

Tedo Dundua (Tbilisi)

BAGRAT, SON OF BIVRAT

"Now this is Hayk who begat Aramaneak, his son in Babylon. And Aramaneak begat many sons and daughters, of whom the eldest was Aramayis. And Aramayis begat many sons and daughters, of whom the eldest was Amasya... Now these are the names of the earliest men who founded the race in Babylon and who went across the northern regions of the land of Ararat. For Hayk set out from Babylon with his wife and sons and all his retinue...

And there ruled over them Zareh, a son of [one of] Aramaneak's sons, a powerful man and skillful with the bow; then Armong; then Sarhang; then Shavash; then Parnavas.

This last begat Bagam and Bagarat, and Bagarat begat Biurat, and Biurat begat Aspat. And the sons of Bagarat succeeded to their inheritance in the regions of the west...

At that time Arshak (king of the Parthians) made his son, called Arshak the Less, king over the land of Armenia and the city of Mtsurn. And he assigned to him as borders Aruastan by the land of the Tachiks, and the land of Syria and Cappadocia by Cilicia as far as the shore of the great western sea, and on the northern side to the great Caucasus Mountain...

He sent him from Mtsurn to the west with greatest army... Bagarat P'arazean, one of the descendants of Aramaneak and great noble, went out to meet him with a large army. He offered him gifts of gold and silver, adorned him with the tunic and stole, crowned him with the hereditary crown, sat him on the throne of gold inlaid with precious stones, and gave him his daughter in marriage.

King Arshak made him [Bagarat] aspet of the land of Armenia, that's, prince and chief commander of the entire kingdom, and father and brother of the king, and to him he gave the authority of that power."¹

This is amalgam from Primary History. Using other more detailed accounts, it can be formulated like this: in the early years of the 3rd c. B.C. northern and southern kingdoms of Kartli (Iberia) were united under Pharnavaz from Mtskheta (northern kingdom), the first king of the Pharnavazid dynasty. Azo, the southern sovereign, seems to be killed in skirmish. Pharnavaz, now victorious, gratefully adopted his sons and kept them within the native domains as the dukes (residing somewhere in Klarjeti /now in Turkey/ and possessing some more appanages in Speri/ Ispir district/). Bagrat (Bagadat) Pharnavaziani, Bivrat (Biurat), Sumbat (Smbat) – these are the names of the first men from Bagrationi ruling clan. Sumbat revolted against Mtskheta overlordship, supported by Artaxias; and thus Vitaxate of Gogarene had emerged.²

Some coins provide more arguments for the genealogy. These silver pieces are mistakenly attributed as a produce of Persis.

The currency of Persis (250 B.C. until the rise of the Sassanids) consists of silver. The denominations are the tetradrachm, the drachm and smaller pieces. The inscriptions are in Aramaic, degenerating into Pehlevi. The debased and frequently illegible script, occurring on the coins of which the art is still good, indicates that the coins are the work of the Greeks who did not understand the language.³

This group is thought to be headed by the pieces of certain Bagadat.

Coins with the same head on obv. have the inscriptions as follows:⁴

N1. BaGaDaT FRaTaRaKA ZI ALaHIA⁵ (Pl. I N1)

¹ Moses Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians*. Translation and Commentary of the Literary Sources by Robert W. Thomson. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. London, England 1978. Appendix A. Primary History, 358-359, 362, 365-366.

² Guram S. Mamoulia, *The Emergence of a Class Society and State in Ancient Kartli /Iberia/*. Tbilisi 1979 (in Georg. with Russ. and Engl. summaries), 121, 134-146; T. Dundua, *Colchis, Iberia and the Kingdom of Pontus According to the Numismatic Material*. Tbilisi 1993 (in Georg. with Russ. and Engl. summaries), 6-29.

³ *Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum. Arabia, Mesopotamia and Persis*. By G. F. Hill, Bologna 1965, v. clx n. 2 for bibliography, p. clxi; Robert Göbl, *Antike Numismatik*. Band 2. München 1978, Pl. 101-102, NN 2086-2105.

⁴ *Catalogue...*, clxiv-clxvi.

