THE POLITICAL ROLE OF SOLOMON, THE EXILARCH, C.715-759 CE (PART 2)

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ABSTRACT

This is the second part of an article on the hereditary Jewish rulers known as Exilarchs, claimed as male-line descendants of King David. This part focuses on the eighth-century Exilarch Solomon, identified as a grandson of the Exilarch Bustanai and the Persian princess. Solomon was of high social standing, based on his learning and wealth from trade, as well as his ancestry. It is plausible that he was involved in the conversion of the Khazar rulers to Judaism and in the Bagratid claim of descent from the House of David. Genealogical evidence is crucial in identifying Solomon with the Jew Forty Cubits, described by both Islamic and Byzantine traditions as the influence behind the implementation of iconoclastic policies in their societies.

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The Khazar Conversion and the China Trade

The empire of the Khazars consisted largely of a variety of Turko-Mongol tribes. At its height, the empire was nearly as large as the neighbouring Byzantine empire to the south, but the population density was much less. The Khazars were in regular contact with China, especially along the old Silk Road. Their crucial location for trading and their economic base, so different from the Mediterranean or north-western Europe, can be well appreciated in the maps of Martin Gilbert. Their empire expanded westward, as they separated from the West Turkish empire, of which they had originally been a part. Useful data may be found in the studies of Turko-Mongol groups by Grousset (1970) and Parker (1924).

The conversion to Judaism of the Khazar rulers and, ultimately, many of their subjects created a Jewish empire which has had no parallel before or since. One would have expected substantial historical records of this event, which impinged on the Chinese, Tibetans, Islamic peoples, Byzantium, Rome and western Europe. Instead, there are only a few scattered references. The fullest account is in the letter of King Joseph to Ḥisdai ibn Shaprut, received about 955, and known in two late versions. Even the date of conversion of the Khazar rulers to Judaism is controversial, based on differing interpretations of contradictory statements in three different sources, plus some subsidiary data.

The fullest modern studies of the Khazars are by Golden (1980, 1992), Brook (1999) and Dunlop (1954, 1966, 1971/72). Koestler (1976) has written a more popular study. Golden's works place the Khazars firmly in their Turkic origins. Dunlop's studies include commentaries on most of the diverse sources from China to Spain which furnish us with our knowledge of the Khazars. Although Golden's work is far more comprehensive, detailed and linguistically technical than Dunlop's, the presentation in Dunlop's publications is much more accessible. Brook is particularly

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useful for his data on the extent to which Judaism became typical in the Khazar empire.

Although the Khazars were literate in several languages and scripts, few Khazar documents are known. Partly because of this, the study of Khazar history or genealogy is complicated by the fact that it is usually difficult to correlate the names of individuals expressed in different languages. The Khazar (Turkish) names have to be reconstructed on the basis of comparative linguistic evidence, since they are recorded only in distorted forms in various foreign languages (which may be transcribed differently by different scholars). For example, the title Yabğu is recorded as Ziebel, Jebu and Sinjibu. A further complication is the variety of ways in which Khazar leaders are identified (Table II):

Table II ***Examples of variation in name usage in Khazarian and Shakespearean contexts***

	Khazaria (based on Golden, 1980)	England
Family name	Assena	Percy
Personal name	Buli, Busir, Bumin	Henry, Harry
Nickname	Dalobian	Hotspur
Title	Šad, Gan, Yabğu, Qağan*	Earl, Duke
Locality	Ili, Duli, Sibir	Northumberland

*These titles might also be used as personal names.

Note that the Khazarian family name is seldom used and is in the background rather than the foreground.

The origins of the Khazar state, and of its ruling family, seem to be relatively simple problems, now largely solved, despite some disagreements about details. The crucial period for both is the time immediately preceding and following the break up of the great West Turkish empire in 630 CE. There seems to be no recent study of the genealogy of the Turkic rulers. Beckwith (1987, pp.206-208) discusses the name of the ruling family, usually written Asena. He argues that it is linguistically the same name recorded by the Greek historian, Menander, as Arsílas, and he reconstructs the prototypical form *Arśïla. This seems probable. The fullest summaries are those of Chavannes (1903) on the western Turks and of Liu (1958) on the eastern Turks, showing some disagreement and overlap. There are difficulties in the primary sources within the various areas, and the comparison of the sources in different areas is a horrendous task. Justifying conclusions about the genealogy would require a substantial monograph. For present purposes, Figure 4 shows the best interpretation of the material which I have been able to devise. Golden's historical summary provides a careful comparative analysis from a historical viewpoint, but he makes no attempt to justify genealogical relationships, which are not central to his study. These include some reconstructions which seem to me improbable. Golden says that the Qağans Shifkwi and Tong Yabğu were younger brothers of Tardu, son of Ištemi, and Tong Yabğu was murdered in 630 by his uncle, Bagatur, who was, therefore, a brother of Ištemi. A daughter of Ištemi was married in 557 to the Sassanid emperor, Xusrau. It hardly seems likely, even in a polygamous society with half-siblings spread over many years, that her uncle would assume power 73 years after her marriage. It is not absolutely impossible, and would have to be accepted if the evidence were clear, but as a reconstruction, I do not find it acceptable, since it is contradicted by data and interpretations which show no such implausibilities. Chavannes regards it as

certain that Che-koei (Shifkwi) was son of Tou-leo, son of Ta-teou (Tardu, son of Ištemi) and that his nephew, Pouli-chad (Buli-shad, son of Moho-shad) was "*descendant a la quatrième generation de Che-tie-mi kagan*" (descendant at the fourth generation of Ištemi). Chavannes is here using an exclusive counting system in which Ištemi's *son* is considered the first generation.

