



Parthian History and Syriac Sources by Looking at the Impact of National Iranian Historical Traditions on Syriac Resources

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(1-20)

Abstract

We are justified in our study of Iran's historical period by the invisible and clear vestiges of the mysterious Parthian empire, which has piqued the interest of a lot of historians and intellectuals. Parthian history has been disproved in numerous dimensions such as political dimensions, social dimensions, and cultural dimensions using contemporary research based on Greek, Roman, Armenian, Syriac, Middle Persian, and Islamic sources, as well as archeological evidence. On the basis of ancient historical writings, it is now possible to recreate a portion of the Parthian Empire's history. Chronicles, written in Syriac, are among the most important historical sources for reconstructing ancient Near Eastern history. These sources are especially vital for refining pre-Islamic Iran's history, as it would be pointless to write the history of Iran during the Sassanid era without utilizing Syriac resources. With these contexts in mind, the goal of this paper is to follow the Parthian rulers' history through a variety of sources. When all of the available Syriac chronicles are taken into account, it becomes clear that these sources were mostly neglected by all of the Parthian rulers, and that no names or addresses can be located in them. At first glance, the absence of Parthian kings, history in Syriac sources suggests that there is no need to study these sources in relation to Parthian history; however, the opinion of this essay is that such a void to depict forgetting of the Parthian kings was not accidental in the Syriac sources, but rather was influenced by the tradition of Iranian historiography in the Sassanid (Sassanian) epoch, and since then the historical has been influenced by.

Keywords: Parthian, Syriac Sources, Syriac language, Historiography, Historical texts

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Introduction:

In the studies of the historical period of Iran, we are justified by the invisible and obvious traces of the mysterious Parthian empire that has interested a number of historians and thinkers. For more constructive studies, in addition to the results of archaeological excavations, it is important to explore the historiographical texts. Contemporary researches using Greek, Roman, Armenian, Syriac, Middle Persian, Islamic sources as well as archeological findings of Parthian history have been studied and the history of this dynasty has been debunked in various political, social and cultural dimensions. Today, it is possible to reconstruct a part of the history of the Parthian Empire based on ancient historical texts. In this article, by examining Syriac texts, the impact of the Sassanid historiography worldview is discussed in order to better examine the roots of the reflection of Parthian history. In reviewing Syriac texts, we encounter the point that the Sassanids have made great efforts to erase the memory of the Parthians. Also, by examining and studying the written sources of Syriac historiography, an attempt was made to give a measured answer to the ignorance of the Parthian kings in this category of sources. Contrary to popular belief, Syriac literature was not a non-native literature in Sassanid Iran. Therefore, before dealing with the reflection of Parthian history in Syriac sources, the present article refers to the history of Syriac language and literature and briefly discusses the formation of the Syriac language as well as the emergence of the historiographical tradition in Syriac literature. In general, the language in which Syriac literature and texts are written is one of the dialects of Aramaic. Aramaic has played a very important role in the development of communication between the lands of the ancient East for several centuries and is one of the languages of the northwestern branch of the Semitic language family (Fales, 2011: 555). Remaining evidence from the late eighth century BC confirms that Aramaic was used as a mediating language between the administrative apparatus of the Assyrian Empire and non-Akkadian tribes. Along with Akkadian, it became the second most important language of the ancient Near East (Tadmor, 1991: 419). After Alexander's conquest of the Orient, Greek gradually replaced Aramaic in the Hellenistic cities of the Eastern Hemisphere, and the role of Aramaic mediator disappeared. With this development, the Aramaic language entered a new phase, often referred to as the "Middle Aramaic" period (300 BC to 200 AD) (Greenspahn, 2007: 7). Had the ancient East (Fales, 2011: 555). The oldest known period of the Aramaic language is called the "Old Aramaic" (Müller-Kessler, 2002: 958). Religious differences soon divided the Syriac language and literature into Eastern and Western. With the beginning of the fifth century AD, the situation changed and the Christian world faced new problems, and in the meantime, the Eastern Syrian Church became the center of controversy. Religious conflicts in Syria and the eastern provinces of the empire eventually led to the closure of the Persian school in Edessa in 489 AD by Zeno (Byzantine emperor). With the closure of this school, the only Nestorian ideology base in the west of the Euphrates was destroyed and therefore many students of this school migrated to the east and the territory of the Sassanid Empire (Asmussen, 1983). In this regard, the formation of the tradition of Syriac historiography came into play in the sixth century AD, when an important part of Syriac literature was composed of historiographical texts; The most important styles of Syriac historiography can be considered as chronicles, church histories and local histories of monasteries. The formation of the Syriac historiographical tradition coincided with the reign of the Sassanid kings in Iran. In order to be able to draw a logical conclusion from the non-reflection of Parthian history in Syriac sources, it was necessary to deal with the most important Syriac histories and events.

These event letters include:

- 1) Syriac yearbook belonging to the sixth century AD, written in the year 30 of the reign of Khosrow Anoshirvan.
- 2) The chronicle of Yaqub Adsaei, this chronicle was written in the late seventh century AD. (Hoyland, 1997: 410).

Although this event is very valuable for the history of the Sassanid kings and mentions the reign of the kings of this dynasty with great accuracy (in years and months), but it does not mention the Parthian kings.

- 3) The Chronicle of Elias Nasibini, the most important book of Elias, is his chronicle, which covers the news of the world from the beginning of creation until the year 1018 AD.

This chronicle is one of the most important historical sources, especially for the Sassanid era (Hoyland, 1997: 422).

This chronicle provides a detailed list of all the kings of the world dynasties (including the Achaemenid and Sassanid kings). However, there is no trace of the Parthian kings in this chronicle.

4) The Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, which is one of the largest and most important Syriac chronicles.

The chronicle he wrote covers the events of the world from the time of creation until 1195 AD. (Howard-Johnston, 2010: 68).

This chronicle has used various sources to write the history of each dynasty, and specifically in the history section of the Sassanid kings, it is certain that it has used ancient sources that have been influenced by Iranian historiography.

In this event, despite the fact that the history of the Sassanid kings is mentioned in great detail, the Parthian kings have been completely ignored.

5) Ibn Hebrew's chronicle (Hoyland, 1997: 423). In this text, too, the Parthian kings are completely absent and no mention is made of them.

6) The chronicle of Arbela or the church history of Adiabneh, which is one of the Syriac texts that covers all the events mentioned in it, the late Parthian period and a large part of the history of the Sassanid period.

For this reason, since this text was introduced by Alphonse Mingana (Mingana, 1907: 1-17), it has always been of great interest to scholars of Sassanid history. This chronicle is the only Syriac text that provides information about the last Parthian kings and even a history of the extinction of this dynasty (Mingana, 1907: 25) for which scholars have provided reasons for the non-authenticity of this text. In general, in the sixth century AD, at the same time with the emergence of the tradition of Syriac historiography, a new wave of collection of historical and national narrations by the Iranians had begun, in which the history of the Parthians was deliberately ignored.