

Evidence of Zoroastrian Presence in Iran Long After Arab Invasion

Dr. Kersey Antia, November 11, 2017, revised December 28, 2018

As reported by Clifford Edmund Bosworth, there were many Zoroastrians residing in Fars in 815 A.D., since the Jizya, the capitation tax on non-Muslims “amounted to eighteen million dirhams, reflecting the numerousness in Fars of the Zoroastrians rather than of Jews and Christians.” (p. 136). Bosworth also reports that the Zoroastrians “retained a presence in Fars since the arrival of the Arabs in Sistan during the later part of the seventh century, as was indeed the case with adjoining provinces like Kirman, Quhistan and Ahurasan,” as indicated by “a rent payment for the land or premises for fire-temples.” He also reports that the Samanid governor in Sistan, Manshur bin Ishaq took refuge in the private home of a Zoroastrian when he was toppled from power in 912 A.D. (*The History of the Saffarids of Sistan and the Maliks of Nimruz*, Mazda Publishers, Costa Mesa, California and New York, 1994, pp. 294-5). Bosworth also reports “slaughtering of large numbers” of Zoroastrians in a rural district of Sistan, the valley of Hindaqanan near the Karkuya Gate quarter in February 1043 A.D. (p. 380).

Another evidence of the survival (as well as slaughter) of Zoroastrians in Sistan can be gathered from *Tarikh-i Sistan* which states that “Dihqans of the Magus” (Zoroastrians) were killed by the victorious army of Hulegaid in 1261 A.D.

An attack by Yaqub, the governor of Kirman, circa 867 A.D., on the mountain peaks of the Jabal Barez in eastern Kirman revealed that “the Jabal Bariz was only imperfectly Islamised and Zoroastrianism lingered on there.” Bosworth presents copious evidence for it. (p. 143). “Again on the evidence of the *Tarikh-i Sistan*,” reveals Bosworth, “Karkuy (probably the modern Karkushah) retained its importance as a holy site for the Zoroastrians of Sistan after the Arab conquest of the later seventh century (A.D.), with its sacred fire remaining intact there.” Relying on a source quoted by another historian, he maintains that “the sacred fire was still kept going in Il-Khanid's times” (the later thirteenth century). He also refers to “the ruins in Sistan of buildings believed to be DAKHMAS, or towers for exposing the dead and fire temples (p. 35) on the basis of testimony provided by G.P. Tate, in *Sistan, A Memoir on the History, Topography,*

ruins and people of the Country, Past, Part III, pp. 191-3, Calcutta, 1910-12.

Thus, it is obvious that Zoroastrians survived in Sistan (modern Afghanistan), Fars and surrounding areas long after the Arab invasion. It is quite plausible that had they known about procuring a safe and an easy refuge in India they would have forthrightly migrated there to avoid extinction of their race, but such a recourse seems to have been known only to those who had settled in India for long for trade and/or to those who somehow came to know about them. The evidence presented here also confirms Patricia Coon's thesis that there were many Zoroastrians resisting the Arab rule under the guise of various names such as Khurramites, as seen earlier.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE WORD YIMA FOR DUALISM

According to Mary Boyce, the Indian god Varuna is like the archetype of Ahuramazda. But Varuna has a "terrible form," beside a kindly one. He attracts as well as frightens worshippers. A very frequent prayer in the Vedas is about being "delivered from Varuna," for instance, Rig Veda, X.97, 16, etc.). Nevertheless, in Rig Veda a worshipper yearns: "When at last shall I be with Varuna?" Varuna is also assimilated with the Serpent Ahi and the Dragon Vritre. A more extensive description of this subject is presented by Mircea Eliade in *The Two and The One*, Harvill Press, London, 1965, pp. 91-98, but the above should suffice for our purpose. It is also noteworthy that Indra's evil adversary, Vritra, is his brother, begotten by his father, Tvashtri, which is quite reminiscent of the two Mainyus born as twins (Yima described in Yasa 30.3.) Moreover, with his Indo-Aryan background Zarathushtra must have been quite cognizant about the dual role of Varuna but as his urgent mission being removal of evil then plaguing his world and presenting a coherent theology or theodicy for it, the concept of Varuna for him turned into an all-good God, Ahura Mazda, along with Shenta Mainyu, Beneficent Spirit, who was perennially opposed by Angra Mainyu, Evil Spirit, thus ensuring complete polarity within Ahuramazda rather than like in Vishnu and urging his followers to opt for the good spirit by making the right choice. Indeed, he says, the Daevas, the evil spirits, did not choose right (Yasna 30.6), as some Vedic gods did. Even Ahura Mazda, the Supreme Being, makes the right choice as per the Gathas, thereby creating a paradigm of a constant battle against evil. Even so, such an attempt does

