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978-1-107-01408-4 - The New Muslims of Post-Conquest Iran: Tradition, Memory, and Conversion

Sarah Bowen Savant

Excerpt

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Introduction

Worries were at my stopping place, so I turned
 my sturdy she-camel toward the White Palace of al-Madā'in.
 Consoling myself with good fortune, and sorrowing
 at the traces of the camp of the clan of Sāsān.
 Successive afflictions reminded me of them;
 incidents make one remember, make one forget.

al-Buḥturī (d. 284/897)¹

Amid the alluvial flatlands east of the Tigris River in Iraq stands a great hulk of a ruin known as the Arch of Khusraw, or to Iranians today as the Tāq-i Kistrā. When Robert Mignan, in the service of the East India Company, came upon the “Tauk Kesra” in 1827, he described “a magnificent monument of antiquity, surprising the spectator with the perfect state of its preservation, after having braved the warring elements for so many ages; without an emblem to throw any light upon its history; without proof, or character to be traced on any brick or wall.” Mignan noted that “the natives of this country assert” that “the ruins are of the age of Nimrod,” a conclusion that he seems to have found credible.² In the

¹ This *qaṣīda* is widely repeated in Arabic sources. The lines featured here follow the recension provided by A. J. Arberry in his *Arabic Poetry: A Primer for Students* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 72–81 (no. 11); they are translated by Richard A. Serrano in “Al-Buḥturī’s Poetics of Persian Abodes,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 28, no. 1 (1997): 79–80 (lines 11–13). See also al-Buḥturī’s *dīwān* in the edition of Ḥasan Kāmil al-Ṣayrafī, 5 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1963–8), 2:1152–62 (no. 470).

² Robert Mignan, *Travels in Chaldæa, including a Journey from Bussorah to Bagdad, Hillah, and Babylon, Performed on Foot in 1827: With Observations on the Sites and Remains of Babel, Seleucia, and Ctesiphon* (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1829), 71 and 73.

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seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, European travelers who came upon the mysterious site assumed the majestic arch and the large columned structure flanking it to be a temple of the sun, or else the work of a Roman emperor.³ But while the Tāq-i Kīsrā was built on the remnants of past civilizations, the history of the site was much more recent, belonging to the Sasanian period and the environs of Ctesiphon, when, within the residential district of Asbānbar, it had served as the throne hall of a palace possibly built by Khusraw Anūshīrvān (r. 531–79 CE).⁴

The Arab invasion of Iraq in the 630s initiated a new phase in the area's history, ultimately resulting in the fall of the Sasanian dynasty and the conquest of Iran, and so Ctesiphon and its monuments were eclipsed. The entire area straddling the Tigris became an Arab-Muslim settlement, which the Arabs called al-Madā'in (Arabic for "the cities"). In the centuries that followed, they dismantled its buildings in order to construct new ones in Kufa and Baghdad. But even as they removed vestiges of the Sasanian architecture, they began the long process of memorializing the site. On the night of the Prophet Muḥammad's birth, according to one report, the battlements of the Tāq-i Kīsrā shook so hard that fourteen of them collapsed. At the same moment, for the first time in a thousand years, the Zoroastrians' sacred fire in Fārs (Iṣṭakhr) died out. According to another account, when the Arabs' conquering hero, Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, entered the Tāq-i Kīsrā he performed the special "prayer of conquest" (*ṣalāt al-fatḥ*) that Muḥammad had performed on entering Mecca.⁵ Afterward, al-Madā'in was governed by Salmān al-Fārisī (Salmān "the Persian"), a companion of Muḥammad. There were also tales of spoils so magnificent that antiquities dealers today still hunt for treasures from Ctesiphon.

The Line of Enquiry

The story of Islam's spread beyond Arabia is central to every general history of the faith and of Muslim civilizations, and to understanding the shape of the Muslim world today. Whereas the early community

³ Oscar Reuther, "The German Excavations at Ctesiphon," *Antiquity* 3, no. 12 (1929): 440 and 447.

⁴ Regarding his role, see esp. the doubts expressed by E. J. Keall, "Ayyān-e Kesrā (or Tāq-e Kesrā)," in *Elr*. Kīsrā is the Arabized form of the Middle Persian *xusrō* and the new Persian Khusraw.

⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje et al., 15 vols. in 3 series (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1879–1901), ser. I, 981 and 2443. Subsequent references to this work give the series and page number of the citation.

was based on a small, tribal, Arabian elite, Islam quickly spread beyond this narrow group and was woven into the fabric of innumerable local contexts. Today, although adherents still acknowledge the importance of the Arabian origins of their religion, Islam commands the loyalty of people of virtually every nationality and is the dominant religion in some of the world's most culturally and socially dynamic regions. About 98 percent of Iran's nearly seventy million people are Muslim; Zoroastrianism, the Sasanian state religion, claims adherents only in the tens of thousands.

One of the most important questions relating to the success of Islam worldwide is how loyalty has been fostered among the newly converted. In particular, how have they come to feel a sense of belonging to a Muslim community? This study addresses questions of loyalty and belonging in relation to Iran's Persians of the third/ninth to fifth/eleventh centuries, who represented the first large group of non-Arab converts to Islam. It does so by showing how the post-conquest descendants of the Persian imperial, religious, and historiographical traditions wrote themselves into starkly different early Arabic and Islamic accounts of the past. Although they soon developed a sense that Islam was as much an Iranian religion as it was an Arab one, nothing guaranteed that Islam would succeed among them, especially in the ways that it did.

The book addresses the issue of loyalty and belonging from the twin angles of tradition and memory. For groups, as for individuals, loyalty and a sense of belonging depend on how they make sense of the past, including their origins, their ancestry, and the achievements of previous generations. The past helps inform and stabilize group identity, particularly during times of political, cultural, or social change. Conversion to Islam led Iranians to recall their past in new ways and to accumulate new memories about their history. Despite the complexity of this process, one can trace its broad outlines by examining the deep currents of Arabic texts that circulated in the third/ninth to fifth/eleventh centuries, including not only works of local, regional, and universal history, but also biographical dictionaries, geographies, works of belles-lettres (*adab*), and "religious" texts such as Qur'an commentaries, collections of and commentaries on Prophetic Hadith, and works of jurisprudence. These Arabic works represented only the first phase in Iran's rewriting of its past, a process that continued with the subsequent development of Persian letters from the fourth/tenth century onward.

The terms "tradition" and "memory" are central to the book and enable it to draw on a broad body of work that has developed largely outside Arabic, Islamic, and Iranian Studies and that treats memory as

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integral to processes of cultural and social change. By “tradition” I mean reports handed down about the past in whatever form, including but not limited to the conventional Prophetic traditions and historical reports known as Hadith and *akhbār* (sing. *khbar*). I treat transmission as evidence of the fostering of shared memories. Traditions, like objects, patterns of action, and ways of thinking, are reproduced and disseminated, and they frequently exhibit differences that suggest adaptation and therefore interpretation. I label those who transmit them “traditionists,” whatever other affiliations they may have had.⁶ The concept of memory, on the other hand, draws attention to the power of traditions to affect individuals and collectivities. As a tradition accumulates weight and authority, it shapes collective agreements about the past, thereby creating memories. These collective agreements are deeply held by groups and the individuals within them, but they can also be opposed, changed, and otherwise subjected to negotiation, especially by the people who consider them to represent “their” past: the descendants of the actors in the story, the residents of the country where the events took place, and the present-day believers.

The period under principal consideration here witnessed great creativity in the fashioning and circulation of traditions about the founding moments of Islam in Iran. This was when Iran’s urban elite classes likely converted to Islam, as Richard Bulliet observed more than thirty years ago. Bulliet based his conclusions for Iran chiefly on biographical dictionaries composed for Iṣfahān and Nīshāpūr, thriving cities in central and northeastern Iran.⁷ In adopting a quantitative methodology for the study of conversion across the Middle East (with prominent attention to Iran), he noted:

⁶ This expansive notion of tradition follows especially Edward Shils, *Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

⁷ Bulliet found that the “basic conversion process” in Iran was completed by 400 AH (1010 CE), leaving about 20 percent of the population “adamant non-Muslims, whose number was reduced only very slowly” afterward; Richard W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), esp. 18–19 and 43. Jamsheed Choksy has hypothesized that urban Zoroastrians adopted Islam between the eighth and tenth centuries CE, whereas the countryside saw an accelerating wave of conversion from the tenth through the thirteenth centuries. See Jamsheed K. Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation: Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elites in Medieval Iranian Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 106–7. But see also the critique of such periodizations by Michael G. Morony, “The Age of Conversions: A Reassessment,” in *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands, Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi, 135–50 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990).

