

MUHAMMAD AND THE Umayyad Dynasty's Conversion to Islam

Putting Muslim Traditions into the Historical Context

A. J. Deus

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Contact for feedback, corrections, and suggestions: amod.jason.deus@ajdeus.org

INTRODUCTION

A.J. Deus's exploration into the Umayyad's conversion to Islam in an earlier paper came to the conclusion that this dynasty had been opponents of an emerging Muslim faith until a few years before the breakthrough of Islam in the late 680s AD. This paper focuses on a modest scope to investigate the historicity of the Prophet Muhammad and his possible relationship with the Umayyads. Given the centrality of the prophet, it is astonishing how little primary evidence attests to him. Some researchers conclude that he lived a few years longer and that he led the early Arab invasions.¹ Even though carbon dating of parchments of the Koran from Sana'a and the fragments from the library at the University of Tübingen² seem to have closed the discussion about Muhammad's historicity, Deus remains unsatisfied that it explains the order of events or the actors involved. After all, when scribes intended to present works as older than they really were, they were smart enough to use old parchment. This possibility led to experimenting with alternative ways of reading the primary evidence and to explore whether the prophet's life and death could somehow be retraced with what is extant. While the Koran seems inseparably linked to the prophet, no evidence exists until the Tübingen fragments and a few verses in the Dome of the Rock that are believed to originate from the last decade of the seventh century. In the paper about the Umayyad's conversion, it was demonstrated that these Mosaics had never been mentioned, not even by Benjamin of Tudela in the twelfth century. The latter confused the builder with Omar (Umar), which is unlikely if there were an inscription. In the twelfth century, the building would be known in the West as the Tower of David.

Other than the aforementioned carbon dated Tübingen *parchments* from 649-675 AD, the Koran finally shows up in the primary evidence seventy years after the emergence of Muhammad's *The Way of Truth*, possibly with Hnanisho' the Exegete³ who made a statement about "a new folly" around 700 AD, followed by Jacob of Edessa around 705 AD who confirmed the emergence of Muslim prayers that were oriented toward the Kaaba in Mecca from the sura *The Cow*,⁴ succeeded by the text of John of Damascus.⁵ While the first Kufic fragments and the appearance in the primary evidence are likely contemporaries, it remains unclear whether the Koran had been completed at that time or whether it may have had been divided into several works. However, Al-Kindi expressed himself clearly in the ninth century that the Koran had been pieced together of different histories by a number of authors.

¹ Crone and Cook, Spuler, Shoemaker

² The fragments of Tübingen were radiocarbon dated by the Institut für Ionenstrahlforschung der ETH Zürich for the Project Coranica to 649-675 with a probability of 95,4% (University of Tübingen, December 14, 2014):

Ma VI 152 - Kufisches Koranfragment, enthaltend Sure 19,59-20,24 (lo. O.), [not dated])

Ma VI 154 - Kufisches Koranfragment, enthaltend Sure 27,56-29,32 (lo. O.), [not dated])

Ma VI 165 - Kufisches Koranfragment, enthaltend Sure 17,37-36,57 (lo. O.), [649-675])

³ Hnanisho' the Exegete, seventh century catholic (universal) priest in Iraq, *commentary* (ca. 700 AD): [...] And if he were [only] a prophet, as idly says some new folly [ayk da-mpaqqa leluta hdatta], [like those who said]: "this is Jesus the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee," when and to which of the prophets did the people cry out Hosannah, both as adults, and as children whose reason is not yet mature?

⁴ Jacob of Edessa (640-708 AD), Letter to John the Stylite (ca. 705 AD) no. 14, fol. 124a, summarized by Wright, Catalogue, 2.604, and translated by Crone and Cook, Hagarism, 173 n. 30: Your question is vain [...] for it is not to the south that the Jews pray, nor either do the Muslims (mhaggraye/Muhammadeans). The Jews who live in Egypt, and also the Muslims there, as I saw with my own eyes and will now set out for you, prayed to the east, and still do, both peoples—the Jews toward Jerusalem and the Muslims toward the Ka'ba. And those Jews who are to the south of Jerusalem pray to the north; and those in the land of Babel, in Hira and in Basra, pray to the west. And also the Muslims who are there pray to the west, toward the Ka'ba; and those who are to the south of the Ka'ba pray to the north, toward that place. So from all this that has been said, it is clear that it is not to the south that the Jews and Muslims here in the regions of Syria pray, but toward Jerusalem or the Ka'ba, the patriarchal places of their races.

⁵ John of Damascus confirms the suras *The Cow* (2), *Women* (4), *The Table* (5), and *The Battlements* (7).

He regarded this as common knowledge at the time. Centuries later, Khaldun would come to single out the Umayyads and the Abbasids for whom, he alleges, the traditions had been created, but not for the Shi'ites or Karijites. With the scant primary evidence and the nearly insurmountable scholarly prerequisites, an attempt to slice it apart is not only extremely difficult but also prone to ridicule.

Nevertheless, there is a consensus about the historicity of Muhammad and the Koran, and it is widely taught in this context. However, if said context is built on traditions, then the chronology of the Koran can perhaps not break free, and the respective investigations will remain circular.

In reviewing the research, some scholars tend to take the primary documents as evidence for the confirmation of the spiritual leader according to traditions (the hadiths), and they use them liberally; in contrast, more critical scholars dismiss most based on dubious document histories or/and perceived non-chronologies. In light of the absence of reliable sources about the seventh century, the second group did not come up with a convincing explanation what these flaws in the chronologies would have to be measured with. Are these compared with traditions and collective memories rather than with other contemporary primary evidence? Or are they elevating secondary documents, like *The Apocalypse of Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai* from a century later, for example, to primary status?

The result of exploring these simple questions is a leader by the name of Muhammad that is connected to a sermon based on Mosaic Law. He does not occur in the primary evidence until *after* 631 AD at the height of a career that certainly has a pretext before this date. He may still be alive in the 650s, if not in the 680s. His first sign of death appears in 691 AD in Egypt. In addition, even in the primary evidence, there might be several parallel “histories” and perhaps multiple Muhammads.

It is not only important for Muslims to understand the prophet and his place in the seventh century. Boldly speaking, Muhammad is attributed to having triggered such radical changes that he constitutes the culmination point of history from centuries before, and he forms also the starting gate for what comes centuries thereafter across the Old World. For the primary evidence, the pivotal point is 692 AD since this constitutes the generally accepted break-through of Islam as state religion. Any evidence beyond this point that reflects back on the seventh century should thus be regarded as likely tainted by the evolution of “traditions” (the hadith collection) or under the impression of leading families’ alignment with the ruling religion. This process brought forth wildly differing scenarios. For example, Stephen of Alexandria would write in the late eighth century that Muhammad had appeared in Mecca around 571 AD.⁶ In other words, tradition did not find its final footing well into Abbasid rule from over a century later. Thus, primary evidence from before 692 AD should take precedence.

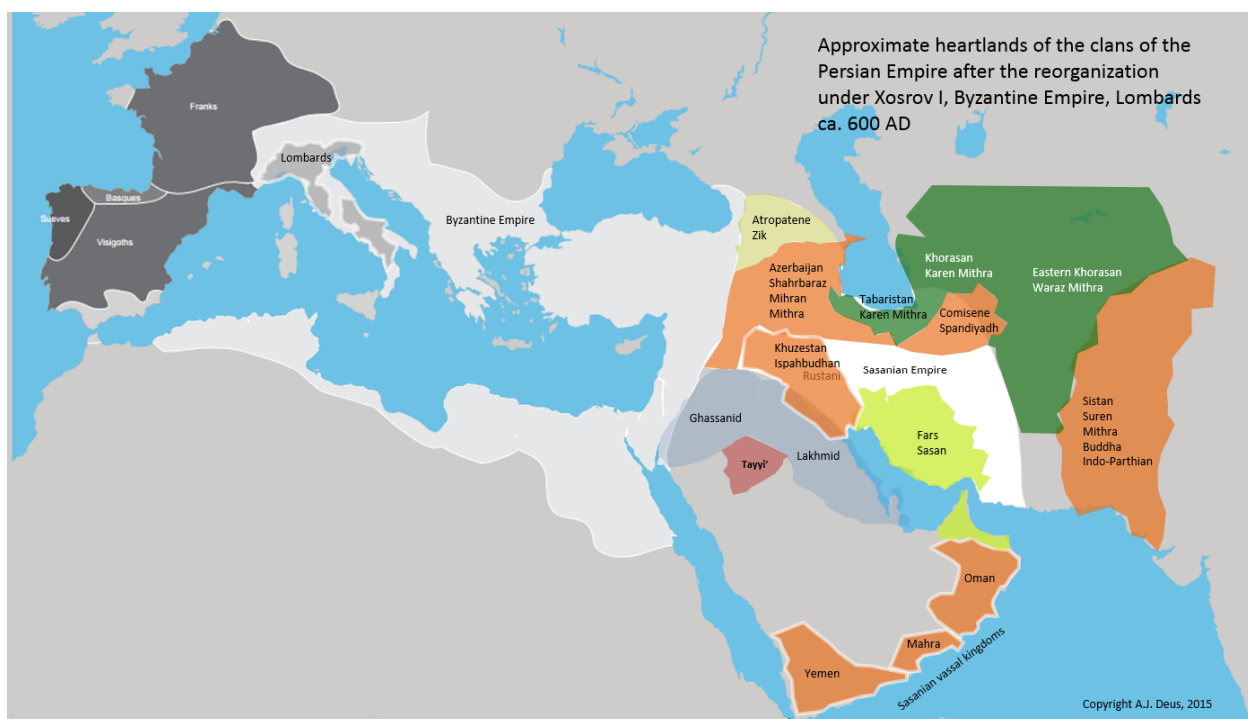
Deus hopes that solving the mysteries of the history in the seventh century could contribute to the knowledge about the role of social economics of religion in mass poverty and also to help averting another Holocaust. With anti-Semitism, religious zealotry, and Islamophobia on the rise, it is urgent that science steps in to replace superstitions with real data. It may help to stop the killings.

⁶ Stephen of Alexandria, *Horoscope*, 21 (775-785) in Hoyland, p. 304: In the desert of Ethrib there had appeared a certain man from the so-called tribe of Quraysh (*Korasionoi*), of the genealogy of Ishmael, whose name was Muhammad and who said he was a prophet. He appeared in the month of Pharmuti, which is called April by the Romans, of the 932nd year (from the beginning of Philip [571 AD?]). He has brought a new expression and a strange teaching, promising to those who accept him victories in wars, domination over enemies and delights in paradise.

REASSESSING THE PRIMARY EVIDENCE

Xosrov, the Ghassanids, and Kabsha

In the 560s, Xosrov I had invaded Syria and cut the Ghassanids off from their Byzantine ally. The Melkite Ghassanids fiercely rejected the creed of the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon from 451 AD where Jesus was declared both *man and god*.⁷ Although Michael the Syrian is too late to be used as primary evidence, the Melkites may have also been upset that Mary had been made *Mother of God*, thus forming a 'quartet' of divinities. The 'Tayyi' tribal alliance had settled between the Ghassanids and the Nestorian Lakhmids (vassals of Persia) in the north-central area of the Arab Peninsula. Around about 575 AD, the Ghassanid King Mundhir III⁸ was fighting against the new Lakhmid King Qabus, who had held the eastern part of the Arab Peninsula,⁹ and the Lakhmids were overwhelmed.



Map 1: Byzantine and Persian empires ca. 600 AD with estimated Persian and Parthian dynastic territories; Persian vassal kingdoms, Lakhmids, and Ghassanids, Lombards

⁷ Michael the Syrian (ca. 1190s AD) 310-11, from Robert G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs, From the Bronze Age to the coming of Islam* (Routledge, 2002) 150: Harith ibn Jabala, [father of Al-Mundhir] king of the Christian Arabs, and his company were much offended by the synod and would not even break bread with the Chalcedonians. Ephraim, patriarch of Antioch [d. 545], was sent to them before his death by the emperor. He said to Harith: "Why are you offended concerning us and the church?" Harith replied: "We are not offended by the church of God, but by the evil which you have done to the faith. We distance ourselves from you because you introduce a quartet [saying Christ is both god and man and Mary being the Godmother] in place of the Trinity and oblige men to deny the true faith."

⁸ Al-Mundhir ibn al-Hārith, Flavios Alamoundaros was king of the Ghassanid Arabs 569 to ca. 581 AD.

⁹ John of Ephesus, 6.3, ca. 580 AD, from Robert G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs, From the Bronze Age to the coming of Islam* (Routledge, 2002) 82-83.

In 590/591 Bahram Chobin of the Parthian House of Mihran (Mithraic spahbeds of the north)¹⁰ usurped the Persian throne briefly, prompting the flight of Xosrov II to Constantinople. After the latter had regained control with the help of the Byzantines, Vistahm of the Parthian Ispahbudhan Dynasty (spahbeds of the west)¹¹ also rebelled and took the throne around 595 – 600 AD.

The disruptive changes to the Seven Parthian Clans and these rebellions are not subject of this paper, but they are indicators for an internal rift among the oligarchical clans that foreshadow the Persian Empire's disintegration. The internal core issue was an age-old enmity among the Parthians in the north and east (the Pahlav) and the Persians in the south and west (the Parsig). It is doubtful that Xosrov II had been able to iron out the differences within the Sasanian-Parthian confederacy, at this time consisting of four main dynasties, the House of Mihran (north), the House of Ispahbudhan (west), the House of Karin (east), and the House of Suren (south).¹² These dynastic groups are not only pivotal in the empire's greatest successes but also in its fall. Some of them would continue to exert their power deep into the Islamic period, and they cannot be counted out in the formation of the Islamic caliphates. It is symptomatic for the dynastic sectarianism that the Persian capital Seleucia-Ctesiphon was engulfed in conflicts between Manicheans, Nestorians, followers of Byzantine Orthodoxy, Mithraism, and also (reformed) Zoroastrianism at the beginning of the seventh century.

On the other hand, Xosrov was indebted to Emperor Maurice¹³ and to the Armenian Smbat of the House of Bagratuni (of Parthian descent) who had helped reinstate the former to the throne, likely at the price of allowing Orthodox ideas to subvert the churches in Persia, which would have eroded the spiritual chasm that had existed for centuries between the empires. Naturally, Smbat Bagratuni was highly honored and given control of the realms that had been held by the Mihran and the Ispahbudhan dynasties.¹⁴

The friendly inter-imperial relationship fundamentally changed with the rise to power of Phocas and Heraclius. Emperor Maurice's son¹⁵ should have become Persia's favored ruler in Constantinople, but Phocas had his family murdered in 602 AD. This, as well as the Parthian resistance against the territorial changes, would have provided Xosrov with a motive for attempting a reversal of the spiritual infiltration into the Church of the East, which was led by Patriarch Gregory from 604 AD.¹⁶ Thus,

¹⁰ Parvaneh Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire* (Tauris, 2008) 115-116.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² The position of these dynasties and their territorial locations are confirmed with the spahbed seals in the Gyselen collection. In addition, Rustam of the Ispahbudhan Dynasty were part of Xosrov's battle formations. Another seal identifies Bahram as the spahbed of the south. Although he is suspected to be a Parsig, a Sasanian, the seals do not give away his family.

¹³ Flavius Mauricius Tiberius Augustus alias Maurice was Byzantine Emperor 582-602.

¹⁴ Parvaneh Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire* (Tauris, 2008) 138: [...] for a total period of almost a decade, therefore, a substantial part of Khurasan was put under the command of the Armenian dynastic figure Smbat Bagratuni. [...] This then is indicative of the predicament in which the Sasanian monarchy had found itself after it was confronted with the rebellions of one Parthian dynastic family after another in the northern and eastern parts of its realm: for a not insignificant period, under what seems to have been extraordinary circumstances, the Sasanian king was forced to exert his power in Khurasan through the agency of neighboring Armenian nobility!

¹⁵ Theodosius 583/585 – 602 was raised to rule the East from Constantinople and his younger brother Tiberius to lead the West from Rome.

¹⁶ William Ainger Wigram, *An Introduction to the History of the Assyrian Church* (Gorgias, 2004) 249 and 247: [...] this Gregory [Patriarch of the Church of the East 604-608 AD] was not the King's nominee, he was the Queen's. Ultimately Xosrov accepted the fait accompli, but with a very bad grace. "Patriarch he is and patriarch he shall be - but never again do I allow another election." Gregory himself was heavily fined; and all Christians suffered — as men do in oriental lands — from the feeling that got abroad that they were somehow "under the wrath of the Government."

Xosrov denied the church leader's replacement for two decades.¹⁷ Xosrov's Orthodox Christian wife and his court doctor, Gabriel of Singar, a devoted convert from Zoroastrianism to Melkite Christianity, seem to have been a strong influence, bringing the religious conflicts right into the royal palace. The reasons for the royal-religious meddling are not obvious, though, and merit further investigation.

Xosrov also had problems with his southern allies. He might have thought to secure control by killing off their king and the royal heir sometime before 609 AD, King Mundhir¹⁸ and Al-Nu'mān.¹⁹ Confusingly, there were two Mundhirs, one king of the Ghassanids and the other of the Lakhmids. Both had a son by the name of Nu'man. With this unlikely parallel, the Ghassanid control over the Lakhmids must have lasted longer than is commonly accepted, but it would fit into the pattern of a strategic reversal if Xosrov had terminated the Ghassanid leaders. Whichever king had been killed, the matter at hand is that both Arab dynasties had been degraded, and they would have reason for settling the scores. The new vassal king, Elijah bar Kabsha,²⁰ would thus have promised to get the Lakhmids back into a pact against Byzantine Orthodox advances and certainly later against Heraclius.

The royal swap indicates a submission of the Lakhmids to the Tayyi' since their new king was chief of the Tayyi'. The Ghassanids (or parts thereof) may now have also fallen under Kabsha's lead, creating a master over a huge landmass that stretched from al-Hira to the Red Sea. If that is so, that would have elevated the Kabsha family over and above both previous tribal alliances combined. It would also have put a trained army into the hands of the Kabshas.

During the 610s, Xosrov's advances through Syria and Anatolia to the gates of Constantinople led to a near collapse of the Byzantine Empire. Also, almost the entire coast line around the Arab Peninsula either submitted to Xosrov or became vassal kingdoms, surely prompting questions about who might be suitable for controlling the newly acquired areas. Despite the tremendous successes, Kabsha in al-Hira was replaced by the Persian governor, (the Mihran²¹) Azadbeh in 617/618, indicating that the Tayyi' alliance may then have been terminated. Azadbeh was in office until 633 AD, until shortly after Yazdegerd took the throne.

Kabsha – being one of the many names of Muhammad – rose in the same year as the prophet of the traditions,²² and the end of both is unaccounted for in the historical record. Without attempting to turn Kabsha (Qabisah) and Muhammad into one, the latter's absenteeism is unfathomable, unless he ended in disgrace. On the other hand, the prophetic revelations started in 610 AD, according to tradition, the same year of Heraclius's capture of the throne in Constantinople. The traditional date of the prophet's flight to Medina, 622 AD, is not only the beginning of the new Muslim time-scale

¹⁷ Wigram, 251: [...] Gabriel used all his influence with the King against the granting of the permission to elect the patriarch and used it successfully. The vacancy thus caused lasted for twenty years (608 the rise of Heraclius -628), until, in fact, the death of Xosrov II.

¹⁸ Chron. Siirt 13.539-40, ca. ninth century, from Robert G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs, From the Bronze Age to the coming of Islam* (Routledge, 2002) 30: When Xosrov II deceitfully poisoned Nu'man ibn Mundhir [582 - ca. 609 AD], king of the Arabs, and his son, the Arabs in the empires of the Persians and Romans broke off allegiance and dispersed, each acting according to their own whim.

¹⁹ Al-Nu'mān ibn al-Mundhir, Naamanes.

²⁰ Eyas ibn Qabisah al-Ta'i (or Iyas ibn Qabisa, chief of Tayyi') ruled the Lakhmids 602-611 AD together with the Persian governor Nakirjan followed by governor Azadbeh 611-633 AD.

²¹ According to Tabari, Azadbeh's son ibn al-Azadbeh would come to be a commander of the Mihran-i Hamadani army (Pourshariati, p. 219).

²² A biological relationship between Kabsha (Qabisah) and Muhammad could have been later reinterpreted as an adoption:

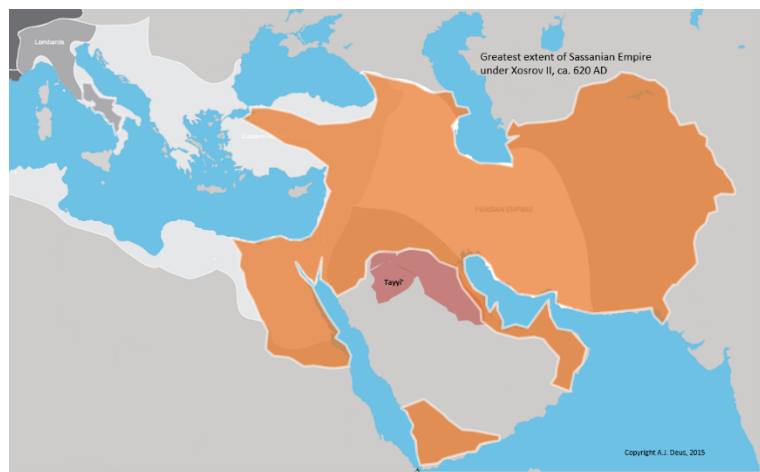
Safi ur Rahman Al Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar: Biography of the Noble Prophet* (Darussalam, 2002) 72: The Prophet was later entrusted to Halimah bint Abi Dhu'ayb from Bani Sa'd bin Bakr. Her husband was Al-Harith bin Abdul-Uzza called Abi Kabshah, from the same tribe.

but also the one that would be found on coins minted under Heraclius in Damascus. The Byzantine Emperor's siege of Ctesiphon (al-Mada'in) synchronizes with the Battle of the Trench, which is the siege of Medina in 627 AD. The peace between Persia and Constantinople falls to 628 AD, together with Xosrov's death and also with the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah of the traditions (between Mecca and Medina). Whether these are coincidences is not further explored here. However, in the absence of Muhammad in the historical record and in light of the claim that multiple histories had been jumbled into one, this avenue awaits closer examination. The insertion of religious fiction into a real historic sequence is a classic technique that can be observed time and again in religious as well as dynastic contexts.

In addition, the Biblical Elijah –here Kobsha – as a precursor to the second Christ²³ bears such weight that it cannot easily be swept aside. This prophet makes up for the prototype of the basic story of Muhammad's revelations from a cave.²⁴ Elijah's Ramadan was already well established with the Arabs of the sixth century.²⁵ Hence, Kabsha could have served well as the starting point for a religious fiction.

Coins during Xosrov II (622 AD), Heraclius (639 AD), and Yazdegerd

After Xosrov had invaded Egypt at around 619 AD (i.e. post Kabsha and having to pass by the Ghassanids), he supported Arian and Semi-Arian Christianity in the region until it was wrested back by the Greeks in 629 AD. The 610s mark the greatest expansion of Xosrov's advances against the Byzantine Empire, but it remains unclear whether the Tayyi' and the remnants of the former Lakhmid territories adjacent to the Tayyi' had been integrated into the Persian domain at this time.



Map 2: Greatest extent of Sasanian Empire under Xosrov II, Byzantine Empire, Lombards, Tayyi', ca. 620 AD

²³ Malachi 4:1-6: Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Yahweh comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.

²⁴ 1 Kings 19.1.

Kings 19:8-19:9: Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the Lord came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

1 Kings 19:13: When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

²⁵ Ahudemme (ca. 570s AD) 21, 26-28, from Robert G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs, From the Bronze Age to the coming of Islam* (Routledge, 2002)

149: Thus he inclined the hearts of the Arabs to the love of God and particularly to giving to the needy [...]. Their alms extended to all men and all places, but especially to the holy monasteries [...] Nor do they confine their piety to making gifts to churches, monks, poor, and strangers, but they love fasting and ascetic life more than any other Christians, to such an extent that they begin the forty-days fast a week earlier than others. Many of them eat no bread during the whole time of the fast, not only the men but also many women.

Xosrov minted coins in Egypt in 622 AD with his image as a Christian ruler in support of Egyptian Christianity.²⁶ Sasanian coins would typically show the Zoroastrian Fire Temple flanked by two attendants. The obvers of a coin dated 622/623 AD shows Emperor Xosrov, presenting himself as a mighty warrior with a large sword,²⁷ typical of Sasanian rule. However, this stamp is void of the temple pictograms.



The coins from Egypt and the changes with the Ghassanids, Lakhmids, and 'Tayyi' indicate that Xosrov may have attempted to arouse hatred by *like* Arian Christians against Phocas and Heraclius.

One may wonder how the Zoroastrian, Manichean, and Mithraic (from Armenia to Khorasan) aristocracies would have received Xosrov's changes. Did they not resist in one way or another? Indeed, one of the four generals, Shahrvaraz²⁸ of the Mihran Dynasty and spahbed of the south²⁹ (the former territory of the Suren Dynasty), Rustam, together with his brother Farrukh Hormizd of the House of Ispahbudhan, and Kanadbak (a branch of Ispahbudhan)³⁰ de facto walked out of the Sasanian-Parthian confederation to enter an alliance with the Byzantine Heraclius around 626/627,³¹ possibly after the failed Avar-Sasanian operation at the Siege of Constantinople in 626 AD. The deserters thus triggered the sudden losses of the Sasanian Empire.³² The Karens, the Mihrans, and the Ispahbudhan had before been



Map 3: Heartlands of the Persian Dynasties after the reorganization under Xosrov II

²⁶ Cécile Morrisson, *Catalogue des monnaies byzantines de la Bibliothèque nationale* (Paris, 1970) 294: Buste de f. de Chosroes portant le stemma et la cuirasse./IB Au centre, croix potencée au-dessus d'un globe.

²⁷ Sasanian Kings. Husrav (Khosrau) II AV Dinar. Uncertain mint, Dated RY 33 (AD 622/623). Facing bust, wearing mural crown with frontal crescent and surmounted by pellet-in-crescent; crescents and fillets over shoulders, crown flanked by stars / Husrav standing facing, crown and symbols as on obverse, holding sword; 'syčsyh' to lower left. Cf. K. Mosig-Walburg, 'Sonderprägungen des Xusrō II vom Typ Göbl V/6 und VI/7,' *Iranica Antiqua* XXVIII (1993), 2-7; Göbl type VI/7; Paruck 460; Saedi -, Sunrise 989. Cf. Classical numismatic Group Triton XIV (2011). Coinarchives.com.