not completely obliterate the Indo-Aryan notion of duality inherent in Vedic gods such as evinced by the two Mainyus being Yima, twins, which however, is often explained away by dualists. Zurvanism may have been a response to reaffirm Zarathushtra's real intent, though a belief in the existence ever of a distinct Zurvanite sect is not plausible, as explained by me elsewhere. As Eliade rightly observes: "Whatever we think of the origin of Zervanism, one thing is certain: these fundamental doctrines have been thought out and elaborated by minds trained in theology and philosophy." (Ibid, p.83). Eliade provides more dualist beliefs, for example, Romanian beliefs in God and Satan being brother, the beliefs among the Bogomils that Christ and Satan are brother, Satan being the first born. Eliade posits that this belief among Bogomils "most probably derived from an Iranian source, since in the Zuvanite tradition also Ahriman was considered to be the first born." (Ibid, pp. 83-4). Indeed, long ago in 1956 I have detailed Iranian influences on the Bogomils. Such beliefs, observes Eliade, reproduces the exemplary tale of the consanguinity of Good and Evil." Eliade goes on providing more such examples (Ibid. pp. 84-91). It was only after Spenta Mainyu somehow came to represent Ahuramazda later on in history that cosmological dualism came to replace Zorathushtra's vision of ethical dualism.

Thus, although Zarathushtra's reform set him apart from the Indo-Aryan Vedic belief system, there would naturally be some traces of it left in his reform if they were congenial and not adverse to his own doctrines, such as the way he explains the two diametrically opposite spirits as Yima, twins. The reason he does not say anything about its implications was he saw the urgency to combat the rampant evil prevailing in his times and the need to remove it – Yasna 48.1, etc. Being a philosopher, the world's first one, he was not evidently at the time concerned as much about the origin of evil as about its complete eradication from the world and ensuring Freshokereti, renovation, of the world. This point is well brought out by my professor, A.R. Wadia, himself a philosopher, in his book on Zoroastrianism.

CONTINUITY OF IRANIAN CULTURE DESPITE THE ARAB RULE

Bosworth provides evidence for the survival of Zoroastrians in Nishapur in circa 993 A.D. when many of them were converted by the Karamiyyas. He quotes Maqdisi who "had many contacts with the Karamiyyah," and who

“was considerably exercised on how they should be considered,” but nevertheless “he came down firmly on placing them within the bounds of orthodoxy” (p. I-7), which is not in conformity with the recent opinion of Patricia Cohn and others, as already seen, who seem to have discovered more historical data about them.

THE CONSCIOUS OR UNCONSCIOUS ZOROASTRIAN'S PROCLIVITIES OF THE BUYIDS

Bosworth wonders “Why did the people of this obscure Caspian region, virtually unnoticed by earlier Islamic authorities, spring into such prominence in the 10th century? How did the region provide the manpower for such extensive military operations as those undertaken by the various Dailami military leaders?” He posits that very limited resources and opportunities for advancement led them to seek opportunity elsewhere. They served in the army in Egypt to the Eastern Iran which may be responsible for their political weakness as their manpower was rather limited to begin with.

Bosworth examined if any religious factors were behind their prominence and found that “the earlier Dailami condottieri retained older Iranian beliefs, which apparently survived in an inaccessible area like Dailam till the 8th century and beyond. At Hamadhan and Dinawar, his troops made a special point of massacring the Muslim religious classes and he himself dreamed of restoring the ancient Persian empire and religion, with himself as Shahanshah. Asfary, although originally in the service of the Samanids, was not a Muslim, and had embarked on a career of independent conquest in Tabaristan and northern Persia, revealed openly his anti-Muslim attitude; at Qazwin, he forbade the performance of the salat, demolished mosques and had the muezzin of the Friday mosque thrown down from his own minaret (*Muruc*, IX, 8, 10-11; IA, VIII, 143). But these were early aberrations. More potent were the Shi'i ideas introduced into Tabaristan and Dailam at the end of the 8th century by Hasanid du'at, and it seems likely that these doctrines had a catalytic effect in releasing Dailami energies outside the Elburz mountain region. “However, it seems the Dailamis did not completely give up their ancient Iranian tradition as already noted. Bosworth adds: “Towards the end of the Buyid period, certain elements of the dynasty and their

Dailami followers received Isma'ili propaganda with some sympathy, and it has often been noted as hardly coincidental that Alamut and other Isma'ili fortresses later arose in the old region of Dailam which appears to me as a confirmation of their anti-Arab instinct.

