



VARQĀ, WALI-ALLĀH

VARQĀ, WALI-ALLĀH (b. Tabriz, 1884; d. Tübingen, 12 November 1955, [FIGURE 1](#)), one of the leading figures of the 20th-century Iranian *Bahā'is*. He was appointed in 1939 as the Trustee of Ḥoquq-Allāh (the Right of God), and on 24 December 1951 as a Hand of the Cause of God (*Ayādi-e Amr Allāh*), as part of the first contingent of the Hands of the Cause, by Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian [Head] of the Bahā'i faith (*Bahā'i World XIII*, p. 381); Shoghi Effendi, 1971, p. 20). Wali-Allah was the third son of Mirzā 'Ali-Moḥammad Varqā, a well-known poet and one of the Apostles of *Bahā'-Allāh*, the founder of the Bahā'i faith (Shoghi Effendi, 1944, p. 296), who was imprisoned and subsequently martyred in Tehran in 1896 alongside his 12 year old son, Ruḥ-Allāh (Taherzadeh, p. 226; Momen, pp. 361-62). 'Ali-Moḥammad Varqā was posthumously elevated to the rank of Hand of the Cause of God by 'Abd-al-Bahā' (*Bahā'i World XIV*, p. 446).

After the martyrdom of his father and older brother, Wali-Allāh, who was then eight years old, remained in Tabriz and was cared for by his mother, under the influence of his maternal grandmother who was the daughter of the chief of the Šāhsavan tribe and firmly opposed to the Bahā'i faith. Years later, when Wali-Allāh was an adolescent, his paternal uncle, Mirzā Ḥosayn, took charge of his education, and arranged for him to live in his household by taking up residence in Miāndoāb. Subsequently, Wali-Allāh moved to Tehran to live with his eldest brother, Mirzā 'Aziz-Allāh Varqā, and pursued his education first in the Tarbiat School for boys, and later in the American College of Tehran. Following a pilgrimage to the Holy Land where he was received by



‘Abd-Bahā’, the son of the founder of the Bahā’i faith, Wali-Allāh attended the American University in Beirut. While studying at the university, Wali-Allāh spent his summer holidays in the Holy Land. He returned to Tehran in summer 1909 and became employed in the court of Moḥammad-‘Ali Shah Qājār (r. 1907-9).

In 1910, Wali-Allāh married Bahiya ‘Aṭā’i, daughter of Ṣani‘-al-Solṭān Mirzā ‘Aṭā’-Allāh ‘Aṭā’i. The couple had ten children, seven of whom survived. The eldest child, ‘Ali-Moḥammad Varqā (b. Tehran, 1 January 1912; d. Haifa, 22 September 2007), became the last Hand of the Cause of God, and Chief Trustee of Ḥoqoq-Allāh, having been invested with this dual responsibility by Shoghi Effendi in 1955 upon the passing of his father, Wali-Allāh (*Bahā’i World XIII*, p. 831; Shoghi Effendi, 1971, p. 173).

When ‘Abd-al-Bahā’ embarked on his historic journey from the Holy Land to the West in 1912, Wali-Allāh Varqā was invited to join the accompanying party as a translator, and he traveled in their company to North America, London, and Paris. He returned to Tehran from Europe and became employed first as a secretary at the Russian legation, and later as first secretary at the Turkish embassy. At the start of World War II, Wali-Allāh resigned from his post at the Turkish embassy to dedicate his time to the affairs of the Bahā’i faith.

After his return to his native Iran from the journey to the West, Wali-Allāh served on the Local Spiritual Assembly (Maḥfel-e ruḥāni) of the Bahā’is of Tehran, and subsequently on the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahā’is of Iran until the end of his life. In 1953, he attended Bahā’i Intercontinental Conferences in Kampala, Chicago, Stockholm, and New Delhi (*Bahā’i World XIII*, p. 381), in between visiting Bahā’i communities in Central and South America, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Italy, Iraq, Egypt, Syria, and Turkey. He made his last pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1954. He passed away in Tübingen and was buried in Stuttgart, Germany (*Kuṣahā*, 1994).

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