

RELIGIOUS DISSIDENCE AND URBAN LEADERSHIP: BAHA'IS IN QAJAR SHIRAZ AND TEHRAN*

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1. Introduction

In order better to understand the role of dissident confessional groups in Qajar urban life, I have chosen to compare and contrast developments among the Baha'i religious minority in two cities, Shiraz and Tehran. The two settings were, of course, quite different. The first was a small provincial capital near the Persian Gulf in the southwest of the country, where the largely male leadership of the religion was mostly drawn from merchant and artisan families. The second was the capital of the entire country, a large city in the north-central area of Iran where government officials and elite women were much more important among adherents, along with some shopkeepers. Both might be seen as holy cities for Baha'is. Shiraz was the birthplace of the Bāb, Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī (d. 1850), recognised by them as the promised Mahdī or messiah of Islam, and the house of the Bāb became an important shrine and one of the places to which pilgrimage was ordained in the Baha'i *Most Holy Book* (*al-Kitāb al-aqdas*).¹ In the twentieth century, Shiraz came to be the city with the largest Baha'i population in the country, numbering in the thousands, with Tehran in second place.² Tehran, on the other hand, was the birthplace of Mīrzā Ḥusayn 'Alī Nūrī Bahā'ullāh (1817–92), the founder of the Baha'i religion that developed from Babism, and the sites associated with his life were treasured by his followers.³

A key question here must be how the Baha'i religion managed to establish itself at all, given that the Qajar ruling class on the whole hated "Babism" and feared it as a manifestation of commoners' insurgency, and that the Shi'ite clergy likewise abhorred the movement as a loathsome heresy. Following the lead of the British sociologist Peter Smith, I believe that sociological theories about the way resources are successfully mobilised can shed some light on the progress of the Baha'i faith in nineteenth-century Iran, though such theories cannot account for the subjective, spiritual dimension of religious change and can therefore tell only part of the story. It is, however, a significant part. The important questions here have to do with networks of recruitment, social

and demographic bases, societal infrastructures, fund-raising, and organisational development.⁴

Building on the enthusiasm generated by the messianic Babi movement of the mid-century, the Baha'i religion had gained around 100,000 adherents in Iran by the end of the nineteenth century, in a population of some nine million. It was founded in 1863 by Bahā'ullāh (the "Glory of God"), a follower of the Bāb who was exiled in 1852 from Iran to the Ottoman Empire and subsequently maintained under surveillance or in prison by the Sublime Porte in Baghdad (1853–63), Edirne (1863–68) and Acre (1868–92). Both the Babi and the Baha'i religions were mass movements, encompassing diverse social classes and strata throughout Iran. In the twentieth century, a branch of the Boir Ahmadi tribe near Isfahan embraced the Baha'i religion, but in the nineteenth century the religion appears to have encompassed few members of tribes. Substantial numbers of adherents lived in village settings. Yet clearly the urban communities played a central role in developing institutions and culture (both popular and literate), in acting as clearing-houses for letters from the Baha'i leadership in exile and for other information.

It must be kept in mind that the Baha'i religion was very different in the nineteenth century from what it became in the twentieth. From the 1930s Baha'is began withdrawing altogether from politics, avoiding membership in political parties and eschewing high government posts, and their leaders built up a system of pre-publication censorship that discouraged adherents from writing about politically charged issues. In nineteenth-century Iran, in contrast, the Baha'is were a radical-reformist group advocating banned ideas such as parliamentary elections, some of their members held high political office, and they had not been forbidden to join political groupings or (later) parties. Although Bahā'ullāh discouraged violence on their part, and recognised a separation of religion and state, he did not hesitate to denounce Ottoman and Qajar tyranny or to advocate liberal, reformist principles that were anathema to these absolutist monarchies. Ironically, in sociological terms the Baha'i faith was probably more church-like early in its history,

becoming more sectarian and withdrawn from mainstream Iranian society in the course of the twentieth century.

The Baha'i scriptures written by Bahā'ullāh taught the unity of the world religions, the unity of mankind, the need for parliamentary governance in individual countries and for a world government on the global level, the need to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor and to end the arms race among nations, an improved status for women, and the desirability of modern science and technology.⁵ What is striking about these ideas is their modernity, and the likelihood of their appeal to Iranians making the transition from old-régime feudalism to agricultural (or peripheral) capitalism. It would not be entirely fair to see these principles as simply bourgeois ideology, as some Marxists have. While some of them might have been congenial to the urban bourgeoisie, others (such as the emphasis on amelioration of the condition of the poor or strong state intervention in the economy, both local and global) were not. Moreover, the ideas were congenial to others than simply merchants: the vast majority of those who became Baha'is were peasants or urban workers and artisans. Admittedly, for many of the illiterate working-class Baha'is, the attractions of the religion may have lain more in its millenarian promise of a bright new future, in its being an authentic, indigenous Iranian response to the onslaught of European modernity, or in the dread the religion inspired among the feudal nobility (so that joining it was a means of "silent" protest against their exploitation by the Qajar, Shi'ite establishment).⁶

Urban artisans and workers who had become Baha'is surely helped shape the tone of the religion, and the "option for the poor" and insistence on social justice in Baha'i writings of this period must be seen in the context of the existence of substantial numbers of the working poor in the community. For example, a large clan of Kazaruni tailors began becoming Baha'is in Shiraz around 1865–66. In Kashan "there were many Baha'is whose profession was weaving," and in the late 1880s "there were not many customers for such handwoven goods, [and] the friends were very poor."⁷ In the nature of the case, the ideas and culture of working-class urban Baha'is are now very difficult to recover, since, being illiterate, they left few records of their lives. This paper will therefore focus on élite urban Baha'is, about whom a great deal of information has survived, though it has been little drawn upon by historians.

The urban élites consisted mainly of merchants and of government officials (though both groups were investing heavily in land in this period, becoming landlords and blurring the distinctions among them). The merchant class in Iran underwent development and differentiation in conjunction with the

vastly increased significance, 1850 to 1900, of cash-cropping for the world market. Late Zand and early Qajar societies were characterised by many practices that it is difficult to regard as anything but "feudal", especially the assignment of land and of tax-farming rights to officials and officers in return for high service to the state. Although a capitalist sector existed in mediaeval Iran, consisting of circulating merchant capital, it was oriented toward long-distance trade in luxury goods such as silk, and remained small in comparison with the agricultural output (much of it for subsistence). The advent of cash-cropping on a large scale in the nineteenth century transformed the old-style traders of the bazaar into a more capitalist, modern sort of import-export merchant.⁸ The importance of Baha'i merchants raises Weberian sorts of questions. Was there a special involvement by Iranian religious minorities, such as the Baha'is, Armenians and Jews, in the rise of agricultural capitalism? If so, what accounts for it? Did it have to do with ideology, or the structural situation of these minorities?

In this same period, the nature of urban and national governance was changing. Whereas Fath-'Alī Shāh (r. 1798–1834) was still a relatively mobile ruler on horseback with a small bureaucracy of scribes, by the later nineteenth century some persons were entering government service having been educated in Europe or at the Tehran Polytechnic College (Dār al-Funūn). The urban patriciate of local high functionaries increasingly arranged such new training and education for its children, and also formed alliances with the import-export houses. Capitalist rationality was coming, slowly and unevenly, to Iran, displacing or transforming the old bazaar pedlars and shopkeepers, and the old government scribes ministering to tribal warriors.⁹

In order to understand the history of the Baha'is of Iran, it is important to recognise that the religion's advent coincided with this transition of the country from a sort of tribal feudalism to agricultural capitalism, and that these social changes were important for urban élites who adopted the new religion. Again, in so saying I do not wish in any way to reduce the spiritual experiences, the emotion, heroism and intellectual life, of those who adopted the Baha'i religion to a matter of economics. I wish only to say that the converts were embedded in a social matrix, and that their religious decisions had social contexts and consequences as well as subjective ones.

2. *The community in Shiraz*

Among what groups did the Baha'i religion find adherents in nineteenth-century Shiraz? What institutional and other steps allowed them to

establish a new religion in this hostile, conservative Shi'ite setting? Of course, in some ways the Baha'is simply built upon some achievements of the earlier Babi movement. Shiraz had been the site of important events in the early history of the Babi movement. There, in the spring of 1844, 'Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī declared himself the "Bāb," or divine intermediary, to Mullā Ḥusayn Bushrū'ī, and sent his disciples forth to spread his word. There the Bāb was arrested and forced to practice pious dissimulation (*taqiyya*) by appearing to recant his claims. His disciples, such as Mīrzā Ṣādiq "Muqaddas" Khurāsānī of the ulama class, preached the faith publicly in Shiraz's mosques before they were ostracised. The Bāb's messianic claims appear to have been popular in the bazaars of Shiraz, and to have attracted some artisans and merchants. Among the Babi artisans was a clan of cobblers, two of whom had attended Qur'ān school with the Bāb.¹⁰ The Bāb's execution in 1850 in Tabriz, the suppression of Babi uprisings in Zanjan, Mazandaran and Nayriz (the last not far from Shiraz), and the widespread anti-Babi pogroms from 1852 in response to the failed assassination attempt against Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, left the Babi community devastated, frightened, and underground where it continued to exist at all. The cobblers and other Babi artisans in Shiraz appear to have kept a low profile in the eighteenth-fifties and early eighteen-sixties.¹¹

Three social strata played a predominant role in reacting to the rise of the Baha'ī religion in Shiraz from about 1865. The first was the high government officials resident in the city, the *nawkar* class, including the governor of the province, the governor of the city, and other influential bureaucrats. These officials may be divided into a national élite of Qajar functionaries and a local patrician stratum. The second was the Shi'ite clergy or ulama, especially the leaders of Friday prayers and other popular figures. The third was the bazaaris or burghers, i.e. the merchants and artisans, with their loose corporate identities, their clans and guilds. Both the government officials and the clerics levied such harsh taxes on artisans and merchants of small property, in return for relatively few services, that it is hard to see this expropriation of resources as anything other than a form of exploitation. Of course, some bazaaris voluntarily contributed to the religious institution, but not all did. In nineteenth-century Iran, the ulama employed seminary students and *lūṭī* street gangs to collect from the recalcitrant.¹² Attitudes to government taxation were no doubt less ambiguous, and given the prevalent tax-farming, and the low level of services offered by the state, most bazaaris probably saw it as parasitical.

Shiraz was one of only twelve Iranian cities in the late 1860s with a population of 25,000 or more, and it had long occupied an important place as a commercial and cultural centre. It was sacked and pillaged by the Afghans in 1729, leaving it a shadow of its former self. In the late eighteenth century it became the capital of Iran under the Zands, who undertook important public building works there that shaped the modern city, including the Vakīl bazaar and mosque, and this period contributed to its recovery. We have estimates by Western travellers for its population in the early nineteenth century, of between 12,000 and 18,000. By mid-century it may have grown to about 25,000. In 1852–53, as a result of an abortive attempt on the life of the Shāh by Babi leaders in Tehran, the Qajar state conducted a country-wide pogrom against Babis in which hundreds and perhaps thousands died. Babism began in Shiraz and had many adherents there, and their persecution can only have added to the travails of the *annus horribilis* of 1853, when a great earthquake struck the city and a locust plague produced widespread famine in Fars province. These disasters may have reduced the population of the city by as much as half.¹³ By the late 1860s, when our story begins, Shiraz had recovered from the calamities of the 1850s, reaching a population of about 25,000. Thereafter it grew modestly, attaining a mere 30,000 in 1913.¹⁴ Only in the twentieth century did it become a large city. The city was ethnically diverse, attracting settlers from nearby villages and towns like Zarqan, Ardakan and Kazarun, and members of pastoral groups such as the Turkic-speaking Qashqā'īs. A Zoroastrian community existed, much smaller than at Yazd and Kerman. About fifteen per cent of the population in the nineteenth century was Jewish, though the symbolic dominance of Shi'ism was underlined by disabilities placed on Jews, forced conversions (some 3,000 were converted to Shi'ism around 1827, including silk merchants in the Vakīl Bazaar), and major pogroms, as in 1910.¹⁵ It was also a centre for heterodox Shi'ite Sufi orders such as the Ni'mat-Allāhīs and the Dhahabīs.¹⁶

Shiraz served as the central distribution point for commercial goods and services in Fars province, especially the import-export trade of the Gulf port of Bushire (Bushahr). It was, as well, the recipient of provincial tax monies. In the range of services it offered, it was nonpareil as the "central place" of the region, with its government offices, courthouse, seminaries, Friday prayer mosques, extensive bazaar, and, in the late nineteenth century, large telegraph station.¹⁷ Shiraz was small compared to cities such as Tabriz, Isfahan, Tehran or Mashhad. Still, the tax revenues generated by Fars in 1867 were a respectable 380,000 tumans, eclipsed only by the districts of Azerbaijan (620,000 tumans), Gilan

(440,000 tumans) and Isfahan (420,000 tumans). Fars was apparently more prosperous than many provinces with capitals that were larger or about the same size, probably as a result of its lucrative cash crops, such as opium, cotton, dried fruit and tobacco.¹⁸ Because of a skewed distribution of wealth, high inflation and population growth, however, a good deal of poverty existed among peasants and especially among urban artisans.

