On the Identity of Shahrālānyōzān in the Greek and Middle Persian Papyri from Egypt

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‘Shahrālānyōzān’ appears in several Greek and Middle Persian papyri from Egypt, as well as a couple of ostraca in Greek and at least one parchment in Middle Persian.¹ John Rea has published two of the Greek papyri as *P.Oxy.* 3637 and 3797, and noted that *P.Oxy.* 1843 (from vol. xvi), which does not mention Shahrālānyōzan by name, is in the same hand and deals with the same transaction as *P.Oxy.* 3637.² During the publication of this new material, Poethke confirmed that Shahrālānyōzan also appears in *BGU II* 377, and Worp suggested that he could also be found in *SPP X* 251 (in the Louvre), a suggestion confirmed by Gascou.³ The Oxyrhynchite material contains more or less precise dates and from this it is clear that this official, whoever he was, was active in Egypt in the 620s, a period when the country was under Persian occupation. The Greek material is also better preserved and more substantial in content than any of the published Persian papyri or parchments. Three of the Greek papyri are about the payment of large sums of gold, due for shipment out of Egypt, in a twelfth indiction which is dated 623/4. A fourth one, and possibly a fifth one as well, is part of the internal administration of a large Fayyumic estate that had passed into Shahrālānyōzan’s control. One of the Fayyūm documents, an account involving disbursements of cash, refers to the *oikos* of Shahrālānyōzan

1 *P.Oxy.* LI 3637 (19(?) .x.623); *LV* 3797 (26.iv–25.v.624); *SPP X* 251 (626/7; 7c. in *BL* 9.343), and *BGU II* 377 (7th century) contain references to someone called Σαράλανεοζαν, transliterated ‘Saralaneoan’ in *P.Oxy.*, while the presence of the same individual is implied in *P.Oxy.* xvi 1843 (6.xi.623, *BL* 8.250). The most interesting published Middle Persian documents that mention Shahrālānyōzān are *CII* Nos. 5, 58, and 81 in Weber, *Ostraca* 118, 161, and 185 respectively), P. 136 and P. 172 in Weber, *Berliner Papyri*, and the leather parchment Wien P. Pehl. 373a (Weber, *Eine spätsassanidische* 185 ff.).

2 Rea, *P.Oxy.* 3637.14n (*LI*, p. 103 f.), with Gershevitch’s suggestion that ‘Shahrālānyōzān’ should be seen as a title with the (tentative) meaning ‘most powerful of commanders.’ Here Gershevitch derives *-yōzan* from Av. *aojah-*, ‘power,’ e.g. Kellens and Pirart, *Les textes* 2:198, which I find an odd interpretation in view of his commentary on *Yasht* 10, 36, see Gershevitch, *The Avestan hymn* 187. Contrast my explanation below.

3 *Ibid.*, and 3797.9n (*LV*, p. 78).

and refers to the estate as an *ousía*.⁴ It also mentions someone who appears to be his wife or one of his wives, calling her *endoxotatē kyria*.⁵ She was based in Alexandria. In contrast to all of this, the Middle Persian documents, which are also from the Fayyūm, are simply scraps of papyrus or parchment and do not directly concern the affairs of Shahrālanyozan.⁶ The picture would probably have been different, perhaps even radically different, if the very substantial collection of Middle Persian papyri acquired by the Nationalbibliothek in Vienna in the late nineteenth century had not disappeared, almost in its entirety, following its loan to Berlin in the 1930s.⁷

To sum up, the Greek material falls into two groups: Oxyrhynchite documents, almost certainly from the former Apion estate,⁸ involving substantial payments of gold, upwards of 150 lbs from just two districts, and the two Fayyūm papyri which are less overtly public in tone. Now the most striking feature of the Greek papyri and the two ostraca from Hermonthis is that Shahrālanyozan is described as *paneuphēmos* in almost all of them. I believe this is a fairly strong clue that papyrologists have failed to pick up on. Absolutely no one but the most powerful and wealthy section of the Byzantine aristocracy described themselves in this way.⁹ In other words, if we approach the issue of the identity of this mysterious individual in a purely abstract, logical way, to begin with, he would have had to have been a high-ranking Sasanian official with sufficient stature to justify the extraordinary step of deploying the one epithet that distinguished the *élite* sections of the Byzantine aristocracy. This restricts the choice to a handful of the *highest* ranking officials in charge of the Sasanian occupation of the eastern provinces.¹⁰ Of course, one can always assume that not all

4 SPP X 251a.2, οἶκον Σαραλάν(), b.7, τοῦ κελλαρ(ίτου) τοῦ οἴκου, b.6, ἀρουρ(ῶν) τῆς οὐσί(ας).

5 SPP X 251b.1, δ(ιὰ) ἐπιστά(λματος) τῆς ἐνδοξ(οτάτης) κυράς.

6 Wien P.Pehl. 373a (Weber, Eine spätsassanidische 185 ff.) mentions the “seal of Šahrālānyōzān” in l. 10 (*gilēnag pad muhr ī Šahr-Ālānyōzān āwišt*).

7 See Weber, Pahlavi Papyri 27–28.

8 I cannot prove this, but the consolidation of the Oxyrhynchite and the Cynopolite for tax purposes otherwise occurs only in Apion documents.

9 E.g. Flavius Strategius son of Flavius Apion I, his son Flavius Apion II, and Flavius Athanasius from the sixth century; Flavius Strategius (the Fayyūm Strategius), Flavius Apion III in the seventh, including some lesser known aristocrats such as Leon in *PLaur.* III 110 (615); an epithet typical of *patricii*.

