

The Bab in the World of Images

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(The original publication (print or PDF) may be ordered online from [Ingenta Connect](#).)

From the Authors: Post-Publication Prefatory Note to the Paper

The pre-publication version of this paper included eight artistic renderings of the Bab, including one from the scene of his execution in 1850. However, during the review process, the Review Office of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United Kingdom—who oversees the publication of the *Baha'i Studies Review* (BSR)—recommended that the authors remove all eight images, based on a 1972 letter from the Universal House of Justice that included the following: “Your understanding that the portrayal of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh in works of art is forbidden, is correct. The Guardian made it clear that this prohibition refers to all the Manifestations of God...” The authors believed this guidance did not apply to the imaginary works of art by non-Baha'is, which Baha'is have no control over. They noted, moreover, that all of the depictions included in their research were in the public domain (they are, to this day, available online to anyone who wishes to find them). Eventually, both sides agreed that the case should be referred to the Universal House of Justice, who confirmed that the aforementioned directive applied to the authors' case as well. They also noted that Baha'is should not disseminate artistic renditions of Manifestations—be they genuine or fictitious—even if the artists are or were not Baha'is. To abide by this guidance, the authors removed the eight images from the article.

Abstract

This paper traces the history of the portraits drawn of the Bab, the founder of the Babi religion. The dramatic success of the Bab in attracting a large number of followers from different social strata generated a great deal of interest in him. His reformist ideas captured the imagination of Shi'ites and Europeans alike. His movement was soon a subject of enquiry by orientalists, academicians, politicians, missionaries, merchants and others alike. Over time, several artists – mostly unknown to date – decided to render portraits of him. Of these, only one actually met the Bab: Aqa Bala Bayg of Shishvan, the chief painter of Qajar Prince Malek-Qasim Mirza (1807–62), the governor of Urmia (Orumiyeh) who hosted the Bab for a brief period in 1848. While the works of other artists were based on imagination, Aqa Bala Bayg's original sketch of the Babi leader was rendered through a series of face-to-face meetings with the young prophet. He later produced multiple other copies from his original. Thus, Aqa Bala Bayg's work appears to be the only genuine images of the Bab left to posterity. Nonetheless, the story of the Bab, the artist from Shishvan, and the Qajar prince who hosted the Bab has not been fully examined. This will be a focus of the current research. We will also explore the intriguing possibility that one or more actual photographs of the Bab might exist. Additionally, we will attempt to reconcile the at times contradictory historical accounts of the various copies of the Bab's portrait, drawn by Aqa Bala Bayg. Finally, we will briefly discuss the works of other unknown artists who have produced imaginary portraits of the Bab and conclude with suggestions for further inquiry.

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The six-year ministry (1844–50) of Sayyid 'Ali-Muhammad Shirazi (1819–50), the founder of the Babi religion, was eventful and tumultuous. His meteoric rise to fame caught the dual centres of power in 19th-century Persia – the government and the ecclesiastics – by surprise. The two soon joined forces in

suppressing the nascent movement. The imprisonment of the Bab in remote areas of northwest Persia was a pivotal piece in the government's plan to isolate the Bab from the general populace, fearing mass conversions and widespread upheavals. However, the Bab's captivity only added to his enigma and increased his popularity. The severe restrictions imposed on him meant that few people outside of the Bab's inner circle of followers, certain government officials, and members of the clergy had personal access to him. Yet, this did not quell the desire of the masses to seek his presence. Among those who eventually succeeded in having a series of personal sessions with the Bab was an obscure artist from the village of Shishvan – located on the banks of Lake Urmia in northwest Persia – who eventually left to posterity what are, to this day, the only authenticated portraits of the young prophet of Shiraz.

There are other alleged images of the Bab in circulation today that the present article will address, but no actual photographs have surfaced. Interestingly, the question of whether any pictures of the Bab were ever taken remains open. The art of photography was introduced to Persia in the early 1840s. The first two cameras reached Persia as gifts to Muhammad Shah (1808–48), the King of Persia, a couple of years before the Bab declared his mission. One was sent to the King on behalf of Queen Victoria (1819–1901) of the United Kingdom, the other from Tsar Nicholas I of Russia (1796–1855), reflecting the Anglo-Russian rivalry for influence in Persia.¹ These cameras were daguerreotypes.² However, other Qajar notables soon came to own daguerreotype cameras as well. They included Malek-Qasim Mirza (1807–62), the governor of Azerbaijan, who later became the governor of Urmia and hosted the Bab for ten days in June–July 1848 before the Bab's transfer to Tabriz for his trial. Malek-Qasim Mirza came to own his camera a year earlier in 1847.³ His obvious interest in photography is evident not only from a picture he took of himself with his own daguerreotype camera, but also from the fact that in 1850 – the year of the execution of the Bab – the Mirza actually became the first Persian in history to give a photographic album to someone. The recipient was his young nephew, Nasir'id-Din Shah, the new King of Persia who had succeeded Muhammad Shah in 1848.⁴

Thus, since the Mirza already owned his camera when he hosted the Bab and gave away an album of photographs in 1850, it is in the realm of possibility that he took one or more pictures of the Bab in 1848.⁵ That scenario becomes even more likely when we consider the incredible popularity of the Bab, Malek-Qasim Mirza's personal interest in photography, and the fact that the prince was among a handful of individuals in the entire country who owned a camera at the time.



Figure 1. Self-portrait of Malek-Qasim Mirza holding a watch in his hands to measure the exposure time. Copyright: Chahryar Adle.

It was during the Bab's ten-day sojourn in Urmia in June–July of 1848 that the artist from Shishvan was allowed to draw what eventually became the only authenticated portrait of the Bab. If the young prophet allowed a relatively unknown artist to draw a portrait of him over a period of three sessions, he likely would not have objected to his distinguished host taking one or more pictures of him. Persians had a long tradition of rendering human images, particularly in miniature form. In fact, they admired the miniature as a precious form of art and considered it to be of significant cultural value. Therefore, neither the Bab nor his host would have felt any cultural or religiously motivated aversion to photography, an art that approximated miniature paintings.

The Enlightened Governor

The Qajar government's initial plan was to transfer the Bab from the Chihriq Castle to Tabriz via the city of Khoy, but they were afraid of possible rescue plans by the Babis.⁶ Therefore, the officials changed the route to take the Bab to Tabriz through the smaller town of Urmia, about 80 miles northeast of Tabriz. The Bab arrived in Urmia sometime in June–July 1848.⁷ During these ten days, he was under the protection of Malek-Qasim Mirza – the governor of Urmia, the 24th son of Fath-'Ali Shah (1772–1834), and paternal uncle of the former king, Muhammad Shah. The prince's stars were on the rise as a promising politician. He soon struck a friendship with his nephew and the future king, Prince Nasir'id-Din Shah, as well. However, the suspicious prime minister, Haji Mirza Aqasi – who, following Muhammad Shah's illness, 'found himself in the midst of a power struggle with a number of officials and notables', including Malek-Qasim Mirza – accused the young prince of conspiracy and banished him from the capital.⁸

In September 1848, the prince was appointed to the prestigious post of the governorship of Tabriz, the historical seat of Qajar heirs to the throne. However, nine months later in June 1849, another Qajar prince – Hamzeh Mirza – became the governor of Azerbaijan and effectively demoted Malek-Qasim Mirza to the governorship of Urmia.