²⁸ According to Pourshariati, Shahrvaraz links to the wild boar, a symbol of the fifth incarnation of Mithra. However, the Parthian Manicheans also incorporated Mithra as the Third Messenger in their beliefs, eclipsing the Pahlavi God Nirasaf in the same role.

²⁹ Gyselen 2001a, seal 2d/2, p. 41, in Parvaneh Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire* (Tauris, 2008) 142: It is remarkable that according to Gyselen, the gentilitial name of Mihran is clearly added to the seal at a later date for we do possess one bulla (impression) "which was made by the seal under its first form (seal 2d/1) and several made by the same seal under its second form (seal 2d/2), where the word -mtr'n- (Mihran) has been added to the end of the inscription on a third line, just below the word spahbed, which addition might in fact be a sign of the growing independence of Shahrvaraz." Gyselen 2001 a, p. 11.

³⁰ Parvaneh Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire* (Tauris, 2008) 269.

³¹ Ibid. 142: What is clear from the complicated course of events is that Shahrvaraz rebelled and mutinied, probably late in 626 or early in 627, and formed an alliance with the Byzantine emperor Heraclius.

³² Parvaneh Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire* (Tauris, 2008) 102.

pushed from their territories by the Armenian-Parthian Smbat Bagratuni who had earlier helped Xosrov to regain the throne.

Due to these tribal divisions, Xosrov's forces broke into three independent armies under Shahrvaraz (Mihran), Farrukh Hormizd (Ispahbudhan Prince of the Medes, Azerbaijan), and Nimruz (Sistan, Persia and the East). The internal strife stood in the way from the Byzantine Empire being assimilated by Xosrov, and the divisions would continue into Islamic times.

Xosrov's successors, Kavadh II³³ and Ardashir III,³⁴ would return to the traditional model of Zoroastrian pictography. In an environment of religious strife, these coins can but indicate Zoroastrian leadership, whatever that meant at the time. Any other interpretation would require more than just circumstantial evidence or claims by traditions that emerged long after the fact.



Yazdegerd's coinage would tell a story of continued dynastic strife. In the years 632-634, all of the extant mints are from Parsig areas: Fars of the House of Sasan, Khuzistan of the House of Ispahbudhan, and Sistan (Sakastan) of the Suren Dynasty. With the exception of the unidentified WYHC mints in 637-639, there have been no mints found from the Pahlav north that would indicate support for Yazdegerd.³⁵ There are no further mints extant from Fars and Khuzistan as of 636 AD until the tenth year of Yazdegerd when Sistan and Kirman mints resume for the next decade. The cause of the gap might have been a severe outbreak of a plague.

In contrast, there is a coin with Heraclius's emblem from 639 AD from the Damascus mint that bears the year 17, coinciding with the Arab era. Since this coin represents the oldest example of the Arab time,³⁶ it possibly served as a reminder for Heraclius's advances and his successive alliance with Shahrvaraz, Rustam, and Farrukh Hormizd. Perhaps, it related to this short lived confederacy (which may *become* Arab time). Logically, but as pure speculation, **AH** could then bear the meaning of **A**ugustus **H**eraclius and be later reborn under a different idea that may have been conjectured into the Byzantine-Sasanian conflict and their prominent deserters.



According to inadmissible tradition, Muhammad's expansion was aggressively advancing under Xosrov's feet. Strangely, the primary evidence is absent of any hint that the ruler was alarmed by this prophet. The areas, including Egypt, that were supposed to start out as Muslim must have been in Xosrov's firm control until his death in 628 AD. However, the traditions in respect to the royal family

³³ Kavadh II was King of Persia from February 628 – September 628 AD.

³⁴ Ardashir III was King of Persia from September 628 to April 629 AD.

³⁵ Susan Tyler-Smith, 'Coinage in the Name of Yazdegerd III (AD 632–651) and the Arab Conquest of Iran' (Numismatic Chronicle 160, 2000) 135–170.

³⁶ There is a coin that some researchers date to 16 AH. This coin is subject of this paper later on.

are not at all concerned with Xosrov II. Likewise, the Muslim leader should be worried about a backlash by the Persians. Yet, Bukhari's earliest hadith in respect to Persia's rulers begins with Xosrov's daughter in 631 AD in a remark that is so out of place that it hints at a continuance of internal enmities among the dynasts rather than an outside 'Arab' threat.³⁷ In addition, nine traditions repeat a prophesy about the end of the Sasanian Dynasty,³⁸ which would not occur until 651 AD, and some even predict the end of the Heraclian Dynasty, which would possibly occur during the turbulences between Muawiah and Constans II, sometime during the mid-fifties AD or at the end of the dynasty in 711 AD. One tradition places Muhammad in context of the turbulent year 631 AD under Xosrov IV, son of Hormizd.³⁹ In all other cases, Bukhari uses the term *Khosrau* as a balance to the *House of Caesar*, rather than a specific person.

Heraclius is described in Bukhari as *head of the Christians of Sham* (Damascus), and the narrations are always put in context with Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, who died in 652 AD.⁴⁰ However, the name *Heraclius* was not only attributed to himself but also to his son and to Constans II (Herakleios). A lone reference by a sub narrator to Heraclius's palace in Emesa (Homs) and another to an *Arab independence* indicates a kernel in a history from before 637 AD. Thus, the respective traditions could lie in a broad spectrum that could span decades, and it is surprising how little they pay attention to Heraclius the Great.

Doctrina Jacobi (just before 640 AD)

The first primary evidence of a new prophet is in the *Doctrina Jacobi* in the context of the Saracens who are here understood as *Saracens* absent of Muslim or tribal prejudices. The latter's origin could rest on any biblical genealogy from those born *not* from Sarah. These include the Ishmaelites (Hagarites) and Keturahns,⁴¹ but it would be frivolous to either take a side or narrow a search to these two without a thorough understanding of their whereabouts, in particular when they are named in the same context or seemingly as one. To make it harder for researchers, sometime around the third century, the authors of the *Genesis Rabbah*⁴² decided to merge Hagar with Keturah as Abraham's second wife, thus creating a wider array of Hagarite descendants.⁴³

When the *candidatus* was killed by the Saracens, I was at Caesarea and I set off by boat to Sykamina. People were saying "the *candidatus* has been killed," and we Jews were overjoyed. And they were saying that the prophet had appeared, coming with the Saracens, and that he was proclaiming the advent of the anointed one, the Christ who was to come. I, having arrived at Sykamina, stopped by a certain old man well-versed in scriptures, and I said to him: "What can you tell me about the prophet

³⁷ Bukhari, ca. 864-870 AD (CMJE and the University of Southern California, 2007-2009) 5:59:709: When Allah's Apostle was informed that the Persians had crowned the daughter of Khosrau as their ruler, he said, "Such people as ruled by a lady will never be successful."

³⁸ Bukhari, for example 8:78:625: The Prophet said, "If Caesar is ruined, there will be no Caesar after him; and if Khosrau is ruined, there will be no Khosrau after him; and, by Him in Whose Hand my soul is, surely you will spend their treasures in Allah's Cause." See also *Sahih Muslim* Vol. 7, 7327 75 (2918) and 7329 76.

³⁹ Bukhari, 4:56:793: The Prophet further said. "If you should live long, the treasures of Khosrau will be opened (and taken as spoils)." I asked, "You mean Khosrau, son of Hurmuz?"

⁴⁰ Compare Bukhari, 1:1:6 and 4:52:191.

⁴¹ Sozomen had attested to the Ishmaelite background of the Lakhmids in the early fifth century as opposed to the Keturahn origin of the Ghassanids. Sozomenus, ca. 420 AD, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 6:38, Translated by Chester D. Hartranft. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 2. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight.

⁴² *Genesis Rabbah*, 61.4.

⁴³ *Genesis* 25:1-4: And Abraham took another wife, and her name was Keturah. And she bore him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. And Jokshan begot Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim. And the sons of Midian: Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoah, and Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.

who has appeared with the Saracens?" He replied, groaning deeply: "He is false, for the prophets do not come armed with a sword. Truly they are works of anarchy being committed today and I fear that the first Christ to come, whom the Christians worship, was the one sent by God and we instead are preparing to receive the Antichrist. Indeed, Isaiah said that the Jews would retain a perverted and hardened heart until all the earth should be devastated. But you go, master Abraham, and find out about the prophet who has appeared." So I, Abraham, inquired and heard from those who had met him that there was no truth to be found in the so-called prophet, only the shedding of men's blood. He says also that he has the keys of paradise, which is incredible.⁴⁴

This document has received scholarly treatment ad nauseam. Crone and Cook, for example, maintain that an alliance between Saracens and Jews is suggested in *Jacobi*.⁴⁵ Wansbrough, in contrast, dismisses such ideas as preposterous since they were brought up by enemies.⁴⁶ *Jacobi* refers to a polemic dialogue between the narrator and a Jew in North Africa who suggests that the Jew would have been better off being a Christian. Unfortunately, the text reveals nothing about what either being a Christian or a Jew – let alone a Saracen – meant for the author. Modern research seems to turn a blind eye to the prospect that all three terms could have significantly different meanings back then, so much so that it might be difficult to recognize either of them easily today.

The act of killing the *candidatus* is generally attributed to July 634 AD. Scholars typically pick the Byzantine commander and *candidatus* Sergius as the victim in the text, but that involves a chain of assumptions that attempts to reconcile this text with inadmissible tradition.

However, there are major reservations that are removed from polemic: this first source lacks an introduction to the central subject of the narration, indicating an expectation that the reader knows more than he/she could. *Jacobi*'s passage operates on a similar approach of vagueness as the traditions. Missing definite historic anchors, the text is left to generous interpretation, which could fit different events at various times or locations. Likewise, the main nuisance with the text had long been pointed out by researchers: it declines to reveal name, place, or time of the prophet. Which one is *Jacobi*'s Christ; from where is he; when did he live? Before, during, and after the seventh century, many prophets seem to have come with the Saracens from Africa, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian deserts, and perhaps from elsewhere. *Jacobi*'s text establishes the appearance of a nameless prophet who came with an undefined Saracen tribe at some unspecified date and place. He killed an anonymous *candidatus* from nowhere. The latter could have been any. It would be negligent to take Muhammad for granted when the text does not say so.

The annunciation of the Christ is a level of Jewish perception that connects to the prophecies of the Seventy 'Sevens' in the Book of Daniel,⁴⁷ which signifies the arrival of the Messiah around 625 AD, 490 years after the Third Jewish-Roman War that ended in 135 AD.⁴⁸ From this follows that the prophet (Elijah) would be the forerunner of the Christ. The text thus proposes more than a mere

⁴⁴ Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It* (Darwin, 1998) *Doctrina Jacobi* V.16, 209. p. 57.

⁴⁵ Patricia Crone and Michael Cook (1976).

⁴⁶ Wansbrough, *Sectarian Milieu*, 116-7: Can a vocabulary of motives be freely extrapolated from a discrete collection of literary stereotypes composed by alien and mostly hostile observers, and thereupon employed to describe, even interpret, not merely the overt behavior but also the intellectual and spiritual development of helpless and mostly innocent actors?

⁴⁷ Daniel 9:20 – 9:27.

⁴⁸ Note the proximity to 0 AH: 135 + 490 = 625 AD. The count may have started with the rise of a leader or an alliance rather than the end of the war.

involvement: it is distinctly Jewish. In contrast, for the Muslims, the prophet is placed before the Mahdi, the Redeemer who should fall together with the *Second* Coming of Jesus Christ, Isa, who will assist the Mahdi in the fight against the Antichrist, Masih ad-Dajjal. After the rule of the Mahdi lies Judgment Day or the Day of Resurrection. While Sunnis are still waiting for the Mahdi, he would be born for the Shi'ites to live on as the twelfth, hidden Imam.

With a prophet that announces the Christ, the text suggests an intriguing possibility: could the Prophet and the Apostle of God in Islam be two individuals?⁴⁹ There is also the prospect of a chain of apostles of God as suggested by Bukhari.⁵⁰

Hence, there are alternatives in understanding Jacobi.

He could have lifted others to prophethood, the son of the Jewish Exilarch, Nehemiah ben Hushiel, for example, who started out in alliance with Xosrov (and perhaps Elijah bar Kabsha) but was involved in the killing of the Persian candidatus during the upheavals in Jerusalem in 614/615 AD. This scenario could also explain the “keys to paradise” (a wink to Saint Peter or the Temple Mount whence the high-priest hurled the keys back to God). Nehemiah fits the classic profile of a redeemer – a khristos/messiah – or an apostle of God. It may be noted that he first had to clean the Temple Mount from centuries old debris before starting his building project.⁵¹ Since he failed in the mission, he would undoubtedly have become a false messiah.

Eliezer ben Qalir wrote that the building project came to an abrupt end.⁵² The flame from Jerusalem was brutally extinguished, Jews were persecuted from Spain to Italy, Byzantium, and also in Persia. However, it is neither readily obvious why the Jews should be ‘overjoyed’ at this death after Persia had provided them a safe haven for centuries nor why they would now be persecuted there also. If the Jewish joy finds its explanation in the primary evidence, then even the killing of a candidatus at the royal court at Ctesiphon would need to be taken into consideration.

Alternatively, a false prophet⁵³ by the name of Musaylimah of the Banu Hanifa tribe surfaced in the legends after Muhammad's traditional death in 632 AD. This Christian or Manichean tribe forms the

⁴⁹ Bukhari, 2:24:540: [...] and it was in front of the Mosque of the Prophet. Allah's Apostle used to go there and used to drink its nice water. [Since all mosques are post Prophet, Allah's Apostle must have been a different person visiting the Mosque of the Prophet.]

⁵⁰ Bukhari, 3:48:849: A Jew from Hira asked me which one of the two periods Musa (i.e. Prophet Moses) completed. I said, 'I don't know, (but wait) till I see the most learned Arab and enquire him about it.' So, I went to Ibn 'Abbas and asked him. He replied, 'Moses completed the longer and better period.' Ibn 'Abbas added, 'No doubt, *an* apostle of Allah always does what he says.'

⁵¹ After the Aka Mosque had been damaged in 1927 and 1937, R.W. Hamilton, director of the British Mandate Antiquities Department excavated under the mosque's piers during 1938 and 1942 in coordination with the Wakf Islamic Trust that controls the compound. There appears to have been built a mosaic floor with Byzantine motifs that is estimated between the fourth and seventh century. Etgar Lefkovits, Was the Aksa Mosque built over the remains of a Byzantine church? Jerusalem Post, November 16, 2008: The Byzantine mosaic floor, which was uncovered under the Umayyad level of the mosque, is "without a doubt" the remains of a public building - likely a church - which predated the mosque, Zweig [archeologist Zachi Zweig] said in an address at a Bar-Ilan University archeological conference. A similar mosaic can be found at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, he said. "The existence of a public building from the Byzantine period on the Temple Mount is very surprising in light of the fact that we do not have records of such constructions in historical texts," Zweig said.

⁵² Eliezer ben Qalir (ca. 630 AD) in Robert Hoyland, Sebeos, the Jews and the Rise of Islam () 3: The holy people will have a short respite, for Assur (the Persians) will permit them to found the holy shrine and they will build the altar and offer up the sacrifices. But they will not have time to establish the sanctuary ... After three months the commander-in-chief will return and come against him (the Messiah son of Joseph) and will kill him in the little temple, and his blood will congeal upon the rock. And the land shall mourn, every family apart (Zacharia 12.12).

⁵³ Bukhari 4:56:817: While I was sleeping, I saw (in a dream) two gold bracelets round my arm, and that worried me too much. Then I was instructed divinely in my dream, to blow them off and so I blew them off, and they flew away. I interpreted the two bracelets as symbols of two liars who would appear after me. And so one of them was Al-Ansi and the other was Musailama Al-Kadhdhab from Al-Yamama.

ancestors of today's royal family in Saudi Arabia. Tradition suggests *Hanif* as a synonym to *Islam*,⁵⁴ and according to Ibn al-Nadim, Mani, the prophet of the Manicheans, was the most hanif of men.⁵⁵ Yet, the Manicheans rely on a lineup of paracletes⁵⁶ whose trail can possibly be picked up five hundred years later with Benjamin of Tudela. His account suggests that the Abbasid rulers saw themselves as paracletes (apostles of God), in a succession of Muhammads⁵⁷ who re-enacted Judaic rituals.⁵⁸

A side remark seems opportune: three hundred years earlier, the Christian writer Cyril of Jerusalem, one of the Doctors of the Church, established that the origin of Manichaeism was Saracen. Although not a contemporary to Manes, he alleged that they were neither Jews nor Christians.⁵⁹ On the other hand, Emperor Diocletian wrote in a rescript at the end of the third century to the proconsul of Africa that the Manicheans originated from the hostile Persians as if deployed as a propaganda weapon to subvert the empire.⁶⁰ It indicates an ongoing struggle that might find its beginnings centuries earlier with the incursion of the Roman Empire into the Middle East. It is also a reminder not to underestimate the strength of Manichaeism. Since this religion had adopted doctrines from Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity (as well as Buddhism), its sectarian branches are not easily identifiable.

According to al-Tabari, the Adnanite Musaylimah claimed a divine, prophetic partnership with Muhammad while he taught the superiority of the Banu Hanifa over the Quraysh.

From Musaylimah, Messenger of Allah, to Muhammad, Messenger of God. Salutations to you. I have

⁵⁴ Bukhari 5:58:169: "Can you tell me of some other religion?" He said, "I do not know any other religion except the Hanif." Zaid enquired, "What is Hanif?" He said, "Hanif is the religion of (the prophet) Abraham who was neither a Jew nor a Christian, and he used to worship none but Allah (Alone)."

⁵⁵ Ibn al-Nadim in Moshe Gil, *Israel Oriental Studies XII*, edited by Joel L. Kraemer (Brill, 1992) 17.

⁵⁶ The word *paraclete* could be described as a human *intercessor* who is endowed with the *presence of God*.

⁵⁷ The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela (1171) 54-58: Thence it is two days to Bagdad, the great city and the royal residence of the Caliph Emir al Muminin al Abbasi of the family of Mohammed. He is at the head of the Mohammedan religion, and all the kings of Islam obey him; he occupies a similar position to that held by the Pope over the Christians [...]

There the great king, Al Abbasi the Caliph holds his court, and he is kind unto Israel, and many belonging to the people of Israel are his attendants; he knows all languages, and is well versed in the law of Israel. He reads and writes the holy language [Hebrew] [...] The men of Islam see him but once in the year. The pilgrims that come from distant lands to go unto Mecca which is in the land El-Yemen, are anxious to see his face, and they assemble before the palace exclaiming "Our Lord, light of Islam and glory of our Law, show us the effulgence of thy countenance," but he pays no regard to their words.

Then the princes who minister unto him say to him, "Our Lord, spread forth thy peace unto the men that have come from distant lands, who crave to abide under the shadow of thy graciousness," and thereupon he arises and lets down the hem of his robe from the window, and the pilgrims come and kiss it, and a prince says unto them "Go forth in peace, for our Master the Lord of Islam granteth peace to you." He is regarded by them as Mohammed and they go to their houses rejoicing at the salutation which the prince has vouchsafed unto them, and glad at heart that they have kissed his robe. [...]

He proceeds from his palace to the great mosque of Islam which is by the Basrah Gate [...]

He does not return the way he came; and the road which he takes along the river-side is watched all the year through, so that no man shall tread in his footsteps. He does not leave the palace again for a whole year. He is a benevolent man.

⁵⁸ Leviticus 16:34: [...] Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites.

Leviticus 16:2: The Lord said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.

⁵⁹ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lecture* (358 AD), 6:22-25: There was in Egypt one Scythianus, a Saracen by birth, having nothing in common either with Judaism or with Christianity. This man, who dwelt at Alexandria and imitated the life of Aristotle, composed four books, one called a Gospel which had not the acts of Christ, but the mere name only, and one other called the book of Chapters, and a third of Mysteries, and a fourth, which they circulate now, the Treasure. This man had a disciple, Terebinthus by name. But when Scythianus purposed to come into Judaea, and make havoc of the land, the Lord smote him with a deadly disease, and stayed the pestilence.

⁶⁰ Lieu, *Manichaeism*, 121-22 in J. Kevin Coyle, *Manichaeism and Its Legacy* (Brill, 2009) 5: We have heard that the Manichaeans [...] have set up new and hitherto unheard-of sects in opposition to the older creeds so that they might cast out the doctrines vouchsafed to us in the past by the divine favour for the benefit of their own depraved doctrine. They have sprung forth very recently like new and unexpected monstrosities among the race of the Persians — a nation still hostile to us — and have made their way into our empire, where they are committing many outrages, disturbing the tranquility of the people and even inflicting grave damage to the civic communities. We have cause to fear that with the passage of time they will endeavor, as usually happens, to infect the modest and tranquil Roman people of an innocent nature with the damnable customs and perverse laws of the Persians as with the poison of a malignant (serpent).

been given a share with you in this matter. Half the earth belongs to us and half to the Quraish. But the Quraish are a people who transgress.⁶¹

Tabari referred to the biblical covenant between God and Abraham in which Isaac had been promised the inheritance of the land of Canaan⁶² and Ishmael had been given unspecified kingdoms.⁶³ He also revealed the identity of the allies: the Quraysh with half, and Muhammad and Musaylimah (Hanifa) with a quarter each — both not Quraysh. These traditions lie very strange in the landscape, not the least because of the insecurities of who the three parties were associated with. That they divide up the entire earth is a hint at the tradition's late creation.

Musaylimah's land of origin was Yamamah, which might rest on a Hebrew word for *source for the light of day*,⁶⁴ as if referring to the Manichaean concept of *light*. Together with his wife, prophetess Sajjah,⁶⁵ Musaylimah was one of the three Adnanite prophets of apostasy that were subject of the Ridda Wars. The other 'defector' prophet was al-Asadi.⁶⁶ Such allegations of reverting from a new faith back to a previous religion is a technique to reset the clocks. The magic trick has been applied repeatedly throughout religious history to create a spiritual bottleneck for a sect through which it could craft a pre-history against the backdrop that it had lost most or all of its followers.

Yet another was al-Ansi,⁶⁷ a rich business prophet of Yemen, who was apparently so ugly that he hid behind a veil and was known as a drunk who entertained the crowd with tricks like having a donkey kneel before God. But there were many more:⁶⁸ Following Bukhari, it was a time of hyperinflation of prophets, and *the Prophet Muhammad* himself looms with a following in the tens of thousands that distinguishes itself through total silence in the primary evidence.

In addition, there was Saf ibn Sayyad (Abdullah ibn Sa'id), a false messiah, according to tradition,⁶⁹ but nevertheless one that must have pretended to be a prophet. In the secondary hadith collection, he competed directly with Muhammad for the title of the Messenger of Allah.⁷⁰

Although not technically recognized as a prophet, a prominent candidate is Maximus the Confessor:⁷¹ He is believed to having been born around the same time as the Muhammad of the traditions. Seemingly originating with Heraclius, a Christological controversy had flared up, the

⁶¹ Al-Tabari (838–923 AD), *The History of Al Tabari*, translated by Ismail K. Poonawala (State University of New York, 1990) 107.

⁶² Genesis 17:8.

⁶³ Genesis 21:13.

⁶⁴ I would like to thank Ahmed Rasmy for pointing it out.

⁶⁵ Sajjah bint al-Harith ibn Su'aid

⁶⁶ Tulayha ibn Khuwaylid ibn Nawfal al-Asadi defected from Mohammad in 631 AD and proclaimed that he was a prophet.

⁶⁷ Al-Aswad al-Ansi appeared as a prophet around 630 AD.

⁶⁸ Bukhari, 8:76:549: The Prophet said, "The people were displayed in front of me and I saw one prophet passing by with a large group of his followers, and another prophet passing by with only a small group of people, and another prophet passing by with only ten (persons), and another prophet passing by with only five (persons), and another prophet passed by alone. And then I looked and saw a large multitude of people, so I asked Gabriel, 'Are these people my followers?' He said, 'No, but look toward the horizon.' I looked and saw a very large multitude of people. Gabriel said, 'Those are your followers, and those are seventy thousand (persons) in front of them who will neither have any reckoning of their accounts nor will receive any punishment.'"

⁶⁹ Bukhari, 9:92:453: Narrated Muhammad bin Al-Munkadir: I saw Jabir bin 'Abdullah swearing by Allah that Ibn Sayyad was the Dajjal. I said to Jabir, "How can you swear by Allah?" Jabir said, "I have heard 'Umar swearing by Allah regarding this matter in the presence of the Prophet and the Prophet did not disapprove of it."

⁷⁰ Sahih Muslim, 41:6999-41:7002: Muhammad said: "Don't you bear testimony to the fact that I am the Messenger of Allah?" Ibn Sayyad said: "No, but you should bear testimony that I am the messenger of Allah." Thereupon 'Umar ibn al-Khattab said: "Allah's Messenger, permit me that I should kill him." Thereupon Muhammad said: "If he is that person who is in your mind (i.e. the Dajjal), you would not be able to kill him."

⁷¹ Maximus the Confessor, ca. 580 – 662 AD.

doctrine of Jesus with one will⁷² as opposed to the separate wills that would be based on the two natures of Jesus (Fredegar explains the controversy with the doctrines of Eutyches and his successors, i.e. both natures of Jesus are unified into one divinity). The new idea would rock the Christian world for the next five decades. Thus, there was a parallel Maronite 'prophet' on the stage of history as the Byzantine ideas' fiercest opponent. Since two of Maximus's biographies are diametrically opposed and his works are tainted with Orthodox verbiage, he is not a reliable source, and he is not subject of this paper. Still, it needs to be noted that his (?) doctrinal ideas in *The Life of The Virgin*⁷³ contain earlier concerns – the work does *not* address Jesus's will,⁷⁴ and the author makes no reference whatsoever to the fundamental changes under foot. Yet, Maximus may indeed be connected with Heraclius and his ideas through Carthage, the capital of the Exarchate of Africa that had been instated by Emperor Maurice not long before.

One more messianic prophet is often forgotten: al-Mukhtār ibn Abī 'Ubayd Allah al-Thaqafī. According to tradition, he was born in 622 AD. He may be too young for Jacobi, but he would leave his mark. He was involved in establishing a counter caliph, Muhammad ibn al-Hanafīyyah, the supposed Mahdi. One of al-Mukhtār's opponents was John Maron,⁷⁵ the first Maronite Patriarch.

