



CHĀNGĀ ĀSĀ

CHĀNGĀ ĀSĀ, an eminent Parsi layman who lived in the 15th-16th centuries a.d. at Navsari in Gujarat. In a passage in the *Qeṣṣa-ye Sanjān* (text in Unvala, ed., II, pp. 352.18-353.11; tr. in Hodivala, pp. 114-16) he is given the traditional Iranian titles of *dahyvad* (Pahl. *dahibed*, OIr. *dahyupati*-), which presumably renders Gujarati *desai* (approximately “squire”), and *dāvar* “magistrate, judge.” There he is praised for being active in religious matters and very liberal, providing poor Zoroastrians with sacred shirt and girdle (*sudra* and *kusti*) and helping them in other ways. At that time the one Parsi Ātaš Bahrām then existing had been taken for safety, after the sack of Sanjan (probably in 1465, Hodivala, pp. 37-66), to the small inland town of Bānsdā; and around 1479 Chāngā Āsā proposed to his own community that they should invite the Sanjana priests to bring it to Navsari. There it remained until 1740, Navsari becoming in consequence the acknowledged religious center of the Parsis.

Before this Chāngā Āsā had persuaded the Parsis to send a messenger, Nariman Hōšang, to Persia to question priests there about details of ritual and observance. In the letter Nariman brought back in 1478 (Hodivala, pp. 279-80) the Persian priests addressed Chāngā Āsā first, as the leading Parsi. They called him “Chāngā-šāh” [*sic*] and praised him for able leadership, and specifically for having gained for the Zoroastrians of Navsari exemption from the oppressive Muslim poll-tax, the *jezya* (Unvala, ed., II, p. 380.7; Hodivala, p. 280; Dhabhar, tr., p. 600).

Two letters brought by the next Parsi messengers to Persia, in 1486 and 1511 (Hodivala, pp. 283, 285) were also addressed first to “Changa-šāh.” His eldest



son, Bahram, predeceased him, and this second son, Manek, succeeded him as *dahyvad* and leader of the Navsari laity. He is addressed as first of the Parsi *behdīns* in letters from Iran of 1516 and 1547 (Hodivala, pp. 289, 295), and in one written some time between 1558 and 1584 (Hodivala, pp. 314-16) this position is accorded to Rānā Kaiqobād, Manek's grandson. Earlier, a stone *daḡma* was built at Navsari by Chāngā Āsā's grandson, Minocheher Bahman (D. S. Meherjirana, II, pp. 1026, 1076-77). Chāngā Āsā himself is still remembered by the Parsis among their illustrious dead at all public ceremonies at Navsari; and the *behdīn* families there of Talātī, Sheth, and Patel claim descent from him (Patell, pp. 861-62 with n. 5).

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