

The Arab Conquest of Persia: The Khūzistān Province before and after the Muslims' Triumph

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During the first two centuries after the appearance of Islam, the Arab Muslims created a vast empire that stretched from Spain and North Africa all the way to the borders of China and India. Iraq and the Iranian plateau were among the first to be conquered. In May-June of 633 CE, Kāled b. al-Walīd was among the first to raid the rich region of Iraq that belonged to the Sasanian Empire.¹ After a series of battles, he defeated the Sasanians and their Arab allies and took over the Sawād.² During the next couple of years Muslims' raids intensified and eventually in 636 CE, Sa'd b. Abī Waqqās crushed the Persians in the Battle of Qādesīya and took over their capital, Ctesiphon.³ The Persian King, Yazdgerd III was forced to abandon the capital and fled to inland Persia. The loss of Iraq was a great failure for the Sasanians, since they had lost their administrative capital along with the tax revenues from their richest province. The royal treasure was also deserted, and a substantial amount of their military forces had perished during the fighting and many of their high nobles and leaders fell. After Iraq, Muslims took over the provinces of Persia one by one and eventually conquered the whole Empire and even went further than the Sasanians' areas of influence to Turkestan and Bactria. One might wonder how those Arab Bedouins took over and defeated the great Sasanian Empire along with the Byzantine Empire. The Arab Muslims seemed to have both a motive to gain material goods and a religious fever to spread their young cause.⁴ Before the start of the conquests, Muslims just finished their first civil war or rīdda wars and were ready for another fight.⁵ Irani mentions that once Arabs took over Iraq, it was the sheer force of circumstances that drove them to conquer the rest of the countries surrounding them.⁶ Persians were weak and venerable for many reasons such as the class and religious strives in their society, conflict among nobles, dynastic instability, un-centralized and disorganized army, too much reliance on Lakhmids and other

¹ A. H. Zarrīnkūb, *Do Qarn Sokūt* (Tehran: Sokhan Publishers, 1966), 13.

² Sawād is the rich region of Southern Iraq.

³ A. H. Zarrīnkūb, *Do Qarn Sokūt*, 14.

⁴ Francesco Gabrieli, *Muhammad and the Conquests of Islam*, trans. Virginia Luling and Rosamund Linell (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1968), 115.

⁵ A. H. Zarrīnkūb, "The Arab Conquest of Iran and its Aftermath," in *The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, vol. 4 of *The Cambridge History of Iran* ed. Richard N. Frye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 1.

⁶ M. S. Irani, "The Province of Khorasan After the Arab Conquest," *Proceedings and Transactions of the All-India Oriental Conference* 12 (1946): 580.



defecting allies as well as a recent unsuccessful war with Byzantium which had left the Sasanians broke.⁷ On the other hand the reasons for the success of the Arab Muslims included organization and determination, effect of their religion on their moral, greater mobility, their ability to recruit forces as they expanded, gain of resources as they took over more lands to better equip themselves, and finally the change of policy under different Caliphs.⁸

This paper is on the province of Khūzistān in the southwest of Iranian Plateau and focuses on the changes and effects that the conquest had on this province before, during and after the Muslim conquest. There are numerous primary sources on the early conquest of Islam. Most are Muslim sources which were written in the 9th-10th centuries long after the conquest happened, but there are also other primary sources such as Pahlavi, Armenian, Christians and Syriac sources, which would be more than helpful. There are non-literal sources as well, such as numismatics, epigraphic, and archaeological findings that can verify our sources. One of the main issues in the study of Early Islamic conquests is that our main Arabic sources were written around 200 years after the events took place and they are sometimes contradictory in the sequence of events and the dates.⁹ However, this doesn't mean that they are not reliable, but just that it is hard to distinguish between authentic and unauthentic sources. Other non-Arabic sources, even though they are mostly fragmentary and not detailed, are very useful in verifying the main body of events. Coins, inscriptions and archaeological artifacts also help to meld together the narratives into accurate and cohesive historical facts. It is the aim of this paper to first look at the difficulties and problems in the study of Early Islamic conquest history and to argue that using both literal and non-literal sources, one could evidently see that there was more continuity rather than change after the Muslim conquest of Persia and particularly in the Province of Khūzistān.

It is extremely difficult to read and comprehend the early Islamic historiography. Most of the conquest accounts were written to address the post-conquest politics such as the amount of taxes, tribute from cities, division of spoils and lands, and the administrative positions for the newly conquered lands.¹⁰ Accounts are often contradictory and the exact course of events is unclear, in addition the precise dates are elusive and the sizes of the armies

⁷ Michael G. Morony, "Arab Conquest of Iran," *Encyclopædia Iranica* 2 (1987): 204; Sebeos, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, trans. Robert W. Thomson. vol. 1 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), xxviii; Francesco Gabrieli, *Muhammad*, 123; F.C. Davar, "A Glimpse into Iran after the Arab Conquest," *K. R. Cama Oriental Institute* 1 (1954): 159; Touraj Daryaee, "The Fall of the Sasanian Empire to the Arab Muslims: Two Centuries of Silence to Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire; the Partho-Sasanian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran," review of *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran*, written by Parvaneh Pourshariati, *Journal of Persianate Studies* 3 (2010): 247-8; A. H. Zarrīnkūb, "The Arab Conquest of Iran," 4.

⁸ Michael Morony, "Arab Conquest," 204; M. A. Shaban, *Islamic History: A New Interpretation A.D. 600-750 (A.H. 132)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 29; Fred McGraw Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 220.

⁹ Richard N. Frye, *The Golden Age of Persia: The Arabs in the East* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1975), 56.

¹⁰ Richard Frye, *The Golden Age*, 67.

are hard to determine.¹¹ The main two problems are the contradictory nature of accounts and the dates of the conquests.¹² One of the reasons for the confusion in dating for Islamic sources could be that many cities revolted after they were conquered and Arabs were forced to retake them repeatedly.¹³ This could cause a lot of puzzlement since; it won't be clear if the first conquest date should be recorded or the last time it was retaken. Therefore a great deal of historical work is required to reconstruct a detailed history of conquests based on Arab sources. The Muslim sources were mostly based on oral traditions and as a result, there was a lot of guesswork and boasting of the Arabs involved.¹⁴ As a result, modern scholars tend to use other non-Arabic sources to clear the way. Armenian historian, Sebeos could bring more precision to the topic, while Pahlavi texts such as *Jāmāsp Nāmag*, and *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr* would clear some issues, and Syriac sources such as *Khuzestan Chronicle* and the anonymous *Chronicle of Zuqnīn* would verify or repudiate the Arabic accounts. These literal sources are mostly independent of the Muslim sources and therefore we could get a view of how the conquered people recorded their history and how they described their lives before and after the invasion. Use of Numismatics and other archaeological sources could shed some light and provide more clarification on literary sources too. Using coins is specially a great way to confirm some details of the accounts. All of these sources should be used interchangeably to get a clear sense of what really happened, but unfortunately reasonable certainty could never be achieved.¹⁵ A modern scholar should carry this burden to achieve a good understanding of the events, so he or she could interpret them accordingly. The Khūzistān province is a good example where all these types of sources could be used correspondently to investigate the effects of the conquest before and after the Arab invasion. While there were many changes in the higher levels of the society, the way of life for the people in Khūzistān province almost remained the same, and at the same time it adopted many new changes and melded them with its own culture and traditions.

