

# **BEGINNING THE PROCESS OF CONVERSION TO ISLAM**

Dr. Kersy Antia, Mar 20, 2020

A ghostly silence descended on Iran after the Arab conquest. The Iranians had to enter the Muslim community to acquire visibility. It was overwhelmingly as slaves and freedmen that they did so. It was the standard Arab practice to enslave captives taken in war. The numbers they took was very large indeed, though no figures were given by them. However, two Greek inscriptions about the Arab invasions of Cyprus in the 650's inform us that 120,000 captives were carried off in the first invasion and about 50,000 in the second one. 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 Sevrus' war against the Parthians in 198 AD; it seems unlikely that the Arabs should have taken about the same number in two not particularly important campaigns. 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. Even if these figures are inflated, they do not fail to convey the danger of life-long servitude suffered by the captives of war. It is not surprising therefore that ultimately they preferred to embrace Islam halfheartedly in order to avoid life-long slavery only to discover their plight as second-class citizens.