Bosworth regrets that our knowledge of the Dalamis "is only sketchy, and is unlikely to be much expanded."

These mountaineers achieved a reputation as mercenary soldiers, above all as infantrymen – a role parallel to that of the Swiss in late mediaeval and Renaissance Europe. The references to Dailami soldiers in classical, Byzantine and Sasanid times have been noted by Kasravi, Ates and Minorsky in the works mentioned above. Particularly interesting is the information of Procopius in his *De bello Persico* that the independent Dailamis served the Sasanids as mercenaries, and that their characteristic fighting equipment was the sword and shield and the javelin (the Islamic *zupin*, see below), for this picture tallies well with the later Islamic characterizations of them. In the first centuries of Islam, Dailam remained unconquered by the Arabs and communications along the southern rim of the Elburz suffered much from Dailami raiders and brigands." Some rulers favored Dailamis for "obviating sole reliance on Beduin Arab levies, who were liable to refuse to fight in winter. They formed the national backing of the three Buyid brothers" and "in his dying testament of 967 A.D. "one of them advised his son "to cherish and conciliate the Dailamis and always see that they were paid regularly." The Dalamis were well known for their skillful use of ZUPIN, "two-pronged short spears which could be used either for thrusting or for hurling at the enemy as javelins." They always carried these ZUPINS at their clan and village meetings as well as for ceremonial duties at the Buyid courts. Bosworth finds the etymology of the word *Zupin* or *Zubin* uncertain, but it could be of Pahlavi or Parthian origin. Bosworth also notes that the Dailamis were very zealous about maintaining the purity of blood and lineage and "marriage in Dailam was strictly endogenous, with death as the penalty for exogamy" and some of their marriage practices did not follow Shari'a laws but the pre-Islamic practices.

THE TAHTRIDS AND THE ZOROASTRIANS

Bosworth reports that although the Tahirids were

ethnically Persian, they had assimilated themselves almost totally in the dominant Arab ruling institution and its culture. By 811 A.D. hostility and rivalry between Tahir and the caliph (Mamun's) minister al-Fadl b. Sahl, whom D. Sourdel has called "the most Iranian of the viziers of the 'Abbasid caliphs." and who was the proponent of the pro-Arab party," observes Bosworth.

He adds: "Certain Persian sources allege that the Tahirid governors showed an outright hostility to any manifestations of Persian culture and literature in their Persian territories." He quotes a writer as saying: "though the flood of their bounty and largesse flowed over everyone, they had no concern for Farsi and the Dari language."

He also quotes a fifteenth century literary biographer who speaks of the eclipse of literature in Persian brought about by the Arab invasions and the subsequent dominance of the Arab language for poetry, prose and official correspondence. Then he states that when one day Abdallah, governor of Khurasan was holding court at Nishapur, "Aman came forward with a book and presented it to the Amir. 'Abdallah asked, 'what is this book about?' The man replied, 'it is the story of Wamiq and Adhra, a pleasant tale which wise men put together and presented to King Anushirvan. Amir Abdallah replied, 'We are men whose reading is the Qur'an, and we have no need of anything except the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet. We do not require this kind of book; it was composed by Magians, and in our view, should be rejected'.

Then he added that the book should be hurled into the water, and he issued a command that, if any of the books of the Persian and Magians should come to light in his territories they were all to be burnt. Because of this, right down to the time of the Samanids, no Persian poetry is known; if such poetry was occasionally composed, it was not written down and preserved. Thus we are left with no solid evidence that the Tahirids encouraged the first stirrings of the revival of New Persian language and literature."