For the purpose of the historicity of Muhammad as well as the Umayyad's conversion, researchers can pick and choose. The text suggests a Jewish event that happened to fall together with the advent of the Saracens. The whereabouts of the latter or their identity remain undefined as well.

Thomas the Presbyter (ca. 640 AD)

The notion of unsubstantiated storytelling changes with Thomas the Presbyter. According to him, the Tayyi' MHMT were engaged in battle by Gaza.

In the year 634 [...] there was a battle between the Romans and the tayyaye d-Mhmt in Palestine twelve miles east of Gaza [...]

Some 4000 poor villagers of Palestine were killed there, Christians, Jews and Samaritans. The Arabs ravaged the whole region.⁷⁶

As outlined earlier, Elijah bar Kabsha had been chief of the Tayyi',⁷⁷ and he was replaced with governor Azadbeh a *debqan* of noble Sasanian blood,⁷⁸ possibly Mihran. Now, the Tayyi' sailed under the label of *MHMT*, which, as is generally recognized, differs from *MHMD*. Hence, the text represents no confirmation of Muhammad. Instead, it may refer to a religious title or an institution of the Tayyi'.

⁷² Monothelitism.

⁷³ Maximus the Confessor, *The Life of The Virgin*, translated by Stephen J. Shoemaker (Yale University Press, 2012).

⁷⁴ Maximus, 51: He united himself with humanity not through seed but by the power of the Most High and the coming of the Holy Spirit. He himself was the one who united and the one who was united: he united the two natures in one hypostasis and was united with human nature by grace.

⁷⁵ John Maron, Youhana Maroun, John the Sarumite, 628 – 707 AD. Maron was consecrated bishop in 676 AD. Pope Sergious I approved the foundation of the Maronite Church in 686 AD and made Maron Patriarch of Antioch and all the East.

⁷⁶ Thomas the Presbyter, *Chronicle* (ca. 640 AD) 147-148.

⁷⁷ Eyaş ibn Qabisah al-Ta'i or Iyas ibn Qabisa, chief of Tayyi'.

⁷⁸ The marzaban Islamic aristocracy of the Tahirid Dynasty would rule the semi-independent province of Khorasan and Baghdad from the ninth century.

Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem (died 639 AD)

There are several comments in Sophronius about the brutality of the Saracen incursions as well as a note that a mosque (*midzgita*) would have been under construction on top of the Temple Mount.

The godless Saracens entered the holy city of Christ our Lord, Jerusalem, with the permission of God and in punishment for our negligence, which is considerable, and immediately proceeded in haste to the place which is called the Capitol. They took with them men, some by force, others by their own will, in order to clean that place [i.e. the dunghill, resp. the Temple Mount] and to build that cursed thing, intended for their prayer and which they call a mosque (*midzgitha*).⁷⁹

Meriting concerns about its authenticity, this text is only part of a Gregorian translation but is still considered contemporary.⁸⁰ Sebeos would relate a similar story with a twist where the Jews started building the temple but were then thrown off by the Ishmaelites.⁸¹ This same version is also confirmed by Eliezer ben Qalir, which confirms that the son of the Exilarch Nehemiah first cleared the site. It is curious that Christians had not taken over the Temple Mount before. It had been filled with dung for centuries and they should have cleared it since Constantine's mother Helena had found the True Cross in Jerusalem. Why the focus on this location — and why now? What is modern research missing?

In the text, Jerusalem stands out as the focal point for the Saracens. While there is nothing in the primary evidence that equates them with the *Tayyi'*, perhaps they were working together. Fredegar would come to report that the Saracens were from the Caspian Sea in the Caucasus region. They are thus here considered separate until Fredegar can be discredited.

Sophronius's report also includes that churches and monasteries have been torn down, that they were mocking the cross, and that they were imitating their leader. Yet, it is confusing that he, whose patriarchy had been under assault, was ignorant of a new spiritual leader that remains anonymous other than calling him the devil.⁸² According to George of Resh'aina, Sophronius and Maximus were spiritually affiliated,⁸³ thus perhaps excluding a reference to the latter. However, as with Maximus, no writings about the issue of Jesus's will are extant of the patriarch, supposedly a defender of Orthodoxy, disabling future generations from making a sound assessment of what was going on.

The view of the self in Bukhari's inadmissible traditions is never *Saracen* or *Ishmaelite*. The latter are generally described in divination with arrows,⁸⁴ and the former are altogether absent. The *Tayyi'* are referred to only once in a negative tone.⁸⁵ While the Quraysh are usually portrayed as hostile infidels to be converted, their prominence is overwhelming. But even though the Koran was supposedly

⁷⁹ Hoyland, Note of Sophronius in John Moschus, ca. 637-639, *Pratum spirituale*, 100-102, p. 63.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Sebeos, 31: Now I shall speak about the plot of the Jewish rebels, who, finding support from the Hagarenes for a short time, planned to [re]build the temple of Solomon. Locating the place called the holy of holies, they constructed [the temple] with a pedestal, to serve as their place of prayer. But the Ishmaelites envied [the Jews], expelled them from the place, and named the same building their own place of prayer.

⁸² Ibid., 72-73: That is why the vengeful and God-hating Saracens, the abomination of desolation clearly foretold to us by the prophets, overrun the places which are not allowed to them, plunder cities, devastate fields, burn down villages, set on fire the holy churches, overturn the sacred monasteries, oppose the Byzantine armies arrayed against them, and in fighting raise up the trophies [of war] and add victory to victory. [...] Those Godfighters boast of prevailing over all, assiduously and unrestrainably imitating their leader, who is the devil, and emulating his vanity because of which he has been expelled from heaven and been assigned to the gloomy hades.

⁸³ Christian Boudignon, *Maxime le Confesseur Etait-il Constantinopolitain?* (2008) 8.

⁸⁴ For example Bukhari, ca. 864-870 AD (CMJE and the University of Southern California, 2007-2009): 5:59:584.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 4:56:793: What will happen to the robbers of the tribe of Tai who have spread evil throughout the country?

written in the language of the Quraysh⁸⁶ and the Kaaba in Mecca was renovated by them, the traditions never develop a self-view as being one of them either. They rather represent a conquered people.⁸⁷ How they suddenly became helpers after the conquest of Mecca⁸⁸ and managed to seize the right to rule remains unexplained.⁸⁹ This claim of Quraysh leadership is repeated in the context of Mu'awiyah.⁹⁰ Bukhari thus shares the paradox with Al-Tabari where Muhammad would not be a Quraysh. Only the mainstream narrative has the prophet originate from this tribe.

The word *mosque* is an Aramaic synonym for *temple*, *synagogue* or *church* that is found in Nabataean texts as early as the first century BC.⁹¹ While it had disappeared since, it now returned. Likewise, Bukhari is unspecific with the term, and in one tradition, he views the word *mosque* interchangeable with a Christian or Manichean place of worship that had existed before the conquest of Najd.⁹² Sophronius thus merely repeats a word for *place of worship* in a language foreign to him. However, Bukhari provides for an intriguing framework through what we do *not* know: out of the thirteen named and arguably oldest mosques in his traditions, none is mentioned by any contemporary historian in the context of Muhammad, Islam, or the prophet, including the one under construction in Jerusalem, as if nobody took issue.

Following the lead of the primary evidence, the only *mosque* that an unidentified group of *Saracens* had under construction went up on the Temple Mount. With the religious turmoil of the time and the possible alternative scenarios, there is no necessity to conclude that the mosque in Jerusalem or the Saracens had a connection to Islam.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 4:56:709: If you differ with Zaid bin Thabit on any point of the Quran, then write it in the language of Quraish, as the Quran was revealed in their language.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 5:58:22.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 4:56:715: The Prophet said, "The tribes of Quraish, Al-Ansar, Juhaina, Muzaina, Aslam, Ghifar and Ashja' are my helpers, [...]"

⁸⁹ Ibid., 4:56:700 and 4:56:705.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 4:56:704.

⁹¹ Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, *The mosque: the heart of submission* (Fordham, 2006) 85, paraphrased: *Masjīd* derives from the verb *sajada* (to bow down, prostrate oneself). The earliest use of the verb is to be found in an Aramaic account on papyrus of Ashiqar, from the Elephantine islands, dating to the fifth century BC. Although the precise meaning is unclear, the first use of the nominal form *msgd'* is found in an Elephantine papyrus, dating to the late fifth century BC. The noun can subsequently be found on Nabataean stele, mostly from the Damascus and Basra regions, dating from the first century AD. Dating from the second and third century AD, Latin inscriptions from the Commagen region refer to *Jupiter Turmasgadas*, which is the same vocalization as the Arabic *Turmasgade*. A Greek inscription from Dura Europos has a similar designation]. Arculf, *Adomnan, De locis sanctis* (ca. 700 AD) 1.1.14.186, p. 221: In that famous place where once stood the magnificently constructed Temple, near the eastern wall, the Saracens now frequent a rectangular house of prayer which they have built in a crude manner, constructing it from raised planks and large beams over some remains of ruins. This house can, as it is said, accommodate at least 3000 people.

⁹² Bukhari, 5:59:658: The Prophet sent some cavalry towards Najd and they brought a man from the tribe of Banu Hanifa who was called Thumama bin Uthal. They fastened him to one of the pillars of the Mosque. The Prophet went to him and said, "What have you got, O Thumama?" He replied, "I have got a good thought, O Muhammad! If you should kill me, you would kill a person who has already killed somebody, and if you should set me free, you would do a favor to one who is grateful, and if you want property, then ask me whatever wealth you want." [...] The Prophet left him till the day after, when he said, "What have you got, O Thumama?" He said, "I have got what I told you." On that the Prophet said, "Release Thumama." So he (i.e. Thumama) went to a garden of date-palm trees near to the Mosque, took a bath and then entered the Mosque and said, "I testify that None has the right to be worshipped except Allah, and also testify that Muhammad is His Apostle! By Allah, O Muhammad! There was no face on the surface of the earth most disliked by me than yours, but now your face has become the most beloved face to me. By Allah, there was no religion most disliked by me than yours, but now it is the most beloved religion to me."

Pseudo Shenute (ca. 644 AD)

The Coptic Apocalypse of Pseudo-Shenute wrote down a prophesy about the incursion of the Ishmaelites:

After that shall arise the sons of Ishmael and the sons of Esau, who hound the Christians, and the rest of them will be concerned to prevail over and rule all the world and to [re-]build the Temple that is in Jerusalem. When that happens, know that the end of times approaches and is near. The Jews will expect the Deceiver and will be ahead of the [other] peoples when he comes. When you see the [abomination of] desolation of which the prophet Daniel spoke standing in the holy place, [know that] they are those who deny the pains which I received upon the cross and who move freely about my church, fearing nothing at all.⁹³

The prophesy is a doomsday scare that has the Jews expecting a deceiver that signifies the end of times. It appears to be an evolutionary step from the *Doctrina Jacobi*. The fact that the invaders denied the crucifixion hints at a form of Messianic Judaism that would otherwise accept Jesus to the lineup of its prophets. As with the *Doctrina Jacobi*, the text expects the pre-runner of the Messiah (the Mahdi).

The last part is perhaps the most intriguing where the text suggests that this new sect was a branch from the (Egyptian Coptic) Church where they could speak freely. While he likely speaks of Monophysitism, it is curious that they rejected the crucifixion.

Other than the rebuilding projects on the Temple Mount in 614/615 AD or 639 AD, it highlights *three* groups as *Jews*, *Ishmaelites*, and *sons of Esau*.⁹⁴ The latter stand for the biblical betrayal of Esau's birthright to the inheritance of Israel by Jacob, but also for the Edomites in the south of Jerusalem who had opposed the Maccabees⁹⁵ and had formed the royal core of the Herodian Dynasty. Historically, the Ishmaelites emerge first in parallel to their Maccabee opponents as Nabataeans (Zabadeans), from Nebaioth,⁹⁶ the firstborn of Ishmael. The latter had also been betrayed of his birthright, which was given to Isaac. The Biblical Esau had been married to Ishmael's daughter.⁹⁷ In the seventh century, the Nabateans had long been displaced by the Romans. A vague glimpse into their further evolution comes from the oldest, thus far found Arabic inscription about 100 km north of Najran. The Christian inscription is dated to 469/470 AD and represents an intermediary between the Nabatean and the Arabic script.⁹⁸ Najran is also the location for the production of the original veil for the Kaaba in Mecca.

While Ishmael and Esau rise, it is unclear in the text who the deceiver is that the Jews expect or where he is from. Likewise, it is not revealed whether the deceiver is coming from the Jews, the Ishmaelites, the sons of Esau, or whether he might be an outsider.

⁹³ Pseudo-Shenute, *Vision* (ca. 644 AD) 340-41.

⁹⁴ Genesis 25:25: Esau was the firstborn of Isaac, Abraham and Sarah's son. He was red and hairy. His twin brother was Jacob.

⁹⁵ 1 Maccabees 5:65: Then Judas and his brethren went forth and attacked the children of Esau, in the land toward the south, and he took Chebron, and her towns: and he burnt the walls thereof and the towers all round it.

⁹⁶ Genesis 25:13.

⁹⁷ Mahalath.

⁹⁸ Frédéric Imbert, email to the author (August 19, 2014): The text is very clear and readable on the stone: it says (under a cross), Yawnān son of Malik, the month of Burak, year 364 [Roman era] (which is to say 470 AD). This is the oldest Christian text known in an Arabic writing (transition from with some Nabatean forms).

Tradition is not concerned with Esau, the son of Isaac and the model lineage for the Herodians. It rather focuses on the connection of Abu Bakr to Joseph, son of Jacob and grandson of Isaac. But together, these texts imply a Judaic involvement of the 'tribes' of Ishmael, Esau, and Joseph. While the Ishmaelites would be a sub-group of the Saracens (*not* from Sarah), the writer does not apply this designation to them. Perhaps they were already concentrating lineages on Ishmael in order to reclaim the birthright from Abraham.

PERF 558 (644 AD)

A papyrus that is identified as PERF 558, bears another instance of the Arab timescale only a few years after its appearance on a coin.⁹⁹ The document was signed off with the year 22 AH, which is 644 AD, double dated with the Christian timescale, and made out both in Arab and in Greek. It also contains the Bismillah (in the name of God) which is commonly believed to be evidence of Islam but constitutes a paradox by itself: the credo was not part of the original suras in the Koran. As the saying also leaves out the prophet, it only confirms that an unspecified group believed in one God. The Bismillah is perhaps a *like*-Arian equivalent to the Christian *In n mine Patris et Filii et Sp ritus Sancti*. Thus, the verse could be an inter-sectarian, *like*-Arian prayer for the same purpose that is distinct from Trinitarian beliefs. But one must not overlook that Trinitarian Christians or Zoroastrians would readily sign off on the Bismillah as well. Despite the apparent complexities over the relationship of God with his disputed descendant and with the mother of the latter, Trinitarians appear ignorant to the issue that Jews, Muslims, and Zoroastrians view their doctrines as violating the unity of God.

Chronicle of Fredegar (ca. 641/655 AD)

Writing from far away in Europe, the chronicler Fredegar is not usually included in the narrative of researchers to Islam. He recounts the invasion of Heraclius, as follower of Eutyches's doctrines,¹⁰⁰ into Persia and presents a version of the rise of the Saracens that differs significantly from the traditional account. Obviously, Heraclius's incursion into eastern Armenia and beyond with doctrines of Eutyches, who had fused the natures of Jesus into one, would be met with resistance by the Nestorian or *like* Arian population that had formerly been associated with the Persian throne. Fredegar essentially alleges that the circumcised Saracens originated from a country of *Ervolia* beyond the

⁹⁹ PERF 558 (ca. 642 AD): In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. This is what Abdallah, Son of Jabir, and his companions-in-arms, have taken as of slaughter sheep at Heracleopolis (Ihnas) from a representative of Theodorakios (Tidraq), second son of Apa Kyros (Abu Qir), and from a substitute of Christophoros (Istufur), eldest son of Apa Kyros (Abu Qir), fifty sheep as of slaughter and fifteen other sheep. He gave them for slaughter for the crew of his vessels, as well as his cavalry and his breastplated infantry in the month of Jumada I in the year twenty-two. Written by Ibn Hadidu.

¹⁰⁰ J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegars, with its continuations* (Nelson, 1960) 66, p. 55: The Saracens proceeded – as was their habit – to lay waste the provinces of the empire that had fallen to them. They were already approaching Jerusalem. Heraclius felt himself impotent to resist their assault and in his desolation was a prey to inconsolable grief. The unhappy king abandoned the Christian faith for the heresy of Eutyches and married his sister's daughter. [...] He was succeeded by his son Constantine, in whose reign the Roman Empire was cruelly ravaged by the Saracens.

Caucasus Mountains, at the Caspian Sea.¹⁰¹ Identified as descendants from Hagar, they suffered from population pressure and were led by two leaders, whose names he did not reveal.¹⁰²

The notion of an incursion from the north-east is also supported by tradition. An old Dictionary of Islam is illuminating in its summary about the al-Mahdi from two traditions, essentially claiming that he would come embedded with troops from the direction of Khorosan, carrying black ensigns.¹⁰³

Fredegar says *Ercolia*, which could be a Latinized version of the Avestan *vəhrkō*, the region of *Hyrcania*. Khorosan and Tabaristan had essentially been the greater north-eastern areas of modern Iran at the Caspian Sea. Before the reorganization of Xosrov I, the area was in de-facto control of the powerful Parthian House of Karen. They were under pressure from Khazaria, a buffer state that was spreading its power north of the Caucasus and from the Chinese Tang Dynasty that was soon to take the Western Turkic Khaganate to the eastern shores of the Caspian Sea. Were the Saracens perhaps a sub-group of the Mithraic Karens, or were the latter perhaps nicknamed 'Saracens'? As shown earlier, the Karens had been uprooted through the reorganization under Xosrov II by the Bagratunis of Armenia. A backlash would thus not come as a surprise.

Even though Fredegar quotes from a book at hand, rendering him secondary but still contemporary, he recounts how Jerusalem had been conquered, how cities had been destroyed, Egypt set to war, Alexandria seized, and North Africa submitted until only few areas of the Byzantine Empire remained. Constans II had to pay tribute to the Saracens for three years (to Muawiyah), after which period the former refused payment.¹⁰⁴ Apparently, the Byzantine Empire had briefly become a vassal state. This information is part of Fredegar's promise to report in detail what might have happened.¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately, the fulfillment is missing. Since the Maronite Chronicle would come to suggest an involvement of the papacy in Rome, these passages might have been destroyed.

As with the previous writers, Fredegar has two groups seizing parts of the Middle East, possibly working together at times since there is an overlap in Alexandria. The European perception for the

¹⁰¹ Ibid.: The race of Hagar, who are also called Saracens as the book of Orosius attests – a circumcised people who of old had lived beneath the Caucasus on the shores of the Caspian [Sea] in a country known as Ercolia – this race had grown so numerous that at last they took up arms and threw themselves upon the provinces of the Emperor Heraclius, who despatched an army to hold them. [Wallace thinks that Ercolia might be Colchis, at the Black Sea. However, Fredegar clearly puts the "country" to the shores of the *Caspian Sea* (Mare Caspium), *beyond* the Caucasus (ultra montem Caucasi)].

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 55-56: He raised a great force throughout the imperial provinces and sent representatives to the Caspian Gates, which the Macedonian Alexander the Great had built of brass above the Caspian Sea and had shut to check invasion by the untamed barbarians living beyond the Caucasus. Heraclius ordered these gates to be opened, and through them poured 150,000 mercenary warriors to fight the Saracens. The latter, under two commanders, were approximately 200,000 strong.

¹⁰³ Thomas Patrick Huges, *A Dictionary of Islam* (Allen, 1885) 305:

"The world will not come to an end until a man of my tribe and of my name shall be master of Arabia."

"When you see black ensigns coming from the direction of Khorosan, then join them, for the Imam of God will be with the standards, whose name is al-Mahdi."

¹⁰⁴ Wallace, 81, p. 68: This year the Emperor Constantine died and was succeeded as Emperor, on the motion of the senate, by his son Constans, who was still a minor. In Constans' reign the empire suffered very great devastation at the hands of the Saracens. Having taken Jerusalem and razed other cities, they attacked upper and lower Egypt, took and plundered Alexandria, devastated and quickly occupied the whole of Roman Africa, and killed there the patrician Gregory. Only Constantinople, the province of Thrace, a few islands and the duchy of Rome remained in imperial control, for the greater part of the Empire had been overrun by Saracens. So reduced, Constans became in the last resort their tributary, merely controlling Constantinople and a handful of provinces and islands. It is said that for three years and more Constans paid one thousand gold solidi a day to the Saracens; but then he somewhat recovered his strength, little by little won back his empire and refused to pay tribute.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 69: How this came about I shall set down under the right year in its proper sequence; and I shall not remain silent if, God willing, I finish this and other matters as I desire; and so I shall include everything in this book that I know to be true.

next five decades would be that Damascus had been established as the capital of the Saracens and that they were building then 'famous' basilicas and churches, not mosques.¹⁰⁶

It is strange that no contemporary report mentions Mecca, let alone the holy city as the capital of a new empire. It may also be noted that the Saracen conquest does not at all agree with an expanding Muslim caliphate. On the other hand, it seems obvious that Arabs, Saracens and Ishmaelites (both in multiple sects that may morph into one by the early eighth century),¹⁰⁷ Lakhmids, Ghassanids, east and west Armenians, the various Persian dynastic groups, the Tayyi', the Khazars, and the remnants of the Western Turkic Khaganate need to be kept diligently apart before putting them back together in a holistic view.

What seems to shape up is a scenario where a *string* of buffer states and vassal kingdoms along the Byzantine-Persian borders may have been involved, probably through shifting alliances in return for privileges. Their histories may have been intermingled in order to create the one that is today commonly accepted. The Saracens may have broken in from the north and brought along a prophet – perhaps Maximus the Confessor. Clearly distinct, the Tayyi' MHMT seem to have acquired territories from the south.

Arab coinage (ca. 648 to 663 AD)

During the reign of the last Persian Emperor, Yazdegerd III, coins were minted that indicate a continuance of the power struggle among the most powerful dynasties inside the Persian Empire, particularly in the home territory of the ancient royal Achaemeni Dynasty from a millennium earlier.

In the year 26 of the Arabian era [648 AD], the emir Salim b. Ziyad had coins minted in Darabjird, the former Sasanian royal residence in the region of Persia. His relative Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad was also minting coins in this year in Zaranj. In the year 41, Ziyad b. Abi Sufyan had coins minted in Darabjird as well.

The Arabian emirs fought over Darabjird as the former royal residence of the Sasanians. In the year 41 [663 AD], Samura b. Jundab was able to bring the residence under his control for a short time. Then, however, Mu'awiya appeared and was acclaimed as the first Amir-I wurroyishnigan.¹⁰⁸



According to Bukhari, Ubayd Allah must have been an enemy of Husain from the House of Ali. The latter's head had been served to him on a platter,¹⁰⁹ leading to the Shi'ite mourning rituals.

¹⁰⁶ Robert M. Kerr, Die Blauen Blumen von Mecca, August 2014, 67 from Beda Venerabilis (ca. 705 AD): Damascus nobilis urbs Fœnicis quæ et quondam in omni Syria tenuit principatum et nunc Sarracenorum metropolis esse perhibetur, unde et rex eorum Mauuias famosam in ea sibi suæ que genti basilicam dicavit, Christianis in circuitu civibus baptistæ Iohannis ecclesiam frequentantibus. from De locis Sanctis: bi dum Christiani sancti baptistæ Iohannis ecclesiam frequentant, Saracenorum rex cum sua sibi gente aliam instituit atque sacravit.

¹⁰⁷ A post-mortem entry in Fredegar relates to the 730s. It explains an assimilation of the term *Saracens* by the (Spanish) Ishmaelites at that time. Wallace., 20, p. 93: Once more the mighty race of Ishmael, who are now known by the outlandish name of Saracens, rebelled and burst across the river Rhône.

¹⁰⁸ Volker Popp, The Early History of Islam, in The Hidden Origins of Islam (Prometheus, 2010) 49.

¹⁰⁹ Bukhari, 5:57:91: The head of Al-Husain was brought to 'Ubadullah bin Ziyad and was put in a tray, [...]

What this all means is contrary to what the history should be and can be taken straight from the coins: in 648 AD, Ubayd Allah was a defender of Zoroastrianism, and in 663 Darabjird was still a stronghold. Sebeos would later confirm¹¹⁰ that the Persians had split into three military factions, one of which was the eastern Iranian group. This split probably also demarked dynastic and sectarian lines.

A look at coinage during this decade in southern Iraq and Iran still shows little change compared to the Zoroastrian rule, but now the dating with Hijri years would begin in the area of Basrah,¹¹¹ perhaps suggesting that they were allied with the Byzantines.



The coins had an image of a Zoroastrian ruler with the added *Bismillah* (in the name of God) and the traditional Zoroastrian symbolism in the obverse. The coinage mirrors the notions that first, there was no awareness of Islam (and there is no evidence) as late as 653 AD, and second, the Persian Empire was divided but at least partially functional in the east and north up until Yazdegerd's death in 651 at an assumed age of only 27. Coins with Hijri years would be stamped thereafter only (after Heraclius's coins), indicating a kernel of history behind the rebellion under (the Persian) Governor Abdullah ibn Aamir ibn Rabi'ah.¹¹² How this group from Basrah ties in with the Tayyi' and the Saracens remains to be explored.

Islam, according to tradition, comes with a message of converting non-believers, if need be through jihad.¹¹³ It is inconceivable that Muslims would have left Zoroastrian iconography on their coins. In his feedback to an early draft of this article, Robert Hoyland rightly pointed out that this is an absolutist position. Yet, the presence of Zoroastrianism in the archaeological record for over a thousand years calls for caution. Since our knowledge about this religion at this junction is practically nil, it is too easy to dismiss the unknown with the comfort of familiarity. However, this violates academic prudence and is contrary to the resilience of religion that typically applies new paint to an old canvas. Is the underlying process here a substitution, an assimilation, or an adaptation? What are the common denominators? Was proto-Islam so close to (reform) Zoroastrianism that the differences were blurry?

It was shown that the Tayyi' of MHMT might have been masters over the Lakhmid and Ghassanid territories under Kabsha. However, the next section (Isho'yahb) will again show that there might

¹¹⁰ See the section of Sebeos.