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed certain economic developments that greatly changed the economy of Fars. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 cut thousands of miles off the sea journey from Bushire to Europe, and allowed the extensive import into southern Iran of inexpensive European factory-made goods, either directly from Europe or via India. Although the individual consumer benefited from cheap textiles and other made goods, Iranian artisans, especially textile workers and shoe makers, suffered considerably as their labour-intensive, high-cost techniques made it impossible to compete with imported manufactures. Moreover, Iranian merchants increasingly faced a balance of trade deficit, making it difficult for them to finance these imports. The export trade to India, which had a growing appetite for longtime South Iranian products such as grain and fruits, took on a new significance and volume. More important, farmers in unprecedented numbers began planting cash crops such as opium poppy, tobacco and cotton. Opium poppy cultivation spread throughout Fars and Yazd, and, in addition, farmers there grew grain, tobacco and cotton, as well as grapes (for raisins, juice, and Armenian and Jewish wines) and fruit for drying and exporting. Cash crops such as opium poppy were not unproblematic, since they displaced foodstuffs and created discontent among peasants during food shortages and famines (though they probably did not cause the famines); nevertheless, throughout the late nineteenth century they were produced by Fars in ever greater volume. Peasants began learning to store some food against shortages, and to guard against planting too little barley. In the 1890s, opium constituted a quarter of Iran's visible exports, but the trade declined precipitously in the opening decade of the twentieth century. The crisis in the Iranian silk industry as a result of a silkworm epidemic in the 1860s, from which it only partially recovered thereafter, also contributed to this diversification of the export economy. Iranian farmers and agricultural brokers had already begun turning to other cash crops before the silkworm epidemic, but it did exacerbate their balance of trade problems. The late nineteenth century was in any case a period when Iran became much more firmly integrated into the world economy, though as a peripheral producer of raw materials, with much of the external

trade and capital (with the exception of the opium business) in the hands of Europeans.¹⁹

Many of these export crops passed through Shiraz on their way to the Gulf. Iranian long-distance merchants from Fars developed marketing networks for these commodities, establishing trading houses in Bombay, Calcutta, Port Said, Istanbul and even Hong Kong. The encounter with European colonial institutions, and with local reformist and independence movements, made these Iranian expatriates more cosmopolitan than the majority of their compatriots. Within Iran, those merchants who proved successful in the opium trade grew fabulously wealthy and politically influential, as did the government officials, such as Qavām al-Mulk, who sponsored it and taxed it.²⁰ As we shall see below, one of the important Iranian export houses (with an outpost in Hong Kong) was operated by the Afnān clan, Baha'is and relatives of the Bāb.²¹

Let us turn now to the rise of the Shiraz Baha'i community. The leadership of the Babi movement after the Bāb's death in 1850 was highly contested, with a number of Babis arising unsuccessfully to claim the station of "He whom God shall make manifest," a messianic figure prophesied by the Bāb. A key such figure was Bahā'ullāh, who nevertheless for the most part kept his claims concealed from the Babi public until the mid-eighteen-sixties. In the meantime, Bahā'ullāh's younger half-brother, Mīrzā Yahyā Nūrī, "Ṣubḥ-i Azal," came to be recognised by many Babis as the leader of the community. He went into voluntary exile in Baghdad, joining his older half-brother Bahā'ullāh, who had been expelled there from Iran by the authorities. Also, the mother of the Bāb, deeply in mourning and a strong believer in her son, went to live in the shrine cities of Iraq. The Bāb's widow, Khadija Begum, lived after his martyrdom with her Shi'ite relatives in Shiraz and tried to keep the faith of the Bāb alive (most of the Bāb's clan had not accepted him). The city's indigenous Babi community probably consisted at this point of a handful of artisan families. In addition, a few Babi families were established in Shiraz by government decree. In the eighteen-fifties, Babis captured at Nayriz were brought to Shiraz, and although most were executed, some women and male children were allowed to live. In addition, the family of the Babi martyr Ḥujjat of Zanjan was brought to Shiraz and put under the guardianship of the local notable Mīrzā Abu 'l-Ḥasan Khān Mushir al-Mulk, a man who frequently served as chief minister of Fars province. Mushir al-Mulk eventually married Ḥujjat's daughter, and Ḥujjat's son Mīrzā Ḥusayn became a servant in his household. Ḥujjat's daughter seems to have retained some feelings for the Babi religion, and kept in contact with Khadija Begum. Her husband,

Mushir al-Mulk, as will be seen, was not above targeting Babis and Baha'is for political purposes until he experienced a change of heart toward the end of his life.²²

Khadija Begum received letters from Bahā'ullāh, who was beginning in the late eighteen-fifties to put forth oblique signals that he was the promised one of the Bāb, "He Whom God shall make Manifest." He carried on a lively correspondence with Khadija Begum (and with many other prominent Babis). Khadija Begum, in the meantime, convinced her thirteen-year-old nephew, Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Nūr al-Dīn, to believe in the Bāb. He in turn eventually won his mother, Zahrā Begum, and his father, the great merchant Mīrzā Zayn al-ʿAbidīn, over to Babism, in the opening years of the eighteen-sixties. The leader of this merchant clan was the maternal uncle ("Khāl-i Akbar") of the Bāb, Sayyid Muḥammad Shīrāzī, and his newly-Babi relatives now urged him to investigate his martyred nephew's claims by going to speak with the Bāb's mother, and with Ṣubḥ-i Azal and Bahā'ullāh, in Iraq. He did in fact, in 1862, undertake this journey, and while in Baghdad, Bahā'ullāh responded to his written questions by penning in only three days a long theological and mystical treatise entitled *The Book of Certitude* (*Kitāb-i Īqān*), often known at this time as the "Treatise for the Uncle." This book, which is characterised by a crisp, straightforward style of argumentation, persuaded Sayyid Muḥammad Shīrāzī to become a Babi. He in turn brought his relatives Ḥājji Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī, Ḥājji Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī, and Ḥājji Mīrzā Buzurg into the faith. Gradually, a significant number of the Bāb's relatives, most of them engaged in import-export trade, became Babis. They kept their conversion as secret as possible, even from their servants. Many of them risked corresponding with Ṣubḥ-i Azal and Bahā'ullāh, however.²³

Bahā'ullāh was brought from Baghdad to Istanbul by the Ottoman authorities in 1863, probably as a result of pressure from the Iranian government to have him removed from Baghdad, which was near to the Shi'ite shrine cities, and from which he could keep in close contact with the Babi community in Iran. When he proved uncooperative in the capital, the Sultan ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz further exiled him to Edirne, where he remained from late in 1863 till the summer of 1868. In Edirne, Bahā'ullāh and Ṣubḥ-i Azal gradually fell out with one another. Bahā'ullāh had begun putting forth messianic claims before he left Baghdad, and continued to do so in Edirne. Clearly, if he was the Babi messiah, then Ṣubḥ-i Azal's position as the Bāb's vicar was not worth much. Although the date is not yet established with any certitude, it appears to be in mid-1865 (1282 A.H.) that Bahā'ullāh began sending letters and

emissaries to Iran with open proclamations of his claims. As a result, Ṣubḥ-i Azal attempted and failed to poison him, then tried to convince his barber and bath attendant to murder him in his bath. This scheme, too, failed, owing to the loyalty of the barber to Bahā'ullāh. In March of 1866 Bahā'ullāh withdrew from the Babi community, and from any relationship with Ṣubḥ-i Azal. In September, 1867, he challenged Ṣubḥ-i Azal to a divine test at the Selimiyye Mosque, and when the latter neglected to show up, he lost face. The Babi community became split between Azalis and Baha'is, with the Baha'is emerging as the majority. In 1868, Bahā'ullāh was exiled yet again, to Acre on the Syrian coast, and Ṣubḥ-i Azal was sent to Cyprus.

It seems likely that it was sometime between December 1865 and February 1866 that Bahā'ullāh's emissary, Muḥammad "Nabil-i Aʿzam" Zarandī, came to Shiraz. A major disciple of Bahā'ullāh, as well as a poet, historian and eloquent preacher, he stayed at the house of Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Nūr al-Dīn, and the Babis flocked to see him there. He then asked that a meeting be held in which they all brought their copies of the Writings (*nivishtijāt*, i.e. the writings of the Bāb, Ṣubḥ-i Azal and Bahā'ullāh). They held the gathering in the house of Āqā Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Karīm. Nabil ordered these in piles. He announced that the first pile consisted of Tablets (*alvāḥ*) from the Bāb. The second derived from Him Whom God shall make Manifest, whom the Bāb had foretold to his followers, on whose good-pleasure he had made the acceptance of his (the Bāb's) own Tablets. Nabil said the Bāb had predicted his coming would be soon, and had mentioned the year Nine (i.e. 1852, the year of Bahā'ullāh's epiphany while imprisoned for heresy in the Shah's dungeon). He then swept up the third sheaf of papers (those from Ṣubḥ-i Azal) and declared that they were hellish writings; he tossed them in the stove, burning them up. This action produced an uproar, and Ḥājji Sayyid Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb's maternal uncle and the clan patriarch, leapt to his feet shouting, "What game is this?" Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Nūr al-Dīn pointed out that the Bāb himself had at first been rejected, and that it was after all Bahā'ullāh whose *Book of Certitude* had brought them into the faith. They agreed to investigate the matter and Nabil left for Isfahan.²⁴

Khadija Begum came to hear Nabil from "behind a curtain," and reported that "as soon as I heard him say that the Blessed Beauty [Bahā'ullāh] was 'He Whom God shall make manifest', promised in the *Bayān*, I experienced the same feeling I had that night" when the Bāb declared himself.²⁵ The Bāb's widow was greatly respected, and had wide contacts in the Babi community; she reports that "believers

travelling to Shiraz always came to pay me a visit and I received them in the home of Mīrzā Āqā [Nur al-Dīn], my nephew."²⁶ Her endorsement of Bahā²ullāh's cause was therefore very important. Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Nūr al-Dīn also quickly threw his lot in with Bahā²ullāh, predictably agreeing with his beloved aunt, and he convinced several of his cousins to join him. He was at a disadvantage, however, insofar as they considered him merely as one of themselves and gave his words no special weight. A Baha²i intellectual, Ḥājjī Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Yazdī, had a sister who had married into the Afnān family in Yazd, and this combination of learning and relatedness lent him some authority. Through him many of the Afnān clan became Baha²is. Indeed, all the members of the clan resident in Shiraz did so.²⁷

Most Babis in the province of Fars accepted Bahā²ullāh rather quickly. Among the prominent dissenters was one Shaykh Muḥammad Yazdī, who had had a long standing grudge against Bahā²ullāh, and who insisted that the Bāb's laws could not be abrogated before they had even been implemented. Babis with sympathies toward Bahā²ullāh had earlier been restrained by Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Nūr al-Dīn from acting against him. Now they came to him, asking permission to kill him. Bahā²ullāh's own teachings, of course, encouraged peace and forbade murder, but these Babis-turned-Baha²is had scarcely had time to imbibe his new ethic. Āqā Nūr al-Dīn would only agree that Shaykh Muḥammad needed to be taught some manners. In the meantime, the latter heard about their intentions toward him and fled from Shiraz to Istanbul. This anecdote shows that once the vast majority of the Babis in a community had adopted the Baha²i faith, the position of the minority who clung to the old religion became difficult or even untenable, not only because of active Baha²i hostility but also because they would have been denied community resources, support and patronage, becoming isolated in a hostile Shi'ite society.²⁸

Ḥājjī Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Yazdī, the Baha²i intellectual whose word carried so much weight with the Afnān clan, also was responsible for bringing many others into the Baha²i faith in 1865 or 1866, including a clan (*silsila*) of Kazaruni Babi tailors, who came to about sixty individuals, male and female. Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Nūr al-Dīn helped them out materially (import-export merchants dealing in textiles, indigo and other goods could clearly offer some preferential deals to tailors who were co-religionists). The Babi cobbler (*kharrāz*) clan, some of whom had seen Bahā²ullāh on trips to Baghdad, also became Baha²is.²⁹ These Baha²is, both wealthy merchants and less well-off artisans, met in Āqā Nūr al-Dīn's large house, where the artisans made an impression as being gregarious and boisterous. Meanwhile, Ḥājjī

Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Yazdī's successes in proclaiming the new religion came to the attention of local Shi'ite ulama, and he was forced to return to Yazd. This involuntary homecoming proved an opportunity for Yazdī to teach the faith to the Afnāns in that city. The younger members of the clan there insisted that the patriarch, Mīrzā Sayyid Hasan accept it first. When after great efforts Ḥājjī Muḥammad Ibrāhīm succeeded in convincing the elder, the rest of the clan also became Baha²is.³⁰

When Yazdī left Shiraz, his place among the Baha²i ulama class there was taken for sixteen months by Nabīl-i Akbar Qā²inī, the renowned Baha²i philosopher and *mujtahid* who had graduated from the course given by Shaykh Murtaḍā al-Anṣārī of Najaf, the leading Shi'ite religious leader of his time. Qā²inī stayed at the mansion of Āqā Nūr al-Dīn, and his eloquent discourses, backed up by such weighty Shi'ite diplomas, helped convert many to the Baha²i faith.³¹ Even as early as 1867, Bahā²ullāh's new emphases on peace, social harmony and tolerance had begun to mark off those Babis who followed him from the more militant members of the old community, as can be seen in a petition of spring 1867 sent to the American consulate from the new Baha²i community of Baghdad. Bahā²ullāh's teachings on harmony were largely still oral, but his post-declaration Tablets, such as the *Sūrat al-Aṣḥāb* ("Sūra of the Companions"), also contained ethical precepts, such as the need to avoid useless wrangling and controversy.³²

The nascent Baha²i community first became an issue in local Shirazi politics sometime between May 1866 and May 1867 (A.H. 1283), and continued to be one intermittently thereafter, culminating in a major episode of persecution in the early eighteen-seventies. In the mid-eighteen-sixties, two prominent rivals for local political power in Fars were Abu ²l-Ḥasan Khān Mushīr al-Mulk and Mīrzā 'Alī Muḥammad Khān Qavām al-Mulk. Abu ²l-Ḥasan Khān, one of the largest landowners in Fars, wanted the vizierate, whereas Qavām al-Mulk was mayor (*kalāntar*) of Shiraz and tax-agent of the city's guilds. The Qavām al-Mulk family was part of a Shirazi patriciate, an urban élite generated locally, with which the national government cooperated. The family's origins as part of the élite go back to the early eighteenth century, when a merchant named Ḥājjī Maḥmūd accumulated vast wealth. His son, Ḥājjī Hāshim, became the ward boss of five of Shiraz's city quarters. The next in the line, Ḥājjī Ibrāhīm, helped the Qajars come to the throne but subsequently fell from favour and was killed (along with all but one of his sons) by Fath-'Alī Shāh. Because of his local popularity, the surviving son, 'Alī Akbar Khān, was appointed by the Shāh to be the mayor of Shiraz in 1812, a post he held till his

death in 1865, gaining in the meantime the title Qavām al-Mulk.³³ He was succeeded by his son, ʿAlī Muḥammad Khān.