Bosworth, however, repudiates the allegation that 'Abdullah took measures to suppress the Zoroastrian texts since "it is well-known that the Zoroastrian communities of Persia, though generally on the defensive against the incoming faith of Islam, were quite flourishing and productive during the third/ninth and early fourth/tenth centuries. It is in this period that a Zoroastrian apologetic and polemical literature arose and that the work of making

Middle Persian excerpts and compilations from the Avesta proceed apace; the latest important redaction of the *Bundahishn* comes from the end of the third/ninth century, and the third/ninth century element in the encyclopaedic *Denkard* is also so strong. The Letters of Manushchihir, High Priest of Fars and Kirman, show the existence of a Zoroastrian community in Hishapur during the third/ninth century; a hundred years and more later the leader of the fundamentalist Muslim Karramiyya sect in 993 A.D. were still converting Zoroastrians there.”

Zoroastrians, it seems, did get a respite in the ninth and tenth centuries from the constant persecution and attempts at conversion, which reduced their population in half just within one hundred years of the Arab conquest of Iran as seen already. However, to say they were “flourishing” in the ninth century is not justifiable as they (or even Maulas) at the time were mistreated by the Arabs, and they continued experiencing discrimination and persecution locally. Moreover this respite was too brief to give rise to new works of any kind but it only afforded them an opportunity to put together what they had already preserved in the Sasnian past into various texts. Thus, none of these compositions were new but merely represented whatever ancient materials they could lay their hands on in order to preserve for their fast fading community. Almost all authors on this subject, as reviewed by me already, hold that these works do not represent the works of the ninth and tenth centuries PER SE, but they represent only much older material deemed worthy of preserving for the guidance of the future Zoroastrian generations who were reduced to merely 10,000 or so by the nineteenth century. However, Bosworth is not alone in perceiving them as “flourishing” then as almost all scholars are included to do so.

Bosworth ascribes the hostility of the Tahirids to their efforts to link themselves with the ancient nobility of the Arabs, through their original clientage to the tribe of Khuza'a. But, he adds: “At the same time, the Tahirids did not object when certain of their panegyrists, and especially those with Shu'ubi sympathies, tried to attach them to the old Iranian past, its emperors and heroes. The result was a certain ambivalence of outlook, reflecting the tensions existing in the Caliphate of the time, when the Persian elements who had already achieved the highest political offices within the state were now claiming social and cultural equality with the proud Arabs.

EARLY REFERENCES TO THE ZOROASTRIANS IN FARS

The quanat of Abr appeared on the surface in the quarter of the Zoroastrians circa 1346, and this was a drawback “observes a writer” because the Majus controlled the fountain-head where it rose to the surface. But the water was extremely sweet and light, and the cognoscenti of the waters of Yazd considered it to be the light of all. These two quanats were still very much used in the eight/fourteenth century. (p. V-96). However, a prejudicial attitude towards the Zoroastrians is quite nascent here if not very discernible but it also testifies to their presence in Pars in the 1400's.

CONTINUITY AMIDST DISCONTINUITY OF IRANIAN CULTURE

Bosworth's views on the continuity of ancient Iran even during the Arab role are very illuminating: “The question of the continuity of rulership and governmental structures between the Sasanid and early Islamic periods merits detailed study, but has not yet received it; yet it is evident to the most superficial observer that this continuity was in many spheres a close one. Obviously, there was a violent change in the field of established religion and cult; the state church of Zoroastrianism was overthrown and the new faith of Islam introduced. Yet even here, it is not impossible to discern some elements of continuity. Islam could conceivably be viewed as a new, purified form of Zoroastrianism brought by a new prophet. Allah and Iblis could be equated with Ahura Mazda and Ahriman; there was a common belief in a creation story, in a resurrection, heaven and hell, and in angels and other spirits; both religions had the practices of worship and prayer and sacred text; and the fatalistic aspects of Zurvanism, the form that Zoroastrianism took in the later Sasanid period, was not unlike the determinist views that became influential, if not universally acknowledged, in early Islam. In the linguistic and cultural sphere, the Middle Persian or Pahlavi language disappeared as a spoken tongue, and outside certain peripheral areas where Islam was late in penetrating, and outside the surviving Zoroastrian communities, it disappeared as a literary medium. Even amongst the Zoroastrian groups, knowledge of Pahlavi had sharply declined by the end of the tenth century; in 978 we have the composition of Kai Kaus b. Kai Khusrau's *Zaradusht-nama*, the first Zoroastrian text in New Persian.

But the themes of older Persian literature, such as the heroic ones that later reappeared in the numerous poetic epics of the tenth and eleventh centuries, and the themes of polite, urbane, and courtly literature which reappeared in Arabic literature and in the Arab-Persian Mirrors for Princes, certainly survived to have a very marked influence on the whole course of Arabic and Islamic literature.”