¹¹¹ Stefan Heidemann, in Angelika Neuwirth, *The Qur'an in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'an* (Brill) 163: The resulting picture for the early decades seems to correspond to a situation in which the Sasanian administration remained operational, but functioned at a provincial level and was responsible to Arab governors. In the 650s, possibly in the year 653-4, the mint authorities under the jurisdiction of the Basra prefecture, began dating coins with Hijri years written in Pahlavi. The introduction of the new era on coins indicates that the administrative Arabic elite gradually developed an awareness of its Islamic identity, but there was still no overt representation of the Islamic religion and its empire.

¹¹² Abdullah ibn Aamir ibn Rabi'ah 622-678 AD, was governor of Basrah 647-656 AD. According to Bukhari 9:86:103, Abdullah was of the Adnanite Rabi'ah tribe to which the Banu Hanifa also belong.

¹¹³ Bukhari, ca. 864-870 AD (CMJE and the University of Southern California, 2007-2009) 2:26:594: The Prophet was asked, "Which is the best deed?" He said, "To believe in Allah and His Apostle." He was then asked, "Which is the next (in goodness)?" He said, "To participate in Jihad in Allah's Cause." He was then asked, "Which is the next?" He said, "To perform Hajj-Mabrur [accepted pilgrimage to eradicate ones' sins]." The Koran itself lends support for Jihad; Koran 9:5: And when the sacred months are passed, kill those who join other gods with God wherever you shall find them; and seize them, besiege them, and lay wait for them with every kind of ambush: but if they shall convert, and observe prayer, and pay the obligatory alms, then let them go their way [...]

indeed be several histories that were intermingled and that the areas of the Tayyi' might not only have shrunk to a smaller size by the fifties but also that they were not recognized as adhering to a new religion. When the religion would break through in 692 AD, its leaders would act swiftly to impose new symbolisms.

A coin from the Bisapur mint (Fars) of 653 AD shows that Fars was still operating on Yazdegerd's time-scale. The coin bears a text that indicates hope for growth: strengthened, shall it grow.¹¹⁴ It perhaps refers to a new beginning for the Parsis under Yazdegerd after the plague, maybe with a new but smaller Pahlavi alliance. To interpret it as Islamic seems somewhat far-fetched.



In sharp contrast to these coins, there is one Palestine mint from the period between 647 and 658 that bears the name *Muhammad*. It might seem bizarre but the coin shows a leader with a Byzantine style royal headdress holding a Christian cross. Should the coin indeed be from this timeframe, it suggests a Christian Muhammadean influence in Palestine (vs. a Muslim anti-crucifixion stance) while Muawiyah was “governor” of Syria but not while he would be in charge as caliph. It looks as though Maximus the Confessor was the leading spiritual figure in Syria during the time of Muawiyah. Thus, there is an apparent confusion between two spiritual leaders or perhaps between the leader by the name *Muhammad* and the significance of *MHMD* itself. Perhaps Muawiyah had been part of an alliance from which he would later brake off.



While it is still decades out, Volker Popp suggests a meaning under al-Malik as the *chosen/praised* in reference to Jesus.¹¹⁵ Since *MHMD* appears under such different pretexts as a Menorah or a cross, the notion of various interpretations cannot easily be dismissed. That does not render the questions at hand easier. Thus, the coin perhaps belongs to al-Malik's period.



Under Muawiyah, coins were issued that resembled those of Justin and Sophia, for example a CION mint and others. This indicates a joint rule of Muawiyah with a female consort. Comparing with Byzantine headdresses from coins issued under Justin and Sophia, the royal fashion and the coins' general layout remained unchanged from its original (second example). Muawiyah's coins are clearly new mints.



¹¹⁴ Xusro-Typ, Sasaniden-Umayyidenzeit. Drachme, Mz. BYS Bisapur, Fars. Büste mit Flügelkronen n. r. APD (erstarkt, es möge wachsen) am Rand. Jahr 21 (?). Rv. Feueraltar zwischen zwei Dienern. 4,08 g. Göbl Tf. 13, 214 Vgl. Gaube Tf. 2, 17f.

¹¹⁵ Volker Popp, The Early History of Islam, in The Hidden Origins of Islam (Prometheus, 2010) 52.



Muawiyah's coin from CION bears the countermark "tayyib," meaning *the good*. Muawiyah had also issued coins with the Greek legend IERO/SOLOI/MON, meaning *belonging to Jerusalem*,¹¹⁶ again highlighting the centrality of the Holy City.

A coin of Muawiyah was minted in Darabgird in 663 AD with the imprint bism Allah (in the name of God). It undoubtedly represents a continuance of Zoroastrian symbolism in contrast to the CION mint, indicating that Muawiyah may have tolerated (or encouraged) local preferences.

Isho'yahb III of Adiabene (died 659 AD)

Isho'yahb III was a Nestorian patriarch of the Church of the East in the Persian capital Seleucia-Ctesiphon between 649 and 659 AD and was a writer who supposedly mentioned "Muslims" and their doctrines. Instead, he addressed differing policies of two factions.

The heretics are deceiving you [when they say] there happens what happens by order of the Arabs, which is certainly not the case. For the *tayyaye mbaggraye* do not aid those who say that God, Lord of all, suffered and died.

While the writer distinguishes between the *Arabs* as friend and the *tayyi' mbaggraye* as foe, he fails to provide the necessary insight to help understand who they were. Yet, it is remarkable that deception seems to be the modus operandi of the heretics, whichever they were, and that the mechanism had been noted so clearly. If that is the case, researchers have a difficult web to untangle. On the other hand, *mbaggraye* might simply be a corruption of *margrave*, for their former military role in controlling the Persian borders, and might thus initially have been an independent term. Yet, the text reveals that the *tayyi' mbaggraye* did not believe in Jesus having died, which implies that they were against the crucifixion, providing for a first element on the Tayyi's path to Islam. Yet, the *Arabs* seem to be distinct from the *Saracens* since they had been branded by earlier authors for their brutality.

Muslims must not originally have seen themselves as *mbaggraye*, and one inadmissible hadith in Bukhari makes a sharp distinction between a *Muslim* and a *Muhajir*, an immigrant, which is commonly believed to be interchangeable with *mbaggraye*.¹¹⁷ In other places in Bukhari, the *Muhajir* are described as a people in need of conversion¹¹⁸ and also as a sub-group of the Quraysh.¹¹⁹ Yet, the term describes so clearly a form of higher submission to Allah that it may constitute a top hierarchical layer of a pre-existing cross-border, inter-tribal sect by the brand name of *Muhajir* that appears to form the main

¹¹⁶ S. Qedar, Copper Coinage of Syria in the Seventh and Eighth Century AD (Israel Numismatic Journal 10, 1988-1989) 33, plate 6.

¹¹⁷ Bukhari, ca. 864-870 AD (CMJE and the University of Southern California, 2007-2009) 1:2:10: The Prophet said, "A Muslim is the one who avoids harming Muslims with his tongue and hands. And a Muhajir (mbaggraye) is the one who gives up (abandons) all what Allah has forbidden."

¹¹⁸ Bukhari, 8:82:817.

¹¹⁹ Bukhari, 5:58:175: "Who are you?" He said, "A man from the Emigrants." She asked, "Which Emigrants?" He replied, "From Quraish." [...]

path to Islam. This hierarchical dualism looks strangely Manichaean.¹²⁰ If so, then a proper translation for the term would be *wanderers* as a synonym for their *Elect*, which again collides with the Manichaean paracletes (as perhaps upheld by the Abbasids in a Manichaean/Mazdakean hybrid). To consolidate them, it would have to be assumed that the *Muhajjir* might have seen their paracletes as divinely inspired, rather than as gods. The parallel would be found with Christians who are, as noted earlier, blind to the Pagan paradox in Jesus's divinity. This opens the possibility to interpret the terms *muhajjir* and *mbaggraye* differently, perhaps fusing the spiritual and military sense of both over time into jihad.

In his letter to Simon, bishop of Revardasir, Isho'yahb referred to a large presence of Manicheans throughout the Middle East and confirmed the concept of relative religious freedom under the Arabs:

You alone of all the peoples of the earth have become estranged from every one of them. And because of this estrangement from all these, the influence of the present error came to prevail with ease among you. For the one who has seduced you and uprooted your churches was first seen among us in the region of Radan, where the *Hanpe* [Manicheans or alternatively Pagans] are more numerous than the Christians. Yet, due to the praiseworthy conduct of the Christians, the Manicheans were not led astray by him. Rather he was driven out from there in disgrace; not only did he not uproot the churches, but he himself was extirpated. However, your region of Persia received him, Manicheans and Christians, and he did with them as he willed, the Manicheans consenting and obedient, the Christians inactive and silent.

As for the Arabs, to whom God has at this time given rule (shultana) over the world, you know well how they act toward us. Not only do they not oppose Christianity, but they praise our faith, honor the priests and saints of our Lord, and give aid to the churches and monasteries. Why then do your people of Oman reject their faith on a pretext of theirs? And this when the people of Oman themselves admit that the Arabs have not compelled them to abandon their faith, but only asked them to give up half of their possessions in order to keep their faith. Yet they forsook their faith, which is forever, and retained the half of their wealth, which is for a short time.¹²¹

Isho'yahb was on a mission to win back the defecting bishoprics in the eastern Arab Peninsula from a *present* error. In contrast to the previous writers, Isho'yahb brought forth a path that the "seducer" had taken from the church leader's district Taron of Turuberan in Greater Armenia to the Persian city of Revardasir. While it is unclear whether the unnamed leader was still alive, Moshe Gil asserts the seducer possibly bringing along a Maronite incursion to the Manicheans. While this drastically complicates matters, there is nothing in the text that could oppose this notion. In fact, in the larger context of religious strife at the time, conflicts between existing sects was the necessary pretext for the occurrence of a new religion that overwhelmed the divided factions.

¹²⁰ J. Kevin Coyle, *Manichaeism and Its Legacy*, Introduction (Brill, 2009) XV: Manichaeans saw themselves as men and women who heard the call clearly and knew how to answer it. Those who responded unconditionally thereby became adherents of Manichaeism's inner circle—the Elect (perfect, or holy ones). They were [...] required to practice a rigorous asceticism, consisting of three "seals" and five "commandments". They were also obliged to frequent prayer and to break with family and all possessions, and so it was assumed that (at least in western forms of Manichaeism) **the Elect would be perpetual wanderers**. Since they could not even collect their own food, this task fell to the other main division of Manichaean membership, the Hearers (or catechumens), for whom looking after the needs of the elect was the primary religious duty. Hearers were subject to a less demanding code of behaviour: they could perform manual labour, own property and 'kill', that is, harvest and prepare the food they offered to the Elect. They had to observe fewer fasts and less frequent prayers, and could marry, though procreation was discouraged. The hope of Hearers was that, after faithful service, they might be reborn as Elect, and so become eligible to be both saviours and saved. For at death the Elect's destiny was to have his or her personal light-substance start on its journey back to the light-realm.

¹²¹ Isho'yahb III, *Ep.* 14C, 251, (659 AD) 180: the word *Manichean* was originally translated as *Pagan*. Following the argument of Moshe Gil (Israel Oriental Studies XII, 1992), the Syriac word *Hanpe* appears to be erroneously translated and should read *Manichean*. It was thus corrected by the author.

Isho'yahb related to events that were under foot during or since shortly before his reign, again, placing the arrival of the seducer post the traditional Muhammad. He, the seducer, would first have appeared in Greater Armenia, from where he was expelled. As the text is directed toward Oman, those that would have accepted the leader's ideas first would have been Manicheans in that region, followed by passive submission of Christians of unspecified sects. In the traditions, Oman is also first on the list with Bahrain as having submitted to Muhammad, which indicates a time shift between history and tradition.¹²² Indeed, the local Ibadi movement claims of itself to having been founded in the ominous year 692 AD when drastic changes would uproot the political and religious landscape.

Robert Hoyland thinks that the following primary text was written during the reign of Ali:¹²³ "The Iranian and Arabian Christian communities had always been reluctant to submit to Seleucia-Ctesiphon, where the head of the Eastern Church resided, but the arrival of the Muslims [or maybe the Maronites] gave them the chance of winning outside backing. This drew an angry response from Isho'yahb III, the eastern prelate in the 640s and 650s, which he voiced in a letter to the Christians of Qatar."

Not satisfied with their wickedness against the church of God, your so-called bishops extended the demonstration of their rebellion to the rulers there and to the chief ruler who is above the rulers of this time. They rose up against the primacy of the church of God, and they have now been scorned by the rulers as befits their insubordination. (Epistulae 266)

"He then appeals to the priests and deacons of Qatar to cast off their unruly bishops and to send to him persons more worthy of the episcopal office:"

You, my faithful, in whose salutary power are the islands and desert dwellers (yothay madbro)—namely those of dirin [modern Tarut], Mashmahig, Tilun [Dilmun/Bahrain], Khatt and Hajar—should be diligent now more than ever before in the assistance of your faith and in the lawful establishment of the priesthood that sanctifies you even more than in attending to worldly affairs. So pick out and send to us either those fallen bishops who are in your mind suitable once more to be restored to sacerdotal service, or others considered by you more suitable than them for the great task of the exalted service of God's church, so that thus they might be anointed, consecrated and perfected. (Epistulae 267-68)

„By such entreaties and threats Isho'yahb managed to heal the division and achieve a secure arrangement, allowing the Qatar region more independence under its own metropolitan.

The last Christian notice about east Arabia before its Islamization comes from a cleric writing in southwest Iran in the 650s AD, who pens a short piece of Arabian geography:

Hasor, which scripture calls 'head of the kingdoms' [Joshua 11.10], belongs to the Arabs, while Medina is named after Midian, Abraham's fourth son by Qetura; it is also called Yathrib. And Dumat al-Jandal [modern al-Jawf] belongs to them, and the territory of the people of Jajar [Arar?], which is rich in water, palm trees and fortified buildings. The territory of Khatt [in the modern Emirates], situated by the sea in the vicinity of the islands of Qatar, is rich in the same way; it is also thickly vegetated with various kinds of plants. The region of Mazun [Oman] also resembles it, and it too lies by the sea, comprising an area of more than 100 pasangs. So [...] also the territory of Yamama, in the middle of the desert, and the territory of Tawf [the Najran Province?], and the city of Hira [by Kufa], which was the seat of king Mundhir, surnamed the 'warrior.'" (Chron. Khuzistan 38-39)

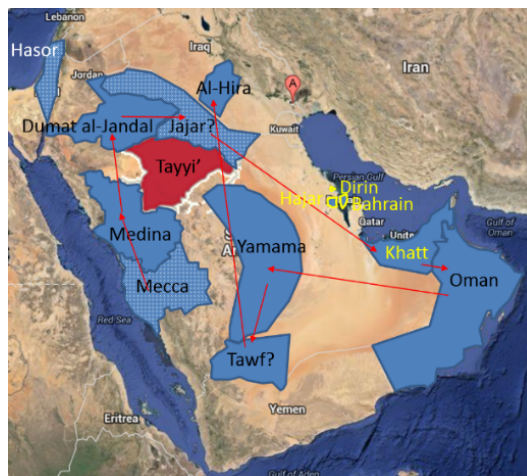
¹²² Bukhari, 5:59:657

¹²³ Ali ibn Abi Talib ruled the caliphate 656-661 AD. He was cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad, a Shi'ite Ishmaelite.

„The author ends with the laconic observation that ‘he [Mundhir] was sixth in the line of the Ishmaelite kings.’”¹²⁴

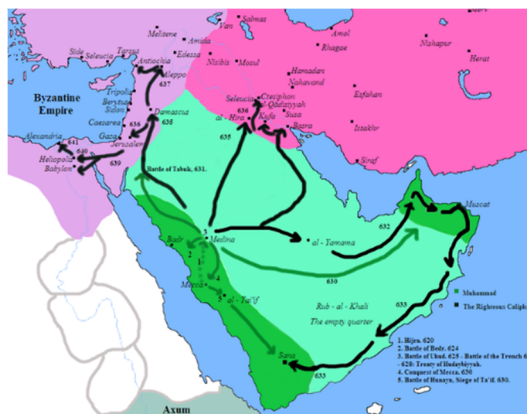
According to the text, there was a schism in the Eastern Church (and also among the MHMTs?). Isho'yahb's targets are around Bahrain and Qatar, and he complains that the rebellion is not only geared against the church but also against the rulers of the time. This is where the like Arian bishoprics had been taken over. If there was an "infected" region in the eastern Arab Peninsula under a "seducer" within this decade between 649 and 659 AD, then it could have been through *conversion* of Manicheans and *like* Arian Christians. Yet, the missionary could have been viewed as a Maronite, which is a link that is also made in the Maronite Chronicle.

In contrast, the cleric's fragment seems unrelated to Isho'yahb. There, the opponents had essentially taken over large areas in the Arab Peninsula, including Hasor, which is believed to relate to Mecca. However, the *head of the kingdoms* is also a Biblical reference in Joshua that could indicate the north-eastern Israeli city. Both regions are marked on the map as shaded areas as is Jajar, which is also unclear. Hasor did not exist at this time, but its neighboring city of Safed would rise to one of the Four Holy Cities of Judaism, together with Tiberias, Hebron, and Jerusalem. This would potentially align the Palestinian coin with the Muhammad pictography if it were to project the same meaning. If the cleric's *Hasor* were identical with Sebeos's *T'etal region*, then the writers must have meant the Levant, which was indeed initially the logic of the cleric's order is perplexing, and the text possible Hasors reveals a patchwork that defies the grain in the making. Except for Khatt, the fragment is so different perhaps talk about two different phenomena, maybe even in different times that would later morph Arab friend and Mhaggrayye foe into one. While the cleric rather seems to overlap with the traditions of the Muslim expansion in the early 630s, Isho'yahb does not complain about an incursion from the western Arab Peninsula other than highlighting the anti-Christian stance of the Mhaggrayye. The map indicates that Syria, Basrah, and Iran, the Lakhmids (that had earlier been under the Tayyī' leadership of Elijah Kabsha), Yemen, or what is



Map 5: Locations in Isho'yahb (marked yellow), areas in fragment of Iranian cleric (marked blue, unclear areas shaded), and Tayyi' (red)

must have meant the Levant, which was indeed initially under the control of Amr Al-'As. However, the logic of the cleric's order is perplexing, and the text is unclear. Plotting his geography with both possible Hasors reveals a patchwork that defies the grandeur of the caliphate that had been decades in the making. Except for Khatt, the fragment is so decisively different from Isho'yahb that they perhaps talk about two different phenomena, maybe even in different times that would later morph Arab friend and Mhaggrayye foe into one. While the cleric rather seems to overlap with the traditions of the Muslim expansion in the early 630s, Isho'yahb does not complain about an incursion from the western Arab Peninsula other than highlighting the anti-Christian stance of the Mhaggrayye. The map indicates that Syria, Basra, and Iran, the Lakhmids (that had earlier been under the Tayyi' leadership of Elijah Kabsha), Yemen, or what is



Map 4: Muslim conquests according to tradition

¹²⁴ Robert G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs, From the Bronze Age to the coming of Islam* (Routledge, 2001) 31-32.

left of the former Ghassanid territories do not seem to be part of either description.

In the traditions, *the Arabs*, as the cleric calls them, find themselves on an inter-tribal list of supporters and opponents and are thus impossible to narrow down to a specific group in this text. Since Isho'yahb had warned of the possible confusion between *Arabs* and *Tayyaye Mhaggraye*, and with the progression of the evidence, it seems logical that the *Tayyaye* were in control of these areas. The cleric's strange introduction would thus need to be transliterated to: "*Hasor, [...], belongs to the Tayyaye Mhaggraye, while Medina is named after Midian ...*" With the inclusion of the 'Tayyi', the region under their control would be more in tune with an emerging state, but it would still be possible to view the writer's sequence as starting with either the region of Mecca or Safed. Choosing the former creates a paradox wherein Mecca is part of the narrative in the Koran but not Hasor. Did the cleric not know of the name change so long after the prophet of the traditions had died? Is it perhaps better to favor Safed from the two possible choices? We know from Sebeos that only a couple of years later, a large Middle Eastern Alliance would fall apart and the 'Tayyi' would be destroyed by Mu'awiyah. Thus, if there had been a '*Muslim*' territory before, in 661 AD, there was none, neither in the Arab Peninsula nor in Egypt, and certainly not in Syria. If they existed, where would they regroup?

Regardless of the understanding of the term *hanpe* as Pagan, Manichaean or something else, Isho'yahb only makes sense in the absence of Islam, which could have abused the struggle for survival of the Manicheans and Zoroastrians as well as of the Lakhmids and Ghassanids for a tale of its own birth. Yet, the cleric seems to describe a separate group that does not come along with indications to its faith but strongly hints at the *Tayyaye Mhaggraye* being on the path to Islam as deniers of Jesus's death, not unlike the death of the Mahdi would come to be denied.

Sebeos History (ca. 660s AD)

Another problematic but celebrated primary evidence is Sebeos' History from the 660s AD. He is criticized in particular for his chronology, and the long chain of transmission invites unwelcome changes. The six paragraphs that follow after the author signs off with declaring that he has „futilely strung together words into a history,” are particularly difficult to accept as authentic.

When the Persian Emperor Yazdegerd III's¹²⁵ rose to power in 632 AD, he was only eight years old (so it is believed) and was thus manipulated from behind the veils. His ascent falls together with the end of Prophet Muhammad of the traditions. According to Sebeos, the Persian armies split into three territorial units under the new emperor,¹²⁶ hence, weakening and dividing the power base¹²⁷ but still respecting the throne. One of these territories was the east from which the Darabjird and Zaranj mints originated. Like the previous writers, *MHMD* or *MHMT* is subject in Sebeos only after the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad of the traditions. Since Sebeos would later recount that the Ishmaelites also

¹²⁵ Yazdegerd III (Yazdgerd III, Yazdiger, Yazdigerd, meaning “made by God”) ruled the Sasanid Empire from the age of eight 632 – 651 AD. His father was Shahryar and his grandfather Xosrov II.

¹²⁶ Sebeos's History of the seventh century, 28 (publishing ca. 660 AD), English by Robert Bedrosian (1985): Finally there came to rule Yazkert, son of Kawad, grandson of Xosrov, who ruled in fear, since the troops of the land of Iran had split into three parts. The first army was the one in the Iranian and Eastern region; the second army was [Erhasman] Xorheam's which was in Asorestan [Babylon]; and the third army was in Atrpatakan [Azerbaijan, east Armenia and Khorasan under Rostam Farrokhzad]. However, the [center of the] kingdom was at Ctesiphon, and all [the Iranians] universally respected it.

¹²⁷ According to Gyselen (2004), a split into the four factions East, South, West, and North may have already occurred under Khosrau I.

started their annual count with Yazdegerd's ascent in 632 AD, the notion of a Muslim timescale beginning with 622 AD seems to be confused. In other words, the Muslim timescale restarted in Basra with a group that may not associate with Ishmaelite or Tayyi' but maybe with an old Persian dynasty that may have been allied with the Byzantines. Given the text of Isho'yahb, this group could possibly be identified through an inadmissible hint by the fourteenth century Muslim scholar Khaldun:

The first to pray for the caliph during the sermon was Ibn Abbas. As Ali's governor in al-Basrah, he prayed for Ali during his sermon. He said: "O God, help Ali, (who represents) the truth." This practice was continued afterwards.¹²⁸

Was the House of Ali perhaps responding to the failed sedition from the Eastern Church with an alliance between them and Abbas from Basra and fracturing itself in its wake? Or was Ibn Abbas perhaps the spiritual leader of the House of Ali?

Until the year 638 AD in Sebeos' chronicle, the only word about *Ishmaelites* — not *Muslims* — was a preview into the future,¹²⁹ challenging orthodox chronology again and indicating that the Ishmaelites had been allied with Xosrov (since he had taken the True Cross).

Placed *at the end* of Heraclius's rule, between 638 and 641 AD, **first** the Jews from Edessa fled to the sons of Ishmael, and **then** Muhammad, a man knowledgeable in Mosaic history, became prominent and taught that the inheritance of the Promised Land has moved from the Jacobites (Israelites) to the Ishmaelites.

Twelve peoples [representing] all the tribes of the Jews assembled at the city of Edessa. [...] Heraclius, emperor of the Byzantines, gave the order to besiege it. [...] So they [the Jews] departed [...] to Tachkastan [the land of the Tayyi'], to the sons of Ishmael. [The Jews] called [the Ishmaelites] to their aid and familiarized them with the relationship they had through the books of the [Old] Testament. [...] In that period a certain one of them, a man of the sons of Ishmael named Mahmet [MHMT], a merchant [t'angar or t'ankangar], became prominent. A sermon about the Way of Truth, supposedly at God's command, was revealed to them, and taught them to recognize the God of Abraham, especially since he was informed and knowledgeable about Mosaic history. [...] He said: "God promised that country [Canaan, Israel] to Abraham and to his son after him, for eternity. [...] Now, however, you are the sons of Abraham, and God shall fulfill the promise made to Abraham and his son on you. [...] go and take the country which God gave to your father, Abraham."¹³⁰

The passage *a merchant* (t'angar or t'ankangar) points either at a possible later edit or at a mistranslation, perhaps meaning a location or a tribal designation, a tanjahr,¹³¹ or perhaps from the Jewish-Arab city of Tayma, which may have been part of the Tayyi's territories. Regardless, the Jews from Edessa **first** fled to the Tayyi' Ishmaelites for help.¹³² Here, Sebeos serves up a confusing hybrid where *MHMT* should be a personal name rather than a historic group that connects to the Tayyi' and binds the latter to the Ishmaelites. The passage "*in this period*" provides for some leeway in the span of

¹²⁸ Muhammed ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 AD), *The Muqaddimah* (1377 AD), translated by Franz Rosenthal (Princeton University, 1958) III:34. The characteristic emblems of royal and government authority, the "outt" (alah). The prayer enclosure (magsurah) and the prayer during the (Friday) sermon.

¹²⁹ Sebeos, 30: The Cross of the Lord remained in the heaven-built city until the taking of Jerusalem by the sons of Ishmael.

¹³⁰ Sebeos, 30.

¹³¹ I.e. from Tangier, which was Arian Christian at this time

¹³² This incident is also placed after 632 AD (Heraclius' compulsory baptism) in Michael the Syrian, in Robert Hoyland, Sebeos, the Jews and the Rise of Islam ¶ 2: At this time the emperor Heraclius ordered that all the Jews in the lands of the Roman Empire become Christian. For this reason the Jews fled the lands of the Romans. First, they came to Edessa; when they were oppressed again there, they took refuge in Persia.

