

*Persian Myths*, Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis, 2<sup>nd</sup> printing, Austin, Texas: British Museum Press, University of Texas Press, 1998. 80 pp., ISBN 0-292-71158-1.

This is the second printing of a work that was published by the British Museum Press in 1993 as part of The *Legendary Past Series*. Other titles in the series concern Aztec and Maya, Norse, Celtic, Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman myths. The volume is handsomely produced with photographs of relevant archaeological and manuscript material tastefully adorning its narrative. Two maps at the beginning of the book help the reader to orient himself in the ancient Iranian world, and focus his attention on the Alburz Mountains and the province of Māzandarān, where some of the more interesting adventure-stories of the Iranian national epic unfolded. In her brief preliminary note, the author states that her book is not intended as a complete and detailed account of all Persian myths, and that many more may be added to those that she has collected in the volume. It appears both from the design and the contents of this thin, but useful volume that her audience is primarily the educated layman. The text is arranged in seven chapters, flanked by an "introduction" and a "conclusion." It ends with a short but useful list of further readings that have been thoughtfully selected with the general reader in mind.

What should be pointed out at the outset is that the author's implied definition of "myth" is quite wide and encompasses virtually all Iranian mythical, legendary, and performing arts. In that respect, she operates outside the definitions of the term to which folklorists might be accustomed.<sup>1</sup> The introduction presents a brief

1. The most famous of these is William Bascom's that defines myth as "traditional prose narratives, which in the society in which they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past." See W. Bascom, "The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives," *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 78, 1965, pp. 3-20. The substance of Bascom's definitions was applied to

occupation. This also suggests that Yaman was producing and exporting copper goods before the end of the Himyarī period.

By all accounts the late Sasanian economic penetration of the Arabian peninsula was unprecedented. The Sasanian monarch is even said to have sent an annual royal caravan – the *lafmah Kisrā* – carrying perfume and wheat, probably to al-Mushaqqar.<sup>83</sup> Hawdha ibn 'Alī in the Yamāma is supposed to have been responsible for it, unless this is a generalization based on the story about the caravan sent to Kisrā by Wahriz. But there were gaps in the Sasanian ring around Arabia, such as the port of al-Shihr on the South Arabian coast where no tithes were collected, because it was not in the territory of a kingdom. All the overland and seafaring merchants went from Dabā to al-Shihr, where the market was held in the middle of the month of Sha'bān (about February 22 in 623), and sold leather, cloth, and furnishings and bought frankincense, myrrh, aloes and millet (*dukhān*) there.<sup>84</sup>

However, the late Sasanian economic interest in Arabia was clearly more than just commercial. The Sasanians may have drawn Arab over-land merchants into their own trading network and encouraged commerce in local products. However, they also developed irrigated agriculture and copper mining in 'Umān, and developed silver mining and textile and leather industries in Yaman. In these respects they may very well have initiated an economic expansion that continued in the early Islamic period. And, if this is so, it would mean that early Islamic economic development did not only derive from the commercial growth of Makka. At least Persian merchants, farmers, miners, and artisans found opportunities in Arabia.

83. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *al-'Iqd al-farīd* (Cairo, 1359/1940). E. Shoufani's statement (*al-Riddah and the Muslim Conquest of Arabia*, Toronto, 1973, p. 28) that the *lafmah* went from Iran to Yaman cannot be confirmed. There is a reference in Marzūqī to "whenever a *lafmah* came to al-Mushaqqar" (*al-Azminah*, II, 163) however, that suggests this was a recurring event. *Lafmah* is also used for a camel carrying musk and silk that Nu'mān ibn al-Mundhir sent to the market at 'Ukāz ("Sulūk," *El* (2), IX, 863b).

84. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *al-'Iqd al-farīd*, p. 206; Marzūqī, *al-Azminah*, II, 163-164.

("whoever ruled the Yaman after them"), while the Abna' of Fārs were the last to collect the tithes there.<sup>73</sup> From 'Adan the merchants went to Ṣan'a' bringing cotton, saffron, dyes, and similar things that found a ready market there. At Ṣan'a' they bought cloth, iron and other things. The market at Ṣan'a' was held from the middle of Ramaḍān until the end of the month<sup>74</sup> (about March 23 to April 7 in 623).

