



## QODDUS

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**QODDUS, Moḥammad-‘Ali Bārforuši** (b. Bārforuš, 1238/1822; d. Bārforuš, 23 Jomādā II 1265/16 May, 1849), a prominent Bābi (see [BABISM](#)) figure who accepted the Bābi religion when still a young clergyman of 22 years and was later given the spiritual title “Qoddus” (lit. ‘absolutely holy’ or ‘the most holy’) by the [Bāb](#). Qoddus was born in the Āqā-Rud quarter of Bārforuš (nowadays [Bābol](#) in Māzandarān; see Māzandarāni, 1944, pp. 405-6; Zarandi, p. 72). According to Niāki and Ḥoseynzāda (p. 160), Qoddus’s birthplace was Āqā-RuPiš. His father, Āqā Moḥammad-Şāleḥ, was an illiterate farmer from a humble and poor family (Māzandarāni, 1944, pp. 405, 413), and his family paid allegiance to Mollā Moḥammad-Ḥamza Şari‘atmadār (1762–1864), the most popular Shaikhi cleric in Māzandarān. Qoddus’s mother died in his early childhood, and his father married another woman who very much loved her stepson (Malek Kōsravi-Nuri, p. 58).

From the early childhood Qoddus was a prodigy, and his intellectual and spiritual gifts were apparent. After completing his basic schooling in Bārforuš and Sāri at the age of twelve, he went to Mašhad to begin his religious studies there. At the age of eighteen, he left Persia for Karbalā’, where he joined Sayyed Kāzem Rašti (d. 1844), the leader of the Shaikhi school. Qoddus studied with Rašti for four years. “He was the last to arrive, and invariably occupied the lowliest seat in the assembly. He was the first to depart upon the conclusion of every meeting. The silence he observed and the modesty of his behaviour distinguished him from the rest of his companions” (Zarandi, p. 72; see also Māzandarāni, 1944, p. 406). Shoghi Effendi (1897-1957) describes



Qoddus as “erudite” and “the most esteemed disciple of Sayyid Kāzim” (Shoghi Effendi, p. 7).

After Qoddus finished his studies at Karbalā’, and on the way back to Persia, he, like other Rašti’s students, became a hermit and spent some time in contemplation and prayer in the mosque of the city of Kufa (Māzandarāni, 1944, p. 406; Amanat, p. 182). On returning to his native town of Bārforuši, Qoddus was welcomed and soon highly praised and supported by Šari’atmadār (Māzandarāni, 1944, p. 406). This incited hostility of Šari’atmadār’s rival, Shi’ite cleric Molla Sa’id Bārforuši, known as Sa’id-al-‘olamā’ (Māzandarāni, 1944, p. 406). All sources agree that Qoddus was a charismatic clergyman and that his piety and personal charm captured the admiration of every observer (Zarandi, p. 183; Māzandarāni, 1944, p. 406; Malek Kōsravi-Nuri, p. 59; Amanat, pp. 183-84).

In May 1844, Qoddus was in Shiraz, where he met the Bāb and gave his full allegiance to the Babi faith. The circumstances of his conversion were as follows. One evening, when the Bāb was returning home accompanied by Mollā Ḥosayn (1814-1849), his first disciple, “there appeared a youth, disheveled and travel-stained.” That young man was Qoddus. He approached Mollā Ḥosayn, embraced him, and asked “whether he [Molla Hosayn] had found the Promised One.” At first, Mollā Ḥosayn tried to calm Qoddus’s agitation and advised him to rest for the moment, promising to enlighten him later. Then, on fixing his gaze upon the Bāb, Qoddus told Mollā Ḥosayn: “I can recognize him [the Promised One] by his gait.” Qoddus went on to say: “I confidently testify that none beside him [the Bāb], whether in the East or in the West, can claim to be the Truth. None other can manifest the power and majesty that radiate from his holy person” (Zarandi, pp. 69-70). Qoddus was the last person among the first eighteen people who embraced Bābism, and who were collectively designated by the Bāb as “the Letters of the Living” (*Ḥoruf-i-ḥayy*).

