



## BOQ'Ā

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**BOQ'Ā** (plur. *beqā'* or *boqā'* but commonly although incorrectly *boqā'*), the mausoleum of a sacred or revered personage, sometimes taken to include additional structures adjoining the tomb or the open space surrounding it. Originally meaning a piece of land visibly distinguished from its surroundings either by its elevation or in some other way, the word *boq'ā* came to mean a choice or preferred plot of land (Dehḵodā, s.v. *boq'ā*). By the fifth/eleventh century, the word appears also to have acquired in Persian the general sense of "sacred place." Maybodī, for example, refers to the church built in Ṣaṇ'ā by Abraha as a *boq'ā* (X, p. 616). We also find the word being applied to Sufi hospices, as in the case of those built by Abū Eshāq Kāzarūnī (d. 426/1035; see Maḥmūd b. 'Oṭmān, pp. 31, 204, where *boq'ā* is used interchangeably with *rebāṭ*). The common practice of burying shaikhs (particularly the founders of orders) in the hospices they had established presumably led to the use of *boq'ā* in the sense of mausoleum. Some surviving pre-Safavid mausolea are now known as *boq'ā* (e.g., the Boq'ā-ye Ja'fariya in Isfahan, an eighth/fourteenth-century structure; see Honarfar, pp. 300-01), but the use of *boq'ā* in this sense appears to be a relatively late development, not encountered perhaps before the Safavid period, and to be restricted to Iran. Nonetheless, it has been suggested that the name of the Beqā' valley in Lebanon derives not only from its being an area of low elevation but also from tombs attributed to various prophets that are situated there (R. Hartmann, "Buḵ'a," in *EI*<sup>1</sup>).

Mausolea designated as *boq'ā* occur in a wide variety of settings. Some stand in the middle of cities, surrounded by buildings of a secular nature; this is the



case with the Boq'a-ye Sayyed Esmā'īl, a Qajar structure situated near Čāla Meydān in Tehran (Najmī, pp. 263-64). Others are found in complete isolation, in remote or rural settings, such as the *boq'a* attributed to 'Alī b. Šahrāšūb in the forest outside Bābol (Rāzī, III, p. 160). Very often a *boq'a* is situated inside a cemetery, as for example Boq'a-ye Bābā Rokn-al-Dīn which stands inside the ancient Taḳt-e Fūlād cemetery on the south bank of the Zāyandarūd in Isfahan (Honarfar, pp. 493-97). A *boq'a* may sometimes form the nucleus around which a cemetery has grown: this was the case with the Boq'a-ye Sayyed Walī, situated with its surrounding cemetery at the eastern extremity of the shoemakers' *bāzār* (Bāzār-e Kafšdūzhā) in Tehran (Najmī, p. 266). A more limited form of expansion took place when a number of persons were successively buried in the same structure, giving it something of a collective aspect; thus the *boq'a* of Āqā Ḥosayn Kṽānsārī in Isfahan came to receive the remains of a number of other Safavid '*olamā*' and to be known as *qobbat al-'olamā*' (the dome of the scholars; Honarfar, pp. 657-59).

Attached to the mausoleum as the central and defining element of the *boq'a* are, in some cases, additional structures such as a mosque or a *takīya*. Conversely, a mausoleum designated as *boq'a* may be the sole surviving element in a complex of structures that once included a *madrasa* or a *kānaqāh*; this is the case with Boq'a-ye Pīr-e Bakrān, a Mongol building situated 30 kilometers to the southwest of Isfahan (Honarfar, p. 253).

Those buried in a *boq'a* generally comprise scholars, Sufis, and half-forgotten or even legendary personalities, the term *emānzāda* being reserved for the relatives and descendants of the twelve imams. Sometimes, however, the word *boq'a* is applied to an *emānzāda*, and the words may even be used in combination; thus Najmī (p. 264) speaks of the Boq'a-ye Emānzāda Zayd to the south of Bāzār-e Amīr in Tehran.

An exception to the general rule that a *boq'a* consists of, or is centered on, a tomb is provided by the Boq'a-ye Šāḥeb-al-Amr in Tabrīz. The main feature of this *boq'a* is a dome, built in Qajar times, over a space where a number of pious persons were believed to have seen the Hidden Imam, the space being known as *maqām-e ḥojjat* (Nāder Mīrzā, pp. 109-10). The Boq'a-ye Davāzdah Emām in Bam would appear to be analogous (Rāzī, III, p. 220).

The function of the *boq'a* was, of course, to provide a minor place of visitation, where vows might be made and intercession sought. In addition, certain mausolea known as *boq'a* provided sanctuary (*bast*) during the Qajar period.



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