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978-1-107-01879-2 - The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism

Patricia Crone

Excerpt

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## I

**Introduction**

## THE ARAB CONQUEST

In the early seventh century Iran was overrun by Arab invaders who inflicted two crushing defeats on its ruler, Yazdegerd, at Qādisiyya in 16/37 and at Nihāwand in 21/642. The first victory secured them Iraq, then part of the Sasanian empire and the site of its capital, Ctesiphon (Arabic al-Madā'in); the second victory secured them the plateau. The collapse of the Sasanian empire was so swift that a fair number of modern historians have thought that the empire must have been corrupt, practically waiting to fall. It collapsed, we are told, because of the sharp difference between the classes and lack of cooperation between them, the prevalent tendency to fatalism, the numerous heterodoxies, the cupidity and corruption of the priests and their interference in politics, the weaknesses of the government and the exhaustion due to Khusraw II's aimless wars, and, in the final analysis, the material and spiritual bankruptcy of the ruling class.<sup>1</sup>

In actual fact, the key factor in the inability of the Sasanians to survive the Arab onslaught seems to have been the location of their capital. There cannot of course be much doubt that both they and the Byzantines were in a poor state after their twenty-year war, and the Sasanians, who had lost that war, were probably in the worse state of the two; but the Byzantines were equally incapable of defeating the Arabs in battle. They also suffered two decisive defeats, one at Ajnādayn in 13/634 and the other at Yarmūk in 15/636. Yet the Byzantine empire survived. The key difference is that the Byzantine capital was not located in Syria. As Ibn Khaldūn explained, you can nibble at the outlying provinces of an empire without thereby causing it to collapse, but if it loses its capital it is unlikely to survive, however

<sup>1</sup> Thus for example Zarrīnkūb, 'Arab Conquest of Iran', 17; Frye, 'Parthian and Sasanian History', 21; Bahrāmī, *Tārīkh-i Īrān*, 198f.

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many of its provinces remain to be conquered. ‘When the Muslims took al-Madā’in [Ctesiphon], the whole Persian empire dissolved, and the outlying provinces which remained in Yazdegerd’s hand were of no avail to him. By contrast, the centre of the Byzantine state was in Constantinople . . . the loss of Syria did not harm them.’<sup>2</sup> The Arabs proceeded to overrun Anatolia without encountering much resistance: every year they invaded, and every year they went back again without keeping their gains. What defeated them there was not the greater social cohesion, religious unity, material welfare, or spiritual health of the Byzantines, but simply the mountainous climate, which would have been a major problem for them in Iran as well if they had not conquered the capital first. Neither the Iranian nor the Anatolian plateau was a region they could conquer piecemeal. However many gains they made in Anatolia, the Byzantine state was still intact, leaving them with the problem of how to keep what they had won when the campaigning season was over. They could try to hang on to their gains by wintering there, but garrisons in Anatolia were cut off from Syria when snow blocked the passes in the Taurus mountains, so that they were left to fend for themselves in a bitterly cold and hostile land. Unlike the Turks, who came from Central Asia, they could not simply move in and occupy the land by settling on it with their families and animals. Both the Arabs and their animals were adapted to hot desert conditions, and their animals died during the Anatolian winters. The only way they could gain permanent control of Anatolia was by destroying the Byzantine empire altogether – that is, by conquering the capital; and this they could not do because the location of Constantinople made it exceptionally difficult to take. If the Sasanian capital had been in Rayy or Nīshāpūr, the Arabs might have found themselves similarly incapable of making permanent gains in the Persian plateau, however easily they could overrun it every year, for the Persian plateau was an equally inhospitable environment to them. But as it was, the very first defeat they inflicted on the Sasanians secured them the capital, and so, as Ibn Khaldūn said, the Persian empire was doomed. Having lost their administrative machinery, their treasury, and most of their personnel, the Sasanians had trouble coordinating the resistance to the invaders. They were now homeless, and as their problems mounted their alliance with the great aristocratic families who controlled the plateau unravelled.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, III, 7 (ed. Beirut, 179; tr. Rosenthal, I, 329; tr. Cheddadi, 428).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Pourshariati, *Decline*.