Malek-Qasim Mirza had a European education and was very fond of European culture and customs. He was educated under the tutelage of the French Madame de la Mariniere. Persian and European sources are unanimous in their praise of the Mirza as a cultured and kind-hearted man. Iranian historian Homa Nategh provides the following description of Malek-Qasim Mirza, quoting European and Persian personalities who came to know the governor:

The other prince who was educated under the same woman [the French Madame de la Mariniere] was the Shah's uncle, Malek-Qasim Mirza, the governor of Urmia. All testify that Malek-Qasim Mirza knew French to perfection. It was he who encouraged the opening of European-style schools in Persia, brought westerners to Urmia, and amazed Europeans with his western customs and behaviour. All Europeans who have passed through Iran during this period have made mention of his knowledge and his support for education. His fame spread beyond Persia into the Ottoman territories. Flandin wrote that the Mirza was 'one of the most prominent men of the orient, from his noble thoughts and his vast knowledge to the attention he paid to European-style education. He knows six languages: French, in which he was fluent, as well as English, Russian, Turkish, Arabic, and Hindi... He is one of the staunchest supporters of European-style educational institutions.'⁹

Comte de Sercey wrote, 'incidentally, this Prince [Malek-Qasim Mirza] spoke French very well.'¹⁰ Like many other sons of Fath-'Ali Shah, he too had learned French from the French woman [Madame de la Mariniere]. He had a lot of interest in anything western. What a good-natured and kind-hearted man he was. No matter how much I say of this kind, young Prince, I have not said enough. My memories of him are among the best ones that I will take with me from Iran.'

Haji Mu'in as-Saltaneh Tabrizi [Baha'i historian] writes that Malek-Qasim Mirza had comprehensive knowledge of medicine and provided treatment to the poor for free.¹¹ While riding on horseback in regions under his command, he was often stopped and asked to visit the sick. Without any concern for outward appearances or his position, he would go to visit the patient alone, comfort the family, and generously provide food and medicine for the patient.¹²

In his report about Malek-Qasim Mirza, Coste writes, 'No Asian personality was as enamoured by our European arts, customs, and temperaments [as him].¹³ During his tenure as Urmia governor, he transformed the town into Iran's paradise.¹⁴

The enlightened Mirza was also an ally of Manuchehr Khan Mo'tamed ad-Dawleh, the governor of Isfahan who himself had hosted the Bab from September 1846 to February 1847.¹⁵ Malek-Qasim Mirza lived in the nearby village of Shishvan on the eastern side of Lake Urmia with his family. When the Bab arrived in Urmia, the prince received him with respect and took him straight to the Governor's Court (Persian: *dār al-ḥokūmeh*), which was known as the Four Towers Building (Persian: *emārat-i chāhār burj*) – a reference to the four large towers built in the four corners of the walled, rectangular building. Below is a view of a small part of the yard:

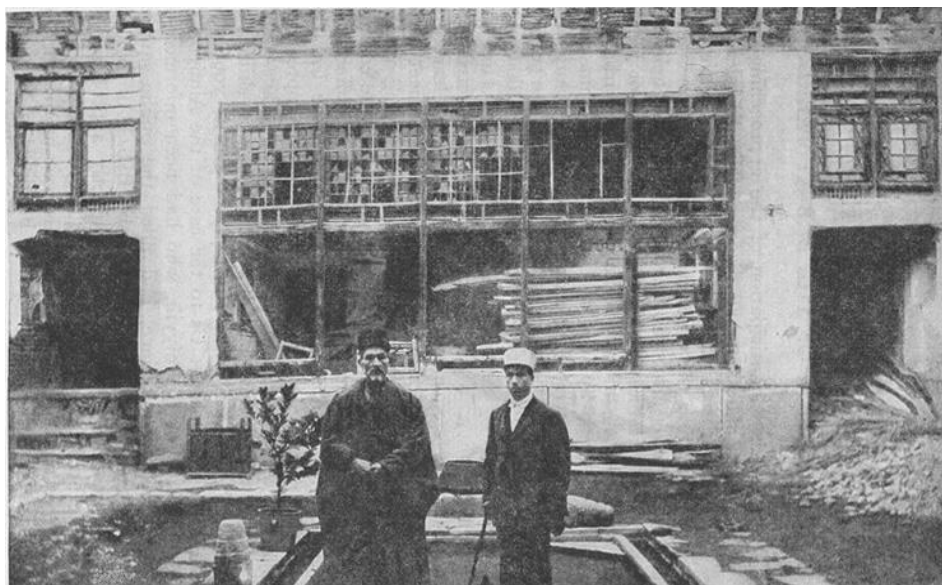


Figure 2: The Governor's Court in Urmia; the 'X' on the top right shows the upper room (Persian: *bālā-khāneh*) occupied by the Bab during his stay¹⁶

Malek-Qasim Mirza's liberal upbringing and the great respect he had for the Bab led the governor to be remarkably lax with his distinguished guest. He allowed complete freedom of association to the Bab during those ten days. This allowed the young prophet to receive and return visits of some of the Shi'i clerics and notables of the town, which included a small number of Babis including one of the local Letters of the Living, Mulla Jalil Urumehi, as well as Mulla Husayn Dakhil Maraghe'i, whose descendants later inherited copies of the genuine portrait of the Bab. See pages 177–178 below.¹⁷ Another person who succeeded in meeting the Bab was the governor's chief painter.

The Painter from Shishvan

The Four Towers building was decorated with paintings of Fath-'Ali Shah and other Qajar nobles. Some or all of these paintings might have been rendered by Malek-Qasim Mirza's chief painter, a local artist from his hometown of Shishvan, known as Aqa Bala Bayg.

Aqa Bala Bayg was allowed to have a series of three sessions with the Bab, who was around 28 years of age at the time.¹⁸ It is not entirely clear if the artist was already a Babi or even knew of the exact nature of the Bab's claims when he first met him.¹⁹ It is also unclear whether the plan for an audience with the Babi leader was conceived by Aqa Bala Bayg, the governor or through another intermediary.²⁰ When the meeting took place, apparently, it was the Bab who planted the seed of a painting in the mind of the artist. Balyuzi notes that over thirty years after those eventful days in Urmia, when Aqa Bala Bayg met Varqa in

Tabriz and became a follower of Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i religion, he revealed the details of his encounter with the Bab to Varqa:

On his [Áqá Bálá Bag's [sic]] first visit, as soon as the Báb noticed him, he gathered his 'aba around Him, as if sitting for His portrait. The next day He did the same [thing]. It was then that Áqá Bálá Bag [sic] understood it to be a signal to him to draw His portrait. On his third visit, he went to the residence of Malek-Qásim Mírzá with the equipment of his art. He made a rough sketch or two at the time, from which he later composed a full-scale portrait in black and white.²¹

On the surface, Varqa's details quoted by Balyuzi appear to contradict other versions of the event. For instance, Mu'in – who also met the artist when Aqa Bala Bayg was an elderly man – states that the painter told him he sought the Bab's permission to draw him and the young prophet granted his wish.²² Fadil Mazandarani and Ishraq-Khavari, another prominent Baha'i historian also quote Mu'in's version of the story.^{23,24} Other -historians Abu'l-Qasim Afnan and Muhammad-'Ali Faizi agree with Mu'in's version without giving a source.^{25,26} However, a closer look reveals that Varqa's version of the story is not necessarily in conflict with the other eyewitness account, namely Mu'in's, which other historians either use or confirm. Mu'in's reference to Aqa Bala Bayg seeking the Bab's permission might simply be an indication of the sign of the artist's respect for the Bab. In other words, even in Varqa's version of the story where the Bab encourages the artist to draw him, Aqa Bala Bayg would likely still have sought the Bab's permission as a sign of respect for the highly venerated guest of the governor.