However, Bosworth is more interested in establishing the “continuity in the governmental traditions of Islamic Iran”. Even though the idea of the theocratic ruler had disappeared in Persia, “the Abbasid Caliphs came to make their regime increasingly theocratic in atmosphere, assiduously cultivating the ulema as supports of their throne, and adopting honorific titles or *alqab* which expressed their dependence on God or which grounded the stability of their rule in His guidance. Professor Bernard Lewis has recently pointed out the messianic implications of the later application of the honorific al-Mansur to the second Abbasid Caliph Abu Ja'far,” Messianism being a hallmark of Zoroastrianism, Bosworth finds it more permissible to discern Persian influence in some of the external trappings of Abbasid rule: the organization of the court on hierarchical lines, with a chamberlain or *hajib* guarding the monarch from contact with the masses; the introduction of a harem system, with eunuch-attendants and with the Caliphs ceasing to contract marriage with free wives after the end of the eighth century; the formation of a regular circle of boon companions (*nudama'*) attendant on the Caliphs in their periods of relaxation; and the requirement of the prostration or *taqbil* on all those coming before the ruler's exalted presence. He even traces some of these trends back to late Umayyad Caliphs as it is “explicitly noted by the Islamic historians.”

Bosworth confirms what other historians often note that the most obvious influence was the actual governmental institutions and their practices. Even though the office of the Vizier may or may not be of Sasanian origin, his financial and administrative functions clearly reflect those of the Sasanian times. The term Diwan for a government department is unquestionably Persian. In eastern Iran, Sasanid coins were minted till the end of the seventh century. Until 697, financial and administrative records were made in the Persian language and in eastern Persia till 742. But it did not lead to any change in personnel, because the Persian clerks had already adopted the Arabic language and retained their posts as it took long for the Arabs to acquire the expertise. Bosworth locates the origin of the state postal service, the

Barid in the Sasanian system. It survived until the eleventh century when it was abandoned by the Seljuqs “much to the disgust of their celebrated vizier, Nizam al-Mulk.”

Bosworth maintains that by the ninth century, a symbiosis of the two cultural traditions was quite evident. He agrees with Gibb that the Shru'ubiyya movement had a sociological as well as a literary aspect which placed the whole direction of Islamic culture at stake but he contends that reaction. But he contends that Gibb overestimated the success of the pro-Arab defensive reaction which was successful to the extent that the resultant Islamic civilization was in many regards an amalgam of the two traditions, a coming together on equal terms, and was not entirely the absorption by the Arab-Muslim tradition of just those Persian elements that it consciously chose to accept whilst rejecting the rest, as was Gibb's final conclusion.” Bosworth thus confirms my earlier review of Gibb.

As few historians have delineated the Iranian element in the Arab-Muslim tradition, it is worth quoting Bosworth at length: “Despite the bitterness of the Shu'ubiyya controversies, the Arabs had always recognized the grandeur and splendour of the ancient Persian civilizations to which they had succeeded by conquest in the seventh century. The physical monuments of this culture, visible, for instance, in the Taq-i Kisra at Ctesiphon in the ruins of ancient Persepolis or Istakhr, in the Achemenid and Sasanid rock reliefs and in the network of fire temples which still covered much of Persia in the first three centuries or so of Islam, were impressive enough. The Arabs of the Jahiliyya had recognized here an obvious superiority to their own degraded condition, as was likewise the case in regard to Byzantium; the external manifestations of Persian culture, such as their palaces, their weapons, their household possessions are referred to in terms of praise by the pre-Islamic poets, and it is only the (to the Arabs) incomprehensible language of the Persians (their stuttering or *tumtumaniyya*) or the mumbling (*zamzama*) of the Zoroastrian priests, which are referred to in derogatory terms. Only with the coming of Islam did the religious fervour of the Arabs create a feeling of hostility towards the Persians, their autocratic monarchy, their social system and their religion; the victory of the Arabs' Islamic religion over such a seemingly impregnable empire must surely have seemed a clear sign of the Arabs' superiority over the defeated nation. Even so, an Arab of pure Quarashi paternal decent, but with a slave mother, like the Umayyad Calip Yazid b. al-Walid b. “Abd al-Malik (reigned 126/174), could boast:

“I am the descendant of the Persian Emperor, my forefather was Marwan, and both the Emperor of Byzantium and the Khaqan of the Turks were my ancestors.”