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Yazdegerd fled to Iṣfahān, where it was put to him that he should go to Ṭabaristān, an inaccessible mountainous area on the Caspian coast not unlike the Leon and Asturias in which the Christian kings of the Iberian peninsula were to hold out. He decided against it. He would not necessarily have fared any better by going there, for Ṭabaristān did not retain its autonomy for more than a century, and there was no equivalent of Frankish Gaul, let alone the whole of Christian Europe, to the north of it, so that it is hard to imagine an eventual Reconquista from there. Yazdegerd proceeded eastwards via Kerman and Sīstān to Khurāsān, no doubt in the hope of repeating the feat of his ancestor Kavadh, who had regained his throne with Hephtalite help in 498 after having been deposed by his own nobility.<sup>4</sup> Yazdegerd sent appeals for help to the Turkish *khāqān*, the king of Sogdīa, and the emperor of China, but he alienated the very men from whom he needed help with his haughty behaviour, and in 651 he was killed by a miller at Marw. The royal family and a number of Iranian nobles fled eastwards, and eventually reached China.<sup>5</sup>

China was not quite so distant a place in those days as one might think. It had come within the purview of the Sasanians close to two centuries before the Arab conquests thanks to its pursuit of an expansionist policy in Central Asia, and there had been a fair number of diplomatic exchanges between the two empires. Yazdegerd II and the emperor of the Wei dynasty had exchanged delegates in 455.<sup>6</sup> Kavadh had sent another embassy which reached China between 518 and 520, apparently bringing Zoroastrianism along with it: the empress dowager Ling is said to have been impressed by this religion.<sup>7</sup> Khusraw I sent two embassies which arrived in 553 and 555 respectively, and the Chinese responded by sending several, one of them to Khusraw II; they also compiled a report on Po-szu (Persia) to acquaint themselves with Persian affairs.<sup>8</sup> By then there was a strong Iranian presence in China, mainly thanks to the Sogdians who dominated the overland trade between Iran and China, and who played a prominent role in its internal trade as well.<sup>9</sup> Labelled Hu (Westerners) by the Chinese, they too

<sup>4</sup> BF, 315; cf. Christensen, *Iran*, 349f.

<sup>5</sup> Tab. i, 2683, 2690ff. His envoys to China reached Changan in 647 (Shinji, 'Zoroastrian Kingdoms', 44); BF, 315f.

<sup>6</sup> Harmatta, 'Inscription', 370f.

<sup>7</sup> Harmatta, 'Inscription', 371; Leslie, 'Persian Temples in T'ang China', 288f. (here dated to between 516 and 519).

<sup>8</sup> Harmatta, 'Inscription', 372f.

<sup>9</sup> De la Vaissière, *Marchands sogdiens*, 109ff.; See also de la Vaissière and Trombert, 'Des Chinois et des Hu'.

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had brought their 'Heaven-God' with them. This deity had been exempted from a proscription of heretical cults by about 500, and was approved again in the 570s, though not for the Chinese, who were forbidden to use the Hu places of worship. A bureau for the cultic affairs of the Hu was set up, which lasted, with some reduction in 713f., down to 845.<sup>10</sup> The official history of the Tang reports that one thousand dogs picked the bones of the dead clean in the outskirts of Taiyuan, meaning where the Zoroastrians exposed their dead.<sup>11</sup> The Chinese also wrote several accounts, to which we shall come back, of the religious beliefs and behaviour of the Hu, and made some artistic representations of them.<sup>12</sup>