Muhammad's first appearance, but the writer seems to mean '*in this period since the Jews had assembled at Edessa.*'

While Sebeos, being from Armenia, said himself that some of his history was hearsay,¹³³ he mentioned a mere sermon (!), *The Way of Truth*, which was revealed to the Ishmaelites. Its title suggests that the writer had no awareness of a Koran and provides for a striking parallel to the first Christian sect, *The Way*, in the New Testament. While *MHMT* focused on the God of Abraham in the Old Testament, Sebeos clarifies that *he*, *MHMT*, had been knowledgeable about the Jewish Law. Since there is no sura that could be associated with *The Way of Truth*, this text is possibly an anti-evidence to the existence of the Koran as late as the 660s.

Sebeos quoted *MHMT* as having set the goal to re-conquer Canaan. Apparently, Jerusalem was the grand prize of the operation, but Canaan spans from the Tigris River to the Sinai Peninsula. What we do not know is how Jews, Ishmaelites, and *MHMT* would have forged a successful alliance.

It may be noted that the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah¹³⁴ and the Treaty of Ayla¹³⁵ after the Battle of Tabouk do not bear a reference to Muhammad's prophethood. The Covenant of Umar is likewise absent of any reference to Muhammad, a prophet, or Islam. Moreover, this late appearance of the Prophet creates a startling paradox between primary evidence and tradition where Muhammad is altogether absent from the early conquests as well as the Ridda Wars and is instead replaced with successors, some of whom shine in absence from the contemporary documents and artifacts. How could there have been wars of apostasy before the Prophet even made a name of himself? Was Islam conjectured into wars of entirely different scopes? Did those wars even take place?

Following the prominence of MHMT in Sebeos, the Ishmaelites set out, and ***then*** the sons of Israel united with them after which Jerusalem submitted to the Ishmaelites.¹³⁶ This seems to align with the construction on the Temple Mount as reported by Sophronius and perhaps also with the coin of Muhammad from Palestine. Sebeos's story placed a first collapse of the Persian Empire to 640/641.¹³⁷ However, Yazdegerd regained partial control and returned to rule for another decade from Seleucia-Ctesiphon. The Ishmaelites had then invaded the Levant under the leadership of Amr (Umar), king of the sons of Ishmael.¹³⁸

¹³³ Sebeos, 30: We heard this [account] from men [who had returned] from captivity in Xuzhastan Tachkastan, who themselves had been eye-witnesses to the events described and narrated them to us.

¹³⁴ Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, Sahih Muslim 19:4401.

¹³⁵ The Biblical Ayla is today's Aqaba, Jordan's only Red Sea port in its far south.

¹³⁶ Sebeos, 30: Then all of them assembled together [...], and they set out [... being] twelve tribes [moving] in the order [of precedence] of the Houses of the patriarchs [...] to the country of Israel.

All the remnants of the sons of Israel then assembled and united, becoming a large force.

¹³⁷ Sebeos, 30: [...] the kingdom of Iran grew weaker, and their army was divided into three parts. Then the Ishmaelite troops who were gathered in the east, went and besieged Ctesiphon, since the king of Iran resided there [Yazdegerd]. Troops from the land of Media [Marats' from southeastern Armenia], some 80,000 armed men under their [formerly Byzantine allied] general Rostom assembled and went against [the Ishmaelites] in battle. Then [Yazdegerd] left the city [...], [the Ishmaelites ...] pursuing them [...] to Hert'ichan [an Armenian border village]. [...] The armies of Rostom and the Ishmaelites attacked each other, and the Iranian forces fled before them. [...] Then they hurried to Ctesiphon and took the treasury of the kingdom, the inhabitants of the cities, and their king, and then hurried to get back to Atrpatakan. But [...] the Ishmaelite army unexpectedly came upon them. [...] Their king [...] fled, winding up with the southern troops. Now [the Ishmaelites] took the entire treasury and returned to Ctesiphon [...]. And they pillaged the entire country.

¹³⁸ Sebeos, 30: When the sons of Ishmael had arisen and issued from the desert of Sinai, their king Amr did not accompany them. But when [the Arabs] had militarily routed both kingdoms, seizing from Egypt to the great Taurus mountain, from the Western Sea [the Mediterranean] to Media and Xuzhastan, they then emerged with the royal army [and went] to the natural borders of the holdings of Ishmael.

In Bukhari's traditions, Amr Al-ʿAs (who may have become king) acts only a couple of times as narrator of traditions that do not contribute to the focus of this paper.¹³⁹ In two instances, Amr is made commander of the army¹⁴⁰ or the troops of the place Dhat-us-Salasil.¹⁴¹ His son Abdallah, a Qahtanite (the umbrella of the Tayyi' as viewed separate from the Quraysh),¹⁴² is much more prominent in Bukhari as a source of traditions,¹⁴³ as a companion of the prophet,¹⁴⁴ and also as an arch-enemy of Mu'awiya.¹⁴⁵ Bukhari thus suggests a Muhammadian trail through Abd Allah. The aspirations of the latter to appoint the king from the Qahtanites seems to have led to the schism by Muawiyah from the throne of MHMD.

According to Sebeos, the Byzantine Empire entered a peace agreement with the Syrian Mu'awiya around 651 AD. He is the first Umayyad who appears in the historical record after a failed attack on Constantinople.¹⁴⁶ Three years later, the Syrian broke the treaty,¹⁴⁷ which is an event that is also mentioned in the Maronite Chronicle.¹⁴⁸ Sebeos gave the new boss the title *prince of the Ishmaelite army*, *prince of the army* or also *Ishmaelite prince*, indicating that Amr Al-ʿAs had been eliminated and that Mu'awiyah may have made himself an enemy in Amr Al-ʿAs's son 'Abdallah. According to Tabari, the latter had been a scholar who was proficient in the book of Daniel,¹⁴⁹ suggesting Jewish involvement.

The chronicle recounts the end of Yazdegerd in 651 AD¹⁵⁰ and portrays Syria as a *satellite* of the Antichrist.¹⁵¹ However, firstly, this honor was inflationary and given to anyone who denied any form of Jesus being a god¹⁵² or to others guilty of even lesser offenses. It was a rhetorical put-down with the aim to instill fear in a superstitious public. Mani, the founder of Manicheism had been recipient of

¹³⁹ Bukhari, 8:73:19, 9:92:450.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 5:57:14: The Prophet deputed me to lead the Army of Dhat-as-Salasil. [...]

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 5:59:644: Allah's Apostle sent 'Amr bin Al As as the commander of the troops of Dhat-us-Salasil. [...]

¹⁴² Ibid. 4:56:704: That while he was with a delegation from Quraish to Muawiyah, the latter heard the news that 'Abdullah bin 'Amr bin Al-ʿAs said that there would be a king from the tribe of Qahtan. On that Muawiyah became angry, got up and then praised Allah as He deserved, and said, "Now then, I have heard that some men amongst you narrate things which are neither in the Holy Book, nor have been told by Allah's Apostle. Those men are the ignorant amongst you. Beware of such hopes as make the people go astray, for I heard Allah's Apostle saying, 'Authority of ruling will remain with Quraish, and whoever bears hostility to them, Allah will destroy him as long as they abide by the laws of the religion.'" ¹⁴³ Ibid., 1:3:113: There is none among the companions of the Prophet who has narrated more Hadiths than I except 'Abdallah bin Amr (bin Al-ʿAs) who used to write them and I never did the same.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 3:31:195.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 4:56:704 [see footnote above].

¹⁴⁶ Sebeos, 33: Now the [Arab general] who was in the Palestine area, ordered that a large naval fleet be organized. He boarded a ship and began warring with Constantinople. But his naval battle did not succeed, for a multitude of [Byzantine] troops in boats came up before him, and sent [the Arabs] to the deep, driving off many others with fire, and pursuing those who fled. Nonetheless, emperor Constans was horrified [by the attack] and considered it wise to pay a tax/tribute [sak], and to make peace by means of messengers. The Ishmaelites hurried the Byzantines to complete a peace agreement. Now Constans, the Byzantine emperor, because he was a lad, did not dare to do so without the approval of the army. So he wrote to Procopius for him to go with him to Damascus, to see Mu'awiya, prince of the Ishmaelite army [...] He revealed the amount of the tribute, stated the limit, made peace, and departed.

¹⁴⁷ Sebeos, 35: When the king of the Ishmaelites [...] had done away with the kingdom of Iran, and when three years of the peace provision had passed, [Mu'awiya] no longer wanted to continue the peace with the Byzantine emperor. So he ordered his troops to commence warfare on land and sea, to do away with this kingdom as well, in the twelfth year of the reign of Constans.

¹⁴⁸ The Maronite Chronicle (664+ AD), from Andrew Palmer, Sebastian P. Brock, Robert G. Hoyland, *The seventh century in the west-Syrian chronicles* (Liverpool University Press, 1993) 32.

¹⁴⁹ Ibn Sa'd, *al-Tabaqat al-kubra* (Beirut, 1960-68) IV, 266, VII, 495; Tabari, II, 299 Cf. Kister, M.J., *Haddithu 'an bani isra'ila wa-la haraja* (Israel Oriental Studies, 2, 1972) 215-239.

¹⁵⁰ Sebeos, 35: In the twentieth year of king Yazkert of Iran [651 AD], in the eleventh year of emperor Constans (who was called Constantine after his father), in the nineteenth year of the lordship of the Ishmaelites [the Lakhmids, 651-19=632 AD], the Ishmaelite army which was in the country of Iran and Xuzhastan [southern Iraq] went eastward to the area known as the Palhaw country (which is the land of the Parthians) against Yazkert, king of Iran. Yazkert fled from them, but was unable to escape, because [the Ishmaelites] caught up with him close to the Kushans' borders [modern greater Afghanistan], and destroyed all of his troops. [Yazdegerd] fled to the army of the T'etals [from Xak'an, king of the Tetalats'ik', north of Armenia] who had come from different areas to help him. [...] Now the T'etal troops seized Yazkert and killed him.

¹⁵¹ Sebeos, 35: Thus did the satellite of the anti-Christ pull [the Armenians] away from the Byzantines.

¹⁵² John of Damascus, *The Fount of Knowledge*, Book IV, Chapter XVII, translated by Rev. G.N. Warwick: as quoted earlier.

such stylish curses in a polemic – likely fictional¹⁵³ – that feigns a lop-sided dispute between the latter and his Christian opponent, Archelaus.¹⁵⁴ Secondly, this section in Sebeos is problematic as it uses a different terminology for the Byzantines than before.¹⁵⁵ On the other hand, John Bishop of Nikiu had used a similar hateful language against what he had thought to be *like* Arian Christianity,¹⁵⁶ and he clearly conveyed that the Ishmaelites had been riding under Muhammadian flags with *The Way of Truth* written on it.

In a letter, according to Sebeos, Mu'awiyah denied that Jesus is god (in the sense of Eutyches?) and asked Constans to return to the god of Abraham.¹⁵⁷ Sebeos is specific enough that Mu'awiyah must not be on the path to Islam. The writer clarifies that the Ishmaelite prince had not accepted Jesus as the Christ. In a doctrinal statement, the Koran clearly accepts Jesus as the *Messiah*,¹⁵⁸ which is nothing but the equivalent to the Greek *Khristos* – in other words, the Koran calls the Messiah *Christ Jesus*. But it also stresses that he represents the Word of God, is the son of Mary, and enjoys an intercessory role with his near access to God. In Luke of the Gospels, Jesus is also the son of Mary, but he is the son of God,¹⁵⁹ a position vehemently opposed by Islam. Sebeos's text is specific enough to put it into the realm of (perhaps not yet Christianized) followers of *John the Baptist* or possibly another form of Judaism, the latter of which is also what Sebeos suggests by connecting Muhammad to Jewish Law and putting emphasis on the Jewish migration from Edessa before the uprising of the Israelite tribes. At this point, Mu'awiyah was a subaltern part of it. That John the Baptist is also an integral component of the Koran hints at a very early fragmentation before Islam came to recognize itself as such.

A tradition in Bukhari mirrors this story where Constans first accepted and then rejected Islam.¹⁶⁰ From this tradition, we learn that the Ghassanids may have been involved and that Constans had a

¹⁵³ Probably by the anti-Manichean militant Cyril of Jerusalem.

¹⁵⁴ J. Kevin Coyle, *Manichaeism and Its Legacy, A Clash of Portraits: Contrasts Between Archelaus And Mani in The Acta Archelai* (Brill, 2009) 29: Mani, he [Archelaus] says, seems “full of insanity” and his doctrine is “grotesque” (17.3). He is “delirious” and forgetful (17.7; see 59.10), and a devious prevaricator (26.6). In what is by now standard anti-heretical discourse, he calls Mani ignorant and short on intelligence (27.3). He is a **“false Christ and a false prophet”** (39.9; see 42.11), a Satan and **“vessel of the Antichrist”** (40.1–2; see 64.9). He is more heretical and lower in intellect than Marcion, Valentinus, and Basilides (42.1) [researchers may note that the text only refers to early Dualistic or Gnostic “heresies” and that no reference is made to heretics after the mid second century up to Mani toward the end of the third]. He is a barbarian Persian (40.5), a “barbarian priest and conspirator with Mithras” (40.7).

¹⁵⁵ Sebeos, 35: This section, unlike the major portion of the book uses *hrhomots* (Romans) instead of *yunats* (Greeks) for the Byzantine Empire.

¹⁵⁶ Nikiu, CXVII, 8.

¹⁵⁷ Sebeos, 36: “If you want to spend your life in peace,” he wrote, “abandon that foolish faith which you learned from childhood. Deny that Jesus and turn to the great God whom I worship, the God of our father Abraham. [...] Otherwise, how can that Jesus whom you call Christ — who was unable to save himself from the Jews — possibly save you from me?”

¹⁵⁸ Koran 3:40: Remember when the angel said, “O Mary! Verily God announceth to thee the **Word from Him**: His name shall be **Messiah Jesus the son of Mary**, illustrious in this world, and in the next, and one of those who have **near access to God**; [...]

¹⁵⁹ Luke 1:31-1:32: You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to **give him the name Jesus**. He will be great and will be called the **Son of the Most High**.

¹⁶⁰ Bukhari, 1:1:6 [This hadith is usually understood as relating to Heraclius I]: While they were discussing it, a messenger sent by the king of Ghassan to convey the news of Allah's Apostle to Heraclius [Constans II?] was brought in. Having heard the news, he (Heraclius) ordered the people to go and see whether the messenger of Ghassan was circumcised. The people, after seeing him, told Heraclius that he was circumcised. Heraclius then asked him about the Arabs. The messenger replied, ‘Arabs also practice circumcision.’ (After hearing that) Heraclius remarked that sovereignty of the ‘Arabs had appeared. Heraclius then wrote a letter to his friend in Rome who was as good as Heraclius in knowledge. Heraclius then left for Homs (a town in Syria [i.e. Emesa, which may not have fallen until now]) and stayed there till he received the reply of his letter from his friend who agreed with him in his opinion about the emergence of the Prophet and the fact that he was a Prophet. On that Heraclius invited all the heads of the Byzantines to assemble in his palace at Homs. When they assembled, he ordered that all the doors of his palace be closed. Then he came out and said, ‘O Byzantines! If success is your desire and if you seek right guidance and want your empire to remain then give a pledge of allegiance to this Prophet (i.e. embrace Islam).’ (On hearing the views of Heraclius) the people ran towards the gates of the palace like onagers but found the doors closed. Heraclius realized their hatred towards Islam and when he lost the hope of their embracing Islam, he ordered that they should be brought back in audience. (When they returned) he said, ‘What already said was just to test the strength of your conviction and I have seen it.’ The people prostrated before him and became pleased with him, and this was the end of Heraclius's story (in connection with his faith).

Jew-phobia since the security checks of a Ghassanid messenger sent by Muhammad included dropping the pants.

In the winter of 654 AD, southwestern Armenia (Arab Armenia) rebelled from Ishmaelite service in order to “*escape the dragon’s teeth and the bitter breath of the beast*” and drove the latter back to their home in the area of Ctesiphon (!),¹⁶¹ which could have been their capital at this time other than its alternative location in Al-Hira. Shortly thereafter, all of Armenia submitted to the Ishmaelites,¹⁶² and all the churches were stripped of their wealth.¹⁶³ Apparently, an alliance had here formed that encompassed the region west of the Tigris River from Armenia to Egypt and the Arab Peninsula. However, the Ishmaelites then fell into four parts. Two of them, Tachik (Tayyi’ with Basrah) and Egypt united and ended up killing their king, perhaps Amr Al-‘As, enthroning another, possibly Abu Turab (alias Ali) or ‘Abdallah.¹⁶⁴ Mirroring Muslim tradition, Mu’awiah then disposed of the new king and became the leader of all while the Tayyi’ were destroyed and Egypt defected to Constantinople.¹⁶⁵ Those that came to tell their stories to Sebeos were imprisoned there, in *Xuzhastan Tachkastan*, perhaps describing the united territories of the Banu Khuza’ah (near Mecca) and the Tayyi’ as outlined earlier.

All primary evidence is in agreement, one accounting for a fact here, another there: Muhammad appeared only after 632 AD, and he lived on as nobody reported the end of a personality whose importance obviously did not escape the writers.

If the Tayyi’ had been on the path to Islam, Sebeos recognizes Mu’awiyah as their enemy. For him or for Muhammad, he hints at Mosaic Law and a schism that may have brought forth a new way of truth. Yet, the Muslim advance was here reset with the destruction of the Tayyi’ and the return of Egypt to Constantinople – the ‘Arab’ conquest was over. This brief period in around the year 654 AD between the schism and the destruction of the Tayyi’ will prove to be essential in understanding the socio-religious environment that led to Islam. While not part of this publication, most of the many parties and their whereabouts can be redefined by extrapolation and deduction from the dynastic past.

¹⁶¹ Sebeos, 37: In that year (654 AD) the Medes rebelled from Ishmaelite service and killed the Ishmaelite king’s prince [in charge] of taxation.[...] For they were unable to bear the bitter and harsh service and the weight of the tax which had been imposed on them. [...] For such reasons they placed their lives in the balance and one out of two thought it better either to die, or to be freed from that wicked service. They started to assemble the remaining people into an army and to organize by brigades so that perhaps they might escape the dragon’s teeth and the bitter breath of the beast. [...]

The Ishmaelite army was defeated by the T’etal army which struck at them and put them to the sword. [...] a few [Arabs] escaped by a hairbreadth [...]. Thus did they go to the Ctesiphon area, to the country of their habitation.

¹⁶² Sebeos, 38: Now Mushegh, lord of the Mamikonians, rebelled in the Byzantine area and entered Ishmaelite service. And in that same year the Ishmaelite army which was in the land of Armenia seized the entire country from end to end. T’eodoros, lord of Rshtunik’, and all the princes of the land united and entered [Arab] service, hastening to do their bidding in every way, for fear of a terrible death hung over them.

¹⁶³ Sebeos, 38: [The Arabs ...] robbed the entire country of Armenia, Aghbania/ [Caucasian Albania, Albānia, Agauank, Ardhan, Arran; Rani], and Siwnik’ [Syunik, Siunik, the southernmost region of Armenia], and denuded all the churches.

¹⁶⁴ Sebeos, 38: Then God sent discord into the army of the sons of Ishmael. Their unity dissolved, they clashed with each other and divided into four parts. One part was in the Indian area [the Arab Peninsula since Sebeos calls its inhabitants Indians]. Another was that army which held Asorestan [Assyria, Babylon] and the northern areas. Another was the one in Egypt and in the T’etal region [from Xak’an, king of the Tetalats’ik’, north of Armenia or perhaps the Levant]. Another was in the Tachik [Tayyi’] area and at the place called Askarawn [Basrah]. They began fighting with each other and destroyed each other with endless killings. Now the troops who were in Egypt united with those in the Tachik area and they killed their king and took the multitude of treasures as loot. They enthroned another king and returned to their places.

¹⁶⁵ Sebeos, 38: Now when their prince Mu’awiya, who was in Asorestan and was second to their king, saw what had happened, he united his troops and he too went to the desert. He killed the king whom they enthroned, battling with and severely destroying the troops in the Tachik area. He then returned to Asorestan in triumph. Now the army which was in Egypt united with the Byzantine emperor, made peace and was incorporated. The multitude of the troops, some 15,000 people, believed in Christ and were baptized. But the bloodshed of countless multitudes increased and intensified among the Ishmaelite armies. They engaged in frantic battles and killed each other. Nor were they able to stop even somewhat from wielding swords, taking captives and intense battles on land and sea, until Mu’awiya grew strong and conquered all of them. He subdued them, ruled as king over the property of the sons of Ishmael and made peace with everyone.

The Maronite Chronicle (ca. 664 AD)

The origin of the Maronites reaches back to fifth century Saint Mar Maron. The founder of the Maronite Church would be John the Sarumite or popularly known as John Maron,¹⁶⁶ the first patriarch in Antioch as of 686 AD. A new church indicates more religious turmoil in the Levant that would become relevant after the Muhammadeans would break through. The chronicle appears to have been composed before that critical moment and, for this reason, needs to be approached cautiously.

The relevant information that can be taken from the Maronite Chronicle is a confirmation that Mu'awiyah had broken the peace settlement with the Byzantines,¹⁶⁷ and that he refused to submit to Muhammad's throne.

Furthermore, Muawiyah did not wear a crown like other kings in the world. He placed his throne in Damascus and refused to go to Muhammad's throne.¹⁶⁸

It cannot be stressed enough that the Maronite Chronicle sent a message to the future: there was indeed a schism with the throne of MHMD in the mid-fifties. If it represented an institution or a title, this fragmentation would have created two opposing MHMD thrones, but there is no trace of Islam, other than some vague remarks about new but unspecified doctrines and a sermon that fails to fit into a Koranic framework.

Indeed, bar Penkaye would later deliver a scenario how the Umayyads could have come to be viewed as Muslims. As Mu'awiyah would be claimed to originally having been educated at the throne of Muhammad¹⁶⁹ and since he had been prince or king of the Ishmaelites, later efforts by the dynasty to reconcile the leader with Islam would turn him into a Muslim. Instead, like Sebeos, Penkaye would suggest that the worship of one god was tied to the ancient Law, i.e. Messianic Judaism. Despite the agreement, Penkaye falls to shortly after 692 AD and needs thus be ignored here. That Mu'awiyah had been educated at the throne of Muhammad is anyway a strange thing to say: the former was born in 602 AD. Thus, the revelations could not have started until he was eight years old. Following tradition, the migration to Medina was not until he was twenty and the siege of Medina in 627 AD not until he was twenty-five, the earliest year when Muslim sources could consider the existence of a throne of Muhammad. In other words, there was no throne of Prophet Muhammad at which Mu'awiyah could have been educated unless the word *Muhammad* carried the meaning of an institution or a title or the prophet appeared later.

The *Maronite Chronicle* portrays Mu'awiah as favoring the Maronite creed.

¹⁶⁶ Youhana Maroun, 628 – 707 AD.

¹⁶⁷ The Maronite Chronicle (664+ AD), from Andrew Palmer, Sebastian P. Brock, Robert G. Hoyland, *The seventh century in the west-Syrian chronicles* (Liverpool University Press, 1993) 32: When Muawiyah had acquired the power which he had aimed at and was at rest from the wars of his people, he broke the peace settlement with the Romans and refused to accept peace from them any longer.

¹⁶⁸ Sebeos, 32.

¹⁶⁹ John Bar Penkāyē's Riš Millē, Book XV, in Sebastian P. Brock, *North Mesopotamia In The Late Seventh Century, Jerusalem Studies In Arabic And Islam* (Liverpool, 1987) 61: Having let their dispute run its course, after much fighting had taken place between them, the Westerners, whom they call the sons of 'Ammāyē, gained the victory, and one of their number, a man called Muawiyah, became king controlling the two kingdoms, of the Persians and of the Byzantines. Justice flourished in his time, and there was great peace in the regions under his control; he allowed everyone to live as they wanted. For they held, as I have said above, an ordinance, stemming from the man who was their guide [mhaddiyānā], concerning the people of the Christians and concerning the monastic station. Also as a result of this man's guidance [mhaddiyānūtā] they held to the worship of One God, in accordance with the customs of ancient law. At the beginnings they kept to the traditions [mašmānūtā] of Muhammad, who was their instructor [tārā], to such an extent that they inflicted the death penalty on anyone who was seen to act brazenly against his laws.

[659 AD]: There was an earthquake in Palestine. A dispute was held between the Jacobites and the Maronites “in the presence of Mu’awiya.” When the Jacobites were defeated, Mu’awiya ordered them to pay 20,000 denarii. “So it became a custom for the Jacobite bishops that every year they give that sum of gold to Mu’awiya so that he not lose his hand upon them.”¹⁷⁰

It is as difficult to accept a source that attests to its own victories as one that shines in polemics. However, in the context of the primary documents of the time, it is hard to resist the inclusion of this text. The distinction may be that Byzantine bishops continued to pay while Constantinople later refused. But, if a mission of the Maronites is here attested, then researchers need to watch out for a counter-mission that may manifest itself in Islam.

For Muhammad’s purpose, there is a throne of MHMD that was tied to Jewish Law from which Mu’awiyah seceded, and the latter acts as protector of the Maronites.

The Chronicler of Khuzistan (ca. 665 AD)

The Chronicler wrote another attest to Muhammad. Khuzistan was the territory that had been attributed to the Ispahbudhan Dynasty. It merits examination of the placement of this work on the timeline as well:

And Yazdegerd, who was from the royal lineage, was crowned king in the city of Estakhr [June 16, 632 AD], and under him, the Persian Empire came to an end. And he went forth and came to Mahoze [near Seleucia-Ctesiphon] and appointed one named Rustam as the leader of the army. Then God raised up against them the sons of Ishmael, [numerous] as the sand on the sea shore, whose leader [mdabbrana] was Muhammad [MHMD]. Neither walls nor gates, armor or shield, withstood them, and they gained control over the entire land of the Persians. Yazdgird sent against them countless troops, but the Arabs routed them all and even killed Rustam. Yazdgird shut himself up in the walls of Mahoze and finally escaped by flight. He reached the country of the Huzaye [Khuzestan]¹⁷¹ and Mrwnaye [Merv of Margrave], where he ended his life. The Arabs gained control of Mahoze and all the territory. They also came to Byzantine territory, plundering and ravaging the entire region of Syria. Heraclius [Constans II],¹⁷² the Byzantine king, sent armies against them, but the Arabs killed more than 100,000 of them.¹⁷³

The Chronicle is typically well arranged, and a shift may be noted from Amr having been the king of the Ishmaelites to Muhammad having slipped into his position, almost as if a legend had started to evolve in the region of Khuzistan. Thus, the text might have been created post 692 AD.

