



JEWISH EXILARCHATE

JEWISH EXILARCHATE, the position of head of the exile, whose title in Aramaic was *Resh Galuta*. The exilarch was the head of the Jewish community in Babylonia in talmudic and medieval times; he was recognized by the Iranian government in Sasanian times as an ethnarch, ruler of the ethnic group.

Rabbinic traditions in Seder Olam Zuta claim the institution originated in the exile of Jehoiachin, 2 Kgs. 225:27/1 Chr. 3:17 ff. Vologases I (d. 79), possibly responded to the Romans' establishment of the loyalist Jewish government in the Land of Israel after 70 C.E., when he reorganized the Arsacid administration and may have founded the exilarchate as instrument of local administration to keep Iran's Jewish community from establishing close ties to a Roman instrumentality. The first explicit reference to an exilarch derives from Judah the Patriarch, author of the Mishnah, the law code of Judaism of ca. 200 C.E. He acknowledged that the Babylonian exilarch, Huna, derived from the male line of the Davidic household, while he derived only from the female line. The Sasanians reconsidered the administration of the non-Zoroastrian communities within their empire. At the outset they denied the ethnarch the right of inflicting capital punishment. But Šāpur I (r. 242-72) conciliated the Jewish community and gave the Jewish administration a legitimate role in administering Jewish affairs, on condition that state law govern in matters of concern to the state: land tenure and taxation. Samuel, the Rabbinic authority, and Šāpur I concurred, with Samuel's teaching "the law of the government is law" stating the policy of the Jewish administration.



The Rabbinic authorities, who were clerks and administrators trained in the law of Judaism, deferred to the exilarch, who was not himself educated in the law; and they held office under his authorization. The rabbis appealed for popular support in the Jewish community by reason of their knowledge of the law, but they also affirmed the exilarch's claim to originate in the Davidic, that is, the Messianic, line. The Sasanian regime supported the exilarch when a rabbi, Geniva, cited Prov. 8:15, "By me, kings reign," to prove that legitimate authority in the community of Israel belonged to the rabbis, masters of the Torah, and not to the exilarch. The exilarch consulted the Rabbinic authorities of the Land of Israel, who advised him to be patient, and the Sasanian government executed the rebel. But when the leading rabbis took the position that they should not have to pay the head-tax imposed by the Sasanian regime on minority communities, the exilarch exercised his authority. In later Sasanian times, in the reign of Pērōz (459-84), Jews and Christians were harassed by the government, and the exilarch was put to death in 470. The office remained vacant for much of the period preceding the advent of Islam.

The exilarchs in Parthian and Sasanian times are as follows: Nahum 140-70, Huna I, 170-210, Mar Uqba I, 210-40, Huna II, 240-60, Nathan I, 260-70, Nehemiah, 270-313, Mar Uqba II, 313-37, Huna, Mar I, Huna III, 337—50, Abba, 350-70, Nathan II, 370-400, Kahana I, 400-415, Huna IV, 415-42, Mar Zutra I, 442-56, Kahana II, 456-65, Huna V, 465-70, Huna VI, 484-508, Mar Zutra II, 508-20, Ahunai, ?-560, Hofnai, 560-80, Haninai, 580-590, Bustanai, d. 670.

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