The cotton, saffron, and dyes would have come from India through 'Adan. These merchants were importing the raw materials for a textile industry to Ṣan'a' and exporting the finished product. There is hardly any evidence for the export of Yamanī cloth before the late sixth century. The silk, striped material of 'asb-cloth, washy-silk, and the striped cloth of 'Adan that was transported to the market at 'Ukāz and sold there in the time of al-Na'mān ibn al-Mundhir (579-601)<sup>75</sup> would have come from Sasanian Yaman. The native dye-plant, called *wary*, that grew on a mountain north of Ṣan'a' and was used to dye clothing yellow, would also have been available.<sup>76</sup>

The same can be said for leather, which is said to have been developed in Yaman under the Persians.<sup>77</sup> There were fields of *qarz*, that produced a dye used in tanning, around Sa'da, where the Banū Madhbij specialized in producing leather goods.<sup>78</sup> In the early sixth century oil, balsam and spices were exported from Najrān to Syria; by the end of the century leather, textiles, including silk, and weapons were produced there.<sup>79</sup> It is tempting to relate the swords of Indian steel forged in Yaman with ingots imported from South India<sup>80</sup> to the Sasanian production of crucible steel.<sup>81</sup> But the report that the king of Yaman sent excellent swords, good copper pots, and swift riding animals to the market at 'Ukāz<sup>82</sup> means that Yaman was exporting swords before 525, long before the Sasanian

73. Marziqī, *al-Azmiyah*, II, 164.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

75. al-Isfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghābi* (Bulaq, 1285 H), XIX, 75.

76. M. Lombard, *Les textiles dans le monde musulman du VI<sup>e</sup> au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1978), pp. 134-135.

77. A. Grohmann, *From the World of Arabic Papyri* (Cairo, 1952), p. 45. Grohmann asserts, without giving any reference, that the Persians built tanneries in Yaman whenever they founded a town.

78. M. Ibrahim, *Merchant Capital and Islam* (Austin, 1990), p. 24.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 23; R. Simon, *Meccan Trade and Islam. Problems of Origin and Structure* (Budapest, 1989), pp. 48, 143.

80. Lombard, *Mémoires*, p. 153.

81. Paul T. Craddock, "New Light on the Production of Crucible Steel in Asia," *Bulletin of the*

Yaman had never been within the orbit of Sasanian power before (another difference with Bahrayn and 'Umān). Thus far the late Sasanian interest in Yaman appears explicitly to have been a matter of income from taxes. But the Persians also turned out to be interested in the development of Yaman's resources. A clue to this occurs in the story about the wealth and valuable things from Yaman that Wabriz sent to Kisrā. When the caravan carrying them was plundered by the Banū Yarbū' of Tamīm in central Arabia the loot included a saddlebag filled with jewels and a palm-leaf basket containing silver ingots.<sup>68</sup>

As the latter suggests, the Persians were, in fact, involved in the mining of Yamani silver. According to Hamdānī there was a famous silver mine at al-Raḍrād that was better than the mine of Shamām. The miners were all Persians who had arrived there before Islam and in the time of the Umawīs and 'Abbāsīs. They were called "the Persians of the mine" and belonged to families living in Ṣan'ā'. He also says that the evidence of mining before Islam was more extensive than that during Islam.<sup>69</sup> Since silver could only have been mined there by Persians before Islam during the sixty years the Sasanians ruled Yaman, and the production of the mine was prodigious in Islamic times,<sup>70</sup> huge amounts of silver would have to have been mined there in the late Sasanian period. Activity at this mine lasted until 270/883,<sup>71</sup> which means that what the Persians started endured for over 250 years, during which time Persian miners continued to be attracted to Yaman by economic opportunity.

The Sasanians also seem to have presided over a transformation of commerce in Yaman in which the export of local Yamani manufactured products was added to the export of incense and the transit of Indian goods to the Mediterranean. From the Ḥimyarī through the Sasanian period an annual market was held at the port of 'Adan (Aden) from the first of Ramaḍān until ten days before the end of the month (March 9 to 28 in 623).<sup>72</sup> Seafaring merchants brought Indian products there, while overland merchants set out from there for Fārs and Rūm. The kings of Ḥimyar had collected the tithe there followed by the Abyssinians

68. Tabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 1, 984. In the rest of the account the people of the caravan took refuge with Hawdha ibn 'Alī in the Yamāna and the Tamīm were punished by al-Mukā'bir at al-Mushaqqar. If these two men really lived in the time of Muḥammad and when the Muslims conquered Bahrayn, it would put these events in the 620s rather than the 570s.

