



BĀBĀ'Ī BEN FARHĀD

BĀBĀ'Ī BEN FARHĀD, eighteenth-century author of a versified history of the Jews of Kāšān with brief references to the Jews of Isfahan and one or two other towns. Next to nothing is known about him except that he was probably a leader of the Jewish community in Kāšān and that he, together with other Jews of Kāšān, was converted to Islam by force for a period of seven months (at the beginning of the fall of 1142/1729), while he retained secretly his Jewish faith. According to Bābā'ī himself he was inspired in his work by his grandfather [Bābā'ī Ben Loṭf](#), the author of *Ketāb-e anūsī*. His history *Ketāb-e sargodašt-e Kāšān*, comprising approximately 1,300 verses in the *hazaj-e mosaddas-e maḥḍūf* meter, is in Persian using Hebrew script. It is the second (after *Ketāb-e anūsī*) and, so far as we know, the only other historical manuscript found among the Iranian Jews. It also takes note of some interesting details of the Afghans' attacks on Isfahan and Kāšān, as well as of Nāderqolī Khan's wars against them. It is interesting to note that Bābā'ī Ben Farhād mentions Maḥmūd and Ašraf, the leaders of the Afghans (especially the latter), favorably while he criticizes Nāderqolī (the future Nāder Shah) for his harsh measures, particularly against the Jews. We know from other historical sources that the Zoroastrians also mention favorably the Afghan conquests and had even helped in them (as in the occupation of Kermān). The Jews and Zoroastrians were accorded superior status to Shi'ites in the political structure of the Afghans. According to *Sargodašt-e Kāšān*, the Jewish community of Kāšān was wealthy, mostly involved in the silk trade. Bābā'ī mentions thirteen synagogues in Kāšān, a figure larger than the number of synagogues in most of the towns of Iran. He also observes with dissatisfaction



the lack of religious observance among most of the Jews of his town.

Another Jew from Kāšān named Māšīaḥ Ben Rafā'el appended approximately eighty verses to Bābā'ī's narrative in which he mentions favorably Mollā Ebrāhīm, the leader of the Jews of Kāšān, who together with a number of supporters, was instrumental in allowing the Jews who had been forced to accept Islam to return to Judaism.

Ketāb-e sargodašt-e Kāšān is the only known work of Bābā'ī Ben Farhād; three manuscripts are known to exist as appendices to the *Ketāb-e anūsī*.

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