Interestingly, while Faizi's version confirms the artist's three sessions with the Bab, his details of what went on during the sessions are somewhat different from Varqa's:

In three sessions, he would gaze intently upon the Bab's face in the latter's room. Aqa Bala Bayg would then leave the room and gradually complete the sketch. Each time the artist entered the room, the Bab would put on his cloak, sit down, pull up his sleeves, and place his hands upon his knees.²⁷

Varqa's Great Discovery

Sometime after the execution of the Bab, Aqa Bala Bayg completed the unfinished drawing into a full-scale black-and-white portrait and made several other sketches based on the first one.²⁸ However, the violent execution of the Bab; the massacre of August 1852, which witnessed the fall of many notable Babi heroes and heroines, including the popular poet of Qazvin – Qurrat al-'Ayn – and Sulayman Khan; and the ensuing bloodbath that engulfed the Persian Babi community must have forced Aqa Bala Bayg to keep the news of his precious relics a secret for some thirty years, until he came into contact with Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad Varqa (d. 1896). Varqa was a native of Yazd and a staunch follower of Baha'u'llah. In the early 1880s, Varqa decided to take up residence in Tabriz, where he eventually came to know Aqa Bala Bayg and succeeded in converting him to the Faith of Baha'u'llah. It was then that the artist revealed his great secret to Varqa. Excited by this incredible discovery, the latter wrote to Baha'u'llah and informed him of the existence of the portrait. Varqa also asked Baha'u'llah to verify whether or not Aqa Bala Bayg's portrait was an accurate depiction of the Bab's face, which he confirmed.²⁹ Baha'u'llah also showed the portrait to Mirza Sayyid Hasan, 'the Great Afnan' (Afnān-i Kabīr) – the brother of the wife of the Bab – who also confirmed the resemblance.

The discovery led to a number of communications between Baha'u'llah and Varqa, in which references to the painting exist. The initial one seems to have been made in 1882 where, according to Balyuzi, Baha'u'llah directed Varqa to instruct Aqa Bala Bayg to make two copies of the image in watercolour.³⁰ One was to stay with Varqa, and the other was to be sent to the Holy Land via Haji Mulla 'Ali Akbar Shahmirzadi (1842–1910) – known as Haji Akhund – who was making a stop in Tabriz on the way to 'Akka. The Haji obtained the copy and successfully delivered it to Baha'u'llah. Today, that copy is preserved in the International Baha'i Archives in Haifa, Israel.³¹

Sometime between 1882 and February 1888, Varqa sought Baha'u'llah's permission to ask Aqa Bala Bayg to make seven additional copies for future Houses of Worship. Baha'u'llah must have agreed. In a

letter dated 16 February 1889 – written in Varqa's own handwriting and evidently addressed to Aqa Bala Bayg – Varqa quotes Baha'u'llah's consent and asks Aqa Bala Bayg to produce seven more copies of the portrait so they could be sent to seven cities in Persia.³² However, it appears that Aqa Bala Bayg started the renderings but passed away before he was able to finish all of them. See page 11 below.

Six years later, in 1895, Varqa and his son Ruhullah were both arrested outside Zanjan. All the writings and precious materials in their possession, including his watercolour copy of the Bab's portrait, fell into the hands of the governor of Zanjan, 'Ala'ud-Dawleh. Eventually, the governor decided to listen to advice from others and, instead of killing the Baha'i prisoners in Zanjan, he transferred them to Tehran along with their possessions that could be used as evidence against them. Therefore, Varqa was allowed to take an inventory of his possessions, box and lock everything and keep the key until he arrived in Tehran, escorted by government officials. This was in April 1896. There, Hajib'ud-Dawleh³³ – the king's head servant, who eventually killed his two Baha'i captives in a brutal manner – confiscated the Bab's portrait and submitted it to Nasir'id-Din Shah. It is not known what the king did with the painting.³⁴

Additional Copies from Aqa Bala Bayg

Fadil Mazandarani notes that multiple copies from Aqa Bala Bayg's second reproduction were produced, but they were all approximations and only the first two were the most accurate renditions.³⁵ In 1902, six years after the execution of Varqa and his son, another copy of the drawing was found by Sayyid Assadu'llah Qumi, who later accompanied 'Abdu'l-Baha during his western travels. Qumi found the copy in the household of the granddaughter of Dakhil-i Maraghe'i while visiting the city of Khoy in north-west Persia. This must be the same copy that Balyuzi refers to as the *original* black and white, which Qumi sent to 'Abdu'l-Baha.³⁶ However, Faizi believes that what Qumi found was simply another copy of the painting.³⁷ According to him, this copy was given by Aqa Bala Bayg's son, Mirza Mahmud, to Mirza 'Ali Asghar, the son of Mulla Husayn Dakhil-i Maraghe'i. It remained in Maraghe'i's household until about 1902 or 1903, when Sayyid Asadu'llah Qumi found it and informed 'Abdu'l-Baha. The latter instructed Qumi to ask for it from Dakhil Maraghe'i's granddaughter. She consented and gave the copy to Qumi, who put it in a special box in the city of Khoy and sent it to 'Abdu'l-Baha in Palestine via Mirza Yusef Khan Vahid-i Kashfi. Faizi's account agrees with Mu'in's.³⁸ Ishraq-Khavari also uses Mu'in's account for this story.³⁹

Nonetheless, 'Abdu'l-Baha seems to have paid special attention to this particular drawing, which raises the question as to whether the drawing was just another copy or the original black-and-white rendering by the artist, as claimed by Balyuzi. In two separate tablets sent to Dakhil's granddaughter via his son, 'Abdu'l-Baha profusely thanks her for the decision to send the drawing to him. Here is a provisional translation of the first tablet:

He is God!

O Handmaid of God, glad tidings! Your gift was accepted at the Holy Land and is with 'Abdu'l-Baha. It brought boundless appreciation. We are very pleased with you for sending such a sacred gift to us. It was placed in the Holy Room [Baha'u'llah's room] and 'Abdu'l-Baha [often] looks upon that radiant portrait. Salutations and praise be upon your daughter, the steadfast leaf, and assure her of divine bounties.⁴⁰

'Abdu'l-Baha 'Abbas

The second tablet was sent because, evidently, the first one was never received by Maraghe'i's daughter.⁴¹ The following is a provisional translation of the second tablet:

He is God!