Yazdegerd III had sent an envoy to ask for Chinese help against the invaders in 638, after his first defeat against the Arabs; but nothing seems to have come of it.<sup>13</sup> His son Peroz settled among the Turks, took a local wife, and received troops from the king of Ṭukhāristān (ancient Bactria); and in 661 he established himself with Chinese help as king of Po-szu (Persia) in a place which the Chinese called Jiling (Chi-ling) and which is assumed to be Zaranj in Sīstān.<sup>14</sup> His campaigns during these years are reflected in Muslim sources which mention revolts in Zaranj, Balkh, Bādghīs, Herat, and Būshanj, and also in Khurāsān, during the First Civil War, in the reigns of 'Alī (35–40/656–61) and Mu'āwiya (41–60/661–80).<sup>15</sup> They do not remember Peroz himself, but they tell us that when 'Alī's newly appointed governor of Khurāsān, Khulayd b. Ka's, reached Nīshāpūr, he heard that governors of the Sasanian king (*ummāl Kisrā*) had come to Khurāsān from Kābul and that the Khurāsānīs had rebelled.<sup>16</sup> Peroz's comeback cannot have been entirely insignificant then, but the entire region was reconquered in the reign of Mu'āwiya. Peroz went to Changan, the capital of the Tang empire, where they gave him a

<sup>10</sup> Eichhorn, 'Materialen', 533, 535f.

<sup>11</sup> Hansen, 'New Work on the Sogdians', 157; cf. Grenet, *Pratiques funéraires*, 227.

<sup>12</sup> See Chapter 5; Mahler, *Westerners among the Figurines of the Tang Dynasty*.

<sup>13</sup> Chavannes, *Documents*, 172; Harmatta, 'Inscription', 373; Shinji, 'Zoroastrian Kingdoms', 44 (the embassy arrived in 639).

<sup>14</sup> BF, 316.-2; Chavannes, *Documents*, 172, 257; Harmatta, 'Inscription', 373f.; Shinji, 'Zoroastrian Kingdoms', 45 (here dated 661); cf. the confused Zoroastrian recollection of his activities in *GrBd*, 33, 21: Yazdegerd's son brought a large army to India, but died before he reached Khurāsān.

<sup>15</sup> BF, 395, 408.ult., 409.11; Tab. i, 3350, 3389f.

<sup>16</sup> Naṣr b. Muzāḥim, *Waq'at Šiffin*, 12; cf. Dīnawarī, 163, where it is a daughter of Kisrā who had come from Kābul. According to *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Nīshāpūr', Peroz was reputed to have lived for a while at Nīshāpūr, but no source is given.

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consolation prize in the form of a grandiose title and permitted him to build a fire-temple in 677.<sup>17</sup>

Peroz had a son called Ni-li-shih, probably Narsai. This son went to Central Asia in 679, accompanied by a Chinese ‘Ambassador for Pacifying the Arab States’, and stayed for twenty years in Ṭukhāristān without accomplishing anything at all. Eventually he returned to Changan to receive the same consolation prize.<sup>18</sup> The Arabs seem to have confused him with Peroz himself.<sup>19</sup> Later they record the appearance of Peroz’s grandson, Khusraw, among the Turks at Kamarja in 110/728f.: he told them that he had come to restore his kingdom. But in 730 and 737 the same Khusraw, if Harmatta is right, paid his respects at the Chinese imperial court, suggesting that he too ended up with a consolation prize in Changan. This was the last attempt at a comeback by the royal family.<sup>20</sup>

Back in Iran, someone who called himself king of Persia sent embassies to China in 722 and 732, and in 744 and 746 the Chinese received envoys from two rulers of Ṭabaristān on behalf of eight kingdoms on the Caspian coast.<sup>21</sup> They had left it a bit late, for in 751 the Chinese themselves were defeated by the Muslims at Talas, and in 755 the Tang empire was shaken to its foundations by the revolt of An-Lushan, or Rokhshan the Bukharan as we might call him, a Sogdian general in the Chinese army.<sup>22</sup> It has been conjectured that some of the refugees from the Sasanian empire were recruited into an auxiliary corps formed to combat him,<sup>23</sup> so that Iranians briefly played a major role in both the military and commercial affairs of China. But though yet another embassy from Ṭabaristān arrived in 755, the ‘Black Garment Arabs’ – i.e., the ‘Abbāsids – soon annexed Ṭabaristān,<sup>24</sup> and China was now definitely out of action. In 845 there was a backlash against foreigners in China: all foreign religions were