69. Hamdānī, *Jawharatayn*, pp. 142-145, 148-149. He locates the mine on the boundary between Niḥm and the district of Yam in the territory of Hamdān. The Persians also mined copper in Yaman (Costa and Wilkinson, *The Hinterland of Saḥar*, p. 149).

70. The annual production is estimated at about one million dīnārs (*Ibid.*, pp. 146-147).

Baskhara ibn Bahbudhan, originally a Zoroastrian (*Majūs*) tailor from Khark, who migrated to 'Umān, where he attached himself to the Azd.<sup>62</sup> This also suggests that Persian immigrants might have been attracted to 'Umān by the economic opportunities there.

Unlike Bahrayn and 'Umān late Sasanian interest in Yaman is explicitly represented in terms of the exploitation of resources. There are two accounts in Ṭabarī that assume and take advantage of such an interest. These accounts are surely legendary, but they express a point of view. In one of them, according to Ibn al-Kalbī, the Ḥimyarī king, Dhū Yazan himself, describes Yaman to Kisrā (Anūshirwān) as "one of the most fertile of lands and most amply endowed with resources," unlike those parts of the Arabian peninsula closest to the Sasanian empire.<sup>63</sup> In the other, reported from Ibn Ishāq, Kisrā (Anūshirwān) is made to tell Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan that the latter's land is distant and poor in resources with nothing but useless sheep and camels. There was no good reason to send a Persian army there. Sayf is then made to tell Kisrā that the mountains of the country he came from were all made of gold and silver, in order to incite the latter's greed.<sup>64</sup>

This may have been with the advantage of hindsight, but according to the well-known story Kisrā emptied his prisons of 800 men, put a cavalryman named Wahriz in charge, and sent them to Yaman on eight ships. Two of the ships foundered at sea, but with the 600 surviving men on the remaining ships Wahriz defeated the Abyssinians in Yaman, sent wealth to Kisrā, and installed Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan as ruler of Yaman with the responsibility for collecting taxes and sending them to Kisrā annually. After Wahriz returned to Kisrā, Sayf was killed by his Abyssinian guardsmen, and Kisrā sent Wahriz back with an army of 4,000 Persian soldiers.<sup>65</sup> This second army is likely to have been the force recruited in Daylam and adjacent regions that defeated the Abyssinians in Yaman and settled there,<sup>66</sup> where their descendants were called the Abnā'. Wahriz became the Sasanian viceroy over Yaman, where he levied taxes for Kisrā until he died after five years near the end of the reign of Anūshirwān (d. 579).<sup>67</sup> Persian viceroys continued to govern Yamān until about 630 CE.

62. Ibn Rustah, *Al-A'laq al-naflisa* (Leiden, 1891), pp. 205-206. Later known as Abū Sufra, Baskhara was the ancestor of the Muhallabī family at Baṣra.

63. Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 951; tr. Bosworth, *Sāsānids*, p. 243.

64. Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 947.

65. *Ibid.*, I, 948-950, 952-953, 957-958.

66. *Ibid.*, I, 899. This tends to be confirmed by reports about a certain Firūz ibn al-Daylamī, who accepted Islam about the time Muhammad died and who helped to kill the false prophet al-Abṣī in Yaman (Balādhuri, *Futūḥ*, p. 105-106; Hamza, *Ta'rikh*, p. 116).

exploitation and settlement at 'Arja from the sixth century CE, based on radiocarbon dates, followed by massive output from early Islamic smelting and a dramatic increase in the size of the settlement there in the ninth century.<sup>53</sup> Weisgerber has seen a connection with late Sasanian mining in Yaman when they occupied it (575-628 CE, see below), arguing that if the Persians did it in Yaman "we can be sure that the rich copper deposits of Oman were also exploited at this time."<sup>54</sup> Copper production peaked at 'Arja and at other sites in 'Umān in the ninth century<sup>55</sup> but had begun to decrease<sup>56</sup> and to change technologically by the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>57</sup> This is another good example of early Islamic economic development beginning in the late Sasanian period, especially since the late Sasanian and early Islamic mining technologies at 'Arja are similar.