The first person who is called "King of the Khazars" (in a non-contemporaneous source) is Ziebel in 627, usually identified with Moho-shad in the Chinese sources. Ziebel is a form of the title Yabğu, which was combined with Qağan among the Western Turks, so that Yabğu Qağan was itself a distinct title, different from either of its component parts. Ziebel ruled much of the area which became Khazaria. Whether so regarded by his contemporaries or not, the retrospective view of him as a Qağan of the Khazars is entirely reasonable. We may reasonably presume that this Ziebel was an ancestor of the later Khazar ruling family. He was identical either with T'ung Shih-hu, the West Turkish Qağan from 618 to 630, or with Moho-shad. T'ung Shih-hu was a Buddhist, married to a Tibetan princess. It is possible that Moho-shad was an earlier name of T'ung Shih-hu himself; if not, he was his younger brother. Artamonov[2] thought that T'ung Shih-hu had appointed his brother, Moho-shad, as the Western Turkish ambassador to China, 618-626. In any case, Moho-shad had four known sons: the eldest, *Shapur, d.639, was father of *Bagatur, killed 641, father of Ibi Šegui, who ruled in the east from 642 to 651, and then fled to the west. Artamonov thought that Ibi Šegui then became the Khazar Qağan and ancestor of the later ruling family. Since his grandfather had died only 12 years earlier, Ibi Šegui would probably have been a fairly young man in 651. Chronologically, he might easily have been the paternal grandfather of Boshir (Greek Bouseros), the Khazar ruler whose sister Theodora married the Byzantine emperor Justinian II between 698 and 703 CE.

Our scanty sources for the conversion of the Khazars to Judaism do not even give a reasonably clear historical context, and the dates are contradictory. The fullest account is the letter of King Joseph, written about 955 in reply to one from Ḥisdai ibn Shaprut in Spain; the king's letter is extant only in later copies, with two markedly different versions. Cutler and Cutler (1986, fn.54-66) have extensive discussions of the differences. King Joseph maintained that his ancestor, Bulan, was converted to Judaism after convening a public debate between a Jewish rabbi, a Christian priest, and an Islamic mullah. Korobkin (1998, pp.341-357) has translations of the letters of Ḥisdai and King Joseph. One of the copies has a note that the conversion happened "*340 years ago.*" Taken from 955, this would give 615 CE. No other evidence suggests a date that early, and no modern scholar has defended that date. It may have been added by a copyist, intending a calculation from his own time, but without knowing who the copyist was, that is no help. Yehuda Halevi, a famous Spanish poet, writing about 1120-1140 CE., presented his views on the central tenets of Judaism in the form of a dialogue between a Khazar king and the rabbi who converted him to Judaism. At one point, the king asked the rabbi the date, counted from the creation of the world, and was told that it was the year four thousand five hundred, which, in the system then in use, corresponds to 740 CE (Korobkin, p.17). This date was widely accepted for some time, and I shall try to show that conversion at about that time is plausible. However, the most recent studies of the Khazars prefer a later date. The Arab writer, al-Masudi (d.956), said that the Khazars were converted when Harūn-al-rashid was Caliph (786-809). Constantine Zuckerman (1995)[3] put the conversion in

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[2] cited by Golden (1980, Vol.I, p.59) and Toumanoff (1963, p.391, fn.7)

[3] pp.243-245.

861, equating the famous three-way debate in which Bulan accepted the superiority of Judaism with a debate in which Saints Cyril and Methodius demonstrated the superiority of Christianity to their own satisfaction. This seems to be largely accepted by Brook (1999), although he accepts some parts of King Joseph's letter which Zuckerman regards as unhistorical. In my view, there are four strong arguments against this late conversion date.

- First, Druthmar of Aquitaine, far to the west, writing in 864 said that the Khazars were Jews in a legendary context which is hardly likely to reflect historical events of three years earlier (Brook, pp.9-12).
- Second, the *Life of Constantine* puts the debate by Cyril and Methodius in the reign of the Qağan Zachariah (Brook, p.123). His name is a clear indication that Judaism was already well established, at least in the ruling family.
- Third, there is the genealogy of the Byzantine Patriarch, Photius (Settipani, 1991, pp.19-29). Photius was called "*Khazar-faced*" by the Emperor Michael II. Zacharias, the grandfather of Photius, has a Jewish name, virtually unattested in Byzantium, although, as just pointed out, known in the Khazar royal family in the next century. Zacharias married a patrician Byzantine woman, a sister of Tarasios, who was already patriarch of the Byzantine church in 784. Settipani (chart on p.27) estimated that the wife of Zacharias was born about 760. Zacharias' grandson, Photius, is believed to have been born about 810. In terms of the historical situation, 786, the year in which Harūn-al-rashid became Caliph, was also the year in which Leo II, hereditary prince of Abasgia, in western Georgia, and a Byzantine patrician, declared his independence from Byzantium. Leo II was the son of Constantine (son of Theodore) by a Khazar princess, the daughter of the Khakan (Toumanoff, 1990, p.74). Toumanoff puts Leo's birth about 766-7, which probably means that he was a first cousin of the emperor Leo "the Khazar." Leo II was able to get the assistance of his Khazar relatives against Byzantium. It seems utterly unlikely that anyone of Khazar ancestry would have been welcomed in Byzantium for a considerable time after Abasgia became an independent kingdom. This, in turn, means that a conversion of leading Khzars to Judaism must substantially antedate the time of Harūn-al-rashid. The simplest solution to the ancestry of Zacharias is that his father or grandfather was a Khazar convert to Judaism and that he converted to Christianity, perhaps as one of the Khazars welcomed to Byzantium because of the status of the emperor Leo and his Khazar mother.

  There is, however, another possibility. If Zacharias was a brother of Leo II, of Abasgia, he would have been a Byzantine Christian patrician with a Jewish Khazar mother. This would have put him in far better circumstances to marry into the Byzantine nobility. Zacharias had a son Leo and grandsons Constantine and Theodore, repeating the names of Leo II, of Abasgia, his father Constantine, and his grandfather Theodore. It should be kept in mind that Byzantines normally named their children for relatives. Moreover, Zacharias had a son Sergius, and one of the hereditary Princes of Lazica (in West Georgia, although a different family from the Abasgians) was Sergius, attested in 696/7—intermarriages between the two West Georgian princely families are probable.
- The fourth argument against a late conversion date concerns chronological considerations relating to the genealogy given by King Joseph in his letter. Constantine Zuckerman (1995) emphasizes that we have sections of three versions of this letter—a rather brief excerpt by Judah ben Barzillai, of Barcelona, a "short" version and a "long" version. Presumably these represent the viewpoint

of the converted royal family. We also have the "Schechter letter" written apparently by a Jew living among the Khazars, of markedly lower social status. A central feature of Zuckerman's argument is that there is only one religious debate in these accounts and that it corresponds with the historically attested debate involving Saint Cyril in 861. However, Wasserstrom (1995, pp.113ff.) emphasizes that debates over religion are mentioned as both teaching and propaganda devices, as well as sometimes occurring historically. Perhaps the most interesting parallel is the debate arranged by Bugukhan of the Uyghurs (Turks, like the Khazars) in 762 between Buddhists and Manichaeans. This led to the adoption of the Manichaean faith by the Uyghurs (Golden, 1992, Ch.6, *cf*. fn.105).

