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A study on the motivations of the Arabs invasion of the southern province of Iran

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Abstract

In the seventh century AD, the Moslem Arabs attacked two of the great empires of the period, The Sassanid Empire in Iran and The Byzantium Empire and conquered vast tracts of land. One of the most important events in this period was the fall of the Sassanid Empire. Historians believe that there are various reasons for the fall of the Southern province of Khuzestan to the invading Arabs. The research shall review the historical importance of the Khuzestan province in the South of Iran and the underlying reasons for the fall of the Persian empire due to the conquering of this region.

1. Introduction

During the caliphate of Abu Bakker a series of skirmishes between the Arabs and Persians occurred on the borders of the empire and in order to impose the might of Islam and strengthen the Arab settlements along the boarders of the Persian empire, Abu Bakker decided to invade the borders of the Persian empire especially in the Heyreh region. When Omar ben Khattab became the Caliph, several important battles between the Arab Moslems and Persians took place, however, after the debacle at Ghadessiyeh and the defeat of Rustam son of Farokh Hormuz and the treachery of a Persian; the city of Tisphon which was the capital of the Persian empire, fell to the invading Arabs. After the fall of Tisphon; the Persian army was defeated in two successive battles that of Jolola and Nahavand. After the defeat of the Persians at Nahavand, the Persian Sassanid king Yazdegerd III was forced to retreat into the Eastern regions of Persia with the remainder of his legions, leaving each province more or less on its own to face the invading Moslem forces. With the conquest of Mesopotamia, the Arab Moslems desisted for a time upon advancing into the central regions of Persia. Mesopotamia was an abundant and verdant region with vast monetary resources and therefore the protecting of the region became an important issue for the Moslem Arabs. Due to the fact that the Khuzistan province bordered Mesopotamia; it was naturally considered as a potential threat to the region and therefore one of the first regions that the Arab Moslems decided to invade. In addition to its proximity to Mesopotamia, the province provided access to the provinces of Kerman, Fars, Isfahan and the other Northern regions of Iran and the conquest of this region would assist in the spread of the Muslim Arabs influence within Iran. The Arabs focus on the Khuzistan region can be best illustrated in the advice given by Omar bin Khettab when

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Atibeh bin Ghazvan (one of the Commanders who conquered of the Khuzistan delta) began the initial preparations to conquer the Khuzistan province. While informing him that the Arab forces had overrun Hayreh and were advancing towards Madae'en, Omar bin Khettab emphasized that Atibeh bin Ghazvan occupy the residents of Ahvaz (Khuzistan) so that would not be able to aid the Persians in the Mesopotamian area. (1)

When Atibeh bin Ghazvan conquered the city of Oboleh on the banks of the Euphrates he built the city of Basreh (14th year of Hijrat) as a military enclave and the main headquarters for the conquering of Khuzistan. After the conquest of Oboleh, Atibeh bin Ghazvan attacked the county of Mishan which was located between Basreh and Khuzistan and which was of strategic importance. The Arabs broke the dams in the area and were able to bog down the boarder forces in the area and thus conquer Mishan. The conquest of Mishan provided the Muslim Arabs with full surveillance of the Khuzistan region and allows them to plan for the total conquest of the area.

Yazdegerd III with due regards to the strategic importance of the Khuzistan province selected Hormozan the ruler of Mehrgan Kadak (2) to secure the province; and to provision and supplement the troops in the region in order to stem the Arab Muslim's invasion.

Azin Hormozan selected the city of Shushtar as the military capital of the region due to the fact that it was the strongest bastion among the other cities of Khuzistan and strategically located along the route of the Arab invasion and capable of withstanding the Arab hordes. In addition Hormozan conscripted a great number of men from the surrounding regions and armed them. (5) Hormozan's forces engaged the Arab forces enerting the Province and were thus able to stem the rapid advance of the Arab Muslims within the province and put pressure on the Arab military enclave in the Dasht Mishan region by attacking from two fronts. Hormozan's forces entered the Dasht Mishan area through Manazer and Nahr Tiri forcing Atibeh bin Ghazvan whom was the governor of Basreh at the time to request help from Sa'ad bin Abivagas. Sa'ad sent a large force to relieve Atibeh bin Ghazvan and to route the forces of Hormozan. (6) The protecting of Southern Mesopotamia against the eminent danger of Hormozan and the Persian forces and the importance of this fertile region for the Muslim Arabs became an important determining factor in the Arab Muslims decision to over run he Khuzistan Province. Yazderd III while moving towards Khorasan, incited the people of Fars to resist the Arab invaders and the Fars province promised to provide supplies and military support to Hormozan in his battle against the invading Arabs; however, they failed to meet their comitents effectively and in a severe and prolonged battle called "Arbak" Hormozan and his forces were defeated and Omar bin Khettab sent a large Arab force to subdue the Khuzistan province and to quash Horozan. (5)

2. Methods

This is descriptive studies that focus on Motivations of the Arabs Invasion of the Southern Province of Iran. In addition, this study survey The Reasons for the fall of the Khuzistan Province.

3. Results

The results of study show that important factor which motivated the Arab Muslims to focus on the conquest of Persia was the invasion of the southern coastal city of Pars along the Persian Gulf by Allae Hazarmi the ruler of Bahrain in the 17th year of the Hijreh. Hazarmi's invading fleet was met with strong resistance and soundly defeated. In order to be able to save the remainder of the army of the ruler of Bahrain; an Arab Calvary force had to pass through the Khuzistan Province and in order to do so they had to create a safe passage by conquering the boarders of the province. (6)

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The research has focused on the reasons for the fall of the Khuzistan province and from the evidence obtained, it is possible to conclude that the fall of the Persian empire and the subsequent conquest of various regions in Persia were the result of the aforementioned factors which had essentially weakened the infrastructure of the empire and
which resulted into the rapid expansion of Islam in the area. The Khuzistan province became the gateway into the central regions of Persia and the collaboration of local governors and rulers greatly aided the Arab conquers in the retaining of order and the governing of such a vast empire. It is believed that further research in various provinces in Iran shall show similar underlying causes and will assist in the providing of a clearer picture of the Arab conquest of Persia and their method of subduing or coercing various ethnic tribes in the region.

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