Although commerce did develop under the Sasanians in 'Umān, that was clearly not their only interest there. The circuit of annual Arabian markets intersected with Indian Ocean commerce in the ports along the eastern and southern Arabian coast in the sixth and early seventh centuries. An annual market was held for five days at Ṣuḥār during the month of Rajab (January) where cloth (*bazz*) was sold.<sup>58</sup> This was followed by a market at the port of Dabā on the last day of Rajab (February 7 in 623) to which merchants came from India and China and from the East and West.<sup>59</sup> The goods of the Arabs and from overseas were brought there, and sales were by bargaining.<sup>60</sup> The Julandā collected the tithe at both Ṣuḥār and Daba.<sup>61</sup>

If the cloth sold at Ṣuḥār was produced locally, that would attest to the development of textile production in 'Umān, supplied to the market by the Azd who were shepherds and weavers (most likely of wool). The connection of the Azd to the textile market and to Sasanian enterprise is suggested by the story of

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 107, 136, 148-149, 184, 189, 230.

54. G. Weisgerber, "Archaeological Evidence of Copper Exploitation at 'Arja," in Costa and T. J. Wilkinson, *The Hinterland of Sohar*, p. 147.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

56. The agricultural and mining settlements at 'Arja were abandoned in the early eleventh century (*Ibid.*, p. 227).

57. Weisgerber, "Archaeological Evidence," pp. 159-161.

58. Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 265; Marzūqī, *al-Azminah*, II, 163. According to Ibn Ḥabīb the market began on the first day of Rajab (January 9 in 623); Marzūqī says the merchants arrived at Ṣuḥār twenty days before the end of the month (January 18 in 623).

59. The north-east monsoon facilitates sailing from India to Arabia from October to March.

60. Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, pp. 265-266.

the ninth century the standard share given by a landlord (*hankarī*) to a farm worker on his property is one-sixth of the produce, which J. C. Wilkinson says is "quite clearly a survival of the pre-Islamic practice."<sup>44</sup>

J. C. Wilkinson also notes that in early Ibādī *falaj* judgements from the ninth century the emphasis is on the upkeep of *aflāj*; there is no mention of constructing new ones.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, according to Whitehouse, there was a major expansion of gardens and orchards irrigated by *aflāj* in the environs of Ṣuḥār in the first half of the ninth century.<sup>46</sup> Costa and T. J. Wilkinson also disagree with J. C. Wilkinson. They found two or three *aflāj* in the vicinity of Ṣuḥār that could be dated to the ninth and tenth centuries by ceramics, including the major open channel system of the Falaj al-Mutaridh, that stretched, with its branches, for some 70 km from the headwaters of the Wadi al-Jizzi to the fields behind Ṣuḥār.<sup>47</sup> Elsewhere in 'Umān they date to the same period open channel systems that went from the mountains to the coast in the Sib, Hazn / Rustāq, and Wadi Fizl regions, an open channel *falaj* at Masna'ah, and a *falaj* at 'Arja.<sup>48</sup> This was also the period of the most intensive irrigation by means of wells in the Ṣuḥār region.<sup>49</sup> Based on sherd scatters in the fields they locate the maximum extent of cultivation in the hinterland of Ṣuḥār during the ninth and tenth centuries.<sup>50</sup> This accords well with a model of incipient development of irrigated agriculture in the late Sasanian period that continued into early Islamic times and peaked in the ninth and tenth centuries. It was not until the eleventh and twelfth centuries that the surface collection of pottery indicates a two-thirds reduction in rural occupation in the irrigated region behind Ṣuḥār.<sup>51</sup> The marked reduction in the extent of cultivation in this period is confirmed by Costa and T. J. Wilkinson.<sup>52</sup>

The Sasanians also revived the mining of copper at 'Arja after a break in activity there since the first millennium BCE. There are traces of copper

44. J. C. Wilkinson, *Aflāj of Oman*, p. 259.

45. *Ibid.*

46. D. Whitehouse, "Maritime trade in the Arabian Sea: the 9th and 10th Centuries A.D.," in M. Taddei, ed., *South Asian Archaeology 1977* (Naples, 1979), p. 875.

47. Costa and T. J. Wilkinson, *The Hinterland of Sohar*, pp. 53-55, 230.

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79, 226-227.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 79, 87-88.