The passage that *‘the Persian Empire came to an end’* serves as an introduction to highlight Yazdegerd’s significance. The paragraph essentially spans his entire rule as the last Sasanid Emperor. Indicating again a later edit, it is surprising that the author has come to a terminal conclusion so quickly as if there was no possibility for a Persian comeback. What is the implication if it were authentic? Is the

¹⁷⁰ The Maronite Chronicle (664+ AD), from Andrew Palmer, Sebastian P. Brock, Robert G. Hoyland, *The seventh century in the west-Syrian chronicles* (Liverpool University Press, 1993) AG 970.

¹⁷¹ Khuzestan: from Old Persian Huza (Ahvaz region of writers in the early Islam era), Khuzi, Susian, Shushan, Khudhi, Khooji (Elamite Oosin), Sasan, or Safavid.

¹⁷² Although not part of this examination but for clarification of the author’s view, the Byzantine king Heraclius probably refers to Constans II (Constans II or Konstas II, alias Constantine the Bearded, Konstantinos Pogonatos, was Byzantine Emperor 641 – 668 AD) who would have been the Byzantine Emperor after the fall of the Persian capital. Constans was a nickname, and his real name was Herakleios.

¹⁷³ Chronicler of Khuzistan (ca. 665 AD) 38-39.

Chronicle trying to suggest that the empire's internal forces had exhausted themselves or perhaps that the dynasts had found a new arrangement of separatism beyond repair of the former establishment?

First, Yazdegerd returns to the royal seat in Ctesiphon in 632 AD; **then** he appoints Rustam of the Ispahbudhan Dynasty as his top general; **then** Muhammad makes his entry into the narrative for the first time. The chronicle neither recognizes him as a *prophet* nor a *religious* leader. While the text reports the victories of the Ishmaelites under Muhammad, Yazdegerd's end in Merv (by treachery of one Mahawayh [Mahuy/Mahoe Suri or his son Baraz]), and the taking of Ctesiphon by the *Arabs* (as opposed to the Ishmaelites), it leaves the whereabouts of Muhammad open despite the fact that the chronicler must have had the lasting impression that the Persian Empire was forever lost.

With this prerogative — yet again — *a* Muhammad would have been active no sooner than 632/633 AD, and his activities could extend beyond the year 651 AD.

George of Resh'aina (d. ca. 680)

George of Resh'aina brings about another unusual twist: As Mu'awiyah had broken its pact with Constantinople, so did the church in Rome. At the Lateran Council of 649 AD, Pope Martin I¹⁷⁴ and Maximus the Confessor, both Eastern Christians, had torn down the Byzantine edict and ended the issue of whether Jesus's will was divine, human, or both.¹⁷⁵ For them, Jesus had two separate wills. This council had been prepared before by Pope Theodore and Maximus, and it amounted to nothing less than a declaration of war by the church in Rome against Constantinople.

The respective council was held in the Basilica of St. John Lateran — John the Baptist — and it was the first that openly broke from the yoke of the emperor. However, the twenty canons of this council are bizarre. The events in Rome fall together with the height of power of the Lombard Arian King Rothari.¹⁷⁶ He had defeated the Byzantines in 645 AD. Moderns will thus never learn what was really going on other than that the positions of Martin and Maximus have been wiped off the face of the earth.

Resh'aina's biography of Maximus is so hostile that one may wonder: at the time of his writing, following the logic of the councils of 649 and 680 AD, he must have been aware that the supposed doctrines of Maximus had made inroads and that they were about to be accepted into orthodoxy. He makes a connection between the Arab incursion, with the changes in Rome, and what had happened around Emperor Constans II. The passage can be placed between 651 and 654 AD, under the peace agreement between Syria and Constantinople.

After Maximus went up to Rome, the Arabs seized control of the islands of the sea and entered Cyprus and Arwad, ravaging them and taking captives. They gained control over Africa and subdued almost all the islands of the sea; for, following the wicked Maximus, the wrath of God punished every place which had accepted his error.¹⁷⁷

When Maximus saw that Rome had accepted the foul mire of his blasphemies, he also went down to Constantinople at the time when Mu'awiya made peace with the emperor Constans, having started a

¹⁷⁴ Pope Saint Martin I was pope from 649 to 653 AD. He was arrested in 653 AD and died in Constans' confinement in 655 AD.

¹⁷⁵ Lateran Council, 649 AD.

¹⁷⁶ Rothari was king of the Lombards 636-652 AD.

¹⁷⁷ George of Resh'aina, *Syriac Life of Maximus* XXIII, 312-13, p. 141.

war with Abu Turab, the emir of Hira, at Siffin and defeated him.¹⁷⁸

With all primary evidence in agreement, the Arabs fall under Mu'awiya's leadership. The text is not entirely clear, but it seems that every place that had previously accepted Maximus's ideas would later easily be overrun by the Arabs, almost as if they were compatible with Maximus, not Islam.

While the Maronite Chronicle claimed a schism in the House of MHMT, Resh'aina takes this a step further by mentioning conflicts with the emir of al-Hira, Abu Turab. Following tradition, he is none less than Imam Ali, nicknamed *man with the dust*.¹⁷⁹ According to tradition, Ali would also be the fourth Rashidun caliph,¹⁸⁰ the rightly guided, or the first in Twelver Shi'ism. While it constitutes a mystery that Prophet Muhammad would neither be regarded as the first caliph nor the first Twelver, the solution might again lie in a time shift and in an understanding of MHMT/MHMD shifting from an institution to a title and then to an individual. To enforce this point, Shi'ites mourn the death of Husain to this day with bloody rituals of self-flagellation for not having been able to come to his aid. The absence of rituals for Muhammad's death in the face of the importance of Husain is perhaps testimony to an editorial lapse.

In traditions, Abu Turab (Ali) is part of the alleged dialogues between Emperor Leo III and Caliph Umar II in a trio that had composed Surat 25, Al-Furqan. The three authors were Abu Turab from al-Hira, Umar I, and Salman the Persian¹⁸¹ from Kazerun in the Fars province or Isfahan.¹⁸² The majority of scholars might disagree: these dialogues come across as an attempt to create a new collective memory and establish historicity through forged traditions, of Surat Al-Furqan in particular. It can thus not hold as a primary evidence, certainly not for the seventh century. However, the absence of Muhammad in the alleged creation of this Surat is perplexing and provokes a fundamental question: should the creation of the Koran be viewed as (partly) independent from Prophet Muhammad? Instead, the Persian governor Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf who would push for the Muslim currency and the Arab language, is accused of having replaced ancient books with those now disseminated in Arabic. Among those switched are other works of Abu Turab of which some survived – as if referring to parts of the Koran. Despite the jittery evidence, it begs the question whether Abu Turab, one of the other

¹⁷⁸ Resh'aina, XXV, 313, p. 141.

¹⁷⁹ Bukhari 5:57:53, 8:74:297

Also 8:73:223: The most beloved names to 'Ali was Abu Turab, and he used to be pleased when we called him by it, for none named him Abu Turab (for the first time), but the Prophet. Once 'Ali got angry with (his wife) Fatima, and went out (of his house) and slept near a wall in the mosque. The Prophet came searching for him, and someone said, "He is there, Lying near the wall." The Prophet came to him while his ('Ali's) back was covered with dust. The Prophet started removing the dust from his back, saying, "Get up, O Abu Turab!" (i.e. O man with the dust).

¹⁸⁰ Abu Bakr (632-634), Umar (634-644), Uthman (644-656), Ali (656-661).

Armenia had been under constant pursuit by Byzantine and Sasanian rulers to enter an alliance with either of the two, leading to shifting alliances and religious turmoil. Rshtuniq, north-west of Lake Van, was the home turf of the Rshtunis a royal house that claimed ancestry to Rusas I of Urartu. However, Thodoros Rshtuni's Byzantine predecessor allies were not Rshtunis:

Mzhez or Mjej Gnuni (630-635, proposed union of Greek and Armenian churches), David Saharuni (635-638), Theodoros Rshtuni (Byzantine 638-655), loss of Bznunik to Hamazasp II Mamikonian who also married Rshtuni's daughter (656).

¹⁸¹ Alternative names of Salman the Persian are (Rouzbeh, 'Abd Allah or Abdulola, Abu Al Kitabayn (father of the *two* books [which two?]), or Luqman al-Hakeem.

¹⁸² Robert G. Hoyland Seeing Islam as Others Saw It (Darwin, 1997): It was 'Umar, Turab, and Salman the Persian who composed that (your Pourkan), even though the rumour has got around among you that God sent it down from the heavens ... As for your [Book], you have already given us examples of such falsifications and one knows among others of a certain Hajjaj, named by you as governor of Persia, who had men gather your ancient books, which he replaced by others composed by himself according to his taste and which he disseminated everywhere in your nation, because it was easier by far to undertake such a task among a people speaking a single language. From this destruction, nevertheless, there escaped a few of the works of Abu Turab, for Hajjaj could not make them disappear completely.

[I would like to thank Ahmed Rasmy for reminding me of this text.]

three, or perhaps a pair might have been sitting on the throne of MHMT. Following the logic of Twelver Shi'ism, Ali would be the first *Imam* of MHMT (not Muhammad), and what emerges in the historical record was *not* among the Twelver. The implications for the creation of the Koran would be wide open from 'an improved edition' to an entirely new work.

The House of Ali (of which Abu Turab may have been the leading member) was now in open conflict with Mu'awiya who had before broken off from the throne of Muhammad, and the Syrian was successful in those places where Maximus had found his converts (hence the crosses?). Does the schism indicate a succession of Muhammad around 654 or a continuation as spiritual leader of the House of Ali? Does this imply that the predecessors of Abu Turab in Al-Hira may have been in control of an expanding caliphate that had followed the footsteps of Maximus and even touched Rome?

In order to restore obedience, Emperor Constans¹⁸³ ordered the arrest of Pope Martin and Maximus. The emperor had accused the pope of conspiring with the *Saracens* (at this time under Mu'awiya), which Pope Martin denied.

At no time did I send letters to the Saracens nor, as some say, a statement (tomus) as to what they should believe; neither did I ever dispatch money, except only to those servants of God travelling to that place for the sake of alms, and the little which we supplied to them was certainly not conveyed to the Saracens¹⁸⁴

It is an anti-evidence for the Umayyads (and perhaps also the Saracens) adhering to Islam in which it becomes clear that an inner-Christian church dispute had rocked the region under the leadership of Constans and his opponents and later prisoners Maximus and Martin. Obviously, the papacy was well informed about the Saracens early on. The pope must have been hostile toward orthodoxy since a series of Greek puppet pontiffs would afterwards be dispatched to Rome to clean up the evidence.

It is curious to note that John of Damascus did not provide for an entry of Maximus or of this heresy in his Fount of Knowledge. Could it be possible that he may not have viewed Maximus as a heretic? Given that John's family was attached to high positions in the Umayyad administration, the answer to the mystery seems fairly obvious.

In fear of losing Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire was moved to Syracuse in Sicily in 668 AD. Constantinople was administered by Emperor Constans's son Constantine, but the emperor was assassinated by one of his Greek servants during another military revolt. This attests to a rift so deep that the Byzantine Empire and with it the spiritual idea that shook up the natures of Jesus was on the brink of collapse.

¹⁸³ Constans II was Byzantine emperor from 641 to 668 AD.

¹⁸⁴ Pope Martin, Ep. 14, PL 87, 199A, (ca. 653 AD).

The Sixth Ecumenical Council in 680-681 AD

Constantine did finally put an end to the earlier decree of Jesus's single will and also to the revolt at home. Yet, at the Sixth Ecumenical Council in 680-681 AD, the Maronite creed was declared a heresy. The council was all about affirming or defining the nature and will of the Trinity and of Jesus:¹⁸⁵ the Trinity has one nature and one will while Jesus has two of each.

Since Pope Martin and Maximus had been arrested, the new popes in Rome had been sent from Constantinople. The church chose a strategy to silencing the issue or burning the evidence.¹⁸⁶ Those that disagreed were exiled,¹⁸⁷ imprisoned, or terminated.

The downside of the newfound 'peace' with the church was that a number of holy people had to be declared heretics¹⁸⁸ and be dishonored — including former Pope Honorius,¹⁸⁹ who had supported Heraclius's idea of Jesus's single will. Yet, the damage was inflicted, new opposition had been created, and the papacy in Rome would break off for good only a few decades later. Eventually, the pope, then Gregory,¹⁹⁰ would visit Constantinople for the first time in the 710s, not to return for more than a thousand years. He wore a triple crown, the Tiara, which symbolizes the king of the Papal States and the king of kings. Rome would finally come to have found a footing for an emancipated Catholic Church and papal autonomy while the Byzantine might would shrink to a mere nation. The changes of the seventh century were so profound that the entire secular and religious landscape of the world had turned on its head.

The council got by without mentioning Maximus the Confessor — unless he was known under a different name. Instead, it singled out Patriarch Macarius of Antioch (in the territory of the Umayyads) and his disciple Stephen as ringleaders. Stephen was viewed as the master, "who tried to defend the impiety of their predecessors, and in short stirred up the whole world, and by their pestilential letters and by their fraudulent institutions devastated multitudes in every direction."¹⁹¹ In the same breath, the council mentions Polychronius:

Likewise also that old man Polychronius, with an infantile intelligence, who promised he would raise the dead and who when they did not rise, was laughed at; and all who have taught, or do teach, or

¹⁸⁵ Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series II, Volume 14, letter of Pope Agatho (Grand Rapids, 1892) 634-635: [...] we confess the holy and inseparable Trinity, that is, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, to be of one deity, of one nature and substance or essence, so we will profess also that it has one natural will, power, operation, domination, majesty, potency, and glory. [...]

But when we make a confession concerning one of the same three Persons of that Holy Trinity, of the Son of God, or God the Word, and of the mystery of his adorable dispensation according to the flesh, we assert that all things are double in the one and the same our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ according to the Evangelical tradition, that is to say, we confess his two natures, to wit the divine and the human, of which and in which he, even after the wonderful and inseparable union, subsists. And we confess that each of his natures has its own natural propriety, and that the divine, has all things that are divine, without any sin. [...]

but we say that as the same our Lord Jesus Christ has two natures so also he has two natural wills and operations, to wit, the divine and the human: the divine will and operation he has in common with the coessential Father from all eternity: the human, he has received from us, taken with our nature in time.

¹⁸⁶ Schaff, *Excursus on the Condemnation of Pope Honorius*, 665: [Honorius's] two letters were ordered to be burned at the same session.

¹⁸⁷ Schaff, *The Imperial Edict*, 667: Whoever did not obey the imperial edict should, if he were a bishop or cleric be deposed; if an official, punished with confiscation of property and loss of the girdle (ζώνη); if a private person, banished from the residence and all other cities.

¹⁸⁸ Schaff, *Session XVI*, 654: To Theodore of Pharan, the heretic, anathema! To Sergius, the heretic, anathema! To Cyrus, the heretic, anathema! To Honorius, the heretic, anathema! To Pyrrhus, the heretic, anathema! To Paul the heretic, anathema! To Peter the heretic, anathema! To Macarius the heretic, anathema! To Stephen the heretic, anathema! To Polychronius the heretic, anathema! To Apergius of Perga the heretic, anathema!

¹⁸⁹ Pope Honorius reigned 625 - 638 AD.

¹⁹⁰ Pope Gregory was king of the Papal State 713 – 731 AD.

¹⁹¹ Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series II, Volume 14, *The Proshoneticus to the Emperor* (Grand Rapids, 1892) 660.

shall presume to teach one will and one operation in the incarnate Christ.”¹⁹²

Polychronius claimed supremacy of Jerusalem over all other bishoprics, including Constantinople and Rome. If this discreet sideline is what it was about, then researchers might need to prepare themselves for a stubborn claim to return from different factions within little time from this council. That the supreme pontiff of Christianity should sit on top of the Temple Mount is suggested by the handover of the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven by Jesus to Peter.¹⁹³

The council failed to touch on the subjects of either Muhammad or Islam. Instead, the authors of evil were Christian or Judaic insiders.¹⁹⁴ If a Muslim faith existed, then the council's focus was nothing short of a surreal denial of reality. Did they turn a blind eye to the world-changing events unfolding under their feet? Since there is still no primary evidence attesting to Islam, the new religion must have been inconsequential, and the Umayyads may have been unaware of it also.

However, the council might serve up a mosaic of names that presents itself with different titles from the opposing perspective. If so, the lack of evidence still prohibits putting the pieces together.

P. Nessana 77 (late 680s)

Two caches of papyri were found in the 1930s in the church of Theotokos and in the church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus in the village of Nessana in southern Israel/Palestina. The verso of papyrus 77 contained an Arab text with two letters that provide a faint testimony from the Second Fitna.

(Letter 1)

1. In the name [of God] the Merciful, the Compassionate.
2. From [Bayān ibn] Qays to Yazīd ibn al-Aswad and ‘Ubaydall[āh] ibn [...]
3. Pea[ce] upo[n] you. I praise for you God beside Whom] there is no other god.
4. God does not like wrong-doing or corruption and as regards you, I did not
5. appoint you to a job for you to act sinfully in it and behave unjustly in any way with regard to
6. that. What you grieve for and complain about [is to you].
7. [...]
8. and [...] taking possession. Indeed your way of thinking is despicable.
9. [...] and you take the (financial) worth of it even though I have
10. [...], for as regards Yazīd ibn Fā’id there is not due to him
11. [...] due to him payment, and the people of Nessana have the protection of God
12. and the protection of His mess[eng]er. So do not reckon that we acquiesce to your
13. corruption and injustice in respect of it. When this letter of mine reaches you, then [...]
14. what I [...], and by God do not [...] from it

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Matthew 16:17–19: blessed are you, Simon Bar Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. I also tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it. I will give to you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven; and whatever you release on earth will have been released in heaven.

¹⁹⁴ Schaff, Letter of Pope Agatho, 634-635: But as the author of evil, who, in the beginning, availed himself of the aid of the serpent, and by it brought the poison of death upon the human race, has not desisted, but in like manner now, having found suitable instruments for working out his will (we mean Theodorus, who was Bishop of Pharan, Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paul and Peter, who were Archbishops of this royal city, and moreover, Honorius who was Pope of the elder Rome, Cyrus Bishop of Alexandria, Macarius who was lately bishop of Antioch, and Stephen his disciple), has actively employed them in raising up for the whole Church the stumbling-blocks of one will and one operation in the two natures of Christ our true God, one of the Holy Trinity; thus disseminating, in novel terms, amongst the orthodox people, an heresy similar to the mad and wicked doctrine of the impious Apollinaris, Severus, and Themistius, and endeavouring craftily to destroy the perfection of the incarnation of the same our Lord Jesus Christ, our God, by blasphemously representing his flesh endowed with a rational soul as devoid of will or operation. Schaff, 659: But because the adversary Satan allows no rest, he has raised up the very ministers of Christ against him, as if armed and carrying weapons, etc. [this is followed by the same list of heretics].

15. [...] unjustly or else I will take it in advance from your assets until such time as I am satisfied that
16. whoever of you is doing that [will be p]enal[ised] in respect of his wealth. So know that!
17. May God [...] goodness and not lead you astray. It is incumbent (on you to choose) between two separate things: either
18. [...] Peace be upon you and the mercy of God.

(Letter 2)

19. [In the n]ame of God the Merciful, the Compassionate.
20. [Fr]om Bayān ibn Qays to Yazīd ibn Fā'id. Peace be upon you and I praise
21. for you God beside whom there is no other god. Further: I was not
22. awa[re] that Ibn Ḥusayn was wresting from you a village that you are (supposedly) in charge of.
- So if
23. [] off him, then do so; otherwise, let us dispatch to it
24. someone who can take full charge of it. Peace upon you and the mercy of God.¹⁹⁵

Having found these documents in a church that venerates Mary, the Godmother and in one that adores the saints Sergius and Bacchus is an indication of Syriac and possibly Ghassanid religious involvement. According to tradition, Saint Sergius was a Roman soldier who was beheaded for Christianity during Emperor Diocletian's persecutions at the beginning of the fourth century. The Sergius cult started from the mid-fifth century with a text *The Passion of Sergius and Bacchus*. Not only Emperor Justinian I and the Ghassanid Saracen King Al-Mundhir had patronized Saint Sergius as protector of the army but also the Sasanid Xosrov II (likely in his former alliance with the Byzantine Empire). Muawiyah, it needs to be recalled, had prayed at the tomb of Mary in Gethsemane and at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.¹⁹⁶ Since there is no connection to Sergius in Muslim traditions and only a negative one with the Theotokos, it seems that the "civil war" between around 680 and 692 might have been a religious war with an emerging Islam that may finally have overwhelmed the territories of Syriac and Maronite Christianity as well as others – in response to the spiritual turmoil in Orthodoxy.

A conclusion that this document might constitute the first historical evidence of the Dhimmi (the right of residence for non-Muslims in exchange for extorting a special tax from them) might be premature. The concept of taxation of the conquered as an inferior class, as perhaps described in the letter, has existed for centuries before and is not an innovation of Islam.

Like PERF 558 from a few decades earlier, the letters contain the Bismilla, but again with leaving out the prophet other than mentioning a *messenger* as the protector that may be alive. It by no means confirms that this messenger is Prophet Muhammad since there could be a string of such messengers. They only confirm that an unspecified group believed in one God, which would be the position of the sender of both letters, Bayan ibn Qays, who may report to a *messenger*. This seems to be a similar language as coming out of Basrah.

¹⁹⁵ Edition and translation of P. Nessana 77, recto, extracted from Robert Hoyland, 'The earliest attestation of the Dhimma of God and His Messenger and the rediscovery of P. Nessana 77 (AH 60s/AD 680) in B. Sadeghi, A. Ahmed, R. Hoyland and A. Silverstein, eds., *Islamic Contexts, Islamic Cultures: Essays in Honor of Professor Patricia Crone* (Brill; Leiden, 2014).

¹⁹⁶ J. Green und Y. Tsafir, 'Greek Inscriptions from Hammat Gader: A Poem by the Empress Eudocia and Two Building Inscriptions', *Israel Exploration Journal*, Vol. 32, Nos. 2-3, Jerusalem 1982, p. 31: [In] Constan's eighteenth year [659 AD], many Arabs gathered at Jerusalem and made Muawiyah king and he went up and sat down on Golgotha [the Church of the Holy Sepulchre]; he prayed there, and went to Gethsemane and went down to the tomb of the blessed Mary to pray in it.

The word *messenger* in the direct sense is only once¹⁹⁷ part of Bukhari's inadmissible traditions. Otherwise it refers to a courier or an angel, or it is presented in derogatory forms.¹⁹⁸ In one instance, the *messenger* comes along as part of a definition in reference to the Old Testament¹⁹⁹ and in another its meaning is unclear and could also refer to an angel.²⁰⁰ The same problem of the messenger is presented in the Koran. There, it usually means angels²⁰¹ as the news agents of God that, in one instance, announce revelations to a *compatriot*.²⁰² Sometimes, it is a synonym for Biblical prophets,²⁰³ Moses and Aaron in particular²⁰⁴ as well as Noah, Abraham, and Lot, or it means lay messengers.²⁰⁵ It refers a couple of times to Prophet Muhammad by interpolation only.²⁰⁶ The usage of the term *messenger* would thus at least be unusual, not the least since the formula *peace be upon him* is missing. In just a few years, Muhammad would emerge in the evidence as *Apostle of God*, instead, a term much more in line with his comparative standing to Jesus Christ and his apostles.

¹⁹⁷ Bukhari, 4:53:386: Narrated Jubair bin Haiya: [...] Al-Mughira replied, "We are some people from the Arabs; we led a hard, miserable, disastrous life: we used to suck the hides and the date stones from hunger; we used to wear clothes made up of fur of camels and hair of goats, and to worship trees and stones. While we were in this state, the Lord of the Heavens and the Earths, Elevated is His Remembrance and Majestic is His Highness, sent to us from among ourselves a Prophet whose father and mother are known to us. **Our Prophet, the Messenger of our Lord**, has ordered us to fight you till you worship Allah Alone or give Jizya (i.e. tribute); and our Prophet has informed us that our Lord says: "Whoever amongst us is killed (i.e. martyred), shall go to Paradise to lead such a luxurious life as he has never seen, and whoever amongst us remain alive, shall become your master." [...]

¹⁹⁸ Bukhari, 2:23:437: [...] the Prophet stroked him with his hand and said to him, "Do you testify that I am Allah's Apostle?" Ibn Saiyad looked at him and said, "I testify that you are the Messenger of illiterates."

¹⁹⁹ Bukhari, 3:34:335: Narrated Ata bin Yasar: I met Abdullah bin 'Amr bin Al-'As and asked him, "Tell me about the description of Allah's Apostle which is mentioned in Torah (i.e. Old Testament.)" He replied, "Yes. By Allah, he is described in Torah with some of the qualities attributed to him in the Quran as follows: [...]."

²⁰⁰ Bukhari, 4:56:793: And any of you, when meeting Allah, will meet Him without needing an interpreter between him and Allah to interpret for him, and Allah will say to him: "Didn't I send a messenger to teach you?"

²⁰¹ Koran 15:80: And the people of HEDJR treated **God's messengers** as liars.

Koran 43:24: Wherefore we took vengeance on them, and behold what hath been the end of those who treated **our messengers** as liars.

Koran 20:96: He said, "And what was thy motive, O Samiri?" He said, "I saw what they saw not: so I took a handful of dust from the track of the **messenger of God**, and flung it into the calf, for so my soul prompted me."

Koran 19:19: He said: "I am only a **messenger of thy Lord**, that I may bestow on thee a holy son."

Koran 11:62: These men of Ad gainsaid the signs of their Lord, and rebelled against his messengers, and followed the bidding of every proud contumacious person.

Koran 11:72: And **our messengers** came formerly to Abraham with glad tidings. (see also 29:31)

Koran 11:79: And when **our messengers** came to Lot, he was grieved for them; and he was too weak to protect them, and he said, "This is a day of difficulty." (see also 29:33)

Koran 11:83: The Angels said, "O Lot! verily, **we are the messengers** of thy Lord:

Koran 42:51: Or, He sendeth a **messenger to reveal**, by his permission, what He will: for He is Exalted, Wise! Thus have we sent the Spirit (Gabriel) to thee with a revelation, by our command.

