

Founder Myths in Iranian History

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Most, if not all, people are interested in their origins, who their ancestors were, and their history. Sometimes the continuity is interrupted by adoption of a new religion, which tries to repudiate or ignore the past. At other times rulers seek to impose their views of events by lying about them.¹ In both cases it is difficult to erase beliefs and practices which have become ingrained in the culture or society, and, in the case of religions, sometimes old tenets are absorbed or transformed to fit new conditions, or are secretly practiced. Let me explain.

When Christianity spread in the Near East, pagan religions were attacked and many customs were banned when conversions took place. Others, such as fetes and holidays, were transformed into new celebrations with new names and meanings. It is well-known that Christmas adopted many practices from pre-Christian sources, including even the date of the holiday. But origins were important to people, and in this case, since the new religion rose from the Jewish faith, its origins of the Old Testament were chosen as Christianity's pre-history rather than the ancient Near Eastern, or the Graeco-Roman account of creation and origins.

1. I hope to devote an investigation into the claims of Darius to belong to the family of Cyrus in another article.

texts for the conquest of the following cities are always earlier than the first Anonymous Arab-Sasanian coins. Secondly, Arab-Sasanian coins begin with the first year after Yazdgird III's death, 31-32H or 652 C.E. In other words, only after the death of Yazdgird III do the Arabic legends appear on the coins. This presumes that the monarch's rule was at least nominally upheld in Fārs, and mints struck coins in his name until his death. This could also be due to the fact that Yazdgird III made his last stand in the western part of the empire and specifically in Fārs, after the death of 'Umar, where there were sporadic uprisings against tribute imposed by the Arabs. Even at Bēšābūhr, which seems to have been conquered earlier (according to the coinage), the first Anonymous Arab-Sasanian coin does not appear until 32H. Thirdly, while there are discrepancies for the dates of the conquest in the literary sources, the numismatic evidence is uniform.

We know that cities revolted several times and were reconquered, thus it is difficult to assign an exact date for the conquest of a city. When we talk about the conquest of a city, do we mean the first conquest or the final conquest and permanent control of that city? The coins may give us the terminal date of the conquest, at a time when the Muslims were firmly in control of a city's bureaucracy, including the minting *dīwān*. It should also be noted that there are some important changes in the nature of our numismatic sources. This has to do with the numbering system for the dates on the Arab-Sasanian coins. On the Sasanian coins, numerals from 2-9 were usually written in their ideographic form; for example year four appeared in the Aramaic ideogram ALAB, Middle Persian *čahār*. On certain Arab-Sasanian coins we begin to get the numbers written in purely Middle Persian form and the Aramaic ideograms disappear.

Which mints followed the new numbering system? Any changes may indicate a shift of staff in the *dīwān*, where the old minters were replaced by new ones. Changes were occurring rapidly at on all levels, and every piece of evidence/source provides a clue to the various developments. To understand the process of the Arab Muslim conquest of the Near East and the Mediterranean world, all materials, both literary and non-literary are needed.

the last mentioned date is here provided. (Dates are in hijri):

<u>Cities/Mint</u>	<u>Ṭabarī</u>	<u>Ibn Balxī</u>	<u>Balādhūrī</u>
Ardaxšīr-xwarrah	<u>30</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>19</u>
Bēšābūhr	**	<u>26</u>	<u>24</u>
Dārābgīrd	<u>23</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>29</u>
Istaxr	<u>29</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>29</u>
Veh-az-Amid- Kavād		<u>18</u>	

This chart shows the different dates given for the conquest of the cities. For Ardaxšīr-xwarrah, the dates vary from 19H-30H, an 11-year gap between the earliest and the latest date. Al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Balxī have a closer date for the conquest 30H-26H, a 4 year gap. Bēšābūhr's dates vary from 24H-26H, a 2 year difference. Dārābgīrd has 23H-29H, a 6 year difference, and for Veh-az-Amid-Kavād there is insufficient evidence, since there is only one year (18H), available. This can also be due to the fact that Veh-az-Amid-Kavād was the westernmost region of Fārs and so was conquered early on when Irāq itself was conquered by the Muslims. This scheme presents a pattern of gaps of 4 to 6 years for the conquest of the first three cities.⁷⁰ By comparing these dates with the latest coins of Yazdgird III and the earliest Anonymous Arab-Sasanian coins the following scheme appears:

<u>City/Mint</u>	<u>Last Yazdgird Coin</u>	<u>Earliest Anon. Arab-Sas. Coin</u>	<u>al-Ṭabarī</u>	<u>Ibn Balxī</u>	<u>Balādhūrī</u>
Ardaxšīr-xwarrah	<u>27/28</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>19</u>
Bēšābūhr	<u>15/16</u>	<u>32</u>	**	<u>26</u>	<u>24</u>
Dārābgīrd	<u>28/29</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>29</u>
Istaxr	<u>29/30</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>29</u>
Veh-az-Amid- Kavād	<u>19/20</u>	<u>31</u>	**	<u>28</u>	**

By comparing the numismatic evidence with that of the literary texts, one can draw several conclusions. One is that the dates given by the literary

70. This is true if we disregard Balādhūrī's date for the conquest of Ardaxšīr-xwarrah (19H).

been clearly established, they do not appear for every year afterwards. ART Ardaxšīr-Xwarrah has continuous coinage with *bism allāh* from 24/35 Hijra to 31/42 Hijra.⁶⁷ BYŠ Bēšābūhr has continuous coinage with *bism allāh* from 24/35 Hijra to 32/43 Hijra when 'Abd Allāh b. 'Āmir's name is struck for the first time. DA Dārābgird is anomalous as compared to ART and BYŠ, since after year 20/31 Hijra, it is in the year 25/36 Hijra that the first *bism allāh* legend appears for this mint. It continues until year 30/41 Hijra and in year 32/42 Hijra 'Abd Allāh's name appears on the coin.

ST Istaxr follows the same pattern as Dārābgird, which may mean that the two cities rebelled several times and became independent. In fact, after the year 24/35 Hijra, the first Arab-Sasanian coins that appear with the name of 'Abd Allāh are in year 33/44 Hijra. In addition, we do not have any coins until the year 38/49 Hijra with the legend *bism allāh rabbi*. From year 39/50 Hijra we get the name *Ziyād*. WYHC Veh-az-Amid-Kavād has a continuous mint from 23/34 Hijra to 26/37 Hijra; 28/39 Hijra and then there are no coins until 37/48 Hijra with the legend *bism allāh rabbi*.

IV. Comparison between the Textual and Numismatic Sources

Let us now compare the numismatic evidence with that of the literary sources. As we have mentioned, the literary sources, Arabic or Persian, seem to be confused and contradictory, with the exact dates elusive.⁶⁸ This may be due to the complexity of the process of conquest. The conquerors not only came from Baṣrah, but also attacked from the Persian Gulf, and by 650 C.E., the literary sources state that Fārs was conquered.⁶⁹ The question is whether or not the coins will confirm this date or suggest an alternative date for the conquest of cities in Fārs.

The following dates are given by al-Ṭabarī, Balādhūrī, and Ibn Balxī for the conquest of the cities of Fārs. Since some of these cities rebelled several times, several dates may appear for the conquest of a city or district. Only

67. With the exception of 26/37 Hijra; year 30/41 Hijra with *lillāh*; 31/42 Hijra has also 'Abd Allāh for the first time.

68. M. G. Morony, "Arab Conquest of Iran," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. II (1987): 203-204.

69. Hinds, *op. cit.*, p.49.

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 2) BYŠ | Year 3 |
| 3) DĀ | Years 1, 2, 3, ⁶¹ 14, 15, 16, 20 |
| 4) ST | Years 1, 2, 10, 11, 12, 13, ⁶² 15, 17, 20 |
| 5) WYHC | Years 3, ⁶³ 4, ⁶⁴ 7, 20 ⁶⁵ |

It has been suggested that certain coins with the year 20 seem to have had an immobile date, meaning they were struck long after Yazdgird III's reign with the year 20. There are three mints in Fārs which have a year 20 mint date: DA (Dārābgird), ST (Istaxr), and WYHC (Veh-az-Amid-Kavād). There are two opinions: 1) to disregard all the year 20 coins or 2) to leave out the mint of WYHC, since the last year before year 20 is year 7. To clarify the situation we must look at the first Arab-Sasanian coinage. They usually are of the Xusrō II or Yazdgird III type, meaning the coins have their portrait and features. They are also known as the Anonymous Arab-Sasanian coins, because they do not have the name of the Arab governor. The only indication that the coin is not Sasanian is that there are Arabic slogans on the margins, such as *jayyid*, or *bism allāh*.⁶⁶ The following table lists the first Arab-Sasanian coins issued by the mints of Fārs:

- | | |
|---------|---------------|
| 1) ART | Year 21 = 32H |
| 2) BYŠ | Year 21 = 32H |
| 3) DĀ | Year 20 = 31H |
| 4) ST | Year 20 = 31H |
| 5) WYHC | Year 20 = 31H |

While the first appearance of the anonymous Arab-Sasanian coins has

61. *Ibid.*, p.103.

