

# **Essays and Notes on Babi and Baha'i History**

by

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To my Baha'i friends,  
from whom I received more than I gave

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## Preface

The Babi and Baha'i religions are historical religions, born in the full light of history, situating themselves in history, and drawing justification and inspiration from their own histories, the histories of the religions that came before them, and the great historical events of their own times. Moreover, Baha'is share a sense that the stories of their three great leaders—the Bab and Bahauallah, their two prophets, and 'Abd al-Baha, who began the process of making the Baha'i Faith into a world community—provide much of the meaning of the Baha'i Faith. The teachings of the Baha'i Faith, admirable though they are in themselves, find their context and power for the believers in the epic story of the religion and its founders. Shoghi Effendi, the great-grandson of Bahauallah and the leader of the Baha'i Faith from 1921 to 1957 four times attempted to express the historical spirit of the Baha'i Faith: first in his translation of Nabil's *Dawn-Breakers*, by which he hoped to expose the Western Baha'is to the spirit of the Babis; second in *The Promised Day Is Come*, a sort of theodicy in which he correlated the events of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the emergence of the Baha'i Faith; and finally in his two centennial histories of the Baha'i Faith, the English *God Passes By* and the Persian *Lawh-i Qarn* ("centennial tablet"). In recent years, the debates about methodology and authority that have riven the Baha'i academic community have almost always involved issues of historiography.

Baha'is and Babis have felt an obligation to preserve their history, in particular the stories of their martyrs, of the companions of their leaders, and of the early believers in each place. This, of course, has Islamic roots, since for cultural reasons of their own Muslims alone among the great civilizations have made the biographical dictionary a major literary and religious genre. The Western Baha'is brought a new direction to Baha'i historiography,

the search for context. Unlike their Middle Eastern coreligionists, the Western Baha'is typically knew nothing about the cultural environment assumed in traditional Persian Baha'i historiography. They needed to understand the strange Arabic and Persian words and names, the Islamic practices referred to, and the places in which these events happened. This interest resulted at first in such things as glossaries and elementary introductions to Islam, written either by Middle Eastern Baha'is living in the West or by autodidact Western Baha'i scholars, then later in more ambitious interpretations of the Persian Baha'i scholarly tradition, such as the works of Adib Taherzadeh and especially Hasan Balyuzi. In the last generation, it has produced a school of genuine academic scholarship on the Baha'i Faith and a number of major works.

The present work belongs to a more modest school of Baha'i historiography than the works of Balyuzi and Shoghi Effendi: the historical miscellany. The following chapters collect a series of investigations, mostly biographical, of Babi and Baha'i history. Like the articles that comprise my *Sacred Acts, Sacred Time, Sacred Space* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1996), most were originally written for an encyclopedia on the Baha'i Faith that has not appeared. In some cases, as in the chapters on Zanzibar and Turkey, they form a collected whole. In others, there is a looser connection. In some cases, despite my best efforts, the encyclopedic origin of the articles is painfully apparent, although I trust the information they contain will be useful to some readers and interesting or diverting to a few more. Some sections, like the account of Iranian history and culture with which this volume begins and a later section on Ottoman Turkey, really are not about the Baha'i Faith at all, but are intended to provide intermediate background for readers familiar with Baha'i history but unfamiliar with the history and culture of the Middle East. As in my earlier work, my central operating principle is the belief that cultural context and detail illuminates Baha'i history. In general, I have written for an intelligent reader who is well read in the English literature of the Baha'i Faith but who does not have special

knowledge of Iran, the Middle East, or Islam—for example, the reader who wishes to know more about the people mentioned in Bahau'llah's last major work, *The Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*. I have not tried to make the book or its constituent parts relevant to readers unfamiliar with the Baha'i Faith. Nonetheless, I think there is a fair amount here that will be of use to scholars who happen to want to know something about the history and thought of the Babis and Baha'is. The reaction to *Sacred Acts* encourages me to hope that the present work will be useful to some readers.

The transliteration system is, with slight modifications, the Library of Congress customarily used by scholars of Islam writing in English. It should be transparent enough to readers familiar with the slightly different system customarily used by Baha'is.

In sections on general topics, such as the chapter on Iranian history and culture with which this work begins, references are minimal and confined to documenting direct quotes and making suggestions for further reading. In sections representing specific research, I have given full documentation, although usually at the end of sections.

For the most part, the original articles were written between 1987 and 1991 and have not been revised. It would, of course, have been better to update them in the light of a considerable amount of primary and secondary material on the Babis and Baha'is that has appeared since, but that would have delayed their appearance further. I hope that in their present form they will spur others to new research.

Most of the articles that comprise the present work were written while I was an employee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, and I wish to gratefully acknowledge the commitment of that body to the development of Baha'i scholarship. I also would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Baha'i World Centre, which supplied some of the source materials used in this work. I would also like to acknowledge the editors of the journal *Iranian Studies*, with whose permission I have used the article on Zanzan originally

published there. I owe a great deal to my former colleagues on the Editorial Board of the Baha'i Encyclopedia, with whom I worked for eleven years, especially to Will. C. van den Hoonaard and B. Todd Lawson. Juan R. I. Cole has been a constant friend and source of information for many years, and I am particularly indebted to him for his assistance on the chapter relating to the Baha'i Faith in Turkey. It was also he who encouraged me to publish this material as a book through the H-Bahai web site. H-Bahai in turn is part of the H-Net family of listservs and is underwritten by the National Endowment for the Humanities, who thus have underwritten the electronic publication of this work. Finally, I would like to thank my family, whose patience has been long tried by my scholarly interests, and particularly my wife Linda.

John Walbridge  
Lahore  
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## **Chapter One**

### **An Introduction to the History and Culture of Iran**

“In the Middle East,” I tell my students, “history is not something that goes away after it happens; it piles up in heaps and gets in everybody’s way.” When I first encountered Baha’is, I heard the story of the Bab and Bahauallah, but I only came to understand the story when I knew a great deal more about the history and culture of Iran and the Islamic Middle East. Islam is tolerably familiar to well-read Western Baha’is, who have taken to heart Shoghi Effendi’s dictum that it is necessary for Baha’is to know the basics of Islam and its history. Iranian culture, except in the most superficial aspects of food and etiquette, is less well known to them. This is a pity, since the Bab, Bahauallah, ‘Abd al-Baha, and Shoghi Effendi were all profoundly Iranian figures, though each in different ways, and can really only be fully understood in their Iranian contexts. The Iranian contexts in question, moreover, go back several thousand years. For example, the fact that the Bab traced his descent to the Prophet Muhammad, while Bahauallah traced his to the last Zoroastrian emperor of Iran tells something quite important about their characters and religious projects, and thus about the differences between the Babi and Baha’i religions. In the chapter that follows, I attempt to give a sketch of the main features of Iranian history and culture that have shaped the Iran of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and thus provided the cultural and historical context of the rise of the Babi and Baha’i Faiths in Iran.



**1. Geography.** The modern state of Iran is centered on the Iranian Plateau, a high arid plain surrounded on most sides by mountains. The center of the plateau contains several regions of almost impassable desert. Most of the population of the plateau lives in oases near the mountains where water is available, often conveyed to the irrigation works by long tunnels called *qanats*, an irrigation system that has been in use for several millennia. The bulk of the population of the plateau is Persian-speaking. In the past large parts of the population have been nomadic, with most of the rest of the population living in agricultural villages. In the twentieth century most of the nomadic population has become sedentary, and the proportion of the population living in cities has greatly increased.

The modern state of Iran also includes several adjacent geographical areas. In the northwest, Azerbaijan is a region of mountains and high plains. With more rainfall than in most areas of the country, it has traditionally been Iran's most important source of grain and meat. Its population, though Shi'ite in religion and Iranian in culture, is Turkish-speaking and thus is closely tied by language and experience to Turkey in the west and to the Republic of Azerbaijan to the north, the latter a province of Iran until the early nineteenth century. North of the plateau are Mazandaran and Gilan along the south and southwestern shores of the Caspian. These areas, below sea-level, contain rainforests. Though the predominant language is Persian, these areas remain somewhat distinct from the rest of Iran. South and west of Adharbajan is Iranian Kurdistan, an area inhabited by the semi-nomadic Kurds and closely related by culture to the Kurdish areas of Iraq, Turkey, and Syria. Separatist movements have flourished in this area. The corner formed by the Iraqi border and the Persian Gulf is an ethnically Arab lowland, geographically contiguous with Iraq, of which it has often been a part. Though Arabic remains the predominant language, there are large Persian settlements there and the region has become much more culturally integrated with the rest of Iran since the discovery of oil at the turn of the century.

The extreme southeast of Iran is inhabited by the Baloch, a nomadic people also living in neighboring areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Finally, northeastern Iran is a continuation of the plains of Central Asia.

It should be noted that just as all Iranians are not Persian speakers, not all speakers of Persian live in Iran. Persian is one of the two main languages of Afghanistan, and Tajik, a closely related dialect, is spoken in Tajikistan and parts of Uzbekistan. Persian was also the lingua franca of Islamic India and survived in India and Pakistan as a literary language into the twentieth century.

A large country, the climate of Iran varies from region to region. On the Iranian Plateau, summers are hot and dry. In the northern areas and in the mountains winters can be quite severe. Even in Tehran, snow is common in the winter.

## **2. History**

### **Pre-Islamic Iran**

*The Aryans and their religion.* The Iranians are an Indo-European people. Sometime, probably in the early second millennium B.C.E., a people calling themselves Aryans migrated from north of the Black Sea southwest towards Iran and Afghanistan. These people worshipped a pantheon of gods preserved both in Hindu and Zoroastrian mythology. Their economy seems to have been based on cattle-raising. One group, the Indo-Aryans, went southeast into northwestern India, where they apparently conquered the native population. Their religion formed the nucleus of modern Hinduism. Another group, the Iranians, moved southwest into Iran, eventually settling a region including much of Afghanistan, Iran, and the area east of the Caspian. There is no direct evidence of the movements of the Aryans, but something can be deduced from comparing the languages and mythology of the Aryans of India and Iran. The Indo-Aryans, for example, used a word for “god” that the Iranians use to mean “devil,” thus indicating a religious split between the two groups early in their histories. Likewise, the oldest myths of

both peoples preserve something of their early culture. By the early first millennium B.C.E. various Iranian groups were dominant on the Iranian plateau and neighboring areas to the east and north.

At some time before or during the migrations of the Iranians, a prophet named Zarathushtra (“Zoroaster,” the usual English form, derives from the Greek rendering of his name) arose among them. He was a priest of the traditional religion. On the basis of visions of the supreme god Ahura Mazda (probably meaning “Lord Wisdom”), he denounced abuses and taught a religion in which believers were to carry out various rituals, particularly concerning purity, in order to aid Ahura Mazda in his battle against the devil, Ahriman. Zoroaster formulated his teachings in the form of a series of hymns known as the Gathas. These were committed to memory by his followers and passed down by them until they were finally written down, together with much additional traditional material, sometime around the fifth century C.E. This body of literature is the Avesta, the holy book of Zoroaster’s religion. For his teachings Zoroaster was persecuted until he finally found refuge with King Vishtaspa, who established Zoroastrianism as the state religion of his kingdom and fought the enemies of the new faith.

Though there is no direct evidence about Zoroaster until much later, there cannot be much doubt that he lived and preached. There is great controversy about where and when he lived, the traditional date and place—258 years before Alexander (570 B.C.E.) in Adharbayjan—being clearly too late and too far west. Various modern authorities place him in Sistan (on the border between modern Iran and Afghanistan), Choresmia (south of the Aral Sea), and Kazakhstan. Dates range from the early second millennium to the early first millennium.

*The Medes and the Persians.* The Iranians come into written history with the rise of the Median empire, an Iranian dynasty, in western Iran in the ninth century B.C.E. In the seventh century one of the Iranian vassals of the Medes, Cyrus II the Great of Persis in southwestern Iran, overthrew his master and went on to conquer a

vast empire, which eventually stretched from Libya to the gates of India and from the Bosphorus to the Indian Ocean. The Persian or Achaemenid Empire, as it is known, was the greatest state the world had yet seen, and its efficient administration set the pattern used throughout the Middle East for centuries to come. The Persian Empire plays a conspicuous role both in the Bible—it is the Persian king who restores the temple in Jerusalem—and in classical Greek history—Xerxes’ famous and unsuccessful effort to conquer Greece. It was by means of the Persian Empire that Iranian culture and religious ideas were conveyed to the Mediterranean world.

The Persian Empire was unexpectedly and suddenly destroyed by Alexander the Great’s invasion in 334. Alexander himself died before he could establish his dynasty, and the empire was divided by his generals, Iran falling to the descendants of Seleucus, who also ruled Iraq, Syria, and the Holy Land. Though the Greek culture brought by Alexander influenced the Iranians, there was only a thin Greek veneer on what was still an Iranian nation. By the second century B.C.E. the Seleucids had been supplanted by an Iranian dynasty originating near the southeastern corner of the Caspian. This dynasty, known to the West as the Parthians and to themselves as the Arsacids, ruled a loose confederation controlling a territory from Iraq and the borders of Syria to Afghanistan and the Aral Sea. Their famous mounted archers were the most formidable opponents of the Roman legions. Though more Iranian than the Seleucids, they were still much under the influence of Greek culture.

In the third century C.E. the Sasanians, a local dynasty of Fars (the same region that was the homeland of the Achaemenids) overthrew the Parthians and formed the Sasanian empire. Occupying much the same territory as the Parthians, the Sasanians were militantly Zoroastrian in religion and continued the Parthian tradition of opposition to the Romans. The Sasanian empire was well-organized and centralized. At their high point in the early seventh century, the Sasanians were able to occupy much of the

Byzantine Empire and besieged Constantinople itself. Whereas the Persians nearly forgot the Achaemenids and Parthians, the Sasanian kings have remained well-known figures in many aspects of Iranian culture: literature, statecraft, art, and folklore.

*The Arab Invasion and Empires.* In the years when Muhammad was preaching his new religion and establishing a Muslim state in Medina and northwestern Arabia, the Sasanians faced military defeat and civil unrest. Thus when the Arabs invaded Sasanian Iraq, resistance was ineffective. The provincial nobility failed to unite to support the central government against the invader. Thus, the Arabs were soon able to occupy both Iraq and Iran. Yazdegerd III, the fugitive Sasanian emperor, was killed in Marv, in the far northeastern corner of his empire. Thereafter, Iran was ruled first from Medina and then until 750 from Damascus.

Persians quickly came to play a key role in the Islamic state. The first Arab occupiers were dependent on Persians to administer the old Sasanian provinces: Persian was the official language of administrative records in the eastern part of the Islamic world through the seventh century, and Persian officials carried on the routine of tax collection and administration under the eyes of their new Arab rulers. By the end of the century considerable numbers of Persians had become Muslims. In 750 a Shi'ite revolution in eastern Iran led to the overthrow of the Umayyad caliphs of Damascus. The Abbasids, the new caliphs, were descendants of an uncle of the Prophet. They moved the capital to Iraq, building the new city of Baghdad. Their chief power base was the eastern empire—Iraq and Iran, the Sasanian lands—and Persians played an ever-greater role in administration and cultural life. The administrative system and court rituals of the Sasanian empire were to a considerable extent resurrected by the Abbasids. During this period Iran gradually became overwhelmingly Muslim, mainly Sunni in this period, although there were always pockets of Shi'ite sympathy.

*The Military Successor States.* By the end of the ninth century the Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad could no longer exercise full control over their dominions. Governors of distant provinces became independent while still acknowledging the nominal authority of the prestigious but powerless caliphs in Baghdad. The example of independent provincial governors was soon followed by military adventurers who carved out ephemeral empires for themselves. Frequently drawing their strength from nomadic Turkic or Mongol tribes, such states characterize Iranian history into modern times. Often these rulers were little more than adventurous gangsters whose states prospered so long as the founder lived and fell apart under less ruthless heirs. Under such rulers life continued unchanged in the Persian cities, for a change of ruler usually meant nothing more than a change of tax collector. Such cultural achievements as these military rulers could boast of tended to consist of monumental architecture or the books written by the poets and scholars they subsidized—both intended to legitimize the sovereign's rule. Only in a few cases did these states have lasting effects on Iranian life.

Iran as a political entity can scarcely said to have existed in this period. Political boundaries bore little relation to ethnic boundaries. Religious identities were often stronger than identities based on language or nation.

*The Safavids.* The modern state of Iran came into existence in 1500 through the conquests of Shah Isma'il Safavi, the hereditary head of an order of militant Shi'ite Sufis. Isma'il was a Turk from Ardabil in Azerbaijan, in the northwest of modern Iran. His state occupied the territory of modern Iran and some parts of Iraq, the Caucasus, and Afghanistan. Until this time Iran had been largely Sunni, though there was a long tradition of sympathy for radical Shi'ite groups. Isma'il forcibly converted his territories to Twelver Shi'ism, to the great irritation of neighboring Sunni regimes such as the Ottomans and the Uzbeks. Though under continual military pressure, particularly from the Ottomans, Isma'il and his successors were able to consolidate a regime that lasted for

over two hundred years. The cultural achievements of the Safavids were considerable. The Safavid kings and their courtiers were often lavish patrons of art, literature, and scholarship. Safavid architecture represents the highest achievement of Islamic architecture in Iran, notably Shah Abbas the Great's magnificent capital, Isfahan. Islamic philosophy reached its highest level of sophistication under the Safavids.

After a series of weak rulers the Safavid state collapsed in the early eighteenth century in the face of an invasion from Afghanistan. This event triggered a half-century of instability in Iran. Two rulers in this period managed to gain control of the bulk of the old Safavid territories. The first, Nadir Shah, was a Sunni soldier from Khorasan, who in the classic pattern of military rulers in Iran, rose through his bravery, charisma, and luck to become a conqueror. His greatest achievement was his invasion of India in 1739, in which he sacked Delhi and brought back to Iran a fabulous treasure, including the famous Peacock Throne. He was eventually assassinated by his own soldiers and his empire fell apart. The second strong ruler was Karim Khan Zand (r. 1751-79), who ruled much of Iran from Shiraz. Less ambitious than Nadir, he ruled under the unpretentious title of "regent" (*vakil*). Though typical of military adventurers in Iran throughout history, he won the affection of the Persians through his wise and moderate rule, his concern for commercial prosperity, and the magnificent buildings he erected in his beloved Shiraz.

*The Qajars.* Karim Khan's successor was immediately challenged by Aqa Muhammad Khan (d. 1797), a eunuch of the Turkish Qajar tribe. He had been variously a rival and advisor of Karim Khan. After the latter's death he established himself as ruler of most of the old Safavid territories, first uniting the various branches of the Qajar tribe under his rule, then defeating and killing Karim Khan's son Lutf-'Ali, and finally recapturing the lost territories of Georgia and Khorasan. After Aqa Mohammad's murder in 1797, his nephew Fath-'Ali became the ruler. Fath-'Ali Shah was distinguished less for his statecraft than for his

uxoriousness: his wives, concubines, and resulting children numbered in the hundreds. During his reign Iran faced its first serious challenge from Europeans. Blundering into two disastrous wars with Russia, Iran lost the northern half of the key province of Azerbaijan. Fath-‘Ali Shah’s heir apparent was his son ‘Abbas Mirza, who ruled Azerbaijan for more than thirty years and conducted Iran’s foreign policy. ‘Abbas Mirza was an intelligent and forward-looking man, who sought to adopt European-style reforms in such areas as the military and fiscal administration, much as the Ottomans were doing at the same time. His European advisors hoped that under ‘Abbas, Iran would develop into a strong and stable modern state. Unfortunately, he shared his family’s tendency towards dissipation, and he died shortly before his father. The throne thus passed to ‘Abbas Mirza’s son, Muhammad (r. 1834-48). Muhammad Shah showed little interest in continuing the reforms that his father had undertaken, and relied on an incompetent prime minister, the ignorant and superstitious Sufi Haji Mirza Aqasi.

Muhammad Shah’s son and heir, Nasir al-Din (b. 1831, r. 1848-96), came to the throne as a teenager and ruled nearly half a century. Nasir al-Din Shah had been governor of Azerbaijan (the traditional post for the heir-apparent) under the supervision of Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir, who then became prime minister. Amir Kabir was an ardent reformer, who sought to institute European-style reforms under an absolutist monarchy. For example, he established the first modern institution of higher learning in Iran, the Dar al-Funun (“Polytechnic”). It was he who ordered the execution of the Bab, apparently because he saw a charismatic and revolutionary religious movement as a threat to the stability of the state. However, Nasir al-Din Shah soon tired of his brilliant and overbearing prime minister, removed him from office, and had him killed in 1852. For the remainder of Nasir al-Din Shah’s reign, Iran came under increasing pressure from the European powers—political, military, and economic. The Shah was himself interested in Western technology and methods,



traveled in Europe, and periodically attempted to carry out reforms. However, he lacked the intelligence and will to follow through on these measures, not all of which were well-thought-out in any case. His major achievement was simply preserving the independence of Iran through the period when European imperialist rapacity was at its height. By the time of his assassination in 1896 at the hands of a supporter of the Pan-Islamist Jamal al-Din Afghani, Iran was entering a crisis.

*The Constitutional Period.* Both Nasir al-Din Shah and his successor Muzaffar al-Din Shah were perennially short of foreign currency to pay for imports of foreign goods and travel in Europe. They developed the practice of selling concessions—monopolies on some part of the economy—to raise funds. These concessions caused great resentment in the Iranian public, for not only did the resulting monopolies force Iranians to pay unnecessarily high prices, but they often led to the ruin of sectors of the traditional economy. In 1890, the Shah sold a monopoly on the sale of tobacco to a British businessman. An outcry resulted, the clergy banned the use of tobacco, and the Shah was forced to withdraw the concession. A few years later the discontent crystallized in the form of a demand for a constitution. An alliance of modernist intellectuals (some of whom were secretly Azali Babis), bazaar merchants, and reformist clergy forced the dying Muzaffar al-Din Shah to agree to a constitution and a parliament, the Majlis. When Muhammad-‘Ali, the new Shah, tried to dissolve the Majlis, a civil war resulted in which the Constitutionalist forces eventually triumphed. Though the next decade was marked by unstable government and economic depression caused by World War I, the ideal of constitutional parliamentary government became firmly rooted in Iran.

*The Pahlavi Dynasty.* In 1921 Reza Khan, the head of a Russian-trained cavalry regiment that was the most effective military force in the country, seized power in Tehran and was proclaimed prime minister. He was a resolutely secular and absolutist reformer who sought to modernize Iran from above on

the model of Atatürk in Turkey and Mussolini in Italy. Though measures such as the forced unveiling of women and the curtailing of the authority of the clergy caused resentment, under his rule Iran rapidly developed a modern state apparatus and economy. He proclaimed himself Shah in 1925, deposing the powerless Ahmad Shah Qajar. The symbol of his achievements was a railroad he built from the Persian Gulf through Tehran to the Russian border. It was this railroad, together with his fascist sympathies, that proved his undoing. When Germany invaded Russia, the Allies occupied Iran in order to be able to send supplies to Russia. Reza Shah was deposed and died in exile on the island of Mauritius.

His son, Muhammad-Reza came to the throne as a teen-ager and for some years was virtually powerless. During the 1940s political life flourished in Iran as the Majlis was freed from the heavy hand of Reza Shah. By the early 1950s the Shah was attempting to consolidate power. When Muhammad Mosaddeq, a nationalist politician, became prime minister and nationalized the British-owned oil fields, the American Central Intelligence Agency engineered a coup that overthrew Mosaddeq and brought the Shah to power. Like his father, Muhammad-Reza Shah attempted to modernize Iran from above. Paid for by steadily increasing oil revenues, vast changes occurred in Iranian life. Education became widely available, the country became firmly integrated into the world economy, and a large middle-class grew up. The clergy grew increasingly marginalized, particularly after 1963 when they were unable to prevent a land-reform program from stripping them of the lands that supported the religious institutions.

*The Islamic Republic.* Under the Pahlavis political reform failed to keep pace with economic and social change. When uncontrolled inflation created havoc in the economy in the mid-1970s, the Shah began to lose his popularity. In 1978 an alliance of Islamic, leftist, and bazaar groups, united by the prestige of the Ayatollah Khomeini, forced the Shah into exile. Khomeini's own Islamic supporters, the best organized of the revolutionary groups,

seized power. Despite a bitter campaign of terrorism by leftist groups and a long war with Iraq, the Islamic regime was able to consolidate its power, uniting the country in hostility towards the Western powers, especially the United States. Despite a dismal human rights record and near economic collapse caused by war and mismanagement, the regime continued to enjoy wide support due to the reforms it was able to carry out and its genuine independence from foreign influence. Moreover, the fact that a modicum of democracy was maintained allowed the Islamic Republic to lay claim to both the nationalist and the constitutionalist political legacies. After the end of the Iran-Iraq war and the death of Khomeini, the regime gradually became more democratic.

### **3. Culture**

The best way to make sense of the complicated history of Iran is to see it as the interplay of a set of cultural patterns and tensions, some of them going back to ancient times.

#### *Iran and Islam*

A continuing theme in Persian culture is whether Iran should be primarily Iranian or primarily Islamic. As early as the eighth century Persian Muslims had begun to reassert their identity as Iranians against the prevailing Arab chauvinism of their Arab Muslim rulers. The greatest expression of this attitude is Firdawsi's *Shah-Nama*, the "Book of Kings," an eleventh-century poetic adaptation of a pre-Islamic national history written in Sasanian times. Thus, Iranian rulers and officials through the last thousand years have tended to identify with the heritage of pre-Islamic Iran, an identity reinforced by the Persian language. This Iranian identity was closely linked with a cult of monarchy, in which pre-Islamic ideas about the divine right of kings, elaborate court ceremonials, and administrative traditions were resurrected. It was the administrative classes, the most permanent element of the government, who clung most tenaciously to the pre-Islamic

Iranian heritage. Thus, Bahauallah's family, which had a tradition of government service, proudly asserted their pure Iranian descent from the last Sasanian king.

On the other hand, pre-modern Iranian Muslims also saw themselves as citizens of the Islamic or the Shi'ite nation. Thus a Persian Shi'ite would be quite willing for his daughter to marry an Arab Shi'ite but would on no account allow her to wed a Zoroastrian Persian. In most cases the Iranian and Islamic identities co-existed. Sometimes they were fused, as when the mother of the Imam Husayn was identified as the daughter of Yazdegerd III, the last Sasanian emperor. The fact that Iran was the only Muslim state with Shi'ism as the state religion tended to smooth over potential conflicts between Iranian and Islamic identities, since it set Iran apart from other Islamic countries.

In modern times the conflict between these two identities has sharpened. The Pahlavi Shahs, seeing Islam and the Shi'ite clergy as barriers to the modernization of Iran and the consolidation of state power, appealed to a specifically Iranian nationalism. Outward symbols of Islamic allegiance such as traditional headgear were outlawed, and symbols of the glories of ancient Iran were brought forward to replace them. Thus, the Zoroastrian calendar replaced the Islamic calendar in official use. A campaign was launched to rid Persian of loan-words from Arabic—a nearly hopeless task, since Arabic words are as prominent in Persian as French, Greek, and Latin loan-words are in English. Parents were encouraged to give their children names from the *Shah-Nama*. Postage stamps portrayed the royal family, the monuments of ancient Iran, and symbols of modernization, like trains and telegraph offices, but they almost never portrayed the Islamic side of Iran. This program of Iranization reached absurdity in 1971 when Muhammad-Reza Shah held a lavish celebration (thirty-five years late) at Persepolis, the old Achaemenid capital, of the 2500th anniversary of the foundation of the Persian monarchy. At the same time he revised the calendar to date from that event. The year

1355 was followed by 2536. (The change proved extremely unpopular and was reversed two years later.)

The clergy naturally resisted such measures. Khomeini, for example, insisted on signing his name “al-Khomeini,” a small act of rebellion that converted his name from Persian to Arabic. After the Islamic Revolution the new Islamic rulers appealed once again to symbols of pan-Islamic identity, replacing, for example, the Persian national symbol of the Lion-and-Sun with the Arabic name of God, *Allah*, on the Iranian flag. The study of Arabic, the language of Islam, was once again made mandatory in Iranian schools. However, soon the country was locked in a desperate war with Iraq, and the Islamic leadership was forced to once again invoke the symbols of Iranian national unity to rally the nation to the fight. Nowadays, visiting foreign delegations are once again taken to see the monuments of the ancient kings at Persepolis, where they are treated to a thoroughly Iranian and monarchical sound-and-light show.

### *Shi‘ism and Islam.*

Somewhat comparable to the conflict between Iranian and Islamic identity is the conflict between Shi‘ite and Islamic identity. Shi‘ites see themselves as both part of and separate from the larger Sunni Islamic world. Ancient resentments born of the persecution of the Imams separate Shi‘ites from other Muslims, but both parties see the Shi‘ites as part of the larger Islamic nation. On the whole, the experience of Iran, often at war with neighboring Sunni states, has predisposed its people to see themselves primarily as a distinct community surrounded by nations hostile to their faith. Thus, Shi‘ism can be invoked to rally the Iranian nation against enemies, real or imagined. The propaganda of the Iran-Iraq war drew on ancient memories of the persecution of the Imams in Iraq, especially of the Imam Husayn. On the other hand, the official policy of the Islamic Republic has been to stress the commonalities between Shi‘ite and Sunni Islam. In practice attitudes vary considerably among individuals. In the Shaykhi school, for

example, and also in the writings of the Bab, Shi'ite particularism is predominant. On the other hand, Bahauallah had little interest in Shi'ite/Sunni differences.

*Class structure of Iranian society.*

The fundamental class structure of Iranian society has its roots in pre-Islamic times, when Zoroastrian clergy tried, not very successfully, to enforce a caste system something like that of Hinduism. Although class lines have never been rigid in Islamic Iran, there are distinct class patterns characteristic of medieval and even modern Iranian society.

*Peasants:* The largest portion of the Iranian population until very recent times consisted of peasants living in small agricultural villages. Their situations could vary considerably, depending mainly on whether or not they owned their own land. Typically villages and their agricultural land were the property of absentee landlords, usually civil or military officials. Villages sometimes belonged to charitable foundations—in effect to the clergy—or to wealthier merchants. The rent was paid in kind, and the crop was divided according to traditional formulae among the landlord, the cultivator, and the individuals who supplied irrigation water, animals for cultivation, and seed. As in other pre-modern agrarian societies, the whole of Iranian government and urban culture was dependent on the surplus extracted from the peasants. Due to a number of factors the economic situation of the peasants became steadily worse in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, leading many peasants to migrate to the towns and cities.

*Nomads:* Most of the area of Iran is mountainous, arid, or both, and agriculture is usually only possible in oases at the feet of mountain ranges. Thus, at one time nomadic tribes constituted nearly half the population of Iran. The nomadic peoples, or at least the chiefs of the major tribes, enjoyed considerable wealth and political power. Nomad soldiers were the backbone of the traditional Iranian army, and many of the Iranian dynasties of Islamic times, notably the Qajars, were of nomadic origin. The

tribes were often not Persian-speaking or even Iranian. Turkish tribes were important in the north, Kurds in the west, and Baloch in the southeast. Under the Pahlavis the power of the tribes was broken, and most were forced to accept a sedentary life. Since the Islamic Revolution, some of the tribes have been able to resume a nomadic life.

*The Bazaar:* Traditional urban economic life in Iran is based on the bazaar, an amorphous physical, social, and economic entity that is at the heart of Iranian cities. The bazaar as a social class included shopkeepers, apprentices, craftsmen, wealthy wholesale merchants, moneychangers, peddlers, porters, and other participants in the market, great and small. The bazaar tended to be allied to the clergy against the government, whose taxes, exactions, and interference was usually the bazaar's chief problem. The pious bazaar merchants supplied the money and the bazaar's gangsters and mobs supplied the power in the streets that maintained the worldly influence of the clergy. In the twentieth century new sorts of economic activity based on Western models destroyed the bazaar's monopoly on economic life, but the bazaar still remains important, both economically and politically. It was critically important in the outcome of the Islamic Revolution. Socially, the Bab's family belonged to the bazaar.

*The "Men of the Sword":* Ruling was normally the prerogative of soldiers, who were often non-Persian invaders or tribesmen. The highest posts in government were normally occupied by members of this military ruling class.

*The "Men of the Pen":* The continuing administration of government was the prerogative of an educated bureaucratic class, mainly Persian in origin. The bureaucratic families maintained specialized skills in such areas as accounting, tax collection, official correspondence, and record-keeping. Thus, while a provincial governor in Qajar times would most likely be a Qajar prince whose place was owed to his family connections and his tribe's Turkish military traditions, his secretary and his chief accountant would most likely be Persians whose families had

monopolized these skills for generations. Bahauallah was from such a family and would thus have been expected to assume his father's administrative position. The cultural and administrative traditions of these bureaucratic families went back far into Sasanian times, and this class was the most loyal supporter of pre-Islamic Persian traditions of nationalism and culture. Paradoxically, as an educated class they also tended in recent times to become Westernized, so they also played critical roles in the emergence of modern Iran.

*The Clergy:* The Shi'ite clergy constituted a small but important social class. To some extent, the profession of cleric was hereditary like most other occupations and crafts in pre-modern times. However, the class and professional boundaries were not rigid, and there was a steady flow of talented young men of other backgrounds entering the clergy, while the sons of clerics often took up other professions, usually as merchants. The clergy had very close links with the bazaar, and clerical families were and are often linked by marriage to bazaar families of comparable social station. For example, the Bab came from a merchant family, but he himself spent some time in the seminaries of Iraq, a cousin of his father became a leading cleric, and the family maintained close links with some of the Shaykhi clerics.

Few religious positions were directly controlled by the government, so the clergy frequently played roles as intermediaries between the government and other classes. The allegiances of the clergy varied considerably depending on their positions. Some—for example, the Friday Prayer leaders, who were appointed by the government—were closely linked to the authorities.. Clerics supported by endowments and contributions were more likely to be aligned with the merchants, the main source of such revenues, whereas village mullas would be likely to occupy a position between the landlord and the peasants.

*The New Middle Class:* The rise of Western-style education in the early twentieth century created a new middle class without strong links to traditional Iranian culture. The possessors of the



new education rose rapidly in influence and wealth as the Pahlavi reforms created a demand for officials, technicians, and businessmen. The new class represented a discontinuity in Iranian society since their experiences and outlook were in many ways fundamentally different from those of the traditional classes. Their rise was bitterly resented by more traditional groups like the clergy and the bazaar. Most urban Baha'i families belonged to this new class, which is one of the factors explaining the hatred directed at them by more traditional groups in Iranian society.

*Monarchy.* In traditional Iranian political thought the monarch did not belong to any class. Ideally, the king's social independence and his absolute power allowed him to identify himself with the state and thus administer justice equally to all groups. One ancient king is said to have had a bell at the door of his palace that anyone who had been wronged could ring to gain access to the king and justice. Conversely, if the king was unjust, society would suffer and even the fertility of the land would decline. The worst offense for a king was to rule arbitrarily. The Iranian and the Islamic strains in Iranian political thought approached the question of the legitimacy of the king slightly differently. In Islamic thought kingship is a "collective" rather than a "personal obligation," which is to say, someone has to be king, and a person who happens to be king, however he may have gained power, has certain responsibilities by virtue of his de facto power—to rule justly, above all. On the other hand, in the Iranian tradition a certain light of God, the *farr*, comes to a man and brings him kingship. If he rules well, that light will stay with him, but if he rules unjustly, the light will desert him and he will lose power. The Iranian tradition has some conception of hereditary monarchy, but not so strictly as in European ideas of succession. In general, the Iranian king is much more of a supernatural figure, surrounded by extraordinary pomp, than was the case for Arab rulers.

*Revolutions.* Counterbalancing its tradition of monarchy, Iran has a strong tradition of revolution. Alone in the Islamic world Iran has had at least two major revolutions in modern times.

(The Babi movement may perhaps be seen as an abortive third revolution.) The archetype of Iranian revolution is the story of the overthrow of the tyrant Dahhak by Kava the blacksmith, as told in Firdawsi's *Book of Kings*. Dahhak was a tyrant who had ruled for a thousand years. Snakes grew out of his shoulders, and they had to be fed on the brains of children. When the tyrant called for the last of his children, Kava put his leather blacksmith's apron on a staff and marched towards the palace, rallying the people as he went, and together they overthrew the rule of the tyrant in favor of the rightful prince. Popular revolutions, usually nominally religious, have been a recurrent feature of Iranian political life since ancient times. In the twentieth century the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–11, the unsuccessful popular movement of Mossadeq in the early 1950s, and the Islamic Revolution of 1978–79 have shaped Iranian political life—overthrowing two dynasties and establishing parliamentary government as a permanent feature of Iranian government. Perhaps more important, Iranians view revolution as a normal and legitimate, though perhaps traumatic, feature of political life.

### *Persian Language and Literature*

Persian is an Indo-European language and is thus related by structure to most European languages, but its alphabet and much of its vocabulary are Arabic. The language underwent vast changes in the millennium between the fall of the Achaemenid empire to Alexander in the fourth century B.C.E. and the reemergence of New Persian in the early Islamic period. Unlike other areas conquered by the Arabs, Iran never adopted Arabic except as a learned language. When independent states with Persian-speaking courts emerged in Iran around the 10th century, Persian reappeared as a literary language. The preeminent literary form in New (Islamic) Persian has always been poetry, and almost every educated Persian has at least dabbled in writing poetry. A knowledge of poetry is one of the basic attainments of an educated Persian, both in medieval and modern times. The first great classic of New Persian

literature was Firdawsi's *Shah-nama*, the "Book of Kings," an adaptation of the Sasanian national history. This work served as a rallying point for the reviving Persian nationalism. The educated bureaucratic classes continued to cultivate such nationalistic literature, as well as Persian adaptations of Islamic scholarly works and dynastic histories glorifying their patrons.

The best known tradition in Persian literature is mystical poetry. The rise of New Persian coincided with the rise of organized mysticism in Islam. A huge and impressive literature of mystical poetry, both lyric and epic/didactic, soon arose in Persian. Mystical themes came to permeate even secular Persian poetry, so that it is usually almost impossible to distinguish a mystical poem from a secular love poem. Mystical poets like Rumi and 'Attar developed Persian into a subtle and expressive medium for discussing spiritual matters.

There was also prose literature in Persian. As a scholarly medium, Persian was until recently subordinate to Arabic, so Persian works on scholarly and scientific topics tended to be popular adaptations of more serious Arabic works. Notable genres in Persian include literary letter-writing, history, and manuals of statecraft. In Baha'i literature these genres are represented by such works as Bahau'llah's and 'Abd al-Baha's tablets, *Dawn-Breakers*, and *Secret of Divine Civilization* respectively.

It should be noted that Persian was the language of polite society throughout the eastern Islamic world—in Iran itself, much of Central Asia, Islamic India, and to some extent in Ottoman Turkey. Iranian literary models were the basis of the literatures of such vernacular Islamic languages as Ottoman Turkish, Urdu, Sindhi, Pashtu, and Bengali. As late as the early nineteenth century the British governed India in Persian.

### *The Arts*

Apart from literature, three arts in which Persians excelled may be mentioned: calligraphy, decoration, and miniature painting. Because Islam discouraged figurative art and stressed the

importance of the sacred text, calligraphy became an important art in Islam. Calligraphy was highly cultivated in Iran, so that any educated Persian was expected to have a reasonable command of one or more calligraphic styles. The Bab's calligraphy was seen as a miracle by his followers, and the production of display calligraphs and fine manuscripts was one of the ways in which the Babis and early Baha'is propagated and legitimized their religion.

Persian artists excelled at decorative arts of all sorts. Even architecture was often subordinated to the surface of the wall or ceiling with its elaborate tile or carved plaster ornamentation. Decoration with elaborate calligraphy and floral or geometrical elements is heavily used in all kinds of Persian arts and crafts.

Miniatures—paintings illustrating books—were a particular Persian specialty. The place filled in Western art by great oil paintings is in Iran occupied by the magnificent decorated books produced for discerning royal patrons.

### *Etiquette*

A portrait of Iran would be incomplete without some reference to the role played by etiquette, in many ways the most distinctive feature of Persian life. Iran is a very old society, for much of its history ruled by outsiders and subject to unexpected upheavals. Thus, it seems that Persian society turned inward and lavished much of its creativity on private life. Thus, Persian society has developed an elaborate system of etiquette. Two features are particularly noteworthy. First is a strong emphasis on hospitality, sometimes referred to pejoratively by Persians as *ta'aruf*, "polite hypocrisy." The underlying assumption is that the guest honors the host by his presence, so that the host is obliged to reciprocate by unquestioning and unstinting hospitality and generosity. Second is an elaborate set of rules governing interactions among individuals with finely graduated nuances to reflect personal, social, professional, and class distinctions. Titles, style of speech and diction, and even pronouns reflect the relative status of the two parties. Though this system of etiquette gives

Iranian society its characteristic graciousness, it is sometimes criticized by Iranians themselves as providing a mask for hypocrisy.

A good introduction to many aspects of Iranian society, particularly in the twentieth century, is R. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*. Two well-informed European views from the nineteenth century are G. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Problem*, a detailed and profoundly well-informed study of Iran from a political standpoint, and James Morier, *Hajji Baba of Isfahan*, a charming but unflattering novel about Persian life. The most thorough survey of all aspects of Iranian life and history is *Cambridge History of Iran*, 8 vols. In many respects the finest general account of Iranian culture is still E. G. Browne, *The Literary History of the Persians*.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Some Babi Martyrs**

The Babi religion may be understood as a transitional phase between Shi‘ism and the Baha’i Faith, and a theme that unites them is martyrdom. Whereas for Sunni Muslims the formative events of their religion were the triumphant conquests of early Islam, the formative event in Shi‘ism was the martyrdom of the Imam Husayn. Husayn perished with a small band of followers in the plain of Karbala in 680. His dignity in defeat and his dauntless faith have provided the model for Shi‘ite piety ever since. The figure of Husayn also provides a link connecting Shi‘ism, the Babi religion, and the Baha’i Faith. In a dream the Bab drank seven handfuls of blood from the severed head of the Imam Husayn, and in the Baha’i symbolic universe, it is Bahauallah who is the return of the Imam Husayn. No Babi of Shi‘ite background, as they all were, could fail to foresee the possibility of joining the returned Imam on some new plain of Karbala. And in the end some three thousand Babis did. We know the names of a few hundred of them and something about the lives of a few score.

#### **Shaykh Salih Karimi the Arab**

The first Babi martyr in Iran was a learned Arab cleric living in Karbala who had been converted by Mulla ‘Ali Bastami. An older man and a close disciple of Tahira, he was one of those who accompanied her to Baghdad and Iran after her expulsion from Karbala. He supported her in her disputations with her husband Mulla Muhammad Baraghani in Qazvin.

When Tahira's maternal uncle and father-in-law, Haji Mulla Taqi Baraghani, was murdered, his heirs—particularly Tahira's husband Mulla Muhammad—accused her of instigating the crime. Seventy Babis were arrested in Qazvin, and Shaykh Salih was among those accused of the actual murder. While imprisoned in the governorate in Qazvin, he was severely bastinadoed. Since the governor did not have the authority to order executions, the government was persuaded to have the five prisoners still suspected of the crime sent in chains to Tehran. One prisoner died in route and another, who had confessed to the crime, escaped soon after arriving. The remaining three were imprisoned in Tehran. They were interrogated individually by Mulla Muhammad, a mujtahid with Babi sympathies, who exonerated them. Nonetheless, Mulla Muhammad-i Baraqani was able to persuade the Shah to order the execution of Shaykh Salih. He faced his death steadfastly, reciting prayers and composing a couplet at the place of execution. He was blown from the mouth of a cannon in the Sabza-Maydan in Tehran. The pieces of his body were collected and buried in the courtyard of the Imamzada Zayd.

