



# QĀ'ENI, SHAIKH MOḤAMMAD-'ALI

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**QĀ'ENI, Shaikh Moḥammad-'Ali** (b. Now Ferest, a village near Qā'en, 3 Moḥarram 1277/20 July 1860; d. Ashkabad, April 1924), prominent Bahai apologist and director of the Bahai school in Ashkabad.

His father, Mollā Ḥosayn, a Bahai, was brother of [Nabil-e Akbar Moḥammad Qā'eni](#). Soon after completing his studies in Islamic sciences in Madrasa Diniya in Mashhad, he converted to the Bahai religion and became a close companion of his uncle until his death. Upon instruction of 'Abd-al Bahā', the leader of the Bahai community, he traveled to many areas in Persia, India, Russia, and Egypt to deal with problems created by dissident Bahais and to promulgate the Bahai religion, which he did successfully among religious leaders and notables. In 1903, on his way to India, on the instigation of Azalis (Solaymān, p. 359; see also [AZALI BABISM](#)), he was attacked and badly beaten by a mob in Isfahan, stripped of his possessions, and incarcerated for four months.

In 1905, while visiting Haifa, 'Abd-al Bahā' asked him to go to Ashkabad to undertake the task of teaching Bahai children and youth. He moved there and remained as teacher and director of the Bahai school until his death in 1924, except for the period that he was working with others on the completion of Abu'l-Faẓl Golpayegāni's manuscript of *Kašf al-geṭā'*, which had been sent to Haifa after his death in January 1914. This book was intended as a response to *Noqṭat al-kāf* (Browne), which Bahais believed contained historical errors.



'Abd-al Bahā' asked Qā'eni to go to Haifa, where he charged him to assist Sayyed Mahdi Golpāyegāni, Abu'l-Faẓl's nephew, to bring the unfinished manuscript to completion under the supervision of Mirzā MoḤammad-Taqi (Ebn Abhar), an eminent Bahai. This was done in Tehran in eight months (1915), where MoḤammad-'Ali Qā'eni together with Ebn Abhar, Mirzā MoḤammad Na'im, and Shaikh Kāzem Samandar gathered and extracted materials and Sayyed Mahdi completed the manuscript. Sayyed Mahdi acknowledged in the introduction to the book the crucial role of Qā'eni in their concerted effort to finish it (Solaymāni, pp. 377-78; Golpāyegāni, pp. 3-10). Qā'eni died in 1924 and was buried in the Ashkabad Bahai cemetery, next to his uncle's grave.

MoḤammad-'Ali Qā'eni was noted for his intellectual acuity, apologetic and oratory skills, and for his artistic gifts as a calligrapher and musician. He was referred to as one of the nineteen "Apostles" of Bahā'-Allāh by Shoghi Effendi, the leader of Bahai community until 1957 (Balyuzi, p. 261). He contributed significantly to the scholarly environment of Bahais in Ashkabad and to the development of a highly organized social and cultural Bahai community there (Momen, pp. 287, 299-301).

*Works.* His main work is *Dorus al-diāna*, a standard textbook on various aspects of Bahai religion, which was first taught in the Bahai schools in Ashkabad but soon became widely used in most Bahai schools in Persia and elsewhere. It was first published in Ashkabad in 1911 and later in Tehran, Egypt, and South America. He also wrote an untitled treatise (Cairo, 1922; Solaymāni, p. 393) in response to the dissident claims of Mirzā MoḤammad-'Ali, younger brother of 'Abd-al Bahā'. His other published works include letters, mainly apologetic in nature (Solaymāni, pp. 369-76; "Nāma-ye tāriki," Raf'ati, pp. 225-34) and the transcript of a talk given by Āqā Shaikh MoḤammad-'Ali Qā'eni to the Theosophical Society of Surat, India, which is printed in "al-Bishārat" (the title of the Persian section of a Baha'i periodical, published in India, entitled "Baha'i News") on pages 104 of volume I, number 9, 1921 (Solaymāni, p. 382). A few unpublished works are held in private collections, including the unpublished treatise "Resāla-ye so'al o jawāb," which was taught at the Bahai school in Ashkabad.



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