The Khūzistān province was one of the most fertile and prosperous regions of Persia, and it remained mostly the same after the Arab conquest. It was placed in the south compartment of Persia, along with the province of Fārs by the Sasanian Empire records.¹⁶ It was said that the generals in charge of these regions acted like kings and only answered to *Shāhanshāh* or the King of Kings. Khūzistān was also present in the beginning of the Sasanian

¹¹ Michael Morony, "Arab Conquest," 205.

¹² Touraj Daryaee, "The Collapse of the Sasanian Power in Fārs/Persis," *Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān* 2, no. 1 (2002): 3-4; Daryaee, "Fall of the Sasanian Empire," 246; Al-Tabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī (Ta'rikh al-rusul wa 'l-mulūk): The Conquest of Iran*, trans. G. Rex Smith. Vol. 9 (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), xiv; Al-Tabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī (Ta'rikh al-rusul wa 'l-mulūk): The Conquest of Iraq, Southwestern Persia, and Egypt*, trans. Gautier H. A. Juynboll. Vol. 8 (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), xiii; Fred Donner, *Early Islamic*, 217; S. Tyler-Smith, "Coinage in the Name of Yazdgerd III (AD 632-651) and the Arab Conquest of Iran," *The Royal Numismatic Chronicle* 160 (1966): 136; Jürgen Paul, "Early Islamic History of Iran: From the Arab Conquest to the Mongol Invasion," review of *The Encyclopædia Iranica, Iranian Studies* 31, no. 3/4 (1998): 465.

¹³ A. H. Zarrīnkūb, "The Arab Conquest of Iran," 21.

¹⁴ Sebeos, *Armenian History*, vol. 2, 236-7; Tabarī, VIII, xiv.

¹⁵ Stephen R. Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 69.

¹⁶ Mohsen Zakeri, *Sāsānid Soldiers in Early Muslim Society: The Origins of 'Ayyārān and Futuwwa* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1995), 32.



Empire in 3rd century. Its name was in the Šābuhr Inscription along with other provinces where Šābuhr I or Shapur mentioned his territory. He said:

I am the ruler of Ērān-šahr and hold these *šahrs*: Persia, Parthia, Xūzistān, Mēšān, Assyria, Adiabene, Arabia, Āzerbāijān, Armenia, Geogris, Segan, Albania, Balaskan, up to the Caucasus mountains and the Gates of Albania, and all of the mountain chain of Pareshwar, Media, Gurgan, Merv, Herāt and all of Abaršahr, Kermān, Sīstan, Tūrān, Makrān, Paradene, India, Kušānšahr up to Peshawar and up to Kašgar, Sogdiana and to the mountains of Taškent, and on the other side of the sea, Oman.¹⁷

The mention of Khūzistān indicates that it was an important and influential region even before the Arab conquest of Iran, and this is essential since Khūzistān could be a good representation of Iran to depict if there was more change or continuity after the invasion. The province of Xūzistān or as we know it, Khūzistān was one of the major provinces of Ērān-šahr or the land of Iran, and it was very prosperous. It was also mentioned in the Pahlavi text of *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*, which was a list of provinces and their cities that was written at the time of Caliph al-Mansūr in the mid 8th century. It is based on an authentic Sasanian sources written long before the advent of Islam.¹⁸ Many cities of Khūzistān were mentioned which included Hormizd-Ardaxšīr (Ahwaz), Rām-Hormizd (Ramhormoz), Šūs (Shush), Šūstar (Tustar), Pīlābād (Jundyshapur).¹⁹ All of these mentioned, were the most important cities of the Khūzistān province and were depicted in the Early Islamic conquest accounts. This is another indication that cities that were present at the time of Sasanids continued to prosper and exist well after the Muslim invasion in the 7th century into the Middle ages and most of them into the modern era. Khūzistān was also present in the time of the Achaemenid Empire and even before but under a different name. Khūzistān and some surrounding areas were known as Elam since it was the land of ancient Elamites that resided there when it was taken over by the Achaemenids. Elam is mentioned in the Behistūn Inscription in the 6th BCE, as one of many regions of Persian Empire, where Darius the Great was the King.

Says the king Darius, these are the regions that came to me by the favour of Ahura Mazda I was their king: Persia, Elam, Babylonia, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt (those) who are beside the sea, Sardis, Ionia, Media, Armenia, Cappadocia, Parthia, Drangiana, Aria, Chorasmia, Bactia, Sogdiana, Gandara, Scythia, Sattagydia, Arachosia, Maka, in all, 23 provinces.²⁰

The Province of Elam or later on as it came to be known as Khūzistān was a primary province for the Achaemenids. This shows the continuous importance of Khūzistān as a strategic and prosperous region throughout history and it is evident that it did not stop with the change of the regimes or dynasties and it continued to flourish. Khūzistān also was held by

¹⁷ *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*, trans. by Touraj Daryaee, 5.

¹⁸ Touraj Daryaee, "The Effect of Arab Conquest on Fars," 193-4.

¹⁹ *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*, 66-8.

²⁰ *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*, 4.



Seleucids during their reign.²¹ Even when a foreign dynasty such as Seleucids took over Iran, there were some changes, however, the basic life of people remained unchanged and the foreigners got assimilated into the Persian culture, as Arab Muslims would later on be submitted too. From the time of the Achaemenids to the Sasanids, Khūzistān had always been a rich and well-off province. There was great diversity among the people of Khūzistān as well by the time of the Islamic conquests, mainly because of the transfer of prisoners by both Achaemenids and Sasanids to this province. Herodotus mentioned the transfer of populations from Ionia to Šūs and from Greece into Khūzistān in the Achaemenid era.²² Shapur II, the Sasanian king was also known to transfer many Romans and Christians from North Mesopotamia and Syria to Khūzistān and settle them in cities of Šūs, Šūstar, and Jundyshapur.²³ As a result, the province of Khūzistān was a rich and civilized multi-ethnic cosmopolis by the time of the first Arab invasions into Iran. When the Muslims invaded this province, the people were already used to the coming of new immigrants and bringing their own cultural characteristics. Therefore it was much easier for the people of Khūzistān to adopt to the new Muslim system while keeping their own Iranian identity.