Bosworth confirms what we have earlier noted about the status of the Mawla in the Arab society and how it was responsible for leading to the Abbasid revolution.

Bosworth describes at length how various Muslim rulers in Iran tried to trace their ancestry to the prophet of his entourage. All the same, he finds an even stronger trend among the Muslim rulers towards claiming an ancestor from the ancient Persian rulers as it was not difficult to do so. Indeed, it was easy to make such connections for the dynasties such as the Tamarids hailed from the Sasanian gentry, Dehqans or aristocracy of a few generations earlier. Bosworth provides many such examples. This was particularly true of the isolated, mountainous Caspian regions or of isolate oasis areas such as Khwarazm.

Bosworth observes: “Although Qutaiba b. Muslim appeared in Khwarazm in 712 and caused much destruction to the old Khwarazmian culture, the (ruling) Afrighids were left to rule as loose tributaries –a unique event in this period of the Arab conquests in Iran and Central Asia, and only explicable by the eccentric geographical position of Khwarazm and Arab fears of dangerously-extended communication lines if a full military occupation of the province had been attempted.” But even dynasties of humble backgrounds, such as the Dailamis and the Saffarids made such claims as it was not too great a stretch of the imagination to believe that, in the chaos of the Arab invasions of Persia and the tragedy of the downfall of the Sasanids, families having kinship connection with the royal house should nevertheless continue quietly to exist, until the inherent qualities of rulership should come to the surface and have free play once more. “

On the intellectual plane, much of the Persian epic and the lore concerning the Persian emperors had, by the ninth and tenth centuries, been absorbed into the common fabric of Islamic civilization, especially when the Persian-inspired literary genre of *adab* and its principal exponents, the secretary Shu ubia.

Bosworth explains at length how various Muslim rulers tried to trace their ancestry to the prophet or to someone in his entourage but finds such linkage grotesque and far fetch “except in the case of the Tahirids. It is gratifying to note that Bosworth confirms the views of other scholars already quoted

by me which may well confirm Iranians not converting in spirit to Islam but inwardly holding on to their original beliefs.

“There are certain pointers that show that the Buyids had more than a passing interest in the old Iranian past. Zoroastrianism continued in the tenth century to flourish in what had been the heart of Sasanid Persia, Fars. The biography of the Sufi shaikh abu Ishaq Ibrahim Kazaruni shows how strong the Zoroastrians were in Fars as late as the first quarter of the eleventh century. The Zoroastrians of Kazarun prevented the shikh from building a mosque, having the backing of the Zoroastrian governor of the town, Khurshid, himself high in the favour of the Buyid Amir in Shiraz; they complained too, about the shaikh's Islamic proselytizing activities and had him arraigned before the Amir and reprimanded. In the course of his antiquarian investigations, 'Adud ad-Daula visited the ruins of the old Achaemenid capital of Persepolis and had an inscription carved there to commemorate his visit; he also got a local Zoroastrian *mobadh* to interpret for him the Pahlavi inscriptions there. 'Adud ad 333333-Daula was also harking back to ancient Persia when he used the imperial title Shahanshah “King of kings,” already attested on a coin minted in Fars in 359/970 which depicts the Amir in a fashion resembling that of the Sasanid emperors, and has a Pahlavi inscription “May the Shahanshah's royal splendour increase!” It was only in the Arab and more strongly orthodox Islamic region of Iraq that 'Adud ad-Daula's grandson Jalal ad-Daula ran into criticism in 1038 when he adopted the title for the ultra-pious considered that such a title belonged to God alone.”

Mardawij (935 A.D.) whose various conquests secured the Buyid rue is said to have wanted to revive the ancient Persian empire as well as religion with himself as their head. Bosworth adds: “At Hamadan and Dinawar, his troops made a special point of massacring the Muslim religious classes, ulema and Sufis alike. When he had gained control of much of western Persia, including Ray and Qazwin, he had made for himself a golden throne set with jewels, donned regal clothes, and had made for himself a golden bejewelled crown having previously inquired about the crowns of the ancient Persians. Fired by pseudo-prophecies and the encouragement of his advisers, he is said to have dreamed of conquering Iraq, rebuilding Ctesiphon and the palace of the Kisras, and then assuming the title of Shahanshah.” He was assassinated when he was celebrating the ancient Zoroastrian feast of Sadeh.