Introduction

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The great conversion experience that fundamentally changed world history by uniting the peoples of the Middle East in a new religion has had few modern chroniclers, the reason being that conversion plays so slight a role in the narratives of medieval chroniclers. Without data it is difficult to write history, and medieval Islam produced no missionaries, bishops, baptismal rites, or other indicators of conversion that could be conveniently recorded by the Muslim chronicler.⁸

What has not been duly appreciated, however, is that in writing about history – including their history before the conquests – Muslims were engaged in an effort to make sense of Islam in the changing and multi-religious communities in which they lived. Conversion is more than a background context for traditions; it is often a point of concern. This is the case even though, as a whole, narrators of traditions generally refer only obliquely to conversion itself and represent themselves as speaking exclusively to other committed Muslims.

Iran in the First Centuries of Islam

In terms of historical background, the following summary will be useful for readers new to Islamic or Iranian history. It represents something of a standard narrative and chronology of the first centuries of Islam, though readers should also be aware that some of its points have been subject to vigorous debates and skepticism among historians.⁹ It is commonly thought that Muḥammad was born in or about 570 CE in the town of Mecca in the western Arabian region of the Ḥijāz. From around 610, Muḥammad developed a conviction that he had been specially selected by God and began to gather a small group of followers.¹⁰ At intervals, he recited passages that, he said, were a revelation from God and formed a corpus called the Qurʾan, and which gave confidence and guidance to his followers. Facing opposition in Mecca, in 622 Muḥammad formed a new community in Medina – the moment that traditionally marks the

⁸ Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period*, 4.

⁹ Regarding what follows, see esp. Chase F. Robinson, “The Rise of Islam,” in *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 1, *The Formation of the Islamic World, Sixth to Eleventh Centuries*, edited by Chase F. Robinson, 173–225 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), and Elton L. Daniel, “The Islamic East,” in the same volume, 448–505 (he treats Iran’s conversion on pp. 463–6).

¹⁰ As an example of skepticism, see Lawrence I. Conrad’s arguments regarding these dates; “Abraha and Muḥammad: Some Observations Apropos of Chronology and Literary Topoi in the Early Arabic Historical Tradition,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 50, no. 2 (1987): 225–40.

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beginning of the Islamic (hijri) calendar. Over the second half of the 620s, he gained the support of many Arab tribal groups as he consolidated his authority in Medina and then fixed his attention on Mecca, which he conquered about two and a half years before his death in 11 AH/632 CE. His followers were known collectively as companions (*ṣaḥāba*) and were divided into two groups: the Muhājirūn (emigrants from Mecca) and the Anṣār (helpers), those Medinans who supported him. After Muḥammad's death the Muslims engaged in military campaigns so extensive that, within twenty years, they had brought down the Sasanian Empire, which stretched from Iraq to Marw in modern Turkmenistan. Arabs settled in cities such as Hamadhān, Rayy, and Nīshāpūr, building their own quarters with palaces, mosques, and gardens. Several former villages, such as Qum, became cities as a result of such settlement, but many territories, protected by mountains and deserts, remained beyond the reach of the Arabs' armies.¹¹ The Byzantine Empire, meanwhile, had controlled the eastern remnants of the Roman Empire, but Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and North Africa fell quickly to the Arabs, with the net result that the Arabs acquired control over approximately half of the former territory of Byzantium.

In the emerging empire, after the first four successors to Muḥammad rule passed down along dynastic lines, first among the Umayyads in Syria (r. 41–132/661–750), and after 132/750, among the Iraq-based 'Abbasids, who descended from the Prophet's uncle, 'Abbās. The early 'Abbasid period is often depicted as a golden age (as in the stories from the *Arabian Nights*), when caliphs ruled with the assistance of their able Persian viziers. Yet for all its strengths, by the second half of the third/ninth century, the 'Abbasid state had begun to show weakness. In Baghdad, the caliphs subsequently fell under the control of Buyid (r. 334–447/945–1055) and Seljuk (447–547/1055–1152) amirs and sultans, the Buyids hailing from the Caspian region of Daylam and the Seljuks from the steppes north of the Caspian and Aral seas. While the caliphs retained nominal sovereignty, Iran and the central and eastern stretches of the empire came under the rule of these de facto rulers, as well as of other dynasties who at various times controlled portions of the 'Abbasid realm: the Samanids (204–395/819–1005), the Saffarids (247–393/861–1003),