The start of the conquest of Khūzistān followed shortly after the fall of Iraq to the Muslims, and it brought some changes and several continuities for this Province. It was the second province that fell into the hands of the Arabs after Iraq. The conquest of Khūzistān took about four years, most likely from 638 to 642 CE and it was a stage by stage, city to city invasion. Tabari started his account of conquest of Khūzistān or as he called it Ahwāz from his source, Sayf b. 'Umar (d. 786-809), who lived more than a hundred years after the events took place.²⁴ Sayf was known to inflate his numbers and boost the Arab conquerors. Al-Hurmuzān was the *marzban* or governor of Khūzistān that opposed the Muslims at the time of the Arab invasion. He took part in the Battle of Qadissiyah and Jalula and after the Persians were defeated, he went back to Khūzistān to regroup.²⁵ Kennedy mentions that he fled to Khūzistān to collect taxes and gather resources to fight the Muslims again.²⁶ It is most likely that he was using politics and strategy to regain his strength in order to be able to deal strongly with the Arab Muslims who were raiding into Iran. Hurmuzān or as it was mentioned in the *Khuzestan Chronicle*, Hormīzdān, was a Mede by origin²⁷ and a native of Mihrajān Qadhaq.²⁸ He was a

²¹ Richard Frye, *The Heritage of Persia* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1963), 139.

²² Herodotus. VI. 20, 119, trans. James S. Romm (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 105.

²³ Richard Frye, *The Heritage of Persia*, 204; Fred Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 169; Michael G. Morony, *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 266.

²⁴ Tabari, VIII, xiii.

²⁵ Tabari, VIII, 115.

²⁶ Hugh Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests: How the Spread of Islam Changed the World We Live in* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2007), 116.

²⁷ *Khuzestan Chronicle*, in *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, by Robert G Hoyland (Princeton, New Jersey: The Darwin Press Inc., 1997), 184.

²⁸ Al-Balādhuri, *The Origins of the Islamic State: Being a Translation from the Arabic Accompanied with Annotations Geographic and Historic Notes of the KITĀB FUTŪH AL-BULDĀN of al-Imām abu-l 'Abbās Aḥmad ibn-Jābir al-Balādhuri*, trans. Philip Khūri Hitti. Vol. 1 (New York: AMS Press, 1968), 117; Michael Morony, "The Effects of the Muslim Conquest on the Persian Population of Iraq," *Iran* 14 (1976): 48.

member of one of the seven old nobility families of Persia and the Brother-in-law of King Khusro Parviz or Khusro II (600-628 C.E.)²⁹ This meant that he held an incredible amount of wealth and influence almost next to the Persian King of Kings. When Hurmuzān arrived in Khūzistān, he fortified the major cities and got ready for its defense. However, the Kurds of Fārs and Khūzistān attacked Hurmuzān before the Arabs did.³⁰ Hurmuzān was able to drive the Kurds back and after that started raiding the Muslim controlled cities of Māysān and Dāstimāysān, which were north and east of Basra, the newly founded city of Arab Muslims.³¹ By raiding the newly conquered cities in the border of Iraq and Khūzistān, he hoped to weaken the Arab forces and prevent them from entering into his province, but he didn't know that it would have an opposite effect and would cause the Muslims to pour into Khūzistān. Utbah b. Ghazwan along with reinforcements from Nu'aym b. Muqarrin and Nu'aym b. Mas'ud went to fight Hurmuzān and his forces between the Nahre Tira and Duluth, which was west of Ahwaz.³² The Muslims were from Kufa and Basra and they easily defeated the Persian forces and Hurmuzān realized that he lacked manpower, therefore he retreated to Ahwāz and sued for peace. The circumstances were that what was conquered would not be returned to the Persians and that Hurmuzān had to pay tribute.³³ The city of Ahwāz was built by Hormizd I, the Sasanian King and was also called Hormizd-Ardaxsir.³⁴ It was a flourishing town in pre-Islamic era and its name came from the Khuzi inhabitants of the region, which were originally Elamites.³⁵ Now this city which had continued to exist for hundreds of years, saw the coming of change, but it was already used to it, since before it had gone through a pair of different dynasties. Tabari seems to be the most complete account so far until this stage of Hurmuzān's first peace treaty. Balādhuri also mentioned that Al-Mughirah ibn Sh'bah raided Khūzistān first in the late 15 or early 16 AH (637 CE) but made peace with the *dihgan* of Ahwaz, Al-Birwaz, and took payments in return.³⁶ He doesn't seem to mention Hurmuzān. The *Khuzestan Chronicle* also has no insight into the beginning of Khūzistān conquest. The newly arrived Muslims were able to enforce their will on the governor of Khūzistān shortly after entering the province. This suggests that even though Hurmuzān was strong, he was not able to hold off the armies of Muslims, and Arabs continued to pour into Khūzistān. The newcomers were able to make their way easily in this province.

The second part of the Khūzistān conquest depicted the disobedience of Hurmuzān, a conflict and finally the complete conquest of Ahwāz, which led to many changes for the ruling classes, while natives continued to pay their taxes. Hurmuzān apparently went back on his word and withheld tribute and taxes. He gathered an army and also received help from the Kurds that he had earlier fought against and set to fight against the Muslims.³⁷ Hurmuzān seemed

²⁹ L. Veccia Vaglieri, "al-Hurmuzān," *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 2, no. 2 (1960): 587.

³⁰ Michael Morony, *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest*, 265.

³¹ Tabari, VIII, 115.

³² Tabari, VIII, 115-8.

³³ Tabari, VIII, 119.

³⁴ *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*, 27,67.

³⁵ Ahmad Kasravi Tabrizi, *500 Years History of Khuzestan* (Tehran: Kaju Publication, 1983), 71.

³⁶ Balādhuri, I, 112.

³⁷ Tabari, VIII, 121.



like a smart and seasoned general who did the best with what he had and did not give up easily. Umar, the second Rashidun caliph, sent the Muslims a general named Hurqus b. Zuhayr al-Sa'di, to Khūzistān in order to help them defeat Hurmuzān.³⁸ The Muslim army went ahead and defeated Hurmuzān at Ahwāz and enforced *Jizyah* or poll-tax on the people of Ahwāz. This change however was not very dramatic for the people of Khūzistān, since they were paying taxes to their own king or governor before, and now they had to pay it to the Muslims. The scholars in this field are not sure how much a difference it would have made in terms of economics, but most agree that it would have been the same amount of taxes that people had to pay. Hurmuzān ran away to the city of Ramhormoz after the fall of Ahwāz. Ramhormoz was also mentioned as being built by Hormizd I and its original name was Ram-Hormizd.³⁹ Hurmuzān sought a peace treaty again and was granted one on the conditions that he collected the taxes of people for Muslims and in return they would protect Hurmuzān against his enemies.⁴⁰ Again, tax collection by Hormīzdān or by the Muslims didn't matter much for the local inhabitants which were a mixture of Iranian, Arabs, Christians and many other ethnicities. On the other hand, Balādhuri mentioned that when Persian broke the treaty, Abu Musa al-Ash'ari was sent to raid the city of Ahwāz. Abu Musa took Ahwāz and then Nāhre Tira by assault in 17 AH (638 CE).⁴¹ Balādhuri did not mention the 2nd truce between Hurmuzān and the Muslims and said that Abu Musa continued to raid Khūzistān, city after city. Abu Musa then conquered Manadhir and took its population as captives, however Umar ordered the Muslims to, "Set free those whom ye have made captive."⁴² The Arab Muslim author wanted to mention the courage and generosity of the Caliph of Muslims and how he wanted to treat the people of newly conquered lands, gently and with god-like manners. However, it seems to be the consent of many sources that if the inhabitants of a city didn't resist and paid their taxes, they would have been left alone. Nevertheless, in some cases there were those who fought and resisted against the Muslims and as a result they had to be made an example of for other inhabitants. In a general sense, people continued their lives as before.