<sup>17</sup> Shinji, ‘Zoroastrian Kingdoms’, 45; Eichhorn, ‘Materialen’, 537; cf. Leslie, ‘Persian Temples in T’ang China’, 286, 289, where this temple is taken to have been Nestorian; Compareti, ‘Last Sasanians in China’, 206ff.

<sup>18</sup> Chavannes, *Documents*, 173, 258; Harmatta, ‘Inscription’, 375; Shinji, ‘Zoroastrian Kingdoms’, 45; Compareti, ‘Last Sasanians in China’, 209f.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Ibn al-Faqih, 209/417, from Ibn al-Kalbī: Qutayba defeated Firūz b. Yazdajird and took his daughter, who became the mother of Yazid III.

<sup>20</sup> Tab. ii, 1518; cf. Gibb, *Arab Conquests in Central Asia*, 71; Harmatta, ‘Inscription’, 375; Compareti, ‘Last Sasanians in China’, 210f.

<sup>21</sup> Chavannes, *Documents*, 258; Chavannes, *Notes additionnelles*, 70, 76f.; Shinji, ‘Zoroastrian Kingdoms’, 29ff.

<sup>22</sup> See *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. ‘Ṭarāz’; Karev, ‘Politique d’Abū Muslim’, 11ff.; Pulleyblank, *Rebellion of An Lu-Shan*, 10ff.

<sup>23</sup> Harmatta, ‘Inscription’, 369.

<sup>24</sup> Chavannes, *Notes additionnelles*, 91f.; Shinji, ‘Zoroastrian Kingdoms’, 29.

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proscribed, though the Iranians seem to have kept at least some of their fire-temples.<sup>25</sup> Thirty years thereafter, in 872 or 874, an Iranian aristocrat of the Sūrēn clan buried his daughter and/or wife near Changan and placed a bilingual inscription in Chinese and Middle Persian over her grave. The inscription says that he was a commander in the ‘Left Divine Strategy Army’ and that his wife and/or daughter had died at the age of twenty-six.<sup>26</sup> This is the last we hear of the refugees in China.

Back in Iran there had been plenty of resistance to the Arabs. The same places had to be conquered again and again, having ‘turned traitors’ (*ghadarū*) or been ‘unfaithful’ (*kafarū*) or ‘broken their treaty’ (*naqaḍū*), as the Muslim sources laconically inform us. Some places seem to have capitulated merely to buy time: Hamadhān, for example, rebelled within a year of having surrendered.<sup>27</sup> In Fārs, the home province of the Sasanians, a certain Māhāk concluded a treaty with the Arabs at Iṣṭakhr in 27/647f., or 28/648f., but broke it again in 29/649f., when the Iṣṭakhrīs killed their fiscal governor. The twenty-five-year-old governor of Basra, ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Āmir, who was laying siege to the still unsubdued Jūr at the time, completed the conquest of Jūr and moved back to reconquer Iṣṭakhr, apparently in 30/650f. or 31/651f.<sup>28</sup> Deeming the lives of all the inhabitants forfeit, he killed ‘forty thousand’ or ‘a hundred thousand’, or in other words a huge number, and ‘annihilated most of the aristocracy and noble cavalry’ (*ahl al-buyūtāt wa-wujūh al-asāwira*).<sup>29</sup> None the less, the inhabitants of Iṣṭakhr rebelled again during the caliphate of ‘Alī.<sup>30</sup> According to the Armenian historian customarily called Sebeos the people of Media – i.e., Jibāl – also rebelled about that time, more precisely in 654. They killed the tax collectors of the Arabs and fled to their mountain fortresses, where the Arabs were unable to dislodge them; the Arabs had been crushing the people of Jibāl with fiscal impositions, he says; they would take a man (as a slave) for every dirham that the locals could not pay, and thus ‘they ruined the cavalry and the nobility of the country’. It was for this reason, he says, that the Medians resolved that death was better than servitude and began

<sup>25</sup> Eichhorn, ‘Materialen’, 538ff.