62. *Ibid.*, p.123.

63. *Ibid.*, p.116.

64. *Ibid.*

65. Beside Tyler-Smith's excellent work, see also F. Gurnet's work on the coinage of Yazdgird III in two parts, the second part providing dates for Fārs as well, "Monnaies sassanides inédites de Yazdgird III (632-651)," *Cercle d'Études Numismatiques*, Vol. 25, No. 4, 1988, pp. 76-85. Also see S. Sears' dissertation on the *Coinage of Iran and Irāq from 650-750*, University of Chicago, 1997.

66. S. Album and M. Bates, *The Coinage of Fars Province, Iran, 650-705 CE*, The American Numismatic Society, 1995; S. Album and M. Bates, "Coins and Coinage," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. VI (1995): 17.

Yazdgird III, the last Sasanian king, was crowned at the Anāhīd fire Temple at Istaxr in 10/632, i.e., the same place where the first Sasanian king, Ardaxšīr Pābagān, was crowned and the new dynasty was launched. Coins bearing the name of this king are rare and only the mints of Sīstān⁵⁶ and Kermān were active, long-term minting sites for Yazdgird III.⁵⁷ Other mints struck coins irregularly in his name and several did not at all, which may indicate that he was not in control of the whole Sasanian empire. This irregularity in minting is typical for Sasanian rulers after Xusrō II, due perhaps to the fact that there was general chaos in the empire and the central administration was weak. These rulers were able to mint only in select provinces, while other mints were inactive.

For Yazdgird III all of the five aforementioned mints struck coins in his name in Fārs. However, there are irregularities for all of the mints. Only two had a relatively steady minting under Yazdgird III, while the other three were quite irregular. This apparent irregularity may have been caused by the unavailability of data rather than by the actual reality of mint production. We need to keep this in mind when discussing minting policy and attributing dates. Other provinces such as Irāq and Āzarbāyjān stopped minting in his name during the early years of his reign, and only Fārs, Jibāl, Kermān, and Sīstān minted coins to the end of his rule. This is the list of dates and mints for Yazdgird III:⁵⁸

1) ART Years 1, 12, 13,⁵⁹ 16⁶⁰

important town in Sasanian times to have such a large output of coins; Malek, "Sasanian Numismatics," *The Numismatic Chronicle*, London, 1993, p.90. I have been able to see affinities in the Arab-Sasanian coins to this mint with the other mints of Fārs identified by Michael Bates, which make it certain that Gyselen's suggestion is correct. Thus Nēw-Šābūhr seems to be less plausible. See also S. Tyler-Smith, "Sasanian Mint Abbreviations," *The Numismatic Chronicle*, Vol. 143, London, 1983, pp.244-245.

56. See #578, #584, #585 for SK; #582 for BN, Joel L. Malter & Company, INC. Classical Numismatics, *Auction 55, Ancient Greek Coins, Including Parthian, Sasanian, Elam and Persis*, November 7, 1993. The ANS collections has various dates for BBA, BN, and SK.

57. Tyler-Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 151. F. Gurnet, "Monnaies sassanides inédites de Yazdgird III (632-651)," *Cercle d'Études Numismatiques*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 1988, p. 55.

58. The dates indicated without footnotes are taken from Tyler-Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

59. F. D. J. Paruck was the first to list the coinage of Yazdgird for the province of Fārs and beyond, "Sāsānian and Arab-Sāsānian Mint-Marks," *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, Bombay, Vol. V, Part I, 1943, Pl. XXXI, 3, p.495.

60. *Ibid.*, p.97.

B. The Numismatic and Epigraphic Evidence

The contradictory nature and confusion of dates contained in these authors make it hard to determine exactly when each region or city was conquered. It is exactly on this question that coins can shed light and provide a clarification of the literary sources. This can be done by identifying and securing the mint organization of the Sasanian empire during the reign of Yazdgird III (10-31 H), the last monarch of that dynasty. For Fārs there is already enough evidence to undertake this study, and it could be done for other regions as well. But until the mints have been attributed for certain, it would be difficult to apply the numismatic evidence to the chronology of the conquest of all regions. The mints of Fārs, Kermān, Sīstān and the Jibāl have been attributed with considerable certainty, and regional comparisons would be useful.

The mints of Fārs have been secured more than those of any other province in the Sasanian period. Fārs had several important mints, and from the surviving specimens, it seems that this region had a very productive output. There are five mints which are known with some certainty and they are:

- | | |
|---------|---------------------------------|
| 1) ART | Ardaxšīr-xwarrah |
| 2) BYŠ | Bēšābūhr |
| 3) DĀ | Dārābgird |
| 4) ST | Istaxr ⁵⁴ |
| 5) WYHC | Veh-az-Amid-Kavād ⁵⁵ |

54. ART, BYŠ, DĀ, ST have been identified definitively by R. Gyselen, "Ateliers monétaires et cachets sassanides," *Studia Iranica* 8 / 2 (1979): 210.