The third phase in the conquest of Khūzistān started with the breaking the truth again and siege of Ramhormoz, Šūs, and Šūstar and the final changes that were brought up the Khūzistān province. Based on Tabari, Hurmuzān broke his treaty again and when the rumor was heard by the Muslims, Umar wrote to Abu Musa Ash'ari and al-Mu'man b. Muqarrīn to take action against Hurmuzān.⁴³ When Hurmuzān prepared himself for battle and gathered an army and came face to face with the Muslim forces at Arbūk, he was again routed by the Arab Muslims. He deserted Ramhormoz and fled to Šūstar, which was a much better place to defend.⁴⁴ Basran and Kofi forces under command of Abu Musa and Nu'man went to Šūstar and a fight broke out before the gates of the city in which, Persians were again defeated. The city of Šūstar apparently had a huge irrigation system with dams and bridges, and was built on a rocky

³⁸ Tabari, VIII, 121.

³⁹ *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*, 27,67.

⁴⁰ Tabari, VIII, 124.

⁴¹ Balādhuri, I, 112.

⁴² Balādhuri, I, 114

⁴³ Tabari, VIII, 132-3.

⁴⁴ Tabari, VIII, 133.



outcrop, which made it very difficult to conquer.⁴⁵ Muslims laid siege to the city and waited behind the walls. It is worth mentioning that Muslims themselves were not very good at giving siege to cities and they learned a lot from many of the defecting portions of the Persian army. This indicates another form of continuity in military aspects where many of the technology is shared among the conquerors and the conquered in order to reach benefits for both sides. Apparently a traitor among the Persians came to Nu'man asking for his life to be spared and in exchange, he showed the Muslims a path into the city.⁴⁶ The traitor said to the Muslims that if they "attack via the outlet of the water, and then you will conquer the city."⁴⁷ The traitor factor is also another arrow that points to the fact that many people didn't want to risk their lives for a defeated king and therefore preferred to be ruled by Muslims and pay the same taxes to different rulers. The Muslim forces gathered behind the gates of the city and a small group went inside the city through the secret water way and opened the gate and Muslims rushed in. The traitor was identified as a Sinā or Sināh in another conquest account.⁴⁸ Hurmuzān took refuge inside the citadel along with his men and was able to hold out for some time, but finally he surrendered and was taken as a hostage to Medina.⁴⁹ Hurmuzān did his best in defending his lands, since it was clear to him that a new ruling class would threaten his wealth and lands, therefore he fought to the last of his efforts, but the people preferred to be submitted and pay their poll tax or *Jizyah*.

Afterwards Abu Musa and his lieutenants went to the city of Šūs and laid siege to it and finished the last part of the conquest of Khūzistān. Šūs was one of the capitals of the Achaemenid Empire and the Elamites civilization. It was a splendor city that rivaled Persepolis in its size and greatness.⁵⁰ It seems that the city of Šūs was a center to Nestorian Christians and many monks lived there. The monks taunted the Muslims over the fact that this was a holy city and only Antichrist could conquer it.⁵¹ Muslims held siege to the city for a while and were about to leave to join other Muslim forces for battle of Nihavand in Hamadan, when one of the Muslim warriors by the name of Safi went ahead and kicked the gate and shouted "Open up, and then it blew open!"⁵² Muslims stormed inside and the Persians surrendered and asked for peace, which was granted. Arabs Muslims took many loots and booties. However it is more likely that people opened the gates for the Muslims since the city was already a center for many different races and religions and therefore it was more ready to accept a new culture and religion. It is said that the Tomb of Daniel was also in Sus, which inside the tomb, there was a body. Abu Musa took the body wrapped in shrouds and took it outside of city and buried it.⁵³ The story of body of Daniel seems to be a myth about a Tomb that was named after Daniel to

⁴⁵ Hugh Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests*, 126; A. Ḥ. Zarrīnkūb, "The Arab Conquest of Iran," 15.

⁴⁶ Tabari, VIII, 135.

⁴⁷ Tabari, VIII, 135.

⁴⁸ Touraj Daryaee, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Iranian History* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2012),

211.

⁴⁹ Tabari, VIII, 136.

⁵⁰ Hugh Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests*, 128; Richard Frye, *Heritage of Persia*, 96.

⁵¹ Tabari, VIII, 145.

⁵² Tabari, VIII, 145.

⁵³ Tabari, VIII, 147.



attract pilgrims and business to the city. The heroic story of kicking the gates open also seems to be a legendary factor in this story. Probably people were out of water and food after a long siege and they accepted a treaty by opening the city gates. In the case of Šūstar the theme of the traitor is also present which was another common element in the stories of the conquest, that could mean probably the same thing happened to people when they ran out of food and water, that they opened the gates to Muslims and accepted to pay their poll-taxes, which was not much different than what they had to pay to their previous Sassanid masters.

Another narrative about the fall of Šūs and Šūstar is from Balādhuri which differed in sequence with that of Tabari, however it offers the same elements of change and continuity. Balādhuri mentioned that Šūs was first taken after fall of Ahwāz, where Abu Musa went and besieged the city until people of the city ran out of food and they had to surrender.⁵⁴ The *Marzbān* of Šūs asked for safe conduct for himself and 80 of his people before opening the gates and Abu Musa accepted. But apparently he forgot to mention himself among the eighty names and therefore Abu Musa ordered him to be beheaded even though he offered his a great sum of money.⁵⁵ This indicates that Muslims accepted payments and taxes rather than killing all the inhabitants, however there were times when the higher classes and the fighting forces had to be made an example of. All of the fighting men of the city of Šūs were put to death by Abu Musa's men, their possessions taken, and their households enslaved.⁵⁶ This version seems to be more cruel and bloody than Tabari's account. However, these moments were to be expected when a conquest was taking place, since no empire became strong by just being nice. There are always lessons to be made and people had to become examples for others. Also the termination of the top ruling class meant more profit for the Muslims, however the life of most regular people didn't change dramatically. The body of Prophet Daniel was also mentioned when Abu Musa took the body outside of city and damned a river and buried him under the bed of a river, so people could no longer go to his tomb.⁵⁷ There are many accounts that mention this tomb, and it is likely that there was a tomb in Sus, however the story of a body could be a fiction in order to make it more interesting to both pilgrims and attract attention to the city. Abu Musa then went to Ramhormoz and took the city and made another treaty with its people for 800,000 dirhams a year.⁵⁸ The numbers might not be accurate, but it clearly states that taxes were taken and the lives of normal people were on most parts unaffected. They had to work hard and earn money in order to be able to pay their dues at the end of the year, and that was the same before the Arab Muslims arrived. Abu Musa finally arrived at Šūstar, where Hurmuzān had taken refuge. The city of Šūstar was fiercely defended but Basran and Kufi forces drove the Persian army back to the city. Hurmuzān was able to retreat to the city but 900 of his men were killed and 600 were captured, that later were beheaded.⁵⁹ Again, through treachery of one of Persians, Arabs were able to storm the city, and they captured Hurmuzān after he held his ground for a short period in the citadel. There is

⁵⁴ Balādhuri, I, 114.