Koran 10:22: Verily, **our messengers** note down your plottings.

Koran 6:61: Supreme over his servants, He sendeth forth guardians who watch over you, until, when death overtaketh any one of you, **our messengers** take his soul, and fail not:

²⁰² Koran 81:19-81:23: That this is **the word of an illustrious Messenger**, Endued with power, having influence with the Lord of the Throne, Obeyed there by Angels, faithful to his trust, And your **compatriot** is not one possessed by djinn; For he saw him in the clear horizon:

²⁰³ Koran 7:57-7:60: Of old sent We Noah to his people, and he said, "O my people! worship God. Ye have no God but Him: indeed I fear for you the chastisement of the great day." The chiefs of his people said, "We clearly see that thou art in a palpable error." He said, "There is no error in me, O my people! but I am a **messenger from the Lord of the Worlds**. I bring to you the messages of my Lord, and I give you friendly counsel; for I know from God what ye know not.

Koran 7:35: And who is worse than he who deviseth a lie of God, or treateth our signs as lies? To them shall a portion here below be assigned in accordance with the Book of our decrees, until the time when **our messengers**, as they receive their souls, shall say, "Where are they on whom ye called beside God?"

Koran 22:74 (as addressing both, prophets and angels): God chooseth messengers from among the angels and from among men: verily, God Heareth, Seeth.

²⁰⁴ Koran 26:15: And go to Pharaoh and say: 'Verily we are the **messengers of the Lord** of the worlds - Send forth with us the children of Israel.'

²⁰⁵ For example Koran 27:36: And when **the messenger** came to Solomon, he said, "Aid ye me with riches? But what God hath given to me is better than what he hath given you: yet ye glory in your gifts:

²⁰⁶ Koran 98:1-98:2: The unbelievers among the people of the Book, and the Polytheists, did not waver, until the CLEAR EVIDENCE had come to them; **A messenger from God**, reciting to them the pure pages wherein are true Scriptures!

Perhaps Koran 29:17, which in self-reference probably also speaks of an angel since the successive examples speak of angels as the messengers (29:31, 29:33): Suppose that ye treat me as a liar! Nations before you have treated **God's messenger** as a liar; but open preaching is his only duty.

On the receiving end of one of these two threatening letters is Yazīd ibn al-Aswad. While nothing is known about him, his lineage²⁰⁷ may provide for some hints: his son may be Abu Imran,²⁰⁸ a celebrated imam and doctor.²⁰⁹ This religious leader's an-Nakha ancestry is claimed to going back to Kufa/Al Hira during the time of Muhammad of the traditions. An-Nakha is one of the main branches of the Madhhij tribe that may earlier have migrated from Yemen to the Al-Hira region.

The documents reveal nothing about the involvement of 'Ubaydall[āh] ibn [...] other than that he also was a recipient of the commands by Bayan that failed to please the leader.

It seems that ibn Husayn had conquered a town that was under the control of Yazid. The latter was reporting to Bayan. However, the information is just not enough to provide for an identity of ibn Husayn either. If there is a connection to the successors of the House of Ali, then the document suggests that Bayan had the upper hand at this time, and ibn Husayn still resisted. Did the House of Ali perhaps fight the new (Islamic?) leaders as long as or even longer than Syria under the Umayyads?

Coinage of the 680s

Zoroastrian coins now suggest a challenge by the Kharijites to the Umayyad leadership.²¹⁰ However, Zubayr's coins from his capital city Kerman²¹¹ were minted in 681-682 AD in the Persian Pahlavi script and language, apparently addressing the local population. Their source is again close to the modern borders of Afghanistan, in the east of Iran, and the Tamgha and Sogdian legends on the coins indicate an alliance with the *White Huns*.²¹² The city of Kerman, from where the mint KRMNAN-NAR (Narmashir) originates, was a Zoroastrian and Karijite center, and the latter would be persecuted there in 698 AD.



²⁰⁷ (Ibrahim ibn) Yazid ibn al-Aswad ibn Amr ibn Rabia ibn Haritha, ibn Saad ibn Malik ibn an-Nakha an Nakhai.

²⁰⁸ Abu Imran, nicknamed Abu Ammar, Abu Imran (Ibrahim ibn) Yazid ibn al-Aswad ibn Amr ibn Rabia ibn Haritha, died 713/714 AD.

²⁰⁹ Ibn Khallikan, *Biographical Dictionary* (Paris, 1843) vol. 1, 6.

²¹⁰ Angelika Neuwirth, Stefan Heidemann, *The Qur'an in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'an* (Brill, 2009) 188: The Kharijite leaders [...] placed distinctive religious slogans on their coins challenging the claim of the Umayyads to rule, with the expression that there is only guidance by God. The Kharijite beliefs, though, were not at all a common denominator among all Muslims.

²¹¹ Neuwirth, 166: Zubayr's name first appeared on coins of Kirman in 681-2. In the year 684, after the death of the Umayyad caliph Yazid, the coins show that he assumed the imperial title "amir of the believers." In the year 687, his brother Mus'ab secured Basra, Iraq and the territories to the east as far as Sijistan. The Umayyads seemed to have lost their cause.

²¹² Coins exist from the White Huns with Zoroastrian and Buddhist symbolism united in one. They are known to having been Buddhists, Hindus, Zoroastrians, and Manicheans.

Coinarchives: AR Drachm (31mm, 3.46 g, 3h). Imitating a Post-Yazdgerd year 37 drachm from the AY mint. Crowned Sassanian style bust right; Sogdian tamgha and legend in margin / Fire altar flanked by attendants; star and crescent flanking flames. Göbl, *Dokumente* –; CNG 87, lot 799; CNG 60, 1090-1 (same dies). VF, lightly toned. [...]

This coin and related imitations (cf. CNG 60, 1090-6 and the previous lot) were struck after the deposition of bin Ziyad in the same Khorasanian locality, by the same Sogdian speaking peoples. The group minting these imitations was plainly impartial to whether the prototype was Sassanian (with Khusrō II types) or Arab-Sassanian, imitating either 'Abd Allah bin Khazim or Salm bin Ziyad. However, the omnipresence of the tamgha and Sogdian legends (in countermark or engraveur) indicates that an association with Sogdian Hephthalite groups is the most important factor in the coins' production and identity.

In 685 AD, the text ‘amir of the believers’ emerges but does not provide a clue to any specific creed. That these coins still contain Zoroastrian iconography with the fire altar and its attendants²¹³ means first and foremost that Zoroastrians were still in charge.

Coinage of az-Zubair reveals that attempts were made to end a ‘civil’ war with a truce. Part of that agreement seems to have been that az-Zubair rose to be the caliph (or counter-caliph) and al-Malik governor of Syria. It is the same year that Husain was killed, according to tradition. Also at the same time, al-Mukhtār helped establish another counter caliph,²¹⁴ Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah of the House of Ali. The latter was believed to be the Mahdi, and he would submit to, or become the spiritual leader of, or succumb to the sword of al-Malik before 692 AD. According to tradition, he was buried in Jerusalem. The downside of the latter is the absence of primary evidence attesting to this holy man dead or alive. Yet, is it conceivable that earlier writers that had started to use the name Muhammad in various forms referred to him rather than another?

In 685 AD, the same year of Az-Zubair’s rise to the top of the caliphate, Al-Malik appears on a coin in connection with Muhammad. He was again branded governor of az-Zubair.²¹⁵ The latter minted coins in 685 AD imprinted with *‘bismillah Muhammad rasul Allah,’ in the name of God, Muhammad is the messenger of God.* This provides for a first instance of the Bismillah joined with Muhammad, which may perhaps indicate only a Muhammad as a spiritual leader on the path to Islam. This might be the missing primary evidence attesting to Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah as the *current* messenger of God who perhaps found himself here at the dusk of a career that may have been up to six decades in the making. This scenario raises more questions than providing for answers but begs for further exploration. If he was the central figure, how and why was he depreciated or nullified in the traditional accounts?

Az-Zubair, was then found on a coin dated 686, identified as caliph. A coin minted under Muawiyah depicts a cross that is crowned by a crescent. A Syrian coin from 686 or 687 again shows a ruler with Byzantine royal head dress holding a cross in conjunction with the imprint Muhammad, indicating either an unlikely theological evolution from accepting the Crucifixion to denying it or a sectarian fragmentation that must reach beyond the beginnings of Islam. However, the possible presence of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah put the notion that *Muhammad* could simply constitute a Christological title (for chosen/praised) into serious doubt. Since the iconography is literally the same as on the coin mentioned in the 650s, it could either belong to the same Muhammad alive or the placement on the timeline of the older specimen might need to be questioned.



²¹³ Mus'ab b. al-Zubayr (AH 67-72 / AD 685-690). AR drachm (30mm, 4.08 gm, 9h). KRMAN-NAR (Narmashir) mint, year AH 70, with Pahlavi GDH in ObQ3, countermarked lillah in ObQ4. Album Checklist 17. Very rare, particularly with countermark. Choice Extremely Fine.

²¹⁴ It gets even more complicated when a coin dated 690 AD, again from the same stamp series, bears the name of Atiya b. al-Aswad, Kharijite caliph, and “in the name of God, possessor of the command.” Another mint dated 700 AD bore the name of Abd al-Rahman b. Muhammad, also one who rebelled against al-Malik.

²¹⁵ Stephen Album, Tony Goodwin, Sylloge of Islamic Coins in the Ashmolean: *The Pre-Reform Coinage of the early Islamic Period* (Ashmolean, 2002) page 22. Year 66 is Walker Sch.5 (p.97) for year 67, see Spink Zurich, 17 March 1987, lot 376.

A five year gap in between az-Zubair's presence on coins and the first mention of MHMD remains unexplained, in particular in the face of a competitor (of the traditions) by the name of Muhammad from the House of Ali. Could it be that both, the Persian az-Zubair and the Syrian al-Malik fell to the throne of MHMT in al-Hira that was led by a MHMD (and may possibly have moved to Mecca)?

An indication to such weakness in Syria is the advance of Justinian II in pursuit of the Maronites (as part of the Maradite army). It looks like Justinian had not approved of John Maron becoming the Patriarch of Antioch. However, Ibrahim, John's nephew, drove the Justinian army back. John, like Maximus before him, campaigned against the heresy of a single will of Jesus, although, if one follows the consensus, he must have been beating a dead horse.

John, Bishop of Nikiu (ca. 650s or 680s AD)

Since the account of John ends in the 650s, Hoyland proposed an early composition. However, the text poses a number of challenges. Since John does not touch on Muhammad until the very end of his chronicle, the prospect of later edits is fairly strong. The problem of missing pages in his account from between 610 and 640 AD only strengthens this perception and could extend to missing pages at the end. On the other hand, it could merely indicate a rushed fix of an otherwise fairly consistent text.

John clearly recognized a distinct *religion of the Mhaggraye*. Critical scholars dismiss the word *Islam* in the text as an outright fabrication, a position that had also been held by Deus. However, there seems to have been a progression from Elijah bar Kabsha, the chief of the *Tayyi'* MHMT, to Muhammad being the spiritual leader of the *Mhaggraye*, and later to the *Tayyi'* *Mhaggraye*, through the MHMD Mahdi, and finally to *Islam*. Thus, if one were to take the text as authentic, then it must be a later composition from what was seen so far. Coins with Menorahs or crosses with the imprint MHMD suggest an originally ecumenical approach that might have been lost in history but is still traceable in the Koran where the Torah and the Gospel, respectively Jews and Christians are proclaimed integral parts of the new teachings.

The most important message in John is probably what is not said: he does not report about any specifics of this new faith.

When John finally gets to Muhammad, like all others, the chronology is post the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad of the traditions. The following passage falls to 645 AD, after the failure of Valentinus to usurp the throne from Constans (Herakleios).²¹⁶

And Abba Benjamin, the patriarch of the Egyptians, returned to the city of Alexandria in the thirteenth year after his flight from the Romans, and he went to the Churches, and inspected all of them. And every one said: "This expulsion (of the Romans) and victory of the Mhaggraye is due to the wickedness of the emperor Heraclius and his persecution of the Orthodox through the patriarch Cyrus. This was the cause of the ruin of the Romans and the subjugation of Egypt by the

²¹⁶ Nikiu, CXX, 61-63: And in those days there arose great troubles through Valentine; for he had assumed the imperial robes and sought to make himself emperor. But when the people of Constantinople heard, they arose against him, and straightway he put off the (imperial) robes. And forthwith they seized him and conducted him before the emperor Constans. And he swore a terrible oath to this effect: 'I have not done this with any evil intent, but in order to contend against the Moslem.' And when they heard this statement, they set him free and made him commander-in-chief of the army, and arranged with him that he should give his daughter in marriage to the emperor. [...]

Mhaggraye.”²¹⁷

Benjamin returned to Alexandria in 644 or 645 AD.²¹⁸ The victory of the Mhaggraye over Egypt (not Syria) falls after Heraclius's wickedness, and Constans seems to have been forced to deal with it.

And Amr became stronger every day in every field of his activity. And he exacted the taxes which had been determined upon, but he took none of the property of the Churches, and he committed no act of spoliation or plunder, and he preserved them throughout all his days.²¹⁹

Previous writers had complained about the aggressive behavior of the Mhaggraye, but John repositions them as friendly. This is followed by the *abolishment* of crushing new taxes that had been introduced *before* the arrival of the Mhaggraye. Economic reasons may have led the population of Alexandria to defect,²²⁰ but placing the text late reveals its rationalizing qualities.

Muhammad only now finds his entry into the stage of John's history:

And now many of the Egyptians who had been false Christians denied the holy orthodox faith and lifegiving baptism, and embraced the religion of the Mhaggraye, the enemies of God, and accepted the detestable doctrine of the beast, this is, Mohammed, and they erred together with those idolaters, and took arms in their hands and fought against the Christians.

And one of them, named John, the Chalcedonian of the Convent of Sinai, embraced the faith of Islam, and quitting his monk's habit he took up the sword, and persecuted the Christians who were faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ.²²¹

The remark about a Muhammad as a contemporary 'beast' places the prophet possibly alive after 645. It also puts the prophet to the *Mhaggraye* with distinct doctrines and separate from the one that had arrived with the Saracens. Thus, the polemical passage finds its origin under the impression of a matured form of proto-Islam that may lie after its breakthrough moment when Islam could be commonly recognized. By the 660s, this is certainly not the case, which implies that the passage was either added or John's work was published later.

According to tradition, the trio of God's drawn sword — the military commander al-Walid,²²² the military magician Amr Al-'As,²²³ and the clever politician Abu Bakr²²⁴ — were engaged in establishing and spreading Islam post Muhammad. Abu Bakr was the second caliph; al-Walid was the military advisor; and Amr Al-'As was the executioner. Similar to earlier texts, the latter was termed "*chief of the Mhaggraye*"²²⁵ by the bishop, while neither al-Walid nor Abu Bakr was noteworthy. It thus appears that

²¹⁷ Nikiû, CXXI, 1-2.

²¹⁸ 631+13=644.

²¹⁹ Nikiû, CXXI, 3.

²²⁰ Nikiû, CXXI, 4-9: He [John of the city of Damietta] had been appointed by the governor Theodore, and had lent his aid to the Moslem [Saracen] in order to prevent their destruction of the city. Now he had been appointed prefect of the city of Alexandria when 'Amr entered it [...] 'Amr deposed Menas and appointed John in his stead. Now this Menas had increased the taxes of the city, which 'Amr had fixed at 22,000 gold dinars, and the sum which the apostate Menas got together was 32,057 gold dinars — he appointed for the Moslem [Saracen]. And none could recount the mourning and lamentation which took place in that city: they even gave their children in exchange for the great sums which they had to pay monthly. And they had none to help them, and God destroyed their hopes, and delivered the Christians into the hands of their enemies.

²²¹ Nikiû, CXXI, 10-11.

²²² Khalid ibn al-Walid, 592-642 AD. The mausoleum of al-Walid is in Emesa, in the Bekka Valley.

²²³ Amr ibn al-As (ca. 583 -664 AD). Upon the conquest of Egypt, Amr supposedly ordered the Rabbinic Jews in Cairo not to quarrel with the Karaite Jews (at the time the Levite Quraysh).

²²⁴ Abu Bakr was caliph 632-634 AD.

²²⁵ John, Bishop of Nikiû, *Chronicles* (ca. 690 AD) CXX:72.

Compare with CXXI:3 wherein Amr Al-'As emerges as the leading figure:

And 'Amr became stronger every day in every field of his activity. And he exacted the taxes which had been determined upon, but he took none

Amr Al-'As led the military while Muhammad, if he had then been alive, was the spiritual chief in a dual leadership. Sebeos had before also made Amr king of the Ishmaelites (perhaps distinct from Amr Al-'As) and Muhammad a spiritual leader of *The Way of Truth*. In contrast, The Chronicler of Khuzistan had Muhammad slip into Amr's shoes.

The Coptic writer Severus Ibn al-Muqaffa' seems to come to build on John, Bishop of Nikiu's text with a tenth century twist: Severus not only confuses Heraclius and his son, but also Muawiyah with Muhammad.²²⁶ Thus, even that late, there was disagreement over the time and persona of the prophet.

Fragment on the Arab Conquests (post-636 or ca. 689)

The Fragment on the Arab Conquests is a note on the side of a Syriac Gospel. It has been long recognized as problematic, in particular because it is nearly illegible.

[...] and in January, they took the word for their lives (did) [the sons of] Emesa [i.e., Him's)], and many villages were ruined with killing by [the Arabs of] Muhmd and a great number of people were killed and captives [were taken] from Galilee as far as Beth [...] and those Arabs pitched camp beside [Damascus?] [...] and we saw everywhe[re...] and o[l]live oil which they brought and them. And on the t[wen]ty six]th of May went S[ac]ella]rius] [...] cattle [...] [...] from the vicinity of Emesa and the Romans chased them [...] and on the tenth [of August] the Romans fled from the vicinity of Damascus [...] many [people] some 10,000. And at the turn [of the ye]ar the Romans came; and on the twentieth of August in the year n[ine hundred and forty]-seven there gathered in Gabitha [...] the Romans and great many people were ki[lled of] [the R]omans, [s]ome fifty thousand [...].²²⁷

If placed in 636, this document would be the first occurrence of the leader *Muhmd*. It is assumed that the text suggests Emesa as the center of battles leading to the abolishment of Heraclius's claims to Syria.²²⁸

of the property of the Churches, and he committed no act of spoliation or plunder, and he preserved them throughout all his days. And when he seized the city of Alexandria, he had the canal drained in accordance with the instructions given by the apostate Theodore.

²²⁶ Severus of Al'Ashmunin (Hermopolis), History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic church of Alexandria (1904) Part 2: Peter I - Benjamin I (661 AD). Patrologia Orientalis 1 pp. 383-518 (pp.119-256 of text): Then Benjamin went forth from the monasteries in Wadi Habib, and departed to Upper Egypt; and he remained hidden there in a small monastery in the wilderness until the accomplishment of the ten years, as the angel of the Lord had told him. These were the years during which Heraclius and the Colchian [Mukaukas who surrendered the empire to the Arabs, perhaps the Coptic Patriarch, Cyrus, according to Alfred J. Butler, The Arab Conquest of Egypt, Appendix C—On the Identity of 'Al Mukaukas' (Oxford, 1978) 508ff] ruled over the land of Egypt. [...]

Then Heraclius appointed bishops throughout the land of Egypt, as far as the city of Antinoe, and tried the inhabitants of Egypt with hard trials, and like a ravening wolf devoured the reasonable flock, and was not satiated. And this blessed people who were thus persecuted were the Theodosians.

And in those days Heraclius saw a dream in which it was said to him: «Verily there shall come against thee a circumcised nation, and they shall vanquish thee and take possession of the land». So Heraclius thought that they would be the Jews, and accordingly gave orders that all the Jews and Samaritans should be baptized in all the provinces which were under his dominion. But after a few days there appeared a man of the Arabs, from the southern districts, that is to say, from Mecca or its neighbourhood, whose name was Muhammad; and he brought back the worshippers of idols to the knowledge of the One God, and bade them declare that Muhammad was his apostle; and his nation were circumcised in the flesh, not by the law, and prayed towards the South, turning towards a place which they called the Kaabah. And he took possession of Damascus and Syria, and crossed the Jordan, and dammed it up. And the Lord abandoned the army of the Romans before him, as a punishment for their corrupt faith, and because of the anathemas uttered against them, on account of the council of Chalcedon, by the ancient fathers.

When Heraclius saw this, he assembled all his troops from Egypt as far as the frontiers of Aswan. And he continued for three years to pay to the Muslims the taxes which he had demanded for the purpose of applying them to himself and all his troops; and they used to call the tax the bakt, that is to say that it was a sum levied at so much a head. And this went on until Heraclius had paid to the Muslims the greater part of his money; and many people died through the troubles which they had endured.

²²⁷ M.S.M. Saifullah, David 'Abdullah, *Quran Manuscripts & Papyrus, Date Texts Mentioning Prophet Muhammad From 622-719 CE, A Record of the Arab Conquest of Syria, 637 AD* (Islamic Awareness, 2008) 157.

²²⁸ Robert Hoyland Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: Wright, the first to draw attention to the fragment, wrote that 'it seems to be a nearly contemporary notice,' a view to which Nöldeke also subscribed. [...] It is of some significance that the fragment accords with one of the dates given in Arabic sources for the battle at Gabitha (assuming this is to be identified with Yarmuk), namely 20 August AG 947/12 Rajab AH 15 (636).

The fragment might instead originate post Sebeos [MHMT as a person], from when the Mardaites/Maronite forces under Byzantine flags would be pushed from Syria half a century later.

The city of Emesa was home to a Byzantine palace. Like in nearby Damascus, one of the heads of John the Baptist had been found there in the fifth century. This turned the city into an ecclesiastical metropolis and a pilgrimage site. Before, and maybe still in the seventh century, Emesa was also the religious center for El-Gabal. Emperor Elagabalus had been pontiff of the Temple of El-Gabal in the early third century, and its sacred stone had been moved to the Elagabalium in Rome.

Other than learning about *a* Muhmd alive after 636 AD,²²⁹ possibly in the 680s, the text contributes nothing to the identification of Muhammad's teachings or a conversion of the Umayyads.

The Tombstone of Abbasa

The daughter of Bint Juraij, Abbasa, died in April 691 AD. Her tombstone was rediscovered in a mausoleum in Aswan, Egypt. The text provides for the archaeological evidence of the words *Muhammad* and *Islam* with undoubtedly Muslim meaning.²³⁰ While it allows to fixate a very late date for the existence of Islam, it distinguishes itself from other tombstones with Koran quotes that appear regularly from the late eighth century.²³¹ However, to the knowledge of Deus, the authenticity of this stone is not yet established. Given the tremendous value that this lone artifact presents – lost in Aswan, far from the religious epicenter of the traditions – it should be viewed with suspicion. Should one not expect to find much earlier tombstones somewhere else? Specifically, the illegible parts are not some random pieces of the text but the very essence of Abbasa's lineage, the signature of the stone. Has the stone been vandalized? Has it been so carelessly excavated that it precisely eradicated the signature?

Probably the most significant passage of the tombstone is *The greatest calamity of the people of Islām (ahl al-Islām) is that which has fallen them on the death of Muhammad the Prophet, may Allah grant him peace*. If it is not a forgery, then it is implied from what was said before that Muhammad must have died sometime in between the mid-650s and before April 691 AD. That his end is a calamity points at two issues: there must have been a sudden death of Muhammad; the author must have been under the impression of mourning, indicating a recent event, perhaps weeks apart, not one decades in the past. This is the earliest expression of mourning the Prophet so far found in the archaeological record, and it is in sharp contrast to az-Zubair's contemporary coins. But again, a chain of Muhammads must be taken into consideration. However, the idea of a Christological title may be difficult to maintain if this artifact stands the test of scrutiny. Still, it may have been *born* of such a title or an institution. However, at this point, it becomes increasingly clear that MHMD is or has become associated with Islam. The *parchment* in the Sana'a Koran that has been radiocarbon dated fits into this timeframe also and was created with

²²⁹ Patricia Crone, Michael Cook Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World.

²³⁰ Helmut Abu Limor Wagner, Abd al-Malik Mohammed und Koran, Ein Grabstein von Assuan und Tausende von Münzen, Symposium of Inārah Institute at the Europäische Akademie Otzenhausen, March 17, 2012, 15:

In the name of Allāh, the merciful, the Compassionate. The greatest calamity of the people of Islām (ahl al-Islām) is that which has fallen them on the death of Muhammad the Prophet; may Allāh grant him peace. This is the tomb of ' Abbāsa daughter of Juraij (?) son of (?). May clemency forgiveness and satisfaction of Allāh be on her. She died on Monday four-teen days having elapsed from Dhul-Qa' dah of the year one and seventy, confessing that there is no god but Allāh alone without partner and that Muhammad is His servant and His apostle, may Allāh grant him peace.

²³¹ Halevy, Léor, Muhammad's Grave, Death rites and the making of Islamic Society (Columbia University, 2011).

a 99.2% probability prior to 676 AD. Likewise, the carbon dated fragments of Tübingen fit into the period from 649-675 AD. However, the subscript that lies under a text in the Sana'a Koran is estimated to around 711 AD. It needs to be taken into consideration that these documents may have been written unto older parchments.

Wishing peace upon the prophet is a distinct marker that allows to revisit traditions for possible signs of life. Several hadiths can be found in Bukhari that lack the essential wish. Although open to different interpretations, one of them suggests that Muhammad was still alive when Marwan ruled in 684-685 AD.²³²

The Fourth Ecumenical Council of Trullo (692 AD)

The mirror image of what happened in Damascus was recorded in 692 AD at the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Trullo in Constantinople. A stream of refugees had arrived in the capital that included the Melkite patriarchs under Umayyad rule. In a seemingly bizarre move, the council decided to oppress the Jews while the Byzantines were supposedly at war with a Muslim caliphate.²³³ Why did Justinian II make new enemies at home when the 'beast' was about to breach the front door?