The second Qavām al-Mulk had therefore only been in office a year or so when Mushīr al-Mulk threw down the gauntlet. Both were competing for the favour of the newly-installed Qajar governor of Fars, Sulṭān-Murād Mīrzā Ḥusām al-Salṭana. Qavām al-Mulk appears to have been an important patron of the Afnān merchants, and their adoption of Babism and then the Bahaʿi faith made them vulnerable. Mushīr al-Mulk, who had married into the family of the Babi martyr Ḥujjat-i Zanjānī, had good information about the Bahaʿi community in Shiraz and knew of this vulnerability. He therefore contacted a leading cleric, Shaykh Ḥusayn Nāẓim al-Sharīʿa, suggesting that they begin a campaign of repression against the Bahaʿis. The cleric was given an extensive list of Bahaʿis, including prominent members of the Afnān clan, two converts from the ulama class and a number of artisans (cobblers, butchers, a stirrup-maker, and of course several Kazaruni tailors). The list was handed over to Ḥusām al-Salṭana, the governor, who in turn called Qavām al-Mulk to task for allowing traitors to proliferate so rapidly in Shiraz and for not suppressing enemies of the crown.

Qavām al-Mulk is said by the Afnān chronicler to have grown fearful of the ire of the prince and to have offered him a water pipe to calm him down. He pointed out to the governor that the list contained the names of several leading merchants and that their inclusion might be inaccurate. These individuals took the lead in organising and patronising Muḥarram celebrations, which the governor and Mushīr al-Mulk had themselves attended and by which they had been impressed. Qavām al-Mulk appears to have been subtly reminding the governor of the merchants' Sayyid status, and of their relationship to the bazaar and the *lūṭīs*, and the potential for trouble should the state move against them. Shiraz had had a great deal of such trouble in previous decades, and had experienced a major urban revolt in 1865 which had led to the fall of the vizier of Fars and the execution of two high officials at the order of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh.³⁴ The allusion was therefore a powerful one. He is reported to have concluded, "These are not ordinary persons whom I can take into custody because of the designs of some, and throw the city into turmoil." He is even said to have threatened to resign as mayor should the prince insist on this course. Ḥusām al-Salṭana at length agreed to back down in the case of the merchants but said that he wanted the others arrested. Eventually, Qavām al-Mulk was able to convince him to drop the entire matter.³⁵

Troubles flared up again four or five years later, around 1870–71 (A.H. 1287). One of the artisan Bahaʿis, Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Rikābsāz ("stirrup-maker"), developed marital problems. His estranged wife, encouraged by his enemies, went to Shaykh Ḥusayn Nāẓim al-Sharīʿa and complained to him that her husband was a Bahaʿi. Since Rikābsāz was a loyal attender at Friday prayers and even unrolled and then rolled up the shaykh's prayer-rug at the mosque, he was loathe to accept the woman's testimony. Eventually her persistent complaints resulted in Rikābsāz's arrest, on charges of being a Bahaʿi and of copying out Bahāʿullāh's works. Shaykh Ḥusayn demanded from Rikābsāz that he curse the Bāb and Bahāʿullāh, but the latter refused and was therefore imprisoned. At this point, Mushīr al-Mulk went to the Prince-Governor with the earlier list of accused Bahaʿis and demanded their arrest also. The governor gave in, and some of the Bahaʿi artisans and ulama were arrested and imprisoned. Apparently Qavām al-Mulk was able to keep the Afnāns out of jail. After a time, Mullā ʿAbdallāh Faḍil, Mullā ʿAbdallāh Bukāʿ, Ḥājī Abu ʿAlī-Ḥasan, Karbalāʿī Ḥasan Khān Sardistānī, and Muḥammad Khān Balūch were released. In late 1874 (1291), after Ḥusām al-Salṭana had returned as governor, three remaining Bahaʿis were executed for heresy, including Āqā Rikābsāz, Muḥammad Nabī Khayyāt and Jaʿfar Khayyāt.³⁶

Despite the vulnerability of such artisan Bahaʿis who dared challenge the Qajar Shiʿite establishment by adopting the new religion, the strong position of the Afnān clan as great merchants in Shiraz, and their ties of clientelage with patricians such as Qavām al-Mulk, appear to have been under most circumstances enough to protect them from major persecution. Qavām al-Mulk proved a good choice of patron; in the eighteen-seventies, he was "able to use the increased revenue gained from his role in the opium trade to extend his control over nearly all the land around Shiraz," and he succeeded in creating the Khamseh tribal federation for his own purposes.³⁷ The Afnān clan's flourishing import-export house can only have cemented their relations with this patron, who knew he needed them and other members of the new bourgeoisie like them.

Qavām al-Mulk was not the only sponsor whom the Bahaʿis were able to find from among the government officials. Ironically enough, at some point Mushīr al-Mulk himself became a Bahaʿi. In 1877 the prince-governor Farhād Mīrzā had abruptly charged Mushīr al-Mulk with corruption, dismissed him as chief minister of Fars, and had him bastinadoed and imprisoned. Mushīr al-Mulk regained his freedom by offering Farhād Mīrzā a large bribe, and thereafter retired to his estates, which he managed as a private subject until his death in December

1883. His sister's son, Nāṣir al-Mulk, took his place in government service. In his last six years of life, Mushīr al-Mulk spent a great deal of time in his private garden, passing his days with friends such as Ḥājjī Sayyid Ismāʿīl Azghandī (a Bahaʿi). At some point he married the daughter of Mullā Muḥammad Riḍā “Rāzī al-Rūḥ” Manshādī, a prominent Bahaʿi preacher. Through discussions with his in-laws and with Azghandī, Mushīr al-Mulk accepted the new religion, and sent an exquisite pen-case and 1,000 tumans to Bahāʿullāh in Acre with Azghandī. Bahāʿullāh returned the money to Azghandī, but kept the pen-case and wrote out a tablet in honour of Mushīr al-Mulk. Thereafter, this patrician proved an invaluable aid to the Bahaʿis.³⁸ Mushīr al-Mulk's ironic conversion raises many questions that the sources do not allow us to answer. Was he guilty about the three Bahaʿis whom he had helped have executed? Even given the concession that he had had a profound change of heart, was becoming a Bahaʿi in some part a way of taking revenge on Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh and his son, who had used him so badly after decades of service? Iranian nobles often devoted their last years to spiritual pursuits, taking up Sufism or patronising Shiʿite ceremonies, so that Mushīr al-Mulk's devotion to Bahāʿullāh does not seem implausible.

The backbone of the Shiraz Bahaʿi community, however, was the artisans and merchants. The merchants benefited from a number of advantages, including their mobility and the international character of their commerce. Bombay served not only as a centre of trade but also as a place where Bahaʿi culture could begin to develop more freely. In the late eighteen-eighties the Afnān clan established a printing press in Bombay, where they printed several volumes of Bahāʿullāh's writings and smuggled them back into Iran for distribution throughout the country through clandestine Bahaʿi networks. Should any of the Afnāns become controversial, they could always send him to one of their commercial outposts (thus they dispatched Āqā Nūr al-Dīn to Bombay in 1879 in the wake of the judicial murder on charges of heresy of his business associates, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn Nahrī in Isfahan). In the 1880s, the Afnān families of Shiraz and Yazd were influential in founding a Bahaʿi community in Ashkhabad, under the Tsarist Russian Transcaspian administration not far from the Iranian border, which served as a refuge for some Bahaʿis from persecution and as a further commercial opportunity in the tea trade.³⁹ That portion of the international trade conducted by the Afnān family consisting of opium became problematic in strict Bahaʿi terms when Bahāʿullāh in ca. 1890 added a final verse to his *Most Holy Book* condemning opium and other intoxicants. The sources do not indicate whether they felt any cognitive dissonance about trading in a substance forbidden by

their religion but which they themselves did not use. The ethic of the Iranian merchant class on the whole was to find ways of reconciling their commercial pursuits with the religious law; thus most Shiʿite merchants were involved in interest-taking on loans, and paid *mujtahids* well for casuistic rulings and juristic fig-leaves under which they could do so. Bahaʿi merchants were at least spared that particular inconvenience, since the Bāb and Bahāʿullāh allowed fair interest to be taken on loans.

Mazandarānī lists prominent Shirazi Bahaʿis outside the Afnān clan also, taking note of a few merchants (named *bazzāz*, indicating dry goods' dealers) and ulama. In the main, however, these pillars of the community were artisans, mainly tailors but also cobblers, bakers and milliners. Many of these groups were suffering from the impact of imported European manufactures and from high price-inflation, and the Bahaʿi faith almost certainly meant something different to them than it did to the Afnāns. Bahaʿis believed in having a parliament, thereby tilting at Qajar absolutism, believed, in an egalitarian fashion, that the little people could be better because of their belief than the great lords, and believed that Bahāʿullāh's advent was a harbinger of dramatic, millenarian change in the world. We do not know how the artisans' allegiance to these ideas, which they apparently tried to keep secret but with little success, affected their standing and activities in the guild structures, but they appear not to have formed a separate, identifiable group in this period. Most Bahaʿis still attended Friday prayers and joined in Muḥarram commemorations, in effect practising Shiʿism while believing in Bahaʿism. Khādīja Begum complains in her memoirs that there were relatively few women Bahaʿis in Shiraz, so it appears to have been primarily a semi-clandestine male club (one wonders whether, after the martyrdom of Āqā Rikābsāz, some Bahaʿi men actually kept their conversion from their wives).⁴⁰ The gender imbalance in Shiraz was righted later on. In Bahaʿi communities in other major cities women were often eminent, numerous and influential.

The nineteenth-century Bahaʿis of Iran maintained the division into social orders typical of Qajar Iran, so that they recognised a “class” of “ulama”, learned men trained originally in Shiʿite seminaries who became Bahaʿis. Some Bahaʿi ulama dissimulated their new faith and continued to be employed in mosque or seminary. Others openly declared themselves and were forced to either to adopt a new profession or to live an itinerant life as they were expelled from one town after another by their alarmed colleagues among the Shiʿite clergy. Two prominent Bahaʿi ulama played an important cultural role in the city. Mullā ʿAbdallāh Faḍīl was among those released from prison in 1871, having

pleaded that he was simply a seeker after truth, sampling Sufism, philosophy and other things. Shiraz was an important centre for both the Dhahabi and Ni^ḥmat-Allahī Sufi orders, and this slightly less dangerous form of heterodoxy clearly offered a camouflage for some Baha^ʿis. A brilliant philosopher, mystic and theologian, he actually managed to continue teaching at the Manṣūriyya seminary, interspersing allusions to the Baha^ʿi faith among his lessons. The head of the seminary managed to get him dismissed for a while, but in the late eighteen-nineties he was reinstated through the influence of the Baha^ʿi prince-*mujtahid*, Shaykh al-Ra^ʿīs. Mullā ^ḥAbdallāh Bukā^ʿ, a renowned reciter of elegies for the Imām Ḥusayn who reduced his audiences to tears, was known also as a mystic and expert in law. The Baha^ʿi merchants valued the Baha^ʿi ulama, as has been seen, often offered them their houses to live in for months at a time, and paid for their missionary travels, as, for instance, Jināb-i Dihqān of Shiraz supported Mīrzā Ḥaydar ^ḥAli Isfahānī.⁴¹

The only important institutional development which the chronicles mention is the refurbishment of the House of the Bāb in the early 1870s. Khadija Begum sent a request to Bahā^ʿullāh that the work be undertaken, and he agreed, ordering it to be done. The repairs were completed in 1873 or 1874 (1290 A.H.).⁴² The Bāb's widow took up residence there. From 5 October 1876 onwards Farhād Mīrzā Mu^ḥtamid al-Dawla became governor of Fars, and he determined to demolish the Baha^ʿi shrine. Khadija Begum was forced to move out for a few months. In the meantime, the chief secretary (*munshī-bāshī*) of Fars, Mīrzā Abu ^ʿl-Ḥasan, and Mīrzā Zayn al-^ḥĀbidīn Khān ^ḥAliyābādī, both of them members of the prince-governor's court, and both Baha^ʿis, succeeded in intervening to prevent the destruction of the Bāb's house.⁴³ With its continued existence secured and its refurbishment, the house of the Bāb became for the Baha^ʿis in Shiraz and surrounding areas a valued and authentic shrine, making it a holy city for them. The travelling, pilgrimage and gathering associated with such a shrine must have contributed to community cohesion.