Zuckerman's other main point is that Judah ben Barzillai's excerpt lacks Ovadiah, Hanukkah, Zebulun, and Nissi of both the other versions and an early Aaron found only in the "long" version. Zuckerman emphasizes that Ovadiah, who is said to have brought in many Jewish scholars, is omitted from Judah ben Barzillai's list—but there is genealogically a very good reason for omitting him, since he was a brother of King Joseph's ancestor according to the "short" and "long" versions; however, Hezekiah and Menasheh, who are also non-ancestral relatives, are included by Judah ben Barzillai. Zuckerman (p.250) writes "*The fact that the names of the 'missing' kings do not come in a row makes it highly unlikely that they were omitted by a negligent copyist of the responsum. Rather, one distinguishes an editor's effort to pump up the list by evenly spread interpolations.*" The argument sounds reasonable until one asks why anyone would bother. If there were only seven generations from Bulan to Joseph, these generations would average very close to 30 years each if Bulan is put in 740. This is plausible enough that no "padding" would be necessary. I do not know a parallel case of genealogical forgery where the objective was simply to "pad" an otherwise valid pedigree. In my view, the "long" version of the letter giving 14 rulers (from Bulan through Joseph) over 11 generations is *a priori* the most likely. If there were 10 or 11 generations and if Bulan is placed in 860, then the average length of a generation from father to son would be less than 8 to 10 years. Clearly this dating is only possible if the genealogical evidence is completely rejected—in a society which placed substantial importance on genealogy. If Bulan is dated about 740, the average would have been about 19-22 years. This is short, but entirely possible in a polygamous society in which marriages normally occur at an early date and a man can have many children at a young age. If Bulan is regarded as a very old man and Joseph as very young, these figures can be slightly increased, but not enough to make the 861 date possible. A date early in the reign of Harūn-al-rashid can be made just barely possible but should be accepted only if other evidence for that date were overwhelming. It is not.

Although King Joseph's letter makes no direct mention of dual kingship, a number of sources say that there were two kings, a religious ruler, who was largely isolated, and another ruler of slightly inferior status who was responsible for administration, warfare, etc. Zuckerman (p.253) argues with some plausibility that Bulan's lower status is implicit in the letter. It seems to be generally assumed that these men were from two separate lineages, but I have seen nothing in the data which requires or even supports such an interpretation. I suspect that they were normally close relatives from a single family. In any case, I do not think that our sources use such terms as "king" and "emperor" in such a consistent way that we can be sure what office is intended. Brook's sharp distinctions in these titles seem to me contrary to what I know of usage elsewhere. I therefore have little hesitation in regarding Bulan as a Qağan, or a close relative of the Qağan.

My interpretations put Bulan in Solomon's time, as the successor and (in a polygamous society) probable son of Boshir, whose sister had married the Byzantine emperor, Justinian II and taken the name Theodora. The Byzantine-Khazar alliance was continued by Bulan, whose sister, Čičak ("Flower"), later called Eirene, married Constantine, the adolescent son of the emperor Leo III in 732, six years after the adoption of the iconoclastic policy. It seems reasonable to suppose that Leo was hoping to convert Bulan and the Khazars to Christianity.

During this period, Khazars fought repeatedly against Islam, effectively as allies of Byzantium. After Arab-Khazar wars continuing from 722, the Arab leader, Maslama, invaded Khazaria in 731 and killed Barjik, the military leader and son of the Qağan (see Fig.6 for Maslama's relationship to Solomon by marriage). In 737, Islamic forces under Marwan ibn Muhammad, conquered Khazaria, and the ruler was forcibly converted to Islam. In terms of *realpolitik*, it was desirable for the Khazars to adopt a position which was not obviously threatening either to Byzantium or to Islam. It seems to me quite likely that Solomon might intervene at this point. Solomon could have argued that it was beneficial to all concerned to have the Khazars become "people of the book" but not automatically aligned with either of the dominant military powers.

This conclusion is possible only if my chronological interpretation is correct. It is not dependent on my view that Solomon was a grandson of the Persian princess, but the situation is more plausible if, indeed, he had a remote but recognised kinship with the Khazar rulers and closer ties to the Ummayad rulers, including Yazīd, who was to become Caliph in 744.

Beckwith (1987) places the Tibetan empire firmly in a broad Eurasian background. He thinks that common processes and knowledge affected the entire area from the Carolingian Franks to the Tang Chinese. The Turkic empire is marginal to his particular area, but central to his interpretations, which show broad historical similarities, previously ignored, creating what he calls "*the essential international unity*" of most of Eurasia and northern Africa at that time. He describes major similarities of pattern in "*learning and literary activity*," "*architecture*," "*technology*," "*economy*," "*political structure*," all showing important structural changes and developments, many downplayed, ignored or unrecognized by conventional historians. He emphasizes the similarity of the revolt of the Uyghur Turks against the *Arsila Turks in 742, the Abbasid rebellion in 747, the revolt of Pippin, le Bref in 751, the anti-Tang revolt of An Lu Shan (half-Sogdian and half-Turkish) in 755—and a parallel Tibetan revolt. He discusses the establishment of the Turkish empire and its tremendous emphasis on trade, but also points out that the major traders were not the Turks, themselves, but the Norse, the Sogdians, and the Jews. It is in this context that he mentions the importance of the conversion of the Khazars in the 740s, an argument which makes good sense at that date but much less sense more than a century earlier or later.

Jewish traders were already playing an important part in sea trade. The conversion of important segments of the Khazar population to Judaism opened up land routes for trade, including the old Silk Road (*cf* Goitein, 1973). Rabinowitz (1948) discusses Jewish control of trade routes from the Frankish kingdom to China in the Carolingian period. There is substantial evidence for Jewish populations moving into China during the rule of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), although there were other movements both earlier and later. The surviving Jewish population of China was studied by Bishop White (1942). A good summary may be found in Goldstein (1999), and a number of Chinese sources are made much more available by Shapiro (1984). I think that the Chinese evidence needs much fuller consideration than it usually receives in studying the importance of the Khazar conversion to Judaism.