55. The location of this mint is controversial and has been attributed to several areas. Mitchiner has identified this mint as NIHC for Ctesiphon in the province of Asūrestān, "Mint Organization in the Sassanian Empire," *The Numismatic Circular*, Vol. LXXXVI, No.9, September 1978, Spink & Son Ltd., London, p.473. Gyselen has identified it as Veh-az-Amid-Kavād aka Arrajān in the Islamic period (*op. cit.*, p. 210). Her reading is based on a seal with three cities mentioned: Istaxr, Bēšābūhr, and Veh-az-Amid-Kavād, thus located in Fārs, *idem.*, *La géographie administrative de l'empire Sassanide*, Res orientales, Peeters, Leuven, 1993; for the discussion, see p. 62; for the seal, see p.112. Mochiri has read it as VSP for Visp-šād-Xosrow in Media, *Études de numismatique iranienne sous les Sassanides et Arabe-Sassanides*, Vol. II, Tehran, revised edition, Leiden, 1982, p. 454; Mordtmann and Sellwood have proposed Nēw-Šābūhr in Khurāsān, Sellwood, *An Introduction to Sasanian Coins*, Spink & Son Ltd., London, 1985, p.49. Mitchiner's suggestion is simply untenable. Mochiri's suggestion one must also reject because in the abbreviation of the mint the last character cannot be *p* but *č*. Malek doubts that Veh-az-Amid-Kavād (Arrajān) was such an

arrived at Rayšahr/Rēw-šahr. Hearing this, 'Umar ordered 'Uthmān b. Abī al-Āṣ to go to Fārs and take over Tawwaj. From that base, the Arabs began to conquer the adjoining areas.⁴⁶ From Baṣrah, Abū Mūsā al-Aš'arī would also send forces into Fārs.

By then some of the Persian forces had been converted to Islam and had entered the Muslim army. For example Hormoz b. Ḥayyān al-'Abdī was sent by 'Uthmān b. Abī al-Āṣ to capture the citadel of Sēnēz which was on the coast of the Persian Gulf.⁴⁷ From there in the year 16 'Uthmān b. Abī al-Āṣ went to Bēšābūhr and was able to impose *jizya* on the population.⁴⁸ Arrajān was conquered in the year 18/638-639, Šērāz in 20/640-641, and Dārābgird's population paid *jizya* in the year 23/643-644.⁴⁹

When 'Uthmān became caliph in 24/644-645, it is reported that the people of Fārs revolted. In particular, Bēšābūhr rebelled under the leadership of Šahrak's brother, but, being defeated, the inhabitants paid *jizya* again. In the year 25/645-646, the population of Bēšābūhr revolted again, and Abū Mūsā al-Aš'arī was sent by the caliph to put down the revolt.⁵⁰ From there, Abū Mūsā al-Aš'arī went to Istaxr (28/648-649). Māhak was in charge in that city and peace was made between them. From there 'Abd Allāh b. 'Āmir who had been appointed *wālī* (governor) by the caliph, was sent to Gōr, but the people of Istaxr revolted again and killed the Arab overlord of that city. In the year 30/650-651 Gōr was conquered and 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās returned to Istaxr, where in year 32/652-653 his forces supposedly killed some 40,000 notables of that city.⁵¹ In that year 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās was appointed as the governor of Irāq and Fārs.⁵² The people of Istaxr once again revolted and after much bloodshed al-'Abbās' forces subdued the city. This seems to have been the last revolt.⁵³

46. Ibn Balxī, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

53. *Ibid.*

Then Jahrom and Fasā were conquered, and it is said that in those places there was also a *hērbēd* who dealt with the Arab conquerors as a representative of the local population.³⁹

Another version of the story, according to Balādhurī is that ‘Uthmān b. Abī al-‘Āṣ in the year 23 or 24 attacked Bēšābūhr, and saw that the people had kept their religion but made peace with him. They later broke their word in year 26, and it was subsequently re-conquered.⁴⁰ It is also reported that in the year 22 ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb had ordered the conquest of Fārs. In the year 28 ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Āmir b. Kurayz went towards Istaxr and from there to Gōr. The people of Istaxr revolted again and after Ibn ‘Āmir had subdued Gōr, he went back and suppressed the Istaxr uprising. Gōr remained elusive: final conquest of the city is said to have been in 29/649-650 by Ibn ‘Āmir. Then Kariyan and Fesjatan (which is identified as Dārābgird) were conquered.⁴¹ The narrative of Ibn Balxī corroborates this by mentioning that after the conquest of Gōr, Ibn ‘Āmir went to Istaxr. 40,000 of Istaxr’s inhabitants were killed, mainly *Āzādegān* “nobility,” as well as *Buzurgān* (*Wuzurgān*) “grandees” and *Aswārān* “cavalry soldiers” who had taken refuge there.⁴²

