he knew and recognized the Shi'ahs very well. Ibn Ziyad kept very strict surveillance over the Shi'ahs through his secret network of spies. 'Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad used to look for the Shi'ahs and kill them wherever he found them, or terrorize them by cutting off their hands and legs and by plucking their eyes from their eye-sockets.

His tactics included hanging innocent Shi'ahs from trees and expelling a large number of them from Iraq. That is why no well-known Shi'ahs remained in Iraq." [7](#)

## The Shi'ahs from Kufah joined Imam al-Husayn (as)

History bears witness to the fact that a number of the Shi'ahs found opportunities to escape from Kufah and join their beloved Imam. They did so at great risk of their lives and by exerting strenuous effort. One example of such Shi'ahs is Yazid ibn Thubayt 'Abdi and his two children 'Abd Allah and 'Ubayd Allah.

Yazid ibn Thubayt was a Shi'ah and one of the companions of Abu al-Aswad. He was a person well-known among his people for his praiseworthy virtues and benevolence.

Abu Ja'far Tabari recounts, "Mariyah, the daughter of Munfidh 'Abdiyyah, was a Shi'ah woman. Her house was a place for the Shi'ahs to meet and engage in conversation. News reached Ibn Ziyad that Imam al-Husayn (as) was on his way towards Karbala in response to the letter the people of Kufah had written to him. Ibn Ziyad therefore ordered guards to keep strict surveillance over the city.

He ordered them to close the way and control the entry and exit of people into and out of Kufah. Yazid ibn Thubayt decided to leave Kufah and join Imam al-Husayn (as). He had ten children. He informed all of them about his will and decision. He suggested to them that anyone willing was welcome to come with him on this journey. Two of his ten children accepted to go with him. Their names were 'Abd Allah and 'Ubayd Allah. After that, he went to the house of Mariyyah and addressed his companions, 'I have the intention of leaving Kufah and joining Imam al-Husayn (as). Who will join me on this journey?'

Most of them replied that they were afraid of Ibn Ziyad's spies and companions... Then, accompanied by his two children, 'Amir and his slave, Sayf ibn Malik, and Adham ibn Umayyah, Yazid ibn Thubayt left Kufah with the intention of joining Imam al-Husayn's caravan.

They made every effort and managed to reach Imam al-Husayn in Mecca in a short period of time. When news reached Imam al-Husayn that some of his followers had arrived, he went out to meet them.

They said to him, 'Yazid ibn Thubayt and some of his companions have come to join you also.' Imam al-Husayn (as) waited for them. After a while, Yazid ibn Thubayt arrived and said to Imam al-Husayn,

... 697... بِفَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَبِرَحْمَتِهِ فَبِذَلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُوا

With this statement, he implied that it was a grace and favor from Allah to meet Imam al-Husayn (as) and that he ought to be happy and be congratulated. Then, he gave his greetings [*salam*] to Imam al-Husayn (as) and sat on the ground in front of him. He told the Imam (as) that he had come with two of his children and a number of his companions to help him. Imam al-Husayn (as) made a prayer asking Allah to grant Yazid ibn Thubayt a good reward both in this world and in the hereafter.

Then Yazid ibn Thubayt's caravan was brought next to that of Imam al-Husayn (as). They all accompanied Imam al-Husayn (as) to Karbala, where they were martyred after courageous battle."

Another person who joined Imam al-Husayn (as) from Kufah was Burayd ibn Khadir Hamadani. He had not met or seen the Holy Prophet (S), but had met and seen the Prophet's (S) companions. He was an excellent reciter of the Holy Qur'an, and was one of the companions of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (as).

He was known to be of the nobles of Kufah. Writers of biography say, "When the news reached him that Imam al-Husayn (as) was on his way from Medina towards Mecca, he started off from Kufah towards Mecca where he joined Imam al-Husayn (as). He stayed with the Imam (as) until they arrived in Karbala where he was martyred."

Other people who had joined Imam al-Husayn (as) from Kufah were Sa'd ibn Harath Ansari and Abu al-Hutuf ibn Harath Ansari. These two had initially come together with the army of 'Umar ibn Sa'd with the intention of killing Imam al-Husayn (as).