O steadfast leaf! Your great gift was received through Mirza Yusef Khan. Our eyes were illumined upon beholding that radiant portrait and our hands were honoured with receiving that magnificent present. I inhaled the fragrant odour of the drawing, kissed it, and placed it upon my brow. Upon receiving that distinguished gift, we immediately wrote and sent a letter to express our joy. It is

evident that you did not receive that letter. Know that if you had offered all that is on earth, along with its most precious gems, they would not have been received with as much pleasure. This servant cannot befittingly reciprocate your present; therefore, I entrusted your reward to the Lord of the world. God willing, His grace and bounty will compensate. My hope is that you will be abundantly rewarded for this righteous deed in the Abha Kingdom. Convey our greetings to your daughter, and tell her that you are the descendant of Dakhil, that renowned eulogist for the Prince of Martyrs.⁴² Now it is your turn to gain fame amongst women for your love of the advent of the Blessed Beauty as the return of Husayn. Praise and salutations be upon you.⁴³

'Abdu'l-Baha 'Abbas

Faizi notes that after the passing of Aqa Bala Bayg, another completed drawing and one unfinished sketch were found among his possessions. The completed one was coloured by Mirza 'Ali Ashraf, a skilled artist, and remained in the Maraghe'i household. Baha'is often used to visit Maraghe'i's house to see the painting posted on a wall during Baha'i holy days until 1936, when Shoghi Effendi instructed the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran to ask for the drawing. Aqa Husayn – the grandson of Dakhil-i Maraghe'i – was asked to submit the painting to the Tabriz Local Spiritual Assembly, which at the time had jurisdiction over the small town of Maragheh. The Tabriz Assembly then sent the painting to Iran's National Spiritual Assembly which, in turn, sent it to Shoghi Effendi. That copy, too, is now preserved at the International Baha'i Archives in Haifa, Israel.⁴⁴ It is possible that these last two copies found in Aqa Bala Bayg's possessions after his passing were among the seven that Varqa had asked him to draw for the future Houses of Worship. However, Aqa Bala Bayg might have died or become incapacitated before he was able to finish the second one. This would also explain why there are no records of the other five paintings requested by Varqa. The fate of the unfinished sketch is not yet clear.⁴⁵

Other Images Purported to be of the Bab

The rapid success of the Babi religion and its enormous potential for reform in the Muslim world quickly aroused the interest of many outside Persia. Western travellers, merchants, diplomats and missionaries took notice and began to write about the nascent movement. Within 18 months of the Bab's prophetic announcement, on 1 November 1845, *The Times* of London became the first western newspaper to publish an article on the new religion.⁴⁶ Early works on the movement were often erroneous and portrayed the Babis as revolutionary communists and anarchists. However, the publication of Arthur Comte de Gobineau's book *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* in Paris in 1865 began to change that.⁴⁷ His work was done so well that it attracted a number of other European intellectuals, including E. G. Browne of Cambridge, who eventually became the most prolific western writer and researcher of the Babi religion.

The oldest image found to date that is attributed to be that of the Bab is a line drawing by an unknown artist who rendered the image sometime before May 1873.⁴⁸ There is a letter dated 6 May 1873 from M. Baumgarten, who appears to have served as the Russian consul in Shahrud, which makes a reference to this drawing.⁴⁹ Baumgarten was in regular correspondence with another Russian official, F. A. Bakulin, who served as secretary-dragoman at Astarabad and Tabriz and eventually became consul at Astarabad, where he remained until his death in 1879. Bakulin kept an archive of materials related to the Bab and his movement, among them an album of drawings that included the aforementioned image. He likely obtained many of his archival materials, including the line drawing, from Baumgarten. In 1912, about 33 years after his passing, Bakulin's family decided to present his archival materials to the Russian orientalist Valentin Zhukovskii. Five years later in 1917, Zhukovskii published Bakulin's materials in an article titled 'Russian Imperial Consul F. A. Bakulin in the History of the Babi Studies'.⁵⁰ The article included the aforementioned line drawing, which is a crude and grotesque depiction of the scene of the execution of the Bab and his follower, Mirza Muhammad-Ali Zunuzi, known as Anis. The image has a French inscription, 'The Remains of the Bab and His Disciple Shot at Tabriz'.⁵¹ However, the work is clearly a Muslim forgery and cannot be considered a serious work of art by a professional. It is also highly unlikely that this image is the artwork drawn by the artist who was taken to the execution scene by the Russian Consul in Tabriz, as it contradicts the detailed description of that painting by a Babi eyewitness – a certain Haji 'Ali-'Askar – who claims to have seen that painting:

An official of the Russian consulate, to whom I was related, showed me that same sketch on the very day it was drawn. It was such a faithful portrait of the Bab that I looked upon! No bullet had struck His forehead, His cheeks, or His lips. I gazed upon a smile which seemed to be still lingering upon His countenance. His body, however, had been severely mutilated. I could recognize the arms and head of His companion, who seemed to be holding Him in his embrace. As I gazed horror-struck upon that haunting picture, and saw how those noble traits had been disfigured, my heart sank within me. I turned away my face in anguish and, regaining my house, locked myself with my room. For three days and three nights, I could neither sleep nor eat, so overwhelmed was I with emotion. That short and tumultuous life, with all its sorrows, its turmoils, its banishments, and eventually the awe-inspiring martyrdom with which it had been crowned, seemed again to be re-enacted before my eyes. I tossed upon my bed, writhing in agony and pain.⁵²

Zhukovskii himself considered the line drawing in the Bakulin papers to be a later rendition and a Muslim work. The style is clearly Persian, not European. The artist even confused the remains of the two bodies and mislabelled the supposed body of Anis as that of Sayyid Husayn, probably thinking that it was the Bab's secretary and not Anis who was executed with him. The Bab's name is also noted as Sayyid Muhammad-'Ali instead of Sayyid 'Ali-Muhammad. These types of errors are hardly expected of a professional artist who visited the scene of the execution shortly after the event, when the memories of the young prophet and his companion were still fresh in the minds of the general public. Additionally, the drawing depicts street dogs devouring the Bab's flesh, which – according to Zhukovskii, too – is the strongest evidence yet for its anti-Babi nature.

The explanatory note over the second dead body [in the drawing] says: 'Siyyid Husayn, the son of Aqa Siyyid 'Ali Zunuzi'. A person bearing such a name and executed with the Bab in Tabriz in fact never existed ... Siyyid Husayn ... was the Bab's well-known amanuensis and secretary, who recanted his teacher [the Bab] right before the execution ... Gobineau assures [the reader] that Siyyid Husayn's recantation was feigned and sham ... In view of such assurance one is justified to assume that in the explanatory note in question two different individuals are conflated – Siyyid Husayn and Aqa Muhammad, the son of Aqa Siyyid 'Ali Zunuzi, both of whom were the Bab's favorite disciples.

This fact may serve as an indirect indication that the drawing was made after a certain period of time had elapsed since the execution when a confusion of the names of the acting figures could have occurred in people's minds. It [the drawing] was most likely made by an orthodox Shi'ah and not by a Babi, since in the latter's case such confusion as well as such presentation of the subject with the dogs seem highly incredible. Another important issue involved is the fact that in the explanatory note over the first dead body the Bab's name is given as 'Muhammad 'Ali' while in fact he was usually known as 'Ali Muhammad'. All these factors coupled together should serve as strong evidence against considering our drawing to be a copy of the picture drawn by the artist brought by the Russian consul if he was Persian at all or if the information provided by the 'Traveller's Narrative' in this regard is really true.⁵³

Shi'is believe that dogs would not eat the flesh of 'holy imams' as their bodies are not composed of the same substance as that of ordinary people.⁵⁴ By adding flesh-devouring dogs to the execution scene, the artist is attempting to discredit claims of holiness for the Bab. At the same time, the drawing is also trying to corroborate the accounts found in official court histories of the Qajar period that fabricated the story of dogs eating the remains in an attempt to explain away the missing bodies after the execution.

Some thirty years after the publication of Zhukovskii's article containing the Muslim fake image, the Persian-born and raised A. L. M. Nicolas – who was both a French consul in Persia and an author – published the first professionally acceptable artwork purported to be that of the Bab. Like Browne, Nicolas was also impacted by Gobineau. His book *Seyyed Ali dit le Bab* (Paris, 1905) became the first work by a western author dedicated entirely to the Bab, his movement and his teachings. The preamble to his book has an image that is supposedly of the Bab, but the portrait does not seem to be an authentic representation.⁵⁵ Close examination of Nicolas's image and Aqa Bala Bayg's rendition of the Bab reveals conspicuous differences in facial features, including the eyes, eyebrows and the mouth. Aqa Bala Bayg's

portrait also shows the Bab to be closer to his actual age of 29 and clearly younger than the person depicted in Nicolas's image. The artist and date of the image in Nicolas's book remain unknown.

