



BĀBĀ'Ī BEN LOṬṬ

BĀBĀ'Ī BEN LOṬṬ, the Jewish poet and historian of Kāšān during the first half of the 11th/17th century (d. after 1073/1662). According to his own words, he, along with the Jews of Kāšān, was forced to embrace Islam and was, for some years, openly a Muslim while retaining secretly his Jewish faith. He was unable to emigrate to Baghdad on account of his advanced age and out of concern for the safety of his large family. He left behind two works in verse: the history *Ketāb-e anūsī* (The book of a forced convert) and a short poem entitled *Monājāt-nāma* in praise of the prophet Elijah. Both these works are in Persian using Hebrew script. Nothing else is known about him.

The *Ketāb-e anūsī* (*anūsī* is a Hebrew word meaning a Jew forced to apostatize who remains secretly Jewish), a work of approximately 5,300 verses composed in the *hazaj-e mosaddas-e maḥḍūf* meter, is, so far as we know, the first historical work originating from an Iranian Jewish community. This work has not been published. There are approximately six manuscripts of it in some major libraries of the U.S., Europe, and Israel. Errors in versification and the use of obsolete words and colloquial language gives the *Ketāb-e anūsī* little literary merit. However, despite the disorderly chain of events recorded in it, it possesses incomparable value because of its content which can be divided as follows: 1. Description of the status of Iranian Jews from the years before 1022/1613 until the end of the reign of Shah 'Abbās I in 1038/1629. During this period the Jews of Iran were subjected to persecution and molestation. A number of their religious leaders were killed for refusing to convert to Islam. Bābā'ī also mentions some of the wars of Shah 'Abbās I with the Georgians, the



foundation of the town of Farahābād by him in Māzandarān and the settling of the Georgian Jews and Christians there. He is corroborated in many details by his contemporaries, Eskandar Beg and, especially, Pietro della Valle. Bābā'ī speaks favorably of Shaikh Bahā'-al-Dīn 'Āmelī and Shah Ṣafī I, and praises the former's intercession on behalf of rescuing the Jews of Isfahan. 2. The molesting and forced conversion of the Jews from the years 1067/1656 to 1073/1662 during the reign of Shah 'Abbās II forms the most important part of the book. His narration is again confirmed by other sources such as the *'Abbās-nāma* of 'Emād-al-Dīn Moḥammad Ṭāher b. Ḥosayn Khan Qazvīnī (*taḵalloṣ*: Waḥīd) and the history of the Iranian Armenians by the Armenian priest Arakel of Tabrīz. The good will and intercession of Mollā Moḥsen Fayẓ Kāšānī on behalf of the Jews is also mentioned with respect. 3. Also of importance is the information concerning the population, professions, economic situation, and communal organization of the Jews in Iran, especially in Isfahan and Kāšān, as well as some historical events such as the coronation of Shah Ṣafī and the war on Qandahār during the reign of Shah 'Abbās II.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

W. Bacher, "Les Juifs de Perse aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles d'après les chroniques poétiques de Babai b. Loutf et de Babai b. Farhad," *Revue des études juives* 51, 1906, pp. 121-36, 265-79; 52, 1906, pp. 77-97, 234-71.

V. B. Moreen, *An Introductory Study of the Kitāb-i Anusī by Bābā'ī ibn Lutf*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1978.

A. Netzer, *Montakab-e aš'ār-e fārsī az ātār-e yahūdīān-e Īrān*, Tehran, 1352 Š./1973, introd., pp. 46-48, text pp. 298-302.

Idem, "Persecution of Iranian Jewry in the 17th Century," *Pe'amin* 6, 1980, pp. 32-56 (in Hebrew).

Idem, *Tārīk-eyahūd dar 'ašr-e jadīd* (A history of the Jews in modern times), Tel Aviv, 1982, pp. 227-28.



Search terms:

باب باب باب باب باب باب بابae ibn lotf baabaey ibn lotf babaei ebn lotf