51. A. Williamson, "Harvard Archaeological Survey in Oman, 1973: III - Sohar and the Sea Trade of Oman in the Tenth Century AD," *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies*, 4 (1974), pp. 90-91.

may be exaggerated, because Costa and T. J. Wilkinson could find only one rather short *falaj* in the hinterland of Ṣuḥār that showed strong evidence of being pre-Islamic.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, they repeatedly refer to the possibility that irrigated agriculture existed in the region of Ṣuḥār and at the copper mining site of 'Arja in the Sasanian period.<sup>37</sup>

As in Bahrayn the agrarian economy was probably based on dates and grain. At least there is a reference to the date and grain tithes of 'Umān in the early eighth century.<sup>38</sup> But, according to J. C. Wilkinson, the economy of the sedentary village farmers in the late Sasanian period was separate from that of the Arabs, who engaged in herding, weaving, transporting goods, and fishing.<sup>39</sup>

The late Sasanian system of *falaj*-irrigated agriculture lasted for several more centuries afterwards in 'Umān, but J. C. Wilkinson argues that it underwent serious retraction in the coastal region during the century and one-half after the Muslim occupation because of floods, piracy, fighting, and rapacious administration.<sup>40</sup> The Persian garrison and landlords had been driven out during the Muslim conquest. When the Persian *'amil* at Rustāq was killed with many of his men and officers by the Muslim Azd, the *Asōwira* and *Marāziba* decided to leave. The survivors were besieged at Ṣuḥār and allowed to evacuate, leaving their property as *sawāfi* for the Arabs.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless a population of *Majūs* survived in the villages of 'Umān in return for the payment of taxes (*jizya*) from the time of Muḥammad to the caliphate of al-Rashīd.<sup>42</sup>

It was only in the ninth century that the social and economic separation between Arabs and the agricultural Persian population began to break down. Arabs settled on the land and became farmers, and the original villagers were tribalized.<sup>43</sup> The irrigation system was maintained. In Ibādī *falaj* judgements from

36. P. M. Costa and T. J. Wilkinson, *The Hinterland of Sohar. Archaeological Surveys and Excavations within the Region of an Omani Seafaring City. The Journal of Oman Studies*, 9 (1987), p. 54.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88, 109-110, 230-231, 233.

38. Balādhuri, *Futūḥ*, pp. 77-78.

39. J. C. Wilkinson, "Bayāsira and Bayādīr," *Arabian Studies*, 1 (1974), p. 75.

40. J. C. Wilkinson, *Aflāj of Oman*, pp. 50, 141; *Idem.*, "Arab-Persian Land Relationships," p. 42.

41. 'Ashur, *Ahl 'Umān*, pp. 41-42; al-Izkawi, *Kashf*, p. 38. This is said to have occurred in 8/692.

42. 'Ashur, *Ahl 'Umān*, p. 42; A. al-'Ani, *'Umān fi-l-'asr al-Islāmiyya al-ūla wa dawr ahliha fi-l-mintaga al-sharqiyya min al-khawf al-'arabi* (Baghdad, 1997), p. 74; Balādhuri, *Futūḥ*, p. 77. J. C. Wilkinson (*Aflāj of Oman*, p. 141) has the *Majūs* still paying *jizya* in 'Umān in the ninth century to preserve their religion and land.

43. J. C. Wilkinson, "Bayāsira and Bayādīr," p. 75.

started in late Sasanian times by the Persians themselves. This is, in fact, one of the few really good examples of how the late Sasanian economic impact on Arabia contributed to development that continued into early Islamic times. However, Shanām was not in a part of Arabia that was controlled by the Sasanians directly, unless the authority of al-Mukābir at Hajar really did extend to the west of the Yamāma.

Compared to Bahrayn the Persian development and exploitation of agriculture and commerce, as well as copper mining in 'Umān in the late Sasanian period is much more evident. It is most likely in the period of revived Sasanian power under Khusraw I Anūshirwān that the Persians divided 'Umān with the Azd. The Persians recognized the autonomy of the Azd in the mountains, deserts, and outlying regions of 'Umān under a chief called the Julandā, while the Azd agreed to a Persian governor ('*āmīl*) and a garrison of 4,000 *marāziba* and *asāwira* at Rustāq in the Ghadaf. There was also a Persian garrison at Ṣuḥār.<sup>32</sup> Although there is no direct evidence that the *marāziba* and *asāwira* actually held land at Rustāq, Persians settled on the Bāṭīna coastal plain and on the eastern slopes of the mountains, there was a class of Persian landlords (*hanāqira*), and the villages in the Persian zone were inhabited by *Majūs*.<sup>33</sup> Until the end of the Sasanian period the Sasanian monarch (*Kisrā*) used 'Umān as a place of exile for everyone with whom he was angry or whose subversion he feared.<sup>34</sup>