Shaykh Salih Karimi was the first Babi to be executed for his faith in Iran, though the elderly Haji Asadu'llah Farhadi, another of the Babis suspected in the murder, had earlier died of ill-treatment and exposure on the road to Tehran. (Malik-Khusravi, *Tarikh* 3:77-81.)

### **Mulla 'Abd al-Karim Qazvini, a secretary of the Bab.**

Also called Mirza Ahmad Katib ("the Scribe") or Mirza Ahmad Qazvini, he was a secretary of the Bab, the teacher of the historian Nabil Zarandi, and a friend of Bahau'llah. Though of a merchant family, he studied law and theology in his home city of Qazvin with Mulla 'Abd al-Karim Èravani. When his teacher proclaimed him a mujtahid, authorized to interpret Islamic law independently, he doubted his worthiness. After a dream which the Shaykhi merchant Haji Allah-varidi Farhadi explained as being of the Shaykhi leader Sayyid Kazim Rashti, he went immediately

to Karbala with his brother ‘Abd al-Hamid and spent the winter in Sayyid Kazim’s classes. After Naw-Ruz Sayyid Kazim sent him back to Qazvin where he worked as a merchant for a number of years. He was apparently married and had children.

Hearing of the Bab’s proclamation, he set out for Shiraz—immediately and on foot, according to one report. Learning in Tehran that the Bab had instructed his followers to meet him in Karbala, he went there, only to find that the Bab had changed his plans and gone to Bushihr and Shiraz. He joined a party of Shaykhis seeking the Bab, waited for a time in Isfahan, and finally met the Bab with the first group of believers allowed to enter Shiraz. There he became a confirmed believer.

When his followers caused disturbances in the city, the Bab sent most of them away but ordered Mulla ‘Abd al-Karim to stay and make fair copies of his writings as they were written, a task he shared with Shaykh Hasan Zunuzi and Sayyid Husayn Yazdi. Just before the Bab was sent to Isfahan, he sent these three ahead where they continued to act as his secretaries, receiving letters from believers and transcribing the replies. Later when the Bab was living secretly in the house of Manuchihr Khan, they continued this task and were the only believers allowed to see him. After the governor’s death in 1847, Mulla ‘Abd al-Karim followed the Bab to Kashan, Qum, and Kulayn, where he probably remained for the two to three weeks until the Bab left. He did not see the Bab again.

Mirza Lutf-‘Ali reports that Mulla ‘Abd al-Karim tried to go to the fort of Shaykh Tabarsi with Aqa Muhammad-Ja‘far Tabrizi but that the two were detained in Shir-Gah. Hearing this, Mulla Husayn sent out a party under Mirza Muhammad-Baqir Hirati that brought them to the fort. A few days later Mulla Husayn sent him to Sari to attend Quddus who was detained there. Quddus in turn sent him away with instruction to personally serve the Bab. (Malik-Khusravi, *Tarikh* 2:232-33.) Another report states that he took part in the disturbances in Khurasan but did not reach the fort. (Mazandarani, *Zuhur*.) Both versions are open to doubt since they



are not mentioned in Nabil, who otherwise has full particulars on Mulla ‘Abd al-Karim’s activities.

Soon after, he settled in Tehran where he lived under the protection of Bahauallah and worked as a scribe, spending his evenings making copies of the works of the Bab, which he gave as gifts. In late 1848 a young Babi, Nabil Zarandi, arrived in Tehran and settled at the Madrasiy-i Dar al-Shifay-i Masjid-i Shah where Mulla ‘Abd al-Karim was then living. He befriended Nabil and introduced him to the leading Babis of Tehran, including Bahauallah and his family.

It was through Mulla ‘Abd al-Karim that Bahauallah corresponded with the Bab after his return from Mazandaran. It is reported that he and Bahauallah originated the plan to proclaim Mirza Yahya as the Bab’s successor while keeping him in hiding—this in order to deflect attention from Bahauallah, who was well known to the authorities and the people. (‘Abd al-Baha, *Traveller’s* 37/67-68. Bahauallah, *Majmu‘ah* 174. Taherzadeh 1:53-54, 2:247-48.)

During the persecutions of February 1850, Mulla ‘Abd al-Karim took refuge in the Masjid-i Shah, the royal mosque adjacent to the madrasa in which he was living. Warned by Bahauallah that the prime minister, Amir-Kabir, had ordered the Imam-Jum‘a to arrest him in the sanctuary, he escaped in disguise to Qum. From about this time he was generally known as Mirza Ahmad Katib “the scribe”—a name given him by Bahauallah, probably as an alias rather than as an honorific. In Qum, shortly before the Bab’s execution, he received a coffer from the Bab containing the last of his writings and his pen-case, seals, rings, and the famous pentacle tablet containing 350 derivatives of the word *Baha*’. He left the same day for Tehran, explaining that the Bab’s accompanying letter ordered him to deliver it to Bahauallah.

After the Bab’s martyrdom he and Bahauallah brother, Mirza Musa Kalim, received the remains of the Bab and his disciple. These they hid first in the shrine of Imam-Zada Hasan, then in the house of Haji Sulayman Khan in Tehran, and finally in the

Imamzada Ma‘sum, where they remained hidden until 1284/1867-68. (Nabil, 521, Taherzadeh 3:424-25.) In spring of 1851 Nabil found him living incognito in Kirmanshah. During Ramadan in the summer of 1851 Bahauallah visited them and sent them both back to Tehran. Mulla ‘Abd al-Karim passed the winter of 1851-52 living in a caravansary outside the New Gate of Tehran where he spent his time copying the Bab’s works.

When he and Nabil fell under suspicion once more, he fled to Qum. By summer he was back in Tehran and was arrested at the time of the Babi attempt on the life of the Shah. His brother ‘Abd al-Hamid, who had come to urge him to return to Qazvin, was arrested with him. The two brothers were imprisoned in the Siyah-Chal with Bahauallah until sometime between Aug. 22-26, when both were hacked to pieces with swords by the artillerymen of the royal bodyguard, probably in the present Maydan-i Arg, adjacent to the artillerymen’s camp and the passage to the Siyah-Chal.

Mirza Ahmad was important as an authority on the writings of the Bab. Several manuscripts in his hand of the Arabic and Persian Bayans survive. He handled the private correspondence of the Bab, Bahauallah, and Mirza Yahya with discretion. He was also one of Nabil’s principal informants for the inner history of the early Babi period. Modern Baha’is know him best as the source through which Mulla Husayn’s famous account of the Bab’s declaration reached Nabil.

The sincerity of his spiritual search is apparent from his own account preserved in Nabil, from the trust placed in him by the Bab and Bahauallah, and from his own actions: his contentment with the modest stations of merchant and scribe when his learning and piety would have given him an honored place among the ‘ulama, his abrupt departures in search of Sayyid Kazim and the Bab, and his refusal to rejoin his family in Qazvin. He enjoyed the respect and affection of Bahauallah and his family and the obvious devotion of Nabil.

Nabil, xxxvii, lxiii, 52, 159-69, 176, 189, 192, 212, 214, 227-28, 331, 439, 504-6, 587-88, 592, 654. Malik-Khusravi, *Tarikh* 2:232-33, 3:295-309. Momen, *Babi* 142.

## **Two Babi Youths**

### **Mirza ‘Abd al-Wahhab Shirazi**

In the summer of 1844, the Bab began dispatching his first believers, the Letters of the Living, on various missions, assigning Mulla ‘Ali Bastami to announce the advent of the Bab to the leading clerics in Najaf, the most prestigious center of Shi‘ite learning. A young merchant, Mirza ‘Abd al-Wahhab, had had a dream in which the Imam ‘Ali was distributing indulgences in the market. When he went to his shop in the Wakil Bazaar in Shiraz the next morning, he saw Mulla ‘Ali reenacting the scene he had dreamed. He followed Mulla ‘Ali, who was leaving that day for ‘Iraq, and with some difficulty persuaded him to allow him to come. They had only gone a short distance when Haji ‘Abd al-Majid, Mirza ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s father, caught up with them. He severely beat Mulla ‘Ali, left him lying at the roadside, and took his son back to Shiraz. Nabil reports this story in the words of Haji ‘Abd al-Majid who was later a prominent Baha’i in ‘Iraq and told the story often. (Nabil, 87-90.)

Haji ‘Abd al-Majid some time later moved his family to Baghdad and then to Kazimayn where Mirza ‘Abd al-Wahhab established a business. Apparently he had no further contact with Babis until 1267/1851 when Bahauallah visited Baghdad and persuaded both him and his father to become Babis. When Bahauallah returned to Tehran, he refused to allow Mirza ‘Abd al-Wahhab to accompany him since he was the only child of his parents and even gave him some money to expand his business.

Nevertheless, ‘Abd al-Wahhab soon received his parents’ permission to go to Tehran. He arrived at the time of the assassination attempt on the Shah. When he asked the way to the house of Bahauallah, he was arrested, placed in the Siyah-Chal, and

chained with four others to Bahauallah. Soon afterwards he was executed—wearing Bahauallah’s shoes because he had none of his own. He was hacked to pieces by the brother and sons of the Grand Vizier and their servants. The executioner later returned to the dungeon and praised the spirit with which he had faced death. Bahauallah often told the story of his execution and the dream that foretold it. (Nabil, 633-34.) ‘Abd al-Baha praised him in a Tablet and one of his American talks. His death date is fixed between August 22 and 26, 1852, by two dispatches of Sheil and the report of the government newspaper.

On his death date see Momen, *Babi* 134-36, 141. On his life in general see ‘Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 3:407-8. Nabil, 594. Malik-Khusravi, *Tarikh* 3:284-94. Balyuzi, *Baha’u’llah* 68, 79, 94-98, 108. \*\*\* DJT 319-21. Cf. Balyuzi, ‘*Abdu’l-Baha* 221-22).

The reader may have noticed the precision of the reports of the executions of the Babis condemned after the attempt on the life of the Shah in 1852. The Shah, terrified of an imagined widespread Babi conspiracy, had involved as much of his entourage as possible in the executions, handing out prisoners to various government offices. The officials, in turn, had competed in the zeal and imagination with which they put their victims to death. The details were reported in exact detail in the recently established government newspaper.

### **Haydar Big Zanjani**

Din-Muhammad Wazir, an unsung hero of the Babi revolts, was Hujjat’s military commander at the siege of Zanjan. His son Haydar Big was apparently in his late teens at the time of the siege and seems to have acted as a sort of aide-de-camp to his father. As the siege progressed, he took a more active role in the fighting. For example, he claims to have been the one who captured Farrukh Khan, an army officer who infiltrated the Babi lines in an ill-starred attempt to capture Hujjat.

When the Babis surrendered, Haydar Big was spared execution, apparently so he could be tortured to reveal the location of a treasure the Babis were thought to have hidden. No treasure was forthcoming, but he missed the initial executions of the surviving Babi men and was sent to Tehran where he was spared execution at the last minute because of his youth. He was imprisoned for nearly two years. He spent some years in the service of an unnamed believer who was later martyred. He was reported to have been living in Tehran in the 1880s.

His lively first-person account of the siege of Zanjan is preserved in the London manuscript of the *New History* and was included in Browne's translation of that book.

Hamadani, *New History* 151-68 passim (in an interpolation added to the London MS by Haji Mirza Isma'il Kashani). 'Abd al-Ahad, "Pers. Narr." 769 in which Browne quotes Shaykh 'Ali-Bakhsh Zanjani as confirming several important particulars of Haydar Big's account of his adventures. Husayn Zanjani, *Waqayi'* 74.

### **The Farhadis of Qazvin**

Several members of this family are notable in Shaykhi and Babi history. They were a typical example of the merchant families drawn first to the Shaykhi movement and later to the Babi religion. The patriarch of the family was Haji Allah-varidi-(or viridi)-yi-Farhadi (ca. 1770–ca. 1830), a Shaykhi merchant of Qazvin. He was survived by his three sons Aqa Muhammad-Hadi, Muhammad-Mahdi, and Muhammad-Javad Farhadi, and one other child. His younger brother, Haji Asadu'llah Farhadi (ca. 1775–1263/1847–48), had three daughters, Khatun Jan, Hajiyiyih Khanum, and Shirin Khanum, who were married to his nephews Hadi, Mahdi, and Javad respectively. Marriage to a cousin is quite respectable in the Islamic world, and marriage to a paternal cousin is often considered ideal since it strengthens the family, both socially and economically, while minimizing the inconveniences

caused by prohibitions on association between men and women not related by blood.

A respected merchant, Haji Asadu'llah's house was a meeting place for Shaykhis, including Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i himself when he visited Qazvin. When the Letter of the Living Mulla Jalil Urumiyya came to Qazvin, Haji Asadu'llah became a Babi, paid Mulla Jalil's expenses, and gave him lodging in his house and one of his own wives to marry. The Farhadi house became a Babi meeting place and was visited by Quddus, Mulla Husayn, Tahira, and others.

Mulla Jalil's classes attracted the jealousy of Tahira's uncle Haji Mulla Taqi Baraghani, a leading anti-Shaykhi and anti-Babi cleric, who ordered the Farhadi house attacked and Mulla Jalil kidnapped. After Mulla Taqi's murder by a man variously said to be a Shaykhi or a Babi, the house was again attacked and looted. Haji Asadu'llah was taken from his sickbed to prison and sent chained and on foot in midwinter to Tehran with four others to answer for the murder. Soon after his arrival he died, either because of the hardships of the journey or because he was secretly murdered by Mulla Taqi's family. After he was denied burial at the shrine of Shah 'Abd al-'Azim, he was buried at the nearby shrine of Bibi Zubayda.

Aqa Hadi Farhadi was the eldest son of Allah-varidi and the nephew and son-in-law of Asadu'llah. With his younger brother Javad, he led the Babi rescue of Mulla Jalil from the madrasa where he was being held and tortured. He made swords in the cellars of the Farhadi house intended for use at Shaykh Tabarsi. Suspected in the murder of Mulla Taqi, he fled to Tehran, and his wife and sisters-in-law and their children had to live in hiding in a ruined shrine in great hardship. Bahau'llah sent him back to Qazvin to rescue Tahira, which he did. (Malik-Khusravi, *Tarikh* 3:82-88, Nabil:281-82.)

**Husayn Milani, who helped rescue the body of the Bab.**

One of the followers of the heretic Usku, among whom he was known as Imam Humam Aba-‘Abdi’llah al-Husayn, Husayn Milani was living in Tabriz at the time of the Bab’s execution and played a role in the rescue of the Bab’s remains. It is reported that he removed the Bab’s remains from the moat and conveyed them to the shop of Haji Muhammad-Taqi Milani or, according to another account, his own shop. It is said that he was one of those who claimed to be Him Whom God will make manifest after the Bab’s death and that he acquired a following.

In August 1852 he was living in Tehran and was arrested after the attempted assassination of the Shah. Fadil Mazandarani states he was executed in Niyavaran the same day as Haji Sulayman Khan, which would have made him one of the earlier martyrs of that month and thus presumably one of the better known Babi’s of Tehran. A platoon of soldiers stripped him and killed him with bayonets. (Malik-Khusravi, *Tarikh* 3:259. Momen, *Babi*:142.)

### **The Seven Martyrs of Tehran**

In February 1850 a number of prominent Babis were arrested in Tehran. Seven of those who were condemned refused to recant and were publicly executed. The incident was significant on several grounds in the moral history of the conflict between the Babis and the secular and religious authorities of Iran. Browne later wrote:

They were men representing all the more important classes in Persia—divines, dervishes, merchants, shopkeepers, and government officials; they were men who had enjoyed the respect and consideration of all; they died fearlessly, willingly, almost eagerly, declining to purchase life by that mere lip-denial, which, under the name of *ketman* or *takiya*, is recognized by the Shi’ites as a perfectly justifiable subterfuge in case of peril; they were not driven to despair of mercy as were those who died at Sheykh Tabarsi and Zanjan; and they sealed their faith with their blood in the

public square of the Persian capital wherein is the abode of the foreign ambassadors accredited to the court of the Shah. ('Abd al-Baha, *Traveller's*, p. 216, quoted in Momen, *Babi* 100.)

The first of the Seven Martyrs of Tehran, and the most important, was Haji Mirza Sayyid 'Ali, the maternal uncle and guardian of the Bab, known to the Iranian Baha'is as "Khal-i A'zam," "the Greater Maternal Uncle." He was a well-travelled merchant, prominent among the Shiraz merchants, known for his piety, and a Shaykhi. He and his two brothers traded with India. He was married to a maternal half-sister of the wife of the Bab and had one son, who had died the previous year in Jedda while on pilgrimage. The Bab's father having died while the Bab was still a child, Haji Mirza Sayyid 'Ali became his and his mother's guardian. He raised the Bab in his own house, supervised his education, and set him up in business in the nearby port of Bushihr.

In 1845 he became a Babi through the efforts of Quddus. He was the only male member of the Bab's family to become a Babi during his lifetime. When the Bab returned from pilgrimage and was arrested, this uncle posted bail. The Bab lived in his house for much of the time until his departure for Isfahan the following year. When the Bab was arrested and expelled from Shiraz in October 1846, his uncle was so severely beaten that he was bedridden for three months. During the following two years he sheltered the wife and mother of the Bab while keeping the news of the Bab's imprisonments and sufferings from them. When the Bab was moved to Chihriq, he settled his affairs and went there to see him. He stayed a short time before he was forced to leave. Failing to reach Shaykh Tabarsi before the Babi defeat, he went to Tehran.

There he lived in the house of Muhammad Big Chaparchi, the commander of the Bab's escort to Adharbayjan, by then a Babi. Despite warnings from Bahauallah's brother Musa that he was identified as a Babi and should leave the capital, he remained and was one of those arrested in February 1850. He was interrogated by the prime minister Amir-Kabir himself, but refused to recant.



Like others among the Seven Martyrs, he could easily have escaped execution had he chosen to conceal his faith, something perfectly acceptable by Shi'ite law. Before his execution he took God as his witness that he was to die only because of his religion, not for any transgression.

His house in Shiraz belonged to the Baha'is until the Islamic Revolution of 1979, when it was confiscated with other Baha'i properties. (Malik-Khusravi, *Tarikh* 3:91–97. Faydi, *Khandan* 131–39. Amanat 149–50, 355, 384. Mazandarani, *Zuhur* 3:221–25. Nabil, 75–76, 143, 151–54, 192, 195–98, 442, 446–49.)

Mirza Qurban-'Ali Barfurushi was a well-known mystical leader and the second of the Seven Martyrs of Tehran. Originally from Barfurush in Mazandaran or Astarabad in Gurgan, he was a widely travelled Sufi master, a shaykh of the Ni'matu'llahi order. He also had associations with the other mystical orders of the time. His followers and admirers were to be found in many parts of Iran—in Tehran, Khurasan, Hamadan, Kirmanshah, Mandalij, Mazandaran, and Astrarabad—and included members of the royal family, notably the Shah's mother. He was respected for his personal, moral, and spiritual qualities. He lived simply and always wore the simple garb and woolen cloak of the dervish.

Mirza Qurban-'Ali became a Babi in 1845 after a chance meeting with Mulla Husayn Bushru'i while travelling from Karbala to Iran. In Tehran he studied with Wahid Darabi, who later led the Babi revolt in Nayriz, and was closely associated with Tehran Babi community. When the Bab was at Kulayn near Tehran, Mirza Qurban-'Ali and some other believers were able to visit him there.

According to Nabil and Fadil Mazandarani, he was prevented by severe illness from going to join the Babis at Shaykh Tabarsi. However, Mirza Lutf-'Ali, a survivor of the siege, reports that he reached the government camp and, not being known as a Babi, was asked to serve as Mahdi-Quli Mirza's emissary to the Babis. At the fort he told Quddus of the situation in the government camp and then returned to Mahdi-Quli Mirza with samples of the

writings of the Bab. Later, when Wahid went to Yazd and Nayriz, Mirza Qurban-‘Ali intended to join him but was arrested before he left.

Having taught his faith openly, he was one of the prominent Babis arrested in February 1850. Since he firmly maintained his faith even under the interrogation of the prime minister himself, intervention on his behalf by many friends, including even the Shah’s mother, was unable to save him. To the prime minister he said that his name, which means “sacrifice to ‘Ali,” proved that he was destined to be a martyr for ‘Ali-Muhammad, the Bab. He spent his last night chanting poems of mystical love in the prison.

He was brought to the Sabza-Maydan after the execution of the Bab’s uncle. After the executioner’s first blow merely knocked off his turban, he recited the famous verse:

Happy he whom love’s intoxication  
So hath overcome that scarce he knows  
Whether at the feet of the Beloved  
It be head or turban he throws!

The second blow struck off his head. (Malik-Khusravi, *Tarikh* 3:98-104.)

Haji Mulla Isma‘il Qumi (or Farahani) was a Babi cleric, the third of the Seven Martyrs of Tehran. He was born and raised in Farahan in ‘Iraq-i ‘Ajam but studied and lived in Qum for many years. Later he studied in Najaf and Karbala, where he became a distinguished and learned Shaykhi, greatly respected for his character. He became a Babi when Mulla ‘Ali Bastami came to Karbala. After participating in the disputes there with the ‘ulama, he went to Shiraz to meet the Bab. He then went to Khurasan and was involved in the disturbances there. He was present at Badasht where he received the title “Sirr al-Wujud” (Mystery of Being). He accompanied Bahauallah, Tahira, and Quddus as far as Niyala, where the party was dispersed, and then went to Tehran. He bitterly regretted the illness that prevented him from going to Shaykh Tabarsi. At this time he lived in the in the Madrasiy-i Dar al-Shifa where several other Babis also lived, notably Nabil

Zarandi and Mulla ‘Abd al-Karim Qazvini. Nabil praises his eloquence in expounding the Qur’an and traditions. He actively taught the Babi Faith, always carrying an indexed Qur’an in his pocket in case he met a receptive person.

When in February 1850 orders were issued to arrest the known Babis in the capital, he happened to be at the house of Mirza Shafi‘, the vazir of Tehran, who warned him that his name was on the list and that those arrested would be tortured and killed. He went into hiding but was arrested when he was recognized in a public bath and was chained and imprisoned with the others. When brought to the Sabza-Maydan, he was stoned and cursed by the spectators but replied with cheerful words. When he reached the execution site, he gave some money to the executioner to buy candy which he then shared with him. He then offered prayers and was executed. (Malik-Khusravi, *Tarikh* 3:104-7.)

Aqa Sayyid Husayn Turshizi was Babi mujtahid, the fourth of the Seven Martyrs of Tehran. A native of Turshiz (Kashmar) in Khurasan, he did his initial studies in Khurasan then went to Najaf for advanced study. After he was accepted as a mujtahid there, it was decided that he would return to his native Khurasan to teach. On this journey he met a Babi acquaintance, the merchant Haji Muhammad-Taqi Kirmani, who was returning from Karbala to Tehran to wait permission to visit the Bab. On the journey the merchant was able to convince his friend of the truth of the new religion. In Tehran he met the Bab’s uncle and other Babis and became a confirmed member of the Babi community of the capital.

He and Haji Muhammad-Taqi were arrested in February 1850. Under interrogation he defended the validity of the proofs given by the Bab. Asserting that his knowledge and competence to judge such matters had been certified by the mujtahids of Najaf and Karbala, he demanded to be allowed to debate the ‘ulama of Tehran. He had, however, already been sentenced to death as an unbeliever by seven eminent mujtahids of the city in judgments solicited by the prime minister.

He was the fourth of the seven martyrs brought to the Sabza-Maydan for execution. Haji ‘Ali Khan, the Hajib al-Dawla, who was there at the orders of the Shah, later reported that at the last moment, he was very struck by the youth, beauty, and demeanor of Sayyid Husayn and on impulse offered him a high post in the government and his daughter’s hand if he would renounce his faith. Aqa Sayyid Husayn refused, saying he preferred to leave the world and its wealth to those who cared for it. Angered, Haji ‘Ali Khan struck him in the mouth and ordered his immediate execution. He died after Mulla Isma‘il Qumi and before his friend Haji Muhammad-Taqi Kirmani. (Malik-Khusravi, *Tarikh* 3:108-12.)

Haji Muhammad-Taqi Kirmani, the fifth of the Seven Martyrs of Tehran, was a well-known Babi merchant. In 1264/1847-48 he had set out from Kirman to make a pilgrimage to Karbala. In Shiraz he became a Babi through Haji Mirza Sayyid ‘Ali, the maternal uncle of the Bab. As the latter was about to visit the Bab in Chihriq, Haji Muhammad-Taqi asked permission to accompany him. Haji Mirza Sayyid ‘Ali told him to fulfill his original intention of making pilgrimage to Karbala and to wait there for the Bab’s instructions. As it happened, the Bab considered conditions too dangerous, so Haji Mirza Sayyid ‘Ali wrote him to come to Tehran where they would wait together until conditions allowed them to go to Chihriq.

Haji Muhammad-Taqi set out for Tehran in the autumn of 1849. In Baghdad he fell in with a friend, Aqa Sayyid Husayn Turshizi, who had become a mujtahid in ‘Iraq. During the journey to Iran Sayyid Husayn also became a Babi. All three were among those arrested and executed in Tehran in February 1850. (Malik-Khusravi, *Tarikh* 3:108-12.)

Aqa Sayyid Murtada Zanjani was the sixth of the Seven Martyrs of Tehran. He was a merchant of Zanzan and brother of the Sayyid Kazim Zanjani who died at Shaykh Tabarsi. When brought to the execution place, he threw himself on the body of Haji Muhammad-Taqi Kirmani and insisted that being a Sayyid,

his death would be more meritorious than that of his friend. (Nabil, 457-58. Malik-Khusravi, *Tarikh* 3:112. cf. Hamadani, *New History* 252, 216. The *New History* and *Nuqtat al-Kaf* do not mention him.)

The last of the seven martyrs, Aqa Muhammad-Husayn Maraghi'i (or Tabrizi), was a servant. A native of Aharbayjan, he became a Babi in Tehran through Haji Mulla Isma'il Qumi, for whom he had a deep affection. He was a servant of 'Azim, a prominent Tehran Babi, and was severely tortured to induce him to implicate others. He would neither speak nor cry out, and the guards thought he was dumb until Mulla Isma'il Qumi told them otherwise. When he would not recant, he was condemned to death with the others. When he was brought to the Sabza-Maydan and saw the body of his teacher, he hugged it and announced his unwillingness to be separated from his friend. He and the other two remaining prisoners each claimed the right to be executed first. Finally, all three were killed at the same moment. (Malik-Khusravi, *Tarikh* 3:113-14.)

## **Chapter Three**

### **The Babi Uprising in Zanjan\***

On 5 May 1850 the Babis of Zanjan rose in arms against the Qajar governor of the town. Led by a charismatic cleric known as Hujjat-i Zanjani, two thousand Babi fighters with their families held part of the town against a much larger government army. Nine months later, when the army captured the last ruined houses held by the Babis, fewer than a hundred Babi fighters survived to face execution.

There is never a neat answer to the question of why a historical event occurred, and the question is that much harder to answer when the information is in fundamental ways incomplete and when the participants themselves differed deeply about the meaning of the event. There were two other major Babi revolts—Mazandaran in 1848-49 and Nayriz in 1850—and at least four other instances where Babi uprisings might have been expected: Shiraz, Qazvin, and Isfahan in 1846, and Tehran in 1852. There were, of course, many urban disturbances of various sizes in Iran in this general period that did not involve Babis. For the question of causation to be usefully answered, we must ask why there were Babi revolts at all, why they happened in some places and not in others, and why they differed in the different places. What chain of events could lead to such violence in a small town? How were the Babis able to coalesce into a fighting force effective enough to hold off regular troops far superior to them in numbers and equipment? What was there in the pre-existing social, economic, and political structure that allowed the town to divide so suddenly and totally? What were the ideas that shaped the actions of

the various parties—for there were at least five major groups playing active roles in the siege: the Babis, the Zanjan clerical establishment, the government, the regular army, and the local levies. The actions of each group were shaped by its political interests, by its religious opinions and conceptual structures, and by the events as they unfolded. Finally, what were the effects of the battle—on the Babis, in Zanjan and elsewhere, on the town, on the government, and on the Shi‘ite religious establishment?

I use the term “revolt” for convenience, though it does not exactly fit; see MacEoin, “Holy War,” 94. The reader can in the end judge for himself what term fits best.

### **The Babis and Zanjan**

Founded in 1844 by a young merchant of Shiraz, the Babi movement spread rapidly in Iran and the Shi‘ite shrine cities of Iraq. Its founder, Sayyid ‘Ali-Muhammad, more generally known as the Bab (“Gate”), claimed divine authority within the Shi‘ite belief system. His claims aroused opposition first from Shi‘ite religious leaders and later from the Iranian government. Usually the converts were isolated individuals, drawn for the most part from among the Shaykhis, an esoteric school of Twelver Shi‘ism. In a few places, however, the conversion of a local leader led to the wholesale conversion of his followers. One such place was Zanjan, where a charismatic preacher became a Babi, followed by several thousand of his supporters. The Bab himself was imprisoned in Azerbaijan in 1847. Open fighting occurred for the first time in 1848, when several hundred Babis traveling west from Khorasan were besieged in an improvised fort in Mazandaran. Three more sieges followed—in Zanjan and twice in Nayriz in Fars. The Bab was executed in 1850, and in 1852 most of the remaining leaders of the movement were killed, following an attempt by a group of Babis to assassinate the Shah. By the end of his life the Bab had openly claimed prophethood, had abrogated Islamic law and promulgated a system of Babi law, and thus had established a separate religion distinct from Islam. The Babi religion was a dramatic instance of the revolutionary tradition in

Iranian religion and the last major religious movement in Iran not shaped by the challenge of the West. (Amanat, *Resurrection*.)

Zanjan is a little town halfway between Tehran and Tabriz in the north of Iran, the capital of the small province formerly known as Khamsa and now called Zanjan. It is important only for the roads that meet there: the Tehran-Tabriz highway and lesser tracks leading across the mountains to the north and south. The population of Zanjan province is mixed, the largest part being from the Turkic Afshar tribe. In the middle of the nineteenth century Zanjan was a walled city of perhaps 8,000 people.

There exists a considerable amount of information about the siege of Zanjan. It was by far the largest of the battles between the Babis and government troops, involving about two thousand Babi fighters and twenty thousand government troops and irregulars. Moreover, the highway between Tehran and Tabriz, one of the most important roads of the kingdom, passed through the Babi positions, so the affair could scarcely be ignored. There are seven or eight Babi and Baha'i accounts, chapters in the official histories of the time, and references in contemporary sources. The chronology and government views can be discerned from the official histories, especially Sipahr, while the Babis' tactics and many anecdotes are preserved in the Babi and Baha'i chronicles. Thus the information is rather good for an event of this sort in nineteenth century Iran.

Of the Babi primary sources, two stand out: *Tarikh-i Waqayi'-i Zanjan* by Mirza Husayn-i Zanjani, a Baha'i commissioned by the Baha'i leader Bahau'llah in about 1880 to write an objective report on the siege, and the interpolation in the London manuscript of the *New History of the Bab* (Hamadani, *New History*, 139–68), containing an account of the fighting based on information from a certain Haydar Big, son of Din-Muhammad, Hujjat's military commander. The other notable Babi and Baha'i accounts are Nabil, a bowdlerized version of Zanjani, *Waqayi'*, with added information obtained from Zanjan Baha'is in the 1860s; 'Abd al-Ahad, "Personal Reminiscences, the memoir of an Azali



who had been a child during the siege; the narrative of ‘Abd al-Ahad’s brother, Aqa Naqd-‘Ali, quoted in Nicolas, *Ali Mohammed*, 332, 338–40, which seems now to be lost. Mazandarani, *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 3:175–85, contains biographies of the leading Babis of Zanjan, especially Hujjat, with information not available elsewhere.

The account in Sipihr, *Nasikh*, the official history, seems to have been written from military dispatches. Hidayat, *Rawdat al-Safa*, is unreliable. Accounts by Gobineau, I‘tidad al-Saltana, and most later Muslim writers are based on Sipihr. Contemporary diplomatic dispatches are quoted or summarized in Momen, *Babi*, 114–27. A petition against Hujjat is reproduced and edited in *Ittila‘at*.

Two additional important sources exist to which I was refused access. The first are the papers of Sayyid Mirza Ab al-Qasim Zanjani, known as “Sayyid-i Mujtahid,” a leader of the Zanjan clergy during this period, including several refutations of the Babis. They are in the hands of one of his descendants. The second is the chronicle of the siege in the second volume of Mazanadarani’s *Zuhur al-Haqq*, held at the Baha’i World Center.

Untangling the religious issues poses special problems. The religious views of the Babis, who had little access to the Bab’s writings, were disparate and in rapid flux during this period. In the case of Zanjan the situation is made more difficult by the fact that almost nothing written by Hujjat during his Babi period survives. By the time the Babi and Baha’i chronicles were written a generation later, the religious situation had changed profoundly and the writers often no longer understood what the Babis of Zanjan had believed. The Muslim chroniclers, of course, had little accurate information about the religious views of the Babis.

### **Pre-Babi religious disputes in Zanjan**

Among the respected ‘ulama of Zanjan in the early nineteenth century was Akhund Mulla ‘Abd al-Rahim. He was in charge of a

mosque and was esteemed among the people for his piety, asceticism, and learning. Some went so far as to attribute miracles to him. He had a son named Muhammad-‘Ali, born about 1812. The boy showed promise, so his father sent him to the shrine-cities of Najaf and Karbala in Iraq, where he studied with Sharif al-‘Ulama Mazandarani, a prominent teacher of the time. His studies were cut short by the death of his teacher and the closing of the seminaries in the epidemic of 1831, so he returned to Iran and settled in Hamadan. When his father died, a delegation from Zanjan came to the young man and asked him to assume his father’s position. He went home and began preaching in his father’s old mosque.

Babi and non-Babi sources agree about his character and position. See Zanjani, *Waqayi’*, 3-4; Nabil, 529; ‘Abd al-Ahad, “Reminiscences,” 770; *Ittila‘at*. On his return see Nabil 529. Hidayat, *Rawdat*, 10:447-48. Sipih, *Nasikh*, 3:89. Only Zanjani, *Waqayi’*, 3-4, and Nabil, 529-30, mention the interlude in Hamadan, which Nabil attributes to his father’s warning of enemies in Zanjan. If the latter is the case, it must be due to them both being Akhbaris (see below).

After his return Mulla Muhammad-‘Ali was given the title Hujjat al-Islam—“Proof of Islam,” a common title for distinguished ‘ulama of the time—and was known as Hujjat-i Zanjani. He seems to have immediately come into conflict with the established ‘ulama of the town. Jealousy was certainly part of it. He was an eloquent, fiery, and attractive speaker and quickly acquired a large following. “The bazaar of the other ‘ulama emptied of customers.” (Zanjani, *Waqayi’*, 4-5.) Beneath the familiar rivalries of the ‘ulama, there was a religious issue, for Hujjat was, as his father had been, an Akhbari. (Hamadani, *New History*, 135. Nabil, 178. Zanjani, *Waqayi’*, 3.) The Akhbaris had opposed the increasing dominance of a rationalism in jurisprudence. They took their name from their greater reliance on the traditions (*akhbar*) of the imams. Their rivals were known as Usulis, from their reliance on rational principles (*usul*). The Usulis held that in the absence of the imam, those sufficiently learned in the Law could decide some legal questions on the basis of their own judgment

(*ijtihad*) when there was no other adequate basis for decision. Such individuals were known as *mujtahids*. Those not possessing such knowledge were required to follow the judgment of a mujtahid and were called *muqallid*, "obedient." This was the basis of the authority of the Usuli hierarchy. The Akhbaris denied that anyone apart from the imam was authorized to exercise such independent judgment. The controversy had preoccupied the Shi'ite 'ulama for much of the eighteenth century and by the beginning of the nineteenth had ended with the complete defeat of the Akhbaris. From that time the claims of the 'ulama to worldly authority rose steadily. (For a general discussion, see Momen, *Introduction*, 117–18, 222–25.) Hujjat challenged those claims.

He was a man of independent mind, noted for extreme originality and freedom from all forms of traditional restraint. He denounced the whole hierarchy of the ecclesiastical leaders of his country, from the Abvab-i Arba'a [Literally, the Four Gates—the four men who for nearly seventy years after the disappearance of the last imam in 874 had claimed to be in communication with him.] down to the humblest mulla among his contemporaries. He despised their character, deplored their degeneracy, and expatiated upon their vices. (Nabil, 178.)

His conflict with the other 'ulama of the town during these years as an Akhbari preacher may be summarized—from the Babi point of view—as follows:

1. He denied the authority of the mujtahids and by extension that of the conventional Shi'ite hierarchy.
2. He denounced the character of the other 'ulama.
3. He stopped certain abuses tolerated by the 'ulama, which they had excused with legal hairsplitting.
4. He issued legal rulings of his own sharply at variance with convention.
5. He imposed extra observances on his own followers.
6. He aroused the jealousy of the other 'ulama because of his ready argument, his eloquence, and his large personal following.

That he challenged the basis of the legitimacy of the clergy is shown by a contemporary document, a petition denouncing Hujjat written in 1847. Though written after he became a Babi, the accusations reflect his earlier preaching. One of those signing the petition wrote:

Akhund Mulla Muhammad-‘Ali [Hujjat]. . . went up onto the pulpit. . . and in the course of the sermon cursed the whole body of Twelver ‘ulama and denied *ijtihad* and *taqlid*. As evidence for his denial of mujtahids—may God multiply their peers!—he cited the holy verse, "Indeed your master is God and His Messenger and those possessing authority among you." . . . [He continued,] "Look! In which sura, in which verse does the Most Holy mention the mujtahid? ‘There is nothing moist or wet but is in an evident book.’ If the mujtahids were the guides in religion, God would surely have mentioned it.”

Others writing in this petition also mention his denial of the authority of the mujtahids and his habit of denouncing the ‘ulama from the pulpit. The Baha’i sources do not mention his denial of *ijtihad* and *taqlid*, probably because they did not know the theological point at issue.

The Babi and Baha’i historians particularly mention how he acted against violations of morality excused through recourse to legal loopholes. There was, for example, an old caravansary that had become a house of temporary marriage (a form of legalized prostitution peculiar to Shi‘ism). A mulla legalized the temporary marriages, thus preventing the brief dalliances from being adultery, and the local clergy shared in the profits. Hujjat closed this institution. He also closed the local wine shops, which others considered licit because they were nominally owned by Christians. He is also said to have criticized the ‘ulama for taking bribes. (Zanjani, *Waqayi*, p 4-5. ‘Abd al-Ahad, “Reminiscences,” 770, 786.)

Hujjat was notorious for his habit of issuing legal rulings sharply at variance with established practice. The most famous had to do with the determination of the month of fasting, Ramadan. Muslim months begin on the first sunset after the new moon has been seen. Since the

new moon is very close to the sun, the new moon may not be seen on the expected day, and thus a given month may have twenty-nine or thirty days. Hujjat evidently had unorthodox views on the subject. Relying on a tradition that "The month of Ramadan is always full [i.e. thirty days]" his followers were sometimes seen to be fasting on the 'Id al-Fitr, the holiday marking the end of Ramadan, when fasting is prohibited. On Ramadan of 1262/1846 the outraged 'ulama of Zanzibar saw that his followers had stopped fasting three days *before* the end of Ramadan. (Sipihr, *Nasikh*, 3:89.)

A second area of dispute concerned ritual purity. Over the centuries the 'ulama had hedged the simple act of washing before prayers with innumerable restrictions to guarantee that the prayer was not unwittingly invalidated. Hujjat seems to have denied some of the details of the laws of purity while insisting on a strict observance of the spirit. Though he required his followers to wash daily with fresh water, the deposition filed against him in 1847 mentions that "he considers encountering a Jew or an Armenian when it is raining to be pure, considers urine to be pure once it has dried, and holds that the feces of a mouse do not make [certain classes of] water impure." (*Ittila'at*. Zanzibar, *Waqayi'*, 8.) The Shi'ites believed that Jews and Christians were impure and that touching their clothing when it was raining transmitted this impurity to a Muslim. Another signer of the deposition said that he considered it allowable to eat with Christians and Jews—interesting in light of the later development of Babi and Baha'i thought on the matter.

There also was a dispute about the nature of the Imam's body. A very interesting debate is recorded between Hujjat and a leading mujtahid of the town.

One day the late Sayyid-i Mujtahid was with Hujjat in a gathering. He saw the respect enjoyed by Hujjat and decided to dispute with him. He said something of this sort: "What is the condition of a person who begins in menstrual blood and who ends as a corpse?" Hujjat replied with tactful words: "First, the infant in the womb does not drink blood, but rather the essence of blood. Were it to drink blood, it would die. It must have

urine and excrement as well. The blood becomes the placenta, and the essence of blood little by little becomes the baby.” Sayyid-i Mujtahid said, “Then what is the state of the Prophets and Imams?” He replied, “With respect to the flesh, they are like us, but with respect to spiritual stations, they are pure in spirit and give new life to men.” The argument continued in this manner and grew bitter. They began to tell lies about him, claiming that Hujjat-i Zanjani said, “The imam is like me.” (Zanjani, *Waqayi*’, 5-6; cf. *Ittila‘at*.)

The question at issue is how the Imam can be perpetually ritually pure if he is nurtured in the womb on blood, which is impure, and becomes impure at death. Hujjat replies that the substance of the infant is not defiled because he is not nourished on the blood as such but on the essence of the blood. The mujtahid then asks how the prophets can be born in a state of impurity, reflecting a Shi‘ite tendency to attribute to the prophets and imams supernatural qualities, both spiritual and physical. Hujjat denies that the physical bodies of the prophets and imams are in any way miraculous. Certainly, this indicates a predisposition to accept a worldly eschatology like that of the Bab.

His reforms made him extremely popular. Even after his supporters built him a new mosque connected to his father’s old mosque, the crowds were such that people still had to pray outside in the courtyard. (Zanjani, *Waqayi*’, 8. ‘Abd al-Ahad, 779. Nabil, 530-31.) His enemies claimed that in 1846 half the district followed his example in breaking the fast on the 27th of Ramadan.

On at least one occasion the complaints of his enemies led to his being summoned to Tehran. Apparently, however, his outspoken criticism of the ‘ulama amused Muhammad Shah, and he was released with honors.

Zanjani, *Waqayi*’, 6–7. His book, *Rayhanat al-Sudur*, on the question of the duration of Ramadan was written for Muhammad Shah in 1843, presumably during this stay in Tehran.. Two MSS exist—Tehran Milli 898 and Tehran Sipahsalar 2536, the latter an autograph.

## **The conversion of Hujjat and the development of Babism in Zanjan**

When news of the claims of the Bab began circulating in Iran, Hujjat sent one of his followers to investigate. The man eventually returned with a letter from the Bab. He found Hujjat preparing to begin the class he taught in his mosque every day after congregational prayers. On reading the letter Hujjat became visibly agitated. He abruptly ended the class, took off his turban, and asked for the lambskin cap of a layman to wear. He had become a Babi. There are evidently two points being made here. First, by trading his turban for the lambskin hat (*kulah*) of a layman, he renounced any claims to religious leadership in the face of the Bab's overwhelming authority and knowledge. Second, the hat was a symbol of a Persian's dignity. In Persian poetry, the lover is pictured as distracted and disheveled in his longing for his beloved. His disgrace in outward matters—like losing his hat—merely confirms the sincerity of his love and is thus no disgrace.

The Babi accounts of Hujjat's conversion differ on details, but all mention the dramatic reception of the letter and his renunciation of the mulla's turban. See 'Abd al-Ahad, "Memoir," 771–73; Zanjani, *Waqayi'*, 9–10; Nabil, 178–79; Hamadani, *New History*, 136–37. Non-Babi accounts agree that his conversion was effected through correspondence with the Bab but place it as late as 1848. See I'tidad al-Saltana, *Fitna*, 61; Sipahr, *Nasikh*, 3:89; Hidayat, *Rawdat*, 10:448; Diya'i, "Sanadi," 163.