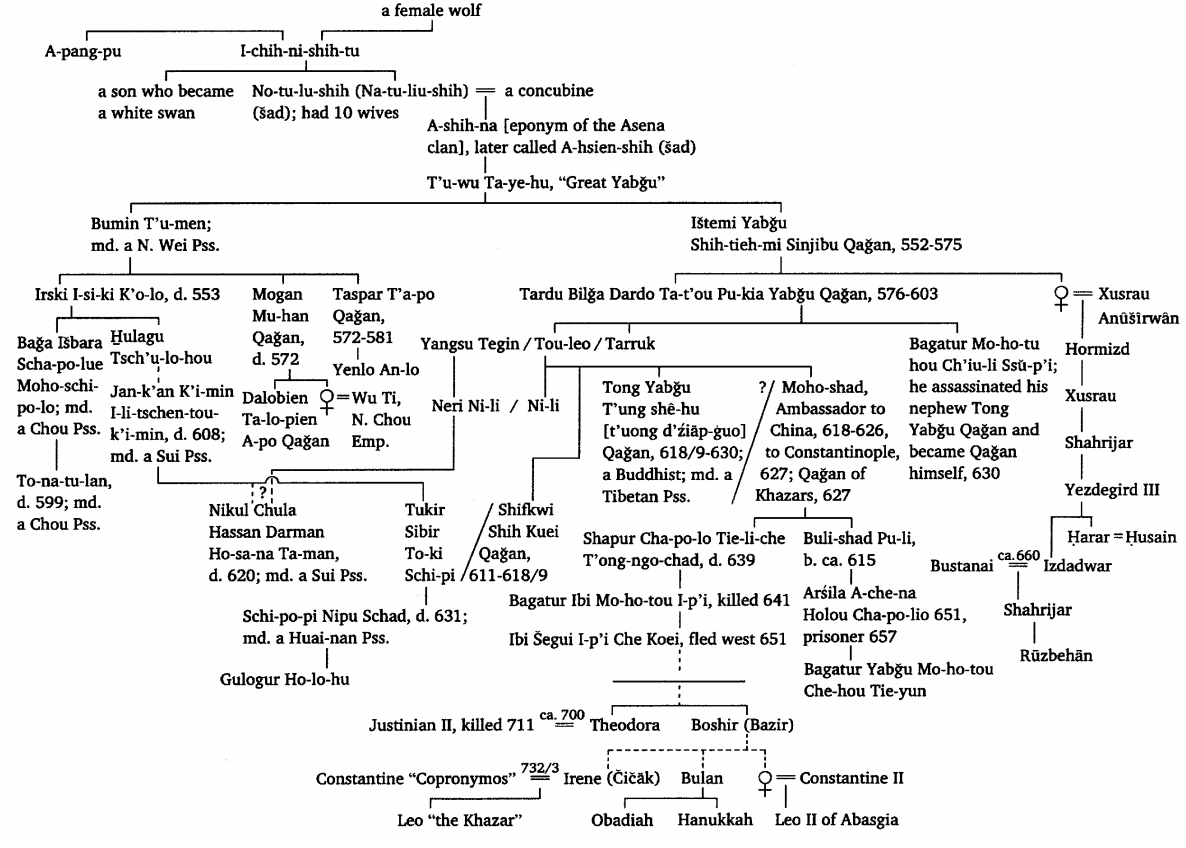


Fig.4 ***Traditional origin, relationships and marriages of members of the family of the Turkic qağans (khakans)***
This table retains the spellings of the sources (primarily Chavannes and Liu), rather than attempting consistency

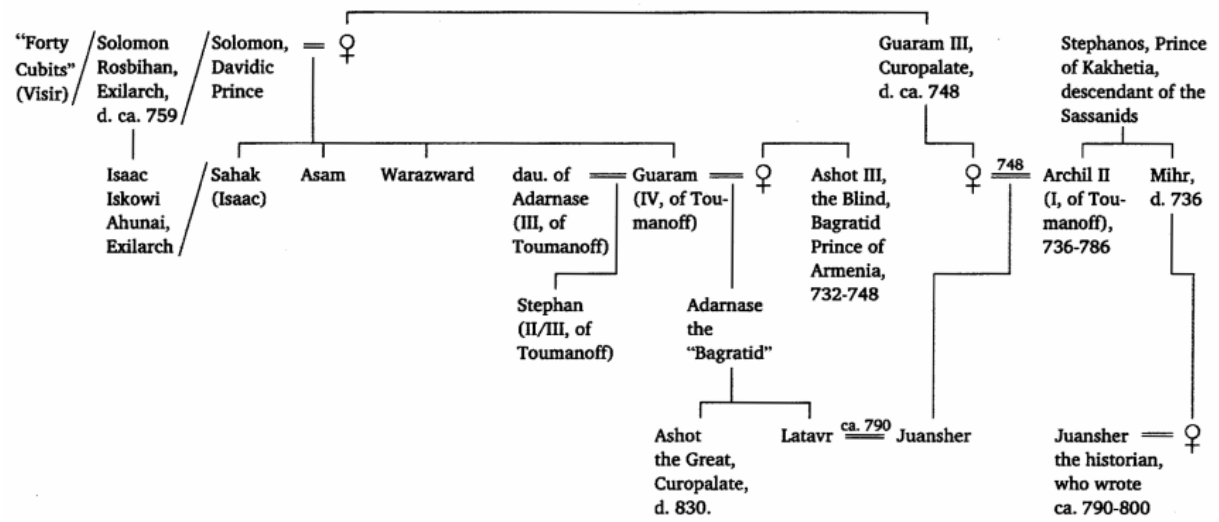


Fig.5 ***Postulated relationships between "Guaramids", "Bagratids" of Armenia and Iberia, and Jewish Exilarchs.***

Slash line marks a postulated identity.