10 On the military side, the chief rival to Shahrvaraz appears to have been the Sasanian commander called Kardarigas by Theophanes, *Chronicle*, 421 etc. AM 6097. Although titles like this came to be used as personal names, there is no indication in the sources of who this person was. On the name, cf. Theophylact Simocatta, *History*, 32. 1.9.6), “This [the Kardarigan] is a Parthian title; the Persians like to be called by their titles, as if they consider it

of these officials are known to us, and so it is always possible that 'Shahralanyozan' conceals a powerful figure of Khusrō II's administration who has simply escaped the attention of the sources. This is possible but unlikely. What I would like to do in this paper is suggest grounds for identifying Shahralanyozan with Shahrvaraz, the powerful general who led Khusrō's invasion of Mesopotamia in 608/9 (probably earlier as well), of Syria in 610, and, most notoriously, of Palestine in 613.¹¹ His actual name was Farrukhān, but as Movses Dasxurants'i tells us, Khusrō "called him various fancy names, now Rāzmiozan and now Šahrvaraz, on account of his advances, attacks and victories won by Persian cunning."¹² Shahrvaraz does not appear to have been from the more traditional layers of the Sasanian aristocracy and, as much later events demonstrated, was in fact hated by them.¹³ From the Syriac sources we can tell, first, that Shahrvaraz supported Khusrō in the conflict with Bahram Chobin late in 590 and much of

unworthy to bear their birth-names," drawing on the *History* of John of Epiphania, who was acquainted with members of the Sasanian ruling elite, as he tells us, see Olajos, *Les sources* esp. 14 ff. on John's access to Persian sources and his visit to the country.

- 11 The assault on Mesopotamia was protracted and Shahrvaraz may not have been involved throughout: *Khuzistan Chronicle* 19; Nöldeke, *Die von Guidi* 16–17; *Chronicle of AD 1234* (henceforth 'Dionysius' = Dionysius of Tel-Mahré) 14, in Palmer, *The seventh century* 122; Sebeos, *The Armenian history* 110 f. (63); Syria: *Chronicle composed AD 640*, AG 921, in Palmer *The seventh century* 17, "On 7 August of the same year [610] Shahrvarāz crossed to Zenobia and took it," our one precise date; Jerusalem: Sebeos, *The Armenian history* 115 f. (p. 69), precise details with the number of killed put at 17,000 (57,000 in later Armenian sources, a misreading of Sebeos' figure; 90,000 in Michael the Syrian and Bar Hebraeus).
- 12 Movses Dasxurants'i, *The history* 77, based on a high-quality seventh-century source that terminates its own narrative in the early 680s, cf. Howard-Johnston, *Armenian historians*, esp. 52 ff. (Note Greenwood's statement that the *History of the Albanians* has been wrongly attributed to Dasxurants'i, Greenwood, *Armenian neighbours* 339, n. 14.) Farrukhān, *Khuzistan chronicle*, 25; Nöldeke, *Die von Guidi* 31; al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* 1:1062, فَرَّخَان, so too Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233), *al-Kāmil fī al-ta'rikh* 1:475; Xořeam etc. in the Armenian sources, cf. Hübschmann, *Armenische grammatik* 42, no. 78.
- 13 Cf. note 40 below. Pourshariati's suggestion that Shahrvarāz turns up on one of Gyselen's seals from the Saeedi collection as *Pirag ī šahrwarāz* (described as 'spāhbed of the Southern Quarter' and a 'grandee', *wuzurg*, hailing from the Mihrān family), Pourshariati, *Recently discovered seals* 175, with Gyselen, *The four generals* 40–41, seal 2d/2, is an improbable one on several counts. (1) There is never any indication in the sources that S. was from the Mihrān clan, which is odd if he *had* been and the fact was well-known. (2) Gyselen is strongly inclined (on internal grounds) to date the *spāhbed* seals that have the expression *hujadag-Khusrō* to the reign of Khusrō I, see Gyselen, *Sasanian seals* 49 ff., Gyselen, *Primary sources* 180 ff., supported by Cereti, *On the Pahlavi cursive* esp. 184, n. 24. (3) Al-Mas'ūdī describes S. as *spāhbed* of the West.

591,¹⁴ and second, that at the time of Maurice's assassination in 602, Shahrvaraz/Farrukhān was already an experienced general.¹⁵

The main arguments for identifying him with Shahralanyozan are: (1) the mainly Syriac (Syrian Jacobite) tradition that attributes the conquest of Alexandria in 619 to Shahrvaraz;¹⁶ (2) Sebeos' crucial testimony that it was Shahrvaraz who controlled Alexandria in 629 when Heraclius opened negotiations with him for the treaty that was eventually concluded at Arabissus in July of that year;¹⁷ (3) the curious if not striking coincidence in the morphology of the names Shahralanyozan and Razmyozan, the latter being Shahrvaraz's most common appellation in the Armenian sources (which generally refer to him as Xorëam, i.e., Farrukhān);¹⁸ (4) a tradition preserved in al-Ṭabarī which asso-