Despite the likelihood that a large portion of the population of Zanjan—or at least of Hujjat's personal following—was converted to the faith of the Bab immediately, understanding of the implications of the claims of the Bab came only gradually and not all aspects of the new faith were discussed publicly. ('Abd al-Ahad, 775–76; cf. Hamadani, *New History*, 137.) After the first incident in the mosque, he invited the people <to embrace the new doctrine>, such of them as he deemed capable of receiving it, in secret; and sometimes he would say openly, "The author of these verses

claims to be the Bab, as <in the tradition> ‘I am the City of Knowledge, and ‘Ali is its Gate.’” (Hamadani, *New History* , 136–37.)

Another source explains:

Each person had a different idea about the Sayyid-i Bab’s cause: some understood Him to be the Gate of *wilayat*; some imagined Him to be the Gate of the Promised Qa’im; some souls thought Him to be the Qa’im of the House of Muhammad; a very few believed Him to be the Gate of the Most Great Manifestation—but as to His truth, they were in agreement, not dispute. (Zanjani, *Waqayi’* , 11.)

Hujjat began corresponding with the Bab. (‘Abd al-Ahad, 775. cf. Sipihr, *Nasikh* 3:389, Hidayat, *Rawdat* 10:448, I‘tidad al-Saltana, *Fitna* 61.) Nabil, says that in an early letter the Bab conferred on him the title Hujjat, “the proof,” a title of the Bab himself, and urged him to preach the Babi teachings publicly. (Nabil, 532–33. As he progressively claimed higher stations, the Bab sometimes gave his earlier titles to his prominent followers.) A sermon attributed to Hujjat perhaps captures the religious excitement of the moment:

O people! Today the Desire of the Worlds has appeared unveiled. The Sun of Reality is dawning; the lamps of imagination and blind imitation are extinguished. Turn your faces toward His Cause, not to me, who is but one of His servants. Before His knowledge my knowledge is but a dead lamp before the Sun. Know God by God, the Sun by its light. Today the Lord of the Age is manifest, and the King of Possibilities is in existence. Today both the seeker of mystic truth and his master [*muridi wa-murshidi*] are engaged in the worship of idols, not worship of God. Now the people are seized by another tumult, a new madness. (Zanjani, *Waqayi’* , 11–13. This and some of the other sermons attributed to Hujjat may be from the lost compilation of his writings entitled *Sa‘iqa* (“the thunderbolt”). See *Ittila‘at* and ‘Abd al-Ahad, “Memoir,” 825–26.)



In Zanjan, as elsewhere, the prohibition of smoking became the most visible characteristic of the Babis:

In the meeting [when he received the Bab's letter and became a Babi] he took the chubuq in his hand and broke it. Afterwards the people imitating him smashed their chubuqs and qalyans, burned their tobacco, and ceased to sell it. . . . Hujjat informed the people of some of the commands and prohibitions of the Sayyid-i Bab. (Zanjani, *Waqayi'*, 11.)

There were also public recitations of the writings of the Bab. ('Abd al-Ahad, "Memoir," 775.)

Several Babi and Baha'i sources allude to a dispute concerning congregational prayer. It is considered praiseworthy in Islam to pray in congregation when possible, but it is only obligatory in the case of the Friday noon prayer. One large mosque in a town is designated as the "Friday mosque" (*jami'*). In many places, including nineteenth century Iran, the *imam-jum'a*, the cleric who led the Friday noon prayers and preached the sermon, was appointed and paid by the government and was one of the most important ecclesiastical officials in the city. It was the custom to mention the ruler in this Friday sermon, and the omission of his name in the sermon was a symbol of rebellion. There was an additional significance in Shi'ism. The right to lead prayers and preach the Friday sermons was originally the Prophet's. When he did not lead prayers, he would appoint another in his place. After him this right belonged to the imam—*imam* actually means a leader of prayers. In the prolonged absence of the imam other arrangements had to be made, but should he return, the responsibility would once more devolve upon him personally.

On becoming a Babi, Hujjat discontinued leading congregational prayer because he had heard that the Bab had made it unlawful for anyone else to lead prayers without his express permission. When the Bab wrote to him telling him to lead Friday prayers, the Babis went to the Friday mosque. A scuffle ensued between the Babis and the followers of the *imam-jum'a*. In the end the Babis triumphed and Hujjat led prayers and delivered the sermon.

Hamadani, *New History*, 371–72. Nabil, 533. Nicolas, *Ali Mohammad*, 335, following Zanjani, *Waqayi'*, 11, says that what happened was that Hujjat began leading the Friday form of prayer in place of the everyday prayer, following the law that the Friday prayer should supersede the daily prayer when the imam returned.

The incident indicates how threatening the Babis must have appeared to the established authorities. Existing political authority in the Shi'ite world was legitimate only in the absence of the Imam. With an Imam—how the Bab's claim was generally understood by non-believers, and in large part by believers—once more in the world, all existing institutions existed only at the sufferance of the Bab. When his orders happened to conflict with the existing order, the Babis had no hesitation in asserting his authority against king and 'ulama. The authorities recognized the revolutionary implications of the claims of the Bab and acted accordingly.

Hujjat's conversion probably occurred in 1846; all the Babi sources agree that a follower of Hujjat met the Bab in Shiraz—thus between early July 1845 and September 1846. Early the following summer the Bab himself was to come to Zanjan. On 23 September 1846 the Bab had left Shiraz, expelled by the authorities. After some months in Isfahan, where he had been protected by the governor, he was summoned to Tehran. The Shah was curious to see him, and important prisoners were dealt with in the capital. Haji Mirza Aqasi, the prime minister, was a Rasputin figure—an old dervish who owed his position to his religious dominance over the Shah. It seems that he feared that the Shah might fall under the influence of the Bab, and in the end the Bab was dispatched to Aqasi's home in Maku, in the farthest northwestern corner of the country. The halt of several weeks so near the capital had allowed news of the Bab's presence and destination to spread among his followers. Though his escort was under orders to go around the main towns on their route, many Babis came out to meet the Bab. In Zanjan there was known to be a large Babi community, well organized with a resolute and capable leader

who had not hesitated to cause trouble in the past. At the least public demonstrations were to be expected.

When word of the Bab's approach reached Hujjat, he sent his courier to meet the Bab in Sultaniyya, one stage east of Zanjan, offering to arrange a rescue. The man approached the camp carrying a basket of cucumbers, one of which had a message from Hujjat concealed inside. The Bab wrote in reply: "Your project accords not with expediency, for today strife is not approved. Moreover they have summoned you to Teheran, and the governor has already dispatched horsemen to set you on the road."

Hamadani, *New History*, 137–38, 219–20, based on the account of the journey given by the chief of the escort, Muhammad Big-i Chaparchi, who became a Babi soon after. 'Abd al-Ahad, "Reminiscences," 775–76.

Whatever orders the Bab may have issued, the town was in a state of high excitement when he arrived. The governor sent a note to Muhammad Big Chaparchi, the chief of the escort, saying that he wished to meet the Bab. By now crowds were coming to the caravansary. The guards were doing a brisk business taking bribes to admit people to meet him. The governor became alarmed and sent two messengers in quick succession urging Muhammad Big to leave Zanjan immediately. The officer had no choice but to go farther that night.

That same night Hujjat was arrested. Two factors lay behind his arrest. The first, of course, was concern about the possibility of the rescue of the Bab and Babi disturbances in Zanjan. It must be remembered that in May 1847 this would not have had the importance for the central authorities that Babi matters were to assume in the next three years. So far disturbances involving Babis had mostly involved the arguments of the 'ulama—noisy and irritating but not of major concern to the authorities. Even at Zanjan, there is little evidence that the secular authorities were particularly concerned about the Babis. From their point of view, sending Hujjat to Tehran was a logical precaution against local disturbances. That they were also concerned about the possibility of the rescue of the Bab is shown by the timing of

Hujjat's arrest. (Another factor is that the Zanjanis expelled their governor at about this time; see below. The relationship between the two incidents is not clear.)

The second factor, the indignation of the 'ulama, was a more serious concern. Whereas the Babi and Baha'i historians emphasize the concern of the secular authorities about the possibility of the Bab escaping, the Muslim historians emphasize Hujjat's religious disputes with the local 'ulama. (I'tidad al-Saltana, *Fitna*, 61. Hidayat, *Rawdat*, 10:447. Sipahr, *Nasikh*, 3:89.) This interpretation is supported by a contemporary document, the petition quoted above. It was prepared by one of the 'ulama and contained specific complaints of eighteen individuals, mostly Zanjan 'ulama, about Hujjat's heterodoxies. It was written in Jumada I, 1263/17 April-16 May 1847, the month of the Bab's visit to Zanjan and of Hujjat's arrest. Whether this is one of the letters sent by the 'ulama that resulted in Hujjat's arrest or whether it was prepared immediately afterwards and sent to Tehran to help make the case against him, we cannot tell for certain. What is remarkable is that there is no specific reference to Hujjat's being a Babi, though there are references to his being an "innovator and inventor in religion" and to his having "devised a false sect." Almost all the accusations have to do with his denial of the authority of the Shi'ite 'ulama and his unorthodox legal rulings. There are a number of explicit references to acts and words from before he became a Babi. Clearly, the 'ulama of Zanjan did not yet understand the implications of the Bab's claims, nor did they distinguish between Hujjat's Babi and Akhbari heterodoxies. Perhaps Hujjat was still teaching the Babi doctrines with caution or semi-secretly. (Nabil, 533-34.)

It should be noted that there is a different explanation of Hujjat's exile to Tehran. On 11 Sha'ban 1263/25 July 1847 a riot broke out in Zanjan, occasioned by the governor's kidnapping and rape of a local woman (Sipahr, *Nasikh*, 2:206-7). According to *Ittila'at*, which evidently uses an additional source unknown to me, the governor was taken out of the city by a mob—face blackened, wearing a paper hat, and riding bareback and backwards on a donkey. Hujjat and his chief clerical rival both issued fatwas justifying the mob, and so both were

brought to Tehran. There are chronological difficulties in associating Hujjat with this incident—although it is certainly his style.

In Tehran Hujjat was received by the Shah, who chided him for his willingness to follow this ignorant Shirazi Sayyid. (Sipihr, *Nasikh*, and other Muslim sources, certainly wrongly, date Hujjat's conversion to this exile in Tehran.) Hujjat maintained his convictions and was held for about a year under a loose house arrest. During this time he corresponded with the Bab and occasionally met with some of the Tehran Babis and debated with the 'ulama at court.

When Hujjat was arrested and taken to Tehran, the Babis were a minor concern of the authorities—the source of local disturbances in the south and a possible threat to the prime minister's spiritual dominance of the Shah. A year and a half later, the situation was very different. The Bab had been moved from Maku to Chihriq at the urging of the Russian minister, who was concerned about the possible influence of the Bab in Russian Transcaucasia. (Momen, *Babi*, 72.) The Bab had been tried in Tabriz before the Crown-Prince and had maintained His claims against important 'ulama of Tabriz. The summer of 1848 brought Babi disturbances in Mashhad. That fall there was open fighting as an armed body of Babis, bearing the black banners of Shi'ite apocalyptic rebellion, traveled west across Mazandaran. Rumors flew among the Babis of Tehran that they should all join this party for the final battle against ungodliness predicted by Shi'ite tradition. The Babis were stopped near Babol and built defenses at the little shrine of Shaykh Tabarsi. It was late the next spring before government troops were finally able to dislodge them. As this drama began to unfold, the old Shah died. Nasir al-Din Mirza, now the Shah, came from Tabriz, accompanied by his ruthless and efficient minister Amir-Kabir. Hujjat, hearing rumors that the new prime minister intended to have him killed, escaped from the city disguised as a soldier and returned to Zanjan. His followers received him with rapturous demonstrations. The new governor did not dare to act against Hujjat, but confined himself to torturing the two men who had announced Hujjat's return. Civil war was eighteen months away.

The division in the town between Babi and Muslim followed preexisting fault lines. Hujjat, before his conversion, was the leader of an Akhbari community to some extent distinct from the rest of the town. They lived in their own neighborhood, which became the Babi stronghold when fighting broke out. When he became a Babi these people followed his example. The lines were not sharp, though. Families divided when the fighting came. Many, especially those with property to protect, deserted when fighting became imminent.

It is also clear that the Babis were in most respects not much different than they had been as Muslims. Their views on theological issues were thoroughly Shi'ite; they simply accepted the Bab as the Imam. Their practices were also largely Shi'ite and Islamic. Evidently, they continued the Akhbari reforms that Hujjat had earlier instituted, with the addition of a few distinctively Babi practices derived from rather early writings of the Bab—the prohibition of tobacco and recitations from the writings of the Bab, for example. There is no evidence of practices from the *Bayan*, the Bab's major doctrinal and legal work composed about 1848.

The degree to which Babi laws were applied in this period is difficult to determine. It was probably only a year or less between Hujjat's initial conversion and his arrest and imprisonment in Tehran, so it is likely that the process of applying Babi law was incomplete when he was taken to Tehran in the early summer of 1847. The Zanjan Babis evidently sent a deputation to Hujjat in Tehran to ask for instructions about their obligations under Babi religious law. (Nabil, 538-39.) The Muslim historians allude to Hujjat's having imposed novel commands and prohibitions. One source refers to his contradicting Islamic law and then goes on to repeat the common accusation of apocalyptic antinomianism and of the practice of community of property and wives. More plausibly, he adds that they replaced the Muslim greeting of "*Salam*" with the Babi greeting "*Allahu Akbar.*" (Sipihr, *Nasikh* 3:89-90. Hidayat, *Rawdat* 10:448. I'tidad al-Saltana, *Fitna*, 61.)

There were also Shaykhi Babis in Zanjan, originally followers of the esoteric Shi'ite sect that furnished the bulk of the Babi converts

elsewhere. During the fighting they were organized as a separate unit and may not have felt the same personal allegiance to Hujjat that the other Babis did. They were sufficiently distinct that the Muslim authorities tried to induce them to betray the other Babis. Shaykhis were followers of Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i. The Bab himself had been a student of Ahsa'i successor. Their esoteric interpretations of Shi'ite tradition and their expectation of the imminent return of the Hidden Imam had made them receptive to the Bab's message. Prior to his conversion Hujjat had been opposed to the Shaykhis. (Zanjani, *Waqayi'*, 42–43, 45–46. Nabil, 178.)

### **The outbreak of fighting and its causes**

The Babis of Zanjan now began to attract attention. Prince Dolgorukov, the Russian minister in Tehran, reported on 7 March 1849, "In truth, there are rumors that in Zanjan they have appeared 800 strong, and that by their presence, they threaten to disrupt the public order." A year later on 14 March 1850 he reported that "their number reaches 2,000 people, and the ideas spread by them among the people incite common discontent." (Momen, *Babi*, 114.) The Muslim historians, who date Hujjat's conversion to his 1847–48 confinement in Tehran, date the beginning of the Zanjan Babi community to this period and say that the number of Babis in the district reached 15,000 by the spring of 1850.

As their numbers increased, the Babis behaved with greater boldness. Even before Hujjat's return, a number of Zanjan Babis had joined the fight at Shaykh Tabarsi; ten Zanjan Babis are said in one source or another to have died there. (Malik-Khusravi, *Ta'rikh*.) Others, believing there would be fighting in Zanjan, had secretly begun to prepare weapons and train for war. (Zanjani, *Waqayi'*, 17–18. Hamadani, *New History*, 142. Nabil, 539. Hidayat, *Rawdat*, 10:448.) When Hujjat went out to his mosque to lead Friday prayers, three or four hundred followers escorted him. The crowds attending prayers overflowed the room reserved for prayer into the outer court of the mosque. ('Abd al-Ahad, "Reminiscences," 779–80.)

This Babi activity in as strategic a place as Zanjan alarmed the authorities. A new governor—Amir Aslan Khan, a maternal uncle of the Shah—was appointed and ordered to arrest Hujjat and return him to Tehran. Hujjat learned of this and no longer went out of his house except with a large armed escort. Despite the concern engendered by the fighting with the Babis in Mazandaran, the governor could do little. The government had stripped the kingdom of troops to suppress a major revolt against the new Shah in Khorasan in the extreme northeast of the country. The potential Babi threat in Zanjan had to wait until more serious matters were dealt with. Oddly enough, Muslim sources, though they accuse Hujjat of political ambitions, say that the government, specifically the prime minister, Amir-Kabir, had already decided to arrest Hujjat before the first clash between the Babis and the authorities. The Babi and Baha'i sources assume the decision to arrest Hujjat was due to these clashes. (Sipihr, *Nasikh*, 3:90. Hidayat, *Rawdat*, 10:448.)

In the meantime tensions between the Babis and Muslims of Zanjan rose. The clergy began complaining to Tehran again. The governor, unable to deal with the situation by force, invited Hujjat to the governorate for negotiations. Hujjat came, accompanied by two hundred armed supporters who waited respectfully but pointedly outside the audience hall. Hujjat and the governor agreed that Hujjat would cease preaching and leading prayers in the mosque and that the Babis would pay triple taxes. In return, the governor's men would leave the Babis alone and any Babis who committed offenses would be dealt with by Hujjat. The governor was able to inform Tehran that a reconciliation had been effected. Hujjat for a time prayed and preached in his own house. However, when a Babi was attacked in his home after having been overheard criticizing the clergy, the Babis came to Hujjat and complained that his inactivity was encouraging their enemies. Hujjat returned to leading prayers and preaching in his mosque. This agreement is reported only by the well-informed Haydar Big, but it makes sense of the events that followed. Its absence from the official Muslim accounts is probably explained by the fact that the



governor would have kept the extra taxes for himself. (Hamadani, *New History*, 140–42.)

The incident that led to open fighting was a street fight between a Babi youth and a Muslim in which the Muslim was wounded. The Babi escaped, but another Babi who had been with him was imprisoned. Hujjat intervened on his behalf and offered the governor a bribe, but the governor would not release the man. Hujjat, aggrieved at the violation of the agreement, sent an armed party to release the prisoner by force. (Nicolas, *Ali Mohammad*, 338–40, contains an eyewitness account by the Babi youth who escaped. Zanjani, *Waqayi'*, 18–19. Sipahr, *Nasikh*, 3:90. 'Abd al-Ahad, "Reminiscences," pp. 781–83. Nabil, 540–41. Hidayat, *Rawdat*, 10:448.) The next day the governor responded by sending a party of *lutis*, street toughs, to kidnap Hujjat while he led prayers. The Babi guards repulsed the attack and wounded the leader. One Babi guard was wounded and captured. He was dragged before the governor, where two leading anti-Babi 'ulama promptly issued a death warrant. Amir Aslan Khan, the governor, spoke abusively to him and then said, "If thou wilt curse the Founder of thy religion and Mulla Muhammad-'Ali, I will not slay thee." The Babi replied, "Curses be upon thine own foul nature, even unto seventy generations of thy forebears, for that they have been instrumental in producing a bastard like thee, who has brought about such great mischief and trouble!" Amir Aslan Khan, a man of temper, drew his sword and struck the Babi prisoner in the mouth, laying open his face from ear to ear. He then ordered the people to attack him. One mujtahid was so angry that he stabbed him in the stomach with a penknife, shouting to the onlookers, "O Muslims, this is holy war!" Others hurried to follow, each striking with whatever he had at hand. When the Babi was dead, his naked body was thrown out into the public square outside the governorate. He was the first Babi to be killed in Zanjan. The son of one of the 'ulama was shot to death in the fighting that day and some forty others were wounded. It was Friday, 5 Rajab 1267/17 May 1850. The next day fighting started in earnest.

The Babi and Baha'i sources for the events of this day differ in many details, but agree on the general course of events. Nabil, 541–43. 'Abd al-Ahad, "Reminiscences," 783–84, 791–95. The casualty figures are from Sipih, *Nasikh*, 3:90. Zanjani, *Waqayi'*, 22–23.

It is clear that larger causes than these trivial incidents lay behind the fighting. The governor, Amir Aslan Khan Majd al-Dawla, had been one of those present at the trial of the Bab in Tabriz. He was a cruel man, tactless and given to rages. He was under orders from Amir Kabir to return Hujjat to Tehran. The governor, in short, had been waiting for a year for the opportunity to arrest Hujjat and suppress the Babis of Zanzan. The war aims of the government, then, are clear enough. They wished to ensure that there would be no more disturbances of the sort that had been so difficult to put down in Mazandaran. (Sipih, *Nasikh*, 3:90. Hamadani, *New History*, 141. Diya'i, "Sanadi," 163–64.) The clergy had been agitating against Hujjat for a number of years and considered the suppression of the Babis to be necessary for the protection of Islam and their own authority.

The Babi historians attribute the outbreak of fighting to the incidents that occasioned it and to the jealousy, anger, and incompetence of the governor and the 'ulama. The Babi war aims were correspondingly vague. They expected that they would have to fight but did not think they should initiate it. (Hamadani, *New History*, 142. Zanjani, *Waqayi'*, 17–18.) The reason is theological. The Babis, in accordance with Shi'ite law, held that when an Imam is in the world, only he is allowed to declare holy war. War might be undertaken in self-defense, but attack was unacceptable without an explicit order from the Imam—i.e., the Bab himself. From the earliest days of the movement the Babis expected that such an order would come. The Hidden Imam was to wage war against his enemies and defeat them, and the Babis expected to join this crusade to purge the world of evil and unbelief. The Babis of Zanzan were ready, but the order had not come—indeed, the Bab is said to have prohibited Hujjat from ordering the use of force when he passed through Zanzan three

years earlier. This battle was not part of that apocalyptic war, although it could become so if instructions came from the Bab. During the fighting, Hujjat subjected the Babis to considerable tactical disadvantages in obedience to this principle.

See MacEoin, "Holy War," especially 98–101, 118–20, though his account of Zanzan is misleading. There is no evidence for the declaration of a "defensive *jihad*" at Zanzan. The Babi accounts agree that the Zanzan Babis did not declare holy war but considered themselves to be acting simply in self-defense: Zanzani, *Waqayi* ' , 28, 36–37; Nabil, 546, 553; Hamadani, *New History*, 137–38, 145; 'Abd al-Ahad, "Reminiscences," 791, 810–11. Throughout most of Shi'ite history scholars had considered the obligation of holy war to be in abeyance in the absence of the Imam, though in the first half of the nineteenth century the 'ulama had declared holy war several times, Zanzan being one of the occasions; see Diya'i, "Sanadi," 163–64, and Zanzani, *Waqayi* ' , 28. Hujjat, an Akhbari, evidently considered this to be an innovation.

Two months after the outbreak of fighting, news arrived that the Bab was dead, executed by public firing squad in Tabriz at the order of the prime minister. There would be no holy war with the Bab at its head. There are indications that in Zanzan the Babi policy on holy war changed after the death of the Bab. Thus, in the later stages of the siege the Babis conducted various sorties, though it was too late for these to have any real effect. (Zanzani, *Waqayi* ' , 60–62. 'Abd al-Ahad, "Reminiscences," 800, 812.)

On the other hand, the Babis could hope for an agreement to restore peace to Zanzan. In that case the Babis could simply go home and resume their ordinary lives. There were, in fact, intermittent negotiations, but nothing came of them. On the government side, key officials and officers were unable to deal with the Babis except as damnable heretics and rebels. Moreover, the Babis held that the authority of the Bab was superior to that of the government. Not surprisingly, the officers and officials in the government camp viewed

this as arrogance, heresy, and rebellious ambition. There was also doubt about the good faith of the representatives of the government. The Zanzan Babis were well aware that in Mazandaran fighting had ended with a truce treacherously broken by the army. When in Zanzan a Babi delegation consisting of boys and old men was seized and mistreated, any chance of the Babis accepting one of the government peace offers was ended. Thus, the final Babi war aim had to be the emulation of the Imam Husayn and his band of doomed heroes. The Babis had no choice but to fight for their honor before God. There was no other option, neither hope of victory nor of honorable surrender.

Hidayat, *Rawdat*, 10:449–54. Sipih, *Nasikh*, 3:93. Momen, *Babi*, 116–19. Zanzani, *Waqayi*’, 57–58. ‘Abd al-Ahad, “Reminiscences,” 809–11. Hamadani, *New History*, 372–73. Nabil, 554–55.

### **The course of fighting**

Soon after the freeing of the imprisoned Babi, the governor ordered the division of the town into Babi and Muslim quarters preparatory to the destruction of the Babis. (Zanzani, *Waqayi*’, 23–24. Hamadani, *New History*, 143–44. ‘Abd al-Ahad, “Reminiscences,” 787. Nabil, 543–44. Sipih, *Nasikh*, 3:90. Hidayat, *Rawdat*, 10:449.) Zanzan in those days was surrounded by a crenellated mud brick wall about six meters high. The highway ran through the town parallel to the river. The town was thus longer from east to west than north to south. The Babis were mostly in the eastern half of the town.

The day after the first fighting Hujjat, at the urging of his lieutenants, ordered the capture of the fort of ‘Ali-Mardan Khan, a substantial stronghold that overlooked the boundary between the Muslim and Babi quarters. A large stock of ammunition and weapons was captured with the fort. (Hamadani, *New History*, 145–46. Zanzani, *Waqayi*’, 36–37. Sipih, *Nasikh*, 3:91.) According to the official chronicle, the next day, Sunday, 19 May 1850, the Babis attacked the house of the governor, but were driven off. (Sipih, *Nasikh*, 3:91.) A lull of some days followed as both sides prepared for

further fighting. The Babis controlled the entire eastern half of the town and barricaded all the streets leading into their quarter. Officers were appointed for each barricade, forty or more in all, and men were apportioned to each. Each barricade had a watchword, usually a name of God, with which to alert others if their position was threatened. Fallback positions were prepared in case a barricade was overrun. Supplies were stockpiled in the fort. In the course of the siege the Babis made their own gunpowder and even several cannon. At the beginning of the siege there were probably about 1,800 fighting men in the Babi quarter with somewhat more women and children.

Zanjani, *Waqayi'*, 30–32, 38–39, 51–52, 62, 66. Hamadani, *New History*, 143–44. Sipihr, *Nasikh*, 3:90–91, 93. Hidayat, *Rawdat*, 10:449. Nicolas, *Ali Mohammad*, 343. 'Abd al-Ahad, "Reminiscences," 774, 809, 818–19. I'tidad al-Saltana, *Fitna*, 264–65. Momen, *Babi*, 117–18.

On the Muslim side appeals for troops were sent to the authorities, and the militia was raised in the surrounding villages. The central government responded immediately. The British ambassador wrote, "Five hours after receipt of [news of fighting at Zanjan] a Battalion of Infantry 400 horse and three guns marched toward Zenjan. This is an instance unexampled in Persia of military celerity, which perhaps would not be surpassed in many countries of Europe." (Sheil to Palmerston No. 64, 25 May 1850: FO 60 151, in Momen, *Babi*, 115). The authorities were deeply alarmed. The first regular troops reached the town on 1 June, with other large contingents arriving on 13 and 16 June. At this time there were perhaps 6,000 government troops at the town, in addition to the irregulars raised locally. (Momen, *Babi*, 115–16.)

Though there had been fighting earlier, the first general attack by government troops against the Babis came on 1 July 1850, preceded by an attempt to blow up a Babi barricade with a mine. The attack failed and was succeeded by a lull. (Sipihr, *Nasikh*, 3:91–92.) According to Baha'i sources, Sayyid 'Ali Khan Firuzkuhi, the first officer in general command of the government troops, was sympathetic to the Babis and was thus replaced and disgraced.

(Hamadani, *New History*, 140–43, 157, 372. Nabil, 556–57. Hidayat, *Rawdat*, 10:449–50. Sipahr, *Nasikh*, 3:93–94.). A pattern soon developed: a new unit and commander would arrive, make a determined attack with the half-hearted support of the previous troops, and make, if anything, only indecisive gains. The new unit would then camp sullenly outside the town with the others and matters would lapse into an informal truce until new troops and a higher-ranking officer arrived.

The government attacks achieved so little because the Babis were in carefully prepared positions and defended themselves desperately. The town was a warren of narrow streets and houses, all interconnected and prepared for defense, and could hardly be taken by infantry without heavy losses. Though the government troops had artillery, the guns were mostly light field pieces more suitable for use against troops in the open. When a ball hit the mud brick walls and dirt barricades of the Babi defenses, there would be a puff of dust and the surface of the wall would crumble, but it would be easy enough for the Babi to reinforce the walls from behind. Mortars caused casualties among the women and children, but there is no evidence they were effective against the Babi defenses themselves. It was probably not practical to carry enough ammunition from the arsenals of Tehran and Tabriz to make a decisive difference. Eventually, heavier guns were brought in, and these did gradually drive back the Babis.

In addition, the Babis had sympathizers among the besieging troops, even among the officers. Many of the officers resented being made to fight against civilians in a battle they blamed on the ‘ulama. Babi sources report that certain units, notably the two ‘Aliyu’llahi (Ahl-i Haqq) regiments, sympathized with the Babis and for that reason held back from the fighting. (Hamadani, *New History*, 141–42, 157, 372.) Moreover, the individual soldiers had grown up with the stories of the heroism of the outnumbered defenders of the Imam Husayn and the brutality of his Syrian enemies and with the prophecies of the army of the Imam at the end of time. Many, while not Babis themselves, must have entertained secret doubts about the justice of their actions.

Women played a role in the fighting, to the fascination of the nineteenth century Iranian historians. There were three thousand or more Babi women and children within the defenses. The Babis were well organized, and women sewed, baked, nursed the wounded, built and repaired barricades, and gathered spent bullets and cannonballs for reuse. Children helped as well. Occasionally, women extinguished the fuses on shells fired into the Babi positions, using wet blankets kept ready for this task. (Zanjani, *Waqayi'*, 49–50. Nabil, 563. 'Abd al-Ahad, "Reminiscences," 769.) The women did not normally fight, and most seemed to have survived the siege, but there was a famous exception.

The government officials and the 'ulama together wrote to the Shah in this wise [giving a list of excuses for their failure to defeat the Babis]: "Fourth, there is a regiment of Babi virgin girls. The Babis fight for love of them." They wrote a great deal in this vein and sent it to the king.

This story became very well known among the people, but the truth of the matter of the virgin girl is this: There was an old man, one of the followers of Hujjat, who had died. Two daughters survived him, one named Zaynab and the other Shah-Sanam. When the barricades were being built and the fighting had begun, Zaynab went to Hujjat and said, "I have no father or brother to fight the holy war in the path of God. Permit me to go and fight." He replied, "The holy war is prohibited for women." She said, "In this dispensation the illusions and veils of the past are torn asunder. Issue your judgment accordingly!" He gave that girl the name of Rustam-'Ali. She was in one of the barricades, dressed in man's clothing, with the other pure souls. One day the soldiers attacked the barricade. That lioness recited these verses of Jawhari:

Name me a sect free of disgrace.

Tell me the tale of Islam's unbelief!

Thus is the Muslim an infidel.

Shouting these verses, Rustam-'Ali threw herself from the barricade and charged the enemy soldiers. Thinking that a large

group was following her, they fled. The people at the barricade called her back, but as she returned, one of the townspeople shot and killed her.

Zanjani, *Waqayi'*, 55–56. See also 'Abd al-Ahad, "Reminiscences," 802–3; Nabil, 549–52; Sipihr, *Nasikh*, 3:94. One of the local mujtahids also ruled that the *jihad* in Zanzan was a *fard 'ayn*—an obligation binding on the individual—that applied even to women. He held that a woman could participate in the fighting without permission of her husband; see Diya'i, "Sanadi."

Throughout the summer and fall the Babis steadily lost men and were slowly driven back upon their strong points, but months went by without the government troops achieving anything decisive. By late fall Babi resistance began to fail. The Babis had been driven a good way back from the city wall. The fort of 'Ali-Mardan Khan, where most of the Babi supplies and munitions were stored, was for a time cut off. A Babi counterattack reopened a route to the fort, but it finally fell to the Garrus Regiment during a general assault in early December. With its fall the Babi position became untenable. (Zanjani, *Waqayi'*, 49–51, 60. Hamadani, *New History*, 158–59. Sipihr, *Nasikh*, 3:95–96.)

At this point Hujjat told his people that they might leave if they could. A number did so but were immediately captured. The remaining Babis regrouped around the house of Hujjat, which they stubbornly defended against government attacks and an artillery barrage. There was talk among some of the younger Babis of killing the women to prevent them falling into enemy hands, but cooler heads prevailed. (Zanjani, *Waqayi'*, 62–64.) Soon after, Hujjat was wounded in the right forearm while inspecting the defenses. He was taken to his house where he languished for some days. His wound was kept secret from the enemy and even from most of the Babis. He died about 30 December 1850, counseling his people to try to hold out three more days. This may be explained by a reference a plan by the government troops to break off the siege for the winter. He was buried in great secrecy in his house—fully dressed with his sword by his side as



befitted a martyr—and the walls were knocked over on top of the grave to conceal it.

At this point Babi morale collapsed. When an offer of safe conduct arrived from the government commander, the Babis surrendered. Only about a hundred Babi fighters had survived the siege.

Zanjani, *Waqayi'*, 60–62, 64–65, 71–73. Hamadani, *New History*, 161–68, 291–92, 373.. Nabil, 573, 577–78. 'Abd al-Ahad, "Reminiscences," 768–69, 812–13, 818–21. Sipih, *Nasikh*, 3:96–97. Diya'i, "Sanadi," 164. Momen, *Babi*, 122.

### **The aftermath**

After the Babi surrender the troops immediately looted the remnants of the Babi quarter. The men were seized and the women and children were taken to the house of Sayyid Abu al-Qasim, the leading mujtahid of the town. They were held in the stables there for forty days before being robbed and released. (Zanjani, *Waqayi'*, 66–73. Nabil, 569–70.) It is not absolutely clear whether the women were imprisoned there, had taken sanctuary there to escape the vengeance of the troops, or some combination of the two. There had been a scuffle between the townspeople and the troops over who should have custody of the Babi women. The townspeople were evidently unwilling to turn over to the soldiers women of the town, even if they were Babis. Nonetheless, the women were treated harshly, on the whole, and some of the children died.

In the meantime, after three days sixty-six male prisoners were taken to the square in front of the governor's house and bayoneted to death by the troops. Hujjat's young son was tricked into revealing the site of his father's grave. The body was dug up and dragged around the town. Forty-four Babis were sent in chains to Tehran with the returning army, and four were executed there on 2 March 1851. The rest were dispersed to various places in Iran. The remaining prisoners in Zanjan, people of no great importance, were released into the custody of family and friends. (Zanjani, *Waqayi'*, 73–76. Sipih,

*Nasikh*, 3:96–97. Momen, *Babi*, 123–24. Hamadani, *New History*, 165–68. ‘Abd al-Ahad, “Reminiscences,” 813, 817, 819.)

The Babi disaster at Zanzan was total. No Babi leader survived, and only a handful of the fighters. The survivors were almost all women and children. Most of these were sent back to their families, who in many or most cases were Muslim. Babis continued to live in Zanzan, but it was not until the 1860’s, when the children of those killed were young adults, that there was again a real Babi community there—though it was divided between Azalis and Baha’is. Further persecutions in 1867 killed three young Baha’i leaders, and little more is heard until the 1890s. Even then it seems to have been a dangerous place to be a Baha’i. Today the Baha’i community of Zanzan probably has not reached the numbers of the Babi community of 1850.

## **Causes and Effects**

### *Social factors.*

Given the turbulent history of pre-modern Iranian cities, the observer might be more puzzled by an urban revolt that did *not* happen. Nineteenth century Iranian towns were riven by the Haydari-Ni‘mati rivalry that pitted rival quarters against each other. The cause of this widespread feud, which apparently goes back to Safavid times, seems to have unknown even the Iranians themselves—a manifestation of human perversity like the enmity of the Green and Blue chariot-racing factions that troubled the peace of Byzantium. (Mirjafari, “Haydari.”) Small disturbances were common enough. In 1847 Zanzan itself had expelled its governor when he abducted and raped a woman, a disturbance in which Hujjat was probably involved. On a larger scale, in 1843 the largely Iranian population of Karbala revolted against the Ottoman authorities and in the end was slaughtered even in the sacred shrines themselves. (Cole and Momen, “Mafia.”) It was an incident not unlike the Babi revolts. And, of course, the role of urban disturbances in the two great Iranian revolutions of the twentieth century is well known.

Not enough is known about the makeup of the Babi community of Zanzan, or about the population of Zanzan in 1850, to do any very deep analysis of the social and economic context of the battle. The Haydari-Ni‘mati feud is not mentioned, though perhaps it was there. Neither the Babi nor the Muslim sources tell us much about the economic status of the participants, for these writers did not think it was relevant. The most conspicuous sociological fact about the Zanzan Babis was that they were a pre-existing group, the followers of Hujjat, who became Babis more or less en masse. It seems likely, though it is not proven, that they were an Akhbari community and that they had been the followers of Hujjat’s father. They mostly lived in the eastern part of town, where they were evidently the bulk of the population. They were distinct from the Shaykhi Babis of Zanzan. Some also came from neighboring villages, although most likely the villagers had close links of kinship with the Akhbari Babis of the town. The Babis were thus not an economic class but a cross-section of the town defined by quarter and by allegiance to a particular religious leader. There is no evidence of the tribal or ethnic identity of this group or whether it differed from the ethnic identity of the rest of the town and district.

The Babi and Baha’i historians do note, however, that when open fighting broke out, it was the wealthier members of the community who were most likely to desert the cause. The individuals who distinguished themselves in the fighting and rose to leadership tended not to come from the traditional leading classes. One gets the impression of small craftsmen, retired sergeants, and the like, finding in the crisis a chance to express their talents. (Zanzani, *Waqayi*, 24–25, 40–43. ‘Abd al-Ahad, “Reminiscences,” 779. Amanat, *Resurrection*, 358.) It is known that Hujjat and his followers, even before their conversion to Babism, were sharply critical of the religious and political leadership. It thus seems very probable that the Babis’ willingness to fight had something to do with resentment at the incompetence and corruption of the leadership of the existing order. Given that not much specific is known about individual Babis in Zanzan and that even less is known about those who opposed the

Babis or stayed neutral, little more can be said with certainty about the social and economic foundations of the Zanzan Babi community or about the social and economic factors that predisposed them to desperate armed resistance to the forces of the government.

*Conceptual structures.*

There is much more of interest to say about the conceptual structures that shaped the actions of the various participants. Four points of reference seem to have been important: the return of the Twelfth Imam, the paradigm of Karbala, the inviolability of Islamic law, and the autocratic model of governmental reform.

Shi'ites believe that Muhammad entrusted his temporal and spiritual authority to the line of his successors, the Imams. This authority is thought to still belong to the twelfth of these successors, who lives in the fabulous underground cities of Jabulqa and Jabarsa. Since the Imam is not present to exercise his authority, it has for the time being passed into the hands of Muslim rulers and clergy, but when the Imam returns, he will reclaim his authority in this world. The Babis believed that—in one sense or another—the Bab was the return of the Hidden Imam. This simple fact was a permanent bar to any real coexistence of the Babis and the state. The Bab might have chosen not to delegitimize the structures of secular society, but he might do so at any time. The Babis of Zanzan and elsewhere admitted the legitimacy of the existing order only insofar as the Bab did not reject it. Conflict resulted when the Bab's instructions conflicted with those of established authority. This conflict was equally well understood by the authorities. Once the nature of the Babi movement was understood, the government moved systematically and implacably to destroy it.

Moreover, the prophecies of Shi'ite tradition told of a great war in which the Imam and his chosen companions would destroy the forces of evil. The Babis expected to be summoned to participate in this campaign; arguably, the fighting in Mazandaran was conceived as being the start of that campaign. The Bab certainly discussed holy war in his writings. Though he seems never to have called for the

launching of the final war against evil, neither Babis nor state officials doubted that eventually he would. On that score too, both sides saw war as inevitable.

The second conceptual framework was the paradigm of Karbala, the battle in which the Imam Husayn, betrayed by the bulk of his followers, with a tiny band of companions fought until all were killed by the forces of a wicked and irreligious government. Though in a sense Karbala and the holy war of the Hidden Imam are opposites—the one utter defeat and the other inevitable triumph—when war began in Zanjan, the two seemed to fuse in the Babis' minds. When the news arrived of the Bab's execution, the Karbala motif became uppermost. The example of the martyrs of Karbala would have shaped the Babis' attitudes towards the fighting, giving it a deeply symbolic quality, and steeled them for death and inevitable but holy defeat. The women, imprisoned in the stables of a mujtahid were like the women brought captive to unholy Damascus. The Babis' opponents would also have noticed the parallels. The campaign dragged on for so long because of the lack of enthusiasm of the government troops. They too had grown up with the story of Karbala, and though they might not have been Babis themselves, they could scarcely have avoided wondering if they themselves were not reenacting a part in the Karbala tragedy as troops of a new godless Yazid.

The actions of the clergy were shaped by another conceptual framework, that of Islamic law, changeless and inviolable. The Bab's claims of divine guidance were not wholly heretical in Shi'ism, a religion in which the Hidden Imam may at any time choose to reassert his authority through whatever channels he wishes. The true source of the righteous indignation animating the anti-Babi clergy was Babi innovation in matters of law. This is very clear in the petition filed against Hujjat, in which petty changes in accepted Islamic law are presented as grave dangers to the security of religion and state. The clergy and their followers might tolerate claims of charismatic authority, but they could not tolerate the abrogation of any part of Islamic law.

A fourth set of ideas molded the thinking of the government officials who made the decision to suppress the Babis and execute the Bab, particularly Amir Kabir and his pupil, the young Nasir al-Din Shah. Like many thoughtful Iranians of the governing class, Amir Kabir realized that the country was in a desperate state and that drastic reforms were needed to modernize state and society before the country was swallowed up by the Europeans. Only a strong and autocratic ruler could impose the necessary reforms. Religion might be tolerated or encouraged in its sphere, but the king must exercise full authority in his. The Bab's movement, no matter how sincere its followers might be or how legitimate their complaints, was a distraction that must be disposed of in order to allow the state to focus on more urgent problems. The words that the Baha'i historian Nabil attributes to Amir Kabir as he prepared to order the execution of the Bab can scarcely be authentic, but they do express the situation as he must have seen it:

[The innocence of the Bab is] wholly irrelevant to the issue with which we are faced. The interests of the State are in jeopardy, and we can in no wise tolerate these periodic upheavals. Was not the Imam Husayn, in view of the paramount necessity for safeguarding the unity of the State, executed by those same persons who had seen him more than once receive marks of exceptional affection from Muhammad, his Grandfather? Did they not in such circumstances refuse to consider the rights which his lineage had conferred upon him? Nothing short of the remedy I advocate can uproot this evil and bring us the peace for which we long. (Nabil, 502.)

### *Why Zanjan?*

Why then did open fighting not break out in other places where there were actually smaller Babi disturbances? We may look, for example, at Shiraz following the Bab's return from pilgrimage in 1845–46, Isfahan during the Bab's visit, Qazvin during Tahira's visit, and Tehran in 1852, when certain Babis attempted to assassinate the Shah. The first answer would seem to be that the Babis in these places

did not form a large and cohesive unit that could react by banding together to fight. In Zanzan and Nayriz the Babis were a pre-existing community. At Shaykh Tabarsi they were a small army on the move. In the other cities there was no large and cohesive community but rather groups of loosely associated individuals drawn mainly from Shaykhi networks. In Tehran the Babis often were emigrants or refugees from elsewhere, forming groups that could not yet have been very closely knit. Second, except in Tehran the aborted disturbances took place early in the Babi period, before either side had concluded that violence was inevitable. A third factor was that all these cities, and especially Tehran, were strategic points and were much more carefully policed than country towns like Zanzan and Nayriz. In Tehran the authorities watched the Babi networks closely, imprisoning, exiling, or executing Babi leaders from time to time. Thus, when some Babis did actually plot to overthrow the government, the crackdown was ruthless and efficient. A final factor was that the Babis had no clear instructions from their leader to organize sedition, so except for the incident at Shaykh Tabarsi, open fighting occurred more or less by accident. In places like Shiraz and Tehran where the Babi leaders were inclined to accommodation, it was less likely that there would be trouble.

