

Qoddus was welcomed and soon highly praised and supported by Šariʿatmadar (Mazandarani, 1944, p. 406). This incited hostility of Šariʿatmadar’s rival, Shiʿite cleric Molla Saʿid Barforuši, known as Saʿid-al-ʿolamaʿ (Mazandarani, 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; Mazandarani, 1944, p. 406; Malek Kosravi-Nuri, p. 59; Amanat, pp. 183-84).

In May 1844, Qoddus was in Shiraz, where he met the Bab and gave his full allegiance to the Babi faith. The circumstances of his conversion were as follows. One evening, when the Bab was returning home accompanied by Molla Hosayn (1814-1849), his first disciple, “there appeared a youth, disheveled and travel-stained.” That young man was Qoddus. He approached Molla Hosayn, embraced him, and asked “whether he [Molla Hosayn] had found the Promised One.” At first, Molla Hosayn 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 Bab, Qoddus told Molla Hosayn: “I can recognize him [the Promised One] by his gait.” Qoddus went on to say: “I confidently testify that none beside him [the Bab], 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 Babism, and who were collectively designated by the Bab as “the Letters of the Living” (Horuf-i-hayy).

Since Qoddus was the last “Letter of the Living,” he was designated by the Bab as “the Last Name of God” (Esm Allah al-aker), just as Molla Hosayn was distinguished as “the First Name of God” (Esm Allah al-awwal) by virtue of being the first “Letter of the Living.” The Bab chose Qoddus as his traveling companion for the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1844. After Qoddus returned from the pilgrimage and tried to propagate Babism, he became the target of persecution by the governor of Fars and was expelled from Shiraz. Qoddus then traveled to Yazd, Kerman, Ardestan, Isfahan, Kašan, and Tehran to propagate the Babi religion, after which he returned to Barforuš in 1847, where he stayed for the next two years.

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

Qoddus was the most important figure in the Babi upheaval of Tabarsi (Tabresi; October 1848 to May 1849) during which 300 to 400 Babis were killed while defending themselves against the attacks of government troops. Molla Sa'id Barforuši, the Shi'ite religious leader of Barforuš 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 Barforush, 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 Barforuš took place on 23 Jomada II 1265/16 May 1849 (Zarandi, p. 408; Amanat, p. 188). Considered a martyr by the Babis 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'atmadar's instructions, Qoddus's remains were buried in the School of Zaki Khan, located at the Hasir Forušan Square of Barforuš (Mazandarani, 1944, p. 442; Malek Kosravi-Nuri, pp. 405-6; Niaki and Hoseynzada, p. 521).

As Šari'atmadar relates (Mazandarani, 1944, p. 438), the writings of Qoddus have received little attention compared to studies of other prominent Babis, owing to the fact that, as 'Abd-al-Baha' testifies, Qoddus's handwriting was somewhat illegible (Kavari, pp. 128-29). However, because of his piety, virtuous life, and unique understanding of the Babi religion, Qoddus has been accorded the highest spiritual station in the Babi community and recognized as second only to the Bab himself (Shoghi Effendi, p. 49; Mazandarani, 1944, pp. 419-21, 423-24). After the martyrdom of Qoddus, the Bab honored him with an exalted station that rivals that of the most venerated saints and holy persons of other religions (Mazandarani, 1944, p. 425).

All sources affirm that Qoddus produced a prodigious volume of writings in the short period between the inception of the Babi religion in 1844 and his death in 1849. Among his writings was a commentary on the letter sad of the word samad (Qur'an, Sura 112 Al-Eklas), which is said to have run three times the length of the Qur'an itself. Al-Šahadat al-'azaliya was another treatise written by Qoddus. Neither of these two writings is extant (Mazandarani, 1944, p. 420; 1972, p. 480; Zarandi, p. 357; MacEoin, pp. 105-7). Hamadani (tr. Browne, p. 44) states that, in addition to these two commentaries, Qoddus composed nearly 30,000 verses, consisting of prayers (monajat), learned discourses (šounat-e 'elmiyya), and homilies (kotab). Several letters of Qoddus and some of his prayers have been published in Bahai publications (Mazandarani, 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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