In 1923, eighteen years after the first edition of Nicolas's work, a variation of that image decorated with roses and nightingales⁵⁶ appeared in the first volume of Avareh's *Kawākib ad-Durrīyyah* (Cairo, 1923). In the caption under the image, Avareh confirms that the portrait was shown to 'Abdu'l-Baha who, after comparing it to the original drawing by Aqa Bala Bayg in Haifa, declared this was not the Bab.⁵⁷ The motive behind Avareh's inclusion of a variation of Nicolas's image in his book was likely to dispel the rumours that this was a genuine portrait of the Bab.

Among other orientalist and scholars who were soon attracted to the Babi movement was Professor E. G. Browne of Cambridge University and the Persian-born Mirza Alexander Kazem-Beg, Professor of Persian Literature at St Petersburg University in Russia, who began to examine and publish on the new religion. Astounding acts of heroism and the exemplary fortitude of Babi martyrs who faced inhuman cruelty at the hands of their captors added further fuel to the fire of interest in the Bab and his movement. For an account of some of these acts of heroism, see the letter from Austrian officer, Captain Von Goumoens, who was in the employment of the Persian government in the 1850s and was an eyewitness to the Babi massacre of August 1852 in Tehran. The officer was so revolted by what he saw that he resigned his post and left Persia.⁵⁸

A few years after Nicolas's book, two publications by the Armenian author Sarkīs Mubāyjiyān (Atrpet) (1860–1937) appeared with significant materials on the Bab's religion. Atrpet's book *Imamat' : Patmakan Hetaghōtut' iwn* [Imamat: An Historical Survey] was published in Armenian in 1906.⁵⁹ The Russian version of the same book, *Imamat: Strana Poklonnikov Imamov* [Imamat: The Country of the Worshippers of the Imam], appeared three years later in 1909. The second half of this book was dedicated entirely to the Babis and Baha'is. This book has the distinction of being the oldest work containing a large number of photographs and drawings purported to be those of the Bab and some of the most prominent Babi figures, including Sulayman Khan, Tahereh, and Zaynab – known as Rustam-'Ali – who dressed up as a man and fought in the Zanjan urban revolt of 1850. In 1910, Atrpet published another book titled *Babizm i Bekhaizm: Opyt Nauchno-Religiōznago Izsliedovanīia* [Babism and Bahaism: An Experience in Scientific and Religious Studies] that included many of the same photographs and drawings. However, in all likelihood, these photographs and drawings are fabrications or imaginary artworks. The drawing from the scene of the Bab's execution is of high quality but historically inaccurate.⁶⁰ According to various chronicles, Anis was executed with him, but there is no sign of him in Atrpet's alleged execution drawing. He must have obtained this particular drawing from its owner, N. V. Khanykov – the Russian consul-general in Tabriz who was at that post during the Bab's execution in 1850 and took an artist with him to render a painting of the scene. Although this particular execution drawing is not the one described by Haji 'Ali-'Askar in Nabil's account, it is possible that both works were done by the same professional artist that Khanykov took to the execution scene. Unlike the Muslim line drawing of Persian origin, this portrait – though historically inaccurate and drawn from imagination – is clearly European in style and of much higher artistic quality.

The exact details of how Atrpet obtained the other images are not known. Evidently, he had travelled to Tabriz to gather materials for his *Babism and Bahaism* and came to know Jalil Khu'i, an ally of Jamal Burujerdi. Burujerdi was an influential Baha'i teacher who by this time had broken ranks with 'Abdu'l-Baha and joined forces with 'Abdu'l-Baha's arch-nemesis and half-brother, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali. According to a letter from an ad hoc committee of the Research Department at the Baha'i World Centre, Jalil sold the photographs and drawings to Atrpet.⁶¹ It is not known how Jalil came to own these materials.⁶²

More recently, other images based on the fabricated portrait of the Bab in Atrpet's books have surfaced. For instance, in his 'Early Shaykhī Reactions to the Báb and His Claims', Denis MacEoin includes a portrait that seems to be loosely based on Atrpet's image.⁶³ A close examination of the two works shows a general resemblance, but differences in facial features are sufficiently pronounced to conclude that Atrpet's and MacEoin's images, while similar, are not identical. Also, whereas Atrpet's portrait only shows the upper part of the body, MacEoin's is a full-body image of the subject sitting in a traditional Middle Eastern posture.

Interestingly, MacEoin identifies the image in his work to be that of Sayyid Kazim Rashti (1793–1843), the Shaykhi leader and not that of the Bab.⁶⁴ The caption to the left of the image labels the subject as 'His Holiness the Point', a title widely believed to be held by the Bab. Nonetheless, many Shaykhis felt the title also applied to their leaders, namely Shaykh Ahmad and Sayyid Kazim, as *the point of knowledge*.⁶⁵ The caption on MacEoin's image appears to be a later addition, though.⁶⁶ The subject's posture in MacEoin's image is similar to the one adopted by the Bab in Aqa Bala Bayg's genuine rendition. However, the artistic styles of the two artworks are completely different. While Aqa Bala Bayg employs the old Persian miniature style, the artist rendering the MacEoin image uses a much more realistic style, so much so that even the lines on the hands of the subject can be seen. The same realistic style can be observed in Atrpet's image. Most recently, two other portraits that are mirror images of each another have surfaced on the Internet. They appear to be based on MacEoin's. The artist and date of these works also remain unknown.

Sculpture of the Bab in Baku, Azerbaijan

The only known sculpture purported to be of the Bab that is prominently displayed at a public site is the one found in Baku, Azerbaijan. This artwork, which depicts the face of the Bab, decorates the Presidium of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences building in Baku. However, the sculpture hardly resembles the Bab, due to the Venetian-Gothic style adopted by the Polish architect I. K. Ploshko who constructed the building. The sponsor was Aqa Musa Naghiev (1849–1919), a Baha'i and an oil tycoon who gathered his riches quickly during Baku's oil boom of the early 20th century. Initially built as a huge palace, the building has a striking resemblance to the Palazzo Contarini del Bovolo in Venice. It subsequently became known as Isma'iliyah to commemorate Naghiev's son, Isma'il, who died prematurely of tuberculosis. In 1918, a year after the Bolshevik Revolution, the palace was burned down, but it was restored during the Soviet period. Today, it houses the Presidium of National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan.⁶⁷ Additionally, Naghiev built the largest hospital in Baku in 1912 and was 'a patron and guardian of one of the largest secondary technical schools for men'.⁶⁸ He also had grand plans for funding a Baha'i House of Worship in Baku that was to be as magnificent as the one in 'Ishqabad, but he never followed through.⁶⁹

Conclusion

The popularity and enigma of the Bab and his movement led several unknown artists to leave imaginary portraits of him to posterity. However, since none of them were contemporaries of the Bab or had personal encounters with him, their artworks resulted in approximations that did not entirely capture the characteristics of his figure. This becomes clear from a close examination of the only authentic portrait of the Bab with the other works. The Shishvani artist, Aqa Bala Bayg – who had a series of three personal encounters with the Bab – has the unique distinction of leaving to future generations the only genuine portraits of the young prophet. He appears to have been asked to produce anywhere from 12 to 14 copies of the portrait. Of these, five copies – four complete and one incomplete – have thus far been identified:

1. **Original sketch (June–July 1848):** The black-and-white ink and pen drawing sketched out during face-to-face sessions with the Bab and completed later. More than likely, this is the artwork found in 1902–3 by Sayyid Assadu'llah Qumi in Khoy and sent to 'Abdu'l-Baha in Haifa.
2. **Watercolour copy one (early 1880s):** Rendered at Baha'u'llah's instruction via Varqa. Intended for Baha'u'llah and delivered to him through Haji Akhund.
3. **Watercolour copy two (early 1880s):** Done for Varqa at Baha'u'llah's instruction. Confiscated by Qajar government officials in Tehran during Varqa's captivity in 1896 and presented to Nasir'id-Din Shah shortly before his assassination. The fate of this copy remains unknown.
4. **Copy four:** Found among Aqa Bala Bayg's possessions after his passing. Coloured by Mirza 'Ali Ashraf and preserved at the Maraghe'i household until 1936, when Shoghi Effendi asked for it. This copy is also currently preserved at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa, Israel.
5. **Copy five:** Incomplete sketch found at the same time and place as copy four. No source clearly mentions the location of this copy – but it, too, is probably kept at the Baha'i World Centre.

Invitation to Further Inquiry

The authors suggest further inquiry into the following areas:

Date of Aqa Bala Bayg's passing: While we know the artist survived at least through 1887, finding the exact or approximate date and location of his passing could provide further clues as to where additional copies of these drawings might exist. This is assuming that the artist was able and engaged in reproducing more copies for future Houses of Worship, following Varqa's request. If copies four and five in the above list proved to be different from the copies intended for 'one or two chosen friends' mentioned to Varqa by Baha'u'llah, then the artist could have drawn a total of seven images – assuming old age or death did not prevent him from continuing his work. However, if he was able to also draw the seven copies for the Houses of Worship prior to his passing, he could potentially have produced a total of 12 to 14 copies (depending on whether copies four and five in the above list were the same or different from the ones meant for 'one or two chosen friends').

Apparent discrepancy in the number of commissioned copies: We suggest a side-by-side comparison of Baha'u'llah's tablet to Varqa dated March 1887 with Varqa's letter dated 16 February 1889. Baha'u'llah's tablet, which is quoted in Varqa's letter, permits Aqa Bala Bayg to draw two to three additional copies: one for Varqa and one to two for 'one or two chosen friends'. However, in the same letter, Varqa asks Aqa Bala Bayg for seven more copies, presumably for future Houses of Worship. Varqa, a dedicated follower, would clearly not go against Baha'u'llah's instructions. Therefore, a close examination of the two documents could provide clues on the source of the discrepancy in the number of copies Varqa asks Aqa Bala Bayg to draw.

The location of copy 5: An inquiry should be put to the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice about this copy to ascertain its current whereabouts.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their deep appreciation to Dr Moojan Momen for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper. They are also grateful to Dr Youli Ioannesyan for sharing his 2009 correspondence with the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice regarding Valentin Zhukovskii's archival materials, his invaluable insights on the relationship between Bakulin and Baumgarten, and his translation of relevant Zhukovskii passages. They also wish to offer their gratitude to Dr Omid Ghaemmaghami for suggesting this research and for providing additional materials for the study and to Steve Cooney, BSR's editor, who made numerous suggestions that led to significant improvements in the quality of this paper.

A Visual History of Āqā Bālā Bayg's Copies of the Bab's Image

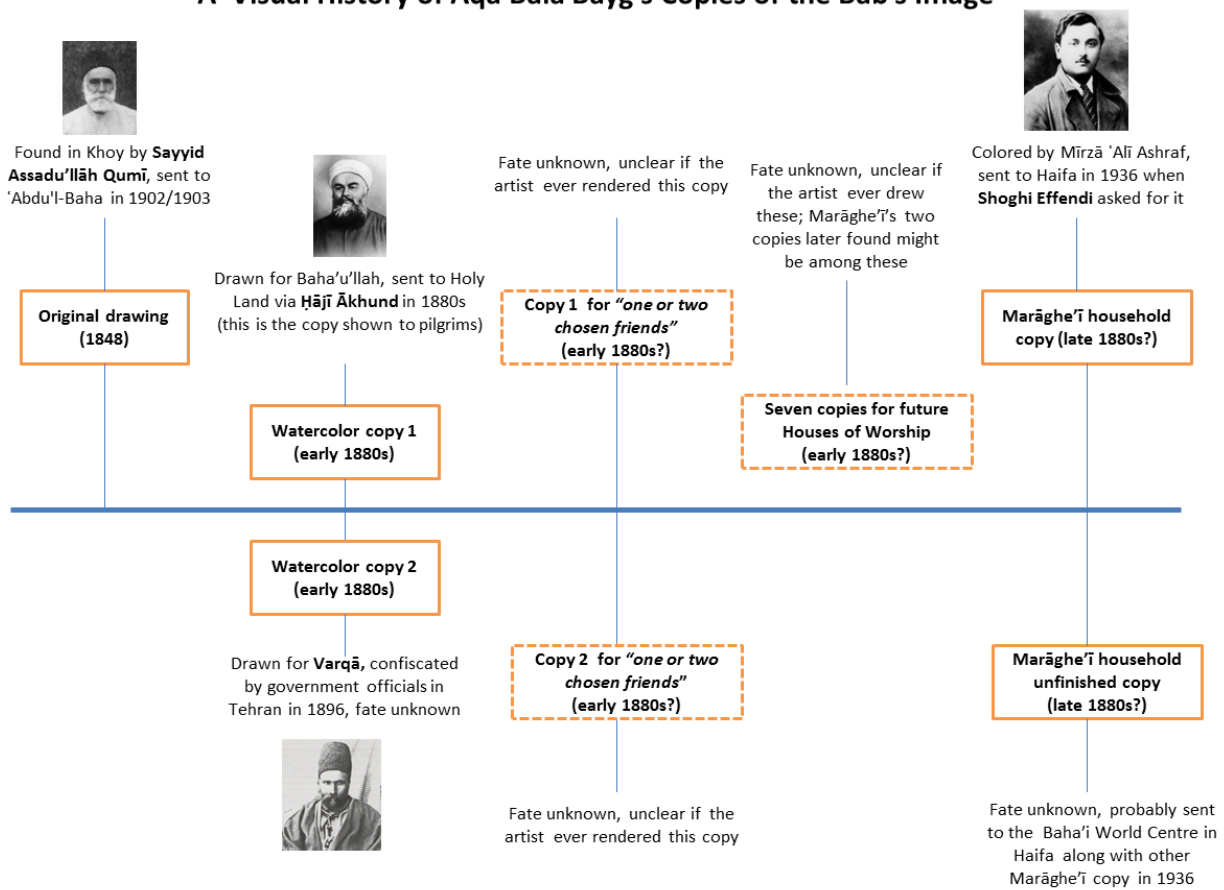


Figure 3. A visual history of Aqa Bala Bayg's copies of the Bab's image.

Suggested citation

Bijan Masumian and Adib Masumian, 'The Bab in the World of Images', *Baha'i Studies Review*, 19, 2013, 171–90. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1386/bsr.19.171/1>.