The events in Zanzan resemble most closely those in Nayriz. In Nayriz too there was mass conversion of a pre-existing social unit under the influence of a Babi cleric whose family already enjoyed great prestige in the town. The Babis already lived in the same quarters and had established leadership and group solidarity. When challenged, they easily slipped into the mode of armed resistance. The fact that neither town was an important place carefully controlled by the central government probably meant that there was more of a tradition of successful resistance to the authorities. Nayriz and Zanzan are to be contrasted in fundamental respects with Shaykh Tabarsi, the earliest and best known battle between the Babis and the government. The Babis at Shaykh Tabarsi were not a pre-existent group but were an ad hoc band of religious enthusiasts gathered around the charismatic leadership of Mulla Husayn Bushru'i and Qaddus. They

were united only by religion, and their fighting had a much more symbolic character.

In short, the explanation for the pattern of Babi uprisings is this: The logic of the positions of the two parties made conflict inevitable. Where the Babis were organized and in sufficient numbers, they fought back. Where they were not, they hid, fled, or were killed.

### *Goals and consequences.*

Finally, we must consider the purpose for which the Zanjan Babis and their opponents fought and the actual long-term consequences of their actions. In the absence of an order for *jihad* from the Bab, the war-aims of the Babis were simply to defend themselves, and if they were unable to do so successfully, to emulate the example of the Imam Husayn and his followers, dying honestly in defense of the truth of their faith. The war-aims of the government were more practical: to eliminate the Babi military threat on the essential Tehran-Tabriz road. Each in its way was successful. Unable to make honorable terms with the government commanders, the Babis fought until only about a hundred of their fighters remained to surrender. Some others probably escaped in the closing weeks of the siege, but in general they were true to the example of Husayn. As for the government, they succeeded in nearly exterminating the Zanjan Babi community. It was not until the surviving children became adults that anything like an active Babi community reemerged in Zanjan. The Babis never again made trouble there.

Zanjan played only a small role in the historical memory of the later followers of the Bab. Though it was by far the largest of the Babi uprisings and though those killed there probably constitute nearly half of all the Babi and Baha'i martyrs to date, it was an event isolated from the mainstream of Babi life. Hujjat and his lieutenants were not part of the Shaykhi network from which most of the Babi leaders were drawn. Few of the other Babi leaders knew him. Hujjat was in contact with Bahau'llah while he was in Tehran, and he corresponded with the Bab, but the Zanjan community was nonetheless isolated. Thus, Zanjan never assumed the symbolic importance of Shaykh



Tabarsi in later Baha'i imagination. The greatest effect on the Babis was indirect: most likely, the outbreak of fighting in Zanjan determined Amir Kabir to order the execution of the Bab.

As for the clergy, the Zanjan uprising, at least as part of the general challenge of Babism, forced them into a more rigid stand against religious unorthodoxy and innovation. They tightened their own organization, rallying around the leading *maraji' taqlid* and becoming both more effective and less open to internal innovation.

The effects of the battle were also felt by the townspeople and by the state. First, large portions of the city were left in ruin. Thirty years later when Browne passed through, the city still had not entirely recovered. Second, the event was profoundly frightening. Zanjan was not a remote spot like Shaykh Tabarsi or Nayriz; any Iranian who had traveled between Tehran and Tabriz would have spent at least a night in Zanjan. For decades, travelers and officials passing through heard tales of the supernatural valor and cunning of Hujjat and the Zanjan Babis. The success of the Babi resistance pointed out the inadequacies of the Persian army and the vulnerability of the state to popular uprising. The result was a hardening of state resolve against the Babis and probably as well against other sorts of popular movements.

The last word belongs to the Baha'i historian Nabil:

I was privileged, nine years after the termination of that memorable struggle, to visit Zanjan and witness the scene of those terrible butcheries. I beheld with grief and horror the ruins of the fort of 'Ali-Mardan Khan, and trod the ground that had been saturated with the blood of its immortal defenders. I could discern on its gates and walls traces of the carnage that marked its surrender to the enemy, and could discover upon the very stones that had served as barricades, stains of the blood that had been so profusely shed in that neighborhood. (Nabil, 579.)

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## **Chapter Four**

### **The Baha'i Faith in Turkey**

Turkey is an Islamic state occupying the Anatolian peninsula and a small area of the southeastern part of the Balkan Peninsula. Modern Turkey is the successor state of the Ottoman Empire, which until the end of World War I also controlled parts of the Arab Near East and the Balkans. The Ottoman Empire played a major role in Baha'i history, for it was to Ottoman Iraq that Bahauallah went as an exile in 1853. Later he was exiled under Ottoman authority to Istanbul, Edirne, and 'Akka. 'Abd al-Baha also lived in the Ottoman Empire for most of his life, the greater part of the time as a prisoner.

Baha'is have lived in the territory of modern Turkey since the time of Bahauallah's exile to Istanbul. The contemporary Baha'i community consists of several thousand believers with about a hundred local spiritual assemblies. The National Spiritual Assembly of Turkey was formed in 1959.

In addition to those living in modern Turkey itself, there are large numbers of Turks elsewhere, particularly in northwestern Iran and Soviet Central Asia. There are a considerable number of Turkish-speaking Baha'is in Iran and an increasing number of Turkic-speaking Baha'is in the new republics of Central Asia.

### **The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire**

The Turks are among the many peoples who have overflowed from the steppes of Central Asia into the settled areas of the

Middle East, Europe, and China. First known as the nomadic founders of a sixth-century empire stretching across Central Asia to the Black Sea, by the tenth century C.E. they had drifted into the eastern Islamic lands, at first as mercenaries but soon as rulers. Their descendants today are scattered across Central and Southwest Asia. They are linked by history, language, and a common allegiance to Islam. The Ottoman Empire began in the thirteenth century as one of the petty Turkish principalities in the former Byzantine lands of western Anatolia. In a series of brilliant conquests over the next two centuries, the Ottomans built an empire covering most of Anatolia and the southern Balkans, capped in 1453 with the capture of Constantinople itself. The Ottomans triumphantly moved the government from their old capital of Edirne (Adrianople) to Constantinople. At its height in the sixteenth century the Ottoman Empire stretched from Iraq to Algeria and from the Crimea to Aden and was one of the most powerful and advanced states in the world.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, it was clear that the Ottomans had failed to keep pace with the technological, economic, and military advances of the European states. Moreover, the administrative structure of the empire had become corrupt and the Sultan's power diluted. A number of provinces had already been lost to European neighbors or insubordinate governors. Many observers expected the empire to collapse. Napoleon, for example, invaded Egypt and Syria as a way of striking at Britain's Eastern interests.

However, the Ottomans proved more resilient than expected. A series of reforming Sultans attempted to reorder the state, army, and economy after European models. Salim (Selim) III (1789–1807) attempted to establish a “New Order” in which the old Janissary Corps would be replaced by a modern army, modern schools established, and the people given a say in local administration. In the end, however, the old army and government establishment united against him, and he was overthrown in a mutiny of the Janissaries.

His cousin, Mahmud II (1808–39), after consolidating his own power, carried on the reforms. In 1826 he tricked the Janissaries into mutinying and massacred them. He also tried to reform education, mostly without success, though he did establish a modern medical school and language academies for training diplomats. The result was a professional diplomatic corps that furnished most of the reforming statesman of the next decades.

‘Abd al-Majid I (Abdülmeçid, 1839–61), though young and susceptible to influence, was sympathetic to the reforms and issued a series of decrees known as the Tanzimat, which, at least on paper, went far towards making Turkey a modern state. However, by about 1850 the impetus towards reform had largely petered out. It was during ‘Abd al-Majid’s reign that the Crimean War (1853–56) took place, in which the European powers united against Russia in defense of Turkey. Bahauallah alludes to the destruction of a Turkish fleet by the Russians in his Tablet to Napoleon III, an incident that Napoleon had used to justify his entrance into the war.

The Tanzimat reforms had failed to transform the state fundamentally, although many improvements had resulted. Their flaw was that for the sake of reform, power had been concentrated in the hands of the Sultan in order to allow him to make necessary changes. However, once power passed into the hands of an incapable Sultan, there were no institutions capable of restraining him.

For the history of the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey, see Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* (2 vol.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976– ); Lord Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries*; *EB* “Turkey and Ancient Anatolia.” For the religious situation in contemporary Turkey, see *World Christian Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Turkey.”

## **Ottoman attitudes towards the Babis**

In the nineteenth century Ottoman Iraq was the temporary or permanent home to a large number of Iranians—pilgrims, clerics, students, refugees, merchants—most drawn by the Shi‘i shrines there. The Babi religion first came to the attention of the Turkish authorities at the end of 1844 when one of the Letters of the Living, Mulla ‘Ali Bastami, was arrested in Iraq on the charges of circulating a blasphemous imitation of the Qur’an and disturbing the peace. Najib Pasha, the governor of Iraq under whose authority Bastami was tried, seems to have sincerely considered Bastami’s Babi views objectionable. Nonetheless, the main concern of the Turkish authorities was apparently to avoid provoking disturbances between the Shi‘i and Sunni communities in Iraq and complicating already strained relations with Iran.

Two years later when similar disturbances arose around the person of Tahira, Najib Pasha, having learned from the commotions associated with the Bastami affair, simply took her quietly into custody and held her in the house of a leading Sunni cleric while he waited for instructions from Istanbul. A few months later she was deported to Iran.

By the 1850s there were many Babis among the Iranians in Iraq, most notably Bahauallah. The Turks had traditionally granted asylum to refugees of all sorts, and at that time were freely giving Ottoman nationality to Iranian refugees, much to the irritation of the Iranian government. They protected the Babis as well, giving them citizenship when the Persian authorities tried to have them extradited. Bahauallah kept the Babis under careful control, so the Turks had few reasons to be apprehensive about them.

The Iranian government, seeing the recovery of the Babi community under Bahauallah’s guidance, was anxious to have him removed from Baghdad. The Iranian ambassador in Istanbul steadily agitated for this end. Eventually, the Turks gave in and ordered Bahauallah to Istanbul as a guest of the government.

For the trial of Mulla ‘Ali Bastami, see Amanat 220–38, Momen, “Trial,” Momen, *Babi* 83–90.

## **Istanbul, the Great City**

From 16 August through 1 December 1863 Bahauallah was an exile in Istanbul. In the nineteenth century Istanbul was the chief city of the Islamic world and the capital of the Ottoman Empire. Once it had been Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine empire.

## **The City's Name**

Istanbul was originally named Byzantium, perhaps after the legendary Byzas, supposed to be the leader of the first Greek colonists to settle the site. The emperor Constantine the Great renamed the city “New Rome” and “Constantinopolis” in 330 C.E. In English this became “Constantinople”—“Qustantiyya” in the Islamic languages. This name remained in use until the adoption of the Roman alphabet in Turkey after World War I.

The modern name “Istanbul”—or “Stamboul” or “Astana”—is an Arabic corruption of a Greek phrase meaning “in the City” and was in use as early as the tenth century C.E. A pun attributed to Sultan Muhammad II, the Ottoman conqueror of the city, made this “Islambul”—“where Islam abounds.” This became the preferred spelling of educated Ottomans.

Islamic cities, like Islamic people, had titles. Those of Istanbul reflect its importance and prestige: “Seat of the Sultanate,” “Home of the Caliphate,” “Home of Victories,” “Dome of Islam,” and the like. Western diplomats referred to Istanbul and the Ottoman government as “the Sublime Porte,” a French mistranslation of Bab-i ‘Ali, “High Gate”—the name of the part of the palace where several ministries were located.

To Bahauallah Istanbul was simply “the City” or “the Great City” (*al-madina al-kabira*), reflecting its preeminence in the Islamic world.

## **History and description**

Istanbul is strategically situated on the European bank of the waterway separating Europe from Asia, on a triangular peninsula

formed by the Bosphorus, the Sea of Marmara, and a deep inlet called the Golden Horn. By its situation it controls sea traffic between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and land traffic between the Balkans and Asia. Moreover, the Golden Horn is a splendid natural harbor, and the peninsula lent itself to defense. Thus, the history of Byzantium/Constantinople/Istanbul may be read as a twenty-six-century-long struggle between those who would use the city to dominate the lands bordering the Black Sea and eastern Mediterranean and those who found their ambitions limited by the rulers of the city.

According to legend, ancient Byzantium was founded about 657 B.C.E. by colonists from Megara and Argos during the great age of Greek colonization. The early history of the town is a complicated series of struggles as various powers contended for the town with its control of the Black Sea grain trade, punctuated by sacks as irritated neighbors retaliated for the tolls the city placed on shipping. Byzantium eventually joined the Roman Empire as a free confederate city, but soon lost its privileges. It was destroyed in 196 and 268 C.E. during civil wars, but was rebuilt both times. Ancient Byzantium occupied a much smaller area than the modern city, and none of its monuments survive.

In 330 C.E. Constantine I, the Great, the first Christian Roman emperor, moved the capital to Byzantium. Now known as Constantinople, the city almost immediately became the leading city of the Western world and the capital of what was really a new eastern Greek Christian empire. Constantine tripled the size of the city. He and his successors filled the city with wonderful churches, palaces, and monuments, and girdled it with great walls that were to be breached only once in their history. Within a century and a half, the last remnants of the Western Roman Empire had vanished, but the fortunes of the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire continued to rise, and by the sixth century it had attained a power and magnificence nearly equal to that of Rome at its height. Constantinople was also the seat of the Patriarch of Constantinople, among Christian prelates second only to the Pope



in Rome. After the split with Rome in the eleventh century, he became the titular head of the whole Orthodox Church, as he remains to this day. Thus, Constantinople became a sort of holy city to the Eastern Christians.

After the sixth century the empire slowly dwindled, but Constantinople remained one of the world's great cities. At its height it had a population of half a million. An Arab traveler of the twelfth century could still remark, "This city is even greater than its repute." By the fifteenth century, however, the Byzantine Empire had been reduced to some small, distant, and impoverished provinces and a few kilometers of land outside the city wall. The city was full of ruins and largely empty of people. The end came in 1453.

Muslims had besieged Constantinople for the first time in 669 C.E. During this campaign the elderly Abu-Ayyub al-Ansari, the standard-bearer of the Prophet Muhammad himself, died and was buried before the walls of Constantinople. The siege failed. Naval raids a few years later also failed. In 716–17 the caliph Sulayman b. 'Abd al-Malik, encouraged by a tradition that Constantinople was to be conquered by a caliph bearing the name of a prophet, besieged the city, again without success. Seven centuries would pass before a Muslim army again stood before the Great City.

In 1355 the Ottoman Turks, having taken the last Byzantine territory in Asia Minor, crossed the Dardanelles and established themselves in Europe. For nine more decades the city maintained a fragile independence, protected mostly by the larger dangers and opportunities that preoccupied the Turks. A Turkish siege in 1422 failed to take the city, but in April 1453 a larger army equipped with the finest siege artillery in the world appeared before the walls. The desperate pleas of the last Byzantine emperor for aid from the West brought only two thousand Genoese soldiers. Cheered by the miraculous rediscovery of the tomb of Abu-Ayyub, the Turks stormed the city on 29 May. The last Roman emperor died fighting on the walls.

Sultan Muhammad II—now called “Fatih,” the “Conqueror”—made Constantinople his capital. Finding the city in ruins and depopulated, he filled it with people deported from other conquered areas. He ordered his nobles to build the mosques and other public buildings for the various quarters of the city. By the end of his reign the population was perhaps 70,000. Over the next century Istanbul rose steadily in wealth, population, and magnificence as the sultans strove to make their capital the greatest city in the world. In various ways the Sultans attempted to make Istanbul a sacred city of Islam. The Byzantines had left the ancient domed church of Hagia Sophia (“Holy Wisdom”). Taking this as their model, the Ottomans filled the city with great domed mosques. In the sixteenth century the great architect Sinan and his staff built more than three hundred public buildings, most in Istanbul. Though the highpoint of Ottoman architecture was the sixteenth century, the Sultans continued building right up to the end of the nineteenth century.

The Ottoman Empire was cosmopolitan, embracing dozens of nationalities—a diversity reflected in the capital. From the first the Sultans had brought Christians and Jews to live in Istanbul. Once the city was reestablished, people flocked in of their own accord: Arab, Turkish, and Persian Muslims; Greek and Armenian Christians; representatives of all the conquered Balkan provinces; Spanish Jews, refugees from the Inquisition seeking the relative freedom of Turkish rule; Western European traders, diplomats, and mercenaries. Typically, people of a particular ethnic group would settle in a quarter around a mosque, church, or synagogue. There they would be allowed to govern their own affairs and would be held collectively responsible for the taxes, good order, and public health of their neighborhood.

After the sixteenth century Istanbul began a slow decline, reflecting the decline of Ottoman power. The city had always been troubled by earthquakes, fires, plagues, and civil disorder. With the decline of the central authority, these grew worse. With the central authorities no longer able to strictly enforce building

regulations, areas once burned over filled up with ramshackle wooden houses. Houses had long since encroached on the broad avenues of Byzantine Constantinople. The city had become a warren of narrow alleys. The rise of modern industrial Europe slowly ruined Istanbul's traditional industries and trade. The government was no longer as rich or as efficient as it had been. Whereas the charitable endowments of wealthy noblemen had once built hospitals, hospices, public kitchens, and other such institutions requiring large annual expenses, they now built libraries and fountains.

Thus, when Bahauallah came to Istanbul in 1863, he found the Great City at perhaps its lowest point since the mid-fifteenth century, though still the greatest city of the Islamic world. It abounded with magnificent mosques and swarmed with people from many countries. It was the most European of Islamic cities, its harbors choked with shipping from all over the world and offering regular steamship service to Europe, Africa, and Asia. But Istanbul was run-down and ramshackle, like the empire it ruled, and none of the improvements in public services and facilities had yet been made that were later to transform Istanbul into a modern city.

There is a vast literature on Istanbul, its history, and its monuments—even excluding works in Turkish. Popular works include Bernard Lewis, *Istanbul and the Civilization of the Ottoman Empire* (Norman, Oklahoma: 1972); *Constantinople: City on the Golden Horn* (New York: Horizon Caravel Books, 1969); and *Istanbul* (Time-Life Books). See also *EB* "Istanbul." Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* contains a classic account of Byzantine Constantinople. *EI2* "Istanbul" contains detailed information with full bibliography on the development and workings of Turkish Istanbul. *EI2* "Qustantiniyya" discusses the period before the conquest from the Islamic point of view. Guidebooks such as Hilary Sumner-Boyd and John Freely, *Strolling through Istanbul* (London: KPI, 1987) are a good

source of information and monuments and the flavor of the city. Since modern tourism started about the time of Bahauallah, guidebooks exist from his time, such as *Handbook for Travellers in Constantinople* (London: John Murray, 1845, 1871).

### **Bahauallah in Istanbul**

Bahauallah and his party reached Istanbul on Sunday, 16 August 1863/1 Rabi‘ I 1280 after a two-and-a-half day journey by steamship from Samsun on the northern coast of Asia Minor. Shamsi Big, an official responsible for guests of the government, met them and had them driven in carriages to a government guest house near the Mosque of Khirqiy-i Sharif. This was in the center of the city, not far from the huge Fatih Mosque built by Muhammad II. Shamsi Big assiduously attended to the needs of the exiles, though the large party—more than fifty people—overcrowded the house. He hired two servants to do errands and cooking. Various of Bahauallah’s companions helped as well.

The next day a representative of the Persian embassy called on Bahauallah bearing the compliments of Haji Mirza Husayn Khan Mushir al-Dawla, the Persian ambassador, and an apology for not being able to call in person. It was a courteous and carefully calibrated acknowledgement of Bahauallah’s high social rank and his status as a political exile. Many other visitors came as well, including high Turkish officials such as Yusuf Kamal Pasha, a former prime minister with whom Bahauallah discussed the possibility of an international language.

Bahauallah himself refused to return these visits or to make the customary calls on the Shaykh al-Islam, the foreign minister, and the prime minister to arrange an audience with the Sultan. Bahauallah turned aside the advice of friends with the words, “I have no wish to ask favors from them. I have come here at the Sultan’s command. Whatsoever additional commands he may issue, I am ready to obey.” Years later, the Persian ambassador, who had been shamed by the Persian princelings and schemers

who swarmed in Istanbul looking for favors and pensions from the Sultan, confessed that he had felt pride in Bahauallah's "dignified aloofness." So it was left to Bahauallah's brother Mirza Musa to do such visiting as was necessary, accompanied by Aqa 'Abd al-Ghaffar Isfahani, the only one of Bahauallah's companions who spoke Turkish well. Bahauallah himself never went anywhere except to his brother's house and to the mosque and public baths. Nonetheless, Bahauallah did not live in seclusion. Visitors crowded into the house, and he regularly received his companions. Other Babis began to appear in Istanbul—though Bahauallah, foreseeing that they would occasion trouble, sent them away as fast as he could.

Baha'u'llah composed several major tablets during this period, notably his Mathnavi, a mystical poem in Persian; the Lawh-i Naqus, known as Subhanaka ya Hu, revealed for the holy day of the Declaration of the Bab, which fell during Bahauallah's stay in Istanbul; and the tablet to Sultan 'Abd al-'Aziz and his ministers.

It was also at Istanbul that Bahauallah's eighteen-month-old daughter Sadhijyya died. The child was buried outside the Edirne Gate. She was the daughter of Mahd-i 'Ulya, Bahauallah's second wife.

The original house having proved too small, the party moved after about a month to the house of Visi Pasha, a much larger and more comfortable house a short distance away near the Fatih Mosque.

The Persian ambassador soon realized he had made a major mistake in having Bahauallah brought to Istanbul. Though he was now much farther from Iran, Istanbul was not an isolated provincial town like Baghdad but the chief capital of the Islamic world. The ambassador now urged the Turkish government to transfer Bahauallah to somewhere less conspicuous, either Bursa in Anatolia or Edirne in European Turkey. The Sultan and his ministers, though not personally hostile to Bahauallah, saw that Babi doctrines had the potential to undermine the basis of Ottoman

government, as well as to complicate relations with Iran. In any case, it had always been the intention of the Ottoman government to exile Bahauallah and his party to some place away from the capital. (Documents recently discovered by Juan Cole in the Ottoman archives show that this was the case.)

The news was first brought to Bahauallah by Shamsi Big. Bahauallah was furious. He had been brought to Istanbul as a guest and now was being made a prisoner. His first impulse was to refuse to go, sending the women and children to foreign embassies for safety and letting the Turkish government do what it could. At worst, the public martyrdom of the Babis in Istanbul would bring great glory to the Babi cause, but Bahauallah was confident the government would back down. However, Mirza Yahya, who had been living under an assumed name among the exiles, refused to take this risk. Faced with the possibility of a public rift among the Babi exiles, Bahauallah had to comply with the government's instructions. The official order was brought by a brother-in-law of the prime minister. Bahauallah replied with the stinging Lawh-i 'Abd al-'Aziz va-Wukala'—the "Tablet to 'Abd al-'Aziz and His Ministers."

After less than four months in Istanbul, the exiles were ordered to proceed immediately to Edirne. On 1 December 1863 they set out for their new place of exile.

For Bahauallah's stay in Istanbul, see 'Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 145, 157–61; Balyuzi, *Baha'u'llah*, 154–55, ch. 26; Taherzadeh 2: 1–6, 55–61, 317–18, 325–32; Salmani 37–40, Phelps 42–47; 'Abd al-Baha, *Traveller's* 54–55, 65; Momen, *Babi* 34n, 199–200; 'Abd al-Baha, *Some* 31; Blomfield, *Chosen* 59–60; Bahauallah, *Epistle* 68–69; Ishraq-Khavari, *Ma'ida* 8:27–28; 'Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 2:177.

A number of sites in Istanbul are associated with Bahauallah. The house of Shamsi Big, the first residence of Bahauallah and the Babi exiles in Istanbul, was evidently a government guest house, not the personal residence of Shamsi Big. It was a two-story house of some size, though too small for the fifty-five exiles. Bahauallah

and his family lived in the apartments upstairs, while the other Babis lived in rooms in the lower story. A pleasant reception room on the first floor provided a meeting-place for the Babis. This house was near the Mosque of Khirqiy-i Sharif in the Sultan Muhammad Quarter in the center of Istanbul. The old house no longer exists.

Bahau'llah moved to the house of Visi Pasha about a month after his arrival in Istanbul. This was a fine three-story house with its own bath and cistern, separate private apartments for the family (the famous "Turkish harem"), and a large walled garden in the visitors' section of the house. The house was located in the same quarter as the house of Shamsi Beg near the Mosque of Sultan Muhammad II Fatih that gave the quarter its name. This house also no longer exists. In 1952 Baha'is purchased part of the site and in 1955 built a national hazirat al-quds on the site. Conditions did not allow the building to be used for official Baha'i purposes so it was used as a residence.

The Fatih Mosque (Fatih Camii), built by Sultan Muhammad II Fatih "the Conqueror" as his contribution to the reconstruction of his new capital, is the largest mosque complex in Istanbul. Completed in 1471, in its original form it occupied a huge square, over 300 m. on a side. About half the area was an open court, in the midst of which sits the large domed structure of the mosque itself. Legend says that the Sultan cut off the architect's hand because the dome was smaller than that of the Church of Hagia Sofia. The cemetery behind the mosque contains the tombs of the Sultan and his queen. Around the courtyard were arranged an elementary school, library, hospital, public bath, dervish monastery, eight seminaries, and a public kitchen that once fed the thousands who lived or worked in the mosque complex, as well as the poor of the neighborhood. It was a particularly magnificent example of the mosques with their complexes of charitable institutions that once were the centers of life in Islamic cities. The mosque and most of the other buildings were destroyed in an earthquake in 1766. They were immediately rebuilt according to a

new plan in a style influenced by European baroque architecture. While he was in Istanbul, Bahauallah went to public noon prayers almost every day, usually in this mosque.

The Mosque of Khirqiy-i Sharif (Hirka-i Serif Camii), the mosque of the Holy Mantle, held one of the relics proving the legitimacy of the Ottoman Sultans' claim to the caliphate. This was the possession of the mantle of the Prophet. As it happened, the Ottomans had two mantles, so in 1851 Sultan 'Abd al-Majid built this charming mosque for the second, the first being kept in the treasury in the Topkapi Palace. The mosque is in the Neoclassical Empire style of the age of Napoleon I. It was very near the house of Shamsi Big, and Bahauallah came here for noon prayers. Both these mosques exist unchanged from Bahauallah's time.

The Edirne Gate (Edirnekap') was in Bahauallah's time one of the two main gates to the city. The road to Adrianople started from this gate, so it is probably through it that Bahauallah left the city. Muhammad the Conqueror entered the city in triumph through the Edirne Gate. In ancient times there was a cemetery outside the gate. Perhaps it was still there in the nineteenth century, for it was outside this gate that Bahauallah buried his little daughter Sadjijyya.

There are many references to Istanbul in Baha'i literature, usually either allusions to the Turkish government or to Bahauallah's exile there. The most important is the apostrophe to the city in the *Kitab-i Aqdas*. (Bahauallah, *Codification* 21) Bahauallah addresses the city as the "Spot that art situate on the shores of the two seas" and says that "the throne of tyranny hath, verily, been established upon thee." There, Bahauallah says, he beheld "the foolish ruling over the wise, and darkness vaunting itself against the light." He prophesies that the "outward splendor" of the city would "soon perish, and thy daughters and thy widows and all the kindreds that dwell within thee shall lament." The Great City thus symbolized the pride and corruption of the Ottoman Empire, and the literal abasement of the city becomes an



example of the retribution of God. The *Suriy-i Muluk* addresses the Persian and French ambassadors in Istanbul and its clergy and wise men, criticizing the latter for their failure to investigate Bahauallah's claim.

Shoghi Effendi in *The Promised Day is Come* makes the decline of Istanbul a symbol and sign, not just of divine retribution upon the Ottoman Empire, but of the decline in influence of Islam. He cites the fall of the caliphate and the flight of the last Ottoman Sultan, the decision to make Ankara the capital of the new Republic of Turkey, and the secularization of the city and of some of the great mosques.

References to Istanbul and its affairs in Baha'i writings include Bahauallah, *Proclamation* 50, 102–4; Bahauallah, *Epistle* 106; Bahauallah, *Athar Muluk* (Lawh-i Ra'is) 234; 'Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 1:381, 2:121–22, 299; Shoghi Effendi, *World* 173–74, Shoghi Effendi, *Promised* 38–39, 65–66, 100–1; Shoghi Effendi, *Tawqi'at* 3:61; Balyuzi, *Eminent* 3.

### **Istanbul after Bahauallah**

Though the great domed mosques still dominate the skyline of central Istanbul, the city has changed much in the century and a half since Bahauallah. In 1865 the Khwaja Pasha fire—said by Bahauallah in the Lawh-i Ra'is to have been a divine warning—burned a large part of the city. This allowed the building of the first modern wide streets in the old city. Over the next half century modern city services were gradually constructed. In recent decades modern apartment blocks have largely replaced the wooden houses of old Istanbul, though the old city also holds the shanties of poor immigrants from the countryside. Istanbul is now a modern city covering several hundred square kilometers on both sides of the Bosphorus. A suspension bridge now connects Asia and Europe. The population has expanded enormously, particularly since the 1970s and is now more than eleven million.

Politically, the last century has not been kind to the Great City. The Young Turks Revolution of 1908 humbled the Sultan. Five wars filled the city with Muslim refugees from the former Ottoman territories in Europe. After World War I the city was occupied for five years by the Allies. The Turkish Republic, idealizing the Turkish villages of Anatolia, spurned Istanbul and made its capital in Ankara, deep in Asia Minor. The Sultanate and Caliphate were abolished. The last Sultan fled to Europe, and the city lost its position as leading city of the Islamic world.

With the fall of the cosmopolitan Ottoman Empire and the rise of nationalistic Turkey and Greece, the Greek Christians who had lived in Istanbul for five centuries under Turkish rule began to leave. Istanbul has become steadily more Muslim and Turkish.

### **The Baha'i community of Istanbul**

The first Babi to reach Istanbul was Mulla 'Ali Bastami, the Letter of the Living who had gone to the Shi'ite holy cities of Iraq to announce the coming of the Bab. He was arrested, condemned, sent as a prisoner to Istanbul, and set to hard labor in the naval dockyards where apparently he died, for he was never heard from again.

When Bahauallah left for Edirne, he left behind Aqa Muhammad-'Ali Jilawdar (also known as Sabbagh-i Yazdi) as a sort of Babi agent to assist pilgrims passing through the city. About two years later he joined Bahauallah in Edirne. Others—both Baha'i and Azali—came to the city. Nine were arrested in 1868 at the time of Bahauallah's exile to 'Akka, interrogated, and either deported or sent along with the other exiles.

While Bahauallah and 'Abd al-Baha were in 'Akka, most Baha'i pilgrims passed through Istanbul, preferring the convenience of Russian railroads and steamships to the arduous overland journey through Iraq and Syria. Some stayed on in Istanbul. The Baha'i Qajar prince Abu al-Hasan Mirza Shaykh al-Ra'is spent several years there in the 1880s and 1890s, for example. See Juan Cole's articles on this individual. In the early

1880s the Afnan family established a branch of their trading firm in Istanbul under the management of Nabil ibn Nabil, the brother of Samandar. Istanbul at this time was also a center of Azali activity, mainly directed against the Qajar regime but also against Bahauallah. The Azalis made a number of accusations against the honesty of the Afnans. The affair lasted ten years, drove Nabil ibn Nabil to suicide, and forced the Afnans to close their office in Istanbul.

For the complicated affair of Nabil ibn Nabil and the Azalis in Istanbul referred to in Bahauallah, *Epistle* 33, 108–9, 123–24, see Balyuzi, *Baha'u'llah* ch.40, Taherzadeh 3:172, 4:391–406; Ishraq-Khavari, *Muhadirat* 275–77, 417.

The modern Baha'i community of Istanbul was established around the turn of the century. After the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the new government attempted to suppress all the old religious institutions. When Baha'is were arrested in Smyrna on suspicion of being a secret religious society, the Istanbul Spiritual Assembly intervened on their behalf and were themselves arrested. However, they were soon cleared, having had the opportunity to explain their beliefs publicly. Shoghi Effendi reported the event as a triumphant vindication of the Faith that resulted in publicity all over the Middle East. Baha'is were arrested again on similar charges in 1933 and were held for about two months. In 1951 a Baha'i delegation attended a United Nations conference for Middle Eastern non-governmental organizations in Istanbul. Shoghi Effendi told the Baha'i world of his pleasure at the degree of official recognition received by the Faith on this occasion. In 1952 Baha'is were able to purchase part of the site of the house of Visi Pasha. Since 1959 Istanbul has been the seat of the National Spiritual Assembly of Turkey. There is now a Baha'i center in Istanbul.

On the Baha'i community of Istanbul, see Balyuzi, *Baha'u'llah* 31n; Taherzadeh 1:286–89; 'Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 303; *Baha'i World* 3:222–23, 4:317 (a photo of the community, c. 1930), 8:692, 9:659, 12: 66, 602, 605–7,

14:602; *Baha'i News* 28 (Nov. 1928) 2, 72 (Ap. 1933) 4, 245 (July 1951) 7; Shoghi Effendi, *Baha'i* 152, 167–69; Garis, *Root* 295, 322–23, 326–27; Balyuzi, *Eminent* 147–48, 181–85, 259; Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Baha* 117, 399; Momen, *Babi* 89–90; Shoghi Effendi, *Tawqi'at* 3:33; Rabbani, *Priceless* 316–18.

## **Edirne, the Land of Mystery**

Bahau'llah's new place of exile was Edirne, the old capital of the Ottoman Empire, about 225 km. northwest of Istanbul on the main road from Istanbul to Central Europe.

### **Name, History, and description**

Roman Edirne was called Hadrianopolis or Adrianople—the “city of Hadrian.” In Turkish this became Adirna—“Edirne” in modern Turkish spelling. Europeans—who learned classical Greek but not Turkish in their schools—continued to call the city “Adrianople” until Turkey adopted the Roman alphabet in the 1920s. Baha'i writers use “Edirne” in Persian and Arabic and generally use “Adrianople” in English. There are occasional references to “Rumelia,” the nineteenth-century name for the area around Edirne. Bahau'llah, however, usually referred to Edirne as Ard-i SIRR, “the Land of Mystery”—SIRR, “mystery,” and Adirna both having the numerical value of 260 in Abjad reckoning. Bahau'llah sometimes associates the epithet “remote” (*ba'id*) with Edirne, as in the reference to “this remote prison” in the Arabic Tablet of Ahmad. He also calls it “the city We have made Our throne.”

Edirne is strategically situated at the junction of several rivers in the gap between the Rhodope and Istranja mountain ranges and thus controls access from Europe to the Thracian plain and Istanbul itself. It is beautifully situated on a hill within a bend of the river Tunja.

The city was evidently founded by the Thracians who called it Uskadama. After its capture by the Macedonians in the fourth century B.C.E., it was renamed Oresteia. The Emperor Hadrian rebuilt the city in the second century C.E. Adrianople was an important Byzantine fortress town for more than a thousand years, guarding Constantinople against threats from the northwest. Major battles were fought there against Goths, Avars, Bulgars, Crusaders, Serbs, and Turks. In July 1362 the troops of the Ottoman Sultan Murad I defeated the last Byzantine governor of Adrianople. The Ottomans made it their capital for the next ninety years and the springboard for their conquests in the Balkans. After the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453, Edirne was no longer the capital but remained a favored retreat for the Sultans of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The town prospered under the favor of Sultans who built fabulous palaces, mosques, and other buildings in the town.

In the eighteenth century Edirne began to decline with the general loss of Ottoman power in the Balkans. Several mutinies of the garrison, a catastrophic fire, and an earthquake all damaged the city. After an occupation by Russian troops in 1828–29, Muslims began moving from the city to be replaced by Christians coming from nearby villages. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the population of Edirne was very mixed, with Muslim Turks being a minority. The bulk of the population consisted of Christian Greeks and Bulgarians with a large Jewish minority, Gypsies, and the usual scattering of nationalities from all over the Balkans and Near East. The population was about 100,000.

Though many of the Ottoman monuments had already disappeared or were in ruins, a number of important buildings still stood, especially several great mosques. Madrasas, bazaars, and caravansaries served the needs of learning, commerce, and travellers. The city once contained many palaces and mansions, but these had suffered cruelly in the decline of the city.

For the history and description of Edrine, see *EI2* and *EB*, *s.v.* “Edirne.”

## **Bahauallah in Edirne**

Bahauallah's exile to Edirne marks his transformation from a guest of the Ottoman government to a political prisoner. Edirne, wrote Bahauallah, was "the place which none entereth except such as have rebelled against the authority of the sovereign." ('Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 161.) The journey there was made in the middle of winter without adequate preparations, and Bahauallah's party suffered severely. On their arrival they were placed in a series of temporary accommodations, vacant summer houses too small and too poorly built to hold a large number of people in winter. Among the documents giving some details of life and events in Edirne is a very early letter of 'Abd al-Baha written in 1864 complaining of their living conditions during this first winter. Eventually adequate housing was found, but Bahauallah nonetheless moved several more times during his stay in Edirne. The other Baha'is generally rented houses near Bahauallah's. Most of the Baha'is not serving in Bahauallah's household found work, usually keeping shops in the bazaar. This helped to ease the financial hardships that had afflicted them during the first months in Edirne.

Two of Bahauallah's children were born in Edirne, Diya'u'llah in 1864 and Badi'u'llah in 1867.

Bahauallah's stay in Edirne marked a crucial stage in the development of the Baha'i Faith. Most important, it was from Edirne that Bahauallah first made public announcement of his claim to prophethood. Most of the Tablets to the Kings were written in Edirne. Many tablets also announced and defended his claim to the Babi community. Messengers such as the historian Nabil carried the news of this claim to the Babis and won the allegiance of most of the Babi community of Iran and Iraq. A steady flow of pilgrims came to Edirne and carried away the news of Bahauallah's claim.

The second major development of the Edirne period was the open break with Mirza Yahya, the generally-recognized successor of the Bab. Mirza Yahya had grown increasingly jealous of

Bahau'llah's prestige. However, this had been concealed from the ordinary Babis, and Mirza Yahya had remained part of Bahau'llah's household. In Edirne, however, the dispute finally came into the open. After Bahau'llah formally confronted Mirza Yahya with his claim to be him whom God shall make manifest, the promised one of the Bab, Mirza Yahya responded with a counterclaim to prophethood. Affairs reached such a state that Mirza Yahya made two attempts to kill Bahau'llah, once by poison and once by suborning Bahau'llah's bath attendant. On 22 Shavval 1282/10 March 1866 Bahau'llah withdrew from the community to allow his followers to decide their allegiances for themselves. Most chose to follow Bahau'llah. Bahau'llah referred to this period as the *Ayyam-i Shidad* (the "days of stress") and the "most great separation."

Finally, it was in Edirne that Bahau'llah began to establish the laws of his own religion, composing, for example, the tablets containing the rituals to be followed during pilgrimage to the two Holy Houses of Shiraz and Baghdad, the prayers of fasting, and a summary of Baha'i law, as well as the Tablet of the Branch, which prefigured 'Abd al-Baha's later appointment as his successor.

During these years the Baha'is maintained excellent relations with the authorities and townspeople. Bahau'llah and 'Abd al-Baha were on visiting terms with several of the governors, as well as with consuls, missionaries, and the clergy, all of whom thought well of the character and piety of the Baha'is. Later some of these people came to visit in 'Akka. It was also in Edirne that Bahau'llah had his most extensive contact with Europeans.

In 1863–68 there were four governors of Edirne, at least three of whom are known to have been on good terms with the Baha'is: Muhammad-Amin Pasha Qibrisi, 1861–Apr. 1864, a former prime minister; Sulayman Pasha, Apr. 1864–Dec. 1864; 'Arif Pasha, Dec. 1864–Mar. 1866; Muhammad-Khurshid Pasha, Mar. 1866– , whose deputy was 'Aziz Pasha, later the governor of Beirut in 1889–92. When accusations were first made against Bahau'llah, Khurshid Pasha defended his innocence. Later, when the orders came to exile Bahau'llah, the Pasha left the city in protest, leaving

his deputy ‘Aziz Pasha to carry out the expulsion. ‘Aziz Pasha was a friend of ‘Abd al-Baha and later visited Bahauallah and ‘Abd al-Baha in ‘Akka.

Eventually, the dispute between the Baha’is and the Azalis came to the attention of the authorities. The decision was made to exile both parties to less sensitive areas. One morning in early August 1868, troops surrounded the house of Bahauallah. Despite the protests of the foreign consuls and the governor on their behalf, the Baha’is and Azalis were ordered to leave the city immediately. Bahauallah refused to leave until his steward could settle his debts. The property of the Baha’is was sold at auction at very low prices. Bahauallah and his companions left the city on 12 August 1868/22 Rabi‘ II 1285.

During their stay in Edirne, the Baha’i exiles rented a considerable number of houses and gardens. In addition, several other sites are also associated with Bahauallah’s stay.

The Khan-i ‘Arab was the two-story caravansary where Bahauallah was lodged during his first three nights in Edirne. It seems to have been located near the house of ‘Izzat Pasha, evidently in the southeastern part of the city near the Istanbul road. The accommodations there were poor. Others in the party stayed there somewhat longer. The Khan-i ‘Arab no longer exists.

Bahauallah and his family moved to a house near the Takyiy-i Mawlavi in the Muradiyya Quarter from the caravansary. It was too small for his family so they moved again after a week. Others of the party moved in from the caravansary after his departure. Bahauallah then moved to a larger house in the same area. His brothers, Yahya and Musa, lived with their families in a second house next door. These early residences in Edirne were all poorly built, draughty, and verminous. Since the winter was extremely cold and Bahauallah’s family had spent the previous winter in sweltering Baghdad, they were unprepared for the cold and suffered severely, especially the children, who were frequently sick. The sites of these first two houses were identified by Martha Root during her visit in 1933.



After six months or so, Bahauallah was able to rent the house of Amru'llah, a very large house across the street from the north entrance to the Salimiyya Mosque in the center of the city. This was a splendid three-story house covering a city block. The *andaruni* (inner family quarters) had thirty rooms. Bahauallah and his family occupied the top floor, Mirza Muhammad-Quli and his family the middle, and servants the bottom. The *biruni* (outer house) had four or five reception rooms on the top floor, as well as a kitchen. Other Baha'is occupied the middle floor. The house had a bath, cistern, and running water in the kitchen. Mirza Musa and Mirza Yahya occupied two other houses in the same quarter. Food for all three houses was prepared in the house of Amru'llah and was distributed to the poor as well. Meetings for prayer and to hear Bahauallah were regularly held in the reception rooms. Bahauallah lived in this house from 1864 until March 1866 and again later for a few months, probably during the first half of 1867. When the house was sold he moved to his final residence, the house of 'Izzat Pasha. The house was apparently named for its owner, one Amru'll'ah Big, but coincidentally its name means "Cause" or "command of God."

At the time of the open split with Mirza Yahya, Bahauallah moved to the house of Rida Big, where he lived with his family for a little less than a year, the first few months in total seclusion. It is now in Baha'i hands and has been rebuilt. Mirza Musa also had a house in the neighborhood, as did a number of Bahauallah's companions. Down the street is an orchard rented by Bahauallah, now also in Baha'i hands. The house of Rida Big had an *andaruni* and a small *biruni*, but the latter had a very large walled garden.

After the sale of the house of Amru'llah, Bahauallah rented the house of 'Izzat Aqa in the southeastern part of the city, not far from the Khan-i 'Arab. This was another large house with a fine view of the river and countryside. There were two large courtyards with flowers and trees. Bahauallah lived here for about eleven months. His companions had another house in the same area.

Mishkin-Qalam, the calligrapher, and Mirza Musa also had houses in the area which Bahauallah visited on occasion.

