



## BĀBĀ ḤĀTEM

**BĀBĀ ḤĀTEM**, 5/11th-century mausoleum in northern Afghanistan, popularly known as Bābā Ḥātom, at some 40 miles west of Balk (A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "Remarques préliminaires sur un mausolée ghaznévide," *Arts Asiatiques* 17, 1968, pp. 59-92). It follows the simple plan of the earliest Islamic mausoleums standing in the Iranian world, consisting of a single square room with a cupola resting on squinches. Precise measurements could not be taken, but the proportions seem to be all based on a modular unit. The only decoration on the stern and bold brick facade is calligraphic, leaving aside the trellis on the spandrels over the door. A band of raised calligraphy in knotted Kufic framing the door reads *Besmillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm, hādā mašhad Sālār Ḳalīl*. The door is of extraordinary size in proportion to the monument, the *hastae* being approximately ninety-five centimeters in length. The inscription identifies the structure as the mausoleum of a certain noble Sālār Ḳalīl who must have received a violent death but whose name has yet to be found in the sources. David Bivar has read the next few words as "*šana'hu umm ummihi*" ("The Inscription of Sālār Khalīl in Afghanistan," *JRAS*, 1977, 2, pp. 145-49), which does not quite fit what remains of the lettering. Inside, the carved three trompe l'oeil gesso niches including the *mehṛāb* emphasize the dependency of such mausoleums on earlier *čahār-ṭāqs*. The tomb in the center, badly plastered over in recent times, still retains its pointed arch profile. The carved gesso decoration on the trilobate squinch arches and the arches above, offer the best preserved example of its kind in any 5/11th-century Iranian mausoleum with remarkable diversity in the variations on the formal motif which is, in effect, a stylized ibex head seen sideways. A long invocation in



plain Kufic on the drum of the dome calls God's blessings on "the angels that surround God, the messenger prophets, the pure worshippers among those in heaven and earth, and on Moḥammad the Seal of prophets and the imam of the Lord of the worlds (*Emām Rabb al-Ālamīn*)." The highly unusual formula raises the possibility of an Isma'ili connection which should be investigated. It is followed by the signature of an otherwise unrecorded artist Moḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Maḥmū[d] (A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "Baba Hatem: Un chef d'œuvre inconnu d'époque ghaznévide en Afghanistan," in *The Memorial Volume of the Vth International Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology*, ed. M. Y. Kiani and A. Tajvidi, Tehran, 1972, II, pp. 108-22). I originally wrote that the phrase *memman 'amala[hu]* introducing the artist's name indicates that he must be the architect. I am now inclined to believe that this could equally well refer to the designer (*naqqāš*) or the calligrapher (*kāteb*), despite the lack of a term specifying such a qualification such as *naqaša* or *kataba*.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

Given in the text. See also J. Sourdél-Thomine, "Le mausolée dit de Baba Hatim en Afghanistan," *REI* 39, 1971, pp. 293-320.

*Search terms:*

بابا هاتم بابا هاتم بابا هاتم بابا هاتم