We further get reports of uprisings in Fārs and of continuous revolts in Istaxr and Gōr. It is reported that Ibn ‘Āmir’s forces killed more than 100,000 inhabitants of Fārs, certainly an exaggerated figure. Then Dārābgird revolted again and was conquered again. Kermān became the next province. There are also reports of revolts after these wars, at which time Sirāf, which is called Soryānj, was conquered.⁴³ Fasā too revolted again during this time.⁴⁴ Thus the account in Balādhurī is confusing and at times contradictory.

According to Ibn Balxī with a force from Baḥrayn, Ḥakam b. Abī al-‘Āṣ was able to capture Tawwaj, located in Ardaxšīr-xwarrah. Once the Persian forces of Šahrak, the *marzbān* (margrave),⁴⁵ were routed, Arab armies

39. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*, p. 145.

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

45. The notion that four *marzbāns* existed as reported in Islamic sources has been challenged by Ph. Gignoux, “L’organisation administrative sasanide: le cas du marzbān,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 4 (1984): 1-29.

According to al-Ṭabarī the conquest of Fārs and the final conquest of Istaxr took place under Hišām b. ‘Āmir, during the caliphate of ‘Uthmān in the year 28/648-649.³² But al-Ṭabarī later contradicts himself when he mentions that in year 29/649-650 the people of Fārs rebelled against ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Ma‘mar; the later was killed and his army defeated.³³ Subsequently ‘Uthmān b. Abī al-‘Āṣ marched to Istaxr with a force from al-Baṣrah and subdued its population.³⁴ The province was then put under the shared military command of Harim b. Ḥassān al-Yashkurī, Harim b. Ḥayyān al-‘Abdī and al-Khirrīt b. Rāshid, the last two belonging to the tribes of ‘Abd al-Qays and Banū Sāmāh.³⁵ But what is puzzling is that it is said that ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Āmir conquered Fārs in the same year.³⁶ This was not the final conquest of Fārs, because it is also reported that Yazdgird III fled to Khurāsān from the province of Fārs in the year 30/650-651.³⁷ Thus al-Ṭabarī account alone demonstrates the confusion and uncertainty over the process and date of the conquest of Fārs.

Balādhurī states that the first district of Fārs that was conquered was Ardaxšīr-xwarrah, and the first site to be captured was Tawwaj. Balādhurī provides two versions of the conquest of Fārs, and the second version seems to be more accurate. This is that ‘Uthmān b. Abī al-‘Āṣ conquered Tawwaj and settled several tribes there, among them the ‘Abd al-Qays. From there he went in the year 19/639 to the district of Arrajān, i.e., Veh-az-Amid-Kavād.³⁸ At the end of ‘Uthmān’s caliphate it is also reported that ‘Uthmān b. Abī al-‘Āṣ conquered Arrajān, then Šērāz. The inhabitants were either given the choice to leave or to pay *jizya*; they were not to be harmed or taken as slaves. Then the city of Sēnēz in Ardaxšīr-xwarrah was conquered, where the inhabitants were left to continue the cultivation of the land. Then ‘Uthmān b. Abī al-‘Āṣ attacked the district of Dārābgird. The *hērbed* (priest teacher) was in charge of the district, and paid a huge sum for his safety.

32. al-Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, p. 2827.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 2830.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 2830-31.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 2831.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 2833.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 2863.

38. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, M. J. de Goeje, ed., Leiden, 1866; translated by A. Azarnoush, second edition, Soroush Publishers, 1983, p. 142.

strictly ordered by 'Umar not to take it upon himself to conquer any adjacent regions. Accordingly, the first raids into Fārs took place as a result of internal Muslim rivalries, notably that of 'Abd al-Qays and Tamīm who were in support of al-'Alā' against the *ridda* of the Bakrī al-Ḥuṭam b. Ḍubay'a. After the suppression of the *ridda*, al-'Alā' followed it up by the conquest of an island off the coast of the Persian Gulf.²⁷