The recruitment networks for Baha^ʿis in Shiraz included mercantile and artisanal clans, linked with one another by ties of patronage and business interactions. They also reached into the Shi^ʿite religious institutions, so that some ulama, seminary teachers, preachers and reciters of Muḥarram elegies became Baha^ʿis. At least one member of the local patrician class, Mushir al-Mulk, adopted the new religion. Provincial officials such as Mīrzā Abu ^ʿl-Ḥasan, the chief secretary of Fars, also joined, and were able to influence the decisions of the Qajar authorities concerning the Baha^ʿis. Among the merchant clans, it was especially important that their patriarchs, such

as Sayyid Muḥammad Shirazi “Khal” in Shiraz or Mīrzā Sayyid Ḥasan in Yazd, should be willing to accept the new religion. The devotion to Bahā^ʿullāh by the Bāb's widow, the Afnān matriarch Khadija Begum, was no doubt also important for the spread of his religion among her relatives and especially among women. Because of egalitarian feelings among cousins within the clans, notable Baha^ʿi converts called upon Baha^ʿi ulama and intellectuals, such as Nabīl-i A^ḥzam Zarandī, Nabīl-i Akbar Qā^ʿīnī and Shaykh Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Yazdī, to preach to their relatives. The latter lost no face in accepting the religion from such eminent outsiders.

Both the great merchants and the artisans brought advantages to the maintenance and propagation of their adopted faith. The former provided significant monetary contributions to community development and missionary work, as well as being able to call upon the help of their state patrons in the Shirazi patriciate (patrons they had gained because of their heavy involvement in the lucrative commodity export market). Their far-flung import-export business, with outposts in Bombay and Hong Kong, made available to Baha^ʿis their communications and transportation infrastructures, such as the mail service on steamers that plied the Karun river and the Gulf routes to India, or the Afnān-owned printing press in Bombay. Those commercial entrepôts were also ideal postings for family members whose heterodoxy became too notorious in Shiraz itself. The merchants' large homes constituted suitable meeting-places for the entire community, including its poorer members, where face-to-face interaction could occur that contributed to group cohesion. That the Afnān merchants were Sayyids, recognised descendants of the Prophet, also lent them both religious and social charisma and helped protect them against harsh punishment by the state. Between 1863 and 1892, very few Baha^ʿi Sayyids were executed, most notably Sayyids Ḥasan and Ḥusayn Nahri in Isfahan (the “King” and “Beloved” of “martyrs” in Baha^ʿi parlance), in 1879, at the hands of Zill al-Sulṭān. Ironically, such persecution by the religious and secular authorities contributed to the cohesion of the Baha^ʿi communities, who tearfully commemorated their martyrs and derived from the tales of their sufferings a spiritual uplift and vigour. The artisans, in their turn, could offer each other mutual support, and could invoke the help of their own guilds and neighbourhood religious clubs (*hay^ʿat*). The artisans, badly hurt by the competition of inexpensive European imported goods, and taxed heavily by the Qajar officials, may have derived a certain amount of satisfaction from the fear they were able to inspire in the ruling class by their simple adoption of the new religion. Without the artisans' greater numbers, the Baha^ʿi merchants would have been much more isolated and vulnerable.

3. *The community in Tehran*

The Bahaʿi community in Tehran also included merchants and artisans, but its leadership contained more members of the élite governmental (*nawkar*) class, who were, perhaps, especially interested in the political reforms advocated by Bahāʿullāh. As with the patronage of patrician families in Shiraz, the excellent government connections of the Tehran Bahaʿis allowed them to survive, despite continued harassment and major outbreaks of persecution. Although the community lacked any single woman with the stature of Khadija Begum, it benefited from the presence of several outstanding female leaders and so became an early centre of Bahaʿi feminism.

Tehran underwent much more growth and change in the late nineteenth century than did Shiraz. It was a small village when the Qajars adopted it as their capital in the late eighteenth century, but as it came to house a large bureaucracy and bazaars catering to its many princes, nobles and officials, its population mushroomed.⁴⁴ Statistics are notoriously unreliable for Qajar Iran, and the range of estimates for Tehran varies widely. Nevertheless, it seems that Tehran had about 85,000–100,000 inhabitants in 1867, and about 150,000 in 1913.⁴⁵ Tehran was, like Shiraz, affected by the vast increase in cash-cropping, and among its élite can be counted many absentee landlords who had become agricultural capitalists. Tehran also profited from being athwart trade routes from the east and south toward the Caspian and the Russian and Ottoman empires, allowing it to collect octroi taxes on the transit of goods. And, of course, it was the centre of the national state, the recipient of tax monies from all over the country, the site of the main bureaucracies and of military forces like the Cossack brigade. Some of the nobles and government officials resident there sent their sons abroad for their education, and the cosmopolitan merchant and foreign service élite had their influence on the capital. On the other hand, the state itself appears to have lacked the means to tax efficiently the new sources of wealth so that its employees' salaries were frequently in arrears and its soldiers were sometimes reduced to earning a living as artisans. Tehran also housed the main institution of secular higher learning, the Polytechnic College (*Dār al-Funūn*). Secular elementary and high schools also began opening from 1887, and Ettahadieh found a drop in the number of religious elementary schools, mosques, and Sufi convents in Tehran from 1853 to 1903, suggesting that the capital was at this time on the way to becoming a secularising city.⁴⁶ Such a trend away from traditional religion might have helped the modernist, liberal Bahaʿis.

Tehran had been an important Babi centre before 1852, but the community there was even

more devastated by the pogroms of that and subsequent years than elsewhere. The hostility of Naṣir al-Dīn Shāh, the capital's most renowned resident and the object of the assassination attempt launched by ʿAzīm Turshīzī and other Babi leaders in the capital in retaliation for the execution of the Bāb, made life difficult for Babis there and later Bahaʿis also. The Shāh's son, Kāmran Mirzā, was the governor of the city and its environs, and he, too, bore the Babis and Bahaʿis great antipathy. Further, the Shiʿite clergy of the capital were numerous and influential, and wished the Babi-Bahaʿi movement to be destroyed. Every year, the chronicler says, brought news of some new killing or imprisonment.⁴⁷ Still, a Babi community survived into the 1860s. Tehran in particular received visits, short and long-term, from Bahaʿi ulama and missionaries (*muballighīn*).

As in Shiraz, a merchant family served as an anchor for the Tehran community. Hājjī Mirzā Muḥammad ʿAttār maintained a retail establishment in the Chahār-Sūq Bazaar, and had become a Babi in the eighteen-forties, incurring the enmity of the ulama. These complained about him to the government, and he was imprisoned, but then released and expelled from the city for some time. When Bahāʿullāh became renowned, in the late eighteen-fifties, ʿAttār hastened to Baghdad and met with him. He then returned to Tehran. His wife, Hawvāʿ, was a pillar of faith and was especially honoured by Bahāʿullāh, and given by him the epithet Umm al-Awliyāʿ (“Mother of the Saints”). Their sons were Āqā Muḥammad Karīm, Hājjī Muḥammad Raḥīm, Āqā Faṭḥ Allāh and Hājjī Shukr Allāh, all of whom became eminent in the community. Āqā Muḥammad Karīm maintained an inn, and gave shelter to Bahaʿis passing through the capital, and his commercial establishment was a centre for the dissemination of Bahaʿi news. His store was burned down twice in the late nineteenth century by enemies (such as arson and vandalism plagued many Bahaʿi merchants, and Bahaʿi farmers as well). In 1888 Āqā Muḥammad Karīm made the pilgrimage to see Bahāʿullāh in Acre.⁴⁸

This Bahaʿi merchant family employed marriage alliances to expand their commercial network and to gain important contacts in the government. Āqā ʿAlī Ḥaydar Shīrvānī, from the Caucasus, had been a follower there of Sayyid ʿAbd al-Karīm. Presumably as a result of Tsarist Russian pressures on Caucasus Muslims, Shīrvānī came to Tehran around 1880 and set up a shop. He received a good return from a small amount of capital. Mirzā Ḥaydar ʿAlī Iṣfahānī, the famed Bahaʿi missionary who had been imprisoned in Sudan, came to Tehran and brought Shīrvānī into the Bahaʿi faith around 1885. Shīrvānī combined his trading thereafter with serving his new religion, faithfully observing the new Law; for

instance, he gave Amīn Ardakānī 700 tumans in Baha'is tithes (the *ḥuqūq Allāh*, or Right of God, equalling 19% of net profits on certain transactions). Because Baha'is were carrying on a lively correspondence with Acre, there was much danger from government spies lest their letters be opened. Shīrvānī held Russian citizenship, and his correspondence was protected by the Capitulations, so the Baha'is used his name to send and receive letters. Shīrvānī maintained a good reputation with the Russian embassy in Tehran and the Russian Foreign Ministry. He married a daughter of Ḥājī Muḥammad Raḥīm Ḥattār, thus joining the Baha'is commercial élite in the capital; at least two of his four brothers-in-law, Āqā Ḥalī Bey and Āqā Mashhadī Ḥabād, were also merchants. When Bahā'ullāh died in 1892, it was to Shīrvānī that Ḥabd al-Bahā' telegraphed the announcement.⁴⁹

Shīrvānī's father-in-law, Ḥājī Muḥammad Raḥīm Ḥattār, had married the daughter of a high government official, Raḥīm Khān Farrāsh-Ghaḍab, the executioner who waited upon the Shāh in his royal antechamber. This official, Raḥīm Khān, was also from the Caucasus, and had a reputation for great bravery. His daughter, having married into a Baha'is merchant family, herself adopted the new religion, causing many dilemmas for her deeply committed, tradition-bound Shi'ite father, who was close to the Babi-hating Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh. Raḥīm Khān nevertheless faithfully protected and served the Baha'is. During the great famine of 1869–72, when perhaps a tenth of the Iranian population died and another tenth emigrated, the state set up special bakeries in four quarters of Tehran under Raḥīm Khān's authority, and he in turn sought help from his son-in-law, Muḥammad Raḥīm Ḥattār, in distributing bread equally to all the people. At this time, because of the enmity toward Baha'is on the part of Shi'ite commoners, they were ineligible to receive the famine relief and were threatened with starvation. Muḥammad Raḥīm Ḥattār had bread distributed to the Baha'is at night, asking those who could afford it to pay for it, and handing it out to the rest gratis. He and his family at that time are said to have scrimped on their own meals, and to have given some of their share to starving Baha'is. Khānum Ḥattār's attention to famine relief for Baha'is came to Bahā'ullāh's attention, whence his bestowal on her of her epithet.⁵⁰

The importance of the Ḥattār women and men as community organisers and hosts is underlined by Mirzā Ḥaydar Ḥalī Iṣfahānī, who lived in Tehran for several years. He wrote,

The only ones who were well off among the friends in Tehran were Āqā Muḥammad Karīm Ḥattār and his brother, Ḥājī Muḥammad Raḥīm. These two believers and their sisters were all devoted to the

Cause of God. Whenever the friends desired to have a sumptuous meal, they would send them a message, and the family would comply with their wishes and send Persian rice and roast meat. One night the brothers themselves attended such a banquet, and the delicious food was followed by fresh fruit.⁵¹

In the mid-eighteen-seventies, Muḥammad Raḥīm Ḥattār became known as a Baha'is and was exiled from the capital, despite the protest organised by Umm al-Awliyā', involving two hundred of her powerful relatives. After five years in Baghdad he returned, but the surveillance of his house by Shi'ite enemies caused him to have to take refuge in his father-in-law's mansion for two months, until the uproar died down. In the early eighteen-eighties, Raḥīm Khān received a posting abroad, and during his absence enemies of the Baha'is orchestrated a major round-up. In 1882, Kāmran Mīrzā Nā'ib al-Saltāna, the governor of Tehran, arrested and condemned to death some fifty Baha'is, Ḥattār among them. The prisoners were engaged by some of the royal family and clergy in more than one debate.⁵² Umm al-Awliyā' saw to the feeding of the prisoners in the meantime, and also undertook to plead with a leading Shi'ite *mujtahid* that they should be spared, but without success. When Raḥīm Khān returned to the capital, he exercised his good offices on behalf of his son-in-law, and after nineteen months of harsh imprisonment, the government released all the arrested Baha'is (who included the cream of the Baha'is intelligentsia of the time, such figures as Mīrzā Abu 'l-Faḍl Gulpāygānī and Ākhund Mullā Ḥalī Akbar Shahmīrzādī).⁵³ The Ḥattār family continued to play a central role in the Tehran community thereafter.