The Persians controlled and settled the most fertile parts of 'Umān and maximized the use of water resources for agricultural development. The ancient, existing network of underground channels (*qanāt/aflāj*) was expanded on the eastern slopes of the mountains, and long channels were constructed to bring water from the mountains to the coastal plain supplementing the water provided by well-irrigation there. Sasanian water works in 'Umān can be identified and distinguished from earlier works by their use of cement instead of stone. According to J. C. Wilkinson the maximum extent of exploitation was probably reached in the late Sasanian period, at the end of the sixth century, when the total area of land under cultivation may have been twice what it was in 1977.<sup>35</sup> This

32. Al-Izkawī, *Kitāb Kashf al-ghamma al-jāmi' li-akhbār al-umma* (Cairo, n.d.), p. 33; J. C. Wilkinson, *Water and Tribal Settlement in South-East Arabia: A Study of the Aflāj of Oman* (Oxford, 1977), p. 131; *Idem.*, "The Julanda of Oman," *The Journal of Oman Studies*, 1 (1975), p. 99; *Idem.*, "Arab-Persian Land Relationships in Late Sasanid Oman," *Proceedings of the Sixth Seminar for Arabian Studies* (London, 1973), pp. 41, 43-44.

33. Wilkinson, "Arab-Persian Land Relationships," p. 40; *Idem.*, *Aflāj of Oman*, p. 131.

34. S. 'Ashur, ed., *Ta'rīkh Ahl 'Umān* (Cairo, 1400/1980), p. 35; al-Izkawī, *Kashf*, p. 33.

to January 8 in 622-623)<sup>26</sup> to which Persian merchants crossed the sea, where sales were conducted by gestures and muttering (we are not told what they bought or sold), and where the Persians collected the tithes from the artisans.<sup>27</sup> Some of the same information occurs in Marzūqī's description of a market at al-Mushaqqar that was supposed to have occurred just before the market at Hajar according to one schedule of pre-Islamic markets in Arabia. According to this account the market at al-Mushaqqar was held during the entire month of Jumāda al-Ākhira; the people of Fārs crossed over to it; it was controlled by the group (*rahṭ*) of al-Mundhir ibn Sāwā of Tamīm, who collected the tithes there as 'āmiils of the Persian kings; and transactions were conducted by touch, muttering, and gestures, without talking, lest anyone swear falsely during the bargaining.<sup>28</sup> Qaṭīf appears to have been an entry port for silk in the sixth century.<sup>29</sup> It is worth suggesting that the emergence of the network of merchants of Dārīn, who exported native musk to the cities of eastern Arabia, Iraq, and the Hijāz in the seventh century,<sup>30</sup> occurred under late Sasanian auspices.

The Sasanians were also interested in mining in Arabia. Al-Hamdānī describes the silver- and copper-mining site of Shamām in the Najd as a large village with 1,000 *Majāns* and two fire temples. He says that it had been prosperous before Islam and during most of the Islamic period, but was in ruins at the time he wrote in the tenth century.<sup>31</sup> Taken at face value this means that the development of mining at Shamām had begun in the Sasanian period, that the miners were Zoroastrian settlers in central Arabia whose descendants survived there well into the Islamic period, and that the mining boom in early Islamic Arabia had been

26. The pre-Islamic Arabs are said to have intercalated one month every three years to keep the lunar calendar aligned with the solar calendar (al-Mas'ūdī, *Murāj al-dhahab*, II, 204). The year 622-623 is simply the first year of the Hijra Era, after which there should not have been any intercalation, and is used here as an indication of where the Arabian lunar months would have fallen in the solar year before intercalation ended and the lunar months began to precess through the solar year. They actually would have oscillated eleven or twenty-two days earlier or later during three-year spans.

27. Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar* (Beirut, 1966), p. 265. Were these artisans the descendants of the workmen who had built al-Mushaqqar?

28. Marzūqī, *al-Azminah*, II, 161-163.

29. M. Ibrahim, *Merchant Capital and Islam* (Austin, 1990), p. 48.

30. S. al-'Alī, *al-Tarziḥāt al-ijtimā'īyya wa-l-iqtisādīyya fi-l-Basra fi-l-qarn al-awwal* (Baghdad, 1953), p. 231; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* (Cairo, 1895), V, 52.