Also associated with Bahauallah is the Muradiyya mosque and Takyiy-i Mawlavi, which together form a fine fifteenth century mosque complex. Originally it was built for the Mawlavi dervishes, the mystical order founded by the poet Rumi and much patronized by the Ottoman Sultans. When the building became a mosque, a *takya*—dervish monastery—was built next door. Subsidiary charitable foundations were added to the complex: baths, a hospital, a seminary, a bakery, and an almshouse. Several of the Baha’i houses were close to this mosque, and Bahauallah is known to have visited it. It still stands.

The Salimiyya Mosque is the great domed royal mosque of Edirne. Built for the cultured and dissolute Sultan Salim II, “the Sot,” this wonderful building was the masterwork of Sinan, the greatest architect of the Ottomans. Its dome and minarets dominate the city, as they have since 1575. It was in this mosque that Mirza Yahya challenged Bahauallah to meet him to publicly dispute their claims. Bahauallah came to the mosque at the appointed time, but Mirza Yahya failed to appear.

For accounts of Bahauallah’s time in Edirne, see ‘Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 161–180, Balyuzi, *Baha’u’llah* 217–59, 460–62, Taherzadeh 2, Momen, *Babi* 185–200, 205–7, 234–35, 487, Balyuzi, *‘Abdu’l-Baha* 19–26, ‘Abd al-Baha, *Traveller’s* 55–59, Phelps, *Life* 47–69, Blomfield, *Chosen* 60–64, Shoghi Effendi, *Baha’i* 189.

### **Edirne after Bahauallah**

Edirne is mentioned often in the later writings of Bahauallah, usually as the “Land of Mystery.” It is often associated with the open proclamation of his prophetic mission. The most important direct references to Edirne in Bahauallah’s writings are the prophecies found in the Suriy-i Ra’is and some other tablets of great destruction and political turmoil in the Edirne area and of Sultan ‘Abd al-‘Aziz’s impending loss of these territories. The

fulfilment of these prophecies ten years later greatly raised Bahauallah's prestige and was a proof often cited by Baha'i teachers over the next several decades. Another passage in the *Suriy-i Ra'is* states that "this Youth hath departed out of this country and deposited beneath every tree and every stone a trust, which God will ere long bring forth through the power of truth."

'Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 181. Persian sources on the Edirne period, mainly important for Bahauallah's prophecies concerning Edirne, are Ishraq-Khavari, *Ma'ida* 8:27–28, Mazandarani, *Amr* 2:284–92, 4:453–58, Ishraq-Khavari, *Rahiq* 1:55–56, 67–72, *Qamus-i Tawqi'* 1:100–104, Ishraq-Khavari, *Da'irat* 2:282, 283, 7:915. Other references to these prophecies and related subjects include 'Abd al-Baha, *Promulgation* 398, Shoghi Effendi, *World* 178, Shoghi Effendi, *Promised* 62, 65, *Iqt.* 74, 'Abd al-Baha, *Tablets* 213, Ishraq-Khavari, *Ma'ida* 4:277, 7:194–95, Bahauallah, *Epistle* 132, Bahauallah, *Athar* 4:336, 'Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 2:213, Zarqani, *Badayi'* 1:357, 2:194.

Bahauallah's prophecies concerning Edirne were realized when war broke out with Russia and several Balkan Christian states soon after the fall of 'Abd al-'Aziz in 1876. The war of 1877–78 with Russia began with an initial success as the Turks heroically defended Plevna in Bulgaria against a Russian siege. However, when the Turks attempted to break out, they were defeated. The Russians poured south and the Muslim population of Bulgaria and Rumelia fled before them, dying in thousands from cold, hunger, disease, and Russian shells in that horrible winter. All the chief towns of European Turkey fell, Edirne included. The city and its population, particularly the Muslims, suffered greatly from that occupation. Most of the Turkish territory north of Edirne was lost to the new Christian state of Bulgaria.

After the Russians withdrew, the town recovered for a time, and in 1890 its population was still about 87,000. However, it was once more devastated in the Balkan Wars of 1912–13. The Turkish defeats in October 1912 left Edirne besieged by the

Bulgarians. The Turks held out there until March 1913. When the Bulgarians began fighting with their former allies over the spoils of the war, the Turks were able to reoccupy Edirne. After the establishment of modern Turkey in 1923, the Greek population abandoned the town as part of the population exchanges between the two countries. The population—65,000 in 1911—had dropped to 34,500 in 1927.

Today Edirne is a border town with a population of 72,000 (1980), the first stop for travellers entering Turkey by train from Western Europe. It is the capital of the province of the same name. The area grows various grains and fruits.

### **The modern Baha’i community**

After Bahauallah’s departure in 1868, no Baha’is lived in or visited Edirne for many decades. The first recorded Baha’i visit to the city was that of Martha Root and Marion Jack, 17 October–6 November 1933. Shoghi Effendi had supplied them with a list of the houses and sites associated with Bahauallah. In the course of their visit they were able to identify four houses—all then in ruins after five wars—in which Bahauallah had lived, as well as several other sites. Though sixty-five years had passed since Bahauallah’s departure, they were able to find two old men who remembered “Baha’i Big” and “Abbas Big” and who were able to supply them with information about the Baha’i households.

By 1963 a local spiritual assembly had been established in Edirne with the aid of pioneers from Iran, and two sites associated with Bahauallah—the house of Rida Big and a nearby orchard—were in Baha’i hands. This house has been rebuilt though not fully restored and furnished. Pilgrims occasionally visit. Two major anniversaries of events in Bahauallah’s life were observed in Edirne. On 11–12 December 1963 some seventy Turkish Baha’is visited the city to observe the centenary of Bahauallah’s arrival there. In 1967 five Hands of the Cause came to commemorate the centenary of the revelation of the Suriy-i Muluk.

For Martha Root's account of her visit to Edirne, see *Baha'i World* 5:581–93, reprinted in Garis, *Root* 179–96. This article contains photographs of most of the important Baha'i sites. See also Garis, *Root* 393–97. On the modern Baha'i community of Edirne and the house of Rida Big, see *Baha'i World* 14:3, *Baha'i News* 328 (6/1958) 14, 397 (4/1964) 3–4, 434 (5/1967) 2.

### **Sultan 'Abd al-'Aziz and his Ministers**

The period from Bahauallah's arrival in Istanbul in 1863 to his de facto release from confinement in 'Akka in 1877 coincided with the important political developments that took place in the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Sultan 'Abd al-'Aziz. He and his ministers 'Ali Pasha and Fu'ad Pasha were the Ottoman officials responsible for Bahauallah's successive exiles, and each was the recipient of important tablets from Bahauallah. Ottoman officials were apparently impressed with Bahauallah personally, and 'Ali Pasha praised his character and beliefs to foreign diplomats. However, the Ottomans were mainly interested in the Babis as a pawn in Turkish-Iranian relations. By favoring or suppressing the Babis, they could exercise some influence on the Persian government. Bahauallah, however, held himself aloof from such machinations, refusing even to return the visits of Turkish officials. This evidently irritated the Sultan, and the Ottoman government yielded to the Iranian entreaties to send Bahauallah away from Istanbul. They were also apparently becoming concerned about the possibility of Babi views on theocratic government spreading and undermining Ottoman authority.

The reasons for Bahauallah's final exile, to 'Akka, are not absolutely clear. Evidently, the agitation of the Azalis in Istanbul aroused the implausible fear that Bahauallah was conspiring with the Bulgarians. (Balyuzi, *Baha'u'llah* 254.) Foreign diplomats were told that the Baha'is threatened to cause unrest by their efforts to convert Muslims. Although there do not seem to have

been converts in Edirne, a number of Baha'is had drifted into the city. There also had been trouble in Baghdad occasioned by the conversion of an Ottoman officer of Sunni clerical background. Bahauallah Himself believed that the Persian government was at least partly responsible. In any case, the Baha'is were treated with noticeable harshness in their expulsion from Edirne and in their initial conditions of imprisonment in 'Akka.

In the late 1860s a further concern began to trouble the Ottoman government. A group of young intellectuals, the Young Ottomans, had started agitating for constitutional reform. Bahauallah's letters to the kings, written mostly during the Edirne period, also advocated constitutional monarchy. A number of the Young Ottomans were in touch with Bahauallah and 'Abd al-Baha, both because Bahauallah and 'Abd al-Baha were perceived as belonging to corresponding social and intellectual circles in Iran and because some of the Young Ottomans were imprisoned in 'Akka at the same time as Bahauallah. See Necati Alkan's articles in the bibliography on these links. Thus during the last decades of Bahauallah's life, he was imprisoned not just because of old fears of Babi revolution but also because of the threat of liberal reform.

Bahauallah addressed the Ottoman government in a number of his works, especially during the period 1863–73. A number of tablets, notably the *Suriy-i Muluk* and the lost *Lawh-i 'Abd al-'Aziz va-Wukala*, addressed the Sultan directly, sternly criticizing the quality of his government. Bahauallah also complained of the unjust treatment he had endured at the hands of the Ottoman government, especially after his exile to 'Akka. The Persian *Lawh-i Ra'is*, for example, catalogs the sufferings endured by the Baha'i exiles during the early months in the Barracks of 'Akka. The *Kitab-i Aqdas*, completed in 1873, also denounces the tyranny of the regime of 'Abd al-'Aziz.

For Bahauallah's relations with the Ottomans, see 'Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 146–47, 172–75, 179, 181, 225; Momen, *Babi* 182–200; as well as the sources cited in elsewhere in this chapter.

## **Sultan ‘Abd al-‘Aziz**

Sultan ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ("Abdülaziz." b. 9 Feb. 1830. d. June 1876) was the thirty-second Ottoman Sultan. Bahauallah’s exiles to Istanbul, Edirne, and ‘Akka all took place during his reign, and it was only after his overthrow and death the Bahauallah regained relative freedom.

The third son of the reforming Sultan Mahmud II, ‘Abd al-‘Aziz came to the throne after the early death of his brother ‘Abd al-Majid I on 25 June 1861. In the early years of his reign he was under the influence of his two great ministers ‘Ali and Fu’ad Pasha, who were thus able to continue the Tanzimat reforms. European-style reforms were made in such areas as provincial administration, education, civil law, and the treatment of minorities and foreigners. He himself toured Western Europe, the first Ottoman sultan to do so. On the other hand, unrest continued in the Balkans, much encouraged by Russia. There were revolts in Montenegro, Serbia, Herzegovina, Bulgaria, and Crete, eventually leading to the loss of much territory in Europe.

After the deaths of Fu’ad and ‘Ali Pasha in 1869 and 1871, ‘Abd al-‘Aziz became increasingly autocratic and reactionary. Though he aligned the Ottoman Empire with Russia, a traditional enemy, unrest continued in the Balkans, culminating in a bloody uprising in Bulgaria in 1875–76. Beginning in 1873 famine struck Anatolia. In one particularly severe winter wolves killed animals and people in the suburbs of Istanbul. The “Young Ottomans,” a loose network of constitutionalist reformers, agitated against the regime. Finally, the government was forced in 1875 to default on the huge public debt accumulated through years of deficits, triggering a major financial crisis and panic.

Midhat Pasha, the president of the Council of State and a sympathizer with the Young Ottomans, obtained a *fatva* from the Mufti of Istanbul accusing the Sultan of madness, incompetence, and corruption, and with the support of other ministers, moved to depose him. Before dawn on 30 May 1876 warships and troops

surrounded the palace. Another ship threatened the Russian embassy to prevent intervention from that quarter. At dawn a salute of 101 guns from the warships announced the fall of ‘Abd al-‘Aziz. A few days later he was dead, though whether by suicide or murder is unclear.

There is not much evidence of ‘Abd al-‘Aziz’s own attitude towards Bahauallah. Most likely he shared the fears of his chief ministers about possible Babi political ambitions. He did personally endorse Bahauallah’s final exile to ‘Akka and most probably the two earlier exiles.

On his part Bahauallah bitterly resented his treatment at the hands of ‘Abd al-‘Aziz. He had done nothing against the Ottoman government: there was no justification for the harsh manner in which he and his followers had been treated. Thus, he denounces ‘Abd al-‘Aziz in a number of tablets. The injustice of ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, he more than once told visiting pilgrims, was greater than that of Nasir al-Din Shah, for the latter had actually been the object of an attempted assassination by Babis, whereas ‘Abd al-‘Aziz had no just cause for complaint against Bahauallah or the Babis.

Soon after the death of Fu’ad Pasha in 1869, Bahauallah prophesied the deaths of ‘Ali Pasha and of ‘Abd al-‘Aziz in Suriy-i Fu’ad and Lawh-i Ra’is. This prediction was well known. Thus the dramatic fall of ‘Abd al-‘Aziz greatly raised Bahauallah’s prestige and was a factor in the conversions of at least two eminent Baha’is: ‘Azizu’llah Jadhhab and Mirza Abu al-Fadl Gulpaygani. Since it was in 1877 that Bahauallah was finally able to leave ‘Akka and move the Mazra‘a, it seems probable that his relative freedom was a byproduct of the brief period of constitutional government under Midhat Pasha and the Young Ottomans.

‘Abd al-‘Aziz is addressed directly at least twice in the writings of Bahauallah. In addition, he is mentioned in several other tablets, as well as in the writings of Shoghi Effendi.

The Lawh ‘Abd al-‘Aziz va-Wukala’, “Tablet to ‘Abd al-‘Aziz and his Ministers,” was the first of Bahauallah’s letters to kings and his reply to the Sultan’s order exiling him to Edirne.



The order had been brought by the brother-in-law of the prime minister. Bahauallah refused to see this man, who was received instead by ‘Abd al-Baha and Mirza Musa, Bahauallah’s brother. Bahauallah promised to send a reply within three days. The next day Shamsi Big, Bahauallah’s host, took this tablet in a sealed envelope to the prime minister. Shamsi Big told the Baha’is that the prime minister turned pale on reading it and said, “It is as if the King of Kings were issuing his behest to his humblest vassal king and regulating his conduct.” On seeing this reaction, Shamsi Big discreetly left.

The text of this tablet is lost, but Nabil reports that it was long, began with an address to the Sultan, and included passages addressed to the ministers condemning their conduct and character. It would thus seem to have been similar in content to the passages addressed to the Sultan and his ministers in the slightly later Surat al-Muluk. There is doubt as to the identity of the recipient. Shoghi Effendi identifies him as ‘Ali Pasha, the prime minister. However, ‘Ali Pasha was foreign minister at this time and Fu’ad Pasha prime minister.

The most important surviving passage addressed to Sultan ‘Abd al-‘Aziz is contained in the Surat al-Muluk, which also addresses the kings of the earth as a group. Bahauallah tells the Sultan that the selflessness of his advice is shown by the fact that he did not ask the Sultan for anything. He warns him against corrupt ministers. He should surround himself with just ministers with whom he consults about the good of the people. He should not rely on those who do not believe in God or who disobey divine law, for such people are not trustworthy. He should not allow others to act for him but should personally attend to matters of state. He should act with justice, trust in God, and observe moderation. He should pay special attention to the needs of the poor and prevent his ministers from enriching themselves at the expense of the people, for in Istanbul Bahauallah saw that worthless people ruled over honorable people. (This is repeated in the apostrophe to Constantinople in the Kitab-i Aqdas: “We behold in

thee the foolish ruling over the wise, and darkness vaunting itself against the light.") The king is the shadow of God on earth and should behave accordingly. The passage ends with Bahauallah complaining of the unjust suffering he has had to endure but reaffirming his loyalty and praying for the well-being of the Sultan.

In Shoghi Effendi's work on the letters to the kings, *The Promised Day Is Come*, Shoghi Effendi quotes the passages of the Surat al-Muluk addressed to Sultan 'Abd al-'Aziz, as well as the apostrophe to Constantinople from the Kitab-i Aqdas. A major theme of this work is the destruction of the individuals, states, and religious institutions hostile to Bahauallah and his Faith. Shoghi Effendi pairs 'Abd al-'Aziz with Nasir al-Din Shah but identifies him as more powerful than the Shah and more responsible for the sufferings of Bahauallah. He quotes the prophecies of the Lawh-i Ra'is of the destruction and loss of the lands around Edirne and of the Lawh-i Fu'ad of the death of 'Ali Pasha and the Sultan himself.

Shoghi Effendi then traces the swift decline of Ottoman Turkey: the loss of European and African territory during the reign of 'Abd al-Hamid II, the loss of the remaining Near Eastern and Balkan territories during and after World War I, along with the death of a large fraction of the empire's population due to war, disease, starvation, and massacre. Finally came the extinction of the six-hundred year old dynasty along with the title of caliph supposedly inherited from Muhammad Himself. Turkey was made a secular state and the capital was moved to Ankara. This, Shoghi Effendi states, was the retributive justice of God on 'Abd al-'Aziz and his successors. Similar passages occur elsewhere in Shoghi Effendi's writings, notably in Shoghi Effendi, *World* 174–76.

On 'Abd al-'Aziz and the tablets addressed to him see *EI2* "'Abd al-'Aziz"; 'Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 146, 158–60, 172–73, 179, 181, 195, 208, 225; Balyuzi, *Baha'u'llah* 154, 199, 206–7, 260–62, 307, 359–61, 379, 411–13, 476; Momen, *Babi* 199, 311n., 485; Balyuzi, *Eminent* 183; Mu'ayyad, *Khatirat* 217, 234; Sulaymani, *Masabih* 4:227–28, 7:461. Shoghi Effendi, *Promised* 19, 61–66, 71; Shoghi Effendi,

*World* 174–79. For his portraits see Balyuzi, *Baha’u’llah* 209, 263. The text of the relevant parts of Surat al-Muluk is found in Bahauallah, *Alvah...bi-Muluk* 35–49. The English translation is in Bahauallah, *Gleanings* cxiv, Shoghi Effendi, *Promised* 37–40, Bahauallah, *Proclamation* 47–54. A facsimile of the Farman banishing Bahauallah to ‘Akka is found in *Baha’i World* 15:50 and Balyuzi, *Baha’u’llah* 284.

### **‘Ali Pasha**

Muhammad Amin ‘Ali Pasha (Mehmed Emin Ali Paşa; d. Bebek near Istanbul 7 Sept. 1871.) was the Ottoman statesman and diplomat who was foreign minister at the time of Bahauallah’s exiles to Istanbul and Edirne and prime minister when he was exiled to ‘Akka. He was the “chief” addressed in the two tablets known as Lawh-i Ra’is.

The son of an Istanbul shopkeeper, he was born in Istanbul in February 1815 and entered government service at the age of fourteen in the secretariat of the court. His nickname ‘Ali ("lofty") referred either to his abilities or to his short stature. Since he knew some French, he was appointed to the Translation Bureau in 1833. The Translation Bureau was one of the reforms of Mahmud II and served as a school of foreign languages and training institute for diplomats. As one of the few modern educational institutions in the country, it produced many of the reforming statemen of the middle of the century.

He rose rapidly in the diplomatic service and was sent to Vienna in 1836, St. Petersburg in 1837, and London in 1838 where he was the counsellor. In 1840 he was a deputy to the counsellor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and became ambassador to Great Britain the following year. In 1845 he was counsellor to the Foreign Ministry and became foreign minister for the first time the following year when his mentor Rashid Pasha was promoted to prime minister. He was dismissed for a few months in 1848 but soon restored. He continued in this post until 1852 when he

became prime minister (Grand Vazir, Sadr-i A‘zam) for two months after the dismissal of Rashid Pasha. In the next two years he briefly held two minor governorships before returning to the Foreign Ministry. Thereafter he remained in high office most of the rest of his life, alternating as foreign minister and prime minister with his friend and fellow-reformer Fu‘ad Pasha. He was foreign minister 1854–55, 1857–58, July 1861, Nov. 1861–67, and 1869–71. He was prime minister (Grand Vizier) five times: 1852, 1855–56, 1858–59, 1861, and 1867–71.

‘Ali Pasha was greatly respected by European statesmen for his integrity, personal charm, diplomatic skill, and mastery of French. This served to protect him, since Sultan ‘Abd al-‘Aziz would have been happy to be rid of him. As a diplomat he worked tirelessly to placate the European powers who threatened to dismember the empire. He was also able to settle peacefully the rebellion in Crete.

At home he was less popular. The sultan disliked him for his attempts to restrain the arbitrary exercise of royal power, to protect the prerogatives of ministers, and to strengthen the rule of law. The younger reformers, the so-called “Young Ottomans”—attacked him because he did not support the movement for a constitution. Nonetheless, under his ministry a number of important reforms of the government structure were carried out, railroads begun, and improvements made in education, the army, and the navy.

William Howard Russell, the British war correspondent, said of him in 1869,

Aali Pasha is a very small, slight, sallow-faced man, with two very penetrating honest-looking eyes. He has a delicate air, and looks timorous and nervous; and his standing attitude is one of rather imbecile deference to everybody, but in the presence of the Sultan this becomes almost prostration. Yet, he is courageous, bold, enlightened, honest, and just; full of zeal for the interests of his country, and unceasing in his efforts for its improvement.

When Bahauallah came to Istanbul, ‘Ali Pasha was serving his fourth term as foreign minister and his ally Fu’ad Pasha was prime minister. He initially summoned Bahauallah to Istanbul at the urging of the Persian ambassador, who was anxious to have him removed from the vicinity of the Persian border and the Shi‘i shrines. He seems to have been favorably impressed by Bahauallah. In 1866 the Austrian ambassador, Prokesch von Osten, reported:

‘Ali Pasha has spoken to me with great veneration of the Bab, interned at Adrianople, who he says is a man of great distinction, exemplary conduct, great moderation, and a most dignified figure. He has spoken to me of Babism as a doctrine which is worthy of high esteem, and which destroys certain anomalies that Islam has taken from Jewish and Christian doctrines, for example this conflict between a God who is omnipotent and yet powerless against the principle of evil; eternal punishments, etc. etc. But politically he considers Babism unacceptable as much in Persia as in Turkey, because it only allows legal sovereignty in the Imamate, while the Osmalis for example, he claims, separate temporal from spiritual power. The Bab, at Adrianople, is defrayed all expenses by the order of and to the charge of the Persian government.

For general accounts of his life see *EI2*, s.v. “‘Ali Pasha Muhammad Amin,” as well as *EB* “‘Ali Pasa, Mehmed Emin,” Momen, *Babi* 491, Balyuzi, *Baha’u’llah* 469. For information on his attitudes towards the Baha’is, see Momen, *Babi* 187, 191, 311n. Bahauallah’s statements about him are summarized in ‘Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 174, 208, 231–32.

Two years later, the dispute between the Azalis and the Baha’is led him to believe that Bahauallah and his followers had political ambitions and were attempting to spread their religion in Turkish territory, and that they were likely to cause disturbances. Thus Bahauallah was to be exiled to a less sensitive area. Bahauallah viewed this as a clear injustice, motivated by nothing more than political expediency, particularly in view of the harsh conditions of

his imprisonment in ‘Akka. He prophesied the downfall of both Fu’ad and ‘Ali Pasha.

Lawh-i Ra’is, “Tablet of the Chief,” is the title of two tablets addressed to ‘Ali Pasha. The Arabic Lawh-i Ra’is, also known as Lawh-i Ra’is I or Surat al-Ra’is (or “Suriy-i Ra’is”) was composed during the journey from Edirne to Gallipoli. It was begun at Kesan (Kashana), where the exiles spent the night of 14-15 August 1868, and was finished at Gyawur-Kyuy soon after. It is written in an elevated Arabic style and is some twenty pages in length. The opening pages are addressed to ‘Ali Pasha. Most of the tablet, however, is addressed to Haji Muhammad-Isma‘il Kashani, known as Dhabih—“sacrifice”—or Anis—“companion”—by which he is called in this tablet. Dhabih and some others had arrived in Edirne, only to find Bahauallah’s house guarded by troops. Unable to meet Bahauallah, he had gone to Gallipoli. The portions of the Surat al-Ra’is addressed to him are intended to console him for his failure to meet Bahauallah. Bahauallah also answers a question about the nature of the soul that Dhabih had asked in a letter. Dhabih was able to meet Bahauallah in a public bath in Gallipoli a few days after the completion of this tablet. Dhabih died in Tabriz about 1880.

The opening pages of the Surat al-Ra’is are a stern denunciation of ‘Ali Pasha for his persecution of Bahauallah. Addressing him bluntly as “O chief,” Bahauallah tells him that he has no power to hinder the Cause of God by his “grunting” or the “barking” of those around him. His deeds have caused Muhammad to mourn. He has allied himself with the “chief of Iran”—meaning either the Shah or the Persian ambassador in Turkey—to harm Bahauallah. (‘Ali and Fu’ad Pasha both denied to foreign diplomats that the urgings of the Persian government had anything to do with Bahauallah’s exile.) Bahauallah compares him to the rulers who had opposed Muhammad, Moses, and Abraham. The Shah of Iran had killed the Bab, but Bahauallah had nonetheless arisen to revive his religion. He prophesies that there will be great afflictions and turmoil in the region of Edirne and that it will pass

out from under the authority of the Turkish Sultan. Finally, Bahauallah states that his only purpose is “to quicken the world and unite all its peoples.”

Bahauallah then addresses Dhabih. He tells of how he and his family and followers awoke to find the house surrounded by soldiers barring all from coming or going, even keeping them from obtaining food the first night. The people of the town, hearing that they were to be sent away, gathered around the house weeping—but the grief of the Christians was greater than that of the Muslims. One of the Baha’is, Haji Ja’far Tabrizi, thinking that he was to be separated from Bahauallah, cut his own throat. Another of Bahauallah’s followers had done this in Baghdad. Though this was contrary to divine law, it showed the depth of their love. Such a thing had not been seen in past religions. Bahauallah praises Dhabih and seeks to console him. This is a day the prophets of the past all longed to attain. His followers should thus not let afflictions discourage them. He prophesies that God will raise up a king to protect his followers. He prays for Dhabih’s success in spreading his faith during his travels and compares Dhabih’s happy state with that of those people who have rejected Bahauallah.

Bahauallah also replies to Dhabih’s question about the soul, regretting that he could not have heard the answer from Bahauallah’s own lips. Saying that he does not wish to dwell on what people have said in the past, he gives a brief account of the soul, explaining that “soul,” “spirit,” “mind,” “vision,” and the like all represent the same entity, differentiated by the circumstances under which they are exercised. He refers Dhabih to another tablet where the matter is explained fully.

Bahauallah also mentions one “Ali” who had been in Baghdad with Bahauallah and who had come to Edirne, only to find him a prisoner. The tablet closes with a prayer that Dhabih will not be hindered from meeting Bahauallah in Gallipoli.

On the Arabic Surat al-Ra’is, see Taherzadeh 2:411–21; Ishraq-Khavari, *Muhadirat* 602–6, 687, 964; Ishraq-Khavari, *Ganj* 109–11; ‘Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 172, 174, 179–80;

Shoghi Effendi, *Promised* 48; Ishraq-Khavari, *Da'irat* 13:2058. The Arabic text is found in Bahauallah, *Athar Muluk* 203–25, Bahauallah, *Majmu'ah* 87–102, Surat al-Haykal 129–43. Translated excerpts are found in 'Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 174, 179–80, Shoghi Effendi, *World* 178, Taherzadeh 2:414–16.

The Persian Lawh-i Ra'is, also known as Lawh-i Ra'is II and occasionally Suriy-i Ra'is, is a letter to 'Ali Pasha written not long after Bahauallah's arrival in 'Akka, probably before the end of 1868. It is a strong protest at the injustice of the imprisonment of Bahauallah, his companions, and their dependents. The title is by analogy to the earlier tablet to 'Ali Pasha, for the prime minister is not addressed as "Ra'is" in this tablet. It is in Persian and is about twenty pages long. Bahauallah begins by criticizing 'Ali Pasha's presumption of lofty rank. The heading of the tablet—"He is the Master by right"—reminds him that God is the true ruler. Bahauallah then addresses him as "thou who reckons thyself the highest of men"—a pun on his name 'Ali, "lofty." He reminds him that all the Prophets of God, though they came to reform the world, were, like Bahauallah, branded as trouble-makers by the rulers of their time. However, even if this accusation were true, the women and children who were imprisoned with Bahauallah had done nothing wrong.

Bahauallah then describes some episodes of his exile from Edirne to 'Akka: how some companions who were not included in the order paid their own way to 'Akka, the sufferings of the children forced to change from ship to ship, how two of his companions tried to kill themselves when faced with separation, how they were denied food and water during the first night in 'Akka, the three loaves of inedible bread that was the daily food ration, and the death and disrespectful burial of two of the exiles. Such treatment was manifest injustice, since the people of Edirne could testify to the piety and detachment of Bahauallah and his companions. Bahauallah prophesies that as a result, the wrath of God would seize 'Ali Pasha and his government. Warnings had



come before—for example, when a large part of Istanbul burned—but they had not heeded. Now it is too late: the wrath of God is so great to allow him to repent.

Bahau'llah reminds him that neither pomp nor abasement lasts forever. To illustrate this, Bahau'llah tells of an incident from his youth. His older brother was getting married, and Bahau'llah's father had arranged a puppet show as part of the festivities. Bahau'llah watched in fascination as the puppet-king and the members of his court come on stage and take their places. A thief is executed and blood spurts from the severed neck. The king dispatches soldiers to fight a rebel, and from behind the curtain the sounds of cannon are heard. After the show, Bahau'llah saw a man come out with a box under his arm. Bahau'llah asked him where the king was and all the members of his court. The man said they were all in the box. From that day on, says Bahau'llah, all the glory of the world has been like that puppet show in his eyes and of no value. Any perceptive person, he says, knows that worldly glory will soon be placed in the box of the grave. Even if a man is not given to know God, he ought at least to pass his life with prudence and justice. Nevertheless, most people are asleep and infatuated with worldly things. They are like the drunken man who fell in love with a dog, only realizing what his lover was when morning came. 'Ali Pasha himself is subject to the vilest ruler: his own self and passion. If he examined his own soul, he would realize his own abasement.

Bahau'llah tells how, when he reached Gallipoli on his way to 'Akka, he had asked a Turkish officer named 'Umar escorting him to arrange a ten-minute interview with the Sultan at which the Sultan might ask him for whatever miracle or proof he thought sufficient to prove the truth of Bahau'llah's revelation. If Bahau'llah was able to produce it, he and his companions should be freed and left to their own devices. But no word came from the Sultan or from the officer. Though it was not fitting for the Manifestation of God to go before another, Bahau'llah made this offer out of consideration for the children and women who shared

his imprisonment and exile. The tablet closes with Bahau'llah's advice to 'Ali Pasha to ask God to let him see the good and evil of his own actions.

On the Persian Lawh-i Ra'is, see Taherzadeh 3:33–37, Ishraq-Khavari, *Ganj* 121–23, Balyuzi, *Baha'u'llah* 173, Ishraq-Khavari, *Da'irat* 13:2058. The text is found in Bahau'llah, *Athar*: Muluk 227–47, Majmu'a (Eg.) 102–16. Translations of excerpts are found in 'Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 187, Shoghi Effendi, *Promised* 46, 62.

These two tablets and the related Lawh-i Fu'ad, with their grim prophecies of affliction for the Ottoman Empire and its leaders were soon widely circulated among the Baha'is and were recognized as being of special importance. Bahau'llah himself in a later tablet said that “from the moment the Suriy-i Ra'is was revealed until the present day, neither hath the world been tranquilized, nor have the hearts of its peoples been at rest.” (Bahau'llah, *Gleanings*, sect. 16.3.) They were in circulation by the mid-1870s and were included in early published collections of the works of Bahau'llah. Their importance for early Baha'i teachings lies in the fact that their prophecies were well known before the dramatic fall of Sultan 'Abd al-'Aziz in 1876.

### **Fu'ad Pasha**

'Ali Pasha's friend and ally, Keçeci-Zada Muhammad Fu'ad Pasha, was born in Istanbul in 1815. His father, 'Izzat Mulla, was a religious judge and poet of some importance who lived an adventurous life in and out of royal favor. In 1829 'Izzat Mulla was exiled to Sivas, and Fu'ad left the theological seminary to study at the new modern medical school in Istanbul. He spent three years as an army doctor in Tripoli, Libya. Having learned French in medical school, he was able in 1837 to obtain an appointment to the Translation Bureau, which also served as a training school for the modern diplomatic corps. Over the next fifteen years he rose rapidly as a diplomat and protege of the reformer Rashid Pasha, serving in London (where he was translator

and later first secretary when ‘Ali Pasha was ambassador), Spain, Rumania, and Russia, as well as holding various high offices and commissions in Istanbul.

In 1852 he was appointed foreign minister for the first time under his friend ‘Ali Pasha and dealt with crises over Montenegro and the Christian holy places in Jerusalem. He was again foreign minister in 1855–56, 1858–60, 1861, and 1867. He was also prime minister in 1861–63 and 1863–66, during which time ‘Ali Pasha served as foreign minister. During 1863–67 he was also minister of war. He held several other senior posts at various times and was sent on a number of special missions, notably the suppression of the Greek revolt in Thessaly and Epirus in 1854–55 and the Lebanese civil war in 1860–61.

Fu’ad Pasha was one of the principal figures of the Tanzimat reforms of the middle of the nineteenth century. He was determined to reshape the Ottoman Empire in a more European mold. Nonetheless, his efforts were necessarily less devoted to positive reforms than to fending off external threats to the empire and internal threats to the reforms by conservatives, notably from the Sultan himself. He was criticized by the younger reformers because of his lack of interest in representative government. He was also interested in linguistic reform and in 1850 wrote the first modern Ottoman Turkish grammar with Ahmad Jawdat, a liberal cleric who was another of Rashid Pasha’s reformist proteges. He accompanied the Sultan to Europe in 1867. Exhausted by overwork, he went to France to rest in 1868–69. He died of a heart attack in Nice 12 February 1869. (For his life and career, see *EI2* “Fu’ad Pasha,” Balyuzi, *Baha’u’llah* 471–72, Momen, *Babi* 501.)

Fu’ad Pasha was prime minister at the time of Bahauallah’s arrival in Istanbul and foreign minister at the time of his exile to ‘Akka. As such he answered the inquiries of foreign diplomats made on Bahauallah’s behalf. His policy is succinctly stated in his reply to the inquiries of the Austrian ambassador:

On representing to Fuad Pasha the intolerant acts of the Ottoman Government towards the Babeer Sect, he was

informed by His Highness that the Porte had ordered Mirza Hussein Ali and his adherents to be deported to Tripoli in Africa on account of their having tried to propagate religious dissensions in the Mahomedan Element in Roumelia; that the Porte was entirely responsible for this measure, the Persian Legation having taken to part in it; and that the subvention of 5000 piasters per month which was allowed to the Mirza by the Authorities at Adrianople would not be discontinued at Tripoli. (Momen, *Babi* 192.)

The idea of exiling Bahauallah to Tripoli in Libya perhaps reflects Fu'ad Pasha's memory of three years as a young army officer in that desolate spot.

For his relations with Baha'is see Momen, *Babi* 187, 191, 311n; Balyuzi, *Baha'u'llah* 154, 199, 206 (with photo); 'Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 146, 174, 208, 231–32.

Bahauallah had prophesied his fall in the Surat al-Ra'is, and comments on his death in the Suriy-i or Lawh-i Fu'ad, an Arabic tablet written to Shaykh Kazim Samandar, probably soon after Fu'ad Pasha's death in 1869. The Suriy-i Fu'ad is written in the style of the passages about Hell in the Qur'an and contains many allusions to the Qur'anic narratives of the punishment of the ancient nations that persecuted the prophets. It was aptly described by Baron Rosen as "a sort of hymn of triumph on the occasion of the death of the most implacable enemies of the new religion." Because of its accurate prophecies of the fall of 'Ali Pasha and Sultan 'Abd al-'Aziz, it was widely circulated during the time of Bahauallah and was included in one of the collections of Baha'i scripture published in India during his lifetime. This tablet is also known as "Lawh-i Kaf-Za, "Tablet of K. Z." The tablet begins with these letters, which are an abbreviation of Kazim, the name of the recipient.

After counselling Samandar to be steadfast, Bahauallah announces the death of Fu'ad Pasha: "God has taken the greatest of those who issued the decree against us." Using the narrative style of the Qur'an, he describes how Fu'ad Pasha fled to France,

seeking the help of physicians against the wrath of God. A dialogue then takes place in which Fu'ad Pasha pleads with the avenging angel for his life, citing his wealth and high position as reason to be spared. But there is no escape for him: the angels of hell summon him to the punishment prepared for him, reminding him of the great injustice he committed in making prisoners of the Holy Family. Bahauallah then prophesies the downfall of 'Ali Pasha, the other minister involved in his exiles, and of Sultan 'Abd al-'Aziz himself—"their Chief who ruleth the land."

Bahauallah once again exhorts Samandar to remain steadfast against the lies of the Azalis, for God has also taken Mirza Mahdi Gilani, the Azali in Istanbul. This man had written a treatise against Bahauallah, to which Bahauallah's *Kitab-i Badi'* was a reply. A second narrative depicts Mirza Mahdi's pleadings with the angel of death. These stories, Bahauallah says, are told to console Samandar.

The text of *Lawh-i Fu'ad* is published in Bahauallah, *Mubin* 210–14 and Rosen, *Collections* 6:231–33. A sentence is translated in Shoghi Effendi, *Promised* 63. For further information on the tablet see Taherzadeh 3:87, Ishraq-Khavari, *Ganj* 192–93, Ishraq-Khavari, *Da'irat* 13:1961, 2071, 2073–74.

## **The Last Years of the Ottoman Empire**

In 1876 the loose group of reformist exiled intellectuals and politicians known as the Young Ottomans had succeeded in deposing 'Abd al-'Aziz on grounds of misgovernment and madness. The result was a brief period of constitutional government—and, in distant 'Akka, the release of Bahauallah from strict confinement within the city. 'Abd al-'Aziz was succeeded by his nephew, the young Murad V, who was himself deposed three months later when he proved to be a drunkard and mentally incapable. The reformers turned to his younger brother 'Abd al-

Hamid (Abdülhamid), who thus became the thirty-sixth Ottoman Sultan.

Born 21 Sept. 1842 in Istanbul, ‘Abd al-Hamid was the fifth of thirty children of Sultan ‘Abd al-Majid and seems to have had an unhappy childhood after his mother died when he was seven. Midhat Pasha, the reformer who had led the plot that overthrew ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, offered him the throne on condition that he accept a constitution and constituent assembly and that he rule through the reformist ministers. Before the reformers could accomplish much, the disastrous war broke out that led to the Russian occupation of Edirne. In the end the Russians were stopped when the British navy moved to support Istanbul. Nonetheless, the Turks lost most of their remaining territory in Europe. The border of the newly-independent Bulgaria was only a few miles from Edirne. The finances of the Empire were placed under European control. The failure of the Western European powers to support Turkey against Russia confirmed ‘Abd al-Hamid’s suspicions of the Europeans. Thereafter, he pursued a passive policy of delay in foreign relations. Though his extreme suspicion of the European powers sometimes lost opportunities for Turkey—as when his failure to cooperate with England lost him the chance to reassert Turkish sovereignty in Egypt—it kept Turkey at peace for a generation and prevented further major losses of territory.

It quickly became clear that ‘Abd al-Hamid was an autocrat of the most absolute sort and did not share the liberal views of the reformers who had brought him to power. Once the war with Russia was over, he suspended the constitution and dissolved the irritating new Constituent Assembly. The reformers were soon silenced, exiled, or killed. An attempted countercoup further fueled his fears. Unlike earlier sultans who had left much of the ordinary business of government to their ministers, ‘Abd al-Hamid created a centralized despotism of a quite modern sort. He was himself shrewd and energetic, and he created a palace bureaucracy that allowed him to control directly all the details of government. A horde of police, spies, and informers pervaded the empire. The

building of railroads and a telegraph network allowed him to control the empire far more tightly than any of his predecessors could have dreamed possible. Freedom of speech was suspended. Censorship was all-pervading and thorough. The palace was a virtual fortress, guarded by Albanian guards loyal only to the Sultan.

Apart from absolutism the distinguishing policy of his reign was Pan-Islamism. The Ottoman sultans had always claimed the title Caliph, supposedly bequeathed to them by the last 'Abbasid caliph when the Ottomans conquered Egypt. Now, with many of the Christian provinces lost to the Empire, 'Abd al-Hamid stressed his role as supreme Islamic leader: head of the leading Muslim state, protector of the Holy Cities, and successor to the Prophet Himself. This won him support from the Muslim masses in the Empire and prestige for him and the Ottoman Empire in other Muslim countries, especially those controlled by Europeans, where he was able to make trouble for the European powers. The greatest achievement of this policy was the building of the Hijaz Railway to carry pilgrims from Damascus to Mecca and Medina. It was paid for by contributions from the entire Muslim world and was completed as far as Medina, before being destroyed in World War I. (It has never been rebuilt.)

The other side of this policy was the persecution of the non-Muslim minorities, especially the Christians. This culminated in civil disorders in Macedonia and great massacres of Armenians in 1894–96 (repeated on a much larger scale during World War I), carried out at the instigation of the authorities. Nonetheless his partiality to his Muslim subjects did not in the end win their permanent loyalty, for his administration was sufficiently corrupt to alienate Muslims as well. In some ways 'Abd al-Hamid is to be seen as the full expression of the darker side of the Tanzimat reforms earlier in the nineteenth century. Like many of his reforming predecessors, he believed that reform could only be imposed from above, and in fact he carried out important reforms in education, communication, and law. However, absolute power

was in the hands of a man gripped by exaggerated fears and for the most part blind to the actual needs of the people. Moreover, his insistence on dealing with everything himself greatly limited the effectiveness of government.

The Europeans were appalled by the oppressiveness and incompetence of his government, by the all-pervasive censorship, and especially by the brutal treatment of minorities. This won him the nicknames “Red Sultan” and “Abdul the Damned.”

In the end the new educational institutions he had founded produced the reformers who overthrew him. A loose network of reform-minded exiles called the Young Turks formed the Committee of Union and Progress. The commanders of the Turkish army in Macedonia mutinied in support of the Committee, marched on Istanbul, forced ‘Abd al-Hamid in July 1908 to reintroduce the constitution, and placed the leaders of the Committee in charge of the government. The following April a countercoup by the Istanbul garrison, probably instigated by ‘Abd al-Hamid, briefly overthrew the new government. The Macedonian troops returned, this time to depose ‘Abd al-Hamid. His brother, Muhammad V (r. 1909–18), became Sultan. ‘Abd al-Hamid lived out his life under house arrest, first in Salonika and then in Istanbul. He died in Istanbul on 10 Feb. 1918.

‘Abd al-Hamid was in some respects an attractive figure—approachable, simple in dress, hard-working, and intelligent. Unlike some of his predecessors, he was not ruined by the temptations of the harem. But he was lonely, fearful, and unhappy, and these qualities expressed themselves in the paranoia, treachery, and absolutism of his government. Muslims, Christians, and Jews celebrated together in the streets when he was overthrown.

On ‘Abd al-Hamid see *EI2*, s.v. “‘Abd al-Hamid II.” and the standard histories of the late Ottoman Empire.

Bahau'llah was the prisoner of ‘Abd al-Hamid from 1876 until his death in 1892, but there is no evidence that the Sultan was particularly concerned with the Baha'is in those years. Bahau'llah



was able to move out of the city of 'Akka without interference the year after 'Abd al-Hamid's accession. When Bahauallah died in 1892, 'Abd al-Baha sent a cable to the Sultan, who gave permission for Bahauallah to be buried at Bahji—an interesting example of 'Abd al-Hamid's concern for the minutiae of administration. This tolerance of the Baha'is lasted until the turn of the century.

