

## **The outcome of the 'Battle of the camel' according to Hichem Djaït**

Battle for the dîn, that is to say both religion and the road, the way, whether Ali's or Aisha's, where the hamasa of Islam and the hamiyya of the Arabs were joined together, the two primordial passions, that of religion and that of blood, but the latter turned against itself. Two hordes of warriors, battle hardened, professionals in combat on a massive scale, trailing clouds of glory from having crushed the Sassanid armies and subjugated the whole of Persia, organised by Islam. It is the first time in history that the Arabs achieve such heights, but we are also at some distance from the pre-islamic inter-tribal wars or even the Prophet's wars. At last a war of imperial armies, founders of empire and destroyers of empire. One finds the same characteristics later, at Siffin, on an even larger and more formidable scale.

The gravity of the all-consuming drama, that is, the emotional intensity of critical moments, grows during the course of many scenes. Aisha brought back to the heart of Basra by her brothers Muhammed bin Abu Bakr.....That house full of the Qurayshi wounded, hiding in inside rooms. In brief, a veritable tableau of tears, exhaustion and grief and which is perhaps a reminder of what the Islam of the Prophet himself had brought as destroyer on his own Qurayshi tribe. Ali had then unfailingly showed harshness, and doubtless the memory of that past had caused hatred in the Qurayshi. Today that past comes back to haunt him, once again, Ali finds himself in the position of the accused, killer of his own tribesmen. This breaks out in the imprecations of that woman, in two verses of virulent lamentation preached to Ali, in the near unanimity of the Quraysh ranged against him, here at the Camel, tomorrow at Siffin. Ali shows sublime and true forbearance in that long moment of psychological testing after the battle. Patient silence before the defeated Qurayshi woman, a simple rebuke to Aisha for having made Muslims kill each other even though God had ordered her to 'stay at home', his strict instruction for her not to be injured, the order for her to be taken home to Medina.

Source: Hichem Djaït, *La Grande Discorde. Religion et politique dans l'Islam des origines*, Paris. Gallimard, 'Bibliothèque des Histoires' 1989, p 217-218.