¹¹ On the persistence of belief systems in rural Iran after the conquests, see now Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

and the Ghaznavids (366–582/977–1186), to name but three.¹² While our earliest extant narrative sources were written in ‘Abbasid Iraq at the height of its glory through the first half of the third/ninth century, a real literary outpouring took place later, often exhibiting different perspectives, when the caliphs were weak and Iranian and Central Asian rulers patronized scholarship and learning. Throughout the period, Arabic functioned as the language of elites much as Latin did in the premodern West. Even local Iranian histories of the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries, for example, tended to be written in Arabic (though in some cases they were later translated into Persian).

Coins give a sense of the cultural confidence and political will of Iranians from the mid-fourth/tenth century onward. The Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 65–86/685–705) and his successors had made sure that Arabic epigraphy distinguished the caliphate’s gold and silver coins from those of its predecessors and current neighbors. However, semi-independent or autonomous governors, such as the Buyids, struck coins with their personal names, which were often of ancient Persian derivation.¹³ When Aḥmad b. Buwayh (d. 355/967) became commander of the caliph’s armies in 334/945, he quickly usurped the caliph’s authority: he and his Buyid successors adopted lofty titles, including *shāhān-shāh* (“king of kings”); had their names read out in the sermon (*khuṭba*) of the weekly communal prayer, traditionally a caliphal prerogative; and inscribed their names on coins. The Buyids drew on the iconography of earlier days and reemployed the Pahlavi script in coins minted and presented to dignitaries on special occasions across their domains.¹⁴ The ‘Abbasids could

¹² There had been Iranian “statelets” throughout the early Islamic period, but these had existed on the fringes of the empire, in territories that were hard to reach and offered little material reward to the ‘Abbasid state. For a useful summary of this situation, see Hugh Kennedy, “Survival of Iranian-ness,” in *The Idea of Iran*, vol. 4, *The Rise of Islam*, ed. Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis and Sarah Stewart, 13–29 (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009).

¹³ Regarding the extensive use of Persian names, see esp. Vladimir N. Nastich, “Persian Legends on Islamic Coins: From Traditional Arabic to the Challenge of Leadership,” in *The 2nd Simone Assemani Symposium on Islamic Coins*, ed. Bruno Callagher and Arianna D’Ottone, 165–90 (Trieste: Edizioni Università di Trieste, 2010).

¹⁴ Regarding the Buyids, see esp. Mehdi Bahrami, “A Gold Medal in the Freer Gallery of Art,” in *Archaeologica Orientalia in Memoriam Ernst Herzfeld*, ed. George C. Miles, 5–21 (Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1952); Wilferd Madelung, “The Assumption of the Title Shāhānshāh by the Buyids and ‘the Reign of the Daylam (*Dawlat al-Daylam*),” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 28, no. 2 (1969): 84–108; John J. Donohue, “Three Buyayhid Inscriptions,” *Arabica* 20, no. 1 (1973): 74–80 and idem, *The Buyayhid*

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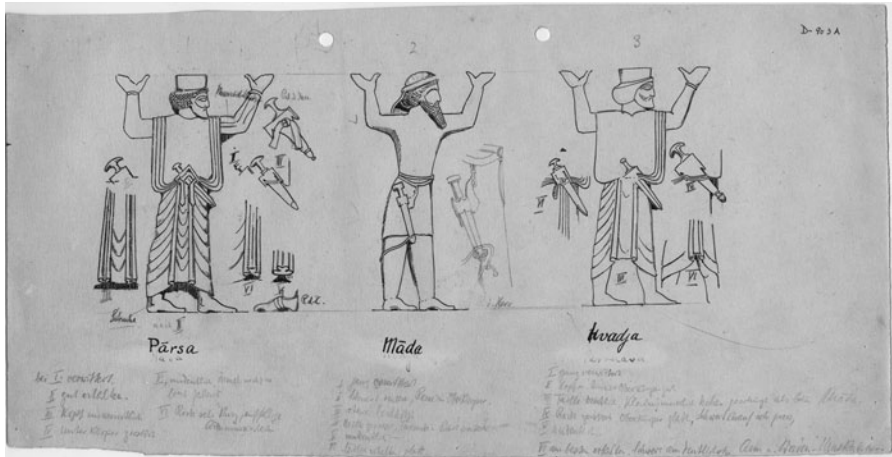