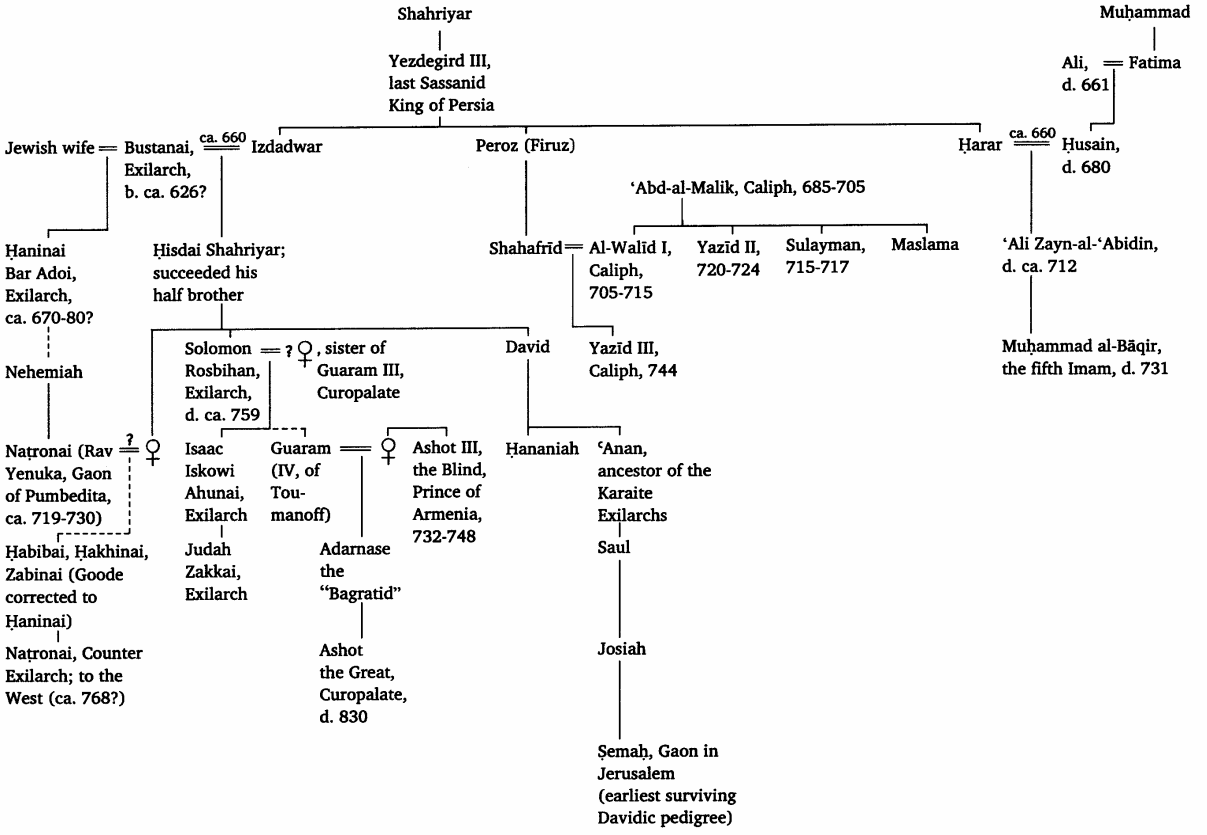


Fig.6 ***Relationships between Sassanid Kings, Jewish Exilarchs and Muslim Imams and Caliphs.***

The "Bagratids" of Georgia

The ruling families of Armenia and Georgia (Iberia) bore the common name of Bagration and, in later periods, claimed a common descent from the House of David. Prior to the development of critical historical studies, this origin was unquestioningly accepted. This view was dealt a severe blow in more recent studies, and Cyril Prince Toumanoff seemed to have dealt it the *coup de grace* in his studies of the Bagratids. Although I now hold quite different views, my knowledge of the Bagratids is derived largely from his publications and helpful correspondence.

Despite the common family name and the alleged common Davidic origin, the details were quite different in the two countries. In Armenia, a more generalized Jewish origin for the Bagratids was alleged by an author, variously ascribed to the seventh, eighth, or ninth centuries, who wrote under the pseudonym of the fifth century historical writer, Moses of Chorene. Toumanoff (1963, pp.330-334) favours an eighth century date for the writings; among his arguments are his views as to the derivation of the specific Davidic origin claimed by the Iberian rulers from the more generalized Jewish origin first put forth by Moses of Chorene. As will be seen, this may reverse the historical situation, but the reversal would not necessarily affect the date of Moses which he favours (in the late eighth century), although it would be impossible for those who maintain a seventh century date. The Jewish claim of Pseudo-Moses is clearly antiquarian speculation, put forward as fact, a common feature of medieval historical writing. In this case, a number of names in the Bagratid family were identified as Jewish, and the inference of a Jewish origin was deduced. Toumanoff (p.32) points out that Bagrat, Smbat, Ashot and Varaz, although actually Iranian, were alleged to derive from Hebrew names. The fact that Armenia had been ruled briefly by kings of Jewish faith, descended from Herod, may also have been a factor in the supposed Hebrew origin of the Bagratids. The conversion of the powerful Khazar kingdom, Iberia's neighbour to the north, to Judaism, so that Jews had real political power in the local situation, was probably a factor of importance in the acceptance of the tradition of Jewish origin in Armenia and a factor of a different nature in the Iberian situation.

Toumanoff (p.338) deduces the historical derivation of the Armenian Bagratids from Smbat I, attested in 314 CE. The Bagratids of Iberia derive from a certain Adarnase, who was called "the Bagratid" and who seems to have come from Armenia to Iberia in the late eighth century. According to the historian Juansher (a relative of this Adarnase by marriage--see Figure 5), writing probably during Adarnase's lifetime:

> *Then a certain prince came to him [Arch'il] who was of the House of David the Prophet, Adarnase by name, a grandson of Adarnase [Ashot] the Blind; his father was related to the Bagratids and had been set up as duke in the regions of Armenia by the Byzantines. And during the oppression of Qru, he had come to the children of the Curopalate Guaram in Cholarzene and remained there. He petitioned Arch'il, saying: 'If thou willest, make me as thy vassal: give me land.' And he gave him Shulaveri [Erushet'i] and Artani.*
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> [Juansher, *History of King Vaxt'ang Gorgasali*, 243, as quoted by Toumanoff (1963, p.412)]