<sup>26</sup> Harmatta, ‘Inscription’, 363ff.; Humbach, ‘Pahlavi–Chinesischen Bilingue’.

<sup>27</sup> See Fragner, *Hamadhān*, 21ff.

<sup>28</sup> In Ibn al-Balkhī, *Fārsnāma*, 116, Jūr is taken in 30, but Iṣṭakhr is only reconquered in 32. Since the first Arab-Sasanian coin from Iṣṭakhr was struck in 31, the reconquest must have taken place earlier (cf. Daryaei, ‘Collapse’, 17).

<sup>29</sup> BF, 315, 389f. (with the phrase); Tab. i, 2830 (cf. 2828 for Ibn ‘Āmir’s age); Ibn al-Balkhī, *Fārsnāma*, 116.

<sup>30</sup> BF, 390.4; Ibn al-Balkhī, *Fārsnāma*, 117.

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to recruit and organise troops.<sup>31</sup> Sebeos may be confusing a revolt of mountaineers who fled to inaccessible mountain fortresses with that of the Iṣṭakhrīs, whose cavalry and nobility were annihilated; or perhaps complaints about the ruin of the nobility and cavalry had become a refrain. At all events, there can be no doubt that there was massive resistance. But it was all in vain. The Persian empire could not be saved. ‘O men, see how Persia has been ruined and its inhabitants humiliated’, as the Arab poet al-Nābigha al-Ja’dī (d. c. 70/690) said in illustration of the ephemeral nature of everything: ‘they have become slaves who pasture your sheep, as if their kingdom was a dream.’<sup>32</sup>

## IRAN UNDER THE UMAYYADS

Thereafter a ghostly silence descends on the Persian plateau. In so far as we encounter Iranians in the next hundred years it is mostly in Iraq, where the Arabs had founded two garrison cities and where the bulk of the surviving sources for early Islamic history were compiled; but even there the sightings are few and far between. Like other non-Arabs the Iranians had to enter the Muslim community to acquire visibility.

It was overwhelmingly as slaves and freedmen that they did so. It was standard practice in antiquity to enslave captives taken in war. The Arabs followed that practice, and both Muslim and non-Muslim sources give us to understand that the numbers they took were very large indeed. We are not usually offered any figures, but two Greek inscriptions relating to the Arab invasions of Cyprus in the 650s claim that 120,000 captives were carried off in the first invasion and about 50,000 in the second.<sup>33</sup> We are hardly to take these figures at face value. The Romans are said to have enslaved 55,000 captives after their destruction of Carthage in 146 BC, and to have taken 100,000 captives in Severus’ war against the Parthians in 198 AD;<sup>34</sup> it seems unlikely that the Arabs should have taken about the same number in two not particularly important campaigns in Cyprus. But the figures do convey a sense of the magnitudes involved. The Islamic tradition gives the total number of fighting men in an Arab garrison city about that time as 30,000 to 60,000, the most common figure being the stereotypical 40,000, encountered in connection with Kufa,

<sup>31</sup> Sebeos, tr. Macler, 143, tr. Thomson, ch. 51 (where ‘annihilated’ is replaced by ‘abolished’), 277 (for the date).

<sup>32</sup> al-Nābigha al-Ja’dī, *Dīwān*, 8:12f.

<sup>33</sup> Feissel, ‘Bulletin épigraphique’, 38of.; de Gagniers and Tam Tihn, *Soloi*, I, 116ff.

<sup>34</sup> Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, 33.