- 14 'Dionysius' 8, in Palmer, *The seventh century* 117, "When he [Bahram] heard of Chosroēs' return, he made ready to do battle with him. When Chosroēs reached Persian territory, *the general Rōmēzān joined him*, adding his 10,000 Persians to the army of the Romans, and became his ally." Khusrō succeeded Hormazd shortly after 27 June 591 and was restored to the throne in autumn of that year, cf. Tyler-Smith, *Calendars and coronations*.
- 15 'Dionysius' 14, in Palmer, *The seventh century* 121, "... Rōmēzān, a powerful, dedicated man with *considerable experience in combat* ..."
- 16 'Dionysius' 24, in Palmer, *The seventh century* 128. "Shahrvarāz invaded Egypt and, with much bloodshed, subjected it with Alexandria to the Persians" (Michael the Syrian, *Chronique de Michel* 2:401; Bar Hebraeus, *The chronography* 1:87).
- 17 Sebeos, *The Armenian history* 129 (p. 88), "Then Khoëam was easily persuaded, and he abandoned Alexandria." Stephanos Asoghig may have read this in Sebeos, if not, he provides interesting corroboration, cf. *Histoire* 148–149: "Héraclius écrivit au général perse Khor'em *qui était alors du côté d'Alexandrie pour l'inviter à venir le trouver* ..."
- 18 I shall suggest an interpretation of -y(a)ozan later (see below). For the name, cf. Delehayé, *Vie anonyme*, at 9 (p. 23), 'Ρασμιοζαν δὴ τοῦ ἀρχόντος, ἦτοι τοῦ ἀρχιστρατήγου, Χοσρόου κτλ., (Cf. Leontius of Neapolis, *Vie de Syméon le fou et vie de Jean de Chypre*, 325), Lappa-Zizicas, *Un épitomé inédit* at 9 (p. 276) (both based on the lost 'Life' of John by John Moschus and Sophronius, so our two earliest references), Theophanes, (*Chronicle* 421), 'Rousmiazan'; Sebeos, *The Armenian history* 110 (p. 62), "Khoëam called Ērazman" 115 (p. 68), "their general, called Rāzmiozan, that is, Khoëam" (p. 69) "Khoëam, that is Ērazmiozan" etc., Dasxurants'i, *History* (n. 12 above), Thomas Artsruni, *History* 155–156, "Rāzmayuzan also called Khoëam," and "Khoëam Rāzmayuzan," Stephanon Asoghig, *Histoire* 146, "le général Khor'em surnommé Razman," Strategius [Georgian text], *Prise de Jérusalem*, ix.2 (p. 16), "Rasmiozdan," xxiv. 3; 6 (p. 54), "Rasmiozan," Garitte, *Expugnatio Hierosolymae* 191, رَسْمِيَسَة (rsmysa); 'Dionysius' 8, in Palmer, *The seventh century* 117, "the general Rōmēzān," 14 (p. 122), "Chosroēs exclaimed, 'Then your name is not Rōmēzān but Shahrvarāz, the Wild Boar!'", Mich. Syr., *Chronique de Michel* (n. 16), 2, 377, "Romīzan," Bar Hebraeus, *The chronography* 1, 87, "Rūmīzān, the captain of the host, who was nicknamed 'SHAHRBARAZ,'" al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* 1:1002, l. 3, رُمِيوزَان.

ciates the family of Shahrvaraz with Darband (on the Caspian coast) coupled with the fact that Darband stood at the heart of a defensive system designed to consolidate Sasanian control of the Caucasian region (*k'usti kapkoh*) against the incursions of the Alans and other tribal groups. There is some reason to believe that *šahr i Ālān* referred to much of the territory to the north and west of Darband, at least until the Khazars became a major force in the eastern Caucasus.¹⁹ Finally, there is the extraordinary report which we owe entirely to Nikephoros, patriarch of Constantinople, that at least one daughter and one son of Shahrvaraz became Christians (with the names Nike and Niketas). Indeed, the understanding between Heraclius and Shahrvaraz included the betrothal of Shahrvaraz's daughter Nike to Heraclius' son Theodosius.²⁰ This remarkable integration into the Greek-speaking Christian circles of the Byzantine aristocracy accords well with the impression conveyed by *SPP* X 251 of a Sasanian official ('Salaraneozan') settling down to the ways of life of a local aristocrat, with an *oikos*, a substantial estate, in the Fayyūm and, who knows, many other districts.

To rehearse some of these arguments as briefly as I can, the Syriac tradition that it was Shahrvaraz who led the invasion of Egypt is *prima facie* contradicted by a second, divergent source tradition that attributes the conquest of Egypt to the Sasanian commander Shahīn. This tradition is found in Nikephoros and al-Ṭabarī and in a passing reference in al-Dīnawarī.²¹ For the conquest and evacuation of Alexandria we have precise dates in a Mesopotamian chronicle composed c. 640 (known, misleadingly, as the 'Liber calipharum').²² This gives us June 619 as the date of the capture of Alexandria. The later, ninth-century Syriac chronicle of Dionysius of Tel Mahré dated Shahrvaraz's invasion of Egypt to 617/8.²³ There is no conflict here if we assume that operations *began* in 618

19 Both Syriac and Arabic sources suggest that the Khazars were on the scene by the later sixth century (e.g. al-Ya'qūbī [d. after 292/905], *Ta'rikh* 1:188, l. 2), but if so, it is hard to disentangle them from their Turkish overlords, the Western or Kök Türks.

20 Nikephoros, *Short history*, at 17 (p. 65): "Now Herakleios conferred the dignity of patrician upon Niketas, son of Sarbaros, and gave the latter's daughter Nike in marriage to his own son Theodosios, born of Martina;" cf. Mango, *Deux études sur Byzance* 105 ff.

