

J. D. NADERSHAH'S CRITIQUE OF THE *KISSEH-I SANJAN*

Dr. Kersey Antia, Mar 3, 2020; updated Mar 20, 2020

I found a rare book lying in my book collection which was privately published in Bombay in 1938, but consisted of articles published much earlier by Ervad Jamshedji Dadabhai Nadershah, L.C.E., entitled *Critical Studies of Some Zoroastrian Problems*. Although Nadershah (1848-1931) may be little known today, he evinces a formidable grasp of Zoroastrian history and religion. He too finds the *Kisseh* “wholly fictitious”. Even though the *Kisseh* “distinctly mentioned” that it “was based on the oral narration of a person”, he finds it regrettable “that even the learned Parsis take this legend for a true history without any ascertainment of the reliability of the stories narrated in it”. He further notes that the well-known Parsi historian, Palanji Barjorji Desai found the *Kisseh's* narrations about Jadi Rana and Mahmud Bagada as “untenable on historical investigation”. Now that “Mr. Desai has shown the unreliability of these stories”, cautions Nadershah, “we cannot without inquiry place our confidence in the other events mentioned in it”. He points out its “exaggeration, vagueness and improbabilities”. For instance, the *Kisseh* claims that “All the Dasturs and Bahdins concealed in mountains for the sake of the religion” is apparently a poetical exaggeration” as many a one continued to live in Iran right up to the time the *Kisseh* was written. Tabaristan continued to be ruled by Zoroastrian Ispahbads for two centuries even after the fall of the Sasanians. Masudi mentioned in A.Y. 311 in the 68th chapter of his history that till then large numbers of Zoroastrians lived in Iraq, Fars, Kerman, Seisatan Khorasan, Taberistan, Kohat, Azerbaijan, Ariana, Hind, Sindh and China. Even in A.Y. 369 Al-biruni in his chronology of Ancient Nations stated that the Zoroastrians were found in the North of Khorasan in Khwarezham as well as Sogdiana. Nadershah too points out that as early as in A.Y 324 one Dinpanah, the son of Itarpane, prepared two copies of Pahlavi tests in Broach (Bharuch) for a Zoroastrian, one when (he was) in a school and the other (when serving) in a fire-temple. He therefore contends that “There was a Zoroastrian population in India from about the beginning of the Yazdagardi Era” and I may add most probably long before that when the trading ships harbored there. He too refers to a copy of *Vendidad* brought to the Uchha, (a city not far from the modern-day Karachi but situated on the bank of a river, possibly the Indus or one of its branches), from Seistan by Ervad Mahyar Mahmer. Another priest transcribed *Arda-Viraf* and *Wosht I Frian* in Broach in 618 A.Y. And made a copy of *Visparad Gahanbar*

there. Broach was then “a seat of Zand and Pahlavi learning for several centuries” as per the *Zand-Pahlavi Glossary* by Dastur Hoshengji, p.80, note. Thus *Kisseh's* statements that the Parsis settled in Broach in the fifth century A.Y. seems to be incorrect. Moreover, there were signatures of the Zoroastrians of Khorasan and Seistan in a Rivayat written in A.Y. 880, I may add, that is, during the tolerant” Abbasid rule and the flourishing of the Shu'ubiya movement (see my forthcoming paper on it), when most of our extant Pahlavi texts were written. Nadershah notes that he was told while he was visiting Kerman in 1874 that a Zoroastrian had come from Afghanistan to settle there and he died there in 1872.

Nadershah further notes that Dr. Jivanji (Modi) rightly considers “that it is of great importance to show beyond all question that there was a colony of Zoroastrians in Sanjan at least about the third century of the Yazdagardi era. But he has not succeeded in it yet”. He also faults Modi's reliance upon the Arab geographer, Idrisi (Hijri Year circa 548) since Idrisi never mentioned Parsis as residents of Sanjan in his times but his translator, Mr. Patel, “Being apparently carried away by the *Kisseh-i-Sanjan*”, presumed they were Parsis, “but he (Mr. Patel) has taken the necessary precaution to put in parenthesis in order to prevent any misunderstanding about its authorship. However, Mr. M.M. Murzban, Bar-at-Law, omits to note these parenthesis” and claimed in a paper in 1917 that Idrisi “refers to the Parsis in Sanjan.” It seems if Jivanji Modi was the most ardent proponent of the veracity of *Kisseh-i-Sanjan*, Nadershah is its most vehement critic and in the process both tend to be each other's critic. While Nadershah presents some valuable evidence as well as arguments in challenging the *Kisseh*, it is difficult to accept the “facts” he provides for challenging the view that the Parsis did not come to India by sea, but by land. Any review of the *Kisseh*, however, ought to study his views as he seems to have been the most vociferous critic of the *Kisseh* in his day, but the constraint of space precludes its inclusion here.