Existing manuscripts of Juansher's history have suffered both from copying error and interpolation, which may be the cause of certain difficulties in the above account. It should be pointed out that some manuscripts make Adarnase the grandson ("son's child") of Adarnase [Ashot], the Blind, while others make him the "sister's child." Thomson (1996, p.248, n.47) discusses the various alternatives and chooses

"nephew" for his translation. The word translated as "related" above actually means "related by marriage."[4] Thus, an account contemporary with this Adarnase makes him derive from the Armenian Bagratids through his mother and makes him derive paternally from the House of David (see Figure 5). Taken literally, this is no claim for the Davidic origin of the Armenian Bagratids. Subsequent fuller statements by Iberian sources continue to claim a Davidic origin for their rulers which excludes the Armenian Bagratids from their paternal ancestry. Toumanoff (p.346) accepts the pedigree which makes Adarnase, ancestor of the Iberian Bagratids, son of Vasak, son of Ashot III, the Blind, and assumes that "Adarnase, the Blind" in Juansher is a simple error for Ashot, the Blind. However, this pedigree is first given in Vardan's thirteenth-century Armenian history and may represent no more that Vardan's own deduction from the general historical situation on the assumption that the Iberian and Armenian Bagratids shared a common male-line ancestry.

It is probably the same assumption in the reverse direction which lies behind the statement of the Armenian, John Katholikos (d.931) that Bagarat, one of the very early traditional ancestors of the Armenian Bagratids, was "*renowned for being of the House of David.*" This seems to be no more than a clumsy attempt to transfer the claimed ancestry of the Iberian rulers to their Armenian cousins at a date which is completely incompatible with later Iberian claims and with Juansher's earlier statement. If the same assumption underlies the statements of Jewish origin, given by Pseudo-Moses, of Chorene, then it is unlikely that his work was written until after Juansher's work became available.

In the tenth century, the Byzantine emperor, Constantine Porphyrogenitus, knew of the Iberian claim to Davidic descent and wrote that the Curopalates of Iberia:

> *. . . -- vaunt themselves saying that they are descended from the wife of Urias, with whom the Prophet and King David committed adultery, for they profess to be the descendants of the children borne by her to David and to be of the family of the Prophet and King David and also of the Most Holy Mother of God, for she was issued from the seed of David. Because of this, the Iberian princes marry their relatives without impediment, deeming themselves to keep Old Law.*
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> [Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, §45, "Of the Iberians," as quoted by Toumanoff, p.415.]

The fact that the Iberian princes claimed that their ancestry permitted them to contract marriages contrary to Christian law seems very unlikely to have arisen from misguided antiquarianism.

Constantine wrote further that the Iberian princes descended from Spandiatis and David, who came from Jerusalem about 500 years earlier. He indicated that David was father of Pankratios, father of Asotios, father of Adarnase, the Curopalate, contemporary with his father, Leo VI, giving about 100 years per generation. However, this latter Adarnase was the son of David, son of Bagrat (Pankratios), son of Ashot (Asotios), son of Adarnase the Bagratid, of the time of Juansher. It seems apparent that the pedigree of the later Adarnase was recorded correctly but read from the wrong end.

As Toumanoff (1963, p.328) points out, the early ninth-century monument of Ashot, son of Adarnase, furnished unquestionable evidence for the presence of the Davidic

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[4] Toumanoff (1963) p.345, n.21.

claim at that time, for it shows Ashot offering a model of a church to the Christian Messiah, represented sitting on a throne and accompanied by King David, shown in an attitude of supplication. However, such a relief can, of course, give no evidence for the specific nature of the claimed descent. The first full genealogy is the eleventh-century version of Sumbat, son of David (*The History of the Bagratids*). This account derives the Iberian Bagratids from a Jewish Davidic prince named Guaram, son of Solomon; the pedigree looks like an artificial construction by someone whose knowledge of the Jews was largely derived from the Christian Bible, and it attaches the pedigree to the family of Jesus. Toumanoff (1963, p.422-6) argues that Sumbat pushed Guaram back from the eighth to the sixth century. Sumbat said that Guaram was set up as Duke after the kingship of the House of Gorgasal became extinct. In the view of the eighth century historian Juansher, there were still kings of the House of Wakhtang Gorgasal in his time and, indeed, he married into their family[5]. If one accepts that the "Bagratids" arrived in Iberia in the late eighth century, one may ask if the reason for their chronological misplacement was not to remove "Guaram, son of Solomon" to a safely remote period. I would suggest that Guaram, son of Solomon, was, indeed, the ancestor of the Georgian Bagratids, that Guaram was the father of Adarnase, and that it is this Guaram who was related by marriage to the Armenian Bagratids. I would further suggest that he is the Guram/Gurgen identified by Toumanoff as one of the heirs of Cholarzene, but that he was a maternal nephew rather than a son of Guaram, the Curopalate, who died in 748. This would put the Jewish Solomon, descendant of King David, early in the eighth century, married to a Guaramid princess, perhaps about 720. If this was the Georgian tradition late in the same century, it is hard to think that their ancestor is anyone other than the historical Exilarch, Solomon Rosbihan. There is, of course, every reason to doubt that a Palestinian Jew of no status except that derived from a claim of Davidic descent, could have moved into Iberia and been accepted to the degree that he married a Guaramid princess. The situation would have been quite different for Solomon Rosbihan. His Davidic ancestry was acknowledged by his contemporaries, he apparently had royal Persian ancestry, which made him a kinsman of some of the local nobility, he had wealth, and he probably had at least some degree of political power and possible influence with the Iberians' feared northern neighbours, the Khazars. Among the children of Solomon listed by Sumbat was a certain Sahak, the Iberian form of the name Isaac. Since the successor of the Exilarch Solomon was his son, Isaac, this offers some further support to the identification, especially since Isaac was a very rare name among the Exilarchs.

There are putative present-day male-line descendants of both the Davidic family and the Georgian Bagratids. It would be interesting to compare their Y-chromosome DNA.

Forty Cubits and the Iconoclastic Movement

My attention was drawn to the iconoclastic movement through a brief summary by Romilly Jenkins (1966, pp.81-83), who pointed out that the anti-image policy of Islam began with an edict of the Caliph Yazīd II in 723 (the date could be as early as 721), that the parallel destruction of images in Christian Byzantium was then ordered by Leo III in 726, and that a Jew called "Forty Cubits" was involved with both rulers. Jenkins accepted the probability that this Jew, indeed, stimulated both movements.