⁵ Bagadat. Tetradrachm. Weight – 16.58 gr. Obv. Head of Bagadat r., bearded, with moustache, and taenia on forehead; wears satrapal head-dress (kyrbasia) with double tie behind, and flaps fastened over top; ear-ring in ear; border of dots. Rev. Bagadat seated l. on throne with back; wears kyrbasia; long overgarment with false sleeves and arm-guards; holds in r. a long sceptre, in l. a flower (?); planted before him, standard with * decoration and hanging tassels – dirēfš-i

N2. BIURaT FRaTaRa ZI...⁶ (Pl. I N2)

N3. BIURAT BaGaDaT...⁷(Pl. I N3)

N4. BaGaDaT FRaTaRaKa BIURat ZI ALaHIA

(Fratakara – "fire-kindler"(?), Frataraka – "Oberer" (in Germ.); ZI ALaHIA – "of the Gods" or "of divine origin").

It is suggested that the coins represent the same man; and if so no.1, on which the inscription is complete, shows that he must have been Bagadat. Then Biurat was his father, and the word Bar, for son, is omitted, as in modern Persian.⁸

The coins are not much earlier than Antiochus III.⁹

Bagadat as a satrap of Persis is not mentioned in records; that is why his Persian identity is still slightly suspected.¹⁰ But fire-temple type¹¹ seems to be very Persian: Polyaeus mentions a satrap of Persis called Ὀβουρζος; he is Vahuberz, and he has a temple on his Rev. Many other rulers of Persis followed him.¹² And the intricacy of the relations between the small groups is too great to allow of their being divided up¹³ (Pl. II). Yet, none of the Persians is seated on throne, that leaves our N1 beyond the group.

The coin evidence and narrative clearly demonstrate that throughout the last half of the 3rd c. B.C. Bagrat Pharnavaziani, duke of Klarjeti, issued the coins with proud legend – BaGaDaT FRaTaRaKa BIURat ZI ALaHIA. N1 is designed originally, while fire-temple type was, perhaps, borrowed from the silver pieces of Vahuberz, who ruled in Persis. Neither satrapal garment, nor

Kaviān; inscr. on r. downwards and on l. upwards, border of dots. Catalogue..., 195 N1 Pl. XXVIII N7.

⁶ Bagadat. Tetradrachm. Weight – 16.89 gr. Obv. As last. Rev. Fire-temple, with double panelled doors, podium, pilasters, and architrave; above, three battlements, each with two horns; on l., Bagadat, in satrapal head-dress and long garment, standing right, r. raised in adoration; on r., standard; inscription, on r. downwards and in exergue, inscription on l., if any, off the flan; border of dots. Catalogue..., 196 N2 Pl. XXVIII N 8.

⁷ Bagadat. Hemidrachm. Weight – 1.68 gr. Obv. As last. Rev. As last; inscrip., on r. between standard and temple, outside, obliterated, in ex., on l.; border of dots. Catalogue..., 196 N3 Pl. XXVIII N9.

⁸ Catalogue..., clxvi.

⁹ Catalogue..., clxx.

¹⁰ Catalogue..., clxvi n.1.

¹¹ Substituted by fire-altar.

¹² David R. Sear, *Greek Coins and Their Values. Volume II. Asia and North Africa*. Printed in England by the Bath Press, Bath. 1998, 572-574, NN6187-6215; David R. Sear, *Greek Imperial Coins and Their Values. The Local Coinages of the Roman Empire*. Printed and Bound by Bookcraft (Bath) LTD. 1997, 588-591, NN5935-5970; Robert Göbl. op. cit. 204-205 pl. 101-102 NN2087-2105; Catalogue..., clxvii.

¹³ Catalogue..., clxi.

fire-temple were alien to Iberians, who worshiped Armazi – Ahurō-Mazdāo,¹⁴ and used to be dressed in Iranian fashion (Strabo XI. 3.3.).

What conclusions are we to draw from all this?

A genealogy of early Bagratids is as follows – Bivrat (Biurat), son of Azo→Bagrat (Bagadat), son of Bivrat→Bivrat, son of Bagrat→Sumbat (Smbat) Bivritiani...

Saurmag, the next king of Iberia, had to deal with a revolt of the dukes (Eristavi).¹⁵ Was ambitious Bagrat among them, did he secure southern principality for himself? Perhaps, we need more records for the full picture. But still, his coins are present, ordered, maybe, to the nearest Greek community. And that could be either Phasis, or – Trapezus.

Plate I

Bagadat



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¹⁴ Tedo Dundua, *Christianity and Mithraism. The Georgian Story*. Tbilisi 1999, 3.

¹⁵ *Das Leben Kartlis. Eine Chronik aus Georgien 300-1200*. Herausgegeben von Gertrud Pättsch, 77-78.