However, on the day of 'Ashura, and after the martyrdom of many of Imam al-Husayn's (as) companions, and after hearing the wailing voices of women and children on the other side calling for help for Imam al-Husayn (as), they used their weapons to find their way out of 'Umar ibn Sa'd's army and managed to join Imam al-Husayn's (as) side.

In short, they defected from 'Umar ibn Sa'd's army and came to the defence of Imam al-Husayn (as). After courageous battle and killing a lot of people in the army of 'Umar ibn Sa'd, they attained martyrdom.

Another group of Imam al-Husayn's (as) sincere Shi'ahs who came from Kufah to join him at Karbala consisted of six people. Their names were 'Amru ibn Khalid Saydawi, Sa'd Mawla 'Amru ibn Khalid, Majma' al-'A'idhi, 'A'idh ibn Majma', Junadah ibn Harath Salmani and the servant of Nafi' Bajali (or Jamali) who was leading the horse that belonged to Nafi' because Nafi' had already joined Imam al-Husayn (as).

They were informed and persuaded to join Imam al-Husayn (as) by leaflets passed around by Qays ibn Mushir al-Saydawi. The leaflets said Imam al-Husayn (as) had left Mecca for Iraq. These six people knew that there were guards along the way who had been charged with the duty of arresting anyone going to help Imam al-Husayn.

They found a guide who could ride to show them a secluded way out of Kufah. Their guide took them to Imam al-Husayn (as) as fast as he could. They made every effort to hide themselves from the sentries. When they joined Imam al-Husayn (as), the newcomers recited some poems they had learnt from their guide for the Imam (as).

Imam al-Husayn (as) said, "I hope that Allah intends good for us, whether we are killed or are the victors."

Hurr had tried to stop these newcomers from joining the caravan of Imam al-Husayn (as), and told them

to return to Kufah or they would be taken prisoner. Imam al-Husayn (as) said, "We will never allow such. We will protect them in the same way that we protect ourselves. These people are my helpers.

You promised not to interfere until the letter of Ibn Ziyad arrives." Hurr said, "That is true, but these people did not come with you." Imam al-Husayn (as) said, "These people are my helpers and companions. It is better for you to keep your promise or we will be forced to fight you." When Hurr heard this, he dropped his opposition and left them alone. The six people mentioned were not only martyred at Karbala, but were among the earliest to be martyred. At the beginning of the battle, they were surrounded by the enemy. Imam al-Husayn (as) told his courageous brother, 'Abbas, to go and free those six people from encirclement.

'Abbas followed his brother's orders and made a vicious attack on the enemies who had surrounded those six people. He broke the enemy line and freed them. These six youths returned to Imam al-Husayn (as) covered in blood. 'Abbas ibn 'Ali was behind them keeping watch over them. Yazid's soldiers tried to close the way for them.

When the six men saw this, they separated themselves from 'Abbas and in a fierce counter attack they all attained martyrdom. 'Abbas gave the final report of what had happened to Imam al-Husayn (as) and the Imam prayed for them and wished them a peaceful return to their Lord.[8](#)

Yet another person who joined Imam al-Husayn (as) from Kufah was Habib ibn Mazahir Asadi, a very popular companion of the Holy Prophet (S). He and Muslim ibn 'Awsajah were among those who had gotten the people's allegiance on behalf of Imam al-Husayn (as). After 'Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad entered Kufah and isolated Muslim ibn 'Aqil, they left Kufah with the intention of going to help Imam al-Husayn (as).

Writers of biography narrate, "Habib equipped his horse and told his slave to take his horse and go to a certain place, being careful not to attract anyone's attention. He told him to wait for him at that place. Habib bade farewell to his wife and children. He then secretly left the city. When the slave saw that Habib was late, he started talking to the horse,

'O Horse! If your owner does not come, go by yourself to help al-Husayn (as).' At that very moment, Habib arrived and heard what the slave said to his horse. He could not help but start crying. As his tears were flowing, he said, 'May my father and mother be sacrificed for you, O son of the Holy Prophet! Even slaves have hopes of helping you, let alone the free.'

Then, he freed his slave in the way of Allah. The slave started crying and said, 'O my master! I will never leave you alone. I am coming with you to help Imam al-Husayn'."