Since Qoddus was the last “Letter of the Living,” he was designated by the Bāb as “the Last Name of God” (*Esm Allāh al-ākher*), just as Mollā Ḥosayn was distinguished as “the First Name of God” (*Esm Allāh al-awwal*) by virtue of being the first “Letter of the Living.” The Bāb chose Qoddus as his traveling companion for the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1844. After Qoddus returned from the pilgrimage and tried to propagate Bābism, he became the target of persecution by the governor of Fārs and was expelled from Shiraz. Qoddus then traveled to Yazd, Kermān, Ardestān, Isfahan, Kāšān, and Tehran to

propagate the Bābi religion, after which he returned to Bārforuś in 1847, where he stayed for the next two years.

Qoddus’s high position in the Bābi community gradually evolved. In the conference of Badašt in 1848—a historic assembly of more than eighty Bābis—Qoddus was among the three Bābi leaders who decided on the course of that meeting, which was a pivotal event in the Bābi history. Contrary to the prevailing belief among historians, there was no conflict between Qoddus and Ṭāhera Qorrat-al-‘ayn (1814/1817-1852) when she dramatically unveiled herself at that gathering in announcing the abrogation of the Islamic religious law (*šari‘a*) by the Bābi law, “and Qoddus was in reality in full sympathy with what Ṭāhera did in that assembly” (Moḥammad-Ḥoseyni, pp. 274-75, 286).

Qoddus was the most important figure in the Bābi upheaval of Tabarsi (Tabresi; October 1848 to May 1849) during which 300 to 400 Babis were killed while defendending themselves against the attacks of government troops. Mollā Sa‘id Bārforuši, the Shi‘ite religious leader of Bārforuś who was always jealous of Qoddus, finally managed to have Qoddus killed. “In his unquenchable hostility and aided by the mob, whose passions he had sedulously inflamed, stripped his victim of his garments, loaded him with chains, paraded him through the streets of Bārforush, and incited the scum of its female inhabitants to execrate and spit upon him, assail him with knives and axes, mutilate his body, and throw the tattered fragments into a fire” (Shoghi Effendi, p. 42).

Qoddus’s tragic and public death at Bārforuś took place on 23 Jomādā II 1265/16 May 1849 (Zarandi, p. 408; Amanat, p. 188). Considered a martyr by the Bābis and later by the Bahais (see [BAHAI FAITH](#)), Qoddus’ tragic death has been compared to prominent figures of other religions, such as Jesus. According to Šari‘atmadār’s instructions, Qoddus’s remains were buried in the School of Zaki Khan, located at the Haşir Forušan Square of Bārforuś (Māzandarāni, 1944, p. 442; Malek Kōsravi-Nuri, pp. 405-6; Niāki and Ḥoseynzāda, p. 521).

As Šari‘atmadār relates (Māzandarāni, 1944, p. 438), the writings of Qoddus have received little attention compared to studies of other prominent Bābis, owing to the fact that, as ‘Abd-al-Bahā’ testifies, Qoddus’s handwriting was somewhat illegible (Kāvāri, pp. 128-29). However, because of his piety, virtuous life, and unique understanding of the Bābi religion, Qoddus has been accorded the highest spiritual station in the Bābi community and recognized



as second only to the Bāb himself (Shoghi Effendi, p. 49; Māzandarāni, 1944, pp. 419-21, 423-24). After the martyrdom of Qoddus, the Bāb honored him with an exalted station that rivals that of the most venerated saints and holy persons of other religions (Māzandarāni, 1944, p. 425).

All sources affirm that Qoddus produced a prodigious volume of writings in the short period between the inception of the Bābi religion in 1844 and his death in 1849. Among his writings was a commentary on the letter *ṣād* of the word *ṣamad* (Qurʾān, Sura 112 *Al-Ekhlās*), which is said to have run three times the length of the Qurʾān itself. *Al-Šahādat al-ʿazaliya* was another treatise written by Qoddus. Neither of these two writings is extant (Māzandarāni, 1944, p. 420; 1972, p. 480; Zarandi, p. 357; MacEoin, pp. 105-7). Hamadāni (tr. Browne, p. 44) states that, in addition to these two commentaries, Qoddus composed nearly 30,000 verses, consisting of prayers (*monājāt*), learned discourses (*šounāt-e ʿelmiyya*), and homilies (*koṭab*). Several letters of Qoddus and some of his prayers have been published in Bahai publications (Māzandarāni, 1944, pp. 407-18, 426-30; Idem, 1972, pp. 481-87). Two manuscripts of the writings of Qoddus are preserved in two libraries in England, namely the British Library and the Cambridge University Library (MacEoin, p. 106).

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