The council's impression was that they were under assault by a *like* Arian enemy, not by Islam.²³⁴ When it came to also confirming the divinity of the virgin Mary as Mother of God, a more precise definition of the *like* Arians was provided that connects them with Jewish Messianism.²³⁵ When put in the historical context, the council produced a number of canons that viewed a *like* Arian advance as 'a barbaric incursion,' with a faith that resembled Judaism, prompting an outpour of hatred against the Jews. But since there can be little doubt that the intruder now sailed under Muslim flags, John, Bishop of Nikiu or the author of the tombstone of Abbasa (both from Egypt) must have been under the impression of a recent phenomenon, which's name, Islam, had not yet made it to Constantinople.

²³² Bukhari 2:23:396: That his father said, "While we were accompanying a funeral procession, Abu Huraira got hold of the hand of Marwan and they sat down before the coffin was put down. Then Abu Said came and took hold of Marwan's hand and said, "Get up. By Allah, no doubt this (i.e. Abu Huraira) knows that the Prophet forbade us to do that." Abu Huraira said, "He (Abu Said) has spoken the truth."

²³³ Canon XI, Philipp Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, The Council in Trullo, 692 AD* (T&T Clark, 1893): Let no one in the priestly order nor any layman eat the unleavened bread of the Jews, nor have any familiar intercourse with them, nor summon them in illness, nor receive medicines from them, nor bathe with them; but if anyone shall take in hand to do so, if he is a cleric, let him be deposed, but if a layman let him be cut off.

²³⁴ Trullo Canon I: And together with this odious and detestable contender against the truth [Arius], we condemn Apollinaris [Melkite], priest of the same iniquity, who impiously belched forth that the Lord assumed a body unendowed with a soul, thence also inferring that his salvation wrought for us was imperfect.

²³⁵ Trullo Canon I: Moreover what things were set forth by the [... Second Council of] Ephesus [...]; these doctrines we assent to as the unbroken strength of piety, teaching that Christ the incarnate Son of God is one; and declaring that she who bare him without human seed was the immaculate Ever-Virgin, glorifying her as literally and in very truth the Mother of God. We condemn as foreign to the divine scheme the absurd division of Nestorius [*like* Arian], who teaches that the one Christ consists of a man separately and of the Godhead separately and renews the Jewish impiety. [...] In the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon] that the one Christ, the son of God, is of two natures, and must be glorified [Latin, "believed in"] in these two natures, and which cast forth from the sacred precincts of the Church as a black pestilence to be avoided, Eutyches, babbling stupidly and inanely, and teaching that the great mystery of the incarnation was perfected in thought only. And together with him also Nestorius and Dioscorus of whom the former was the defender and champion of the division, the latter of the confusion [of the two natures in the one Christ], both of whom fell away from the divergence of their impiety to a common depth of perdition and denial of God. [The Sixth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople, 680 AD] taught that we should openly profess our faith that in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, our true God, there are two natural wills or volitions and two natural operations; and condemned by a just sentence those who adulterated the true doctrine and taught the people that in the one Lord Jesus Christ there is but one will and one operation; to wit, Theodore of Pharan, Cyrus of Alexandria, Honorius of Rome, Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paul and Peter, who were bishops of this God-preserved city; Macarius, who was bishop of Antioch; Stephen, who was his disciple, and the insane Polychronius, depriving them henceforth from the communion of the body of Christ our God.

In contrast to earlier writers that had written off Persia all too soon, the expectation was that the spook would soon be over and the fleeing clerics could return to their posts.²³⁶

One of the canons from this council listed a large number of heresies and what to do when their members converted to Orthodox Christianity. Among many, it listed Arians and Manicheans, but it did not mention Muslims or Islam. While some of the bishops did not sign the decrees, the patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Antioch did. The seats of the latter three had been in the hands of the caliphate and were now abandoned. Yet, Islam was not worth mentioning. The Manicheans, the *like* Arians, the Melkites, and the Council of Chalcedon, however, were.²³⁷ Prominently missing on the list are also the Maronites (a sub-group of the Melkites) and Maximus the Confessor.

What may look like a purification of the Orthodox faith is in reality a calculated submission and humiliation of a number of religious sects – looked at as *'barbaric churches'* – that had to flee from the caliphate, including the Melkite leaders. The council stood in the name of depriving the Manicheans, like Arians, and Melkites of their lifestyle and families.²³⁸

The most fundamental issues of this council were twofold: Firstly, the representation of Jesus was 'standardized.' It was at this council that the cross with Jesus was raised to be the sole representation for Western Christianity.²³⁹ In sectarian fragmentations, it can be demonstrated repeatedly that the offshoot would position itself at the opposing end. Did the caliphate perhaps remove the iconography and the crosses in response to the council? The Lamb would remain a mainstay of those parts of Melkite Christianity that would live on. Secondly, in the wake of this council, the Paulinic epistles were standardized throughout East and West, which might have fueled the fire of hatred between the factions even more. In other words, many sects had not used Paul until now,²⁴⁰ and it may be the

²³⁶ Trullo, Canon XVIII: Those clerics who in consequence of a barbaric incursion or on account of any other circumstance have gone abroad, we order to return again to their churches after the cause has passed away, or when the incursion of the barbarians is at an end.

²³⁷ Trullo, Canon XCV: But concerning the Paulianists it has been determined by the Catholic Church that they shall by all means be rebaptized. The Eunomeans also, who baptize with one immersion; and the Montanists, who here are called Phrygians; and the Sabellians, who consider the Son to be the same as the Father, and are guilty in certain other grave matters, and all the other heresies—for there are many heretics here, especially those who come from the region of the Galatians [in the Anatolian diocese of Pontus]—all of their number who are desirous of coming to the Orthodox faith, we receive as Gentiles.

And on the first day we make them Christians, on the second Catechumens, then on the third day we exorcise them, at the same time also breathing thrice upon their faces and ears; and thus we initiate them, and we make them spend time in church and hear the Scriptures; and then we baptize them.

And the Manichæans, and Valentinians and Marcionites and all of similar heresies must give certificates and anathematize each his own heresy, and also Nestorius, Eutyches, Dioscorus, Severus, and the other chiefs of such heresies, and those who think with them, and all the aforesaid heresies; and so they become partakers of the Holy Communion.

Ancient Epitome of Canon XCV.

Thus we admit those converted from the heretics. We anoint with the holy chrism, upon the brow, eyes, nostrils, mouth, and ears, Arians, Macedonians, Novatians (who are called Cathari), Aristerians (who are called Quartadecimans or Tetradiatæ), and Apollinarians when they anathematize every heresy; and sign them with the cross as we say, "The Seal of the gift of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

²³⁸ Trullo, Canon XXX: Willing to do all things for the edification of the Church, we have determined to take care even of priests who are in **barbarian churches**. Wherefore if they think that they ought to exceed the Apostolic Canon concerning the not putting away of a wife on the pretext of piety and religion, and to do beyond that which is commanded, and therefore abstain by agreement with their wives from cohabitation, we decree they ought no longer to live with them in any way, so that hereby they may afford us a perfect demonstration of their promise. But we have conceded this to them on no other ground than their narrowness, and foreign and unsettled manners.

²³⁹ Trullo, Canon LXXXII: In some pictures of the venerable icons, a lamb is painted to which the Precursor points his finger, which is received as a type of grace, indicating beforehand through the Law, our true Lamb, Christ our God. Embracing therefore the ancient types and shadows as symbols of the truth, and patterns given to the Church, we prefer "grace and truth," receiving it as the fulfillment of the Law. In order therefore that "that which is perfect" may be delineated to the eyes of all, at least in colored expression, we decree that the figure in human form of the Lamb who taketh away the sin of the world, Christ our God, be henceforth exhibited in images, instead of the ancient lamb, so that all may understand by means of it the depths of the humiliation of the Word of God, and that we may recall to our memory his conversation in the flesh, his passion and salutary death, and his redemption which was wrought for the whole world.

²⁴⁰ The Peshita version of the New Testament (Syria Vulgate) had a number of books excluded that were only added in the seventh century: 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Revelation, and all of the additional Catholic books.

reason why Islam is absent of references to Paul. While this path is also not explored here, it is a hint to the convergence of a large cycle of religious evolution that had been in the making for over half a millennia.

Despite the appearance of the combination of Muhammad and Islam in the recent archaeological record, the Council of Trullo suggests that in 692, the enemy was not yet recognized as Muslim but as *like-Arian* and Messianic Jewish. Manicheans also might loom much larger in the evolution of Islam than is commonly believed, in particular when it concerns the early Muhammadeans of the traditional view. Finally, Zoroastrianism tends to be severely under-rated.

Post-Reform Coins (692 AD)

A coin dated 692 that bore 'Abd al-Malik's name was made of the same stamp series as az-Zubair's but said *Partisan of the Caliph* and bore also the imprint *Muhammad, Apostle of God*. Since the Mahdi Muhammad had died, it should thus not be entirely off hand that MHMD might at this time have become a (*like-Arian*) religious title, and the Apostle of God might simply have been the new patriarch in Jerusalem or perhaps already in Mecca. It is also unclear how the various religions and sects (including Buddhist communities) sprouted and interbred from their beginnings, let alone how they would have reacted to a new doctrine, hence, potentially triggering multiple feuds in many places on differing grounds, leading to further fragmentation.

Ohlig was probably correct in his findings, which imply that al-Malik was not a Muslim, but not because he may not have known about Islam (should the tombstone be authentic) but because he may have actively rejected it until career necessity might have prompted him to change. However, with his analysis of the inscriptions of the Dome of the Rock, Ohlig puts too much weight on a questionable piece of evidence. According to Finbarr Barry Flood, Abbasid rulers had no reservation in mutilating Umayyad inscriptions in Damascus and elsewhere.²⁴¹ Deus demonstrated in part I of the Umayyad's conversion,²⁴² that the inscriptions first showed up in the historical record centuries later.

To highlight the possibility of a competition (that had formed under Mu'awiyah), the Christian monk Anastasius Sinaita²⁴³ wrote around 700 AD – thus outside of the evidence here included – that the *Persian* Saracens in Kufa refuted the Byzantine doctrines, the crucifixion, baptismal water, the Holy Communion, and icons.²⁴⁴ He viewed them as demons and the devil impersonated. The same author had before viewed the *Arab* Saracens as accepting Jesus as man and the Holy Spirit as the Word of God.²⁴⁵ The secret lies perhaps in the confusion of two or more competing Saracen groups, of which the Persian branch would evolve into Islam. The Arab branch would carry their creeds on to Spain and would become a victim of later efforts to modify the collective memory.

²⁴¹ Finbarr, Barry Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus: Studies on the Makings of an Umayyad Visual Culture* (Brill, 2001) 126.

²⁴² A.J. Deus, *The Umayyad Dynasty's Conversion to Islam, Putting Muslim Traditions into the Historical Context, From the Low Point Until ca. 692 AD* (June 2013).

²⁴³ St. Anastasius Sinaita was a Greek ecclesiastical writer of the seventh century. He was abbot of Saint Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai and hated the Monophysites while supporting the Chalcedonian Creeds.

²⁴⁴ Anastasius Sinaita, *Diègēmata Stèrìktiká*, after 700 AD.

²⁴⁵ Anastasius Sinaita, *Viae dux* (before 690 AD) I 1; ebd. 9, line 45-49 and X 2,4; ed. Uthemann, ebd. 169.170, Zeilen 5-12.

The mysteries continue after the currency reform, for example with coins that bear the Jewish Menorah with the imprint *Mohammad is God's prophet*.²⁴⁶ Maybe the evidence is trying to say: independent “caliphates” were competing against each other, and they may not have had a shared understanding of Muhammad. Perhaps they had the same understanding of MHMT but not of how it should relate to their territories and sectarian beliefs.

As of 696 AD, post-reform coins surfaced from Kufa,²⁴⁷ and it almost seems that al-Malik was not in control of the currency reforms. This implies some sort of an allegiance that al-Malik may have been forced to submit to. With the currency reform, all images and icons disappeared. Instead, the coins bore a religious message.

There is no god but God alone, He has no associate. In the name of God, this dirham was struck in Ramhurmaz [Khuzestan, Iran] in the year 79. God the one, God the eternal, He did not beget and was not begotten. And there is none like unto Him. Muhammad is the messenger of God whom He sent with guidance and the religion of truth that He might make it prevail over all religions even if the associators are averse.²⁴⁸

The warning on the coins is targeted boldly at the “associator” role of Jesus as god,²⁴⁹ and Muhammad *is* (rather than *was*) the messenger of their god.

That the imprint may relate to present time can be attested for with a Khazar coin from the 820s, which says “*Moses is the Messenger of God*” (Musa Rasul Allah). Not just because of its distance in time, this coin provides for its own world of difficulties by breaking all conventions of Muslim chronology, but it is hardly by coincidence that Musa²⁵⁰ had been the seventh imam of Twelver Shi'ism at the time. From this would follow the logic that “*x is the pontiff*” of whichever sect it may concern, and this may also be the core of the birth of Islam, which emerges with a new pontiff, not in Constantinople, Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, Seleucia, Mecca, or Medina but on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem where Jesus had identified a rock – the foundation stone – on which to build his church.

The central question is how al-Malik fits into this change of heart. Did he follow suit with the Melkites (and how did they adapt), did he finally submit to Islam, or was he in a leading role? These questions can be answered by following the primary evidence diligently.

²⁴⁶ Walker 605 ff.; and D. Barag, “The Islamic Candlestick Coins of Jerusalem,” *Forum Ancient Coins*.

²⁴⁷ Review Stephen Album, Tony Goodwin, *Sylloge of Islamic Coins in the Ashmolean: The Pre-Reform Coinage of the early Islamic Period* (Ashmolean, 2002).

²⁴⁸ Al-Malik, post reform Silver coin, 696 AD.

²⁴⁹ John of Damascus, *The Fount of Knowledge, On Heresies* (ca. 740 AD): Moreover, they call us Hetaerists, or Associators, because, they say, we introduce an associate with God by declaring Christ to the Son of God and God.

²⁵⁰ The seventh imam of Twelver Shi'a Islam, the Shi'ite Musa al-Kadhim ruled the Shi'ite caliphate in the Arab Peninsula 765-795 AD.

Conclusion

A seemingly simple question is embedded in a highly complex environment that is not made easier to understand by the presence of deception and destruction of evidence. In modern surveillance techniques, chatter provides the decisive clues to detect organized criminal activities. The same applies for the past, and it is beyond doubt that the chatter started after Prophet Muhammad of the traditions had already been at peace. The different placements of evidence on the timeline has no impact on this finding nor does it render the traditions altogether futile. However, with a shift in timing with Sebeos, Khusistan, possibly Nikiú, and every other primary evidence, as well as many inadmissible traditions that suggest the same, researchers should be able to build on a fairly solid foundation of the absence of all three, the Koran, Muhammad, and the non-conversion of the Umayyads to Islam deep into the seventh century. It can be said with certainty that not a single piece of evidence attests to the prophet of the traditions, not even the succession in Twelver Shi'ism.

The crux with incorporating primary evidence into traditions is that it supports a house of cards that – if built by intelligent scribes – was skillfully inserted into real history. To figure out what really happened and in order to avoid circular arguments, primary evidence must take precedence. Tradition can help to clarify certain aspects that lie outside of the scribe's (unknown) agenda. In particular, what is *not* addressed is often as important as what is spelled out.

The hypothesis here made is that Muhammad, should it not simply be a title that moved from one unto another, found his first entry into the historical record in the early 630s AD and was still alive in the mid-650s. In fact, the first contemporary evidence is in Thomas the Presbyter from around 640 AD for MHMT,²⁵¹ followed by Sebeos from the 660s for Mehmet, and then the Maronite Chronicle for MHMD, indicating a shift from a MHMT institution to a legendary person MHMD. The first (suspect) evidence of his death is from a tombstone in 691 AD in a location remote from the alleged religious center, suggesting a recent passing away of Muhammad, who may be distinct from the original – a pontiff Muhammad. The parchments of the earliest Koran fragments happen to originate from the same period (649-675 AD), but not all of the Koran seems to have been created by the original prophet. Put in other words: multiple primary documents indicate a Muhammad alive in the mid seventh century and none exist of a prophet Muhammad that died in 632 AD, let alone at any point thereafter until the date on a tombstone. Up to al-Malik, there is no evidence of Islam. The Umayyads were instead exposed to a *like*-Arian form of Jewish Messianism in the 680s. It started from an expanding territory of the Tayyi' who were at first headquartered in Al-Hira in between the Syrian and Persian holdings. The earlier Saracen and Ishmaelite incursions were unaware of Islam.

To recapitulate, the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD had declared Jesus as both fully man *and* fully god in one union (hypostasis). This creed was rejected by all *like*-Arian and Melkite sects, since they, in simplistic terms, viewed the divinity and the humanity as separate in various forms. For them and for the Jews, the divinity would be present with (or accompanying) a

²⁵¹ Thomas the Presbyter, *Chronicle* (ca. 640 AD) 147-148: In the year 634 [...] there was a battle between the Romans and the tayyaye d-Mhmt in Palestine twelve miles east of Gaza [...] Some 4000 poor villagers of Palestine were killed there, Christians, Jews and Samaritans. The Arabs ravaged the whole region.

prophet in either the form of the Holy Spirit (the presence of God), or the Word of God (the prophesy itself), or in some cases both. The doublet is also the spiritual concept that would form the basis of the Koran: Jesus is a man, a prophet, and God is the divinity who speaks through the Holy Spirit to a prophet (the Word of God). These differences cascade through to Mary, which is either the Mother of God for Byzantine Orthodoxy or the mother of Jesus for *like*-Arians and Muslims.

Heraclius had come up with a new formula with (parts of) the doctrines of Eutyches, who had fused the natures of Jesus into one god and claimed but one energy and later but one will. Maximus was not a carrier of the Byzantine ideas but an opponent of same, since he not only worked with Pope Martin but possibly also with Mu'awiyah. It would be far too soon to imply a direct connection, but whoever wrote the Koran may have been riding on a rolling train: *the Messiah Jesus is the son of Mary [i.e. not begotten by God], the Word of God was conveyed unto the mother while the Spirit proceeds from the only God to the prophet who is the Apostle of God.*²⁵² The question focuses on the status of a chain of recipients of the Holy Spirit – the Muhammads.

The proposed time shift provokes an unexplained biographical overlap of Maximus and Muhammad. If not of the same team, they must have been fierce opponents, possibly in a profound fight over pontifical supremacy over all of Christianity where the rock of Jerusalem possibly emerges as the intended cornerstone for a new map of secular and spiritual powers that may have moved from Seleucia-Ctesiphon or Al-Hira to the Holy City. The idea appears at times as a more inclusive leadership based on a voluntary submission to their god with Jesus being a human messiah endowed with the Spirit of God and the Word of God. Islam emerges as a shoot-off that was entangled in the related conflicts that shook the religions of East and West to their roots. Islam thus morphs from a *like*-Arian form of Jewish Messiahism into its earliest and still evolving form toward the end of the century. While the Christian influence is apparent in the Koran, the messianic beliefs in Manichean, and Zoroastrian (Mazdakism) religions contain elements that potentially form a common denominator with the new ideas.

Greater Armenia turns out to be center stage, rather than sitting on the fringes, thus, elevating the testimony of Sebeos to a higher level than generally assumed. It is also clear what the missing pages of Nikiú between 610 and 640 AD might reveal in respect to Muhammad or Islam: nothing that would support the collective memory. They can be written off as secondary in importance for this purpose. Instead, the traditions may have absorbed part of the Ghassanid and Lakhmid histories for the story of Muhammad. This absorption appears to find its roots with Xosrov's attempts to stem Phocas's and Heraclius's advances. The latter's successes came about through rebelling factions within the Persian establishment (Shahrvaraz, Rustam, and Farrukh Hormizd).

Likewise, inadmissible traditions as well as the primary evidence convey that the Muslim timescale is connected to Heraclius's advances and later alliance with the three Persian rebel factions. MHMT/MHMD shows in the record during a few decades since.

²⁵² Koran 4:126-4:127.

Independent of the Kabsha (Qabisa) hypothesis, it appears that the Jews from Edessa carried the seed (Sebeos), and the 'Tayyi' represent the sprout of what evolved into Muhammadeans. Their goal was Jerusalem, as was of other groups, certainly also in the first wave of attacks. However, the temple building in Jerusalem was attributed first to Saracens from the Caspian Sea in the Caucasus region, or in Sebeos to Jews who were driven away by the Ishmaelites. The next temple that went up was in Fustat under Amr, but from Mecca there was no sign of activity. It is perplexing that the Muhammad of the traditions ascended to heaven from the Mount before it would have been built. It appears as though a Maronite 'heresy' under Maximus, rather than Islam, had been accepted first by Manicheans in the eastern Arab Peninsula. The ideas made inroads from North Africa to the Euphrates River. Perhaps they also touched the imperial palaces in Rome that were now in the hands of the Vatican.

654 AD is an important year, give or take a couple, when Abu Turab (Ali) became emir of al-Hira. Turab's rise possibly falls together with Mu'awiyah's refusal to submit to the throne of MHMT and his brake with Constantinople. Since Mu'awiyah acted as the champion of the Maronites (against the Jacobites) in 659 AD, perhaps a first Muhammad had died around 654 AD, and the latter may have been part of a dual government with Amr Al-'As. However, Mu'awiyah did not only clash with Turab but also with Amr Al-'As's son 'Abd Allah who seems to lie on the path to Islam.

At the same time, a geography of the Arab Peninsula by a cleric suggests a party, possibly the 'Tayyi', that was in the process of expanding its territories and was distinct from the descriptions by Isho'yahb. The 'Tayyi' and 'Abd Allah may form the beginning of the evolution to Islam, and the cleric is the only source that provides for a connection to Medina.

The record of MHMT went silent for a couple of decades until az-Zubair became (counter) caliph in 681 AD in Kerman. After the Maronite creed was declared a heresy in 680/681 AD, it re-emerges as MHMD under az-Zubair – as if subverted – in 685 AD. It is also around 685 when Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah entered the scene. In 692 AD, a 'barbarian incursion' (not one that is decades old) wiped out the Melkite leadership in the Levant and seized al-Malik's lead.

All this is not to say that the original prophet did not exist, but his absence in his allocated time slot would trigger fundamental changes in the Muslim genealogies. Hence, researchers that are not interested in parroting expedient traditions must be open for a radical shift in how the seventh century unfolded. This notion is supported by ancient and reputed Muslim scholars. Khaldun of the fourteenth century suggested that the emergence of Islam has to be understood without the Muslim traditions. These were forged later for the pleasure of the ruling dynasties.²⁵³ However, here the case is made that the absence of traditions to particular times or topics speaks volumes. Al-Kindi²⁵⁴ was of the opinion that the Koran had been pieced together of different histories²⁵⁵ – and this difficult avenue is what the research in this paper also suggests.

²⁵³ Muhammed ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 AD), *The Muqaddimah* (1377 AD), translated by Franz Rosenthal (Princeton University, 1958) Introduction: [...] they blindly follow the tradition of the historians of the Umayyad and 'Abbasid dynasties, without being aware of the purpose of the historians of those times. [They] wrote their histories for members of the ruling dynasty, whose children wanted to know the lives and circumstances of their ancestors, so that they might be able to follow in their steps and to do what they did [...].

²⁵⁴ Abu Yusuf Ya'qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi, 801–873 AD.

²⁵⁵ Andrew Rippin, *Muslims, their religious beliefs and practices* (Routledge, 2005) 14; from Emmanuel van Si, *Radical Islam, Medieval Theology and Modern Politics* (Yale University Press, 1985) 2: Show me any proof or sign of a

There were at least fifteen significant parties on the landscape, and their histories would be intermingled in the traditions: 1) the Zoroastrians of Persia (divided into eight major dynasties that may overlap with some of the parties and beliefs), 2) the Manicheans across the Persian Empire and down the eastern Arab Peninsula, 3) the 'Tayyi' in the Arab Peninsula that may have absorbed the central regions as well as Oman, 4) the Melkite Ghassanids in the western Arab Peninsula that had earlier overwhelmed the Lakhmids, 5) the Arian Lakhmids in the eastern Arab Peninsula, 6) the Jews from Edessa and then Khorasan, 7) Maximus the Confessor who also touches the Vatican, 8) the Maronites (perhaps of Maximus), 9) the Armenian Rshtun Dynasty from Ctesiphon, overlords of the Ishmaelites at times, 10) the Umayyads from Damascus and Syria (possibly also eastern Armenians), 11) later the Zubayrs, 12) Saracens from the Caucasus (perhaps overlapping with Khorasan and the Karens), 13) the Byzantines in Constantinople, 14) Rabbinic Jews across the Middle East, including Tiberias and Basrah, and 15) evolving Muslims who must have been hiding particularly well.

It remains unaddressed why and how the shift in histories took place other than what every scholar in religious studies knows: religion is a slow moving target. Former opponents felt an urge to transform themselves into early proponents once a sect had reached a position of power. In control of information, contrary evidence routinely went up in flames, and new ideas were backdated into the old. However, religion was not static but sprouted through drawn-out socio-religious destruction in the interest of the powerful, providing for the keys to a web that is difficult to unlock.

Some later writers provide timelines that differ from the contemporary pieces, Jacob of Edessa, for example, but there is no longer an urgent need to figure out for early Islam what may have happened at that time. These writers might have been under the impression of a wave of humanitarian disasters that started from 678 AD, and they may have been influenced by early efforts to come up with 'traditions' about the life of Muhammad. It is interesting that Jacob of Edessa brought the year 0 AH in proximity of Muhammad's rule over the Arabs. This would then align the counting of years with the rise of a ruler rather than an arbitrary event of subordinate significance, even for the Koran. What needs to be figured out is *when* the onset of Islam actually took place, and this task — with the connections of the MHMT/MHMD framework that the primary witnesses of the time deliver — is achievable; but this is part of a larger publication in the making. If Muhammad was alive at a later time, then the prophetic revelations must also have occurred later unless they would be independent or spread over several Muhammads.

With their research and publications, scholars can contribute to one of the rare opportunities to foster peace and prosperity among the many Judaic opponents in the Muslim world and around the globe. Knowledge of the beginnings of any religion — while at first zealously rejected (including by many experts) — will inevitably lead to enlightenment as well as to social and economic awakening of the affected, here in particular the realm of Islam.

wonderful work done by your master Muhammad, to certify his mission, and to prove what he did in slaughter and rapine was, like the other, by Divine command.

The result of all of this is patent to you who have read the scriptures and see how, in your book, histories are all jumbled together and intermingled; an evidence that many different hands have been at work therein, and caused discrepancies, adding or cutting out whatever they liked or disliked. Are such, now, the conditions of a revelation sent down from heaven?