Another important family in Tehran was a princely one, that of Shams-i Jahān Fitna, a Qajar princess and granddaughter of Faḥ'Alī Shāh. Of a religious disposition, she had been excited by the news of the Bāb's charismatic claims in the eighteen-forties. Sayyid Muḥammad "Fatā al-Maliḥ" Gulpāygānī, who had been close to the Babi disciple and poet Ṭāhira Qurrat al-'Ayn, had taken pupils among wealthy households in the capital around 1850, and he was hired to tutor Shams-i Jahān. He secretly brought her into the Babi religion, and encouraged her to meet the female disciple of the Bāb and famed poet, Ṭāhira, then under house arrest at the home of Tehran police chief Maḥmūd Khān Kalantar. Shams-i Jahān determined to meet the leader of the Babis, whom she had heard was Ṣubḥ-i Azal, and set out for his residence in Baghdad in 1858. In the end she was denied an audience with the furtive Mīrzā Yaḥyā, and instead she sent her questions to his brother, Bahā'ullāh, who also had a following. The answers were brought to her early the next morning by Mīrzā Āqā Jān Kāshānī, Bahā'ullāh's amanuensis. He told

her that the figure “He whom God shall make manifest” promised by the Bāb, was in fact Bahā³ullāh, but he swore her to secrecy, insisting that this secret could not at that time be revealed. She returned to Tehran, meeting on the way with other Babis who were convinced that Bahā³ullāh was their messiah. She writes that she was quite prepared when, around 1865–66 (1282), Aḥmad Yazdī arrived in Tehran with the news that Bahā³ullāh had revealed himself as the promised one of the Bāb. She brought her brother, Ṭahmāsp Mīrzā Mu³ayyid al-Dawla, into the Babi-Bahā³i faith, as well. She visited Bahā³ullāh again, in Edirne, and died at Tabriz on her way back.⁵⁴

Her brother, Ṭahmāsp Mīrzā, associated with and helped financially support Baha³i ulama such as Muqaddas Khurāsānī, Nabī-i Akbar Qā³inī, and Mīrzā Muḥammad Furūghī. Ṭahmāsp’s son, Muḥammad Mahdī Mīrzā, studied at a seminary and became a Shaykhī for a while, but when he lost a public debate with Mīrzā Abu ³l-Faḍl Gulpāyḡānī in Hamadan in 1888 (1305), he re-entered the Baha³i faith. He thereafter went to Acre and met Bahā³ullāh, and this family remained devoted Baha³is in the next generations. Muḥammad Mahdī Mīrzā’s son, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Mīrzā, became head of the telegraph office in Isfahan and then Tehran, and during the counter-revolution of 1908 he served as head of Muḥammad ‘Alī Shah’s consultative council, incurring the enmity of the revolutionaries (among them, ironically, another Baha³i prince, the fiery constitutionalist Shaykh al-Ra³īs). He fled to Ottoman territories when Muḥammad ‘Alī Shah was overthrown, but eventually was able to return to Iran, where he wrote defences of the Baha³i faith.⁵⁵

A government-connected member of the Baha³i élite was Ḥājjī Faraj Khān, the son of Colonel ‘Abdallāh Khān. His father had been among those charged with killing Babis in the pogroms of 1852, and young Faraj, then 15, witnessed some of the executions. He was affected by some of the last words of one of the Babis. His father died in 1857, and around 1863 he began arguing with his mother about the Babis. Sometime later he gathered up his money, packed his clothes, and left Tehran, informing his mother and relatives that they would never see him again. He went to Baghdad, where Mīrzā Javād (Karbalā³i²) brought him into the Babi religion and taught him to believe that the Imām Ḥusayn had returned (a station claimed by Bahā³ullāh). Around 1872, Ḥājjī Faraj hastened to Acre, where Bahā³ullāh was imprisoned, and succeeded in visiting him. Bahā³ullāh asked him to return to Tehran to bring his mother into the faith, and Faraj set out for the capital with a group of other Baha³is. His mother and brother were delighted to see him, and his mother promptly had him engaged to a sixteen-year-old named Faṭīma Sulṭān, the

daughter of Muḥarram Bey (a graduate of the military academy). Ḥājjī Faraj brought his fiancée a literate Baha³i woman as a tutor, and in the course of the lessons she embraced the new religion. Faṭīma Sulṭān and Ḥājjī Faraj married and maintained a mansion near the telegraph station and the Royal Garden, which became a site for the comings and goings of the Baha³is. Ḥājjī Faraj was the paternal nephew of Amīn al-Sulṭān, who served as Prime Minister late in Nāṣir al-Dīn’s reign, and he was forced to observe caution. Among his relatives, only his mother knew he was a Baha³i. When Baha³is were imprisoned, Ḥājjī Faraj interceded for them with Amīn al-Sulṭān. His wife Faṭīma Sulṭān Khānum also attempted to succour arrested Baha³is and their families, using her high status as a woman of two prominent military families to approach Kāmran Mīrzā and Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh with petitions for the release of her co-religionists, sometimes with great success. When Mullā ‘Alī Jān Māzandarānī was killed, she paid his burial expenses. When local Shi‘ite toughs continued to bother Māzandarānī’s widow, the family brought in men from the palace (*da‘irat al-Sulṭānī*) to beat them up.⁵⁶

In addition to Umm al-Awliyā³ and Faṭīma Sulṭān Khānum, there was another strong woman leader from the government-official class in Tehran, ‘Iṣmat Khānum Ṭā³ira. Born there in 1861, she was the daughter of Mīrzā Ismā‘īl Khān Āshṭiyani Mustawfi-yi Niẓām, a man of high status. Her mother was Ḥasīna Khānum Zahra, an extremely accomplished woman and a poet. ‘Iṣmat Khānum’s maternal grandfather, a skilled Babi doctor and prolific author, had been physician to the prince Ḥusam al-Salṭāna (probably Muḥammad Taqī Mīrzā). ‘Iṣmat Khānum and her brother ‘Īsā were orphaned in 1868 when their father died. They were raised for a while by their grandfather, and then for a while by their maternal uncle Faraj Allāh Khān, the inspector-general (*sar-ilā³ bāshī*) of the capital’s buildings. He hired tutors for them and had them taught polite Persian letters and Arabic. At one point little ‘Iṣmat is said to have been in the presence of the Shāh, and attracted a comment from him on her boldness. When their uncle died, their mother struggled on with them. In 1877, at the age of sixteen, ‘Iṣmat was married off to Mihr ‘Alī Khān, the deputy imperial bodyguard of the Shāh, and a fierce persecutor of Baha³is who often brought them as prisoners to his own house.

‘Iṣmat’s maternal uncle, Abu ³l-Barakāt, was a Baha³i who, in order to escape persecution, adopted the life of a dervish and went to India. On his return to Tehran he stayed with his niece and gradually brought her into the Baha³i faith. ‘Iṣmat Khānum now began treating the Baha³i prisoners who were brought to her house with compassion. Her husband

and brother, however, discovered her new adherence, and her attempts to help the Baha'is resulted in her being badly and repeatedly beaten by her husband. She remembered once going outside in the snow to sit on the steps after being battered one winter evening, and leaving the snow around her dyed red. She nevertheless persevered, and taught her daughters the faith, as well as finally convincing her brother, 'Īsā Khān, to join. In the mid-eighteen-eighties, her husband died, releasing her from her nearly decade-long captivity. 'Īsmat received a generous state stipend for Mihr 'Alī's orphaned daughters, and her wealthy brother 'Īsā Khān helped his sister out, so that she was able to maintain an independent household thereafter. She threw herself into Baha'ism and cultural activities. She began holding classes for Baha'is students in the capital. She wrote poetry under the pen-name of Tā'ira. She was known as a free-thinker (*hurrat al-afkār*), and worked for women's emancipation (*hurriyyat al-nisvān*). She moved in the highest society of elite Qajar women, including that of princesses, serving as a story teller and moral preacher and also subtly spreading Baha'ism. She not only taught girls informally, incurring much criticism from conservatives, but at length managed to establish a girls' school. When the press became freer during the Constitutional Revolution, she published articles on women's emancipation. She died in 1911.⁵⁷

Other families were important in Tehran. The children of Mīrzā Hāshim Tafrishī split, some becoming Azalis (a daughter, Badrī Jān, married Şubḥ-i Azal), and some Baha'is. Among the Baha'is was his daughter, Hājir, who married a court astrologer, Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Munajjim-Bāshī. Their many children became Baha'is. Her brother Mīrzā Faraj Allāh married the daughter of the famous Baha'is missionary to India Jamāl Efendi Tunukābūnī (born Sulaymān Khān, a very wealthy man of high status who had served at one point as governor of Tunukābūn). Faraj Allāh's son, Dr. 'Aṭā' Allāh Khān, was educated at the Polytechnic College and took a medical degree, and he later helped found the first Baha'is school in Tehran.⁵⁸ Dr. 'Aṭā' Allāh Khān may have inaugurated a major tradition, that of the modern Baha'is physician. Not only was one of the Shāh's astrologers a Baha'is, but one of his more eminent court musicians, Mīrzā 'Abdallāh (1843–1918), was one also.⁵⁹

Despite the importance of the government official class, clearly they constituted a small proportion of the community. Interestingly, in Tehran the religion spread beyond the confines of Shi'ite Islam and Babism, attracting members of religious minorities. Examples are Ḥakīm Masīḥ and Ḥakīm Ḥaqq-Nazar, Jewish physicians trusted by Nāṣir al-Dīn's court, who became Babis and then Baha'is.⁶⁰ Another such fig-

ure was Mīrzā Ayyūb Ḥakīm, the son of Muḥammad Shāh's court physician, who was in his turn also close to the court. From a Jewish background, he became a Baha'is in 1873 through Ḥājī Muḥammad Ismā'īl Dhābiḥ. A number of Jews, especially members of his immediate family, attempted to dissuade him. He persevered, however, and went to see Bahā'ullāh in Acre. On his return, he helped bring his brothers and then a large number of other Tehrani Jews in the Baha'is faith. In the early 1890s, Curzon reported that 150 Tehrani Jews became Baha'is in a single year.⁶¹ The association of Baha'is with the Zoroastrian school in the capital also resulted in some conversions among that religious minority.⁶² For these minorities, embracing the new religion of Baha'ism was particularly courageous, since in so doing they gave up their protected status as recognised religious communities, putting themselves beyond the pale in the eyes of the state.

Tehran at one time or another also sheltered a number of important Baha'is ulama. These included Mīrzā Abu 'l-Faḍl Gulpāyḡānī, a *muḥtadid* who taught at the seminary of the Shāh's mother in the citadel at Tehran in the mid eighteenth-seventies, and who became a Baha'is in 1876 after long discussions with Baha'is ulama (his first encounter with the religion came at the hands of an iron smith who confounded him). He lost his position at the seminary and was hired as secretary by the Zoroastrian agent in the capital, Mānakī Şāhib, a Parsee from Bombay who had opened a school for Iranian Zoroastrians. After his arrest and imprisonment in 1882–83, he adopted a peripatetic style of life, travelling widely throughout Iran and eventually abroad. He went on to become the foremost Baha'is thinker of the first generation in Iran.⁶³ Among the large number of other important ulama who lived for some time in Tehran were Mīrzā Ḥaydar 'Alī Işfahānī, Ākhund Mullā 'Alī Akbar Shahmīrzādī, and Āqā Jamāl Burūjirdī (who was jailed in the early eighteen-seventies and conducted a lively debate with the Shi'ite ulama, and who returned later to live in the capital despite his notoriety). Ibn-i Aşdaq, son of the famous Babi-Baha'is preacher Mīrzā Şādiq "Muḥaddas" Khurāsānī, also maintained a residence in Tehran after his marriage. Ibn-i Aşdaq married a minor Qajar princess, 'Adhrā' Khānum, a great-granddaughter of Muḥammad Shāh, who embraced her husband's religion. Her sister, in turn, was married to an official, Intizām al-Sulṭana, who became a devoted Baha'is himself.⁶⁴ This Baha'is member of the ulama class, like the 'Aṭṭār merchants, was able through marriage alliances to gain the patronage of persons in the Tehran government official stratum. The very large numbers of Qajar princes and princesses produced in the massive harems of the Shāhs made even royal alliances entirely possible.

To the historian Rūḥullāh Mihrābkhānī we owe an important and fascinating account of the institutionalisation of the Bahaʿi religion in Tehran, based on a rare nineteenth-century manuscript that he unearthed, the memoirs of Mīrzā Asad Allāh Iṣfahānī.⁶⁵ In 1877 or 1878 (1294), a copy of Bahāʿullāh’s *Most Holy Book* came into the possession of Mīrzā Asad Allāh Iṣfahānī, an important Bahaʿi missionary and a brother-in-law of ʿAbd al-Bahāʿ, Bahāʿullāh’s eldest son. It had been written in 1873 but only gradually circulated in Iran; insofar as it formally encoded a new holy law, aimed at abrogating and supplanting the Muslim *shariʿa* or revealed law, it was an extremely dangerous book. The Qajar authorities construed possession of it as a sign of apostasy from Islam, a capital offence. Iṣfahānī, then residing in Tehran, read with interest Bahāʿullāh’s command that a house of justice (*bayt al-ʿadl*) should be established in every Bahaʿi community, with nine or more members. Although the Bahaʿis had ulama, it was Bahāʿullāh’s intention that they should not achieve the sort of ecclesiastical authority which ulama had in Shiʿite Islam, and he therefore created these lay steering committees. During this period, of the eighteen-seventies, lay committees were also frequently being set up among Ottoman millets, which challenged the authority of the clerical leaders within these millets, and in Iran, the Zoroastrians similarly had steering committees or *anjumans* on which bourgeois members of the community served, in contradistinction to the priests or *mobeds*. The call for the establishment of Bahaʿi houses of justice therefore came at a time of greater laicisation of minority religious communities generally, a time when agricultural capitalism was contributing to the rise of a new, literate middle class unwilling to cede all religious power in the community to the clergy.