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Basra, and Fustāt alike.<sup>35</sup> (Marw, conquered in 31/651, still only had a small garrison, stereotypically set at 4,000.)<sup>36</sup> Again, we are not to take the figures at face value, but if for the sake of argument we do, and assume four dependants for each combatant, the total population of an Arab garrison city in those early days will have been between 120,000 and 240,000. The Greek inscriptions estimate the yield of the two Cyprus campaigns at 170,000, exceeding or approaching the total population of an entire Arab garrison city at the time. There were only three garrison cities and four military districts in Syria in the 650s; and vastly many more captives were taken in the Fertile Crescent and Iran than on Cyprus. Though there was further emigration from Arabia in the early Umayyad period, when Marw became a substantial garrison city, Qayrawān was founded, and a fifth military district was established in Syria, there can be no doubt that the Arabs were a very small minority in the non-Arab Near East. Unreliable though the figures are, they graphically illustrate the fact that the Arabs must soon have been outnumbered by non-Arabs even in their own settlements.

Slaves were generally used in the house, where they did all the work nowadays done or facilitated by machines, and where they serviced the sexual needs of their masters too. Outside the home they supplied skilled labour as scribes, copyists and teachers, and as craftsmen and traders earning money for themselves and their masters, as well as unskilled labour of diverse kinds (again including sexual services); there was little agricultural slavery, no galley slavery, and no slavery for the exploitation of mines that we know of. Since most forms of slavery involved personal human contact with Muslims, most slaves ended up by adopting the religion of their captors, with momentous consequences for the latter. It was not just as Arabs that the conquerors were rapidly outnumbered in their own settlements, it was as Muslims too.

Slaves were often manumitted. It is impossible to say with what frequency (slavery is one of the most under-studied topics of early Islamic history), but freedmen abound in the sources, and the Arabs accepted those of them who had converted as full members of their own polity. The freedman did suffer some disabilities vis-à-vis his manumitter, whose client (*mawlā*) he became, but the effects of this were largely

<sup>35</sup> BA, IVa, 190.17 (Basra on the arrival of Ziyād); Tab. i, 2805.7; Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, 316 (Fustāt under Mu‘āwiya); *al-Imāma wa’l-siyāsa*, I, 144 (Basra under ‘Alī), 145 (Kufa under ‘Alī).

<sup>36</sup> *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. ‘Marw al-Shāhidjān’.



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limited to private law; in public law freedmen had the same status as their captors. Of course, whatever the law might say, there was massive prejudice against them.<sup>37</sup> Non-Arab freedmen were casually written off as slaves, awarded less pay in the army than their Arab peers, regarded as less valuable for purposes of blood-money and retaliation, and deemed utterly unacceptable in positions of authority such as prayer leaders, judges, governors, and generals, where their occasional appearance would be greeted with wild abuse. Free or freed, non-Arabs were deemed unsuitable as marriage partners for Arab women; aristocratic Arabs disliked the idea of giving daughters even to ‘half-breeds’ (sing. *hajin*), however elevated the fathers.<sup>38</sup> Stories regarding Arab prejudice against their non-Arab clients are legion. Treated as outsiders, the clients (*mawālī*) responded by congregating in their own streets, with their own separate mosques;<sup>39</sup> but they stopped short of forming their own separate Muslim community and, for all the prejudice against them, they rapidly acquired social and political importance. A mere forty years after the conquests, when the Arabs were fighting their Second Civil War, slaves and freedmen participated as soldiers on several sides and played a conspicuous part in the movement that took control of Kufa under the leadership of the Arab al-Mukhtār (66–7/685–7). The slaves and freedmen in this revolt were mostly Iranians captured in the course of Kufan campaigns in north-western Iran, and they spoke an Iranian language (‘Persian’ to al-Dīnawarī) among themselves.<sup>40</sup> Clients, again many of them Iranians, dominated the civilian sector of Muslim society which emerged after the Second Civil War, and they rose to influential political positions too, though they continued to remain subordinate to the Arabs in military and political affairs throughout the Umayyad period (41–132/661–750).<sup>41</sup>

As might be expected, their rapid rise to prominence was a source of anxiety to the Arabs, who watched their own society being transformed by outsiders and feared losing control of it, both politically and culturally. Patriarchal figures were credited with predictions that things would go wrong when the children of captives became numerous, or when they

<sup>37</sup> The classic study is Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien* (ed. and tr. Stern as *Muslim Studies*), I, ch. 3.