However, al-'Alā' gave orders to raid Fārs and divided his forces into three contingents. The first contingent was put under the leadership of al-Jārūd b. al-Mu'allā who was killed by the Persian forces once he had crossed from al-Baḥrayn to Fārs.²⁸ The second contingent was put under the command of al-Sawwār b. Hammām. It had crossed with the first army and had the same fate as that of al-Jārūd b. al-Mu'allā.²⁹ The third contingent was put under the leadership of Khulayd b. al-Mundhir b. Sāwī who was able to continue fighting, but could not retreat to al-Baḥrayn because his way of retreat to the boats was blocked. Upon hearing this news, 'Umar reprimanded al-'Alā' in a letter, had him dismissed and put under the command of Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ. He then asked 'Utbah b. Ghazwān to send troops to Khulayd b. al-Mundhir b. Sāwī, whose forces were hard pressed in Fārs.³⁰ With reinforcements they were able to retreat and return to their bases, some to al-Baṣrah and al-Baḥrayn.

This was the first raid into Fārs by Arab Muslims, whose forces were originally comprised of Qays and Tamīm tribes. This was also the first time that the Baṣran forces were noted for their valor and military capability, since they had come to the rescue of the stranded Arab Muslim forces in Fārs. Although al-Ṭabarī account says the Arabs fought valiantly and killed many of the Persians, it appears that it was such a difficult battle that the caliph did not attack the province again for some time. This proved that if there was to be a conquest of the province, it needed to be done with a larger force.³¹

27. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

28. al-Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, p. 2546.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 2547.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 2548.

31. Ibn Balxī's account of the conquest is quite different. He states that al-'Alā' b. al-Ḥaḍramī had sent Harṭima b. Ja'far al-Baraghī to conquer the islands close to Fārs. After hearing this news 'Umar rejoiced and said that the conquest of Fārs had begun, *Fārsnāme*, R. Nicholson, ed., Cambridge, 1932, p. 113. Because of its late date, however, this account may be less reliable.

why the Muslims became the dominant force in Iran.²³ This work also dedicates some attention to the mechanics of the process of conquest, which is important, although again based on the literary sources. All these works with the exception of the last one, provide a very dim view of the conquest of Sasanian Iran and of what must have happened to the Zoroastrians.

III. The Conquest of Fārs

A. Textual Sources

The textual sources offer a wealth of information on the conquest of the Near East by the Arab Muslim armies. However, these sources often give conflicting scenarios about the process and exact dates of the conquest. Thus it becomes very difficult to arrive at a precise narrative of the conquest of a city or region in the seventh century. This contradiction can be illuminated by comparing three Perso-Arabic textual accounts: 1) al-Ṭabarī; 2) Balādhurī; and 3) Ibn Balxī.

According to al-Ṭabarī, the first raids into Fārs were undertaken from ‘Umān and al-Baḥrayn.²⁴ It appears that there was no organized plan to conquer the province of Fārs. The caliph was content to hold Irāq and Khūzestān and was not planning to conquer the Persian-speaking areas. In fact ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb supposedly said that “I wish there were between us and the people of Fārs a mountain of fire, through which they cannot reach us, nor we them.”²⁵ Thus the first raids into the province of Fārs seem, as al-Ṭabarī states, to have had an ad hoc nature, as a result of disobedience to the Caliph.

The conquest began in year 17 H/638-639 CE when al-‘Alā’ b. al-Ḥaḍramī was appointed governor of al-Baḥrayn by Abū Bakr.²⁶ He held the same office during the later caliphate of ‘Umar. It is said that he had been

23. J. K. Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation, Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elite in Medieval Iranian Society*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1997.

24. Hinds, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

25. Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta‘rīkh al-rusul wa’l-mulūk*, Vol. IV, Muhammad A. Ibrahim, ed., Dār al-Ma‘ārif, Cairo, 1963, p. 2545. For translations, see G. H. A. Juynboll, Vol. XIII, State University of New York Press, Albany, p. 126. The same kind of statement is made for the northern area such as the Jabal (Hamadān), where it is said that ‘Umar had wished that there was a mountain of fire between the people of Kūfah and al-Jabal, so they would not be able to have contacts, p. 2545.