⁵⁵ Balādhuri, I, 114-5.

⁵⁶ Balādhuri, I, 114.

⁵⁷ Balādhuri, I, 115.

⁵⁸ Balādhuri, I, 115.

⁵⁹ Balādhuri, I, 117.

big contradiction in the sequence of events, therefore other sources should be consulted to better understand them. This mix up in the order of events could be explained by the fact that many of these cities were retaken many times, and therefore the chronology seems to be a little out of place. Though it is evident that once people of cities continued to do their daily lives just like before, with few changes that eventually were normalized by people's standards.

The *Khuzestan Chronicle* also narrated the conquest of Šūs and Šūstar in specific details, which helps verify and analyze the Arabic sources about the effects of the conquest. The narrative started with Abu Musa attacking Ahwāz and as a result Hurmuzān made peace with the Muslims because he didn't have enough men to engage the Arabs. It could mean that people were not ready to die for a weak king who fled into the main land, since regular people didn't have much in stake, they continued their lives like before and tried to avoid the war and fighting all together. It is mentioned that there was a peace treaty between Persians and Muslims for two years until, Hurmuzān broke the treaty and engaged the Muslims. Just like Balādhuri, the chronicle first tells the account of siege of Šūs, where the Arabs took it after only a few days and killed all of its nobles.⁶⁰ One could see that this Syriac sources did not glorify the Muslims that much and depicted the conquest as a bloody one. It is true that the conquest was bloody at first, but as time went by, things started to go back to normal. Based on the Pahlavi text of *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*, Šūs and Šūstar were both built by Sīsindūxt and Šūs also was mentioned as the capital of the ancient Elamites civilization.⁶¹ The story of Daniel's body is also present in this account where it mentioned that it was found in the House of Mar Daniel by the Muslims. Sebeos also talked briefly about the Body of Prophet Daniel in Šūs, therefore confirming that at least a tomb existed at the time of the conquest in Šūs.⁶² Many claimed it was the body of Daniel, while others said that it was the body of Cyrus the Great.⁶³ The chronicle then told the account of siege of Šūstar or as it called it Shushtra, which took Muslims 2 years to take it.⁶⁴ It mentioned that the city was very strong and extensive because of the rivers and canals that surrounded it like moats. One of them was called Ardashiragan, after Ardashir I, the founder of Sasanids who dug it, another Shamiram, after the famous Assyrian Queen and another was named Darayāgān after Darius the Great.⁶⁵ So the city was surrounded on almost all sides by rivers and it was very hard to conquer it. Then again, the similar story of a traitor from the city arose, and this time he was a person from Qatar, who conspired with a man who lived next to the wall to give the city to the Muslims.⁶⁶ They asked the Muslims for a third of spoils and dug tunnels under the city and lead the Muslims inside. The reasons that the traitor was from Qatar might be that shortly after the Fall of Iraq, Sasanians colonies such as Qatar, Yemen and Bahrain defected and converted to Islam and took part in the conquest against Persia. This could explain the enmity between the Persians and people of Qatar at the time of the siege of Šūstar. Also this indicates that normal people wanted to live in peace and it

⁶⁰ *Khuzestan Chronicle*, 185..

⁶¹ *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*, 27, 67.

⁶² Sebeos, I, 58.

⁶³ *Khuzestan Chronicle*, 184.

⁶⁴ *Khuzestan Chronicle*, 184.

⁶⁵ *Khuzestan Chronicle*, 184.

⁶⁶ *Khuzestan Chronicle*, 185.

did not matter for them who they had to pay their taxes to. It well could have been a group of town members who came to their senses and opened the gate for the Arabs in exchange for tribute. The Muslims killed the Bishop of Hormizdardashir, along with priests, deacons and students, while they took Hurmuzān alive.⁶⁷ The killing of all priests and Christians seems to be a bit excessive, since the Prophet Muhammad prohibited the killing of holy men, but it is still very possible, since the Christian sources mentions it many times. However, it is likely that the higher level Christians were killed as an example and other monks who fought and didn't give up also were put down. We could never be certain but at first, there was a huge deal of bloodshed, but gradually people came to their senses and saw that Muslims were not much different than the Sasanians or any other dynasties.

After the fall of Šūs and Šūstar in whatever order based on our sources, it seems that Jundyshapur always was the last in almost all sources to fall. Based on Tabari, Abu Musa went to Jundaysabur or Jundyshapur and besieged them.⁶⁸ Jundyshapur's name was present in the Pahlavi text, as one of the 4 important cities of Khūzistān, and its original name was Pilābād.⁶⁹ The city was also very easy for Arab Muslims to take since it had no natural defenses. It was also known for its many Christians and priests and as well as a family of famous doctors.⁷⁰ After a few days, the people of the city opened the gates and surrendered claiming that they received a message through an arrow stating that Muslims would grant them safe passage if they paid their tribute.⁷¹ So the people of the city had prepared the *Jizyah* and opened the gates. The Muslims denied any of this and found out that a slave among Muslims by the name of Muknif, who was originally from Jundyshapur had done this.⁷² Muslims wrote to Umar and asked for his advice and he wrote back saying that God hold the keeping of promises in highest place, and that they should grant them their immunity and so they did.⁷³ This is another example of how Muslims acted in most situations towards the people of the newly conquered areas. Poll-tax was more important that the lives of people, and people were needed as a source of revenue for the Caliphate. It was therefore in the best advantage of Muslims to keep the inhabitants of cities and countryside in the same situation as before the invasion, so they could pay their taxes. This event appears also to depict the honesty and goodness of Muslims even if they didn't promise on something compared to treachery of Persians. It is very unusual to send a messenger to Medina and wait for its return, which probably took months, to deal with a city. It is evident that it was in the policy of the Muslims to deal with most of the cities who gave up in the same fashion and raise as much money as they could. All the conquest of Khūzistān was complete by 20 AH (641) based on Tabari.⁷⁴ Balādhuri also put Jundaysabur or Jundyshapur at the end of the road of Khūzistān conquest. He mentioned that Abu Musa went to the city and besieged it, while offering the terms of peace for the population of the city in

⁶⁷ *Khuzestan Chronicle*, 185.