31. Al-Hamdānī, *Kitāb al-Jawharatayn al-'aliqatayn al-mā'i'atayn min as-safrā' wa'l-bayda'*, ed. and tr. C. Toll, *Die Beiden Edelmetalle Gold und Silber* (Upsalla, 1968), pp. 142-143. See also D. M. Dunlop, "Sources of Gold and Silver in Islam According to al-Hamdani," *Studia Islamica*, 8 (1957), p. 10.

living in the town of al-Ghābah at the time of the Muslim conquest of Baḥrayn.<sup>19</sup>

The nature of the Persian settlement in Baḥrayn seems to have been determined by military, political, and economic interests. Some of the settlement may have been forced, but Baḥrayn may also have been seen as a place of opportunity by the dregs of Sasanian society.<sup>20</sup> Had late Sasanian economic development in Iraq, al-Ahwāz, and Fārs created a surplus population that spilled over into Baḥrayn and brought development with it? At least there was an immigrant labor force in late Sasanian Baḥrayn and ethnic assimilation between Persians and Arabs in both directions. The circumstances look quite colonial.

It is impossible to determine if the Sasanians engaged in agricultural development in Baḥrayn, but some of the Persians were farmers. After the completion of the Muslim conquest in 634 some of the Persians living at Qaṭīf stayed on as farmers,<sup>21</sup> which suggests that they had been farmers before the conquest. A reference to the time for gleaning at Hajar<sup>22</sup> means that grain was being grown there, and grain was exported from the Yamāma to Makka in the time of Muḥammad,<sup>23</sup> which means there was a surplus. At least at the time of the Muslim conquest the agrarian economy of Baḥrayn was based on dates and grain, because the *Majūs*, Jews, and Christians there, who decided not to convert to Islam, agreed with al-'Alā al-Ḥaḍramī to save the Muslims the trouble of working by giving them half of their grain and dates.<sup>24</sup> The earliest evidence for the development of a system of irrigation canals in the oasis of al-Ḥasā' comes from the early Islamic period,<sup>25</sup> but it would be unfair to claim, at this point, that this grew out of earlier Sasanian practices in Baḥrayn.

The Persians were interested in commerce in Baḥrayn however. An annual market was held in Hajar throughout the month of Jumāda al-Ākhira (December 11

19. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 85.

20. For the attractiveness of Hajar as a place to settle see Marzūqī, *Kitāb al-Azminah wa-l-amkina* (Haydarabad, 1332/1914), II, 163. This occurs in a pre-Islamic context.

21. Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* (Haydarabad, 1975), I, 54.

22. Tabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 985.

23. F. Donner, "Mecca's Food Supplies and Muhammad's Boycott," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 20 (1977), pp. 254, 262.

24. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 78, 80.

25. R. McC. Adams, et al., "Saudi Arabian Archaeological Reconnaissance 1976. The Preliminary Report on the First Phase of the Comprehensive Archaeological Survey Program," *Atlat*,

III occupied Bahrayn. According to Ḥamza the name of al-Muka'bir was Dādfrīz ibn Ḥashanshafān or Khurrazād ibn Narsī. He not only governed Bahrayn but also from 'Ilmān to al-Yamāma and regions to the west.<sup>9</sup> The last looks exaggerated but is worth noting; he may well have governed Bahrayn under Khusraw Parvīz.<sup>10</sup> There was a *marzbān* called Sībukht at Hajar in the time of Muḥammad.<sup>11</sup> The Arabs of late Sasanian Bahrayn were ruled indirectly. In the time of Muḥammad the 'Abd al-Qays, Bakr ibn Wā'il, and Tamīm were governed for the Persians by Mundhir ibn Sāwā<sup>12</sup>, while Hawdha ibn 'Alī al-Ḥanafī was the Sasanian agent in the Yamāma.<sup>13</sup>

Bahrayn was colonized by Persian settlers in the late Sasanian period. There appear to have been Persian cavalrymen there.<sup>14</sup> One version of the building of the fortress of al-Mushaqqar at Hajar by a Persian cavalryman, probably in the time of Khusraw II,<sup>15</sup> tells how the workmen would only stay and finish it if they were provided with women. So prostitutes were brought from the Sawād (of Iraq) and al-Ahwāz and skins of wine were conveyed across the sea from Fārs for them. The workmen and women married each other, and their descendants became most of the population there. They spoke Arabic, claimed kinship with the 'Abd al-Qays, and are said to have been armed. After the rise of Islam, some of them were considered to be members of the 'Abd al-Qays, while others were dispersed among the Arabs.<sup>16</sup> The Persian king (*Kisrā*) also settled hostages (*wadā'i*) in Hajar, who were *Majūs* (Zoroastrians), stayed on after the rise of Islam, but refused to become Muslims and paid a tax of one *dīnār* (apiece).<sup>17</sup> It is most likely in the late Sasanian period that Persian immigrants from Ištakhr settled in Bahrayn, where some of the Banu 'ljl assimilated to them.<sup>18</sup> There were also Persians

9. Ḥamza, *Ta'rikh*, p. 116. Ḥamza also says that he conquered Yamān and lived until the arrival of 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amīr ibn Kurayz in Bahrayn.