26. According to Hinds (*op. cit.*, p. 39), he was appointed governor of al-Baḥrayn by the Prophet in 8/629-630.

Here different patterns of Arab settlement and their relation with the natives in the Iranian plateau were discussed. A more comprehensive study of the patterns of conquest was undertaken by F. Donner who commented on the nature and dates of the conquest and the problem of textual sources and chronology for this period.¹⁶

Iranian writers have also written histories dealing with the conquest of Iran and its aftermath. M. Azizi's *La domination arabe et l'épanouissement du sentiment national en Iran*,¹⁷ along with A. H. Zarrinkub's *Do Qarn Sokūt*¹⁸ and by the same author "The Arab Conquest of Iran and Its Aftermath,"¹⁹ provide the most extensive study of the conquest and subsequent developments, although at times from a nationalist point of view. Zarrinkub studied the social and political situation of Iran on the eve of the Muslim conquest and the first two centuries of Muslim rule. The movement of the Arabs into Iran, the relation of the Magians with the Muslims, the status of the *mawālī*, the questions of *jizya* and *kharāj* were all discussed, based on Muslim sources.

Zoroastrians have also dealt with the end of the Sasanian empire and the situation of the Sasanians under Muslim rule. M. S. Irani's "The Province of Khorasan After the Arab Conquest" discussed the resistance of the Iranians against the Muslim invaders.²⁰ F. C. Davar wrote perhaps the most one-sided essay on the aftermath of the Muslim conquest of Iran, without making a single reference to any source.²¹ B. Faravashi wrote an essay on the causes of the fall of the Sasanians.²² More recently, J. Choksy has conducted a judicious study of Zoroastrian-Muslim relations in the Islamic period and examined how the Zoroastrians lost their hold on power and, conversely

16. Donner, *op. cit.*

17. M. Azizi, *La domination arabe et l'épanouissement du sentiment national en Iran*, Paris, 1938.

18. A. H. Zarrinkub, *Do Qarn Sokūt*, Tehran, 1966.

19. *Idem*, "The Arab Conquest of Iran and Its Aftermath," in R. N. Frye, ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 4, Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp.1-56.

20. M. S. Irani, "The Province of Khorasan After the Arab Conquest," in *Proceedings of the Transaction of the 12th All-India Oriental Conference* 13 (1946): 530-537.

21. F. C. Davar, "A Glimpse into Iran after the Arab Conquest," in *A. V. W. Jackson Memorial Volume*, Bombay, 1954, pp.149-161.

22. B. Faravashi, "Les causes de la chute des Sassanides," in *La Persia nel medioevo*, Rome, 1971, pp.477-484.

together all the sources available in the first half of the twentieth century. He dealt with the Arab Muslim conquest and the Sasanians in Central Asia after the collapse of their rule in Iran using the literary sources uncritically.⁷ After Christensen's magnum opus Richard N. Frye published a book on the history of ancient Iran. The last chapter of the book contains a detailed description of what happened as the result of the Muslim conquest.⁸ Another work by Frye on late Sasanian and early Islamic Iran is the most important account of the social and intellectual situation in Fārs in the seventh century.⁹ The bureaucracy, the state of religion, and Zoroastrian interactions with Muslims were discussed in some detail. Frye was insightful but also very cautious and did not push his conclusions very far, letting fanciful imagination affect his work. Even more important, much more material evidence has come to light since then which makes another study necessary. A. I. Kolesnikov has been one of the most important scholars who has dealt with the conquest of Iran.¹⁰ On the conquests in general, F. Gabrieli's book was based solely on the Islamic literary sources.¹¹ B. Spuler's work on early Islamic Iran is perhaps the most complete work for Iranian history on this period.¹² M. Hinds published "The First Arab Conquest of Fars" in 1984,¹³ and M. Morony in his work dealt especially with the aftermath of the conquest of Irāq, both mainly dependent on the literary sources.¹⁴ Morony's work discussed the different populations of Sasanian Irāq, including the Zoroastrians and their situation in that period. He also concentrated on the conquest and the relationship of the Muslims to the conquered Iranians.¹⁵

7. A. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, Ejnar Munksgaard, Copenhagen, 1944.

8. R. N. Frye, *The Heritage of Persia*, World Publishing Company, Cleveland and New York, 1963.

9. *Idem*, *The Golden Age of Persia, The Arabs in the East*, Weidenfeld, 1973.

10. A. I. Kolesnikov, *Zavoevanie Irana Arabami (Conquest of Iran by the Arabs)*, Moscow, 1982.

11. Gabrieli, *op. cit.*

12. B. Spuler, *Iran in Früh-Islamischer Zeit*, Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, Wiesbaden, 1952; *idem*, "Les iraniens et le gouvernement des Arabes au début de la domination de l'islam," *Orientalia Suecana*, Stockholm, 1984-1986, pp.39-400.