Mīrzā Asad Allāh writes in his memoirs of 1877–80 that he secretly called a meeting in his house of eight prominent Bahaʿi elders from Tehran, who began organising the community’s affairs. They sent missionaries to nearby villages, for instance, and attempted to help believers who were victimised by persecution. The rest of the community had no idea where these initiatives were coming from. Mīrzā Asad Allāh was initially discouraged by the relative uninterest among the other members in committee work, and complained that if he did not call a meeting, none was held. Then Mīrzā Ḥaydar ʿAlī Iṣfahānī and Ibn-i Aṣḍaq came to Tehran in 1879 or 1880 (1297), and these two very active Bahaʿi preachers and missionaries agreed enthusiastically to serve. The rest of the membership floated, and remained a secret cabal of elders. They called the building where they met a house of justice, but referred to the administrative body itself as a consultative assembly (*maḥfil-i shūr*).⁶⁶ This terminology appears to indi-

cate an interest, on the local level, in democratic movements and thought, since the constitutionalist writers of the time employed the word *shūr* or *mashvarat*, both meaning consultation, to refer to parliamentary sorts of governance. Bahāʿullāh, of course, also advocated parliamentary government at the national level, but most Bahaʿis were not in any position to pursue that goal practically. In their own institutions, they could, however, strive for a more collective sort of leadership, though Iṣfahānī’s secret council of elders was hardly at this point very democratic. Ultimately, the assembly members would be chosen by secret ballot by universal adult suffrage in the local community.

The Tehran consultative assembly drew up an important list of goals for Bahaʿis who wished to spread the faith and to encourage the implementation of the laws of the *Most Holy Book*, including the wide establishment of further consultative assemblies. This list gives great insight into the thinking of Bahaʿi urban leadership in the late eighteen-seventies. Such travellers were to attempt to establish in each city, town or village houses of justice where consultative assemblies would be convened. The assemblies were to discuss all matters concerning the welfare of the friends and to implement the decisions taken. They were to set up philanthropic investment trusts (*maḥall al-baraka*) with capital raised from the community. Some of the profits from the investments made would be returned to the owners of the capital, and the rest spent on philanthropical projects such as succouring the Bahaʿi poor and subventing the expenses of missionaries. The administration of the trust fund was to be in the hands of a committee known as the “trustees” (*umanaʿ*). Bahāʿullāh himself encouraged these institutions in numerous Tablets, writing, “God willing, the investment trust (*maḥall al-baraka*) will be radiant and illumined among treasuries (*buyūt al-amwal*), and the dawning-place of trustworthiness and piety.” He also called the trustees “blessed.” The third goal was the establishment of regular dawn prayers (*mashriq al-adhkār*), either in private homes or in a building purchased for this purpose; in some instances Bahaʿis bought land and constructed on it their own building for worship, gathering at dawn in accordance with the text of the *Most Holy Book*. The fourth goal was the institution of the nineteen-day Feast, which at this time had no administrative content or purposes. Rather, every nineteen days Bahaʿis were to invite co-religionists to an evening meal, after which the prayers and writings of Bahāʿullāh were chanted. In one town, nineteen Bahaʿi hosts took turns offering a meal each night of the nineteen-day Babi-Bahaʿi month, so that believers met virtually every evening. The final goal was to encourage the payment by Bahaʿis of the *ḥuquq Allāh* or “Right of

God," the 19% tax on net profits from certain economic activities. These monies were thought to belong to the *ṣāhib-i amr*, which is to say, to the head of the religion, Bahā³ullāh. The tax seems to be a form of the Muslim *khums*, a fifth or 20% payment owed initially on booty to the Prophet Muḥammad, which Shi'ites continued to pay (on profits from some forms of trade) to the Sayyids or the Prophet's descendants. In the *Most Holy Book*, Bahā³ullāh made it clear that in future these revenues were not to be owed to his descendants but rather to the houses of justice. Many Baha³is paid the tax by donating property to the Baha³i faith as a religious endowment (*waqf*). They sent the revenues generated by the property to Bahā³ullāh in Acre or donated them to causes inside Iran such as spreading the religion or caring for the indigent.⁶⁷

At one point, the assembly included Mīrzā Asad Allāh Iṣfahānī, Ibn-i Aṣḍaq, Mīrzā Ḥaydar 'Alī Iṣfahānī, Ākhund Mullā 'Alī Akbar, Āqā Mīrzā 'Alī Naqī, Āqā Sayyid Abū Ṭalib, Āqā Muḥammad Kāzīm Iṣfahānī and Āqā Muḥammad Karīm [‘Aṭṭār] the broadcloth seller. Interestingly, these members were mostly drawn from the ranks of the Baha³i ulama, and at this point do not appear to include the Baha³i government officials who play such a prominent role in Māzandārānī's history of the community. Only one of the great merchants was a member. Another prominent Baha³i preacher was then in the capital, Āqā Jamāl Burūjirdī, the scion of a distinguished family of *mujtahids* and himself at this time one of the major Baha³i ulama. The Tehran house of justice decided to invite him to join, but he said he would agree only if he would be the chairman of the body. The members responded that the *Most Holy Book* had said nothing about there being a chairman. Because of his insistence on leadership (he is reported to have said one vote of his should equal six of anyone else's), Āqā Jamāl ended up being excluded from membership. He in his turn began a campaign against the whole idea that the time had come to set up such consultative assemblies. The dispute was ultimately submitted by both sides to Bahā³ullāh. He in reply first sent a letter to Āqā Jamāl Burūjirdī, asking him to go to Mosul to preach the faith there. Then he sent a letter to the consultative assembly, saying that he was pleased with their work and encouraging them to continue. In essence, he ruled against Āqā Jamāl, but arranged things so as to avoid humiliating the great *mujtahid*.⁶⁸

Although Mīrzā Asad Allāh, author of the memoirs upon which this account is based, blames Āqā Jamāl for overweening egotism, the issues here go beyond individual ambition. In the Uṣūlī Shi'ite system, the *mujtahid* or trained jurist was recognised as having a unique professional competency to settle questions in Islamic law and the laity were com-

manded to obey his rulings implicitly. Āqā Jamāl envisioned the continuation this role for the ulama in the Baha³i religion. The other members of the consultative council and Bahā³ullāh himself, however, clearly had a more lay, egalitarian vision of community governance. A Baha³i *mujtahid* in a consultative assembly only had the same vote that Āqā Muḥammad Karīm the seller of broadcloth did.

The advent of the consultative assemblies, indeed, spelled the beginning of the end of the power of the Baha³i ulama, as Āqā Jamāl Burūjirdī perhaps had the prescience to see. The Baha³i ulama, being preachers dedicated to spreading the religion, tended to become well-known as Baha³is in any city where they resided much more quickly than did the urban notables or artisans. They often attempted to continue to make their living within the framework of Shi'ite religious institutions, the only livelihood for which they were trained. The Shi'ite clergy clearly, took an extremely disapproving view of these Baha³i ulama, since they had all the rhetorical and literary skills of their Shi'ite counterparts, and they acted forcefully against them wherever they could. Baha³i ulama therefore were much more peripatetic than the lay notables, being exiled from city after city. Over the long term, this mobility, implicit in their style of life, told against their ability to remain in control of the consultative assemblies. Moreover, once the Baha³i religion became a recognised phenomenon, associated with particular families, the ulama class became extremely difficult to reproduce. A Baha³i young man could not easily go off to study for years in a Shi'ite seminary. The secular schools being set up in Tehran to train professional people such as physicians and attorneys in any case looked a great deal more inviting. Baha³i religious meetings had no place for sermons, and therefore the community had no strong incentive systematically to hire or support Baha³i preachers. Ideology, structures of authority, and liturgical practice within the religion, and the increasing inaccessibility of Shi'ite seminaries without, ensured that the Baha³i ulama would die out as an identifiable social stratum. The Baha³i religion became increasingly laicised, anticlerical, and even somewhat anti-intellectual, as the assemblies, staffed by merchants and professional people, gained a powerful grip on community power. As a dissident religion with a strong emphasis on individual ethics and subjective spirituality, whose meetings for worship lacked a sermon or professional preacher, the Baha³is resemble some Western dissident groups such as the Anabaptists and Quakers (also not particularly noted for their scintillating intellectualism). Āqā Jamāl Burūjirdī and a handful of other Baha³i ulama rebelled against Bahā³ullāh's chosen successor, his eldest son 'Abd al-Bahā³ in the 1890s after the founder's death. Excommunicated,

they found they had backed the wrong horse and thereafter sank into obscurity. This temporary and ultimately minor schism if anything increased the distrust among the urban notables in control of the consultative assemblies toward Baha'i ulama and hastened the ultimate demise of this latter group.⁶⁹

As in Shiraz, so in Tehran, the bazaar formed one crucial site for the recruitment of believers. The ʿAṭṭār family with its various branches represented one of the major proponents of the Baha'i faith in the city. Māzandarānī mentions that large numbers of working-class Baha'is were in danger of starving in the early eighteen-seventies. We do know the name of Ustād Ḥusayn Naʿlband Kāshī, the ironsmith who pointed out contradictions in Shiʿite traditions to the learned cleric Mirzā Abu ʿl-Faḍl Gulpāyḡānī, first setting him to thinking about the Baha'i religion. He was among the Baha'i artisans and shopkeepers in the city arrested in the early eighteen-eighties, along with a seal maker, various sorts of tailor, a mould caster, a dyer, a tobacco seller and a member of the ʿAṭṭār clan of broadcloth importers.

The *nawkar*, or government official class, was more important as a source of Baha'i converts in Tehran than in Shiraz. An impressive number of these were women—ʿIṣmat Khānum Ṭāʿira, Umm al-Awliyāʾ, Fāṭima Sulṭān Khānum, and others, who clearly played an essential role in the spread and development of the religion. Bureaucrats such as Ṭāʿira's brother, ʿIsā Khān, military men such as the nephew of Amīn al-Sulṭān, as well as minor royalty such as Shams-i Jahān Fitna, her brother and his children and the wife of Ibn-i Aṣṣdaq, joined the new movement. The ʿAṭṭār clan even managed to marry into the *nawkar* class at one point, winning over the daughter of the Shāh's executioner! The willingness of these government-connected individuals to adopt a religion hated by their sovereign and most of their relatives and peers is something of a puzzle. Clearly, the Baha'i faith is an attractive religion, able to inspire large numbers of Iranians to take the considerable risks associated with embracing it. But in some instances we can see how its attractiveness might have been enhanced by structural conflicts within the government class. Ḥājjī Faraj appears to have been in deep conflict with an absent father who killed Babī for a living and then died young, leaving Faraj a rebellious orphan ridden with guilt and resentment. ʿIṣmat Khānum Ṭāʿira, a battered wife (see above, p. 135), became a Baha'i even though it was her husband's job to imprison and execute Baha'is, hence in clear defiance of her violent mate. It should also be remembered that the government class, despite its status privileges, faced severe difficulties in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Those who were not successful in going into private landholding

faced lengthy arrears in receiving their state salaries and stipends, because of the high indebtedness and virtual bankruptcy of the mismanaged Qajar state. The Shāhs' practice of maintaining harems as large as 200 and producing immense numbers of children created a huge group of royals, many of whose ambitions could not be accommodated, some of whom became ulama or merchants. A few of these disgruntled royals adopted dissident religions such as the Baha'i faith, apparently in part as a protest against their marginalisation (though it is true that some mainstream royals adopted such heterodoxies as Shaykhism and Sufism, perhaps in rebellion against the increasing hegemony of the Uṣūlī *mujtahids*). Thus generational and gender conflicts, as well as discrepancies between ascribed status and achieved class standing, may have created discontents with the *status quo* that contributed to the successes of the dissident Baha'i faith among this stratum.

