



BĀBOL II. ISLAMIC MONUMENTS

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ii. Islamic Monuments

Once the largest town in Māzandarān, Bābol was undoubtedly the site of numerous monuments. In the early seventh/thirteenth century, for example, the geographer Yāqūt (IV, p. 642) mentioned its congregational mosque and the historian Ebn Esfandiār reported visiting the tomb of Ḥasan b. Maḥdī Māmṭīrī (p. 125; tr. E. G. Browne, *History of Ṭabaristān*, GMS 2, London, 1905, p. 76). At the beginning of this century, H. L. Rabino counted 63 quarters, 26 mosques, 8 *madrasas*, 31 *takīas* used during religious ceremonies in Moḥarram, 10 shrines, 3 graves of venerated dervishes, 31 caravanserais for merchants and 13 for caravans, 36 baths, many elementary schools, and 1,471 shops (*Māzandarān and Astarābād*, GMS, N.S., 7, London, 1928, p. 45 and n. 69). In addition, a royal garden lay outside the town to the southwest.

Yet today only two small ninth/fifteenth-century *emāmzādas* are classified as historical monuments and attest to this past: one to the east of the town, four kilometers from Šāhī (illustrated in D. Wilber, "Survey of Persian Architecture," *Bulletin of the American Institute for Iranian Art and Archaeology* 5, 1937, figs. 6-7, and A. Hutt and L. Harrow, *Iran II*, London, 1978, pl. 101, p. 125) and the other in the town itself (Iranian National Monuments 67 and 342



respectively). Both are brick octagonal towers surmounted by pyramidal roofs and connected to rear rectangular prayer halls. The inscription on the cenotaph in the first states that it is the grave (*mašhad*) of Solṭān Moḥammad-Ṭāher b. Mūsā Kāẓem, that it was founded by the amir Mortazā Ḥosaynī who also provided the cenotaph (*ṣandūq*), and that the architect (*me'mār*) was the master (*ostād*) Šams-al-Dīn b. Naṣr-Allāh Moṭahharī in 875/1470-71 (Pers. text in Rabino, pp. 18-19). The tomb tower's door is also dated 896/1490-91. The second mausoleum contains two cenotaphs, the main one dated 888/1483-84 and signed by the master Aḥmad, the carpenter from Sārī (*najjār al-Sāravī*).

Both of these buildings are typical of tomb towers in Māzandarān. The earliest Islamic examples dating from the Bavandid dynasty in the early fifth/eleventh century (Rādakān, Lājīm, and Resket) are round with *moqarnas* cornices underneath conical roofs (A. Godard, "Les tours de Ladjim et de Resget," *Athār-e Īrān* 1, 1936, pp. 109-24). Their Pahlavi inscriptions and decorative *moqarnas* suggest the maintenance of an earlier tradition. Later ninth/fifteenth-century examples are usually polygonal, with a composite cornice including a blind arcade, and some (like the two at Bābol) have rectangular prayer halls in the back (*Survey of Persian Art*, pp. 1163-64). The tradition continued until the eleventh/seventeenth century, but the ninth/fifteenth-century group, including the two at Bābol is noteworthy for its finely carved wooden doors and cenotaphs: Rabino mentioned sixteen in situ examples dating from 781/1379-80 to 906/1500-01 (passim, listed in L. Bronstein, "Decorative Woodwork of the Islamic Period," in *Survey of Persian Art*, pp. 2622-23; many more are published in M. Dabīḥī and M. Sotūda, *Az Āstārā tā Astārābād* 7 vols., Tehran, 1349-54 Š./1970-75); similar fragments are found in museums in Iran, Europe, and America. These simple small towers are totally distinct from contemporary Timurid architecture in Khorasan and Transoxania with its sophisticated vaulting and spaces, bulbous domes, and glittering tile and stucco revetment. Rather, they bear witness to the relative isolation of Māzandarān and the importance of a local architectural tradition.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

See also N. Meškātī, *Fehrest-e banāhā-ye tāriki o amāken-e bāstānī-e Īrān*, Tehran, 1349 Š./1970, pp. 181-82; Eng. tr.

H. A. S. Pessyan, *A List of the Historical Sites and Ancient Monuments of Iran*, Tehran, 1353 Š./1974, pp. 169-70.