⁶⁸ Tabari, VIII, 148.

⁶⁹ *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*, 27, 68.

⁷⁰ Hugh Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests*, 127-8.

⁷¹ Tabari, VIII, 148.

⁷² Tabari, VIII, 148.

⁷³ Tabari, VIII, 149.

⁷⁴ Tabari, VIII, 150.



return for tribute.⁷⁵ People accepted and Abu Musa did not take their lives or their properties expect their weapons. However a part of Jundyshapur population fled to the city of Kalbaniyah and Abu Musa went there and took over it with ease.⁷⁶ As long as the inhabitants didn't offer resistance, the Muslim forces took their weapons and their taxes and left them alone until the next tax season. Couple of more small cities and the conquest of Khūzistān was over by Abu Musa. The *Khuzestan Chronicle* did not mention the fall of Jundyshapur and ended its account with the fall of Šūs and Šūstar. The Fall of Jundyshapur was the last task before Muslim armies headed to the Province of Hamadan to take part in the Battle of Nīhavand, which was the last stand of the Persian army, where again Muslims triumphed and the Iranian plateau became open to the Arab Muslims and they conquered it region by region at the same time by various commanders sent by Umar and Uthman. The province of Khūzistān acted as a highway into the Iranian plateau and provided many resources and riches to the Muslim army, even though it took four years of hard fighting by the Muslims to achieve it. These new riches were used wisely by the Caliph and their generals to expand and hire more soldiers in order to even expand their empire further on. Most of these riches came from poll-taxes and the Muslims would have not wanted to upset the flow of this cash stream, therefore they let people live their lives as long as they paid their *Jizyah* in whatever fashion they pleased.

The faction of Asāwira or the heavy cavalry of the Persian army played a great role in the conquest of Khūzistān and Fārs, and was a great example of how some military factions and nobilities reacted to the Arab invasion. Tabari and Balādhuri both mention that the name of their leader was Siyah al-Uswari and he was in charge of the vanguard of the Yazdgerd's army.⁷⁷ Siyah was send along with three hundred of his men, including seventy aristocrats, to go from Isbahan to Istakhr and gather men as he went along.⁷⁸ He went to Šūs as Abu Musa was besieging the city and when he saw the greatness of the forces of the Muslim army, he turned to his men and said that "Muslims never encountered an armed force without defeating it... for I think we should go over to them and embrace their religion."⁷⁹ It is very possible that these militants were not loyal to a dynasty or a King, since they only thought about their own wealth and status. They saw that if they were to keep their lands and their positions, they had to join the new ruling system. This is another example of how people, this time in the higher ranks of the society, chose to adopt to the new small changes that the new dynasty had brought rather than face critical alterations and destruction. Then Asāwira went to Abu Musa and gave them their conditions and asked for the maximum stipends in return for helping Muslims in their efforts expect in Arabs' civil wars. Abu Musa first refused, but Umar send him a letter and told him to grant them their wishes. The Asāwira impressed the Muslims with their valor and bravery in the Fārs campaign.⁸⁰ Balādhuri mentioned the same account, except that he mentioned that the Asāwira helped Abu Musa in the siege of Šūstar.⁸¹ They also joined the

⁷⁵ Balādhuri, I, 119.

⁷⁶ Balādhuri, I, 119.

⁷⁷ Tabari, VIII, 142; Balādhuri, I, 105; Fred Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 257.

⁷⁸ Tabari, VIII, 142.

⁷⁹ Tabari, VIII, 143.

⁸⁰ Tabari, VIII, 144-5.

⁸¹ Balādhuri, I, 106.

Tāmīm tribe and settled in Basra.⁸² These soldiers knew that under the new regime, they could gain a lot of money and continue their profit making. On the other hand, they soon realized that if they kept loyal to the Sasanian king they would have lost their wealth. Therefore, they chose the winning side, since it really didn't matter for them who they were fighting for, as long as they got paid good enough, and they found that with the Arab Muslims. They were mentioned in the *Khuzestan Chronicle* and in this account, they actually helped Hurmuzān in defense of Šūstar but after it fell, they defected to the Muslims.⁸³ In the military, they were very famous among the Sasanian soldiers and after they defected, many other factions of the Sasanian army also betrayed the Sasanians and joined the Muslims. Shahriyār, the brother of Hurmuzān was also mentioned in some account for defecting after the fall of Šūs and served in many regions alongside with the military group of Asāwira.⁸⁴ Other famous groups of Sasanian defectors included the *Hamrā* or the Reds, and the *Jūnd*, which were an elite unit of the Imperial army.⁸⁵ Some of these groups even joined the Muslims before the fall of Ctesiphon or as Muslims called it Mada'in. One of the main reasons the Sasanians were unable to defend themselves was the defectors who weakened their army significantly. The reason for their defection might have been that the central government of Yazdgerd III, who had recently been appointed in the year of Prophet Muhammad's death, was not very strong and therefore it drew little loyalty from all the noble houses and factions. Greed and maintaining their social status could have also been another reason that these factions joined the Muslim's army. This shows that many people chose to live their lives like before with more continuity and at the meantime they adopted the new changes such as converting in order to continue their lives unaffected. There was of course no one who was unaffected, but people tried to be as fluid and expandable as they could, since they wanted to survive and really did not matter for them who was the top ruling master.

The coins of Yazdgerd III could clear us a path to better understand the literal sources regarding the conquest of Khūzistān and the rest of Persia and that relates to the changes that took effect. As mentioned before, Islamic and non-Islamic accounts never presented a coherent and continuous narrative. Different dates were recorded by authors and sometimes by the same writer. Many coins had been found in Khūzistān and Fārs that could help us better understand the chronology of events and other reasons for the fall of the Sasanians. Four specific coins have been found in the province of Khūzistān in the cities of Ramhormoz, Rev-Ardaxšir, Mesān and Ahwāz. They are dated respectively to 1 YE⁸⁶ (632 C.E.), 1 YE, 6 YE, and finally 20 YE.⁸⁷ Except a few coins that were circulated between the years 3-10 YE (634-5 to 641-642 CE), there was a lack of coins, and between the years 6-7 YE, there were absolutely no coins struck. Tyler-Smith strongly suggests that this shows that the Arabs conquest of Iran

⁸² Michael Morony, *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest*, 198.

⁸³ *Khuzestan Chronicle*, 27; Parvaneh Pourshariati, *The Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran* (New York: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 2008), 240.

⁸⁴ Mohsen Zakeri, *Sāsānid Soldiers in Early Muslim Society*, 114-5

⁸⁵ Hugh Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests*, 131-2.

⁸⁶ The year Yazdgerd III started his reign, which equals to 632 CE.