<sup>38</sup> Bashear, *Arabs and Others*, 37–40; Crone, ‘The Pay of Client Soldiers’; Crone, ‘Mawālī and the Prophet’s Family’, 17of.

<sup>39</sup> Tab. ii, 681.4, iii, 295.12; Dietrich, ‘Die Moscheen von Gurgān’, 8, 10.

<sup>40</sup> Tab. ii, 724.11; Dīnawarī, 302.7; cf. *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. ‘al-Mukhtār b. Abī ‘Ubayd’.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. ‘mawlā’.

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attained maturity.<sup>42</sup> The slaves who had once been Arab property would inherit the world, it was said; non-Arabs would ‘kill your fighting men and consume your income [*ḡay*’, lit. booty].<sup>43</sup> It might be better to kill nine out of ten captives than to have slaves, it was argued: ‘they will not remain loyal and they will embitter your lives’.<sup>44</sup> Clients responded with horror stories about Arab prejudice, crediting past Arab rulers with abortive plans to decimate their ranks, an idea occasionally mentioned in an applauding vein on the Arab side as well.<sup>45</sup> Free converts also became a source of anxiety. It would be the end of the religion when the Arameans became eloquent (in Arabic) and reached a status allowing them to acquire palaces in the provinces, it was said; the caliph ‘Umar reputedly wept on hearing that they had converted to Islam.<sup>46</sup> When al-Ḥajjāj (governor of Iraq, 75–95/694–713) built the new garrison city of Wāsiṭ in Iraq he is said to have cleared the area of Arameans and forbidden them entry into his new city, envisaged as a pure Arab enclave and bastion of colonial rule in Aramean-Iranian Iraq, though the people it was meant to keep out soon settled there as well.<sup>47</sup> Whatever the truth of this story (one out of many involving al-Ḥajjāj and *mawālī*), there is no doubt that the Umayyad regime sometimes tried to stem the tide of free converts, when it came.<sup>48</sup> But despite the advice to cut down on slavery, they never seem to have tried to limit the taking of captives or to exclude freedmen from membership of their community, so the flood of immigrants continued.

By the 120s/740s the Arabs were no longer the people that their grandfathers had been. Many apparent Arabs were actually children of mixed parentage – or not descendants of the Arab conquerors at all, but simply Muslim speakers of Arabic who tried to pass for Arabs, or who did not even try to hide their non-Arab descent.<sup>49</sup> Among the Syrian troops at al-Ahwāz in the 740s, for example, there was a Damascene soldier by the name of Hānī; he was a *mawlā* attached through his patron to a South Arabian tribe, and he married an Iranian woman by whom he fathered a son and a daughter. The daughter married a slave by the name of Faraj

<sup>42</sup> Sayf b. ‘Umar, *al-Ridda wa’l-futūḥ*, 18, no. 21; Abū Zur‘a, no. 1339; Bashear, *Arabs and Others*, 95.

<sup>43</sup> Bashear, *Arabs and Others*, 74, 103.

<sup>44</sup> Kister, ‘Land, Property and *Jihād*’, 289.

<sup>45</sup> Crone, ‘Mawālī and the Prophet’s Family’.

<sup>46</sup> Bashear, *Arabs and Others*, 80.

<sup>47</sup> Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, I, 275; Wāsiṭī, *Ta’rikh Wāsiṭ*, 46, no. 13; Ibn al-Faḡīḥ (ed. Hādī), 266; Yāqūt, IV, 886.2, s.v. ‘Wāsiṭ’.

<sup>48</sup> See below, pp. 13ff.

<sup>49</sup> Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, I, 133ff.