Another person from Kufah who came to the help of Imam al-Husayn (as) was Hajjaj ibn Masruq Ju'fi. He was one of the followers of Imam 'Ali (as). He came from Kufah to Mecca in order to join Imam al-Husayn (as). He came with the Imam to Karbala. At prayer times, he was the one who recited the call to

prayer [*adhan*]. He was one of those martyred at Karbala.

Two others from Kufah were Nu'man ibn 'Amru Azdi Rasibi and his brother Hulas ibn 'Amru. These two brothers were initially in the army of 'Umar ibn Sa'd, but escaped to join Imam al-Husayn's (as) army by night. They stayed with him and were among the people martyred in the early confrontation with the enemy.

Also, from among the people of Kufah was Zuhayr ibn Qayn Bajali. He was one of the nobles and brave men of Kufah. He was extraordinary in battle. In the beginning, he was a supporter of 'Uthman, but in the year 60 of the Islamic calendar, he went on pilgrimage [*hajj*] to Mecca together with his family.

When returning to Kufah, he met Imam al-Husayn (as) along the way. Allah, the Exalted, guided him. From then on, he became one of the supporters of Imam al-Husayn (as). He came with the Imam to Karbala and was martyred there.

It can be deduced from this that there were other supporters and well-wishers of 'Uthman in Kufah. They existed up to the time of Imam al-Husayn (as), and did not have much inclination towards the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as). Therefore, it cannot be supposed that all the people of Kufah were devout and faithful to Imam 'Ali (as).

One of the Shi'ahs who escaped to join Imam al-Husayn (as) was Sa'id ibn 'Abd Allah Hanafi. He was one of the bravest and most devoted Shi'ahs of Kufah. When the news of Mu'awiyah's death reached him, he called the Shi'ahs of Kufah together. They wrote a joint letter to Imam al-Husayn (as) inviting him to come to Kufah. When Muslim ibn 'Aqil came to Kufah, Sa'id ibn 'Abd Allah Hanafi swore that he would sacrifice his life to help Imam al-Husayn (as).

Muslim ibn 'Aqil wrote a letter and entrusted it to Sa'id to take to Imam al-Husayn (as). When Sa'id joined Imam al-Husayn (as), he stayed with him until the day of 'Ashura when he got martyred.

On the night before the day of 'Ashura, Imam al-Husayn (as) gave a speech in which he gave his companions the liberty to stay with him or escape under the cover of darkness. In the beginning, every one of the members of Bani Hashim said something pledging loyalty to Imam al-Husayn (as) and promising to stay with him to the very end.

When they finished talking, the first person from the companions to speak in defence of Imam al-Husayn (as) was Sa'id ibn 'Abd Allah. He said to Imam al-Husayn (as), "We will never leave you alone until we are sure that we have safeguarded the Prophet's right in you. I swear to Allah! Even if I knew that I would be killed, then brought back to life, then burnt alive, and this were repeated seventy times, I still would never stop at anything to help you."

On the day of 'Ashura, he was the one shielding Imam al-Husayn (as) from spears by acting as a human shield. His body took all the spears and arrows that were aimed at the Imam. As a result of this,

no spear or arrow hit the Imam. He got so wounded by the arrows and spears which hit him that he finally fell on the ground. Then after cursing the enemies, he turned to Imam al-Husayn and said, "O son of Allah's Prophet! Have I been faithful to my promise?" Imam al-Husayn (as) replied, "Yes, you will be my advance guard in paradise." Then, the soul left his blessed body and he was martyred.

Others from Kufah include Shawdhab ibn 'Abd Allah Hamadani and 'Abis ibn Abi Shabib Shakiri. Shawdhab was one of the bravest Shi'ahs of Kufah. He was one of the reliable memorizers and transmitters of *hadith* (Islamic traditions) from Amir al-Mu'minin Imam 'Ali (as). Together with his master, he brought Muslim ibn 'Aqil's letter from Kufah to Mecca for Imam al-Husayn (as) and then they accompanied him to Karbala where they were both martyred.

