



## BIDOQT

**BIDOQT** (current pronunciation: Beydoqt), the center of a subdistrict (*dehestān*) in Gonābād *šahrestān* in central Khorasan and the seat of the [Gonābādi Sufi order](#). The subdistrict of Bidokt is called also Pas-kolut, since it is separated from the rest of Gonābād lowlands (*jolga*) by a stretch of hilly salt land called *kolut*. It is comprised of some ten villages and has a total population of about 20,000 who speak a Persian dialect (for a study, see Nuri). The farmland is irrigated by wells and underground channels and grows cotton, cereals, saffron, mulberry (leaves used in sericulture), grapes, melons, apricots, pomegranates, apples, and fodder (*Farhang-e ābādhā* V, pp. 1-36; *Tābanda*, pp. 67, 78 ff., 113 ff.). Farmers appear in long-tailed Khorasani turbans; younger males are rarely seen, having migrated to large urban centers to work. Historical sites include Qal'a-ye doqtar in Šurāb and shrines in Beymorḡ /Boymorḡ and Geysur (Godard, pp. 53-57; Zamāni, pp. 43-81).

The township of Bidokt is eight km east of Juymand (center of Gonābād) on the Mashad-Zāhedān highway. It is situated at 34° 21' N and 58° 45' E, at an altitude of 1,090 m; its population, nearly 5,000 in 1986, has been fluctuating in past decades due to natural growth, emigration, and immigration. The old town had an attractive desert architecture, and many wind-towers (*bādgir*) are still standing among the ruins of the 1968 earthquake, which damaged also the two-century old congregational mosque (for the seismic history, see Ambraseys and Mellville, pp. 6, 14, 43, 97-98). The new town was rebuilt up on the hill on a geometric plan, with generous assistance from both the government and the Gonābādi order (Amini Beydoḡti, pp. 50-52).



Bidoqt was the birthplace of Mollā Solṭān-Moḥammad Solṭān-‘Ališāh (1835-1909), the founder of the Gonābādi order, and it has ever since remained the principal residence of the succeeding leaders (*qoṭb*) of the order (Gramlich, pp. 65 ff.). The landscape of the town is marked by Mazār-e Solṭāni (FIGURE 1), a large complex with the lofty four-minaret mausoleum of Solṭān-‘Ališāh, the construction of which was begun by his son Nur-‘Ališāh II (1867-1918) and was completed by his grandson Šāleḥ-‘Ališāh (1891-66). It is also the burial place of the latter and his two successors, Solṭān-Ḥosayn Tābanda Reżā-‘Ališāh (1914-92) and ‘Ali Tābanda Maḥbub-‘Ališāh (1946-97), and it thereby attracts a large number of pilgrims annually. Accordingly, the town has prospered by attracting wealth and skills from all over Persia and maintains a developed social and economic infrastructure (Tābanda, pp. 113 ff.; Amini Beydoḳti, pp. 36 ff.). Followers of the Gonābādi order have been numerous among the residents of Bidoqt and its environs (Miller, p. 356; Tābanda, p. 113). Many Gonābādis, on the other hand, are known to be resentful of the order (which carries the name of their locality) and hold a negative view of Bidoqt (e.g., Mojtawawi, among others, nearly ignores Bidoqt; cf. publisher’s introduction in Tābanda, pp. iii-vii). Early in 1979 revolutionary bands desecrated the mausoleum complex, but a settlement was soon reached (personal survey in the town).

Bidoqt is not mentioned in sources until late medieval times; one of the earliest, Ḥāfez-e Abru, names it as a village of Jonābad (I, p. 42), that is Gonābād. Four more settlements of the same name are recorded in the adjoining Qāyen-Birjand region, in the subdistricts of Zirkuh, Šākenāt, Šahābād, and Qaysābād (*Farhang-e ābādiḥā* III, pp. 28, 30, 33, 45; for coordinates, see Pāpoli Yazdi, p. 116). Despite the current pronunciation, the name has been compared to *Beydoqt* (in Persian dictionaries: Enju Širāzi, II, p. 2221; *Borhān-e qāte’*, ed. Mo’in, I, p. 333; ‘Abd-al-Rašid Tatavi, I, p. 371; Abu’l-Mozaḥḥar Ḥaydar, I, p. 148; etymologized as from Mid. Pers. \**bay-duxt* “god’s daughter”), which is glossed as the planet Zohra “Venus,” that is, Nāhid, Mid. Pers. *Anāhīd* (thus it may also be a personal name). The nearby Qal’a-ye Doḳtar (in Šurāb and Bejestān) suggests a related concept (cf. Bāstāni Pārizi, pp. 203 ff.). Other nearby places, with names like Beylond/Bilond, Beymorg, Bihud, Behābād, Bejestān, and Bajesqi, also tempt one to see the component *bay/bag* “lord, god” and read into them a suggestion of the sacredness of the area in ancient times. In any case, in the Middle Ages the secluded province of Qohestān/Kōhestān, to which Bidoqt and Gonābād belonged, was marked with old religious symbols (e.g., the *ātašgāh* “fire temple” of Toršiz and Zoroaster’s

cypress tree of Kešmar/Kāšmar). It also offered sanctuary to heretic sects: Toršiz, Ṭabas of the Date, and Mo'menābād were Isma'ili strongholds; Zāva, now Torbat-e Ḥaydariya, was the birthplace of the Ḥaydari Sufi order; and Bōzgān was renamed Torbat-e Jām after the saintly Shaikh Aḥmad Jām (cf. Le Strange, *Lands*, pp. 352-63; Barthold, p. 136).

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