In contrast to Shiraz, a significant number of Tehrani Jews adopted the Baha'i faith, many of them traditionally-trained physicians. Some Zoroastrians became Baha'is as a result of Mirzā Abu ʿl-Faḍl's and others' friendly relations with Mānakjī Šāhib and his Zoroastrian school. Compared to Shiraz, the Tehran community was therefore far more diverse in the religious backgrounds of its adherents. In nineteenth-century Iran, these religious minorities faced many disabilities and were considered ritually unclean by many Shiʿites, in sharp contrast to the universalist and open attitude toward them of Baha'is from a Shiʿite background. As Smith notes, "for Iranian Jews and Zoroastrians to be treated as fellow and equal human beings by members of the dominant culture was doubtless an experience of profound significance for them."⁷⁰

The way in which these various segments of the community interacted to reinforce community loyalties is demonstrated by the story of Ḥājjī Muḥammad Raḥīm ʿAṭṭār's famine relief efforts during the crisis of 1869–71. Because he had married into the government official class and because as a merchant he knew the bazaar, he was appointed by his father-in-law to help distribute bread to the indigent in the capital. He used his position to help poor Baha'is also. These links of patronage exercised in an emergency form a species of vertical integration, wherein the middle class burghers could distribute the fruits of their clientelage with government figures to members of the Baha'i working class. The Tehran community appears to have been exceptionally well-organised and to have possessed perhaps the first consultative council. Run initially for the most part by the Baha'i ulama, along with a merchant or two, this body established an investment fund with which to pay for a more continuous sort of

poor relief within the community as well as to support Baha'i missionary work. The assembly saw itself as modelled on instructions in Bahā'ullāh's *Most Holy Book*, and helped other cities set up similar committees and investment funds. Its ethic mixed a commitment to egalitarianism (it was a committee of equals) and consultative or parliamentary discussion (*mashvarat*) with paternalism. It was not elected but formed by a network of self-appointed elders, and was wholly male. In time, these institutions came to be elected and came to include women, but this was not the case in the nineteenth century. The consultative assembly's mild paternalism differed starkly, however, from the hierarchical and authoritarian leadership style of some Baha'i ulama, such as Āqā Jamāl Burūjirdī. The assemblies clearly had advantages, of organisation and scriptural authorisation, which allowed them to win out over the ulama not affiliated with them. This form of organisation probably helps account for the concerted spread of the faith and the smooth functioning of the urban community. Bahā'ullāh's command that a substantial religious tax, the Right of God, be paid to these institutions, and then increased through wise investment, helped fund the assemblies at an impressive level. The attention of Baha'is such as Ṭā'ira and Dr. Āṭā' Allāh to establishing schools for Baha'i boys and girls (as mandated in the *Most Holy Book*) also helped consolidate the community in the long run.

4. Conclusion

The contrast between the rise of the Baha'i faith in Iran (1865–92) with the rise of the Babi movement (1844–52) could not be more stark. The Babis were perceived as an intolerable threat to the state and to the Shi'ite religion and were willing to fight for what they saw as the right. As a result of this polarisation, major battles broke out in some provincial places, such as Zanjan, Nayriz and the shrine of Shaykh Tabarsī in Mazandaran. The failed Babi attempt in 1852 to assassinate the Shāh resulted in a severe countrywide pogrom against the Babis. While the Baha'is, themselves largely from a Babi background, suffered some continued stigma because of this association, their movement met with quite a different response. Although the state and the clergy occasionally attempted to use coercion to harass and slow the progress of the religion, there was nothing like a military siege of an entire quarter or village where Baha'is clustered. Rather, the Baha'is achieved an uneasy coexistence with Shi'ite society, one characterised by continuous informal vandalism and discrimination against members of the new religion and occasional major episodes of persecution, but also by frequent acquiescence on the part of the state in its *de facto* spread and importance.

Minor members of the Qajar royal family adopted the religion, as did state officials who served as high functionaries (e.g. Mushīr al-Mulk in Shiraz; also, it should be noted that the chief minister (vizier) of Khurasan and the governor of Bushire at one point were both Baha'is).⁷¹ Non-Baha'i patricians such as Qavām al-Mulk offered their patronage to important Baha'i commercial clans such as the Afnāns, and this is paralleled by Raḥīm Khān, the Shāh's executioner, protecting the ḂAṭṭār merchants and their clients in Tehran. The punctuated equilibrium of state-Baha'i relations is partially accounted for by the reformist ideology of the Baha'is, which aimed at parliamentary, consultative government, low taxes, universal education, adoption of Western science and technology, a limited military institution, an improved status for women and steps toward a world government and society. While some of these Baha'i goals were anathema to many quasi-feudal Qajar nobles, the Baha'is advocated them peacefully and quietly, showing that they were not an immediate challenge. Reformist high officials, such as the sometime prime minister Mīrzā Ḥusayn Khān Mushīr al-Dawla, even looked upon the new religion positively once they understood its social programme. One source of Baha'i success, in both Shiraz and Tehran, was therefore a relatively low level of state intervention against the religion (in each city there was only one major episode of large-scale arrest in our period, resulting in three judicial murders in Shiraz, while all the other detainees were released, though other executions of individual Baha'is in the two cities took place). This relative reluctance to intervene reflected the reformist rather than revolutionary stance of the Baha'is, rendering them no immediate threat to the state, as well as the divided opinions within the state about the movement and its lack of resources to mount another major, country-wide pogrom even had it so desired.

The Baha'i community, despite its majority of impoverished artisans and villagers, possessed substantial monetary resources. Great merchants such as the Afnān and ḂAṭṭār clans (as well as the Nahrīs of Isfahan and the Bāqirovs of Qazvin and Rasht) were among the chief beneficiaries of economic developments in the late nineteenth century. The Afnān's import-export house profited from the new cash crops, and the ḂAṭṭār appear to have retailed British manufactured broadcloth to Teheranis. The government officials who became Baha'is also, often brought substantial wealth to the community. More important, high officials who were sympathetic to the cause or actually embraced the new religion were in a position to benefit it enormously by their patronage. In Tabas the governor, a Baha'i, "chose a very beautiful building as the place where the Baha'i meet-

ings were to be held,” and attracted many important people locally to the religion.⁷² Baha’i sources attribute to Qavām al-Mulk and to Raḥīm Khān the ability at some points to ward off hostile action against the Baha’is on the part of other officials or the clergy.

One is struck by the centrality of the rise of agricultural capitalism as a context for the development of the Baha’i faith in Shiraz. There may, in fact, be a parallel between the pivotal role played in the development of early modern capitalism by confessional groups such as Calvinists and Mennonites in Lutheran and Catholic Germany, and the role played by Iranian religious minorities (Jews, Zoroastrians, Armenians, Babis and Baha’is) in developing capitalist institutions in late nineteenth-century Shi’ite Iran.⁷³ This link between religious minority status and an active role in capitalist innovation may have had something to do with specific religious ideologies, but it may be seen more as an outcome of structural, social tensions. Religious minorities, in both instances, had the advantage of being on the whole barred from openly taking an active part in high politics, so that they were encouraged to focus on commerce. Moreover, they suffered from great local vulnerability, leading them to seek strenuously the security offered by liquid wealth. The Afnān and ‘Aṭṭār clans’ ideological attraction to a dissident religion like the Baha’i faith may have been bound up with an image of themselves as heroic entrepreneurs fighting off the rapaciousness of parasitical feudal nobles and of the predatory foreign joint-stock companies that were coming to dominate Iranian economic life. The Baha’i faith may have had the virtues, for them, of being both recognisably modern in its values and its social gospel and authentically Iranian.

In another way, the phenomenon of the rise of great Baha’i commercial houses parallels wider developments in Qajar society. Iran in this period was increasingly characterised by a situation of “weak state, strong society.” Whereas merchants and officials could profit enormously from the commodity export trade, the state lacked the power and organisation to tax this sector efficiently, sinking into royal and bureaucratic penury. Urbanisation and religious pluralism, it has been suggested, are conducive to greater religious participation, and although pluralism was limited in Qajar Iran by the state’s alliance with Shi’ism as the official religion, the weakness of the government allowed more pluralism than might have appeared on the surface.⁷⁴ The new Baha’i religion, and especially its bourgeois stratum, was an emblem of the strong society in the face of the weak state.

To conclude, then, the Baha’is gained the adherence of thousands of urban artisans and rural peas-

ants, whose popular culture was less under surveillance and less amenable to control by the state and the clergy than was that of the literate strata. They attracted some important members of the commercial and government élites. Both élite and working-class women embraced the new religion, which was in theory substantially less patriarchal than Shi’ite Islam, and gender segregation in Iranian society left women leaders free to make a powerful impact among female networks. Prominent Baha’is from the Sayyid caste (such as the Afnān family), recognised as descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad, could often employ their religious charisma to protect themselves and other community members. Baha’is from the ulama class preached and wrote actively, employing all the considerable tools gained from their training in Shi’ite seminaries in the service of the new faith. Internally, Baha’is organised consultative assemblies and sophisticated investment funds, staffed by Baha’i ulama and merchants, to increase the solidarity of the community through charity work and to spread the religion through concerted missionary efforts. They could accomplish all this because the conflicts in Qajar Iran between the clerics and the state, and between some government officials and their rivals, created slippages in official Shi’ite authority, spaces of culture and power in which Baha’is could manoeuvre, survive and sometimes even flourish.

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¹ For the Babi movement, see Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844–1850* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1989).

² Fredy Bémont, *Les villes de l’Iran*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1969–77), vol. II, pp. 151–52.

³ The standard account of the whole sweep of this religion is Peter Smith, *The Babi and Baha’i Religions: From Messianic Shi’ism to a World Religion* (Cambridge, 1987). The sudden emergence of a liberal group from a much more conservative one has happened elsewhere; after all, Unitarianism developed out of Calvinist, Puritan Congregationalism in early nineteenth century New England, though admittedly without the messianic element characterising the Baha’is. What is interesting is that the Unitarians have grown increasingly more liberal over time, whereas in significant ways Baha’is turned toward antiliberalism in the twentieth century.

⁴ Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, Mass., 1978); M. Zald and J. McCarthy (eds.), *The Dynamics of Social Movements* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979); *idem* (eds.), *Social Movements in an Organizational Society* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1987); the virtues of this approach to the study of the Babi and Baha’i movements was first suggested by Peter Smith of