The Samanids and the Tahirids represented the interests of the local Iranian landed classes and the Samanids lacked the direct Iraqi connections. The Samanids also played an important part in the renaissance of New Persian language and literature.

According to Biruni, the Samanids descended from Bahram Chubin and in Firdausi's *Shah-nama* were proud of their origin from the people, and claimed, with considerable justice, that they had reached their position of power by their own efforts, unassisted by noble birth or official influence and the Saffarids "claimed, again with justice, that they represented the interests of the people of Sistan against past exploitation by Caliphal and Tahirid officials and tax-collectors. Their implacable refusal to accept the norms of Sunni orthodoxy and political practice, obedience to the moral authority of the Caliphs and their legitimate representatives, exposed the Saffarids to the hostility of the generality of Islamic historians. The Saffarids had thus no incentives for claiming any connection with the Arab past; the Arab ruling institution in Sistan had typified everything that Ya'qub had been fighting against, and Ya'qub openly showed this contempt for and impatience with Arabic learning on one occasion." Even so, they aspired to link themselves with the Iranian past at an early date. The anonymous *History of Sistan* provides a long genealogy linking them with the Sasanids' Khusrau Aparviz, Kawadh and Ardashir to Faridun and Jamshid and the first man Kayumarsh.

A poet quotes the founder of the Saffarid dynasty, Nagub as asserting:

"I am the son of the noble descendants of Jam, and the inheritance of the kings
of Persia has fallen to my lot.

I am reviving their glory, which had been lost and effaced
by the long
passage of time.

I am openly seeking revenge for them; although men have closed their eyes
to recognizing their regal rights, I do not do so."

With me is the banner of Kawi (*'alam al-Kabiyan*),
through which I hope to
rule all the nations.

So say to all the sons of Hashim (the Abbasids), "Abdicate quickly, before you

have reason to feel sorry!

Our forefathers gave you kingly power, but you have never
showed proper
gratitude for our benefactions.

Return to your country in the Hijaz, to eat lizards and
graze sheep,

For I shall mount the throne of the kings, with the aid of
my sword blade and
the point of my pen!"

Yaqub proved his intentions by marching to Bagdad until he was halted within fifty miles of it. His reference to the Sasanian Kawiyān banner which was captured by the Arabs reveals his zeal for his Iranian heritage. Bosworth finds such developments not so surprising as when a Transcaucasia "Islamic dynasty which was indisputably

Arab in origin abandoning its Arab genealogy in favor of a connection with the pre-Islamic Iranian monarchs." Memory of the family's Arab origin became obliterated. In the tenth century even Mas'udi traced their ancestry "incontrovertibly" to a descendant of Bahām Gur, and along with that of the Avar prince of the neighboring Caucasian principality of Sarir while all later historians traced it to Anushirvan the Just. Even though such instances are rather rare, they speak volumes for the innate Iranian instinct to connect itself with its glorious past.

Even when obsequious genealogists could not suppress the fact of Ghaznavid's pagan Turkish origins, they ingeniously linked them with Yazdegerd III claiming their ancestor had married his daughter who escaped to Turkestan. Bosworth reveals even Mahmud of Ghazna (998-1030) had been praised by his poets for his Turkish lineage as well as his alleged connection with the Iranian past and the panegyrics of the early Ghaznavid often praise Mahmud and his son as heirs of the Kisras.

As Bosworth notes, the Seljuqs were of free Turkish and not slave origins and so naturally they preferred to derive their legitimacy from their Turkish past and yet some of their Khans called themselves descendants of Afrasiyab. While the Turkish rulers too ultimately became gradually permeated by the superior culture of Persia, "during their long rule, the trend to find/invent connections with Iran's glorious past came to an end as the need to do it was no more urgent," observes Bosworth. (pp. VII 51-62).

THE GHAZVANID AND ZOROASTRIANS

Even in 1029 A.D. When Mahmud Ghaznawi invaded the city of Rayy in Kharasan ostensibly in Bosworth's estimation to "cleanse Rayy and Iibal of the heresies of the Batiniyyah Mu'tezilah and Mazdakites," he justified getting rid of them in his Fath-nemah addressed to the Caliph because they "did not perform the Muslim worship nor pay the poor tax, nor did they acknowledge the prescriptions of Islamic law,----The best of this bad lot are Mu'tazilah.---- Rayy harboured a number of the Mazdakites, who ostensibly profess Islam, but nevertheless openly reject the Muslim worship, the poor tax, fasting and ritual ablutions." (p. XI-72-73). In his note No. 73 (p. XI-81, Bosworth notes that the neo-Mazdekites survived in Iran's rural areas long after Babak's execution in 838 and "many of them were subsequently caught up by the propaganda of the the Ismaili Da'is. Some scholars maintain that the Mazdakites, while following Mazdakism, had not renounced Zoroastrianism and so they do not count them among non-Zoroastrians.