21 Nikephoros, *Short History* 6 (p. 45), calling him "Saitos"; al-Dīnawarī (d. 281–289/894–901), *al-Akhbār al-ṭiwāl* 112, ll. 14–15, al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* 1:1002, l. 9 ff., followed by Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil* 1:475 (where al-Ṭabarī's رموزان has become !بوران); in an earlier passage al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār* 110 f., l. 19 ff. ascribes the capture of Alexandria and the search for the Cross (!) to a second commander (neither Shahīn nor Shahriyar = Shahrvarāz) whose name is clearly corrupt, cf. القائد الآخر بوز (بوزد in the Cairo ed. of al-Dīnawarī).

22 *Chronicle composed AD 640*, AG 930, in Palmer, *The seventh century* 17–18.

23 'Dionysius', 24, in Palmer, *The seventh century* 128.

and culminated in the capture of Alexandria in the middle of 619, following what appears to have been a prolonged siege. In 617 Shahrvaraz was in Pisidia.²⁴ Sebeos tells us that Shahīn joined him there, and it is just possible that the invasion of Egypt started as a joint operation in the next campaigning season, which would explain why we have two traditions. In any case, if we *do* have to choose, the Syriac tradition is more credible. The passage in al-Ṭabarī is a highly compressed summary of events ranging from 610 to 626, and it is garbled.²⁵ It posits three Sasanian commanders, but two of them were the same individual. Shahrvaraz appears first as “Rumiyūzān,” i.e., Razmyozan (Khusrō “sent him to Syria which he then subdued and penetrated as far as Palestine”), and then as “Farruhān,” i.e., Farrukhān, “with the rank of Shahrvaraz” (“He led an expedition to attack Constantinople, until he halted on the bank of the strait just near the city ...”).²⁶ al-Ṭabarī or the source he used had lost all narrative sense of these events, but he/his source was correct in describing Shahīn as *pādgōsbān* of the West and dating the start of the invasion to Khusrō’s 28th year.²⁷ Finally, at least one strand of the Arabic historical tradition also attributed the siege or capture of Alexandria to Shahrvaraz, namely, the one found in al-Thaʿālibī and Abū ʿAlī Miskawayh.²⁸ This was clearly a different source to that used by al-Ṭabarī.

In short, if Shahrvaraz led the invasion of Egypt in 618/9 and was still in control of the country in 629 when, according to Sebeos, he “abandoned Alexandria,”²⁹ he was clearly the highest-ranking Sasanian in charge of Egypt in the 620s, and probably used Egypt as his major base of operations throughout these years. In 622 or 623 the Sasanians launched a naval offensive to seize Rhodes and other Byzantine possessions in the Mediterranean.³⁰ The Syriac sources

24 Sebeos, *The Armenian history* 113 (p. 66), with Howard-Johnston’s notes in pt. 2, 204.

25 al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrikh* 1:1002, ll. 3–15.

26 About Farrukhān: *وَأَمَّا الْقَائِدُ الثَّالِثُ فَكَانَ يُقَالُ لَهُ فَزْهَانٌ وَتَدْعَى مَرْتَبَتَهُ شَهْرَبَرَزَ وَأَنَّهُ قَصَدَ قَصْدَ الْقِسْطَنْطِينِيَّةِ حَتَّى* *وَأَمَّا أَحَدُهُمْ فَكَانَ يُقَالُ لَهُ زَمْيُوزَانَ وَجَمَّهَ إِلَى بِلَادِ الشَّامِ فَدَوَّخَهَا*; about Rumiyūzān: *أَنَاخَ عَلَى ضِفَةِ الْخَلِيجِ الْقَرِيبِ مِنْهَا حَتَّى انْتَهَى إِلَى أَرْضِ فِلَسْطِينَ*.

27 al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrikh* 1:1002, المغرب, cf. Sebeos, *The Armenian history* 111 (p. 64), “Then came Shahēn Patgosapan ...,” also at 124 (p. 81). Note al-Balādhurī’s description of the governor (*marzbān*) of Iṣfahān at the time of the conquest (al-Balādhurī [d. ca. 892], *Futūḥ al-buldān* 309, *وَكَانَ مَرْزَبَانَهَا مَسْنَا يُسَمَّى الْفَادُوسْفَانَ*. Al-Balādhurī, *Origins* 486).

28 al-Thaʿālibī (fl. 412/1021), *Histoire des rois des Perses*, 701, *فَهْضُ وَحَاصِرِ أَلْأَسْكَندَرِيَّةِ*, Miskawayh (d. 421/1030), *Tajārib al-umam*, 1:230. The earliest source is al-Zuhri (d. c. 741) cited Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, cf. Kaegi and Cobb 2008, 106, 108. So too in the anonymous author of the *Nihāyat al-arab fi akhbār al-Furs wa’l-ʿArab*, cf. Dāneš-Pažūh 1996, 424, lines 17–18 (‘Shahriyār’), and Eutychius, *Ann.*, 28, ed. Breydy 1985, 121, lines 1–2 (Arabic).