13. Hinds, *op. cit.*

14. Morony, *op. cit.*

15. *Idem*, "Conquerors and Conquered: Iran," in G. H. A. Juynbool, ed., *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society*, Carbondale: S. Illinois University Press, 1982, pp. 73-88; *idem*, "Arab Conquest of Iran," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. II (1987): 203-210.

nature of Arab Muslim settlement in the conquered regions.⁴ On the other hand, the epigraphic and the numismatic sources give us much information on the person or official whose name is inscribed on the seal or struck on the coin, where the seal or coin is from, when the coin was struck, the religious conviction of the owner or governor under whom the coin was struck, and, depending on the material used, what was the economic situation or status of the person. Recently, S. Tyler-Smith⁵ has conducted an excellent study of Yazdgird III's coinage. While she is meticulous in her study of Yazdgird III's coinage, she only provides a general picture of the literary sources. The question that needs to be raised is that what is the connection or relation between the material culture and the textual sources? It will be seen that the comparison between the two types of sources can provide some clues as on the period of conquest in the province of Fārs. The numismatic sources will be used here to the possible extent in which Tyler-Smith has furnished them, along with the earliest attested Arab-Sasanian coinage studied by S. Album and M. Bates. They will be compared with the mentioned literary sources.

II. Historiography

Much ink has been spilt on the conquest of Sasanian Iran and its aftermath. The works vary in terms of their approaches, their use of material evidence, and intentions. The focus here is on the province of Fārs and the changes that occurred in that province. However, much of the scholarship is more general, and very little is specifically dedicated to Fārs. With regard to the end of the Sasanian history, F. Justi's chapter on ancient Iranian history in the *Grundriss der iranischen Philologie* provided the most complete early account.⁶ The most important work on Sasanian history was written by A. Christensen, who brought

4. For the province of Fārs and other regions see the important works of D. Whitcomb, "The City of Istakhr and the Marvdasht Plain," *Akten des VII International Kongresses für iranische Kunst und Archäologie*, München, 1979, pp. 363-370; *idem*, *Before the Roses and Nightingales, Excavation at Qasr-i Abu Nasr, Old Shiraz*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1985; *idem*, "Early Islamic Cities, Evidence from the Aqaba and Istakhr Excavations," (manuscript copy), pp. 1-7.

5. S. Tyler-Smith, "Coinage in the Name of Yazdgerd III (AD 632-651) and the Arab Conquest of Iran," *The Numismatic Chronicle*, Vol. 160, London, 2000, pp. 135-170.

6. F. Justi, "Geschichte Irans von den ältesten Zeiten bis zum Ausgang der Sāsāniden," in W. Geiger and E. Kuhn, eds., *Grundriss der iranischen Philologie*, Zweiter Band, Verlag von Karl J. Trübner, Strassburg, 1896-1904, pp. 395-550.

scenarios as to the process of conquest of the province of Fārs. Then how can we know when and how the Arab Muslims were able to conquer a region? This article aims to look at some of the methodological issues in regard to the early Islamic conquests and what results one might attain by using alternative sources, such as the material remains. This demonstration will show that other sources of information besides the historical texts, such as the *futūh* "conquest" literature, are needed to clarify the situation in seventh century Iran.

I. The Nature of the Sources

Stephen Humphreys has conveniently put together all the primary tools for the study of early Islamic history. His work is thus of utmost importance for ascertaining their value and classification.¹ Arabic sources have a special importance for this period because of their sheer quantity and the wide geographic region they cover. When dealing with the early Islamic conquests, these texts are the main sources for this period.² All of these texts give us a formulaic approach to the conquest (*futūh*) process which can be summarized as: 1) the siege and conquest; 2) the subjugation of the provinces and territories; and 3) the *futūh* in general.³ But based on the differences among these accounts, one can question the accuracy of these sources. Other important sources are the material remains. These have been used to a lesser extent when dealing with the conquest period. They include the archaeological, epigraphic and the numismatic sources. The archaeological sources are silent sources and are more difficult to utilize without confirmation, but they are still crucial for our understanding of the

1. A. Bayāt, *Šenāsāi-ye manābe' wa ma'āzez-e tārīxī-ye Irān*, Vol. I, Amir Kabir Publishers, Tehran, 1986; R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History, A Framework for Inquiry*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1991.

2. E. Bosworth, *Sīstān under the Arabs, from the Islamic Conquest to the Rise of the Saffārids (30-250/651-864)*, ISMEO, Centro Studi e Scavi Archeologici in Asia, Reports and Memoirs XI, Rome, 1968; F. Gabrieli, *Muhammad and the Conquests of Islam*, New York, 1968; Fred M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1981; M. G. Morony, *Irāq After the Muslim Conquest*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1984; M. Hinds, "The First Arab Conquest of Fars," in *IRAN* 22 (1984): 39-53.

3. Albrecht Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition, A Source-Critical Study*, The Darwin Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1994, p. 32.