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Endnotes

- ¹ Chahryar Adle, 'Daguerreotype', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater, vol. 6, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1993, 577-8. Available online at: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/daguerreotype-the-first-practical-photographic-process-introduced-into-persia-in-the-early-1840s-shortly-after-its-officia>.
- ² Named after the French painter Jacques Daguerre (1787–1851), who developed the process and presented it to the French Academy of Science in 1839. The process involved exposing, through the lens of a camera, a silver-coated copper plate sensitized by iodine, then developing the image with vapour of mercury.
- ³ Chahryar Adle with Y. Zoka, 'Notes et documents sur la photographie iranienne et son histoire I. Les premiers daguerréotypistes. C. 1844–1855/1260–1270', *Stud. Ir.* 12/2, 1983, 262.
- ⁴ Adle, Daguerreotype.
- ⁵ After Urmia, the Bab was taken to Tabriz for his trial. Following the trial, he was returned to the Chihriq Castle. See p. xxix of Moojan Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1981. In *Ḥaḍrat-i Nuṣṣaḥ Oūlá* (Baha'i Verlag), Muhammad-'Ali Faizi notes that the Bab's stay in Urmia lasted ten days. See prominent Baha'i historian Mirza Assadu'llāh Faḍīl Māzandarānī's *Tārkh-i Ṣuhūr al-Ḥaqq* (2:228).
- ⁶ Mazandarani, Fadil. *Ṣuhūr al-Ḥaqq*, 2:228. Digitally republished, East Lansing, Michigan: H-Bahai, 2000 9 Vols.. <http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/index/diglib/mazand1.htm> Electronic resource Last access 21 March 2016
- ⁷ The exact date of his arrival in Urmia has not yet been determined. He arrived in Tabriz for his trial sometime in July 1848. Two years later, on 19 June 1850, the Bab was taken back to Tabriz, this time for execution.
- ⁸ Abbas Amanat, 'ĀQĀSĪ, ḤĀJJĪ MĪRZĀ ABBĀS ĪRAVĀNĪ', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 2, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986, 183–8. Available at: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/aqasff-ujuli-mnsz-adras-ivxni-ca>.
- ⁹ Jean-Baptiste Eugène Napoléon Flandin (1809-89), French orientalist, painter, archaeologist and politician, is famous for his paintings of Qajar-period monuments, landscapes and social life. He came to know Malek-Qasim Mirza during his Persian travels. Flandin and his partner, architect Pascal Coste, were made a laureate of the Institut de France and joined the embassy of Édouard Comte de Sercey to Persia (1839–41). In their travels through Persia, Coste and Flandin provided what can be regarded as the most comprehensive representations of architectural renderings and details, monumental plans, large tomb reliefs and picturesque views of the Qajar period (cf. Jean Calmard, 'Flandin and Coste', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater, vol. 10, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1999, 35–9. Available at: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/flandin-and-coste->).
- ¹⁰ Comte de Sercey was sent to Persia as ambassador extraordinary by Louis Philippe in 1839–40.
- ¹¹ Muhammad Mu'in as-Saltaneh Tabrizi was a Baha'i historian whose *Tārkh-i Amr*, completed in the 1920s, provides some fresh information on Azerbaijan. An online copy of this rare history is available here: <http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/arabic/vol4/muin/muin.htm>. Muhammad Mu'in al-Saltanih. *Tarikh-i Amr*. [History of the (Babi) Cause]. MS in private hands. Published in digital facsimile. Lansing, Mi.: H-Bahai, 2000
- ¹² as-Saltaneh Tabrizi, Muhammad Mu'in. *Tārkh-i Amr* 187.
- ¹³ Pascal Coste, French architect and Flandin's partner in their joint travels in Persia (see note 11 above).
- ¹⁴ Homa Nategh, *Iran dar Rāhyābī-yi Farhangī: 1834–1848*, Vincennes: Khavaran, 1990, 1–5, 106 (quoted in Abu'l-Qasim Afnan's *'Ahd- A 'lā*, Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000, 601–2).
- ¹⁵ Amanat, 'ĀQĀSĪ'.
- ¹⁶ Zarandi, Nabil. *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation*. New York, NY: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1932, 310.
- ¹⁷ Mazandarani, *Ṣuhūr* 2:230. Later that year, Mulla Jalil was killed during the Shaykh Tabarsi upheaval.
- ¹⁸ Faizi, Muhammad-'Ali. *Ḥaḍrat-i Nuṣṣaḥ-i Ūlá: The Life of the Báb*. Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahá'í-Verlag, 1987, 368.
- ¹⁹ Mu'in (189) – who met the artist – says that Aqa Bala Bayg was already a Babi when he met the Bab. Mazandarani also quotes Mu'in's version in his *Tārkh-i Ṣuhūr al-Ḥaqq* 3:48. But Afnan notes that Aqa Bala Bayg was neither a Babi nor aware of the Bab's revelation when he met the latter (cf. Afnan, *'Ahd- A 'lā* 313). Here, Afnan might be quoting a later volume of Mazandarani's *Ṣuhūr* (6:13) in which another eyewitness, Mirza Sayyid 'Ali Oskoui – who also personally met Aqa Bala Bayg in Seysan in 1887 – is quoted as saying that the artist was not a Babi when he drew the Bab and later became a Baha'i via Varqa.
- ²⁰ In a talk given by Darius Shahrokh, he notes that Aqa Bala Bayg was among the crowd who flooded the house of the governor to have a glance at the 'miracle worker' [the Bab], after the latter had managed to tame and ride the governor's unruly horse. Malek-

Qasim Mirza had asked the Bab to ride his wild horse, evidently to test the Bab's powers (Darius Shahrokh, *Varqā and Son: The Heavenly Doves* 11). The transcript of Shahrokh's talk is available online at: http://bahai-library.com/shahrokh_varqa_son.

²¹ H.M. Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahá'ís in the time of Bahá'u'lláh: With Some Historical Background* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1985), 87. The transliteration of diacriticals in this passage are as published in H.M. Balyuzi's book.

²² Mu'in, *Tarikh-i Amr* 189.

²³ Mazandarani, *Zuhur* 3:48.

²⁴ Ishraq-Khavari, Abdu'l-Hamid. *Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif Bahā'ī* 1:11. 16 vols. Digitally republished, East Lansing, Mi.: H-Bahai., 2001. Available online at: <http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/arabic/vol5/dairih/1/1dair011.gif>.

²⁵ Afnan, 'Ahd- A'la 313.

²⁶ Faizi, *Nuqtay-i Úlá* 368.

²⁷ Ibid. From this description, it appears that, during each session, the artist did simple line drawings in the presence of the Bab and completed the details later. He used a drawing technique known as *siah-qalam*, or 'black pen', which involved laying down a preliminary drawing in red or black ink that would later be painted over. (cf. Bernard O'Kane, 'siah-qalam', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Online Edition, 2009, available at: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/siah-qalam>.)

²⁸ At this point, none of the drawings were in colour yet.

²⁹ There appears to be some ambiguity as to whether Baha'u'llah and the Bab ever met. In Browne's edition of Mirza Husayn Hamadani's *Tarikh-i Jadid* (Cambridge University Press, 1893, 217), it is noted that Baha'u'llah was among many people who met the Bab at Khanluq near the village of Kulayn, some 30 kilometres south of Tehran. Thus, the supposed meeting would have taken place when the Bab was on his way from Kashan to Tehran (in March 1847) before Haji Mirza Aqasi, the prime minister, persuaded Muhammad Shah to redirect the Bab to the castle of Maku. In a tablet to Varqa, Baha'u'llah appears to confirm a meeting of some sort between the two at that time. Here is a provisional translation of the relevant passage found in Ishraq-Khavari's *Mā'ideh-yi Āsmānī* 4:154: 'He who heralded the light of divine guidance, that is to say the Primal Point – may the souls of all else but him be sacrificed for his sake – in the days when he was journeying to Maku, attained to outward seeming the honour of meeting [Baha'u'llah], albeit concealed from all.'