After 1892 'Abd al-Baha remained a prisoner as his Father had been, theoretically in custody but in practice under few restrictions. It was the opposition of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, the second surviving son of Bahauallah, to 'Abd al-Baha that finally attracted Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid's personal attention to the Baha'is. Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his followers had approached the governor of Damascus, accusing 'Abd al-Baha of plotting against the government. Several factors seem to have led the Sultan to give credence to these accusations. First was the increasing threat of nationalist movements in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Second was the arrival of Western pilgrims. The Sultan was well aware that various European powers had colonial ambitions in Ottoman territory, and he seems to have feared that the Americans visiting 'Abd al-Baha were part of a plot to foment revolt. Finally, 'Abd al-Baha had many friends—and possibly even followers—among reform-minded Turks. In August 1901 'Abd al-Hamid ordered that 'Abd al-Baha, his brothers, and his cousin Majd al-Din once again be strictly confined within the wall of 'Akka. Around 1905, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his supporters, aware of 'Abd al-Hamid's alarm at the Constitutional Revolution in Iran, approached the authorities with fresh accusations. This time the Sultan responded with a Commission of Inquiry that spent some weeks investigating 'Abd al-Baha and the Baha'is. However, when the Commission returned to Istanbul, they found the Sultan preoccupied with finding those responsible for his attempted assassination, and 'Abd al-Hamid did not take up the matter for some time. A tablet from 'Abd al-Baha of about this time tactfully praises 'Abd al-Hamid for ignoring the slanderous

accusations against him and instructs the Baha'is to pray for the Sultan. ('Abd al-Baha, *Tablets* 3:494–96.) In about 1908 there was fear that the Commission's recommendations would finally be acted on and 'Abd al-Baha would be exiled to Fezzan in the interior of Libya. However, the Young Turks' revolution in the summer of 1908 resulted in the release of all political prisoners, 'Abd al-Baha included.

Accounts of the reincarceration of 'Abd al-Baha, the Commission of Inquiry, and the release of 'Abd al-Baha are found in 'Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 263-72, Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Baha* 94-95, 111-24, and Momen, *Babi* 320–23. These are largely based on information from Afrukhtah, *Khatirat*, and Mu'ayyad, *Khatirat*. See also Balyuzi, *Baha'u'llah* 420, 425–27; Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Baha* 47, 128–29, 374, 395; Balyuzi, *Eminent* 148, 259; Shoghi Effendi, *Promised* 13, 61, 64–65; Shoghi Effendi, *World* 174–75; 'Abd al-Baha, *Promulgation* 36, 203, 225.

Naturally enough, 'Abd al-Hamid's dramatic fall and imprisonment and the simultaneous liberation of 'Abd al-Baha impressed the Baha'is as an example of the hand of God at work. 'Abd al-Baha, for example, sometimes remarked on it in his talks: "God removed the chains from my neck and placed them around the neck of 'Abd al-Hamid. It was done suddenly—not a long time, in a moment, as it were." ('Abd al-Baha, *Promulgation* 225.) For Shoghi Effendi, 'Abd al-Hamid was (quoting an unnamed historian) "the most mean, cunning, untrustworthy and cruel intriguer of the long dynasty of 'Uthman." His fall was "the beginning of a new era," one of "the awful evidences of that retributive justice," and was one part of the collapse of Islamic institutions as a result of their failure to accept the Bab and Bahau'llah. (Shoghi Effendi, *Promised* 65, 66)

### **Jamal Pasha and World War I**

After the revolution of 1908, the Committee of Union and Progress ruled in the name of the Sultan. New administrative,

social, and economic reforms were imposed, including areas neglected by earlier reformers such as women's rights and industrial development. 'Abd al-Baha took advantage of the new freedom to travel to Egypt, Europe, and America. 'Abd al-Baha publicly stated his gratitude for the fall of the Sultan, but by the time of his return to Haifa in 1913, the Committee of Union and Progress had become a dictatorship, ruling in an authoritarian style reminiscent of 'Abd al-Hamid's. Once again 'Abd al-Baha feared for the Baha'i position in the Holy Land. Internal reforms were, however, overshadowed by military disasters. In 1911 Italy seized Libya, the last Ottoman province in Africa. The First and Second Balkan Wars of 1912–13 resulted in the loss of almost all the remaining Ottoman territory in Europe to an alliance of Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro.

The Ottoman Empire rashly entered World War I as an ally of Germany and Austria. Though Ottoman forces performed fairly well—inflicting a humiliating defeat on the British in the Dardanelles campaign of 1915, for example—the Ottoman economy eventually collapsed under the strain of modern war. Troops deserted in large numbers. The Arab provinces of the Near East fell to Allied troops. On 30 October 1918 Turkey signed an armistice. Battle, famine, and disease had devastated the population.

For Baha'i history, the most important Ottoman official during World War I was Ahmad Jamal Pasha (Cemal Paŝa), the Turkish commander-in-chief in Syria, who threatened to execute 'Abd al-Baha. Born in Istanbul in 1872, Jamal Pasha graduated from the Ottoman military college in 1895 and was commissioned a captain in the general staff. Stationed in Salonika, he joined the subversive Committee of Union and Progress, the "Young Turks." When the Committee seized power in 1908, he became a member of its executive committee. In the following years he was military governor of Üsküdar and civil governor of Adana and Baghdad. He commanded a division in the First Balkan War (1912). After the Committee of Union and Progress seized total power in January

1913, he became successively military governor of Istanbul (promoted to lieutenant-general), minister of public works, and minister of the navy. During this period he was one of the three Young Turk leaders who ruled as a dictatorial triumvirate.

Soon after war broke out, he was made commander of the Fourth Army in Damascus and military governor of the Syrian provinces—the area covering modern Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, and northwestern Saudi Arabia. His efforts in 1915 and 1916 to invade British-occupied Egypt were repulsed. Despite progressive tendencies—notably an interest in public works and archaeology—Jamal Pasha ruthlessly suppressed the Arab nationalists, hanging thirty-two prominent Arab leaders in 1915 and 1916. He also persecuted the Jewish settlers in Palestine. In December 1915 Jamal Pasha contacted the Allies, offering to revolt against the Ottoman Government, stop the massacres of Armenians, and cede European Turkey to the Russians. In return he would become Sultan of the Ottoman provinces in Asia. The British rebuffed him. Since the Turkish government did not find out about these negotiations, he remained in command of the Syrian army. In June 1916 the Sharif of Mecca—the hereditary ruler of the Hijaz—revolted against the Turks and began harrying their lines of communication. The British invaded Sinai in 1916 and Palestine in 1917, driving back Jamal Pasha's army. At the end of the year, he was relieved of his command, having lost Palestine as far north as Jaffa and Jerusalem.

After the outbreak of World War I, 'Abd al-Baha came under renewed suspicion, probably for his Western connections. When Jamal Pasha first came to 'Akka, probably about the beginning of 1915, he summoned 'Abd al-Baha to his camp and told him bluntly that he had received reports that 'Abd al-Baha was a religious mischief-maker. 'Abd al-Baha saw that the Pasha was drunk and knew his reputation for hanging enemies real and imagined, so he turned the matter to a joke by comparing his own reputation to that of Jamal Pasha, who had been in the eyes of the Sultan a political mischief-maker. The two men parted on good terms.

Mirza Muhammad-‘Ali and his followers began reporting to Jamal Pasha that ‘Abd al-Baha’s religious activities and relations with people in other countries were of a political nature and that he was opposed to the Committee of Union and Progress. It was not long after that the German consul in Haifa brought ‘Abd al-Baha the news that Jamal Pasha had told a gathering of Muslim clergy in Jerusalem that he intended to crucify him after he returned from conquering Egypt and that he would destroy the Shrines of Bahauallah and the Bab. ‘Abd al-Baha reassured the distraught consul that none of these events were likely to happen.

After the failure of the first Turkish attack on the Suez Canal on 2–3 February 1915, Jamal Pasha and his German advisers began elaborate preparations for a larger attack. Jamal Pasha himself roamed Syria and Palestine trying and hanging Arab nationalists. “Gallows” occurs frequently in ‘Abd al-Baha’s description’s of the Pasha’s character. ‘Abd al-Baha was sufficiently concerned that one day early in 1916 he went to Nazareth to meet Jamal Pasha. When a letter arrived asking about ‘Abd al-Baha’s whereabouts, he replied, “Tell him, ‘In front of a cannon.””

Jamal Pasha’s attacks on the canal in April and July also failed. Thereafter, he was preoccupied with the British advance through Sinai and southern Palestine that began in August and lasted until December 1917. Before he could carry out his threats to ‘Abd al-Baha, he was recalled. Nonetheless, in December 1917 rumors of danger to ‘Abd al-Baha reached Major Tudor-Pole, a friend of ‘Abd al-Baha who was at that time an intelligence officer with the British army in Palestine. He alerted influential friends and followers of ‘Abd al-Baha, who persuaded the military authorities to pass word through the lines that ‘Abd al-Baha was not to be harmed. Haifa and ‘Akka fell to British and Indian cavalry on 23 September 1918. The British authorities immediately announced that ‘Abd al-Baha and his family were safe.

The main source for Jamal Pasha’s relations with ‘Abd al-Baha is Mu’ayyad, *Khatirat*, pp. 184–86, 290, 332–33, 443–

47, from which are derived other accounts such as Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Baha* 409–14, 'Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 317, Rabbani, *Priceless* 26, Mazandarani, *Asrar* 3:42–45, Ishraq-Khavari, *Rahiq* 1:370. See also Blomfield, *Chosen* 202–5. Note that the order of events given in the body of the present article is an educated guess. On the capture of Haifa, see Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Baha* 425–30, Blomfield, *Chosen* 219–27, Momen, *Babi* 332–38.

Jamal Pasha appears several times in 'Abd al-Baha's talks to local Baha'is. (Most of what we know about his dealings with the Pasha come from these talks.) Though he joked about the real danger that Jamal Pasha posed, he described him as “a mountain of arrogance” and said that he was bloodthirsty, rapacious, and drunken. For Shoghi Effendi, Jamal Pasha was one of a series of threats to the Baha'i World Center—Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid, Hitler, and the 1947–48 war—averted by the providence of God. Shoghi Effendi described his character as “bloodthirsty” and “suspicious and merciless” and referred to his “ruthless military dictatorship” and to his being “an inveterate enemy of the Faith.”

For Shoghi Effendi on Jamal Pasha, see Rabbani, *Priceless* 189, Shoghi Effendi, *Promised* 13, 65, Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel* 54, 72, 'Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 317.

When the Young Turk government fell at the end of 1918, Jamal Pasha fled to Europe. He was tried in absentia and sentenced to death. Accepting an appointment in the Afghan army, he traveled to Russia, where he helped negotiate an agreement between the Bolsheviks and Atatürk's nationalists in Turkey. In Tiflis, Armenia, on 21 July 1922, while returning from another diplomatic mission to Moscow, he was assassinated by Armenians, the third victim of a campaign to avenge the Armenian massacres of World War I.

For the life of Jamal Pasha, see *EI2*, s.v. “Djemal Pasha” and his own *Memories of Turkish Statesman* (London, n.d.), also available in Ottoman, modern Turkish, and German.

## **Atatürk and Modern Turkey**

Peace, however, was not to come to Turkey for four more years after the end of World War I, for the Allies planned the dismemberment of Turkey. The British, French, and Italians occupied Istanbul, the Straits, Cilicia, and the old Arab provinces. The Armenians had been promised a state including most of eastern Anatolia, and the Italians had been allotted southwestern Anatolia. The Greeks had invaded western Anatolia, pushing eastwards from the ancient Greek territories of the Aegean coast, burning and killing as they went. The Sultan, a bitter enemy of the Young Turks, was in the hands of the Allies and was abetting their plans.

In the face of this disastrous situation, the Turks of Anatolia rallied to resist the various invaders. Mustafa Kemal, later known as Atatürk, the most successful of the wartime generals, organized a popular government in Ankara. The new regime defeated the Armenian Republic in 1921, regaining some territory lost to Russia forty years earlier and ending Armenian hopes for regaining their old lands in eastern Anatolia. In 1922 the Turks drove the Greeks back into the sea at Smyrna. The Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 confirmed the existence of the new Turkey. Huge population exchanges—Muslim Turks from Greece and Greek Christians from Turkey—and the loss of the non-Turkish Muslim provinces resulted in a new Turkish republic that was overwhelmingly Muslim and ethnically Turkish. The Sultanate was abolished and with it the Ottoman Empire. The last Sultan lingered a few months longer as caliph—now only a religious leader—but even this title was abolished in 1924.

Atatürk made himself a virtual dictator and set about reorganizing Turkey on the model of modern European nation-states, providing in the process a model for Reza Shah Pahlavi in Iran. The Ottoman Empire had been a multi-ethnic empire ruled by a Turkish dynasty; the Republic of Turkey became a Turkish national state. Islam was deinstitutionalized. Though mosques

remained open, all the theological seminaries and monasteries of the mystical orders were closed. Almost all religious institutions were disbanded. A new civil law based on the Swiss code replaced Islamic law. Traditional headgear was prohibited, and men were required to wear Western hats. Under state sponsorship there was rapid economic development. Atatürk turned Turkey's back on the Islamic world and attempted to make Turkey Western and European.

Atatürk was not entirely successful in eliminating Islam as a social and political force, particularly in the countryside. His attempts to abolish Arabic as a liturgical language were eventually abandoned. Even Atatürk's harsh anti-clerical measures could be seen by many pious Muslims as salutary reforms of corrupt religious institutions. Typical, perhaps, is the fact that Turks never ceased referring to Atatürk himself as "Ghazi"—"victor in the holy war."

Politically, Turkey has become generally democratic. After Atatürk's death in 1938 Turkey enjoyed considerable periods of democratic rule, broken by military intervention in times of instability. Generally, Turkey has remained true to Atatürk's vision of a secular modern state—in recent years, for example, attempting to join the European Community. However, Islamic nationalism is also increasingly influential.

### **Shoghi Effendi on the fall of the Ottomans and the rise of modern Turkey**

Five years after the end of World War I the Ottoman Empire was gone, replaced by Atatürk's secular Republic of Turkey. In several of his works, especially *The Promised Day is Come*, Shoghi Effendi points to this extraordinary transformation as evidence of the hand of God at work, sweeping away the obsolete forms of Islam and preparing the way for the eventual triumph of the Baha'i Faith, "a slow yet steady and relentless retribution." (Shoghi Effendi, *Promised* 61.) He links it to the fall of the Qajar monarchy in Iran. For Shoghi Effendi the decline of Istanbul—no



longer the capital even of the shrunken Turkish Republic—particularly symbolized this. For Shoghi Effendi the Ottoman Empire also represented Sunni Islam's encounter with the revelation of Bahau'llah, just as Iran and the Qajar regime represented Shi'ism.

Shoghi Effendi considered the Ottoman regime more culpable than the Iranian government in its treatment of the Baha'is. While in Iran the Babis had attempted to assassinate the Shah, the Ottomans had no just cause for complaint against the Bahau'llah.

For Baha'i writings on the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, see Mazandarani, *Amr* 4:453–58; Bahau'llah, *Proclamation* 102–4; Bahau'llah, *Tablets*, 213; Shoghi Effendi, *Promised* 19, 38–39, 61–66, 100–1; Shoghi Effendi, *World* 173–74; Taherzadeh 2:312–23, as well as the bibliography on tablets mentioned above.

## **The Baha'i Community of Turkey**

The modern Republic of Turkey now has the second largest Baha'i community in the Middle East. The modern Baha'i community of Turkey was established by Iranian Baha'i traders, pilgrims, and refugees seeking the opportunities and relative freedom of cosmopolitan Istanbul. A local spiritual assembly was established there, and Baha'i communities eventually grew up in other towns in the area. A second area of Baha'i settlement was in the south, in partly Arab areas like Adana, Iskenderun (Alexandretta, held by France until 1937), and neighboring towns. The Baha'is here seem to have been Arabic-speaking descendants of early Baha'is in Iraq and the Holy Land. Baha'i communities also eventually grew up in other important towns such as Smyrna and Ankara.

Like the Tanzimat and Young Turk reformers before him, Atatürk attempted to modernize Turkish society by authoritarian rule rather than by liberalization. He ruthlessly suppressed

competing influences: most Islamic institutions, particularly the mystical orders, Freemasons, labor groups, Communists, and the like. In 1928 a number of Baha'is in Smyrna were arrested on the grounds that they were—as the Times of London correspondent put it—“a group of Turks, Americans, and Persians who had formed a secret society with the object of continuing the religious practices in vogue in the days of the Sultans.” They were further suspected of having political contacts with royalist emigres. When the Istanbul spiritual assembly intervened, its members were also arrested. The Istanbul Baha'is used the trial as an opportunity to expound publicly the history and teachings of the Baha'i Faith, gaining considerable publicity in the Middle Eastern press. In the end they were cleared of the charge of being a subversive organization and convicted only of the minor charge of having failed to register as an association. In 1932–33 many Baha'is were arrested in Istanbul and Adana on similar charges, although in Adana the prejudices of Muslims seem to have been a factor also. By March 1933 the Istanbul Baha'is had been acquitted, but fifty-three Baha'is remained in prison in Adana, prompting Shoghi Effendi to ask the American and Iranian Baha'is to appeal to the Turkish authorities in their behalf. All the Baha'is were released by the beginning of April.

In later decades Baha'is continued to face intermittent harassment from Turkish authorities concerned that they represented a foreign political or cultural influence, thus forcing the Turkish Baha'is to remain somewhat cautious in their public activities. As late as the 1960s a Baha'i election meeting was raided by police and those present briefly jailed.

The constitution of the Republic of Turkey guarantees freedom of worship and conscience but prohibits religious interference in politics. The criminal code prohibits proselytism. The establishment of the republic resulted in the deinstitutionalization of Islam but also the departure of almost all non-Muslims from the country. Islamic institutions now are entirely controlled by the state. Other religious communities are

free of direct state control but must operate within narrow legal limits. The development of the modern Turkish Baha'i community has been shaped by these paradoxical circumstances. Though in most ways freer than other Middle Eastern Baha'i communities, it has always had to exercise its freedom with caution for fear of triggering old religious or newer political prejudices. The Turkish Baha'i community, like Turkey itself, exists in a cultural borderland between Europe and the Middle East.

Martha Root visited Turkey in 1927, 1929, and 1932. Systematic development of the Baha'i community began with the Ten Year Crusade (1953–63). With the aid of pioneers from Iraq and Iran, the community grew to twelve assemblies in 26 localities. A national spiritual assembly was formed in 1959. The community built a national hazirat al-quds in Istanbul and bought a temple site and three holy places. There were organized youth activities.

During the Nine Year Plan (1964–73) the community grew to 22 assemblies in 57 localities, including groups on three islands near the Dardanelles: Imroz, Bozca Ada, and Marmara. There were also systematic efforts to establish communities in the towns and villages visited by Bahauallah and along the Black Sea coast. The number of assemblies and localities grew to 33 and 102 in 1979 but dropped to 29 and 98 by 1983. In 1986 there were 50 assemblies and 157 localities. Statistics on assembly activities such as feasts, assembly meetings, and children's classes show that the Turkish assemblies are relatively strong and active. Fairly large scale enrollments have occurred in southwestern Turkey. The Turkish Baha'is have undertaken various efforts associated with Bahauallah's stay in Turkey. These include establishing communities in the areas visited by him, acquiring and restoring holy places, and commemorating events of his life in Turkey.

The peculiar political conditions of Turkey made goals involving official recognition difficult to attain. The first national spiritual assembly had to be elected by mail. Though the national spiritual assembly was not able to achieve incorporation, by 1980 it had some exemption from taxation. Since 1966 authorities

have also permitted believers to list their religion as “Baha’i” on their identity cards.

The most significant accomplishment of the Turkish Baha’i community is the degree to which it has become assimilated into its country, an achievement only equalled in the Middle East by the Baha’i communities of Iran, Iraq, Egypt, and Morocco. The earliest Baha’is in Turkey were Iranians. Some of their families have remained and have assimilated thoroughly into Turkish life, a process encouraged by strong Turkish nationalist pressures. Though Turkey still receives pioneers, it sends almost as many pioneers out to other countries. Over the years Baha’i teaching has brought many ethnic Turks into the community, especially since the 1970s. During the Nine Year Plan the Turkish community was successful in teaching in the ‘Alavi, or ‘Ashiq, community, a dissident Shi‘i minority in Anatolia. By the 1970s the Turkish Baha’i community was culturally Turkish, rather than being an expatriate Iranian community as is the case in many other Middle Eastern countries.

Since the Iranian Revolution of 1979, many Baha’i refugees have crossed into Turkey, some of whom have had to stay for long periods while awaiting resettlement.

For the history of the modern Turkish Baha’i community, see Balyuzi, *‘Abdu’l-Baha* 399; Momen, *Babi* 474–75; Ishraq-Khavari, *Da’irat* 7:972–74; Garis, *Root* 294–95, 322–27, *Baha’i World* 1:101, 103; 2:183; 3:43, 45, 218, 222–23; 4:97, 274, 430–31; 5:432; 6:511; 7:560; 8:692; 9:658–59; 10:559; 11:524–25; 13:297–98, 356, 759, 951, 1035; 14:86, 161, 418; 15:173–74, 251; 16:267; 17:96, 185–86; *Baha’i News* 28 (Nov. 1928) 2; 72 (Ap. 1933) 4; 397 (Ap. 1964) 3–4; 434 (May 1967) 2; Rabbani, *Priceless* 316–18; ‘Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 303. See also the statistical and teaching plan summaries released by the Baha’i World Center: 1963: 26, 31, 36, 44, 119; 1964: 12–14, 35; 1968: 2, 27, 50, 67, 79, 94, 101–2; 1975: 11, 44, 67, 71, 76, 95; 1983: 98; 1986: 39, 45, 50–51, 56, 66, 72–74, 79, 88, 90–91, 152–53. Some

photographs of Turkish Baha'is are found in *Baha'i World* 3:321, 4:317, 319; 13:297, 525; 14:264; 15:251, 576; 16:266.

### **Growth of the Baha'i community (including Alexandretta/Hatay)**

Year	Baha'is	LSAs	Groups	Isol.	Local.	Inc. LSAs
1900	100?					
1921	1					
1930	2	8		10		
1937	6?					
1944	6?					
1953						
1963	12	9	5	26		
1973	22	35		57		
1979	33	69		102		
1986	44	58	55	157		

### **Other Turkish Baha'i Communities.**

Though the largest modern Turkish community is in Turkey, large numbers of Turks live in Iran, the Soviet Union, and China, as well as elsewhere in the Middle East, Europe, and now even America and Australia. All speak Turkic dialects that are somewhat mutually intelligible.

Turks and Turkic peoples have lived in Iran for more than a thousand years, largely sharing the culture of the Persian-speaking majority. More often than not, Iran has been ruled by Turkish dynasties such as the Safavids (1499–1722) and the Qajars (1779–1924). Most Turks in Iran are in Aharbayjan, now divided between Iran and the Soviet Union. These are the Azeri (Ahari) Turks, closely related by language and culture to the Turks of Turkey but thoroughly assimilated into Iranian life and sharing a common Shi'i faith. The Babi and Baha'i religions spread among

the Turks of Aharbayjan as it did among the Persians elsewhere in Iran. Most of the Babis at the battle of Zanjan, for example, must have been Turks. A number of the nomadic tribes of Iran are also Turkic, but there have never been many Baha'is among them, though systematic efforts have been made to teach them.

Six of the new republics of the former Soviet Union are ethnically Turkic: Azerbaijan, Kirghizistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan, although the last is now only 40% Turkic due to immigration from other parts of the former Soviet Union. The area north of Iran and Afghanistan and east of the Caspian was formerly known as Russian Turkistan. There are also other Turkic groups elsewhere in the Soviet Union. Baha'i refugees from Iran established communities in Russian Turkistan and the Caucasus around the turn of the century. Until the early 1930s there were national spiritual assemblies in the Caucasus, which included Soviet Azerbaijan, and Turkistan. Some of these communities still exist after half a century of isolation from the rest of the Baha'i world. Few if any of the local Turkic peoples ever became Baha'is.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, there has been rapid growth in the Baha'i communities in the new republics, including the Turkish areas. New converts seem to include a significant number of Turks, but the situation is changing rapidly.

Other Turkic communities exist in western China, Bulgaria, Syria, and Iraq. There are few if any Baha'is among these groups.

In the last three decades poverty has driven many Turks to emigrate to Western Europe, America, and Australia. The Five Year Plan called for collaboration among the national spiritual assemblies of Turkey, Germany, and Australia in teaching these emigrants.

## **Baha'i literature in Turkish**

The Turkic languages belong to the Altaic family and are thus related to other Central Asian languages such as Mongolian.

All the Turkic languages are characterized by vowel harmony, agglutinative morphology, and verb-final word order. They are thus very different in sound and structure from other Islamic languages such as Persian and Arabic. Almost all modern Turkic languages once used the Arabic alphabet, though it was not very suitable for their sounds. Early Turkic languages also used the ancient Uighur script, and modern Republican Turkish uses the Roman alphabet. Since about 1939 Soviet Turkic languages have used the Cyrillic script, but since the independence of the Turkish republics of the former Soviet Union there have been plans for adopting the Latin alphabet of modern Republican Turkish.

The Turkic language used in the nineteenth century Near East was Ottoman (Osmanli), a southwestern Turkic dialect heavily infused with Persian and Arabic words. It was the language of government and the ruling elite throughout the Ottoman Empire, though educated Ottomans usually knew Persian and Arabic as well. It was closely related to Azeri, the Turkic dialect of northwestern Iran. In 1928 as part of his modernization program, Atatürk decreed that Turkish should be written in the Roman alphabet. In addition he tried to purify the language from Persian and Arabic loan words. The Arabic script was no longer to be taught. This had the effect of cutting modern Turks off from their old literary heritage; not only could they not read the old alphabet, they no longer knew many of the Arabic and Persian words and phrases that filled Ottoman Turkish. Modern Turkish is thus quite different now from other Turkic languages and from the Ottoman Turkish of a century ago.

It should be noted that Republican Turkish spelling of Arabic and Persian words and names is based on Turkish pronunciation and thus differs substantially from the common transliterations directly from Persian and Arabic. “Muhammad,” for example, is “Mehmet” in modern Turkish.

For information on Turkish, see *EB* (1985) “Turkic Languages;” Bernard Comrie, *The World’s Major Languages* (New York: Oxford, 1987) pp. 619–44.

‘Abd al-Baha lived almost his entire life in the Ottoman Empire and spoke Ottoman Turkish well. He wrote a number of prayers in Turkish. These are heavily infused with Persian words and phrases, in accordance with the literary tastes of the time. They have been published. Though a few items evidently were published in Ottoman Turkish, Baha’i publishing in Turkey did not begin in earnest until after the change to the Roman alphabet. In addition to expository works originally written in Turkish, many of the best known Baha’i books in Persian were translated, particularly works by Bahauallah, ‘Abd al-Baha, and Mirza Abu al-Fadl Gulpaygani. The early translators, such as Majdi Enan, were educated before the reform and thus knew Persian and Arabic. These translations, though written in the Roman alphabet, were thoroughly Ottoman in style and became increasingly difficult for younger Turks educated in the new system. There have thus been attempts to rewrite the older translations in modern Republican Turkish to make them more accessible. Translation remains a problem since there are now few Turkish Baha’is who are fluent in Arabic and Persian. The enrichment of Turkish Baha’i literature has been a goal of teaching plans since 1964.

Though there are large Turkish-speaking Baha’i communities in Iran, the Iranian government prohibited the publication of literature in Turkish throughout most of this century. As a result there has been little Turkish Baha’i literature published in Iran, the Turkish prayers of ‘Abd al-Baha being a notable exception. A translation of the short obligatory prayer into Azeri is found in *Baha’i World* 16:601 and 17:520.

Sixty percent of the speakers of Turkic languages live outside Turkey, many of them in the former Soviet Union: about one out of eight citizens of these republics speaks a Turkic language as his mother tongue. Most of the earliest published Baha’i literature in Turkish was printed by the large Baha’i communities in Baku in Russian Azerbaijan and Ashkhabad in Russian Turkistan. Beginning with the Nine Year Plan, the translation of Baha’i



literature into the various dialects of Soviet Central Asia has been a goal, including Turkmen, Kazakh, Kirghiz, and Uzbek. Translations were made into at least the first two of these prior to the fall of the Soviet Union. It seems likely that with the independence of these states there will be a large increase in Baha'i literature in the languages of the Turkish republics.

The most recent bibliographies of Baha'i literature in Turkish are *Baha'i World* 13:1108; 18:889. For other Turkic languages see *Baha'i World* 14:569; 15:714; 16:601, 612; 18:843, 857–58.

## **Excursus**

### **'Abdu'llah Pasha**

This Turkish official was the governor of 'Akka from 1819 to 1832 and was the owner of a number of buildings important in Baha'i history. He was the governor of 'Akka after his father-in-law Sulayman Pasha. He sided with the Turkish Sultan against Muhammad-'Ali Pasha of Egypt when the latter sent his son Ibrahim Pasha to invade Turkish Syria in the summer of 1831. The Egyptian army besieged 'Akka for six months. Eventually, he was forced to surrender the city after a bombardment that damaged almost every building in the city. He was exiled to Egypt but later returned to reclaim his properties in the 'Akka area. He then moved to Istanbul and finally to Medina where he died and is buried.

Among the extensive properties he amassed were the mansion of Mazra'a on land formerly owned by his father 'Ali Pasha and in which Bahau'llah later lived; the Governorate of 'Akka, now known as the House of 'Abdu'llah Pasha, where 'Abd al-Baha lived from 1896 to 1910; and mansions adjacent to the Mansion of Bahji and on the promontory of Mt. Carmel. He also completed the Citadel of 'Akka in which Bahau'llah was imprisoned. (Ruhe, *Door* 205-6.)

## **Chapter Five**

### **The Baha’i Faith in Iran**

#### **Three Clerics and a Prince of Isfahan: Background to Bahauallah’s *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf***

Among the defining events in the development of the Baha’i community of Iran in the time of Bahauallah was the judicial murder of two wealthy and prominent Baha’i merchants in Isfahan early in 1879, the result of an extortion plot that got out of hand. Members of the respected Nahri family, the two brothers were entitled by Bahauallah “the King and Beloved of Martyrs.” The incident itself is well known. The following sections discuss the Tablet that Bahauallah wrote in immediate reaction to the murders and four prominent opponents of the Baha’i Faith in Isfahan: three clerics and a prince-governor.

On the event see Balyuzi, *Eminent* 33–44. Ishraq-Khavari, *Nurayn*, is an account of the incident with biographies of the brothers. For contemporary foreign accounts see Momen, *Babi* 274-77.

#### **Lawh-i Burhan**

The Tablet of the Proof was revealed in 1879 as a rebuke to the two clerics—the “Wolf” and the “She-Serpent”—responsible for the martyrdoms of the King and Beloved of Martyrs in Isfahan. The Imam-Jum‘a of the city, Mir Muhammad-Husayn Khatunabadi, had owed the brothers a large sum of money. It was

generally thought that their arrest as Baha'is was a pretext to void this debt and allow the governor, the Imam-Jum'ā, and Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir Isfahani, another leading cleric, to seize and divide the brothers' extensive properties. Though the governor had received orders to send the two brothers to Tehran where they would most likely have been released, the two clerics were able to force him to permit their executions.

The killing of the two brothers—members of a prominent merchant family in Isfahan and among the leading Baha'is in Iran—shocked and angered the Baha'is and their many friends, both Iranian and European. Bahauallah immediately wrote the letter known as the Lawh-i Burhan sharply rebuking the two clergymen. It reached Tehran only thirty-eight days after the killings. Mirza Abu al-Fadl Gulpaygani, on Bahauallah's instructions, sent a copy of the letter to each of the clergymen. There is no record of their reactions.

The principal theme of the Lawh-i Burhan is contrast between the pretensions of the two clergymen to be exponents of the Law and faith of Islam and the injustice and cruelty of their killing two descendants of the Prophet himself. Most of the tablet is addressed to Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir, the more influential of the two. Bahauallah denounces the injustice of sentencing the two brothers to death. Bahauallah says that there is no hatred in his own heart for the Shaykh, who has been deceived by his own folly. Had he realized what he had done, he would have cast himself into the fire.

Bahauallah compares the Shaykh to the Jewish priests who condemned Christ to death and to the leaders of the cult of idols in Mecca who opposed Muhammad. They could offer no proof to justify their actions, nor could the Shaykh for his. (This is the source of the title of the tablet.) In fact, the Shaykh followed his passions, not his Lord, and abandoned the Law of God—the knowledge of which is the source of the authority of the Muslim clergy—and followed the law of his lower self. True learning is to recognize the station of Bahauallah. If the Shaykh were to subdue

his passions, he would understand the call of Bahauallah and his sins would be forgiven. Bahauallah and his followers, as their actions testified, had no fear of the Shaykh's cruelty.

Bahauallah says that leadership had made the Shaykh proud. But there is no honor in being followed by the worthless and ignorant: it was such people who supported the priests who put Christ to death. Bahauallah refers here to three of his own works: tablets to the Sultan and Napoleon III and the *Kitab-i Iqan*.

Bahauallah digresses to address the Muslim clergy in general, warning them that neither their wealth nor the religious sciences in which they prided themselves would profit them. The Shah, Bahauallah implied, feared to interfere with wolves such as the Shaykh. But the Shaykh is like the last sunlight on the mountaintop, soon to fade away like those who had opposed God in the past. Truly, Muhammad and Fatima the Chaste wept at his deeds. The Muslim clergy had opposed everyone who had tried to improve the condition of Islam. Bahauallah points as a warning to the disastrous war of 1877 in which Turkey had lost much of her territory in the Balkans.

Now Bahauallah turns from the "Wolf" to the "She-Serpent"—Mir Muhammad-Husayn, the Imam-Jum'a. His denunciation of this man is even sharper than that of the Shaykh. There is no hint that this man deceived himself about the injustice of his actions. Soon, Bahauallah promises, "the breaths of chastisement will seize thee. . . ." He will not, Bahauallah prophesies, consume the wealth that he had pillaged.

When Edward Browne visited Isfahan a few years after the martyrdoms, he heard of "the terrible letter" threatening the two clergymen with divine chastisement. Most likely it immediately began circulating in manuscript among the Baha'is. It would have been convincing, for its prophecies of disgrace and death for the two clergymen were soon fulfilled. It was published in at least two early collections of the writings of Bahauallah, *Aqdas-i Buzurg* (1314/1896) 200–208 and *Majmu'a* (Cairo, 1920) 53–66. Bahauallah Himself quotes lengthy passages in *Epistle to the Son of*

*the Wolf*—itself addressed to Aqa Najafi, the son of Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir: pp. 79–86, 97–103. The entire text is included in the Arabic and English editions of *Tablets of Baha’u’llah*, Sect. 14. Almost the entire text of the tablet was translated by Shoghi Effendi in Bahau’llah’s *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*.

Bahau’llah, *Epistle*, refers to the tablet as “Lawh-i Burhan.” It is also known as “Lawh-i Raqsha” (“Tablet of the She-Serpent”).

For text and translation see Bahau’llah, *Tablets*,, sect. 14. Taherzadeh 4:91–102. Ishraq-Khavari, *Ganj* 145–46. Balyuzi, *Baha’u’llah* 382. Mazandarani, *Asrar* 2:40–41. Ishraq-Khavari, *Da’irat* 13:2021, 2057. Ishraq-Khavari, *Nurayn* 245–53.

### **Mir Muhammad-Husayn Khatunabadi, “the She-Serpent”**

The cleric known in Baha’i tradition as “the She-Serpent” (Raqsha’) was the Imam-Jum‘a of Isfahan and one of those responsible for the execution in 1879 of the Nahri brothers, the “King” and “Beloved of Martyrs.” The Khatunabadis were the descendants of Mir Muhammad-Salih, a distinguished scholar of the early eighteenth century, and had held the position of Imam-Jum‘ah of Isfahan for about a century. Mir Muhammad-Husayn was the brother of Mir Sayyid Muhammad Sultan al-‘Ulama’, the Bab’s host in Isfahan in 1846. On his brother’s death in 1874, he inherited the family office, thus making him one of the two or three highest ranked clergy in the city. (The Imam-Jum‘ah was the leader of Friday prayers at the most important mosque in the city. The holders of this office were, at least nominally, appointed by the government, although often the office was effectively hereditary.) He does not seem to have lent any particular distinction to his office.

Mir Muhammad-Husayn’s earliest contact with the Babis was when his brother sent him out of the city to meet the Bab, who was coming from Shiraz. Since the Bab stayed for some time in his brother’s house, Mir Muhammad-Husayn must have met him a number of times.

Mir Muhammad-Husayn's importance in Baha'i history arises from the curious fact that his bankers were Baha'is: the three Nahri brothers, a family of wealthy merchants who had become Babis at the time of the Bab's visits and who were now among the most important and well-known Baha'is of Iran. They would routinely pay the Imam-Jum'a's debts as they came in. The account eventually reached the very large sum of 18,000 tomans. In early 1879 the brothers presented this bill for payment. Mir Muhammad-Husayn stalled, asking for an audit. Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir, the most powerful cleric in Isfahan and a bitter opponent of the Baha'is—proposed that the three Nahri brothers, well-known as Baha'is—be arrested as heretics. Their property would then be forfeit and could be divided among the two clerics and the governor, whose cooperation would be necessary. The three brothers were arrested, two of them while guests in the Imam-Jum'a's house. The youngest recanted and was released. The two older brothers refused and were eventually executed at the insistence of the clergy. Mir Muhammad-Husayn and Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir personally delivered the death warrants to the prison.

After the executions of the two brothers, the Imam-Jum'a sent his servants to seize their property and loot their houses, many of their possessions being extremely valuable. A few days later a dispute broke out between him and Zill al-Sultan, the governor. Several weeks later Mir Muhammad-Husayn tried to force the issue by marching on the governorate with his supporters to demand a larger share of the plunder. When disorders continued, troops were sent from Tehran, the Imam-Jum'a was exiled to Mashhad, and his property was plundered. He was allowed to return from his exile in Mashhad a year or so later. He died in Isfahan two years after his victims on 21 June 1881 of a repulsive tumor on his neck. He was buried in an unmarked grave by a few porters, no one else daring to risk the anger of the governor by attending his funeral. When the merchants closed the bazaar to

mourn his death, the governor's attendants forced them to reopen their shops.

Baha'i tradition reports that when someone expressed doubts about the wisdom of killing the Nahri brothers, he had said, "Their blood be on my neck." Thus his gruesome death was interpreted as a punishment of his crime and the fulfillment of Bahau'llah's prophecy of his downfall.

Momen, *Babi* 271–74. Balyuzi, *Eminent* 33–44. Bahau'llah, *Tablets*, "Lawh-i Burhan" para. 14, pp. 213–16. Taherzadeh 4:73–102. 'Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 200–1, 232–33. Nabil, 201. Browne, "Babis of Persia," p. 490–91.

### **Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir Isfahani, "the Wolf"**

"The Wolf" was a leading mujtahid of Isfahan responsible for a number of persecutions of Baha'is. He born in 1234/1818–19 and was the son of a prominent cleric in Isfahan. His mother was the daughter of Ja'far Kashif al-Ghita', one of the most important exponents of the Usuli legal school. Muhammad-Baqir went to Najaf, where he studied jurisprudence with the two greatest Shi'i legal scholars of the time, Muhammad-Hasan an-Najafi and Murtada al-Ansari. Having completed his studies, he returned to Isfahan to assume the position of leader of prayers in the Royal Mosque. About the same time, the old Imam-Jum'a and several other important clerics in Isfahan died, abruptly making him the highest-ranking cleric in the city. He acquired many students and great religious authority in Isfahan and surrounding regions. He wrote several books, none especially important. Most of Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir's efforts went into building up his religious, political, and economic power. His political position was such that he was sometimes able to challenge the governor directly, doing such things as inflicting the death penalty against the wishes of the authorities. He also acquired great wealth, at least partly by hoarding grain in times of famine.

In 1876 he was forced by the authorities to leave Isfahan and retire to Mashhad. He then went to Tehran, was reconciled to Zill

al-Sultan, the governor, and returned to Isfahan on 16 April 1876. In 1883 he fell from grace once more, being forced to leave the city after the humiliation of having his wife seduced by the governor. He died in Safar 1301/December 1883, shortly after arriving at Najaf.

Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir had a number of children, several of them later prominent clerics in Isfahan. The most important was Muhammad-Taqi, better known as Aqa Najafi or to the Baha'is "the Son of the Wolf."

Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir was a relentless foe of heresy and waged a twenty-year battle against Shaykhis, Babis, and especially Baha'is. In 1864, he had several hundred Babis of Najafabad arrested and wanted to put them all to death. More moderate clerics prevented this, but four were eventually killed—two of whom were under the protection of the Shah—and many others beaten and robbed.

In 1874, shortly before the arrival of Zill al-Sultan, the new governor, he instigated a major pogrom against the Baha'is of Isfahan. About twenty were arrested, while hundreds of others took refuge in the office of the British telegraph company and the houses of the Europeans in the city. Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir proclaimed from his pulpit that Muslims were free to kill Baha'is and to do as they wished with their property and women. The garrison intervened to restore order, and eventually the Shah stopped the persecutions.

In 1878 a Baha'i from the village of Talkhuncha, Mulla Kazim, was arrested there and delivered into the hands of Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir. When he refused to recant his faith, he was publicly beheaded in the Maydan-i Shah. His body was abused by the mob. Two other Baha'is were also arrested. One was severely beaten and his ears were cut off. A number of Baha'i houses were also attacked.

In March 1879 Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir; Mir Muhammad-Husayn, the new Imam-Jum'a; and Zill al-Sultan plotted to kill three Baha'i Nahri brothers. Zill al-Sultan tried to withdraw from



the conspiracy when he was ordered to send two of the brothers to Tehran, but some fifty clergymen, accompanied by their supporters, closed the bazaar and marched to the governorate. Zill al-Sultan agreed to endorse a death sentence issued by the clergy. Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir and the Imam-Jum‘a personally supervised the execution.

After this last incident Bahauallah gave Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir the title “Wolf” (Dhi’b) for his cruelty, denouncing him in the Lawh-i Burhan (“Tablet of the Proof”). In another tablet (Bahauallah, *Athar* 2:197–98, evidently written at the time of one of the Shaykh’s exiles, he prophesies his final complete downfall.

After the Shaykh’s death, his son Muhammad-Taqi—better known as Aqa Najafi or the “Son of the Wolf”—assumed his place as prayer leader in the Royal Mosque and carried on the crusade against the Baha’is.

Amin, *A‘yan* 9:186. Momen, *Babi* 243, 513, 268–74. Balyuzi, *Eminent* 33–40, 134, 259. Bahauallah, *Tablets*, 203–26. ‘Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 201, 232. Bahauallah, *Athar* 2:197–98. Brown, “Babis of Persia” 491.

### **Aqa Najafi, “the Son of the Wolf”**

Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi Najafi—usually called Aqa Najafi, and entitled by Bahauallah “Son of the Wolf”—was a bitter opponent of the Baha’is. He was born on 17 Rabi‘ II 1262/14 April 1846, the son of Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir Isfahani, who was the leader of prayers at the Royal Mosque in Isfahan. He was related by blood and marriage to many prominent ‘ulama. He studied under his father in Isfahan and then went to Najaf where he studied the usual subjects under Mirzay-i Shirazi, the highest-ranking Shi‘i cleric of the time, and others. Returning to Isfahan, he was associated with his father and assumed his father’s position in the Royal Mosque on his death in 1883. His title “Aqa Najafi” stressed his claim to be regarded as one of the Najaf circle of religious scholars.

Building on the wealth and power accumulated by his father, Najafi became the most powerful cleric in Isfahan and one of the wealthiest men of the city. For over thirty years he waged a bitter struggle for control of Isfahan with Zill al-Sultan, the Qajar prince-governor. In the process he accumulated vast wealth, which he distributed generously to students and other clerics. The rise of his power in Isfahan was aided by the fall of Zill al-Sultan from royal favor in 1888.

Despite his hatred for the representatives of the Qajar dynasty and his early support for the nationalist revolt against the tobacco concession in 1891–92, his support for the constitutional revolution was ambiguous and inconsistent. He was criticized and mistrusted by many of the constitutionalist leaders, some of whom he had denounced as heretics and Babis (which, indeed, some were).