FIGURE 0.2. Persepolis (Iran), Throne Hall, standing figures drawn from rock reliefs depicting representatives of the nations of the Empire “supporting the throne,” 1903–1936. Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Gift of Ernst Herzfeld, 1946. Drawing by Ernst Herzfeld (D-903a).

do little as pre-Islamic symbols such as Sasanian winged crowns entered the larger currency system, although there were protests. The great jurist and caliphal adviser al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058), for example, reportedly once declared a legal opinion (*fatwā*) against the Buyid ruler Jalāl al-Dawla, who in 429/1037–8 demanded from the reigning caliph, al-Qā’im (r. 422–67/1031–75), the right to the Arabic title *malik al-mulūk* (“king of kings”).¹⁵

The term “Persia” was used in Achaemenid (559–330 BCE) and Sasanian (224–651 CE) times to refer both to the ethnic homeland of a “Persian” ethnic group in southwestern Iran and to the vast lands under the imperial control and cultural influence of this people following its

Dynasty in Iraq, 334H./945 to 403H./1012: Shaping Institutions for the Future (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Luke Treadwell, *Buyid Coinage: A Die Corpus (322–445 A.H.)* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum Oxford, 2001), xv–xvii; and Roy Parviz Mottahedeh, “The Idea of Iran in the Buyid Dominions,” in *The Idea of Iran*, vol. 5, *Early Islamic Iran*, ed. Edmund Herzig and Sarah Stewart, 153–60 (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012).

¹⁵ Al-Māwardī declared the fatwa in 429/1037–8; see ‘Izz al-Dīn b. al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-ta’rīkh*, ed. C. J. Tornberg, 15 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1851–76), 9:312–13; also, C. Brockelmann, “al-Māwardī,” in *IE²* and K. V. Zetterstéen, “Djalal al-Dawla,” in *IE²*. Ibn al-Athīr’s citation of the title as *malik al-mulūk* rather than *shāhān-shāh* (as stated by Brockelmann) is noteworthy.

dispersal.¹⁶ Scholars have traced the ambiguous usage of the geographical term “Persia” in early Islam to this prior, pre-Islamic ambiguity.¹⁷ In early Arabic sources, one can thus find the term *Fārs/Fāris* applied both in the narrow sense to a specific province, particularly by geographers, and in wider senses to refer to a territory that includes the province but exceeds it. Likewise, the term *ahl Fārs/Fāris* (or sometimes just *Fāris*) may denote either a “Persian” people sharing a culture and a sense of historical community, in general, or the people of the province of Persia in particular, whereas the much more common term *al-Furs* most often refers to a people not limited to a province.¹⁸ By contrast, the idea of Iran (Middle Persian, *Ērān*) has quite a different sense and history, and the term “Iran” had only limited usage in the period of this study. In the late 1980s, Gherardo Gnoli initiated reconsideration of this term and its associations with the argument that a notion of Iran reached a point of clarity only at the beginning of the Sasanian period, when it was part of a program that included among its elements an appeal to Achaemenid origins.¹⁹ Accordingly, the Sasanians introduced the Middle Persian title of *shāhān-shāh Ērān* and invented the idea of *Ērān-shahr*, the “domain of the Iranians,” to refer to their realm; the term was subsequently used as part of state propaganda.²⁰ Sasanian titles made extensive use of the name

¹⁶ The “Persian” rulers of both the Achaemenid and the Sasanian empires established imperial centers outside of Fārs, including Susa (Achaemenids) and Ctesiphon (Sasanians).

¹⁷ “The confusion between the two senses of the word was continuous, fueled by the Greeks who used the name Persai to designate the entire empire. It lasted through the centuries of Arab domination, as Fārs, the term used by Muslims, was merely the Arabicized version of the initial name.” Xavier de Planhol, “Fārs i. Geography,” in *Elr*. Cf. David Morgan, *Medieval Persia, 1040–1797* (London: Longman, 1988), 1–2, and Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), 1:4–5.