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[5] Toumanoff (1963) pp.402; 407, fn.2; 400 (though he thinks that this was an exaggeration of their real status).

The problem of "Forty Cubits" was presented in a very condensed form by Joshua Starr (1933). None of the accounts are quoted either in the originals or in translations, but twelve versions are cited. The Byzantine iconoclastic movement under Leo III and Constantine V was studied in detail by Stephen Gero (1973, 1977). Both Starr and Gero dissociate the Byzantine and Islamic iconoclastic movements, and neither accepts that Jews or Judaism were of central importance in either movement. Cutler & Cutler (1986) provide a very useful bibliography (p.299).

The *Narratio* of John of Jerusalem, an account prepared for the Council of 787, said that Yazīd II was promised a long life and rule by a Jewish magician called "Forty Cubits" if he would adopt a policy opposed to graven images and that he consequently adopted such a policy. This was attested at the same Council by the Bishop of Messene, who said "*I was a child in Syria when the chief of the Saracens destroyed the images*."[6] Nevertheless, the *Narratio* reports, Yazīd II did not have a long life, and his son and successor Walid [II] had the Jewish "false prophets" executed. In fact, though Walid was Yazīd's son, he was not Yazīd's successor and did not become Caliph until 743. Gil (1992, pp.83-84) has a brief discussion and thinks that there may have been a Jewish leader involved. He quotes "*some say that the name of that Jew was Abū Māwiya*." This implies that there were independent accounts of the iconoclastic movement in Islam. Abū is an Arabic prefix, "father of," often used with the name of an adult son to distinguish a respected elder. In this case, Māwiya is apparently a female name, and the use may be metaphorical, coupled with a fondness for punning. Māwiya, or Māriya, was a Roman slave who became a Queen of Hira (al-Hīrah); another of the name was a Queen of Ghassan (Smith, 1885, p.125; Hitti, 1937, p.83). This could constitute a doubly allusive reference to the Persian slave who became Bustanai's "queen" and to her ancestress the Christian wife of Xusrau (Chosroes II).

The modern woman's name Mawiya means "a clear mirror." As will be shown, "Father of the Mirror" might well be considered an appropriate metaphor for the Exilarch Solomon.

Walid was followed in 744 by Yazīd III, a son of Al-Walid I and his wife, a Persian princess, a niece of Bustanai's wife and, in my view, a second cousin of the Exilarch Solomon. An eighth century poem, attributed to the Caliph Yazīd III, said:

> *I'm the son of a Chosroes, and my father is Marwān;*
> *A Caesar is my grandsire, and my grandsire is Khāḳān.*[7]

In my interpretation of the genealogical evidence, Yazīd's descent from Marwān is paralleled by Solomon's acknowledged descent from King David, and the two of them shared the descent from the Persian rulers, the Turkish qağans and the claimed (though disputed) descent from Roman emperors.

I would suggest that the nickname "Forty Cubits" was applied to Solomon and that Solomon's relationships with the family of the Imams, descendants of Ali and of the Prophet, and with the family of the Caliph Yazīd III, his renown as a descendant of King David, his reputation for learning, his wealth, and his distant relationship with the Khazar Khan together would have served to protect him in moving back and forth between these cultures in a way which would have been very unlikely or impossible for other Jews.

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[6] Gero (1973) p.65, fn.18.

[7] Sprengling (1939) pp.215*ff*.

Gero (1973, pp.189-198) maintains that John of Jerusalem invented the name "Forty Cubits" to replace nameless Jews who were originally said to have inspired Yazīd II. He further argues that the name "Forty Cubits" as applied in the Arabic *Kitāb al-'Uyūn* to Leo's "cunning" ambassador to Maslama at the time of the siege of Constantinople in 716-717 is historical but is just an accidental similarity. Gero disproves Starr's hypothesis that the "original" of "Forty Cubits" was an Islamic freedman of Leo III named Basir, showing that there is no evidence that Beser (as he transcribes the name) was other than a zealous supporter of Leo and no evidence that he had any connection with anyone called "Forty Cubits." Gero says that Bišr is a known Arabic personal name and summarily dismisses as philologically impossible Brooks' (1899) equation of Beser's name with the title "vizir" which had been accepted by Jenkins. This eliminates the alleged direct involvement of "Forty Cubits" with Leo's iconoclastic measures but leaves the alleged association of both Yazīd II and Leo with a man named "Forty Cubits." Curiously it is a Byzantine source which associates Yazīd II with "Forty Cubits" and an Arabic source which associates Leo with "Forty Cubits." Gero's argument that the name was invented in the Byzantine source, corresponding by sheer chance with the Arabic source, seems to me extremely implausible.

There is another possible reference to the Exilarch in connection with the Arabic sieges of Amorium and Constantinople by Maslama. The *Kitāb al-'Uyūn* has a very confused account derived by improperly combining at least two previous accounts. According to this, a certain Solomon b. Mu'adh, the Antakhi, came to Maslama. Brooks (1899, p.26 fn.1) says that he commanded the Arabic army at the siege of Amorium and that he was confused with another Solomon, who commanded the Arabic fleet at Constantinople, and with Maslama's brother, the Caliph Sulayman. Brooks cites Michael the Syrian for putting "Solomon the king" at Constantinople. He assumes that the reference is to the Caliph, but the Exilarch is sometimes called "king" in Arabic sources. This Solomon was present when Leo made oaths to Maslama and reproached Leo when he failed to keep faith with Maslama. He is said to have told Leo that Maslama would kill him if he returned with such a message. Leo replied "*Your death is of less consequence to me than the loss of my kingdom.*" Solomon returned to Maslama and committed suicide by taking poison from a ring. The ring is a nice veridical touch, but if this Solomon was the Exilarch, this part of the tale is untrue. This Solomon was certainly not the Caliph and seems unlikely to have been the fleet commander. That he was identical with Leo's ambassador, Forty Cubits, is far from certain, but seems possible. If he was "Forty Cubits," he next appears with Maslama's brother Yazīd II. The Caliph Yazīd II was a patron of poets and musicians, a drunkard who spent much time with his concubines and paid little attention to affairs of state (Hitti, 1937, p.278). He and his brothers may have been well acquainted with the youthful Jewish prince, whose family had purchased recognition as Exilarchs from the family of the Caliphs. I suspect that the "promise" which led Yazīd to a rigid, negative view of the representation of graven images was actually a warning -- "*if you continue in your present ways, you will die soon.*" Apparently he repented but died shortly afterward in any case. The evidence seems to show that a single individual played a crucial role in the anti-image policy of Islam and in the development of the iconoclastic movement in Byzantium.