Like his father before him, Aqa Najafi was a bitter and ruthless opponent of the Baha'is. Najafi was one of the clergy who had signed the death warrant of the two Nahri brothers and took an active role in forcing the governor to carry out the sentence. After his father's death, Najafi assumed the leading role in the persecution of Baha'is in central Iran. He was largely responsible for the persecutions in Sida in 1889, in Najafabad in 1889, 1899, and 1905, and in Isfahan and Yazd in 1903. In addition to his activities in Isfahan and its vicinity, he wrote to 'ulama in other cities urging them to persecute the Baha'is. He also harassed the Muslims who attended the Christian missionary schools and the Jews. Such was Najafi's hatred of the Baha'is that he is said to have prohibited the recitation of the famous Ramadan dawn prayer, traditionally thought to contain the greatest name of God, because it contained the name "Baha." Though the leading 'ulama in Najaf did not usually openly endorse Najafi's pogroms, they did not repudiate him and helped prevent the government from acting against him.

Despite Najafi's thirty-year crusade against the Baha'is, he is best known among Baha'is for the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf.

Bahau'llah's last major work, this book is addressed to Aqa Najafi and contains Bahau'llah's own summary of the history and teachings of his religion. The "Shaykh" addressed throughout the book is Najafi.

Aqa Najafi had fifteen children by three permanent and two temporary wives. Several of his children were of moderate prominence in clerical circles in Isfahan, as their descendants are still. Najafi is variously said to have written forty or a hundred books. He published a number of them, but it is said that some of these were actually written by others.

His wealth is also a source of controversy. Though a clerical source speaks of his generosity, there seems little doubt that much of his wealth was ill-gotten. He cooperated with the governor to corner the market in wheat during a famine. On one occasion he had an official tortured and killed who had complained that Najafi had hoarded hundreds of tons of wheat while people starved. He threatened revenue officers to avoid paying taxes. The wealthy of Isfahan suspected that the Baha'is he attacked were chosen for the wealth that might be seized from them, and they feared him, even if they were not themselves Baha'is.

Aqa Najafi's character is a matter of disagreement. The clerical biographers generally praise him. "He was among the great scholars and clerics of Isfahan. . . He was almost without peer through the centuries in his political skill and ability to deal with the government." (*Makarim*.) He has also been called a murderer, opportunist, hoarder, and plagiarist. He was hated in his day by the government, foreign diplomats, and missionaries, and feared above all others by the Baha'is. His fellow clergy admired him, then and now, as a zealous defender of their faith.

He died 11 Sha'ban 1332/5 July 1914 in Isfahan and was buried near the Maydan-i Shah in Isfahan.

*Elr*, s.v. "Aqa Najafi." \*\*\* *Makarim* 1662–67. Amin, *A'yan*, 9:196. Momen, *Babi* 280–88, 363, 376–85, 395–96, 426–36, 514. Balyuzi, *Eminent* 38, 132–33, 151–53, 259. Momen, *Shi'i* 133, 140–41. Algar, *Religion* 16, 102, 128, 173, 180–

81, 209, 212, 220, 231–32. Bahauallah, *Ishraqat* 40. Ishraq-Khavari, *Da'irat* 1:46, 110.

### **Sultan-Mas'ud Mirza Zill al-Sultan**

Born on 5 Jan. 1850, Sultan-Mas'ud Mirza Zill al-Sultan was the eldest surviving son of Nasir al-Din Shah and long-time governor of Isfahan. He was passed over for the throne because his mother, 'Iffat al-Saltana, was a temporary wife and not of noble blood, so the next son, Muzaffar al-Din Mirza, was designated heir-apparent. His original title was Yamin al-Dawla, but in 1869 he received the title Zill al-Sultan, "shadow of the king."

He became governor of Mazandaran at age 11 and of Fars at 13. In 1874 he became governor of Isfahan. He ruled sternly, suppressed disorders, and paid taxes promptly to the central government. With these commendations, additional provinces were added to his government until by 1882 he governed about 40% of Iran, including such important areas as Yazd, Fars with its capital of Shiraz, and Kirmanshah. In addition, he built up an efficient provincial army containing 21,000 men, 6,000 horse, and ten batteries of artillery—a force that by Iranian standards was large, well-armed, and well-trained. He ruled regally in Isfahan, flattering English diplomats who supposed him to be enlightened and pro-British.

This situation abruptly ended in 1888. Nasir al-Din Shah, suspecting that Zill al-Sultan planned to contest the throne with his gentler brother on his father's death, detained him while he was visiting Tehran and announced that Zill al-Sultan had "resigned" all his offices except the governorship of Isfahan. His deputy-governors in the cities and provinces formerly under his rule were dismissed and the fine army disbanded. Zill al-Sultan eventually returned to Isfahan, an embittered and much weakened man.

After the assassination of Nasir al-Din Shah, having lost his own power and without the support he had once hoped for from the English, he yielded to his younger brother's accession to the throne. He remained governor of Isfahan for twenty years after his

disgrace. These years were dominated by a long struggle for control of Isfahan with the powerful and unscrupulous Aqa Najafi. He was finally dismissed from his governorship after the Constitutional Revolution and exiled to Europe. He was allowed to return during World War I and died not long after his return in Isfahan on 2 July 1918.

Zill al-Sultan's relations with the Baha'is were complex and ambiguous. On his first arrival as governor in Isfahan, he was greeted with a persecution of Baha'is instigated by Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir. He sought to prevent the news from reaching Tehran. In 1879 he consented to the arrest of the Nahri brothers, the "King" and "Beloved of Martyrs." It seems likely that his interest in the matter was the innocent extortion scarcely distinguishable from tax collection and that he did not particularly want them killed. Nonetheless, confronted on the one hand with the obstinate refusal of the two brothers to recant and on the other by a mob led by sixty clerics, he consented to their deaths. In this he disobeyed orders from the Shah to send them to Tehran. After their deaths, he took such a large share of their plundered wealth that the Imam-Jum'a, cheated in the transaction, raised another riot in protest.

In the various persecutions that took place in Isfahan and its vicinity through the rest of his governorship, Zill al-Sultan generally played a passive role, pleading his inability to confront the clergy, especially the formidable Aqa Najafi. When possible he discouraged the pogroms but rarely took active measures to stop them. Zill al-Sultan was not himself actively hostile to the Baha'is and in any case hated the clergy. It is said that Zill al-Sultan did instigate the persecution of the Baha'is of Yazd in 1891 to divert attention from himself after he had been indirectly implicated in a plot against the Shah.

On at least one occasion Zill al-Sultan attempted to enlist the Baha'is in his schemes to gain the throne for himself. He sent a messenger to Bahauallah, Haji Muhammad-'Ali Sayyah Mahallati. Bahauallah rejected this overture politely but firmly and later

remarked to his companions that had he sent Zill al-Sultan's letter to Nasir al-Din Shah, it would surely have resulted in the prince's death. In the fall of 1911 Zill al-Sultan approached 'Abd al-Baha in Paris, hoping for his help in securing his return to Iran and reacquiring certain properties of his that had come into the hands of Baha'is. 'Abd al-Baha said that Zill al-Sultan would return to Iran and that the property in question would be given to him without payment. Discovering that one of 'Abd al-Baha's attendants was a son of one of the brothers he had put to death thirty years before, he muttered excuses. 'Abd al-Baha said that he knew the part Zill al-Sultan had played and what his motive had been.

Zill al-Sultan married Hamdam al-Muluk, the daughter of Nasir al-Din Shah's sister and Mirza Taqi Khan, the former prime minister. His son Jalal al-Dawla was governor of Yazd and played a large part in the persecutions of the Baha'is there.

Zill al-Sultan tried to portray himself to foreigners as a progressive and pro-British reformer. The astute Curzon, however, saw him as driven by the single ambition to supplant his brother as heir apparent and believed that he had also made overtures to the Russians. In fact, although he was a vigorous and in many ways capable ruler, there was much less to him than his English admirers saw. His rule was marred by cruelties: persecutions of Baha'is, the treacherous killing of a Bakhtiyari leader, and persecutions of Jews and others, mostly instigated by the clergy but tolerated by the prince. Foreigners were appalled by the damage he inflicted to some of the great monuments of Isfahan, though in this he cannot be said to have been better or worse than his contemporaries.

His relations with the Baha'is were consistently duplicitous. He was willing to present himself as sympathetic to the Baha'is and even to solicit their aid, but he abandoned them when it suited his political purposes.

Curzon 1:416–21 and passim. Browne, *Year* 114–15. Momen, *Babi* 268–90, 301–5, 376–85 passim, 524. Balyuzi, *Eminent* 33–44, 79–80. Balyuzi, *Baha'u'llah* 409–10, 431–

34. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Baha* 161–62. Blomfield, *Chosen* 186–87. \*\*\**Makarim* 1814–15.

## **Khomeini**

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini—properly Imam Ayatu'llah Ruhu'llah al-Musavi al-Kumayni, the leader of the Iranian revolution of 1979, was bitterly hostile to the Baha'is and sanctioned the persecutions that took place under the Islamic revolutionary government of Iran.

## **Life**

Khomeini was born in about 1900 in the impoverished oasis town of Khumayn, south of Tehran. His grandfather, a member of a Persian family living in Kashmir, had studied in Karbala and settled in Khumayn at the invitation of a local chief around 1840. While Khomeini was still an infant, his father was killed in a dispute with a local landlord, leaving Khomeini to be raised by a somewhat more prosperous uncle. His uncle and aunt wished him to become a traditional physician (*hakim*), but he showed talent for Islamic learning. World War I having made travel to the Shi'i centers in Iraq impractical, he chose to study in the nearby town of Arak, eventually becoming a favored student of Shaykh 'Abd al-Karim Ha'iri Yazdi (1859–1937).

Khomeini was fortunate in his choice of teacher, for Ha'iri Yazdi moved to Qum in 1922 and led the revival of that town as a center of Shi'i learning, becoming its chief religious authority. By the end of the 1930s Khomeini had begun teaching the slightly unorthodox disciplines of mysticism and philosophy. In 1930 he married the daughter of a prominent cleric of Tehran, Batul Saqafi, whom he adored and by whom he had five children. By 1937–38 he was prosperous enough to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca and spend several months in the shrine cities of Iraq.

During these years Khomeini had been so angered by the secular and anti-clerical policies of Rida Shah Pahlavi that in 1944

he published a vitriolic anti-government pamphlet called *Kashf al-Asrar*, a work that foreshadowed his later ideas on Islamic government. He was also influenced by the antisemitic propaganda of the Nazis, which left him with an abiding belief in a Jewish conspiracy against Islam.

When Ayatu'llah Burujirdi (1875–1962) came to Qum at the beginning of 1945, Khomeini became his close advisor, carrying out religious and political missions on Bururjirdi's behalf that helped secure the latter's position as chief religious authority of the Shi'i world. Burujirdi firmly discouraged Khomeini's involvement in anti-government politics and terrorism.

During the 1950s Khomeini turned his attention to the problem of becoming a Grand Ayatu'llah—*marja' al-taqlid*, a supreme authority on religious matters. Therefore, he began writing books, thus establishing his scholarly credentials. His increasing personal wealth allowed him to gather a large circle of students. By about 1958 his position as an Ayatu'llah of the second rank was secure, but his prospects were limited by the presence of a number of more senior Ayatu'llahs, some of whom would surely outlive him and thus block his path to promotion. Moreover, his interests lay in philosophy, mysticism, and even poetry—not the jurisprudence that was the chief interest of his class. Even three decades later an air of doubt still attached to his claim to be a Grand Ayatu'llah.

In 1962 and 1963 the government introduced a number of reforms: large-scale land reforms, women's suffrage, and the elimination of religious tests for local offices. The first struck at the independence of the religious institutions, which were dependent on their large endowments of rental farmland, while the latter two were seen by the clergy as anti-Islamic. Large demonstrations took place throughout the country. Khomeini took a leading role in agitating against the measures, speaking against the Shah in bold and abusive language. The protests reached their height in 1963 at 'Ashura, the anniversary of the martyrdom of Husayn, which fell that year at the beginning of June. By the time



troops had restored order, hundreds were dead. Khomeini, along with other clerical leaders of the protests, was arrested and brought to Tehran where he was held for ten months before being released in April 1964. His preaching remained defiant. That November he was arrested again for his opposition to a bill removing American military personnel from the jurisdiction of the Iranian courts. He was exiled to Turkey. The following year he settled in Najaf, the chief Shi‘i scholarly center of Iraq, where he lived until 1978.

### **Thought and writings**

Khomeini’s intellectual importance rests on his theory of Islamic government, a subject on which he disagreed with the majority of modern Shi‘i clerics. Traditionally, Shi‘is accepted the separation of church and state in the absence of the Hidden Imam. Khomeini argued that many of the fundamental laws of Islam presumed the existence of an Islamic government. Also, people are weak and, for the most part, will fall into sin without the influence of a government to enforce religious law. In our time Islamic states had fallen into the hands of those who served the purposes of non-Muslim imperialists. Khomeini painted a stark picture of the division of society into a tiny minority of rich and corrupt oppressors exploiting the mass of oppressed Muslims. The solution was to establish true Islamic governments. The proper leaders for such governments were the Islamic clergy because of their knowledge of divine law and their commitment to justice. This last is the famous doctrine of the “guardianship of the jurisconsult” (*vilayat-i faqih*). Khomeini presented this message in books, pamphlets, and fiery sermons smuggled into Iran on cassettes.

Though Khomeini’s scholarly output was much less than that of other Grand Ayatu’llahs, he did write a number of books. These were:

*Tahrir al-Wasila* and *Tawdih al-Masa’il*, manuals on ritual obligations of the sort conventionally written by Grand Ayatu’llahs.

*Kitab al-Bay‘*, a treatise on the law of contracts that provided a vehicle for his denial of the legitimacy of the secular state.

*Islamic Government (Hukumat-i Islami)*, a compilation of his lectures on government, his most influential work.

*Misbah al-Hidayat*, on mystical philosophy.

To this must be added his Last Will and Testament, written in 1983 and constituting his political testament.

There are also a number of collections of speeches, letters, and the like.

### **Khomeini and the Iranian Revolution**

While in Najaf Khomeini developed his theory of Islamic government and built up a loose revolutionary network within Iran. Eventually his uncompromising opposition to the Shah's regime won him support from other anti-government groups, who hoped to use him for their own purposes. Early in 1978 riots broke out in major Iranian cities, resulting in many deaths. Riots continued through the summer and fall, encouraged by Khomeini's network of supporters. Expelled from Iraq in October, Khomeini settled in Paris, by now the recognized leader of the revolution. After the Shah's departure from Iran, Khomeini returned to Iran in triumph on 31 January and within days was the unquestioned ruler of the country though he himself held no government post.

Khomeini moved quickly to consolidate his Islamic regime by executing many leaders of the old government. By consistently supporting the most radical elements of the revolution, he was able to maintain his own position and eliminate other elements of the revolutionary coalition, such as Marxists, secular nationalists, and even rival Ayatu'llahs. Though various political groups coalesced out of the clerical coalition that had brought him to power, Khomeini retained supreme control, able to frustrate policies that he objected to. Under his authority Iran pursued a xenophobic foreign policy, resulting in disasters such as American hostage crisis, the eight-year Iran-Iraq War, and the American economic embargo. His major foreign policy success was that under him and

his successors, Iran for the first time in several centuries had a government that was not under the influence of one or more powerful Western states. Since Khomeini's program was primarily religious and moral, devoted to the moral and spiritual reform of Islamic society, he had few concrete economic and political programs, apart from a generalized hostility towards the West.

In the last years of his life, he was rumored to be ill. In any case, he played little role in day-to-day affairs, living in seclusion in a heavily fortified village near Tehran. Nonetheless, he retained the capacity to intervene in affairs if he chose, as his condemnation of the British author Salman Rushdie in 1989 proved. He died of complications following surgery on 4 June 1989 in Tehran.

### **Khomeini and the Baha'is**

Khomeini shared the distaste of many (though not all) Shi'i clerics for Baha'is. His first contact with Baha'is was evidently in Simnan in 1930, where he tried to organize an anti-Baha'i meeting. Later his hatred for Baha'is, Jews, and the Pahlavi regime coalesced, convincing him that the three groups were in league to destroy Islam. Thus Khomeini supported the anti-Baha'i pogroms of the 1950s and in 1963 accused the government of using local government reforms as a device to favor the Baha'is.

After his return to Iran in 1979 Khomeini refused to include Baha'is among the religious minorities protected by the Islamic regime. There can be little doubt that the persecutions of the Baha'is in Iran under the Islamic regime were conducted with the consent of Khomeini, though they were generally initiated by particular groups within the revolutionary coalition and carried out by lower-level officials.

Almost every book published about the Iranian Revolution deals with Khomeini at length. An imperfect and generally hostile biography is Amir Taheri, *The Spirit of Allah* (Bethesda: Adler & Adler, 1986). A study of the development of his intellectual views is found in Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent* (New York: NYU Press,

1993), ch. 8 and passim. Khomeini's works have been zealously published in Iran since the revolution though some post hoc editing has taken place. A representative sample by a good scholar is *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, trans. Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981). There are many translations of varying quality produced by or on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

## Miscellaneous historical and doctrinal topics

### Seven Proofs

The Persian. *Dala'il-i Sab'a* is a major polemical work of the Bab in which he justifies his religion and his claims to prophethood to an unidentified and evidently sceptical inquirer who is said to have written and asked for proofs of the Bab's mission. There are actually two works with this title, a longer version in Persian and a shorter version in Arabic. The Persian text mentions that it being written in Maku and that four years of the revelation had elapsed, that is in late 1847 or early 1848. The individual for whom the work was written is not known, but the text mentions that he was a student of Sayyid Kazim and had met Mulla Husayn, and the content indicates that he was not a confirmed believer. Azal claimed that the recipient was the Bab's secretary, Sayyid Husayn Yazdi, and Fadil Mazandarani believed that the recipient was Mulla Muhammad-Taqi Harawi, a Shaykhi who was converted by Mulla Husayn in Isfahan but who later abandoned the religion and wrote a refutation of the Bab (Brown, *Catalogue* 448; Mazandarani, *Asrar* 4:109). Since the former remained a firm Babi and the latter is referred to as a third person in the text, the matter is still unsettled. (MacEoin, *Sources*, 85–88.)

The Seven Proofs seems to have been popular among the Babis; after the death of the Bab Mirza Ahmad Katib was able to earn a modest living copying it and the Persian Bayan for the Babis (Nabil, 592), and at least thirteen manuscripts of the Persian text and three of the Arabic text exist in the hands of various Babi and Baha'i scribes.

The doctrines of the Seven Proofs closely resemble those of the Bayan, which was written about the same time. The chief theme of the work is the standard by which the Bab's claim to prophethood is to be evaluated. He argues that according to the Qur'an, a prophet is to be judged by his verses (*ayat*), a word that

Muslims interpreted as meaning both “writings” and “evidentiary signs.” Taking for granted that his own writings were comparable to the Qur’an, he argues that only God can reveal scripture and that the greatest miracle of Muhammad was that no one until the Bab had been able to compose anything comparable to the Qur’an. The verses of God must be greater than the miracles of the prophets of old, since the Qur’an, the only evidentiary miracle of Muhammad, abrogated their religions. Finally, whereas it took Muhammad twenty-three years to reveal the Qur’an, the Bab, who composed his works with extreme rapidity, had revealed works of comparable size in two days and nights, despite his not having had a conventional theological education.

The Bab, arguing against the usual Muslim reluctance to accept the possibility of revelation after Muhammad, points out that the Muslim belief that Islam abrogated Judaism and Christianity implies the obligation to accept other prophets if they come with inimitable revealed writings. This obligation applies to the Babis as well, who were counselled to accept Him Whom God shall make manifest, the messiah of the Babis, whom Baha’is identify with Bahauallah.

The Persian Seven Proofs contains a number of passages of historical importance, the most important being the Bab’s explanation of the gradual revelation of his station.

An edition has been published by the Azalis in Iran; Abu al-Fadl Bayda’i, ed., *Dala’il-i Sab‘a* (Tehran: Ism-i A’zam, n.d.). Known MSS are listed in MacEoin, *Sources*, p. 185. I have used Cambridge Browne F.25 in the preparation of this article. I have not seen the Arabic version. A full French translation is A. L. M. Nicolas, *Le Livre des Sept Preuves* (Paris, 1902). English selections are found in Bab, *Selections*. See also Mazandarani, *Asrar* 4:108–15; Amanat, *Resurrection* 161, 193–94, 199, 375, 384; Momen, *Babi* 37, 39; Sulaymani, *Masabih* 2:496; Ishraq-Khavari, *Qamus* 202, 206, 1645–52; ‘Abd al-Baha, *Makatib* 26; Ishraq-Khavari, *Muhadirat* 837-39.

## **Lawh-i Aqdas**

The “Most Holy Tablet” is an Arabic letter addressed to a Baha’i, apparently of Christian background. He may have been Faris Effendi, the Syrian Christian converted by Nabil Zarandi while they were jailed together in Alexandria in 1868. It was written in ‘Akka, but the exact date is unknown. Its Arabic uses many Christian terms and quotations from the New Testament. The title—properly al-Lawh al-Aqdas—is given by Bahauallah Himself in the heading of the tablet. It is sometimes referred to as the “Tablet” or “Message to the Christians.” It is to be classed with the tablets to the kings and rulers revealed in the Edirne and early ‘Akka periods.

After the initial salutation addressed to the unnamed Christian Baha’i, the bulk of the tablet is addressed to the Christian community as a whole—the “followers of the Son,” the priests, the bishops, and the monks.

Bahauallah begins by asking the Christians why they failed to recognize him as the return of Christ. He points to the Pharisees who had lived in expectation of the Messiah and had known the prophecies of the Old Testament yet had rejected Christ. The monks who fail to recognize Bahauallah are like these.

Bahauallah then eloquently announces his own claim to be the return of Christ, “come down from heaven, even as he came down from it the first time.” This announcement is expressed in the prophetic language of the Bible and the Qur’an with allusions to the Kingdom of Heaven, the River Jordan, Sinai, the Father, the Hour, and the Face of God. He chides the Christians for not heeding the voice of the Bab, “the Crier. . . in the wilderness”—words that the New Testament applies to John the Baptist.

He calls the priests to leave their churches and their bells and not to be veiled by the name of Christ, for Bahauallah has glorified Christ. Now they should summon the people to the Most Great Name of Bahauallah. They should ponder the fact that although the light of his revelation appeared in the East, its effects were

manifested in the West—perhaps an allusion to the extraordinary technical progress of Europe in the nineteenth century. As for the bishops, he says that they are the stars whose fall had been prophesied by Christ Himself. He promises the monks that if they follow him, he will make them his heirs, though if they fail to do so, he will endure this with patience. The tablet now becomes a dialogue between Bahauallah and Bethlehem and Sinai, in which these two holy places of Christianity and Judaism bear witness to Bahauallah's station.

Bahauallah addresses the recipient of the letter again, praising him for recognizing his Lord. The Muslims had persecuted Bahauallah without just cause, but such people are like the dead. He should not be disturbed by what they say and should remain steadfast.

Bahauallah asks the recipient to greet on his behalf another Baha'i, whom he praises with wordplay on the man's name, Murad, which means "desired."

The tablet closes with a set of beatitudes proclaiming the blessedness of those who have recognized Bahauallah and his station.

The Lawh-i Aqdas was first published in *Kitab-i Mubin*, a collection of Bahauallah's writings published in Bombay in 18\_\_ [and reprinted as Bahauallah, *Athar* 1????] Shoghi Effendi translated several passages in Shoghi Effendi, *Promised*, along with similar passages addressed to the Christian priests. These are incorporated in the full translation found in Bahauallah, *Tablets*.

The Arabic text is found in Bahauallah, *Athar* 1 and Bahauallah, *Tablets* ch. 2. The full English text is in Bahauallah, *Tablets*, ch. 2. Extracts translated by Shoghi Effendi are in Shoghi Effendi, *Promised* 42, 105–7, 110. Eric Bowes, "Baha'u'llah's Message to the Christians" (n.p.: Baha'i Publications Australia, 1986) is a brief commentary addressed to a Christian audience. It includes the full English translation. Information on the Lawh-i Aqdas is found in



Ishraq-Khavari, *Ganj* 164–68, Ishraq-Khavari, *Da'irat* 13:2011–14, and Taherzadeh 4:227-35. Information on Faris Effendi, the probable recipient, is found in the sources mentioned and in Taherzadeh 3:5-11 and Balyuzi, *Baha'u'llah* 267–68.

## **Philosophy**

Philosophy (Ar. and Pers. *falsafah*, from Gr. *philosophia*, “love of wisdom”; *hikmat*, lit. “wisdom.”) is the investigation of the underlying principles of reality and knowledge by rational means. Philosophy is distinguished from religion by its reliance on rational investigation rather than revelation. Traditionally, the natural sciences were considered part of philosophy, but modern thought now confines philosophy to those subjects that cannot be investigated by empirical experiment.

The history of philosophy is complex, and it is not possible to explain here even the various conceptions of the meaning and content of philosophy. Moreover, little research has been done into the philosophical aspects and antecedents of Baha'i thought, and almost nothing has been done to integrate the ideas of the Baha'i writings with modern philosophy. Therefore, this article will mainly discuss philosophy as part of the historical background of Baha'i thought and the references to philosophy in the Baha'i writings.

## **Islamic philosophy as background to Baha'i thought**

*History of Islamic philosophy.* Philosophy reached the Islamic world in the eighth century through the translation of a large number of Greek philosophic, scientific, and medical works. The Greek philosophical corpus in Arabic eventually included most of the works of Aristotle, extracts or summaries of the works of Plato, and various treatises and commentaries of later Hellenistic philosophers, physicians, and scientists. By the ninth century there was an indigenous school of Islamic philosophy, the most important representatives of which were al-Kindi (9th cent.), al-

Farabi (d. 950), and Ibn-Sina (980–1037), known in the West as Avicenna. These early Islamic philosophers expounded a system in which Aristotle's logic, physics, psychology, and ontology were combined with a neoplatonic metaphysics of emanation. Though later philosophers made many modifications, this system remains the basis of the Islamic tradition of philosophy up to the present. Thus, the reader should be aware that 'philosophy' in Islam refers primarily to the Greek tradition of philosophy, although some strains of Islamic mystical theology came to be included in the philosophical curriculum. Other kinds of Islamic thought, notably dogmatic theology, might also be included as 'Islamic philosophy', but following tradition they are not discussed here.

Philosophy, however, never completely overcame opposition from Islamic theologians and jurists who held that certain doctrines of philosophical metaphysics were contrary to Islam. As a result, many of the distinctive features of Islamic philosophy resulted from the philosophers' attempts to reconcile Greek philosophy with revealed religion and specifically Islam. Al-Farabi, the first great Islamic philosopher, taught that the doctrines of prophetic religion—particularly concepts such as heaven and hell that were most disputed between philosophers and theologians—were expressions of philosophical truths in language suitable for the masses of people incapable of grasping literal philosophic truth. Since both philosophers of the Platonic tradition and Muslim scholars considered religions to be primarily legal systems, religion thus became a branch of political philosophy. Philosophy and religion expressed the same truths on different levels. Al-Farabi's approach was carried on by Spanish Arab philosophers such as Ibn-Rushd (the Latin Averroes, 1126–1198) and greatly influenced both Jewish and Christian philosophy in the Middle Ages. In Islam, however, this approach to reconciling religion and philosophy died out after Ibn-Rushd.

In the eastern lands of Islam Ibn-Sina was more influential. In contrast to al-Farabi, who like Plato made political philosophy central to his system, Ibn-Sina mainly confined himself to abstract

issues and began to explore the philosophical implications of mysticism. As-Suhrawardi (1154–91) systematically integrated mysticism and philosophy, producing a system reinterpreting Ibn-Sina's system on the basis of the concept of divine light.

The great mystical theologian Ibn-'Arabi (1165–1240) produced a wonderfully complex system of mystical theology that came to be called "the Unity of Being" (*wahdat al-wujud*). In his system all the creatures of the universe are the self-manifestations of God. His works encompassed all the lore of Islamic thought and mysticism and burst on the Islamic world like a bombshell. Even among thinkers bitterly opposed to him, his system was immensely influential.

Islamic philosophy reached its greatest heights in seventeenth century Iran in the so-called "School of Isfahan," whose greatest representative was Mulla Sadra. In Sadra's system the rationalism of Ibn-Sina and the mysticism of as-Suhrawardi and Ibn-'Arabi were combined. Although philosophy was still a matter of suspicion to most Islamic clerics, a continuous tradition of philosophy has survived carried on by Shi'i clergy from Mulla Sadra and the School of Isfahan down to the present.

The Shaykhis were the most recent distinctive school to arise in Islamic philosophy. Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i, a Shi'i Arab from eastern Arabia, propounded an elaborate system in which an extreme reverence for the imams was combined with a philosophical system owing much to Mulla Sadra. His most distinctive contribution was the elaboration of an older idea in which a world of immaterial images intermediate between the physical world and the world of pure spirit served as the locale for heaven, hell, and the miraculous events of the last judgment. Like many Islamic philosophers before him, Shaykh Ahmad was bitterly attacked by orthodox clergy. After the death of his successor, Sayyid Kazim Rashti, a large number of his followers became Babis. The remaining Shaykhis broke into several factions and emphasized the Shi'i orthodoxy of their views, modifying or concealing their most distinctive doctrines.

The philosophical tradition deriving from Ibn-Sina and Mulla Sadra has continued in the theological seminaries of Iran up to the present. Although it has never ceased to be viewed with suspicion by some of the clergy, in recent decades it has attracted considerable interest and respect in the West. A number of prominent figures in the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran were philosophers of this tradition, including Khomeini himself.

*Doctrines of Islamic philosophy.* Though naturally there is immense variation in the views and approaches of Islamic philosophers over the last twelve centuries, some useful generalizations can be made. Islamic philosophy is based for the most part on the works of Aristotle, which Islamic philosophers understood as a systematic treatment of philosophy and science. Where appropriate works of Aristotle were not available, other classical works filled the gap, notably the substitution of Platonic works of political philosophy for the untranslated *Politics* of Aristotle and the addition of a late textbook of Neoplatonic metaphysics, misattributed in translation under the title of *The Theology of Aristotle*. After al-Farabi's abortive attempt to organize philosophy on the basis of Platonic political philosophy, almost every Islamic philosopher organized his works on the basis of some variation of a systematic division of the sciences worked out by Ibn-Sina:

Theoretical

Logic

Mathematics

Physics (natural science)

Metaphysics

First philosophy (ontology)

Theology

Practical

Ethics

Economics (household management)

Politics

While logic, the sciences, and even ethics eventually were accepted as useful tools even in Islamic jurisprudence, metaphysical doctrines came into direct conflict with Islamic dogmatic theology. While there are innumerable variations, Islamic philosophers generally shared a view of the universe something like the following:

God is that one being whose existence is necessary in itself. God in His essence is absolutely one and simple. Since an absolutely simple cause cannot be the direct cause of the complexity of the world, God in His simplicity cannot be the direct cause of all the particulars of the world, so that the traditional Judeo-Christian-Islamic account of God creating the world by simple fiat cannot be accepted. Instead, God creates directly one other being—an immaterial intellect or mind variously known as the primal intellect, the primal will, the first angel, and the proximate light. This immaterial intellect creates another, which in turn creates another of still lower rank. The Islamic philosophers accepted the Ptolemaic astronomy, in which the earth was at the center of a set of concentric spheres, each associated with a planet and each moved by an immaterial intellect. It is the very complex interrelationships among the planets and their motions that account for the complexities of the sublunar world in which we live. The world itself is eternal, without beginning or end in time.

This metaphysical system came into conflict with Islamic theology and its representatives on several grounds. First was the question of authority. The philosophers claimed to derive doctrines about God, the universe, and the soul from pure reason. Islamic philosophers worked prophecy into their systems and were for the most part sincere Muslims, but it was clear that prophecy was subordinate to philosophy. Second, there were several fundamental philosophical doctrines that directly conflicted with the usual interpretation of Islam: God did not create the universe from nothing at a particular moment of time. It was difficult to

explain how God could know particulars or how His providence could care for the individual person. The night-journey of Muhammad, heaven and hell, and the last judgment could not be taken literally. Philosophers were accused of denying the immortality of the individual soul.

Earlier Islamic philosophers had attempted to defuse these criticisms, explaining prophecy and its symbolic elements by subsuming prophecy under political philosophy and explaining the contradictions between philosophy and religion in terms of the rhetorical difficulties of conveying philosophical truths to ordinary people. Later Islamic philosophy drew on mysticism and theories about the imagination to solve such difficulties. As it had in later Greek philosophy, philosophy became an ethical and mystical pursuit for the individual, not simply a subject of intellectual investigation. Thus, philosophical investigation was to some extent protected by the prestige of mysticism.

In addition, new attempts were made explain religion in terms of philosophy. The most interesting was the doctrine of the World of Image. In the material world an image is normally a form subsisting in matter. The divine world of the intellects had no images, only pure intellect. The later philosophers, following Ibn-‘Arabi—posited a world in which images could exist without matter. This explained a whole range of phenomena ranging from the images in mirrors, imagination, and dreams to the visions of mystics, heaven and hell, and the last judgment. The Shaykhis developed this idea to its highest degree, arguing that men lived both in this world and several levels of the world of image. The material body, for example, dies in this world but the image body in the world of image is resurrected as promised in the Qur’an.

### **The Bab and philosophy**

The Bab in the Bayan prohibited the study of philosophy (*qawa'id-i hikmiya*), along with the study of logic, religious law and legal theory, philology, and grammar, except insofar as these disciplines might be necessary for reading his works. He did allow

the study of dogmatic theology (*ʿilm-i kalam*). The volume of his writings and the fact that he Himself was devoid of these sciences made their study unnecessary (Persian Bayan 4:10). Though the Bab condemned the study of abstract sciences, many of his most influential followers were drawn from the Shaykhis and may be presumed to have had philosophical training and interests. However, in the few disturbed years before the suppression of the Babis, it is not likely that any of them had much time for philosophical reflection. The Bab's writings show some trace of Shaykhi philosophy and certainly presuppose issues dealt with in Shaykhi and Islamic philosophy, but they do not deal directly with philosophical issues. The relationship of the thought of the Bab and his followers to Islamic philosophy needs much more study.

### **Bahauallah and philosophy**

Though Bahauallah condemned "such sciences as begin in mere words and end in mere words," he did not renew the Bab's explicit condemnation of philosophy. He is not known to have made any particular study of philosophy, but his writings show an easy familiarity with the concepts and main issues of Islamic philosophy. Though none of his writings can be said to be philosophical in a technical sense, he often uses philosophical terminology and sometimes treats specifically philosophical questions. An example is the Tablet of Wisdom (or "of philosophy": 'Lawh-i Hikmat'), written in reply to questions about the eternity of the universe submitted by the prominent Baha'i philosopher Aqa Muhammad Qa'ini, Nabil-i Akbar. In this tablet Bahauallah answers this classical philosophical question, though in a way that indicates that much of the dispute about it derives from the limitations of men's minds. He goes on to summarize the history of the ancient philosophers, citing the common Islamic belief that the Greek philosophers were in contact with the prophets of Israel as evidence that the deistic philosophers drew their fundamental inspiration from prophetic religion. 'Abd al-

Baha's *Secret of Divine Civilization*, written about the same time, also gives this account of the history of philosophy.

It should be noted that philosophers were one of the groups addressed in the *Suriy-i Muluk*.

### **‘Abd al-Baha and philosophy**

‘Abd al-Baha's writings also show familiarity with Islamic philosophy, in addition to those ideas of European philosophy and science that were becoming known in the Middle East. His earliest major work, the commentary on the famous Islamic tradition "I was a hidden treasure," is a philosophical and mystical refutation of Ibn-‘Arabi's doctrine of the unity of being. *The Secret of Divine Civilization* touches many of the themes relating to philosophy that characterize ‘Abd al-Baha's later references to the subject: philosophy as a sign of civilization, that the fundamentals of philosophy derive from the prophets, the praise of the great ancient philosophers, and the comparison of the early believers in each religion to philosophers. These themes are expanded in ‘Abd al-Baha's talks in Europe and America, where he also criticizes modern materialistic philosophy, by which he means a naive faith in the universal applicability of the methods of physical science. This he distinguishes from the deistic philosophy of the ancients and of more reflective moderns.

In such works as *Some Answered Questions*, ‘Abd al-Baha frequently uses the concepts and arguments of Islamic philosophy when he discusses scientific, metaphysical, and theological topics. Often he cites the views of the ancient philosophers in confirmation of his own views. Among the philosophical subjects specifically addressed by ‘Abd al-Baha in his writings and talks are proofs for the existence of God, personal eschatology, epistemology, free will, the nature of religion and evil, and substantial motion. Insofar as they assume a philosophy, the writings of Bahauddin and ‘Abd al-Baha employ the late Avicennan philosophy of illumination current in nineteenth century Iran. Whether this philosophy is integrally connected with the Baha'i



teachings or whether it is a rhetorical device sometimes useful for conveying them is a matter of current Baha'i theological debate.

### **Shoghi Effendi and philosophy**

Shoghi Effendi, who was educated in Western schools and had studied political economy and philosophy in college, showed little direct interest in philosophy in his writings. Though he permitted the study of philosophy, he generally encouraged Baha'is to pursue more practical interests during his time. He makes little reference to contemporary philosophical schools other than to reiterate 'Abd al-Baha's criticism of "materialistic philosophers" and to comment that this sort of philosophy was an intellectual fad that would one day pass. His most specific comment on philosophy is his sharp criticism of the contemporary schools of Hegelian political philosophy, particularly Communism, nationalism, and fascism.

Current Baha'i law allowing the study of philosophy is based on several interpretations of Shoghi Effendi in which he distinguished between "fruitless excursions into metaphysical hairsplitting" and "a sound branch of learning like philosophy" (Shoghi Effendi, *Unfolding* 445).

### **Philosophical writings by Baha'is**

Among the numerous clerics who became Baha'is during the lifetimes of the Bab and Bahauallah were a number of men trained in philosophy. In addition to the many former Shaykhis who may be presumed to have a greater or lesser training in philosophy, we may include Wahid, Sayyid Yahya Darabi, the Babi leader of Yazd and Nayriz, whose father was a well-known philosopher. A number of prominent Baha'is of the time of Bahauallah were also trained as philosophers, the most notable being Aqa Muhammad Qa'ini, known as Nabil-i Akbar, and Mirza Abu al-Fadl Gulpaygani. Though both these men wrote on Baha'i subjects, not surprisingly they dealt mostly with theological subjects and the defense of their new religion.

It is interesting that the two greatest modern Iranian Baha'i scholars, Fadil Mazandarani and 'Abd al-Hamid Ishraq-Khavari, were both former 'ulama trained in philosophy. Though both wrote mainly on historical and theological topics, Mazandarani's great compilation of Baha'i writings, *Amr va-Khalq*, shows his knowledge of philosophical issues.

Three other recent Baha'i authors have written specifically on philosophy. 'Azizu'llah Sulaymani, better known for his Baha'i biographical dictionary, prepared a textbook of traditional Islamic philosophy for the use of Baha'i students. This work, *Rashahat-i Hikmat*, is intended to familiarize the students with traditional philosophy for use in understanding Baha'i scripture and for teaching their faith to those trained in this philosophy. It makes no attempt to integrate modern Western philosophy or science. Dr. 'Ali-Murad Davudi was chairman of the philosophy department at Tehran University until his disappearance shortly after the Islamic Revolution. He wrote a number of works on the history of Greek and Islamic philosophy, in addition to articles on Baha'i philosophical and theological themes. Ruhi Afnan, a cousin of Shoghi Effendi expelled as a covenant-breaker, wrote several works on the history of philosophy and its interrelationship with religion. These include an ambitious attempt to correlate Babi and Baha'i thought with the rationalist philosophies of Descartes and Spinoza.

Only recently have Western Baha'is begun to write on philosophical themes. Some examples are listed among the sources mentioned below.

### **The Greek philosophers and the Jews**

Bahau'llah and 'Abd al-Baha praise the "deistic" (*ilahi, muta'allih*) philosophers of the Greeks. In a famous tablet to the Swiss scientist A. H. Forel, 'Abd al-Baha writes:

As to deistic philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, they are indeed worthy of esteem and of the highest

praise, for they have rendered distinguished services to mankind. (*Baha'i World* 15:37.)

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.), for example, is mentioned a number of times, usually favorably. Aristotle's works had been the primary influence on Islamic philosophy. Islamic philosophers defended Aristotle and the other pagan philosophers as sages of antiquity who through reason and mystical insight or through contact with the Hebrew prophets had attained knowledge of the unity of God. Various wise sayings were attributed to him. Bahau'llah's reference to him in the Tablet of Wisdom (para. 47/Bahau'llah, *Tablets*, 147) and many of 'Abd al-Baha's references to him reflect this view of Aristotle. 'Abd al-Baha thus contrasts him with the modern materialist philosophers and scientists ('Abd al-Baha, *Promulgation* 327, 356-57/'Abd al-Baha, *Khitabat* 2:299, *Baha'i World* 15:37) and compares the continued fame of his learning with the oblivion of the empires of his day ('Abd al-Baha, *Promulgation* 348/'Abd al-Baha, *Khitabat* 2:268). On the other hand, his learning was limited compared to that of the Prophets and of God ('Abd al-Baha, *Paris* 19, 'Abd al-Baha, *Some* 5:para. 6/p. 15). 'Abd al-Baha attributes a type of pantheism to him ('Abd al-Baha, *Some* 82: para. 2/p. 290).

There has been considerable confusion about Bahau'llah's account of the Greek philosophers, as elaborated by 'Abd al-Baha. In his Tablet of Wisdom, Bahau'llah had praised Hippocrates, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Apollonius of Tyana, and Hermes Trismegistus. Empedocles, he said, had been a contemporary of David and Pythagoras a contemporary of Solomon. Thus, "the essence and fundamentals of philosophy have emanated from the Prophets" (Bahau'llah, *Tablets*, 9, para. 26, pp. 145). Socrates is praised for having taught monotheism, an offence for which the ignorant put him to death.

With the circulation of Baha'i writings in the West further questions arose. Western Baha'is questioned why the chronology implicit in the Tablet of Wisdom differed from the Western histories. Forel had evidently written to question 'Abd al-Baha's

criticism of “materialist” philosophers. Other questions might have been asked had the Western Baha’is of ‘Abd al-Baha’s time known more of classical history: why was Empedocles placed before Pythagoras? Why did Bahauallah seemingly accept the historicity of Hermes Trismegistus, given that Western scholars had known for three hundred years that the works attributed to him were spurious? Explaining that Bahauallah’s “Tablet of Wisdom was written in accordance with certain histories of the East,” ‘Abd al-Baha states that histories from the period before Alexander the Great had many discrepancies and that such discrepancies were to be found even in the various versions of the Bible (Research Department, p. 2). To Forel he explained that there had been two schools of ancient philosophers, one deistic and one materialistic. His condemnation of philosophers had applied only to the materialists (*Baha’i World* 15:40). The explanation for Socrates’ monotheism is that he studied in the Holy Land, for the Greeks were polytheists and so Socrates’ monotheism must have had another source. Hippocrates had also lived in Syria, in the city of Tyre (‘Abd al-Baha, *Some* 14–15, 25.55; ‘Abd al-Baha, *Secret* 77; ‘Abd al-Baha, *Promulgation* 362–63, 406).

The difficulty with ‘Abd al-Baha’s account is that it is not in accordance with what is known about the lives of Greek philosophers. Empedocles and Pythagoras were not contemporaries of David and Solomon. There is no evidence that Socrates went to Syria. Socrates did not teach monotheism. So why did ‘Abd al-Baha say and write these things? There are two kinds of answers: theological and historical.

