



MOBĀRAK, HĀJI

MOBĀRAK, HĀJI (حاجی مبارک)(b. Africa, 1823; d. [Karbala](#), ca. 1863), African slave of Sayyed ‘Ali-Moḥammad Širāzi, the [Bāb](#), and participant in the founding events of the Babi movement. Mobārak, born in Africa, was transported to Iran, purchased by the Bāb’s brother-in-law, Ḥāji Mirzā Abu’l-Qāsem at the age of five, and educated within his household. Mobārak was fully literate and astute at business affairs. He was probably a eunuch. In 1842, the Bāb, returning to [Shiraz](#) after a six-year absence, purchased Mobārak (now nineteen) from his brother-in-law for fourteen *tomans* (about \$28). Mobārak along with another African slave, Feẓẓa Kānom, served the Bāb and his family for the rest of his life. (Afnan, pp. 4-5; Lee, pp. 13-14).

Upon returning home, the Bāb decided to wind up his business affairs in order to pursue his religious devotions. Mobārak was given the task of settling his master’s outstanding accounts. He is supposed to have discharged this task with “superb competence” (Afnan, p. 6), which suggests that he had learned the language and mathematics of accounting (*siāq*).

Mobārak participated in events associated with the genesis of the Babi religion, being a witness (in an adjoining room) on 22 May 1844, when the Bāb first declared his religious mission to Mollā [Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Bošru’i](#) (Afnan, pp. 4-7; Lee, pp. 21-22), the first convert to [Babism](#). Bahais regard this declaration as the founding event in the history of their religion. Shortly after that, the Bāb chose only two of his followers to accompany him on a pilgrimage to Mecca, namely Mollā [Moḥammad-‘Ali Bārforuši](#), who is the first in rank of the Bāb’s disciples and is usually referred to in Bahai sources as



Qoddus, and Mobārak. During the journey, Mobārak witnessed his master's constant dictation of sermons (*koṭba*) and religious treatises, works that offended at least some of his fellow pilgrims (Amanat, pp. 242-43). In Mecca, the Bāb is recorded to have sacrificed, in accordance with the customs of Islamic pilgrimage, nineteen lambs, nine in his own name, seven for Qoddus, and three for Mobārak, securing for the latter the full rites of the *ḥājj* pilgrimage and entitling him to the honorific title *ḥāji* (Nabil, pp. 132-33).

Returning to Shiraz after his pilgrimage, the Bāb was arrested for heresy and placed under house arrest in the home of his uncle, Mirzā Sayyed 'Ali, who was supposed to insure his isolation. However, a secret door to the house allowed his followers access to him. Mobārak was charged with guiding believers to and from these clandestine meetings. When the Bāb was removed to [Isfahan](#) (1846), Mobārak remained in the Bāb's house in Shiraz to serve his wife (Ḳadija Bagom) and mother (Fāṭema Bagom). After the Bāb's execution in 1850, his mother and his grandmother were eventually forced to move to Karbala. Mobārak accompanied them and died there, in their service, at about the age of forty (Afnan, pp. 15-18).

To salvage their respectability after 1850, members of the Bāb's family maintained in public that the Bāb had not been executed, but rather was living in India, administering the family's trading affairs in that country. While serving the family in Karbala, Ḥāji Mobārak helped to preserve this polite fiction by vowing to sweep the courtyard around the tomb of the Imam Ḥosayn every day until his master's "return," and he performed this pious duty every morning until his death (Afnan, p. 18; Lee, pp. 31-33).

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