Bosworth disagrees with Arberry that Mahmud Gaznavi was not impressed by Firdausi's Shah-namah because he made an unfortunate choice in presenting to Mahmud, "the fanatical conformist" "his vast epic in praise of Zoroastrian Persia." While Bosworth admits that "Shah-nema is not Islamic at all in its inspiration, but neither is its pathos specifically Zoroastrian, and the Ghazvanid were not adverse to being connected with the glories of old Persia." He quotes T. Noldeke as holding that Firdausi's attitude was certainly strongly anti-Arab, though not necessarily openly anti-Islamic. (p. XVIII-40). The use of the word "openly" seems very suggestive or full of connotations, especially as it is often believed by some Iranians that Firdausi, like so many of his contemporaries, had adopted Islam only outwardly but had privately retained his Zoroastrian faith which may explain why he was denied a burial in a Muslim cemetery even though he was a Dehqan of note.

REFERENCES TO ZOROASTRIANS IN AFGANISTAN

Ubaidallah, the son of Abu Bakra, notes Bosworth, "was sent to Fars to take charge of the suppression of the sacred fires of the Zoroastrians there, and the confiscation of the fire temple treasures; in less than a year he had allegedly assessed 40 million dirhams from this office." In 671 Bosworth adds:

“He is said to have taken strong measures against Zoroastrianism in Sistan and also to have raided into the (Zoroastrian) territories of the Zunbils and Kabelshahs, extracting tribute from them.” (p. XIX-272). Ubaidahhah was again appointed as governor of Sistan and when he learned that the Zunbils had withheld the tribute of 300,000 dirhams, he informed al-Hajjaj of it. al-Hajjaj ordered him “to march into the Zunbil’s territories and not to desist from attacking until he had laid waste the land, had destroyed the Zunbil’s strongholds, had slain his warriors and he enslaved his progeny. However, “Ubaidallah had to buy off the Zunbil in order to extricate his army, dying himself shortly afterwards,” according to the *Tarikh-i-Sistan*. At first he was able to engage in plunder and destruction of many Zunbil strongholds. “But the tactics of the Zunbil were to fall back before the Muslims, thus luring them on into an increasingly inhospitable and food-less terrain,” for the Zunbil soldiers kept destroying all food and fodder as they retreated. “Ubaidallah at last realized the perilousness of his situation and prepared to treat willy-nilly with the Zunbil. He offered the latter 500,000 or 700,000 dirhams, together with three of his own sons---and others of the Arab leaders, as hostages and promised to swear a solemn engagement never to raid the Zunbil’s lands whilst he remained the governor of Sistan, if only the Muslims would be allowed to withdraw peacefully.” His co-commander Shuraih who had earlier entreated him to withdraw, now felt that “withdrawal would be dishonourable and would be a crushing humiliation at the hands of the pagan.” Ubaidallah “denounced him to the Zunbil as rebellious and disobedient to his superior officer.----The intransigents fought on until all but a handful were killed. Ubaidallah meanwhile is reported to have enjoyed, together with his family, the hospitality of the Zunbil.” Bosworth describes in detail the terrible privations and suffering of the soldiers of Ubaidallah as they marched back home. Many died and “only 5,000 finally reached Bust” and Ubaidallah too died soon thereafter at Bust but was maligned by poets for his failure. (pp. XIX 272-278).

DECLINE OF PERSIAN INFLUENCE UNDER THE TURKISH RULERS

Bosworth seems to regard the Turkish conquests of Iran as leading to “The intellectual stagnation of later mediaeval Islam” and Iran. He cites Bernard Lewis comparing the Turks with noble savage and he finds the same view-point in the

writings of Jahiz who blames “the Muslims' luxury and sloth, their lack of vitality and courage in battle” for the invasions of the Tartars. (pp. XXIII 15-16). This is quite intriguing since some historians blame the downfall of the Sasanians on their luxurious life-style, lack of courage in the battle and the like.