⁸⁷ S. Tyler-Smith, "Coinage in the Name of Yazdgerd III," 153.

should have happened in this period of 3-4 years.⁸⁸ The Battle of Qadissiyah was dated 14-16 AH (635-638) by various accounts and the conquest of Khūzistān took four years between 637-8 to 641-2 CE. This strongly suggests that the dates of the conquest of Iraq and Khūzistān seem to be correct. During the conquest of these two provinces, flow of coins stopped coming because of chaos created by the invasion. Yazdgerd's weakness could be also verified by numismatic evidence that had been found too. Out of 180 coins of Yazdgerd III that has been found so far, very few coins are found out of Khūzistān and Fārs, and Kermān.⁸⁹ Fārs was one of the sits of administration of Sasanians and Khūzistān and Kermān were on both sides of Fārs. This could suggest that when Yazdgerd came to the throne, he had little power and authority to extend his rule to far reach provinces, such as Khorasan, and Azerbaijan, and therefore little loyalty could be expected from all of the noble houses and generals in different provinces when the conquest took place. Therefore, it is evident that many of the defectors and even regular people saw this weakness in their king and preferred to adopt to the new ruling class of Muslims than to be on the losing side. In general, there was more continuity for those who chose to abandon Yazdgerd and go on to the side of Arab Muslims than those who fought to defend the Sasanians.

The conquest in general looked like to be very violent and bloody as mentioned by many sources both Arabic and non-Arabic at first. However the Arabic sources never mentioned the killing of Christians, since the Prophet Muhammad's ban on killing monks but the Syriac, Armenian, and Pahlavi sources mentions it repeatedly.⁹⁰ Sebeos mentioned that Muslims took all the treasures after taking Ctesiphon and ravaged the whole land.⁹¹ He also said that Arabs put the population of whole cities to sword and took booty and burned whole lands. Sebeos mentioned "They (Muslims) put man and beasts to the sword. Capturing 22 fortresses, they slaughtered all the living beings in them."⁹² This seemed a bit excessive, but there was a great amount of killing involved of course, but the anonymous chronicle of *Zuqnīn* said that after taking Dara, Muslims didn't hurt anyone, but they only took tribute.⁹³ It probably depended on the way the people of each city treated the Muslims. If the population of the city resisted greatly and fought fiercely against the Muslims and after a long siege gave up, the outcome would certainly be looting of the city and killing if not all, but some portion of the population to make an example. In more frequent instants, if the people paid their tributes and didn't resist to the Muslim armies, therefore the Arabs would have most likely left them alone and only took the *Jizyah*. There was more continuity in the way of lives of people of cities if they cooperated with the Arab Muslims and in most cases, this was the dominant situation. However there was few instances when Arabs had to kill the top classes and make an example. There is no certainty in this pattern and definitely there were some exemptions, but it seems like that money mattered more to the huge Muslim armies who always needed provisions and resources

⁸⁸ S. Tyler-Smith, "Coinage in the Name of Yazdgerd III," 146.

⁸⁹ S. Tyler-Smith, "Coinage in the Name of Yazdgerd III," 154.

⁹⁰ Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūbi, *Kitāb Al-kharāj*, trans. Ben A. Shemesh (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1969), 195.

⁹¹ Sebeos, I, 99.

⁹² Sebeos, I, 105.

⁹³ *The Chronicle of Zuqnīn: Parts III and IV: A.D. 488-775*, trans. Amir Harrak (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1999), 143.



for their soldiers, than senseless killing of natives. In a sense, the changes brought by the Muslims in the first and second centuries was just the difference in whom received the taxes and tributes and for most people that did not matter and they continued their lives mostly unaffected.

The issue of conversion after the conquest of Iran is another effect of the new religion of Islam on the Persian people for the better or worse. The Muslim historians try to depict as if the greatness of Islam over other religions lead to the conversion of the people.⁹⁴ However, many people converted in the early Islamic period for personal freedom, financial gain and to maintain their social status.⁹⁵ In 7th and 8th centuries, the Arab Muslims didn't want Persians to convert to Islam, mostly because the Muslims would lose their *Jizyah* or poll-tax on them. Finally when people were allowed to freely convert, conversion was mostly voluntary with few exceptions.⁹⁶ However, there was a downturn for the converted Persians. They were not still considered to be the equal of Arab Muslims and were often discriminated upon.⁹⁷ Freed slaves and converted Iranians remained as second-class citizens, and this was one of the reasons that lead to the Abbasid Revolution and finally it was mended in the 9th and 10th C.E. after many centuries.⁹⁸ The conversion of people in Iraq and Khūzistān was more peaceful compared to other provinces such as Khorasan and Transoxania, mainly because there was already a great diversity among the people of Khūzistān.⁹⁹ Another reason was that many Arabs moved into Iraq and Khūzistān and therefore, the Khuzi people were totally dominated by Muslim elites. Even if you weren't a Muslim, your children would be brought up in a Muslim environment and they would most likely become Muslims without choice. Many normal people had to deal with the issues of this new system and therefore they adopted the new religion of Islam willingly when they were faced with the choice many years after the conquest. As long as they could live their lives and keep their heritage, they did not mind the change of their religion or the new Arabic cultural characteristics.

Zoroastrian communities slowly declined mostly because of conversions and intermarriage with Muslims, however all of their ideas and beliefs continued to be saved to the modern era. The reaction of the Zoroastrian and other religions communities to Islam was mostly apocalyptic. They saw the arrival of Islam and mass conversions as the sign for the end of the world. The Pahlavi text of *Jamasp Nāmag* mentioned that:

Iran will come to the Muslims and the Muslims will grow stronger daily
and will seize (Iran) city by city... because of lawlessness, this Iran will come as a

⁹⁴ F.C. Davar, "A Glimpse into Iran," 150.

⁹⁵ Jamsheed K. Choksy, "Zoroastrians in Muslim Iran: Selected Problems of Coexistence and Interaction during the Early Medieval Period," *Iranian Studies* 20, no. 1 (1987): 26; Michael Morony, "The Effects of Muslim Conquest of Iraq," 47; Jamsheed Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation: Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elites in Medieval Iranian Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 77.

⁹⁶ Jamsheed Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation*, 78.

⁹⁷ Jamsheed Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation*, 78-9.

⁹⁸ A. Ḥ. Zarrīnkūb, "The Arab Conquest of Iran," 29.