'Abis ibn Abi Shabib Shakiri was one of the most famous Shi'ah personalities in Kufah. He was a tribal headman and a very brave man. He was an eloquent speaker and a man devoted to worship. The tribe of Bani Shakir was among the most sincere believers in the *wilayat* (guardianship) of Imam 'Ali (as). On the day of 'Ashura, he came alone on the battlefield and challenged the enemy, "Is there anyone to fight me?" No one had the courage to come forward and fight him, so in the end, 'Umar ibn Sa'd ordered his troops to shower him with stones. When he saw this, he threw his armor and headcover off and went forward to fight them. He fought on till he attained martyrdom.

Yet another of the true Shi'ahs from Kufah was 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umair Kalbi. He and his wife Umm Wahab hastened to help Imam al-Husayn (as). On the day of 'Ashura, Umm Wahab held the pillars of the tents and said to her husband, "May my father and mother be sacrificed for you! Go and fight in the way of the Prophet's grandson!"

'Abd Allah ibn 'Umayr sent her to the women's side of the camp, but this lioness could not leave her husband. She tightly held his clothes and said, "I will not leave you at all, till I attain martyrdom by your side."

Imam al-Husayn (as) said to her, "May you have a good reward from the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as) and may Allah have mercy on you. Return to the women and stay there with them, because women are exempted from fighting." She returned to the women. After her husband's martyrdom, this heroine came to the place where her husband's body had fallen and brushed the dirt off him while saying, "May you enjoy paradise."

Shimr, the accursed, gave orders to his slave to hit the woman with a wooden stick in the head. Rustam, Shimr's slave, struck her head with a wooden stick so hard that she attained martyrdom right there.

Two others who escaped from Kufah and managed to join Imam al-Husayn (as) were 'Abd Allah ibn 'Urwah Ghaffari and his brother 'Abd al-Rahman. These two brothers joined Imam al-Husayn (as) at Karbala. They were honored to be in the presence of Imam al-Husayn (as) on the day of 'Ashura.

They said to Imam al-Husayn (as), "The enemy has surrounded you from every side. We would love to

be at your service and fight your enemies so as to repel them from you.” Imam al-Husayn said, “Well done! Come with me.” They joined Imam al-Husayn (as) and fought by his side bravely until they attained martyrdom.

‘Amru ibn Qarzah Ansari is also one of the companions of Imam ‘Ali (as) who came from Kufah. He had fought beside Imam ‘Ali (as) in all the wars that had taken place during his time. He was a trusted memorizer and narrator of *hadith*. He joined Imam al-Husayn (as) in Karbala before anyone could prevent him. He too was one of the people who took turns guarding Imam al-Husayn (as) on the day of ‘Ashura.

He came forward with his face and chest towards the enemy in order to stop arrows and spears from harming Imam al-Husayn (as). He fell on the ground covered in blood. He said, “Have I been faithful to my promise?” Imam al-Husayn answered, “Yes, you are my guard in paradise. Give my greetings and *salam* to the Prophet of Allah. Tell him that I too will join him very soon.” Then, ‘Amru ibn Qarzah Ansari achieved martyrdom and returned to his Lord.

Abu Thamamah ‘Amru al-Sa’idi was also a Shi‘ah from Kufah from the time of Imam ‘Ali (as). He had taken part in the wars that Imam ‘Ali (as) had fought, and later in the battles his son Imam al-Hasan (as) had fought. Then, he remained in Kufah. After the death of Mu‘awiyah, he wrote a letter to Imam al-Husayn (as) asking him to come to Kufah.

In Kufah, he was one of those who had been ordered by Muslim ibn ‘Aqil to collect donations for buying arms. ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad sent a person to arrest him. He and Nafi‘ ibn Hilal Bajali escaped from Kufah and joined Imam al-Husayn (as).

On the day of ‘Ashura, he stood in line to protect the Imam from spears and arrows when Imam al-Husayn (as) was performing his prayers. By the end of the prayers, he had been hit by thirteen arrows. He suffered a lot of wounds and finally fell on the ground and attained martyrdom.

Muslim ibn ‘Awsajah was one of the Prophet’s (S) companions. He was one of the people of Kufah who had written the letter to Imam al-Husayn. He was also one of those who got the people’s allegiance for Imam al-Husayn (as). After the martyrdom of Muslim and Hani ibn ‘Urwah, he went into hiding in Kufah. Later, he and his family escaped. They joined Imam al-Husayn and he sacrificed his life for Imam al-Husayn in the way of Allah.