29 Sebeos, *The Armenian history* 129 (p. 88).

30 *Chronicle composed AD 640*, AG 934, in Palmer, *The seventh century* 18, with n. 115,

attribute these operations to Shahrvaraz, and Alexandria would have been a perfect base from which to conduct them. From the summer of 624 to the start of the 626 campaigning season when Persian troops massed for the invasion of Anatolia, Shahrvaraz was back in Persia, pursuing Heraclius who had opened a major counter-offensive in April of 624.³¹ In August 626, following the abortive siege of Constantinople, Shahrvaraz withdrew, probably to Alexandria.³² By this stage there was huge disaffection in the ranks of the Sasanian army and Shahrvaraz's return to Egypt and refusal to come to Khusrō's aid the following year when Heraclius launched his second counter-offensive in September 627, were symptomatic of the crisis that culminated in the removal and execution of Khusrō in February 628.³³ In other words, as the Persian counter-offensive of 626 faltered, tension seems to have developed between Shahrvaraz and Khusrō,³⁴ and it is even possible that there was a mutiny in the armies stationed in Asia Minor. At any rate, a rumour circulated that Shahrvaraz had come to a deal with Heraclius.³⁵

Kavād II, Khusrō's son, who consented to his execution, sued for peace within days of his accession.³⁶ In April, in the presence of the Roman ambassador Eustathius, Kavād dictated a letter to Shahrvaraz, instructing him that "he should collect his troops, come back into Persia, and abandon Greek territory."³⁷ Thus Shahrvaraz was still in former Byzantine territory in April 628

'Dionysius' 30, in Palmer, *The seventh century* 133, Mich. Syr., *Chronique* 2:408, Bar Hebraeus, *The chronography* 1:89.

31 See Howard-Johnston, Heraclius' Persian campaigns, esp. 16–26, for a lucid discussion of the chronology of these campaigns.

32 Cf. Mango, *Deux études sur Byzance* 109.

33 Disaffection: 'Dionysius' 34–35, 37, in Palmer, *The seventh century* 136f., referring to the "general mutiny led by Shahrvarāz," al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* 1:1005, *الكتاب الى الخلاف*, *فاخرجهم بهذا الكتاب الى الخلاف*. Refusal to aid Khusrō: Sebeos, *The Armenian history* 127 (pp. 84–85), "Heraclius arrived and camped nearby, outside the city of Ctesiphon; he burned all the royal palaces around the city ... However, *Kho'ream did not come to the aid ofking Khosrov*, but remained right where he was in the west."

34 For a sample of the legends that evolved around their tense relationship, see ps.-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-tāj* 182ff., ps.-Jāḥiẓ, *Livre* 198ff.

35 The Syriac sources, Theophanes, etc. make much of a tradition that Shahrvaraz changed sides or made a secret deal with the Byzantines: 'Dionysius' 35 (p. 137), 38 (p. 138), Theophanes, (*Chronicle* 452–453) *AM* 6118, al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345/956), *Les Prairies d'or* 1:242, Mich. Syr., *Chronique* 2:408–409, Bar Hebraeus, *The chronography* 1:89, *Histoire Nestorienne* ii, 87 (p. 41).

36 Negotiations started on 3 April, about five weeks after Kavād's accession, *Chronicon Paschale*, 187, under the year 628; Sebeos, *The Armenian history* 127–128 (p. 85), Thomas Artsruni, *History* 162.

37 Sebeos, *The Armenian history* 128 (p. 86).

and reluctant to leave. In fact, no formal evacuation of the occupied territories occurred till June 629, the date given for the evacuation of Egypt and Syria by the chronicle of 640.³⁸ This confirms Sebeos' testimony that Shahrvaraz evacuated Alexandria on the eve of his famous treaty with Heraclius which is dated July 629. The largely Armenian and Greek tradition that Shahrvaraz finally agreed to the withdrawal of troops because Heraclius offered to back a bid for power against the ruling dynasty, now represented by the child Ardashir (Kavād's son), seems credible to me, but it does encounter the obvious difficulty of why Shahrvaraz waited a whole nine months before the putsch of April 630 in which he murdered Ardashir and usurped power.³⁹ He himself was hated by the aristocracy and managed to survive for only forty days.⁴⁰

To return to 'Shahralanyozan,' Dieter Weber's suggestion that we should take this as a name meaning "die Alanen bekämpfend" opens a new line of enquiry.⁴¹ Shahralanyozan-Farrukhan himself was clearly fond of nicknames that drew attention to his reputation as an intrepid warrior. Both 'Shahrvaraz' (literally 'Wild boar of the realm' with the actual meaning 'Hero of the realm')⁴² and 'Razmyozan' ('Stirring up the regiments'? 'Throwing the battle lines into confusion?')⁴³ did precisely this, and so presumably did 'Shahralanyozan.' A form of this name is attested in the Armenian aristocracy of the fourth century,

38 *Chronicle*, AG 930, in Palmer, *The seventh century* 17–18.

39 It is possible that he was busy fighting the Khazars and even used the Khazar threat as the pretext for toppling Ardashir, as Movsēs Dasxurants'i claims, *The history* 104–105 (cf. Flusin, *Saint Anastase* 2:306 ff.). S. was clearly installed in power with Heraclius' backing, cf. Sebeos, *The Armenian history* 129 (p. 88; Heraclius bestows the throne on S. and his offspring), and the discussion in Mango, *Deux études sur Byzance* 110 ff., which concludes, "c'est Héraclius qui décida d'installer Šahrvaraz sur le trône persan ... il lui promit la couronne et, après lui, à son fils." The strongest formulation of this is in Vardan Arewelc'i (Thomson, *The historical compilation* 174), "When Heraclius heard this [news of Kavād's demise], he urged Xorem to seize the crown by murdering the youth [Ardashir]" (!!).