The theological answer is simpler. In the time of ‘Abd al-Baha, Western science, and increasingly Western philosophy, were thoroughly positivistic, sometimes in a very simplistic way. ‘Abd al-Baha, as had many religious thinkers before him, cited the religiously-oriented Greek philosophers as evidence that reason did not necessarily imply irreligion. Pythagoras and Plato are thus old allies of monotheistic religion. Such statements are additional examples of Bahauallah’s and ‘Abd al-Baha’s habit of using their

thorough command of high Islamic culture to explicate Baha'i teachings. But what were the materials that they drew on?

The key to understanding the historical origins of 'Abd al-Baha's account is found in his statement that "the Tablet of Wisdom was written in accordance with certain histories of the East." The pre-modern Islamic world had a very imperfect knowledge of the history of Greece in general and of Greek philosophy in particular. 'Abd al-Baha's account can be explained by his reliance on the Islamic accounts of the Greek philosophers. The details of his account can be explained in three stages:

1. *The two schools of Greek philosophy.* On this point 'Abd al-Baha is on solid ground. The later Greek historians of philosophy were fond of arranging philosophers in "schools" or "successions." Diogenes Laertius, the author of the most comprehensive surviving classical history of Greek philosophy, divides the philosophers into the Ionians and the Italians. The Ionians were the pre-Socratic physicists, or as it might be translated, "materialists." This succession included the atomists and those pre-Socratics who attempted to find a physical first principle of being. The Italians were the Pythagoreans and Empedocleans, whose interests were more theological and religious (Diogenes Laertius 1.13–14). The same notion is found in pseudo-Plutarch (Aetius), *De placita philosophorum* (1.3). Here we find Pythagoras, Empedocles, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle listed among the Italians. This work was translated into Arabic, and this chapter was incorporated into various well known Arabic histories of philosophy (e.g., Shahrastani [13th cent.], *Nuzhat al-Arwah*, ed. Ahmed [Haidarabad: Da'iratu'l-Ma'arifi'l-Osmania, 1396/1976], 1:20). The Italian school acquired added importance when it was identified by the Illuminationist school of Islamic philosophers with the "divine sages" of the Greeks. The Ionian physicists were mostly forgotten by the Muslims. Thus to later Iranian intellectuals familiar with philosophy, the Greek philosophers of importance were the "divine" or "deistic" philosophers of the Italian school: Pythagoras, Empedocles,

Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. This was a tradition that both Bahauallah and ‘Abd al-Baha know and cite.

2. *“Those properly called wise.”* Medieval Muslim scholars attempting to understand the history of Greek thought were confronted by a variety of fragmentary accounts, none of which was sufficiently detailed to serve as the basis of a coherent and comprehensive history. As a result a variety of independent short accounts were transmitted, most of which eventually dropped out of circulation. The most persistent such tradition, found in works written from the tenth century on, was a list of “those properly called wise”: Luqman, Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Accounts influenced by it can be recognized by the error of placing Empedocles before Pythagoras. According to this account, Luqman, a sage mentioned in the Qur’an and not otherwise known, lived in Syria at the time of David and was the first to be called “wise” (or “a sage” or philosopher, *hakim*). Empedocles came to Syria and studied with Luqman. Pythagoras went to Egypt, where he studied with the disciples of Solomon. Socrates was a follower of Pythagoras, who was put to death for refuting polytheism with rational arguments. Finally, there was Plato, who was Socrates’ student. This tradition would have been known to any well-educated nineteenth century Iranian.

This account can be traced back as far as the tenth century philosopher al-’Amiri and probably derives in whole or part from some Christian source. It was common for early Christian theologians to trace the origins of Greek philosophy to Jewish sources. They found it a useful strategy for undermining their most formidable pagan opponents, the Neoplatonic philosophers. Needless to say, there is no evidence of intellectual contact between the Greeks and Jews before the conquests of Alexander and little evidence of significant intellectual contact until even later. The identification of the Jews as the original source of philosophy was useful for medieval Muslims as well, since the Islamic version of the theory of progressive revelation did not provide an obvious explanation for pagan philosophy. That this

particular account is the origin of Bahauallah's and 'Abd al-Baha's versions of the history of Greek philosophy is obvious from a variety of large and small features.

3. *Oral simplification and quoting from memory.* There is one major remaining incongruity: 'Abd al-Baha's statement that Socrates studied in Syria. No such statement is known either in Greek or Islamic sources—or for that matter, in Bahauallah's writings. 'Abd al-Baha writes the following:

It is recorded in eastern histories that Socrates journeyed to Palestine and Syria and there, from men learned in the things of God, acquired certain spiritual truths; that when he returned to Greece, he promulgated two beliefs: one, the unity of God, and the other, the immortality of the soul after its separation from the body; that these concepts, so foreign to their thought, raised a great commotion among the Greeks, until in the end they gave him poison and killed him. . . . Eastern histories also state that Hippocrates sojourned for a long time in the town of Tyre, and this is a city in Syria. ('Abd al-Baha, *Selections* 25, p. 55)

This passage attributes two innovations to Socrates: the unity of God and the immortality of the soul. In the Islamic versions of the tradition we have been discussing, these doctrinal innovations are attributed to Empedocles, not Socrates. Hippocrates is not said to have lived in Tyre; Pythagoras was. In each of these cases a less familiar name in the Islamic tradition—Empedocles and Pythagoras—has been replaced by a more familiar name—Socrates and Hippocrates. In the absence of a textual source embodying the confusion, the probable explanation is simply that 'Abd al-Baha read the story in some history and later retold it several times, and that either he or his secretary confused Socrates with Empedocles.

As for the larger question of whether the early Greek philosophers could have been influenced by Judaism, the answer is no. There is no surviving reference in Greek to the Jews dating earlier than the conquests of Alexander, which took place in Aristotle's lifetime. It is also quite certain that no such references

were known in the first century C.E., since had they existed Jewish apologists such as Philo and Josephus would certainly have eagerly cited them, as would slightly later Christian writers. The reason why there was no such contact is simple enough; the Greeks and Jews had no common language. The Jews of that time used Aramaic as a lingua franca; the Greeks used Greek. There would have been nowhere they would have met with a common language. Plausible arguments can be made for a Zoroastrian influence, or even an Egyptian influence, on early Greek philosophy, but not for a Jewish influence.

*Sources:* The principle Baha'i scriptures dealing with philosophical subjects are the Tablet of Wisdom (Bahau'llah, *Tablets*, 9:137–52), 'Abd al-Baha, *Some* (especially parts 4 and 5), 'Abd al-Baha, *Promulgation* (20–22, 87–91, 253–55, 326–27, 355–61), and Tablet to Dr. Forel (*Baha'i World Faith* 336–48). Baha'i writers on philosophy have include 'A. M. Davudi, *Insan dar A'yun-i Baha'i* and *Uluhiyat va Mazhariyat*; William Hatcher, *Logic and Logos*; Julio Savi, *The Eternal Quest for God*; John Hatcher, *The Purpose of Physical Reality*; B. Hoff Conow, *The Baha'i Teachings*; Udo Schaefer, *The Imperishable Dominion*; M. Momen, "Relativism: a Basis for Baha'i Metaphysics," in SBBR 5:185–217; Robert Parry, "Philosophical Theology in Baha'i Scholarship," BSB Oct. 1992, 6/4–7/2: 66–91. Ruhi Afnan, *the Revelation of Baha'u'llah and the Bab: Book 1: Descartes' Theory of Knowledge* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1970); idem, *Baha'u'llah and the Bab Confront Modern Thinkers: Book 2: Spinoza: Concerning God* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1977). The text of the tradition of "the five properly called wise" is found, with thorough commentary, in Everett K. Rowson, *A Muslim Philosopher on the Soul and its Fate* (American Oriental Series 70; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1988), 70–89, 203–63. I have discussed various aspects of this tradition and related material in two books: *The Leaven of the Ancients: Suhrawardi and the Heritage of the Greeks*, esp. ch. 4–8, and *The*



*Wisdom of the Mystic East: Suhrawardi and Platonic Orientalism*, esp. ch. 2. On Socrates in Islamic sources, see Ilai Alon, *Socrates in Mediaeval Arabic Literature* (Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Science, Texts and Studies X; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991). On texts relating to Socrates in the Baha'i writings, see Research Department, Baha'i World Center, Memorandum to Universal House of Justice, 22 October 1995, which was kindly shared with me by Robert Johnston. On the history of Greek philosophy in the Tablet of Wisdom, see Juan R. I. Cole, "Problems of chronology." Introductions to Islamic philosophy include Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman, eds., *History of Islamic Philosophy*, and M. M. Sharif, *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, though none are totally satisfactory.

## **Dreams**

The attitude towards dreams displayed in Babi and Baha'i history and literature is firmly rooted in Iranian tradition. Iranians have generally accepted the possibility of significant true dreams. Thus, the sophisticated philosophical tradition of which the Shaykhi school was a part explained dreams as a contact with the World of Image, an intermediary world between the material and purely spiritual realms. The authority of true dreams was unquestioned in the Iranian, the Islamic, and the Shi'ite traditions. The *Shah-Nama*, the Iranian national epic, reports a number of dreams foreshadowing the rise or fall of rulers and thus granting political legitimacy. The Qur'an itself was sometimes revealed to Muhammad in dreams. The Prophet Joseph was the archetype of dream-interpreters (Q 12:4, 36–49). The Shi'ite Imams received inspiration through true dreams.

The most important class of dream for the spiritual background of the Baha'i Faith is that in which a religious figure appears and initiates or gives knowledge to an individual. The tradition of receiving revelation in a dream goes back in Iran to Zoroaster. Throughout the history of Islamic Iran, claims to

religious knowledge or authority have been made on the basis of dreams in which the Prophet, the Imams, angels, or other supernatural individuals appeared. Such dreams took on particular importance for Shi'ism, since it was believed that the Twelfth Imam was in concealment but still concerned with the affairs of his community. It was through dreams that he most commonly instructed his followers. For Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i, the founder of the Shaykhi school, such dreams were central. He saw the Imams and the Prophet many times in dreams and had received from them the authority to teach (*Amanat, Resurrection* 131-32, 168). During the period prior to his declaration of his mission to Mulla Husayn, the Bab had significant dreams. It was a dream in which he drank a drop of the blood of the Imam Husayn's severed head that began his prophethood. Likewise, Bahau'llah's prophethood first came to him during dreams in the Siyah-Chal.

True dreams may also be symbolic and require interpretation—as the example of Joseph shows. In Baha'i history the most famous interpretation of a dream is that of Bahau'llah's father. According to Nabil (119) Bahau'llah's father had dreamed of his son swimming in the ocean as fish clung to his hair. A dream interpreter had been summoned and explained this as a prophecy of the boy's future greatness. Likewise, a mujtahid's dreams warn him of Bahau'llah's greatness (Nabil, 111–12), and a dream tells a merchant to prepare to be the Bab's host (Nabil, 217). Such dreams have continued to play a role in Baha'i piety ever since.

In Baha'i theology, dreams are significant only as evidence of the objective existence of the spiritual realm. Both Bahau'llah and 'Abd al-Baha say that true dreams, dreams in which problems are solved, and the power to travel beyond one's own body in dreams are evidence that man's soul is immaterial (Bahau'llah, *Seven* 32–33; Bahau'llah, *Gleanings* 79:151–53; 'Abd al-Baha, *Some* 61:227–28).

In the modern Baha'i community, dreams have no official authority (Hornby, *Lights* 1739:513–14, 1745:515), but they often

play a role in the spiritual lives of individuals. Two themes are particularly significant. Dreams in which ‘Abd al-Baha appears, often to give some spiritual advice or practical instruction, seem to be not uncommon and are generally viewed as spiritually significant. Second, dreams sometimes play a role in teaching successes. A Baha’i teacher might report being guided by a dream to a place or an individual. Sometimes, Baha’i teachers report being told that a dream, either of the teacher himself, of ‘Abd al-Baha, or of some other recognizable Baha’i image, had presaged their coming. Though such reports have no canonical authority and perhaps properly belong to the realm of Baha’i folklore, they do play a role in modern Baha’i spirituality.

*Sources:* On dreams in Iran see H. Ziai, *EIr*, s.v. “Dreams and Dream Interpretation.”

### **Evolution: a note**

From the mid-nineteenth century to the present, the issue of conflict between science and religion has been preeminently identified with the dispute about evolution and human origins. The religious implications of Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection were recognized as soon as his *The Origin of Species* was published in 1859. Not only did Darwin’s theory discredit traditional religious accounts of the origin of man, such as those found in Genesis and the Qur’an, it seemed to make man an animal like any other and thus cast into doubt any account positing a supernatural aspect of human beings. The controversies concerning evolution in the Christian world are well known and still continue, especially among evangelical Protestants. Darwin’s theory became well known in the Middle East within a few decades of its publication through popular accounts in Arabic and other Islamic languages. A Shi’i cleric in Najaf wrote a two volume refutation of Darwin soon after the publication of the first book on the subject in Arabic. Thus, by the time ‘Abd al-Baha came into contact with Westerners around the beginning of the

twentieth century, evolution was a subject that any serious religious thinker—Middle Eastern, American, or European—would be expected to take a position on.

‘Abd al-Baha’s best known statement on the subject is in *Some Answered Questions* (ch. 45–51). It is usually understood to advance a theory that man evolved from a more primitive form to his present state but that he was always a distinct species, not directly related to other animals. Such a theory has no scientific support.

‘Abd al-Baha’s statements on evolution reflect the unease of many thoughtful religious people of the time at the use and misuse of Darwinist concepts. Evolution was being used as a justification for the abandonment of traditional religious and spiritual ideas, of standards of decency and kindness, and of the social solidarity that made the rich and powerful responsible for the well-being of the poorer and weaker members of society. The formulation given in this talk is clearly ‘Abd al-Baha’s attempt to offer a way out of this dilemma, using the philosophical and theological concepts of the sophisticated Iranian philosophical tradition, which since the work of the great philosopher Mulla Sadra in the 17th century, had seen the transformation of substance as a key to understanding the deepest nature of being and the godhead. Thus, his statements on evolution should be read not literally as corrections to a particular scientific theory but as an insistence that scientific truth must be understood in the context of a spiritual view of the universe. (See also Brown and von Kitzing, *Evolution and Baha’i Belief*, which I have not used.)

### **R.M.S. Titanic**

The biggest news story during the first few weeks of ‘Abd al-Baha’s stay in America was the sinking of the British passenger steamship Titanic of the famous White Star Line. He had reached America on 11 April 1912, a few days before the disaster.

The largest and most luxurious liner built to that day, the Titanic sank after striking an iceberg on her maiden voyage from

England to New York on 15 April 1912. Of the 2235 people aboard 1522 drowned or froze, including many prominent English and American socialites. News of the disaster reached America the next day and filled the papers for weeks to come. Following a speech to the Persian-American Association in Washington, D.C., on 20 April, he was asked by reporters about the disaster. He replied that Europeans and Americans seemed possessed by a desire for speed, that it was a pity if such a loss of life had indeed resulted from nothing more important than the desire to save a few hours (Ward, *239 Days*, citing *Washington Evening Star*, 21 April 1912).

At a reception on 23 April, he returned to the topic of the disaster. ‘Abd al-Baha’, who had chosen to come to America on the more modest *Cedric* of the same line, remarked that he had traveled as far as Naples with some of those who died—presumably some of the many Syrians among the immigrants in steerage, almost all of whom died. Explaining that in everything there is a divine wisdom, he then spoke of death as the gate to the other worlds of God and said that the disaster showed both the need for man’s technical skill and his ultimate dependence on God (‘Abd al-Baha, *Promulgation* 46–48). ‘Abd al-Baha’s remarks are notable for avoiding both the most common reactions to the disaster: excessive sentimentality and intemperate criticism of society, the owners, crew, or survivors.

## Appendices

### Personal Names

A source of particular confusion for Westerners studying Baha'i history is the complex system of names used by Persians, particularly prior to the modernization of Persian names in the twentieth century. This appendix is intended as a guide to these names and to the Baha'i laws and customs governing personal names.

#### **Baha'i laws and customs relating to personal names.**

*Islamic customs concerning personal names.* Islamic given names were almost always Arabic religious names of one of the following classes:

forms of the name of the Prophet, such as Muhammad, Abu al-Qasim, Ahmad, and Mustafa;

names of other holy persons, such as prophets, imams, and companions of the prophet;

names related to God, such as 'Abd Allah ("servant of God") and 'Abd al-Rahman ("servant of the All-Merciful");

for women, names of the wives of the prophet and other holy women, such as Fatima, 'A'isha, and Maryam.

On the other hand, old Arabic names identified by Muhammad as unlucky or inappropriate or borne by famous villains of Islamic history fell out of use. These naming practices

were commended by piety and desire for good fortune and were not, strictly speaking, Islamic law.

*Babi laws governing names.* In the Persian Bayan the Bab strongly recommended the use of names relating to God—attributes of God such as Bahauallah, “splendor of God,” Jalal Allah, “glory of God,” and Jamal Allah, “beauty of God,” or names of servitude such as ‘Abd Allah and Dhikr Allah “mention of God”—or names of the Shi’i Holy Family—Muhammad, ‘Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn. Thus the world would gradually be filled with the names of God (5:4). He specifically allowed the use of the name ‘Abd al-Bayan, *bayan* (“exposition”) being in the eyes of the Bab a name of God (3:4).

*Baha’i laws governing names.* There are very few specific Baha’i laws governing personal names. ‘Abd al-Baha said that children are not to be named Bahauallah, Bab, or Primal Point (Nuqtiy-i Ula, another common title of the Bab). Girls are not to be named Khayr al-Nisa’ (“best of women”), for this title is reserved for the mother and first wife of the Bab. The name ‘Abd al-Baha may, however, be used. Bahauallah, writing through his secretary, says that in this day the names Diya’, Badi’, Husayn, and ‘Ali are particularly pleasing. In a letter through his secretary addressed to the Arab Baha’is he says that they should name their sons Husayn or ‘Ali (i.e., Bahauallah’s own names) and give them the title (*laqab*) ‘Abd al-Baha. Girls should be given the title Amat al-Baha and be named Dhikriyya, Nuriyya, Sahihiyya, or ‘Izziyya (Mazandarani, *Amr* 3:59–62). These last probably should be understood as recommendations rather than binding laws.

*Baha’i practices relating to personal names.* The Bab, Bahauallah, and ‘Abd al-Baha, as well as some of the Babi leaders, all were accustomed to give their followers religious names and titles. Similar practices existed among Muslims, especially the clergy, but it was carried much further among the Babis and the Baha’is. This seems to have served several purposes. First, a new name indicated a new spiritual identity. Thus, when Bahauallah

gave the participants in the conference at Badasht new names, it symbolized their membership in a new and independent religion. Second, the titles given to Babi and Baha'i leaders indicated their rank. Thus, Mulla Husayn Bushru'i was given the titles "Bab al-Bab" ("gate of the gate") and "Qa'im of the People of Khurasan," a messianic title. 'Abd al-Baha was entitled "Most Great Branch," hinting at his station as his father's successor. Third, religious names were used for security, to protect the identity of individual believers. Thus, letters were commonly addressed with names, letters, and numbers that were both religious symbols and codes.

The names and titles conferred by the Bab and Bahauallah were most commonly names and attributes of God numerically equivalent according to the Abjad reckoning to the individual's given name. Thus, Muhammads were commonly entitled Nabil, both being equivalent to 92 according to the sum of the numerical values of the individual letters. Yahya became Wahid (28). Second, names were sometimes given because of their meaning or for some reason no longer clear. For example, the Babi heroine Qurrat al-'Ayn ("solace of the eyes," which name itself was a nickname given her by her teacher) was given the name Tahira ("The Pure One") to indicate her unimpeachable status within the Faith. Third, a name or title might be a variation of the individual's previous name or title. Thus, the Babi leader in Zanjan, whose clerical rank prior to his conversion had been Hujjat al-Islam ("proof of Islam") was given the title "Hujjat" ("proof"), a title of the Hidden Imam previously born by the Bab Himself. Haji Mirza Muhammad-Taqi Afnan, the builder of the Baha'i temple in 'Ishqabad, was called by 'Abd al-Baha "Wakil al-Haqq" ("deputy of God") after his government title of Wakil al-Dawla ("deputy of the state"). Fourth, names and titles were given because of the individual's activities. Thus, Mirza Aqa Jan Kashani was known as "Khadim Allah" ("the attendant of God") because he was Bahauallah's private secretary. Fifth, sometimes religious names were given to children at the request of the parents.



When in 1925 Iranians were required to choose Western-style family names, forms of these religious names and titles were often used as surnames. Thus, the family of a Muhammad who had been addressed by Bahauallah as Nabil might chose to be known as Nabili (“of Nabil”) or Nabilzada (“son of Nabil”). In other cases, a striking word from a tablet addressed to the individual might be adopted as a surname. In other cases an arbitrary word of Baha’i religious significance might be chosen as a surname.

Modern Iranian Baha’i given names are of three sorts. First, names of Babi and Baha’i saints and heroes, virtues and spiritual qualities, and attributes of God. Second, and less common, the old Islamic names. Third, the common Iranian secular names drawn from Persian history, mythology, and poetic imagery.

Outside of Iran, names and titles given by the central figures were much less common, both because the Baha’i Faith did not spread outside the Islamic world until the time of ‘Abd al-Baha and because Western-style names are rarely changed. ‘Abd al-Baha did sometimes give “Persian”—i.e., Baha’i religious—names to Western believers, but though these were treasured, they were not often used in public. He also frequently named children. Shoghi Effendi does not seem to have named children nor, with a few exceptions, given personal titles. Modern Baha’is do frequently give their children Baha’i names, usually those of well-known heroes and heroines such as Tahira, Wahid, Bahiyya Khanum, and Hands of the Cause, but this is by no means universal or obligatory.

A related practice is the “naming ceremony,” a meeting for prayers and celebration at which an infant is formally named. This was sanctioned by ‘Abd al-Baha as a substitute for the Christian baptismal ceremony. Shoghi Effendi, however, did not encourage this practice. (‘Abd al-Baha, *Tablets* 149–50; Hornby, *Lights of Guidance*, para. 321; Mazandarani, *Amr* 3:262.

### **Traditional Persian and Islamic names**

Until 1925 Iranians did not use modern-style names composed of a given name and a surname and in fact did not have a single fixed name at all. Instead, the names of individuals were built up from given names, nicknames, titles, and descriptions and varied considerably, depending on the context in which the individual was mentioned and his time of life. A single individual might be known by quite different names in different times and places. By examining the various parts of an individual's name it is sometimes possible to deduce a good deal about him. Most of what follows refers specifically to men's names. To the extent that women were known outside their families, their names were built up in similar ways. More will be said about women's names below.

It should be noted that titles of honor and respect tended to become devalued with time, both because of the Iranian taste for exaggerated courtesy and because of corruption within the government offices responsible for granting titles of nobility. Thus, Khan, originally a title of high officers of the state, became by the early twentieth century the equivalent of "Mister."

Each element of the nineteenth century Iranian name will be discussed in turn. After that there will be brief discussions of women's names, traditional Turkish and Arab names as they appear in Baha'i history, and modern Middle Eastern names.

a. *The given name (ism)* is the name given to a child at birth. In Iran it was usually the name of a prophet or imam such as Muhammad, 'Ali, Husayn, or Ibrahim (Abraham), a variant form of the name of a prophet or imam such as Ahmad (an honorific form of Muhammad), Baqir, Sadiq (both titles of particular imams), or Kalb-'Ali ("dog of 'Ali"), or a name relating to God such as 'Abd Allah, Allah-Yar ("friend of God), Nasir al-Din ("champion of the Faith"), or Fadl Allah ("grace of God"). Sometimes compound forms are used, such as Husayn-'Ali, Muhammad-Javad, or 'Ali-Rida, each being a fuller form of the name of an imam. Sometimes only the last element of the compound is used, particularly if the second element is only used with one particular first element.

When Muhammad or ‘Abd is the first element, it is particularly likely to be dropped. Examples are Muhammad-Hasan becoming Hasan, ‘Ali-Rida become Rida, and ‘Abd al-Rahim becoming Rahim. Occasionally, ancient Persian names such as Firuz and Farhad were used. These became very common in the twentieth century but were less used in the nineteenth. Turkish names such as Qilich are occasionally seen.

Although the given name was never changed, it is less useful than it might be for identifying individuals. First, there were a great many people with common names like Muhammad, ‘Ali, and Husayn. Second, because these names were so common, people were likely to be referred to by some nickname or title, rather than by their given name.

b. *Titles used before the given name* tended to show social or religious status. The following are the most common:

Akhund: A Shi‘i clergyman. Roughly synonymous with mulla. In the twentieth century “akhund” acquired the pejorative sense of “ignorant priest.”

Aqa: “sir” or “mister.” Among Baha’is it usually applied to men of lower social status, such as servants. When it is used after the given name, it indicates affectionate respect. In modern Persian, it is the equivalent of “Mister.” In Turkish Aqa indicates high rank, and it is sometimes used that way in Persian, as when ‘Abd al-Baha is referred to as Aqa, “the Master.”

Darvish or dervish: a wandering mystic. The word usually has a slightly unsavory connotation, but when used as a title for a Muslim mystic, it indicates respect and that the individual was known as an ascetic and mystic.

Hadrat: “His Majesty” or “His Holiness,” used in the form “Hadrat-i so-and-so.” A title of extreme deference, used only of prophets, kings, and people of the highest eminence. It is an honorific used in speaking about someone, not part of his name as such.

Haji, Hajj: “Pilgrim.” Title acquired by a man who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca. Its female equivalent is Hajjiyyah. It is

most commonly born by clergy and merchants. A “Haji Mulla Muhammad” would be a cleric, while a “Haji Muhammad” would most likely be a pious merchant.

Imam: (1) One of the twelve descendants of the prophet Muhammad who were, according to the Shi‘ites, his legitimate successors. (2) The leader of public prayers in a mosque. (3) In modern usage, a Shi‘ite cleric of high rank.

Jinab: “Threshold.” Used before a name in the form “Jinab-i so-and-so.” It is used in speaking about someone important, learned, or holy, but is less deferential than “Hadrat.”

Karbala’i: Title acquired by one who has visited the Shrine of the Imam Husayn in Karbala. It is a less prestigious title than Haji.

Mashhadi: Title acquired by one who has visited the tomb of the Imam Rida in Mashhad in northwestern Iran. Because a visit to Mashhad was less expensive than a pilgrimage to Mecca or Karbala, this title tends to indicate a lower social class than Haji and Karbala’i.

Mir: a contraction of “Amir,” “prince,” indicating descent from Muhammad. It is equivalent to “Sayyid.”

Mirza: contraction of “Amirzada,” “son of a prince.” Prefixed to a name, it indicates that the person is roughly equivalent socially to a minor government official. As such it could indicate anyone from a person who simply was literate to a high government official who was not a member of one of the ruling tribes. However, after a name it means “prince.” Thus, Mirza ‘Ali might be a clerk, whereas ‘Ali Mirza would be the son or grandson of the Shah.

Mulla: A Shi‘i clergyman. Most mullas were professional clerics, but the title was also sometimes used by those who had some theological training but who earned a living some other way.

Pahlavan: a brave and athletic man. In the nineteenth century, it seems to be a polite title for luti, the street toughs and gangsters who played a major role in the towns, frequently in alliance with the clergy.

Sayyid: a descendant of Muhammad. Originally, the title

meant “lord” or “chief.” It is the modern Arabic word for “mister.”

Shaykh: Elder. In Baha’i history this title is usually used for Arab clerics.

Sultan: King or sovereign. The usual title of the head of the Ottoman Empire.

Ustad: master craftsman.

*c. Titles used after the given name*—e.g., Muhammad Khan, Muhammad Big, etc.—usually indicate high social station.

‘Ali-Shah: Title of certain mystical leaders in nineteenth century Iran.

Bagum: Lady, Dame. The female equivalent of Big. A title of respect for a woman.

Big: (pronounced “bay”) In Iran a title of middle-ranking officials, especially military. In Turkey it was a title of nobility.

Jan: “Heart.” It is sometimes used as a following title and indicates affection or affectionate respect.

Khan: A secular title of nobility. In nineteenth century Iran it was used by high government officials who were not members of the royal family, especially those from the Turkish tribes that formed much of the ruling class in Iran. In the early twentieth century, it was used by middle-class men.

Khanum: Title of respect or affection for women. In modern Persian, it precedes the name and means Miss or Mrs.

Mirza: When placed after the given name, a prince.

Pasha: Title given to high political or military officials in the Ottoman Empire.

Pur: Son of, placed after the name. It is a common element of modern surnames.

Shah: King. Placed after the given name, it is the title of the kings of Iran. Placed before a name, it indicates a saint or his shrine or a leader of mystics. Thus, Nasir al-Din Shah was the king of Iran, but Shah ‘Abd al-‘Azim was the tomb of a descendant of an imam. See also “‘Ali-Shah” above.

Wazir: Minister. Title of the holder of a high government post.

Zada: Son of, placed after the name. It is a common element in modern surnames.

d. *Names from places, tribes, and family.* People with similar names were commonly distinguished by their place of origin, tribe, or ancestor. Such names go at the end of the full name and usually end in -i, a suffix roughly meaning “of.” Some examples are:

Shirazi, Isfahani, Rashti, Nuri—of Shiraz, Isfahan, Rasht, and Nur. Sometimes in Persian the -i is not used, as in Salih-i ‘Arab (for ‘Arabi), meaning Salih the Arab. It should be noted that these names frequently refer to where the individual or his ancestor used to live, rather than where he currently is: Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahman was known to the Babis in Baghdad as “Kirkuki,” because he lived in Kirkuk, but in Kirkuk, where everyone was “Kirkuki,” he was known as Talibani, the name of his family. Occasionally, such names are the proper names of families, such as Bahauallah’s family, the Nuris.

e. *Names from professions:* People were frequently nicknamed according to their professions, such as Banna (builder), Mujtahid (jurisconsult), Mustawfi (accountant), Katib (copyist), Qahvachi (coffee-maker), and Ashtchi (soup-maker).

f. *Titles of nobility (laqab, pl. alqab.)* These took the form of two-word phrases, usually in Arabic, such as Mu‘tamid al-Dawla (Trust of the State, title of a governor), Malik al-Shu‘ara (King of Poets, title of a prominent poet), Ra’is al-Tujjar (Chief of the Merchants, title of an important businessman), Amir-Nizam (“Chief of State,” title of the Prime Minister). Under the Qajars such titles were granted by the Shah and were graded to indicate the bearer’s occupation and importance. There were similar titles for noblewomen. New titles were often given with promotions. Titles were sometimes, but not always, inherited. In the time of the Bab such titles were restricted to people of considerable importance. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the system had been thoroughly corrupted, thousands of titles having been granted by dishonest clerks. The system was abolished by Rida Shah as part of his modernization of personal names in 1925 but

these titles sometimes continued in informal use or were adapted to form the newly required modern surnames.

These titles of nobility were either used after the proper name and titles or in place of it. Thus, the Iranian ambassador to Turkey might be known as Haji Mirza Husayn Khan Mushir al-Dawla or just by his title of nobility, Mushir al-Dawla.

Baha'i religious titles sometimes were formed on the model of these titles of nobility, as in Mahbub al-Shuhada ("Beloved of Martyrs").

*g. Women's names.* These followed the same patterns as men's names. However, because women were seldom in contact with many people outside their own families, their names were generally simpler. Frequently, they were known by such titles as Khanum Jan or Bagum Khanum. These really meant no more than "Grandma" or "the Madam," but in a society where women were not likely to be known outside their family, they were sufficient. In cases where women were known, they acquired names, titles, and nicknames in the same way men did.

*h. Arab names.* Occasionally classical Arabic names are found in Baha'i literature. These take the following form:

[given name] ibn (son of) [father's name] ibn [grandfather's name] etc. These may be preceded by an honorific title (laqab) such as Qutb al-Din (Axis of the Faith) or Nasir al-Din (Champion of the Faith). After this comes a name of the form "Abu Muhammad," meaning "Father of Muhammad," where Muhammad is, usually, the name of the man's eldest son. Then comes the given name and chain of ancestors. Finally there are names ending in -i identifying the man's home city, tribe, or family.

Thus the thirteenth century scientist known as Qutb al-Din Abu al-Thana' Mahmud ibn Mas'ud ibn al-Muslih al-Shirazi. His given name was Mahmud, his father's name was Mas'ud, and his grandfather's al-Muslih. Qutb al-Din was a respectful title meaning "Pole of the Faith." Abu al-Thana' means "father of praise," a polite euphemism substituting for the patronymic he would have borne had he fathered a son. "Shirazi" indicates that

he came from Shiraz; before he left Shiraz he had been known as “Kazaruni,” from Kazarun, his family’s ancestral home. In practice, he is most commonly known as Qutb al-Din Shirazi, a form of his name that his mother would not have recognized.

The full name is not usually used, and people are generally known by some distinctive portion of the name. Thus there are people famous in Islamic history known as Mu‘awiya (the given name), Khalil ibn Ahmad (given and father’s name), Abu-Bakr (name of eldest son), Ibn-‘Arabi (name of an ancestor), Nizam al-Mulk (honorific title), and al-Farabi (name of home city).

*i. Turkish names.* Such Turkish names as are found in Baha’i history are usually those of government officials and are rather similar to Iranian names, although the titles have different meanings. The reader should be aware, however, that because the modern Republic of Turkey has adopted the Roman alphabet, Ottoman Turkish names may be found spelled either according to the transliteration scheme for the Arabic alphabet or according to modern Turkish spelling. Thus, Muammad may also be spelled Mehmet, reflecting Turkish pronunciation. Modern Turks use western-style given and surnames.

*j. Examples of Persian names.* The following are few examples to aid the reader in interpreting nineteenth century Persian names.

Sayyid ‘Ali-Muhammad-i Shirazi: the Bab. “Sayyid” indicates he was a descendant of the prophet Muhammad. “‘Ali-Muhammad” was his given name and combines the names of the Prophet and his adopted son, the first imam. “Shirazi” indicates that he came from the town of Shiraz.

Mulla Husayn-i Bushru’i, also known as Bab al-Bab: “Mulla” indicates that he had had a religious education. “Husayn” was his given name, for the third imam, and is a shortened form of his full name, which was Muhammad-Husayn. “Bushru’i” is from Bushruya, the village he came from. “Bab al-Bab” is a title meaning “Gate of the Gate,” given him by the Bab in recognition of his having been the first believer.



Mulla Abu al-Hasan-i Ardikani, also known as Haji Amin and Amin-i Ilahi: “Mulla” indicated that he had a religious education. “Abu al-Hasan” is his given name; it means “Father of Hasan” and is a form of the name of an imam. He came from Ardikan. “Haji” means “pilgrim”; while it usually refers to someone who has been to Mecca, in this case it probably refers to his having been the first outside Baha’i to visit Bahauallah in ‘Akka. “Amin-i Ilahi” means “trustee of God”; he was the trustee of the huququ’llah, the religious tax payable to Bahauallah.

Manuchihr Khan Mu‘tamid al-Dawla, the governor of Isfahan who befriended the Bab. “Manuchihr” was his given name, the name of a legendary hero of pre-Islamic Iran; since he was actually a slave of Christian origin, most likely this name was given to him by his owner rather than by his parents. “Khan” is the title of a high official, usually not of Persian origin. “Mu‘tamid al-Dawla” means “trust of the state” and was a title of nobility granted by the Shah.

Mulla Muhammad-i Zarandi, also known as Nabil-i A‘zam or Nabil-i Zarandi. His given name was Muhammad and he had a very modest religious education. He came from the village of Zarand. Bahauallah gave him the title of Nabil-i A‘zam, “the Most Great Nabil,” “Nabil” being numerically equivalent to “Muhammad.” He was called “Nabil-i A‘zam” or “Zarandi” to distinguish him from several other Muhammads also known as “Nabil.”

Asiya Khanum, also known as Navvaba Khanum, Navvab, Buyuk Khanum, and Waraqiy-i ‘Ulya: the first wife of Bahauallah. Her given name was Asiya. “Khanum,” “lady,” is added for politeness, as it would be for any respectable lady. “Navvab,” “Navvaba,” and “Buyuk” all mean, roughly, “Madam” or “Lady.” Within the household there would be no need for surnames or the like to tell who was meant. “Waraqiy-i ‘Ulya” means “Most exalted leaf.” Since the Manifestation of God is symbolized by a tree, a leaf is a female member of the holy family. Her daughter Bahiyya Khanum bore this title after her death.

## Arabic

The most important language of Baha'i scripture is Arabic. The following is intended as an introduction to the language for those who encounter Arabic words in Baha'i texts but who have no interest in learning the language.

**History.** Arabic (Arab.: al-‘Arabiyya, lughat al-‘Arab, lisan al-‘Arab; Pers.: Tazi) is the old language of central Arabia, the area that is now Saudi Arabia. It is now spoken in the Arab countries and used as a liturgical and learned language throughout the Islamic world. It was often used by the Bab, Bahauallah, and ‘Abd al-Baha, particularly for authoritative texts, prayers, and communications with Arab Baha'is.

Arabic is a member of the Semitic family. Thus it is closely related to many languages of the ancient Near East, notably Hebrew, and more distantly to ancient Egyptian and the Hamitic languages of North and West Africa. It is attested in names and fragments as early as the ninth century B.C.E. and preserves, perhaps because of its long isolation, an elaborate Semitic grammar already largely lost in biblical Hebrew. The Classical Arabic now used evolved in the sixth century in the poetry of central Arabia. It owes its importance to its use, with some elements of the Hijazi dialect, in the Qur'an.

After the Islamic conquests of the seventh century, Arabic gradually became the spoken language of the Islamic areas where other Semitic or Hamitic languages had formerly been spoken. Even in areas such as Iran and Turkey where other vernaculars remained in use, Arabic was the language of learning until the early twentieth century. In the Islamic world almost all works on religion or science were written in Arabic, and its vocabulary permeated the speech and writing of other Islamic languages. In Persian, for example, almost any Arabic word could be used; and a

Persian text on religion, philosophy, or science would often be almost indistinguishable from Arabic.

The increasing importance of Arabic led to a vast development in its vocabulary; but largely because of the prestige of the Qur'an the structure of the written language has not changed greatly since the time of Muhammad. An educated Arab can still read even pre-Islamic poetry without much difficulty. The spoken dialects have, however, changed considerably in the various Arab countries; but they have rarely developed into independent written languages. Classical Arabic is still normally spoken in formal situations such as university lectures, political speeches, and broadcasting.

**Structure.** Like other Semitic languages Arabic is based on meaningful roots of three consonants. These roots can be combined with vowels and other consonants in several hundred forms, each of which has a particular meaning. The root K.T.B., for example, has to do with writing; and when used with the simple active participle form  $c^1ac^2ic^3$ , becomes *katib*, meaning "writer" or "scribe."  $C^1ic^2ac^3$  is an infinitive form; hence *kitab* means "writing" or "book." *Kataba* means "he wrote," *mukatabah* "correspondence," *maktub* "letter," and so on. Word forms commonly seen in English texts are usually nouns or adjectives (the two are not strictly distinguished in Arabic) and include:

$c^1ac^2ic^3$ : active participle: *Nasir* ("victorious") ??

$mac^1c^2uc^3$ : passive participle: *Mahbub* ("beloved"); *Majnun* ("possessed by jinn" or "mad"); *Maqsud* ("Desired One").

$c^1ac^2c^3$ : noun: 'Abd ("servant" or "slave").

There are only two verb tenses in Arabic, perfect and imperfect, each of which may refer to past, present, or future. Thus time is not so precisely defined as in English (cf. Bahauallah, *Iqan* 115).

Arabic has a set of consonants different from English, some of which are nearly impossible for an English speaker to pronounce. In Baha'i contexts Arabic words are usually pronounced with the Persian accent.

**Arabic in the Baha'i writings.** Many of the Bab's works are written in Arabic—works written in Qur'anic style, works on theology and law, commentaries on the Qur'an, and the like. The Bab's Arabic works pose many difficulties, not only because of their abstrusity, but also because of their vocabulary and complex sentence structure. The Bab's enemies criticized his grammar and accused him of ignorance of the most elementary rules of the language; he was supposedly asked to conjugate *qala* ("to say"), an exercise for a schoolchild, and to have been unable to do so. In fact, the difficulty was that the Bab was unwilling to accept the limitations of conventional Arabic grammar and style and frequently used nonstandard derived forms of words. While theoretically there are a large number of words derivable from any Arabic root, in fact only a small number are used. The Bab used many more unknown in Arabic (for example, most of the 360 words derived from *baha'* that he included in a famous tablet.) The effect is a style intense, unorthodox, challenging, and sometimes obscure. The Bab himself claimed that his verses and their beauty were testimony to the truth of his revelation. (Bab, *Selections*:45, 109; Bab, *Haykal al-Din* 141; Bab, *Persian Bayan* 2:1, 7:2.)

Although most of Bahau'llah's writings are in Persian, many of the most important are in Arabic, and Arabic passages are often found in tablets to educated Persians—the Arabic tending to be more formal, the Persian more intimate. Bahau'llah often used Arabic when he was addressing the world or writing something of universal relevance: the *Kitab-i Aqdas* is in Arabic, as are the tablets to the Kings, the obligatory prayers, the marriage vows, and the prayers of fasting and burial.

Bahau'llah wrote a clean and elegant Arabic, relatively free of both the unorthodox elements of the Bab's style and the excessive decorativeness of his contemporaries' literary Arabic. (Much the same was true of his Persian style.) He generally wrote in rhymed prose (*saj'*) in a style reminiscent of the Qur'an, but somewhat

simpler and without archaic elements. His style is austere, concise, and elevated—well translated by the King James English commonly used in Baha’i translations of his writings. Bahauallah’s grammar and usage is sometimes influenced by Persian, as is usual in Arabic written by Iranians. For this reason Bahauallah was occasionally criticized for not writing pure Arabic. Late in his life he initiated a project to collect and edit his own writings; one of the things that was done was to eliminate some of the “Babi-ism” characteristic of his early Arabic writings.

Generally, Bahauallah expresses Himself in terms familiar to his reader, often using technical terms from the Islamic religious sciences, the Qur’an, and Islamic mystical philosophy.

Though ‘Abd al-Baha was completely fluent in Arabic (he spent most of his life in Arab countries) and wrote many tablets in Arabic, the bulk of his works are in Persian. His Arabic style was of a high order, but somewhat more complex and conventional than his father’s.

Shoghi Effendi also knew Arabic well and often used Arabic elements in his Persian writings, but he generally did not write in Arabic.

**Other Arabic Baha’i Literature.** A good deal of Baha’i literature has been published in the Arab countries, especially in Egypt: Arabic Baha’i sacred writings, translations of English and Persian works, and native Baha’i literature. Egypt was a principal center of Baha’i publishing in the early twentieth century. More recently, the Lebanese Baha’i community has published a number of books in Arabic. The Universal House of Justice uses English in its communications with the Arab communities.

*Sources:* For a general account of the Arabic language, see *EI2*, s.v. “al-’Arabiya.” On Arabic in Iran see *EIr*, s.v. “Arabic.” The classic popular introduction to Arabic literature is R. A. Nicolson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907).

**Shaykh Abu-Mansur Ahmad b. ‘Ali b. Abi-Talib Tabarsi** was the twelfth century Shi‘i scholar whose tomb near Barfurush was the scene of the most important battle between the Babis and government troops in 1848–49. Shaykh Tabarsi—not to be confused with his contemporary al-Fadl b. Hasan Tabarsi, the author of a famous commentary on the Qur’an—was one of the teachers of the Shi‘i biographer, Ibn Shahrashub. He was best known for the *Kitab al-Ihtijaj*, a collection of the traditions in which the Prophet and the Imams used arguments.

*Sources:* Majlisi, *Bihar* 0:140. Tihrani, *al-Dhari‘ah* 1:281–82. Amin, *A‘yan* 3:29–30. The identification of the tomb with this man is made by the tablet of visitation in the tomb. See Brown, *Year* 617.

## Abbreviations

<i>EB</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Britannica</i>
<i>EI1</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam.</i> 1 <sup>st</sup> edition
<i>EI2</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam.</i> 2nd edition
<i>Ir</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Iranica</i>

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