⁹⁹ Jamsheed Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation*, 106.

heavy burden to the governors of the provinces... and all of Iran will fall to the hands of those enemies, and non-Iranians and Iranians will be confounded in such a way that Iranianess will not be distinguishable from non-Iranianess, (and) those who are Iranians will turn back on non-Iranian ways.¹⁰⁰

The text first mentioned the gradual conquest of Persian city by city as is mentioned in all of the conquest accounts of Arabic and non-Arabic sources. It also referred to the heavy poll-tax and tribute that governors of each province and each city had to pay to Muslims. Finally the settlement of Arabs and their co-existence with Persians was mentioned, which seemed to be the highest sin of all by Zoroastrians that Persians were mixing with those Arab Muslims. However, these text seemed to exaggerate a great deal, since most of the regular people were not that devoted to Zoroastrianism and the high nobility mostly practiced Zoroastrianism. So to the normal people, not many things changed and the public continued to pay the same taxes as before but to different leaders. Another Pahlavi text named *Bundahišn* refers to the Muslims' evils. It stated that :

Iran was left to the Arabs and they have made that law of evil religion current, many customs of the ancients they destroyed and the religion of the Mazda worshipping religion was made feeble and they established the washing of the dead, burying the dead, and eating the dead. And from the primal creation of the material world till today, a heavier harm has not come, because of their evil behavior, misery and ruin and doing violence and evil law, evil religion, danger and misery and other harm has become accepted.¹⁰¹

The Social and religious implications of the new religion was such a burden on the Zoroastrians and this passage clearly depicts the situation. Zoroastrians were afraid of the evil tradition of washing and burying the dead, which in their view, did pollute the holy water and the earth. They also appeared to go to an extreme and say that Muslims ate their dead, just to vilify the Muslims. Zoroastrians were afraid of the spread of Muslims' traditions and their conversions of the Persian people and thought that the end had come. Again, the Zoroastrian texts seemed to make the Muslims look bad, since they had just lost a lot of power and influence and were no longer the dominant religion in the Persian Empire. So, their frustration with the Muslims could be understood, but the lives of people wasn't effected in severe ways. The population of Zoroastrians declined drastically, but it still had many followers. Finally, there was a mass conversion to Islam in 9th-10th CE, when Zoroastrianism finally became a minority. In Khūzistān, this happened very quickly and by the end of the 8th CE and early 9th centuries, very few Magians or Zoroastrians were left in this province.¹⁰² The main reason of this, as mentioned before, was the closeness of Khūzistān to the centers of Muslim society,

¹⁰⁰ *Jamašp Nāmag*, in "Apocalypse Now: Zoroastrian Reflection on the Early Islamic Centuries," by Touraj Daryaee. *Medieval Encounters* 4, no. 3 (1998): 190-1.

¹⁰¹ *Bundahišn*. Chapter XXXIII. 20-22, in "Apocalypse Now: Zoroastrian Reflection on the Early Islamic Centuries," by Touraj Daryaee. *Medieval Encounters* 4, no. 3 (1998): 191.

¹⁰² G. H.A. Juynboll, ed., *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), 82.



which were Basra, Kufa and later on Baghdad. However, even to this day around a million of Zoroastrians remain in Iran and are spread in many provinces. It is true that since the Khūzistān province was close to the Arab cities, less minorities remained there, but the people continued their lives and their traditions and held on to them in Khūzistān and in all other provinces of the Persian Empire to this day.

Many Arabs settled among Iranians, and especially in the province of Khūzistān starting even before the advent of Islam and up to the modern times. The settlement of Arabs in the newly conquered areas was a very critical decision in making the effects of the conquest long term. Earlier it was mentioned that in the text of *Jamasp Nāmag*, there was mention of Arabs' settlement among the Iranians.¹⁰³ There were many Arabs in Khūzistān before the rise of Islam who fought on both sides of the battle for Arab Muslims as well as for Sasanians.¹⁰⁴ The people of Khūzistān apparently had an easier time, in accepting the people and the religion of Arab Muslims, most likely because they were so used to diversity among themselves, that they were not greatly affected in a negative way. They had an easier time mingling and interchanging with the Arabs. This shows that there was more continuity in the province of Khūzistān than other regions since people were much more used to different cultures and various religions. At first there was some resistance and few rebellions in Khūzistān. However, there was only one recorded incident of a rebellion that happened in Khūzistān led by Zoroastrians and by a person called Pirūz from Khūzistān. Nevertheless, they were defeated in the Battle of Bayruḏh in 643-44 CE and after that there were no more rebellions.¹⁰⁵ Once the Arabs started to settle in Khūzistān, there was little chance for the rebels to succeed and the resistance halted. The tribe of Bakr ibn Wa'il settled in Khūzistān in 680's, and the migration of Arabs continued until the fall of the Abbasids, when it only slowed down.¹⁰⁶ It is evident that not many Arabs migrated into Khūzistān shortly following the Muslims invasion and Arabs mixed with the native population and continued the traditions of Iranians. The majority of the Arabs in Khūzistān migrated between the 16th - 19th Centuries and nowadays, the greater part of the population of Khūzistān is Arabs. This does not mean that the Iranian culture and ways of lives disappeared but rather, the Arabs and Iranians melted together and both culture assimilated and a combination of both traditions now continues to exist. The Khūzistān region was among the most fertile regions, right next to Sawād region of Iraq, and the Muslims took advantage of its prosperity and came to settle down from Basra and Kufa in this region. Khūzistān was also the main road into the Persian Plateau and its control was needed to send armies into other regions of the Persian Empire and Central Asia. The lives of normal people, whether Iranian or Arabs were not effected in a great way after the Muslim conquest and natives and migrants continued their way of lives while borrowing from each other cultures.

While the Arab conquest of Iran affected the Persians in various ways, the Khūzistān province seemed to have adopted very fast with the new religion and the new ruling class and

¹⁰³ *Jamasp Nāmag*, 191.

¹⁰⁴ Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "Iran and the Arabs Before Islam," in *The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods*. Vol. 3(I) of *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 598.

¹⁰⁵ Tabari, *VIV*, 78; Touraj Daryaei, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Iranian History*, 212.

¹⁰⁶ Michael Morony, *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest*, 230.

the Iranian culture persisted while it embraced the new changes. There are many issues and problems in the study of Early Islamic conquest history such as difficulty with dates and an uncoherent sequence of events. Many of our sources for this period are Arabic sources that were written 200-250 years after the events took place and therefore they seem to talk more about the issues of their own time in the context of the history of early Islamic history, rather than the historical events of early Islam. This doesn't mean that the Muslim accounts are wrong or unauthentic but that they should not be studied like European or modern accounts of history. Many of these Islamic sources could be confirmed by Pahlavi, Armenian, Byzantine, Syriac and Egyptian sources. Non-literal sources such as coins, inscriptions, and archaeological evidences also help us greatly in verifying or refuting the literal accounts and are a great tool for the historians. All literal, including both Muslim and non-Muslim sources, and non-literal sources should be combined in the study of early Islamic history, in order to better understand and interpret this period of change and continuity. This conquest like all of other conquests seems to be violent at first, but gradually as the Muslims settled in Persia and rebellions died out, people adopted the new religion and the Arabs on the other hand embraced many cultural aspects of the Persian culture. So in a way, it was the interexchange of ideas and cultural values through a bloody and extended conquest. After the end of the conquest, conversion started to take place and by 9th-10th centuries and by then the majority of the Iranian plateau's population were Muslims. The province of Khūzistān is a great example to portray the Islamic conquests in a smaller scale, since it was the second province to fall after Iraq and because it absorbed the Arabic identity sooner and was more comfortable with the changes compared to other provinces of Iran and at the same time it carried its Iranian identity and culture into the next generations and even to the modern era.

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