40 Disliked by the aristocracy: al-Tha'libī, *Histoire* 734, *المرازية على كراهته واجتمع*, cf. al-Dīnawarī, *Kitāb al-akhbār* 116, al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* 1:1063, both attributing S.'s assassination to the nobility—*كثير من العطاء واهل البيوتات* (al-Ṭabarī). Shahrvaraz's hostility to the aristocracy: Ferdowsī (d. 410 or 416/1019 or 1025), *Shāh-nāma* 9:2953, *هي* *فاخذ جاعة من الرؤساء فقتلهم*, cf. Sebeos, *The Armenian history* 130 (p. 88), "All the principal men at court or in the army in whom he could place no trust he commanded to be put to the sword." This corroborates al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh* 1, 197, *فاخذ عطاء الفرس فقتلهم*, al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* 1:1062, l. 14 *فاخذ جاعة من الرؤساء فقتلهم*.

41 Weber, Ein bisher unbekannter.

42 Cf. Monchi-Zadeh, *Die Geschichte* 63, 'Phl. varāz, np. Gurāz "Eber" → "Held".

43 Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch* 260, s.v. Razmiozan, renders the meaning as 'Kampf aufsuchend', and most scholars have repeated this, e.g. Nyberg, *A manual of Pahlavi* 2:40:

where it *clearly implies a reference to the Alans to their north*.⁴⁴ In the sixth century much of the central and eastern Caucasus was dominated by the Alans, Procopius says so in so many words,⁴⁵ and Alan raids across the Caucasus would undoubtedly have been a major reason for Khusrō Anoširavan's massive projects of construction and fortification in the sub-Caucasian region.⁴⁶ The Sasanian objective of holding the passes through the Caucasus against barbarian pressure from the north fructified in a vast defensive system which is in fact best described in Arabic sources such as al-Balādhurī and Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, and a valuable passage in Ibn Khurradādhbih. Darial in the Central Caucasus and Darband on the western shore of the Caspian were pivotal to this system.⁴⁷ The former, of course, derives its name from 'Dar-i Alān,' Ar. Bāb al-Lān. Alan settlements were widely dispersed in the seventh century.⁴⁸ The Arme-

MPrth *rzmy(y)wz* 'eager for battle'; to me it seems likely that the name contains a stronger Avestan allusion, esp. to *Avesta*, *Yasht* 14, 62 (n. 59 below), where the object of *yaoz-* is *rasmanō* (*rasman-*, 'regiment,' 'Schlachtreihe, Phalanx'; for *y(a)ozan* cf. n. 59). Note the pronunciation implied in the earliest (almost contemporary) transcriptions of the name, viz. 'Ρασμιοζαν in the Lives of John the Almoner and Rasmiozan/Rasmiozdan in Strategius (n. 18 above).

44 Cf. Garsoïan, *The epic histories* 344–345.

45 Procopius, *Bell.* 8.3.4, ταύτην δὲ τὴν χώραν ἢ ἐξ ὄρους τοῦ Καυκάσου ἄχρι ἐς τὰς Κασπίας κατατείνει Πύλας Ἀλανοὶ ἔχουσιν, αὐτόνομον ἔθνος, οἳ δὴ καὶ Πέρσαις τὰ πολλὰ ξυμμαχοῦσιν.

46 One can get some sense of the scale of these investments from reports (especially in Yāqūt and al-Ya'qūbī) about the quality of Khusrō's constructions at Darband, Yāqūt (d. 626/1229), *Muʿjam al-buldān* 1:440, al-Ya'qūbī cited Ibn al-Faḥīh (fl. 289/902), *Kitāb al-buldān* 290ff., cf. Ya'qūbī, *Les Pays* 232–233, with Barthold, *Derbend* esp. 941, Kettenhofen, *Darbend* esp. 15–16, al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ* 1:895, says he built "towns, castles, ramparts and numerous structures" throughout the region, with stone transported from Gurgān, فبنيت في ناحية صول بصخر منحوت في ناحية جرجان مدن وحصون وأكمام وبنیان كثير. Al-Tha'libī, *Histoire* 611 claims he built over 100 fortresses (قلعة) between Iran and the Caucasus.

47 Darial is listed among the provinces (*hshtr*) of the empire in Shapur I's victory inscription at Naqsh-e Rostam, where it is called 'the Alan gate' (Parth. 'l 'nn BB'), see Back, *Die sassanidischen* 286–287 (text), 187–188 (commentary). It was a Sasanian stronghold in 466, cf. Priscus fr. 37 in Müller, *Fragmenta* iv, 107, and Marquart, *Ērānšahr nach der Geographie* 99ff., but subsequently lost to the Huns. Movses Dasxurants'i, *The history* 66 refers to a *marzbān* of Čolay in the mid-5th century, suggesting that much of the coastal region was under Sasanian control by then, before the emergence of Darband as a substantial fortified site.