Another one of the people of Kufah who joined Imam al-Husayn (as) was the One Legged Martyr, Muslim ibn Kathir A’raj Azdi. He had lost one of his legs fighting on the side of Imam ‘Ali (as) in one of the wars. Even though he was legally exempted from war, and it was not at all incumbent for him to fight, he escaped from Kufah and went to Karbala to be at the service of Imam al-Husayn (as).

He became one of Imam al-Husayn’s (as) soldiers and was one of the first people to be martyred at the beginning of the battle. Mas‘ud ibn Hajjaj Taymi and his child ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Mas‘ud were also

among the people who came from Kufah and were martyred at the beginning of the battle on the day of ‘Ashura.

These two had employed a very good trick. When they noticed that they could not manage to escape from Kufah and join Imam al-Husayn (as) in Mecca, they enrolled in the army of ‘Umar ibn Sa‘d and in this way were able to reach Karbala. After reaching Karbala, they escaped from ‘Umar ibn Sa‘d’s army and joined Imam al-Husayn (as).

Mawaqqi‘ ibn Thamamah Asadi was also one of the people who came to Karbala from Kufah. He traveled by night until he joined Imam al-Husayn (as). On the day of ‘Ashura, he fought very bravely. When his strength was exhausted, he fell on the ground. The enemies wanted to cut his head from his body, but he had relatives in the army of Yazid who hurried to protect him from his enemies and managed to take him back to Kufah.

They wanted to secretly cure him, but their secret could not remain hidden. When news reached the Governor of Kufah about what they intended to do, he gave orders that Asadi’s wounded and incapacitated body should be put in yoke and chains and sent into exile to a distant land. Mawaqqi‘ ibn Thamamah Asadi spent a year in yoke and chains with a body covered in blood until he finally joined Imam al-Husayn (as) by attaining martyrdom.

These were some of the religious and devoted Shi‘ahs of Kufah who joined Imam al-Husayn (as) and sacrificed their lives and souls for the Imam and his aims and objectives.

There are many people who joined Imam al-Husayn (as) from Kufah, but we cannot mention all of them here.<sup>9</sup>

## **Martyrs who carried messages**

There were other Shi‘ahs who took the duty of carrying messages between Kufah and Mecca. They attained martyrdom as letter carriers. We will now mention some of them here:

### **1. ‘Abd Allah ibn Yaqtar Humayri, Imam al-Husayn’s foster brother**

Biographers write, “Imam al-Husayn sent ‘Abd Allah ibn Yaqtar Humayri to Kufah to deliver the reply he had written to Muslim ibn ‘Aqil. Ibn Ziyad’s notorious spy, Hasin ibn Tamim, arrested him in an area called Qadissiyyah near Karbala. Hasin ibn Tamim took him to ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. ‘Ubayd Allah asked ‘Abd Allah ibn Yaqtar Humayri what Imam al-Husayn (as) had sent him to do. He did not give any answer to this question.

‘Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad ordered him to the top of the palace where he must curse ‘the lying son of the liar’ [*kadhhab ibn kadhhab*]. (By this ‘Ubayd Allah meant Imam al-Husayn.) ‘Ubayd Allah said, “Then you must come down and get the judgement I will issue for you.”

He went on top of the palace, turned to the people and addressed them, “O people! I am a messenger from al-Husayn son of Fatimah the daughter of Allah’s Prophet. I have been sent to you. The message he entrusted to me to give to you, the people, is that he requests you to help and support him in his uprising against the sons of Marjanah and Sumayyah.”

At this point, ‘Ubayd Allah gave orders to his agents that they should drop ‘Abd Allah ibn Yaqtar Humayri from the top of the palace to the ground. When they did this, his bones were broken. Then, as he was breathing his last, ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umayr, a *faqih* (religious jurisprudent) of Kufah, cut his head off. When the people criticized him for doing so, he sarcastically replied, “I wanted to put him out of his misery.”

## **2. Qays ibn Mashar al-Saydawi**

One of the couriers who was martyred was Qays ibn Mashar al-Saydawi. He had carried a letter from Muslim ibn ‘Aqil to Imam al-Husayn (as), and was bringing the Imam’s reply to Kufah when he was arrested by the villainous spy Hasin ibn Tamim and brought before ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad asked him what the contents of the letter were.