¹⁸ See, e.g., Abū al-Ḥasan al-Mas‘ūdī, *Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa-l-ishrāf*, ed. Michael J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1893), 77–8, where al-Mas‘ūdī includes in the land of the Persians Fārs as a province (quite far down his list), as well as other regions and towns, including Nishāpūr, Herat, and Marw in Khurāsān. Al-Mas‘ūdī describes seven original nations (*umam*), including the Persians, *al-Furs*. The term *al-‘Ajām* is sometimes also used synonymously with “Persians”; see C. E. Bosworth, “‘Ajām,” in *Elr*, and Jan Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their History from the Assyrians to the Umayyads* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 24–8. Writers also appear to use the term *al-‘Ajām* to avoid the ethnic sense of “Persians” (a good example being Abū Ḥanīfa al-Dīnawarī, d. ca. 281 or 282/894–5, in his *al-Akhhbār al-ṭiwāl*, discussed in Chapters 3 and 4).

¹⁹ Gherardo Gnoli, *The Idea of Iran: An Essay on Its Origin* (Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1989), 178.

²⁰ Gnoli argues that “This new title had a very important value insofar as, in its adoption by Ardaxšīr and his successors, we can actually detect the birth of the very idea of Iran in

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Ērān, and it was also used as part of personal names.²¹ Since Gnoli (and, indeed, before him as well), many scholars both inside and outside of Iran have undertaken studies that consider the meaning and significance of “Iran” as a focus of “national” loyalties from Sasanian on through to modern times. As with many studies of other, modern nationalities, opinions are deeply divided, with some scholars viewing identification with Iran as reaching back into the distant primordial Avestan, Achaemenid, or Sasanian past, while others argue for the modernity of Iranian national sentiment.²²

In contrast to the Sasanian period, and at variance with the situation today, we find early Islam to be the era of Persia and Persians.²³ Muslims

its political, cultural and religious meaning. He who coined that title wanted to refer to the *arya* and Zoroastrian tradition so as to cement his politics and to differentiate them from those of his hated predecessors.” Gnoli describes *Ērān-shahr* as “something new, though in the guise of a venerable tradition,” and invokes Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger’s notion of the “invention” of tradition. Gnoli, *Idea of Iran*, 138, 139, and 177; Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

²¹ Gnoli, *Idea of Iran*, 130. Cf. Arthur Christensen, *L’Iran sous les Sassanides* (Copenhagen: Levin & Munksgaard, 1936), esp. 108ff., 214–15, 416, and 513ff.

²² The bibliography on this subject is extensive; see especially Mostafa Vaziri, *Iran as Imagined Nation: The Construction of National Identity* (New York: Paragon House, 1993); Afshin Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power, and the State, 1870–1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008); Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, “Historiography and Crafting Iranian National Identity,” in *Iran in the 20th Century: Historiography and Political Culture*, ed. Touraj Atabaki, 5–21 (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), and in the same volume, Afshin Marashi, “The Nation’s Poet: Ferdowsi and the Iranian National Imagination,” 93–111; and Abbas Amanat and Farzin Vajdani, *Iran Facing Others: Identity Boundaries in a Historical Perspective* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). See also the series published by I. B. Tauris in association with the London Middle East Institute at SOAS and the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford, *The Idea of Iran*, including vol. 4, *The Rise of Islam*, ed. Curtis and Stewart (2009), and vol. 5, *Early Islamic Iran*, ed. Herzig and Stewart (2012). Regarding *Ērān* as a focus for Zoroastrian religious loyalties in the Sasanian period, see vol. 3, *The Sasanian Era*, ed. Curtis and Stewart, and especially the chapter by Shaul Shaked, “Religion in the Late Sasanian Period: Eran, Aneran, and Other Religious Designations,” pp. 103–17.

²³ A strain of recent scholarship relating to Iran has sought to limit strictly the size of the social group called Persians in early Islam, with the argument that early Muslim sources, when they refer to *al-Furs*, err by confusing the people of a part of Iran, that is, Fārs, for the entirety of the Iranian population. See, for example, Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation*, 8–9. Considering that early Muslims, including Iranians, themselves used the term “Persians,” such scholarship risks favoring a hypostatized notion of Iranians. One can refer to Iranians, but with the acknowledgment that this was not the primary category employed in early Muslim sources. For the term “Iran” in later centuries, however, see esp. Dorothea Krawulsky, *Īrān, das Reich der Īlhāne: Eine topographisch-historische Studie* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert, 1978), and Krawulsky, “Zur Wiederbelebung des Begriffes ‘Īrān’ zur Ilkhānezit,” in *Mongolen und*