48 From their strongholds in the Central Caucasus (Darial, etc.) to the western shores of the Caspian, north of Darband. According to al-Balādhurī, Khusrō I met the Turks at al-Barshaliyya, *Futūḥ al-buldān* 199 (برشلية), not far north of Darband. This was Barsāliā (= Bashli?), the name by which the Alan country was known in this region, cf. Mich. Syr.,

nian *Geography* of Ananias of Širak tells us that the Massagetae (Alans) dwelt “as far as the Caspian Sea to which a branch of the Caucasus extends. Here is the wall of Darband, the town of the Chor pass (*k’atak’ pahakin Čora*), with its great rampart built in the sea.”⁴⁹ Armenian *pahak Čora* has an exact equivalent in the Arabic Bāb Šūl, and al-Ṭabarī’s expression *nāhiyat Šūl wa-Ālān* can be read as implying that Alan territory impinged on Darband.⁵⁰ Both Kavād I and Khusrō I invested massively in the fortification of Daghestan, constructing fortresses throughout the region and assigning these and their garrisons to local rulers.⁵¹ Khusrō was responsible for the creation of a formal system of rulership, with titles such as Sharvān-shāh, Ṭabarsarān-shāh, Ālān-shāh, and so on.⁵² According to Ḥamza, these Transcaucasian rulers were assigned hereditary estates.⁵³ Darband itself would undoubtedly have had a Sasanian in control. The *History*

Chronique 2, 364 and Marquart, *Ērānšahr nach der Geographie* 485 ff., concluding, “Damit ergibt sich die Lage des Landes Barsālīā von selbst: es muss sich im Süden bis Darband, im Norden mindestens bis zu den Ebenen am Sulak und Terek erstreckt haben.” Repeated Alan (Ossete, Mazk’ut’k’) raids through Darband and the passes south of Darband (e.g. Moses Khorenatsi, *The history* 9, Thomson, *The historical compilation* 161, etc.) is also proof of a widespread Alan presence in this sector.

49 *The geography* 57; cf. Moses Dasxurançi, *The history* 155, “the gate of Čolay which is near Darband.”

50 al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḫ* 1:895, ناحية صول والآن, al-Ṭabarī, *The history*, 152.

51 al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān* 198; Ibn Khurradādhbih (d. ca. 300/911), *Kitāb al-Masālik* 123; Ibn al-Faḥīh, *Kitāb al-Buldān* 344; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḫ* 1:895, l. 7 ff. Kavād’s foundations describe an arc through eastern Albania/Arrān into southern Daghestan, up to the “long wall called Apzutkawat” (*Abzūd kavād*, ‘Kavād extended this’) that connected the mountains to the Caspian north of Shapotran, Ananias of Širak, *The geography* 57 (long rec.); *Ḥudūd al-Ālām* 401. Kavād also seized Darial from the Huns and placed a permanent garrison there, against the Massagetai (= Alans, cf. Dio Cassius, lxi, 15, Amm. Marc. 23.5.16, 31.2.12), Procop., *Bell.*, 1.10.12 (seizure), 1.16.4 ff. (garrison). Darband was chiefly fortified by Khusrō I, with the famous wall that protruded into the sea and the imposing network of forts in the mountains to the west, al-Iṣṭakhrī (wr. ca. 951), *al-Masālik* 184 ff., n. i; al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān* 199. In the *Sīrat Ānūshirwān* Khusrō claimed he settled thousands of Turkish auxiliaries in these regions, subordinating them to the *marzbān* of Šūl, cf. Grignaschi, *Quelques spécimens* 19 ff., 24. “Pērōzkhusrō”, *ibid.*, 19, was surely Khusrō’s name for Darband, cf. Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam* (n. 28) 192, l. 8 ff. فلما بلغت باب الصل ومدينه, فيروز خسرو.

52 al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān* 199–200, Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (ca. 350/961), *Ta’riḫ sini mulūk* 58, al-Mas’ūdī, *Les Prairies d’or* 1, 160, and the ref. in the *Sīrat Ānūshirwān* to *al-mulūk min qibalanā hunāka* (Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam* 192, Grignaschi, *Quelques spécimens* 19).

53 Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *Ta’riḫ sini mulūk* 57, واسكن في كل طرف قائدا يقطع له من الجيش واطعمهم من ما يلي, ذلك الصقع ضياعا وجعلها من بعدهم وقفا على اولادهم.

of *Ṭabaristān* mentions a nephew of Khusrō, Narsī, as the “lord of Darband” (*ṣāhib ḥurūb Darband*).⁵⁴ Before his own accession to power, Khusrō Parvez bore the title ‘Alānshāh, underlining the centrality of Darband to the Sasanian defence system in the late sixth century.⁵⁵ The eleventh-century *Ta’rikh Bāb al-abwāb* preserved in Mūnejjim-bashī’s *Jāmi‘ al-duwal* makes repeated use of the expression ‘al-Bāb and the Marches’ (*Bāb al-abwāb wa-l-thughūr*).⁵⁶ This recalls the late Sasanian terminology preserved in a valuable passage of the famous *Letter of Tansar*, a third-century original that was re-edited in the sixth century, where the founder of the dynasty Ardashir is supposed to tell his priests, “if any man come submissively before us, seeking to walk upright upon the highway of obedience, we shall not deprive him of the title of king. No other man, not being of our house, shall be called king, except the Lords of the Marches—of the Alān and the western region, of Xwārezm and Kābul.”⁵⁷ Thus ‘Alānshāh’ was one of the titles of the commander assigned to Darband and the Marches, and it was this position, I suggest, that Hormazd conferred on Khusrō Parvez, presumably to give him control of a substantial body of troops.⁵⁸ More speculatively, I suggest that on his accession to the throne, Khusrō transferred this command to Farrukhān, who was not yet Shahrvarez, perhaps modifying the title to remove any reference to ‘king’. If ‘Shahrālanyozan’ was another of his fancy names for this general, it may have been an allusion to the Avestan image of the goddess Anāhīt “stirring up the shores of the sea Vourukaša” (in the *Aban yašt* or ‘Hymn to the waters’), or of Vərəθraϥna, the god of Victory, throwing the battle lines into confusion.⁵⁹ Among her various attributes, Anāhītā was