10. According to Balādhurī (*Kitāb Futūh al-Buldān*, Leiden, 1866, p. 85), al-Muka'bir defended al-Zarab against the Muslims during the caliphates of Abū Bakr and 'Umar.

11. Abu Ezzah, "Eastern Arabia," pp. 56-57, Balādhurī, *Futūh*, p. 78.

12. Balādhurī, *Futūh*, p. 78.

13. Tabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 984-985.

14. Bosworth, *The Sāsānids*, p. 291.

15. Since Māhbūdī, the father of the cavalryman who built al-Mushaqqar, was active in the last decades of the sixth century (Bosworth, *The Sāsānids*, pp. 300, ft. 703; 314, ft. 736), the building would have been in the next generation, under Khusraw II.

16. Tabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 985-986.

for any strong state in Iraq and Iran to protect itself by controlling the borderlands along the Iraqī frontier in north-eastern Arabia, the coastal territory of mainland Baḥrayn across the Gulf from Fārs,<sup>2</sup> and coastal 'Umān across the Strait from Kirmān. But Yaman was further afield; it was only occupied by the Persians in the late Sasanian period (sometime during the 570's), and that requires an explanation.

It is not the purpose here to give a detailed account of the late Sasanian political position in Arabia but only to provide a general picture of the extent of that position. Almost all of the information comes from later accounts written in Arabic that are clearly semi-legendary, anecdotal, and prone to exaggeration. Even if these accounts reflect post-Sasanian propaganda, their image is impressive. Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī lists some sixteen *marzbāns* who governed various parts of Arab territory.<sup>3</sup>

Until the end of the sixth century north-eastern Arabia was ruled indirectly for the Sasanians by the Banū Lakhm at al-Ḥīra on the border of Iraq. After the treaty with Byzantines in 531 Khusraw II Anūshirwān (531-579) is said to have appointed or confirmed al-Mundhir ibn al-Nu'mān (al-Mundhir III, ca. 504-554) over the territory extending from 'Umān, al-Baḥrayn and al-Yamāma to al-Ṭā'if and the rest of the Ḥijāz and all the Arabs in between.<sup>4</sup> The last ruling member of the Banū Lakhm, al-Nu'mān ibn al-Mundhir (al-Nu'mān III, 579-601) had conquered mainland Baḥrayn<sup>5</sup> and ruled it through his representatives. After the death of al-Nu'mān and the battle of Dhū Qār,<sup>6</sup> the Sasanians restored the desert frontier and ruled it directly. The desert region along the edge of the *rif* from the border of al-Ḥīra to al-Baḥrayn was governed for Khusraw Parvīz (590-628) by Fanā Burzīn, whom the Arabs called Sāsān ibn Rūzbih.<sup>7</sup> The main Sasanian strongholds in Baḥrayn were at Qaṭīf and Hajar. In an account that appears to be telescoped, Ṭabarī represents the legendary Āzādḥ Fīrūz ibn Jushnas (Gushnasp), called al-Muka'bir, as the governor of Baḥrayn for Khusraw Anūshirwān (531-579) at Hajar.<sup>8</sup> If so, this would have been before al-Nu'mān

2. For a short account see R. N. Frye, "Bahrain under the Sasanians," in Daniel T. Potts, ed., *Dilmun. New Studies in the Archaeology and Early History of Bahrain* (Berlin, 1983), pp. 167-170.

3. Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *Ta'rikh sinī mulūk al-'arab wa-l-anbīyā'* (Beirut, 1961), pp. 115-116.

4. Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* (Leiden, 1879), I, 958.

5. W. Caskel, "'Abd al-Ḳays," *ER*(2), I, 73.

6. The battle of Dhū Qār was probably fought between 604 and 611. See C. E. Bosworth, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, Vol. V: *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen* (Albany, 1999), p. 339.

7. Ḥamza, *Ta'rikh*, pp. 115-116. According to A. Abu Ezzah, "The Political Situation in Eastern Arabia at the Advent of Islam," *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies*, 9 (1979), p. 60. Persian military commanders were also associated for Kāziya (Kuwait) and Uḥulla and its region