He replied, “I tore the letter to pieces so that you could not find out what the contents were.” ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad asked, “To whom was the letter addressed and written?” Qays said, “A number of people whose names I do not know.” ‘Ubayd Allah said, “If you do not know their names, then at least go on the pulpit and curse ‘the lying son of the liar’ [*kadhhab ibn kadhhab*].” Qays ibn Mashar al-Saydawi went on the pulpit and said, “O people! Verily al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali is the best creation of Allah and son of Fatimah the daughter of the Holy Prophet (S). I am a messenger from him sent to you.

We separated from each other at an area called Hajar. You should hasten to join and help him.” At that moment he cursed ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad and his father, and sent peace and blessings upon Amir al-Mu’minin, Imam ‘Ali (as). Ibn Ziyad gave orders to his agents to bring Qays ibn Mashar al-Saydawi down from the pulpit and kill him.”<sup>10</sup>

These were the true Shi’ah.

## **The forerunners of martyrdom**

After Muslim ibn ‘Aqil came to Kufah, and before the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn (as), a number of people were martyred because of paying allegiance or sending messages to Imam al-Husayn. Others were martyred because they wanted to escape and help Imam al-Husayn but were discovered before they could succeed. We will now mention some of them:

### **1. ‘Ammarah ibn Salkhab Azdi**

He was one of the Shi’ahs who had paid allegiance to Muslim ibn ‘Aqil in Kufah. When Muslim was captured, Ibn Ziyad also captured ‘Ammarah ibn Salkhab Azdi and asked, “What tribe are you from?” He

answered, “I come from the tribe of Azd ibn Ziyad.” ‘Ubayd Allah bin Ziyad gave orders to his agents to take ‘Ammarah to his tribesmen and separate (cut) his head from his neck.

Abu Ja‘far recounts, “They cut his head off in the presence of his tribesmen.”

## **2. ‘Abd al-A‘la ibn Yazid al-Kalbi**

‘Abd al-A‘la ibn Yazid al-Kalbi was an astute horseman and a very brave Shi‘ah of Kufah. He was a supporter of Muslim ibn ‘Aqil. After Muslim ibn ‘Aqil was deserted by the people, Kathir ibn Shahab arrested ‘Abd al-A‘la and handed him over to ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad.

Abu Mukhnaf recounts, “After the martyrdom of Muslim ibn ‘Aqil, ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad called for ‘Abd al-A‘la. He asked him how he was feeling. ‘Abd al-A‘la answered, ‘I came out in order to be a spectator at the battlefield.

I did not have any intention of fighting against you.’ ‘Ubayd Allah asked him to swear upon Allah that he was telling the truth. ‘Abd al-A‘la refused to swear. Therefore, they took him to a place infested with wild and vicious animals and he was martyred there.”<sup>11</sup>

## **The presence of Khawarij in Kufah**

When we inspect historical accounts, we see that the commanders of ‘Umar ibn Sa‘d’s army were bitter and obstinate enemies of Imam al-Husayn (as) and the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as). They were all of Nawasib, Khawarij and Umayyad descent, including ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, ‘Umar ibn Sa‘d, Shimr ibn Dhi al-Jawshan, Qays ibn Ash‘ath, ‘Amru ibn Hajjaj Zubaydi, ‘Abd Allah ibn Zuhayr Azdi, ‘Urwah ibn Qays Ahmasi, Shabath ibn Rib‘i Yarbu‘i, ‘Abd al-Rahman Abi Sirah Ja‘fari, Hasin ibn Numayr and Hajjar ibn Abjar.

Likewise, there was no one famous as a Shi‘ah among the people who took part in killing Imam al-Husayn (as). On the contrary, most of the enemy combatants were reputed for being hostile and for bearing grudges against the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as).

These include Sanan ibn Anas Nakha‘i, Harmalah Kahili, Munqidh ibn Marrah ‘Abdi, Abi al-Hutuf Ju‘fi, Malik ibn Nasr Kandi, ‘Abd al-Rahman Ju‘fi, Qash‘am ibn Nadhir Ju‘fi, Bahr ibn Ka‘b ibn Taym Allah, Zar‘ah ibn Sharik Tamimi, Salih ibn Wahab Mari, Khawli ibn Yazid Asbahi, Hasin ibn Tamim and others.