54 Ibn Isfandiyyār (wr. 613/1216–1217), *Tarikh-i Ṭabaristan* 153, Ibn Isfandiyyār, *An abridged translation* 97.

55 Ferdowsī, *Shāh-nāma* 9, 2694, بر ما ز دام تو ازرد بود; cf. Alemany, Sixth-century Alania, who notes the parallel with Pahl. *shēl’nywc’n*. There is an interesting resonance of this in Juansher’s *Life of Vaxt’ang Gorgasali*, Thomson, *Rewriting Caucasian history* 228, “Then the king of the Persians Urmizd gave Ran and Movakan to his son, who was called K’asre Ambarvez. He came and resided at Bardav ...”

56 Minorsky, *A history of Sharvān*, 41, 47; e.g. Ar. 16: باب لا بواب والنغور.

57 Ibn Isfandiyyār, *Tansar’s Epistle to Goshnasp* 9, l. 16 f. جز ان جاعت که اصحاب ثغورند الان و ناحیت; Ibn Isfandiyyār, *The Letter of Tansar* 35.

58 This is implied in the reason Khusrō gives for his appointment, cf. Ferdowsī in n. 55 above.

59 *Avesta, Yasht* 5, 4: *yaōzenti vīspe karanō zraiiā vōuru-kashaiiā*, also in 8, 31 (Panaino, *Tištṛya*, 1 55); 10, 36: *yaōzenti vīspe karanō rasmanō arezō-shūtahe* (Gershevitch, *The Avestan hymn* 90, “all the flanks are surging of the battled-tossed regiments”), in all of which the verb form is intransitive. (For the transcription of intervocalic *ū*, see Hoffmann and Narten, *Der Sassanidische Archetypus* 39 ff.) The stronger, transitive use occurs in *Avesta, Yasht* 8,

also the goddess of war.⁶⁰ The *yašts* which have a more distinctly epic character were favourite songs sung by warriors, and the verb *yaoz-* which appears repeatedly in the *yašts* should be taken in its late Avestan sense of ‘confounding,’ ‘throwing into turmoil’ or ‘stirring up.’⁶¹ Thus I would suggest ‘throwing the land of the Alans into turmoil’ as a likely translation of ‘Shahralanyozan.’

Whatever one thinks of this reconstruction, it is interesting that according to a tradition transmitted by Sayf ibn ‘Umar and reported in al-Ṭabarī, a descendant of Shahrvaraz was ‘ruler of Darband’ (*malik bi al-Bāb*) at the time of the first Arab incursion into Transcaucasia in 643.⁶² What should we make of this? In *Termination of Hostilities* Donald Hill commented, “It is extremely unlikely that any Muslim forces penetrated into the country of the Khazars at such an early date.”⁶³ This seems to imply that Darband was now under Khazar control. To me it seems more likely that the Sasanian contingents called the Siyasikin or Nishastagan retained control of Darband into the early 640s, when the rest of the empire had fallen apart. The backbone of this *isnād*, one repeatedly used by Sayf, may have been a compilation of reports reduced to writing by Ṭalḥah ibn al-A‘lam. In any case, the long-standing prejudice against Sayf’s reliability as a transmitter has now begun to disintegrate. I only mention this report in conclusion because it fits into the general framework of my argument so well.

8 (Panaino, *Tištrya*, I 34): *āpō yaozaiieiti* (in tmesis with *upā* and *aiβi*), and most spectacularly in 14,62 (the hymn to Victory), where the god Vərəθraγna does various things to the battle lines (*rasmanō*), including “throwing them into confusion”—*yō rasmanō yaōzaiieiti*. Translations of the passage from *Yasht* 14 include Malandra, *An introduction* 87, “We worship Ahura-created Wərəθraγna, who destroys the battle lines, who cuts the battle lines, who tramples the battle lines, who throws the battle lines into confusion...,” and *Avesta* 267, “der die Schlachtreihen zerstört, der die Schlachtreihen zerschneidet, der die Schlachtreihen ins Gedränge bringt, der die Schlachtreihen in Verwirrung bringt.”

- 60 E.g. Chaumont, *Le culte d’Anāhitā*. The figure of Anahita presided over Khusrō’s expansion into the eastern provinces, see Malek, *The Sasanian king*, discussing Khusrō’s special issues that begin c. 610, with reverse types that replace the fire altar with a facing bust of the goddess. Malek notes that “The cult of Anāhitā was in its ascendancy under Khusrau I” (p. 35).
- 61 See Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* 1231, s.v. *yaoz-*, 2a caus. ‘in Verwirrung bringen’, Boyce, *A word-list* 103, *ywz-* [yōz-] Pth. ‘agitate, set in motion, convulse; be agitated’.
- 62 al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh* 1:2663, *وما اطل عبد الرحمن بن ربيعة على الملك بالباب والملك بها يومئذ شهريز رجل من اهل فارس وكان على ذلك الفرج وكان اصله من اهل شهريز الملك الذي افسد بنى اسرائيل*.
- 63 Hill, *Termination of hostilities* 155.

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