- Mahidol University, Thailand; see Smith and Moojan Momen, "The Babi Movement: A Resource Mobilization Perspective," in P. Smith (ed.), *In Iran: Studies in Babi and Baha'i History. Volume 3* (Los Angeles, 1986), pp. 33–93.
- 5 For Baha'i social thought in the nineteenth century, see Juan R. I. Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium: The Genesis of the Baha'i Faith in the Nineteenth Century Middle East* (New York, 1998); *idem*, "Iranian Millenarianism and Democratic Thought in the Nineteenth Century," *IJMES* XXIV (1992), pp. 1–26; for Bahā'ullāh, see H. M. Balyuzi, *Bahā'u'llah, King of Glory* (Oxford, 1980).
- 6 An overview of artisans in this period is Heinz-Georg Migeod, *Die persische Gesellschaft unter Nasiru'd-Din Šah (1848–96)* (Berlin, 1990), pp. 195–210; Thomas Philipp, "Isfahan 1881–1891: A Close-up View of Guilds and Production," *Iranian Studies* XVII (1984), pp. 391–411; and Willem Floor, "Guilds and Futuvvat in Iran," *ZDMG* CXXXIV (1984), pp. 106–14; for non-volent forms of subaltern resistance, see James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, 1990).
- 7 Haydar 'Ali Isfahāni, *Stories from the Delight of Hearts*, tr. A. Q. Faizi (Los Angeles, 1980), p. 96.
- 8 For Iranian merchants in this period, see Migeod, *Die persische Gesellschaft*, pp. 179–94; and Floor, "The Merchants (*tujjār*) in Qajar Iran," *ZDMG* CXXVI (1976), pp. 101–35.
- 9 For the nature of the state bureaucracy in this period, see A. Reza Sheikholislami, "The Patrimonial Structure of Iranian Bureaucracy in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Iranian Studies* XI (1978), pp. 199–258.
- 10 Fāḍil Māzandarāni, "Tārīkh-i zuhūr al-ḥaqq," Vol. VI, ms. uncatalogued copy in Afnān Library, London, pp. 861–62. Māzandarāni was a towering scholar of the Iranian Baha'i community who lived in the first half of the twentieth century. His nine-volume "History of the Manifestation of the Truth" is an invaluable chronicle (including many original documents) of the history of the Babi and Baha'i religions, 1844–1921. Only volumes III and VIII have been published, and contemporary Baha'i authorities have refused to allow adherents to publish the remaining volumes.
- 11 Māzandarāni, "Tārīkh-i zuhūr," VI, p. 855; Balyuzi, *Khadijeh Begum: The Wife of the Bab* (Oxford, 1981), p. 30.
- 12 Floor, "The Political Role of the Lutus in Iran," in Michael E. Bonine and Nikki R. Keddie (eds.), *Modern Iran: The Dialectics of Continuity and Change* (Albany, 1981), p. 89.
- 13 John I. Clarke, *The Iranian City of Shiraz*, Research Papers Series no. 7 (Department of Geography, University of Durham, 1963), pp. 10–11; for a contemporary poem describing the earthquake, see Ḥasan Imdād, *Shirāz dar guzashta va ḥal*, (Shiraz, 1960), pp. 45–46.
- 14 Thomson to Alison, Tehran, 20 April 1968, "Report on Persia," *Accounts and Papers presented to the House of Commons, 1867–68*, 19, in Charles Issawi (ed.), *The Economic History of Iran, 1800–1914* (Chicago, 1971), p. 28; Sabotinski, *Persiya* (St. Petersburg, 1913), in *ibid.*
- 15 Laurence D. Loeb, *Outcaste: Jewish Life in Southern Iran* (New York, 1977), esp. ch. 3.
- 16 See Imdād, *Shirāz dar guzashta*, pp. 504–15 for some nineteenth century mystical figures.
- 17 For the idea of a "central place" in Iran, see Bonine, *Yazd and its Hinterland: A Central Place System of Dominance in the Iranian Plateau* (Marburg, 1980).
- 18 Thomson, in Issawi, *Economic History of Iran*, p. 28.
- 19 Roger T. Olson, "Persian Gulf Trade and the Agricultural Economy of Southern Iran in the Nineteenth Century," in Bonine and Keddie (eds.), *Modern Iran*, pp. 173–89; Bémont, *Villes*, II, pp. 146–47; Vahid F. Nowshirvani, "The Beginnings of Commercial Agriculture in Iran," in Abraham Udovitch (ed.), *The Islamic Middle East, 700–1900: Studies in Economic and Social History* (Princeton, 1977), pp. 547–91; Gad Gilbar, "Persian Agriculture in the late Qajar Period, 1860–1906," *Asian and African Studies* XXII (1978), pp. 312–65. An overview of the period from a Wallersteinian, dependency-theory point of view is John Foran, *Fragile Resistance: Social Transformation in Iran from 1500 to the Revolution* (Boulder, Colo., 1993), pp. 107–51; while this approach has much to recommend it, one must guard against downplaying local dynamics and overemphasising the role and impact of Europe. External trade is seldom more than 15% or so of an economy like that of Qajar Iran.
- 20 Olson, "Persian Gulf," p. 186.
- 21 A major secondary source on this family is Muḥammad 'Alī Fayḍī, *Khāndān-i Afnān, Sidra-yi Rahmān* (Tehran, 127 B.E./1971); for our period, this source mostly replicates information available in the primary account, Mīrzā Ḥabīb Allāh Afnān, "Tārīkh-i amri-yi Shirāz," copy of uncatalogued Persian ms., Afnān Library, London, and I will keep most citations to the latter.
- 22 Balyuzi, *Khadijeh Begum*, p. 30; Mihdī Bāmdād, *Sharḥ-i ḥāl-i rjāl-i Irān*, 6 vols. (Tehran, 1968–74), vol. I, pp. 39–40.
- 23 Ḥabīb Allāh, "Shīrāz," pp. 153–68; Māzandarāni, "Tārīkh-i zuhūr," vol. VI, p. 856; a biography in English of Aqā Mīrzā Aqā Nur al-Dīn is Balyuzi, *Eminent Baha'is in the Time of Bahāullah* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 216–36.
- 24 Ḥabīb Allāh, "Shīrāz," pp. 169–74; Māzandarāni, *Tārīkh-i zuhūr*, vol. VI, p. 857.
- 25 Khadija Begum, quoted in Balyuzi, *Khadijeh Begum*, pp. 30–31.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- 27 Ḥabīb Allāh, "Shīrāz," p. 177; Māzandarāni, *Tārīkh-i zuhūr*, loc. cit.
- 28 Ḥabīb Allāh, "Shīrāz," pp. 175–76.
- 29 Māzandarāni, *Tārīkh-i zuhūr*, vol. VI, pp. 861–62.
- 30 Ḥabīb Allāh, "Shīrāz," pp. 179–82.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 183; Māzandarāni, "Tārīkh-i zuhūr," vol. VI, p. 857.
- 32 Cole, "Bahāullah's 'Sūrah of the Companions.' An early Edirne Tablet of Declaration (c. 1864). Introduction and Provisional Translation," *Bahai Studies Bulletin* V/3 (June 1991), pp. 4–74.
- 33 William Royce, "The Shirazi Provincial Elite, Status Maintenance and Change," in Bonine and Keddie, *Modern Iran*, pp. 292–95; Olson, "Persian Gulf," in *ibid.*, p. 417.
- 34 Ḥasan-i Fasā'i, *History of Persia under Qajar Rule [Fārsnāma-yi Nāsiri]*, trans. Heribert Busse (New York, 1972), pp. 350–51.
- 35 Ḥabīb Allāh, "Shīrāz," pp. 184–90, quotation on p. 190; Māzandarāni, "Tārīkh-i zuhūr," vol. VI, pp. 857–58; for Ḥusām al-Saltāna see Ḥusayn Sa'ādāt Nūri, *Rijāl-i dawra-yi Qājariyya* (Tehran, 1364 s.), pp. 24–25.
- 36 Ḥabīb Allāh, "Shīrāz," pp. 191–220; Māzandarāni, "Tārīkh-i zuhūr," vol. VI, 858–61; Māzandarāni gives the date of the arrests as 1287/1870–71, but identifies the prince who ordered the arrests as Ḥusām al-Saltāna; at this time Zīll al-Saltān was governor of Fars (Fasa'i, *Persia*, p. 386). Māzandarāni gives the date of the executions as 1288/1871–72; but this appears to be an error. British intelligence reports on southern Iran say three "Babis," who had been imprisoned for some time, were executed between 14 December 1874 and 16 January 1875 ('Alī Akbar Sa'īdī Sīrjāni (ed.), *Vaqā'i-i ittifaqiyya* [Tehran, 1982], p. 26); Ḥusām al-Saltāna was reinstated as governor of Fars early in 1874. It seems likely, that the arrests were made in 1870 or 1871 at the order of Zīll al-Saltān, but that the executions were carried out at the order of Ḥusām al-Saltāna, probably late in 1874 (1291).
- 37 Olson, "Persian Gulf," p. 186.
- 38 Muḥammad Tāhir Mālamīri, *Khāṭirāt-i Mālamīri* (Langenhain, 1992), pp. 96–98, 125.
- 39 Momen, "The Baha'i Community of Ashkhabad: Its Social Basis and Importance in Baha'i History," in Shirin Akiner

- (ed.), *Cultural Change and Continuity in Central Asia* (London, 1991), pp. 278–305.
- 40 Balyuzi, *Khadijeh Begum*, pp. 31–32.
- 41 Māzandarānī, “Tārikh-i zuhūr,” 6:862–64; Iṣfahānī, *Delight*, p. 97.
- 42 Ḥabīb Allāh, “Shīrāz,” pp. 225–30; Balyuzi, *Khadijeh Begum*, p. 33.
- 43 *Ibid.*, pp. 33–34.
- 44 J. Gurney, “The Transformation of Tehran in the later Nineteenth Century,” in C. Adlé and B. Hourcade (eds.), *Téhéran, capitale bicentenaire* (Paris and Tehran, 1992), pp. 51–71.
- 45 Here I am following mainly Bémont, *Villes*, vol. I, pp. 117–18; these are close to the figures given by Zandjani, “Téhéran et sa population,” in Adlé and Hourcade, *Téhéran*, p. 252; other, differing estimates are given in Mansoureh Ettehadieh, “Patterns in Urban Development. The Growth of Tehran (1852–1903),” in Edmund Bosworth and Carole Hillenbrand (eds.), *Qajar Iran* (Edinburgh, 1983), pp. 199–200, and Issawi, *Economic History*, pp. 26–28. The official census gave a population for the capital of 210,000 in 1922, which seems to me to be a useful benchmark for the earlier period.
- 46 Ettehadieh, “Tehran,” p. 203.
- 47 Māzandarānī, “Tārikh-i zuhūr,” vol. VI, p. 404.
- 48 *Ibid.*, vol. VI, pp. 404–06.
- 49 *Ibid.*, vol. VI, pp. 468–69.
- 50 For this famine, see S. Okazakis, “The Great Persian Famine of 1870–71,” *BSOAS XLIX* (1986), pp. 183–92.
- 51 Iṣfahānī, *Delight of Hearts*, tr., p. 81.
- 52 Mirzā Abu Ṭ-Ḥaḍḍ Gulpāyḡānī, *Letters and Essays, 1886–1913* (Los Angeles, 1985), pp. 81–82.
- 53 Māzandarānī, “Tārikh-i zuhūr,” vol. VI, pp. 406–11; ‘Alī Aṣghar Bahā’i, “Tārikh-i Dawḡā-i Tihiran, 1300,” Uncatalogued Persian ms., 61 fols., National Baha’i Archives, Wilmette, Illinois; London, Public Record Office, Foreign Office 60/453, Thomson to Earl Granville, Tehran, no. 33, 17 March 1883; Thomson to Earl Granville, Tehran, no. 62, 15 May 1882, repr. in Momen (ed.), *The Babi and Baha’i Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 292–95.
- 54 Māzandarānī, *Tārikh-i zuhūr*, vol. VI, pp. 412–14; Ni‘matu’llah Bayḡā’i, *Tazkira-yi shu‘arā-yi qarn-i avval-i Bahā’i*, 4 vols. (Tehran, 126 B.E./1969), vol. III, pp. 172–74, 185–87. Shams-i Jahān’s memoirs survive in the form of an autobiographical poem, reproduced by Māzandarānī, most of which Bayḡā’i printed and of which he gave a prose summary.
- 55 Māzandarānī, *Tārikh-i zuhūr*, vol. VI, pp. 441–42.
- 56 *Ibid.*, vol. VI, pp. 444–50.
- 57 *Ibid.*, vol. VI, pp. 457–62. See Ṭā’ira, “Nāma-ha va nivishta-hā va ash‘ār,” in Afsaneh Najmabadi (ed.), “Recasting Women and Femininity in Qajar Iran,” *Nīma-yi Digar*, II/3 (Winter, 1997), pp. 146–95; for remarks about her feminist journalism in *Iran-i Naw*, see Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906–1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy, and the Origins of Feminism* (New York, 1996), pp. 197, 202. According to Richard Hollinger, who has seen the original text of Charles Mason Remy’s travel diary, this is the figure whom Remy met on his trip to Tehran in 1908 and whom he describes as working to get Baha’i women to unveil and to eschew gender segregation at Baha’i meetings: Remy, *Observations of a Baha’i Traveller*, pp. 106–09. For ‘Iṣmat Khānum’s context, see Mahdavi, “Women and Ideas in Qajar Iran,” *Asian and African Studies* XIX (1985), pp. 187–97.
- 58 Māzandarānī, “Tārikh-i zuhūr,” vol. VI, pp. 451–53.
- 59 Margaret Caton, “Baha’i Influences on Mirza ‘Abdallah, Qajar Court Musician and Master of the *Radif*,” in Cole and Momen (eds.), *From Iran East and West. Studies in Babi and Baha’i History, Volume 2* (Los Angeles, 1984), pp. 31–64.
- 60 Māzandarānī, “Tārikh-i zuhūr,” vol. VI, pp. 442–43.
- 61 *Ibid.*, vol. VI, p. 464; the Hon. George N. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, 2 vols. (London, 1892), vol. I, p. 500; cf. PRO, FO 60/510 Sidney Churchill, Memorandum, 30 January 1890, enclosed in Wolff to Salisbury, no. 33, 4 February 1890, repr. in Momen, *Babi and Baha’i Religions*, pp. 248–49.
- 62 Susan Stiles, “Early Zoroastrian Conversions to the Baha’i Faith in Yazd, Iran,” in Cole and Momen (eds.), *From Iran East and West*, pp. 67–93.
- 63 Rūhu’llāh Mihrābkhānī, *Zindigānī-yi Mirzā Abu Ṭ-Ḥaḍḍ Gulpāyḡānī* (Langenhain, 1988, 2nd rev edn.).
- 64 Balyuzi, *Eminent Baha’is*, pp. 171–76.
- 65 Mihrābkhānī, “Maḥāfil-i shūr dar ‘ahd-i Jamāl-i Aqdas-i Abhā,” *Payām-i Bahā’i* XXVIII (February 1982), pp. 9–11; XXIX (March 1982), pp. 8–9; based on Mirzā Asad Allāh, *Yād-dāshthā*, Persian ms., xerox copy kindly provided to author by Mr. Mihrābkhānī.
- 66 Mihrābkhānī, “Maḥāfil,” vol. XXVIII, pp. 9–10.
- 67 *Ibid.*, vol. XIX, p. 9.
- 68 *Ibid.*, vol. XXVIII, pp. 10–11, vol. XIX, p. 8.
- 69 Burūjirdī’s biography is given in Māzandarānī, “Tārikh-i zuhūr,” vol. VI, pp. 300–14.
- 70 Smith, *Babi and Baha’i Religions*, p. 97.
- 71 For Mirzā Muḥammad Riḍā Muṭtaman al-Saltāna, the long-time vizier of Khurasan, see Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahais*, pp. 52–59; the Bushire official in question was Sa’d al-Mulk; his brother, Niẓām al-Saltāna, also advanced in government despite his Baha’i adherence: PRO, FO 60/493, Ross to Wolfe, 25 August 1888, encl. in Wolff to Salisbury, no. 178, 8 September 1888, repr. in Momen, *Babi and Bahai Religions*, pp. 246–47. Other figures who might have been Baha’is are mentioned in some sources. Mirzā Ḥusayn Khān Ābāda’i was appointed the superintendent (*mubāshir*) of Abada, where there was a large Baha’i population. In April 1887, however, he was removed from this post, imprisoned, bastinadoed, and sent to Isfahan with his brother, on charges of being a Baha’i (Babi). It seems likely that the government’s displeasure with him had other origins, but that when it was decided to move against him, the fact of his adherence to the Baha’i faith made it easier: Sirjānī, ed., *Vaqā’if-i ittifaqiyya*, p. 286 (dispatch of 19 Rajab 1354/13 April 1887, report for British of local events in southern Iran, in Persian). Since malcontents were often accused of Babism in Qajar Iran, however, it is difficult to be sure that persons such as Ābāda’i were actually Baha’is.
- 72 Iṣfahānī, *Delight of Hearts*, p. 119.
- 73 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*; trans. Talcott Parsons (New York, 1958); Heinz Schilling, *Religion, Political Culture and the Emergence of Early Modern Society* (Leiden, 1992), esp. pp. 176–87.
- 74 Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, “Religious Economies and Sacred Canopies: Religious Mobilization in American Cities, 1906,” *American Sociological Review* LIII (February, 1988), pp. 41–49.