## **The presence of followers of Abu Sufiyan in Sa‘d’s army**

Imam al-Husayn (as) bestowed the title, “the Shi‘ahs of Abu Sufiyan” on the soldiers of ‘Umar ibn Sa‘d. He addressed them in this way,

«ويحكم يا شيعه آل ابي سفيان! إن لم يكن لكم دين، وكنتم لا تخافون المعاد، فكونوا أحراراً في دنياكم»

“Woe upon you, O followers of the household of Abu Sufiyan! If you lack religion and do not fear the Day of Resurrection, then at least be free in your world.”<sup>12</sup>

When we refer to and ponder the words and speeches of Imam al-Husayn (as) at Karbala, we do not find a single instance where he calls his rivals his Shi'ahs or followers. In the same way, the killers of Imam al-Husayn (as) were never called the Shi'ahs of Imam al-Husayn in the words of other narrators either. This in itself is proof that the traitors who enrolled as soldiers of 'Umar ibn Sa'd were not real Shi'ahs of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as).

When Imam al-Husayn (as) asked why they wanted to shed his blood, some of 'Umar ibn Sa'd's soldiers answered, “We are at war with you because of the enmity and grudges which we bear against your father.”<sup>13</sup>

It is clear that these people held deep-seated enmity and hatred of Imam 'Ali (as) due to the sinister propaganda machine of Mu'awiyah ibn Abu Sufiyan. A true Shi'ah of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as) would never say that they were enemies of Imam 'Ali (as). Some of the enemy soldiers called Imam al-Husayn ‘the lying son of the liar’ [*kadhhab ibn kadhhab*].<sup>14</sup>

Some of them addressed him thus, “Al-Husayn! We give glad tidings to you that you are going to the fire!”<sup>15</sup> They also told Imam al-Husayn (as) and his companions, “O al-Husayn! Your prayers will not be accepted by Allah.”<sup>16</sup>

A true Shi'ah of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (as) would never utter ugly words from his mouth regarding his leader and guide. All these ugly statements were a result of hatred and grudges that were held against the Prophet's *Ahl al-Bayt* (as) by followers of Abu Sufiyan and Mu'awiyah ibn Abu Sufiyan.

<sup>1</sup>. A'yan al-Shi'ah, vol. 1, pp. 584–585.

<sup>2</sup>. Rijal Najjashi, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>. Al-Kawakib al-Durriyyah, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup>. Lillahi wa lil-Haqiqah, p. 97.

<sup>5</sup>. A'yan al-Shi'ah, vol. 1, p. 585.

<sup>6</sup>. Tarikh Madinat al-Damishq, vol. 57, p. 198.

<sup>7</sup>. Ibn Abi al-Hadid, Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 11, p. 44.

<sup>8</sup>. Absar al-'Ayn fi Ansar al-Husayn (as), p. 66.

<sup>9</sup>. Tustari, Qamus al-Rijal; Absar al-'Ayn fi Ansar al-Husayn (as); Dhakhirah al-Darin fima Yata'alliqu bi al-Husayn wa Ashabih; Ma'ali al-Sibtayn; Pishva-ye Shahidan (The Leader of Martyrs); Nafs al-Mahmum; Tarikh Tabari; etc.

<sup>10</sup>. See previous footnote.

<sup>11</sup>. See previous footnote.

<sup>12</sup>. Khwarazmi, Maqatal al-Imam al-Husayn (as), vol. 2, p. 38; Al-Luhuf, p. 45.

<sup>13</sup>. Yanabi' al-Muwaddah, p. 346.

<sup>14</sup>. Ibn Athir, Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh, vol. 4, p. 67.

<sup>15</sup>. Ibid., p. 66; Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah, vol. 8, p. 183.

[16.](#) Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah, vol. 8, p. 185.

---

**Source URL:**

<https://www.al-islam.org/uprising-ashura-and-responses-doubts-ali-asghar-ridwani/who-killed-imam-al-husayn#comment-0>