In the context of the anti-Jewish activities of Leo III, Starr (1933) thought that it would be "*very strange*" if the individual who influenced Leo III was a Jew, although the sources say he was. It seems to me even stranger that two men named "Forty Cubits" would have been associated with two separate iconoclastic movements. Addressing Starr's objection, however, one can point out that in the broader context, the Jewish policy against "graven images" had remained important in Judaism,

despite Hellenisation; it had never been nearly as central in early Christianity, nor was it much observed by the very secular Ummayad Caliphs.

I have attempted to show that the Exilarch, Solomon, was of royal Persian ancestry through his grandmother and that his wife was an Armeno-Georgian princess. These connections appear to have been crucial in the conversion of the Khazar kingdom to Judaism, which I attribute largely to Solomon's activities. Figures 5 and 6 show the suggested identities and relationships of the Exilarchs of the 7th to 9th centuries. Finally, I think that Solomon was directly responsible for iconoclastic policies in both Islam and Christianity. The hypothesized identification of Solomon the Exilarch with Forty Cubits is independent of his hypothesized identification with Solomon of the Iberian tradition. The role of Solomon in the Khazar conversion might be accepted even if both of these other hypotheses were rejected, but these three main hypotheses are stronger together than individually. The accompanying chronological table shows some of the principal events discussed here.

One can easily see why it might be thought that anyone who could persuade the two greatest political powers of the time to adopt a policy quite contrary to their previous practices must have been both a giant and a magician. If "Forty Cubits" was actually a Palestinian Jew from Tiberias, we must leave him in his anonymity and accept the view that he was, indeed, a powerful magician. If "Forty Cubits" was, as postulated, the Exilarch Solomon, his powers enabled him to survive one alleged suicide and one alleged execution in connection with iconoclasm. Such abilities are attested once more in an encounter with the Caliph Marwan II (744-750). According to Arabic accounts, the Caliph was shown the dark fate which awaited him and the entire Umayyad dynasty in a magic mirror. (One wonders whether this "magic mirror" was not a book of ethics of the sort called "a mirror for princes.") The magician who showed him this was the Jewish Exilarch and, according to the Arab historian Tabari, the enraged Caliph had him executed[8]. If so, the Exilarch was indeed a magician, for the Exilarch from long before the beginning of Marwan's reign to long after his death was Solomon Rosbihan. The Umayyads ceased to rule. Solomon did not.

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[8] Stillman (1979) p.39, fn.42; Arthur Zuckerman (1972) p.78, fn.11.

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Chronological Summary[9]

Bustanai born about 626 (aged 16 under Omar in 642; aged 35 under Ali, 656-661); married about 660 to Persian princess, Izdadwar. Died about 670?? (ff. Abraham David 1971).

Ḥaninai Bar Adoi, son of Bustanai and Jewish wife, perhaps born about 646-650; Exilarch about 670.

Ḥisdai Shahriyar, son of Bustanai and Izdadwar, born about 662; Exilarch prior to the death of his aunt's husband, Ḥusain, in 680, replacing his half-brother, then perhaps about 30-35. Probably died by 715 or earlier.

Solomon Rosbihan, the Exilarch, great-grandson of Yezdegird III—descended from the Turkish Khakhan—believed to descend from Caesar (i.e., the Byzantine emperor)—second cousin of Muḥammad, the fifth Imam, c.712-731—second cousin of Caliph Yazīd III, whose father d.715.

c.715-20 (?) — Solomon, descendant of King David, married a Guaramid princess, a sister of Guaram, the Curopalate (Guaram d. c.748).

716-17 — Maslama attacked Amorium and Constantinople — "Forty Cubits" an ambassador of Leo III to Maslama.

717 — Leo III became Byzantine emperor—probably from Commagene, spoke fluent Arabic, had Arabic support when he usurped.

c.719 — Naṭronai ben Nehemiah became Gaon of Pumbedita. Also called Rav Yenuka. A descendant of the House of David. Perhaps married the sister of the Exilarch, Solomon. Often confused with a later Naṭronai, also Gaon of Pumbedita.

720 — Leo III ordered the forced conversion to Christianity of all Byzantine Jews.

723 — The Jew "Forty Cubits" persuaded Yazīd II, the Caliph, to adopt anti-image policies in Islam.

726 — Beser assisted Emperor Leo III in adopting the iconoclastic policy.

730 — Publication of the edict against images, Byzantium.

732-3 — Constantine, son of Leo III, married "Eirene," sister of the Khakhan Bulan, of the Khazars, and probably niece of the Byzantine empress, Theodora, sister of the Khakhan Bushir.

732 — Ashot, the Bagratid, became Prince of Armenia and adopted a pro-Caliph policy until his deposition in 748.

c.740 — Bulan, the Khazar Khakhan, converted to Judaism.

741 — Constantine V, aged 21, brother-in-law of Bulan, became emperor and fought his brother-in-law, Artavazt, the Armenian.

744 — Yazīd III, second cousin of the Exilarch, Solomon, briefly became Caliph, then was replaced, first by his brother, Ibrahim, then by his father's first cousin, Marwan II, who was told by an Exilarch "magician" that he and nearly all his relatives would soon be killed, which happened in 750.

c.759 — Solomon Rosbihan died. Succeeded by his son, Isaac Iskowi Ahunai, a man probably about 40.

c.767? — Ahunai died. His son, Judah Zakkai Baboi, was perhaps aged somewhere between 15 and 25 and was immediately opposed by three rival claimants. The chronology of these years has been very confused and I have yet to see a summary which seems to make sense.

c.766-768 — the deposed Exilarch, Naṭronai, went to the West.

c.767-8 — Establishment of a break-away sect by 'Anan, one of the opponents of Zakkai. 'Anan's descendants became Karaite Exilarchs.

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[9] *Note:* this table was also included with Part 1 of the article (*Foundations* **2**(1):46)