However, in a tablet to a believer from Shiraz, 'Abdu'l-Baha clearly states that this meeting did not physically take place (see Nosratu'llah Muhammad-Husayni, *Haḍrat-i Bab* 319). Baha'u'llah's own reference that the meeting was 'concealed from others' appears to confirm this. Early Baha'i historian 'Abdu'l-Husayn Āyati, known as Āvāreh, notes that the start of this rumour was attributed by some to Haji Mirza Jani, whereas in reality, Jani's *Nuqtatu'l-Kāf* is silent on this issue (cf. *Kawākib ad-Durrīyyah* 1:96). In the introduction to *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, Browne states that Baha'i historian Mirza Husayn Hamadani added the reference to this meeting in his *Tarikh-i Jadid* (217). According to Muhammad-Husayni (*Bab* 319), there is also a note in 'Abdu'l-Baha's own handwriting on vol. 1, p. 96 of the original copy of Avareh's *Kawākib ad-Durrīyyah* where he reiterates that 'there was definitely no physical meeting [between the Bab and Baha'u'llah]' (provisional trans.).

³⁰ Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahá'ís* 87. Balyuzi's source for allowing only two watercolour copies is not clear. Faizi (*Nuqtay-i Úlá* 369) and Afnan ('Ahd- A'la 313–4) cite excerpts from a tablet of Baha'u'llah to Varqa that allows copies to be made for Varqa and 'one or two of the chosen friends'. Provisional translation: 'We allow a limited number of portraits of that beautiful personage to be drawn for you [Varqa] and one or two of the chosen friends.'

³¹ Here again, Mu'in's version (*Tarikh-i Amr* 189) of the details is somewhat different from Balyuzi's. Mu'in claims the original was already with Aqa Bala Bayg's son, Mirza Mahmud in 1882, and that was the copy that Haji Akhund took to 'Akka. Mirza Mahmud was a secretary and scribe for Imam Quli Mirza – the successor to Malik Qasim-Mirza. If this is true, the artist must have done so while still living. In 1887, Mirza 'Ali Oskoui met him in Seysan (Mazandarani, *Zuhur* 6:13). Mazandarani (ibid., 3:48) also confirms that Haji Akhund took the original drawing, not a copy, to 'Akka. However, his source for this is probably Mu'in's own history. Balyuzi (*Eminent Bahá'ís* 87) believes that Haji Akhund's was a watercolour copy and that the black-and-white original was discovered later by Assadu'llah Qumi and sent to Haifa in 1902. The current color copy on display at the Baha'i International Archives in Haifa has the following inscription underneath it: عمل کمترین آقا بالا در بلد اورمی کشیده شد سنه ۱۲۶۶ ("This work by the lowliest servant, Aqa Bala, was drawn in the city of Urmia in the year 1266 AH [1850 AD].")

³² Faizi, *Nuqtay-i Úlá* 369–70 and Afnan, 'Ahd- A'la 313–4. To protect believers, Varqa names the cities in the cryptic language prevalent among the early Babis and Baha'is that identified locations by a key letter or two in the name of the city. Thus, Tehran would be identified as 'The Land of Tā' or Yazd would be 'The Land of Yā'. The destinations for the additional copies were Qum, Tehran, Khorasan, Yazd, Isfahan, Shiraz and Kashan.

³³ Arabic, lit. 'Chamberlain of the State'. This was the title given to the Shah's chief steward. The position was held by Ja'far Quli Khan from October 1892 and he lost it when Muzaffar ad-Dawleh came to the throne, i.e. shortly after the martyrdom of Varqa. Ja'far Quli Khan was then given the title of Mu'in us-Sultan.

³⁴ Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahá'ís* 92. Mazandarani (*Zuhur* 6:13) quotes Mirza Haydar-ʿAli Oskoui that Varqá's copy of the Bab's painting was confiscated by Nayeb as-Saltaneh. Without giving a source, Shahrokh (*Varqá and Son* 12) claims that 'Abdu'l-Baha had predicted that Varqá's copy will be found in the future and returned to his descendants.

³⁵ Mazandarani, *Zuhur* 3:48.

³⁶ Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahá'ís* 87.

³⁷ Faizi, *Nuqṭay-i ʿUlá* 370.

³⁸ Mu'in, *Tarikh-i Amr*, 190.

³⁹ Ishraq-Khavari, *Da'irat al-Ma'arif* 1:11.

⁴⁰ Faizi, *Nuqṭay-i ʿUlá* 371.

⁴¹ 'Abdu'l-Baha must have kept copies of his letters to believers. That would explain why a copy of a potentially lost tablet was still available to him and is extant today.

⁴² Imam Husayn, the grandson of the prophet Muhammad and third in the line of Shi'i imams. Dakhil's poetic rendering of the sufferings of Imam Husayn in Turkish, *Kitab-i Dakhil (Kulliyat al-Jadid)*, was published in Tabriz in 1889 and was highly regarded. It was also the first publication by a follower of Baha'u'llah, excluding 'Abdu'l-Baha. Thanks to Dr Moojan Momen for providing this reference.

⁴³ Faizi, *Ahd- A'la* 371–2.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 372. Faizi's sources for his narrative were oral accounts by Varqá's son, Mirza Valiyu'llah Khan, at the intercontinental Kampala conference held from 23–28 January 1958, as well as an unspecified written account by Dr Dakhili, the great-grandson of Dakhil-i Maraghe'i.

⁴⁵ Copies of Aqa Bala Bayg's portrait of the Bab are not available to the general public. The Universal House of Justice considers viewing the image a privilege. During pilgrimage, Baha'is can see a colour copy of the original in the Baha'i International Archives in Haifa. In addition, on rare occasions, copies may be seen by Baha'is outside of Haifa. In a letter dated 12 July 1973 by the Universal House of Justice, the international governing body of the Baha'is to their National Spiritual Assembly in Panama, it is noted that 'The portraits of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh should be shown infrequently and on very special occasions, such as a special observance connected with an event intimately associated with the Forerunner or Founder of our Faith ... we feel that the privilege of displaying these very precious portraits should not be abused.'

⁴⁶ For the text of the article, see Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* 69–70.

⁴⁷ Moojan Momen, 'Scholarship on the Bahá'í Faith', <http://www.momen.org/relstud/schol.htm>

⁴⁸ V. A. Zhukovskii, *Rossiiskii imperatorskii konsul F.A. Bakulin v istorii izucheniia babizma* (Petrograd: Tip. Akademii nauk, 1917). Published in the periodical "Zapiski Vostochnogo otdeleniya (Imperatorskogo) Rossiiskogo arkheologicheskogo obshchestva" 24, 1–4, 33–90. (Proceedings of the Oriental Department of the [Imperial] Russian Archeological Society), henceforth abbreviated as ZVORAO. The authors are indebted to Dr Youli Ioannesyan for this reference and the line drawing. They are also grateful to Soussan Shahriari for obtaining copies of the pages containing Zhukovskii's drawing and his discussion of the image, and similarly to Joshua Harris for translating portions of Zhukovskii's account into English and to Charles Bonds for reviewing that translation.

⁴⁹ This letter was found by Dr Youli Ioannesyan.

⁵⁰ ZVORAO, vol. 24, 33–90.

⁵¹ See Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* 43.

⁵² Zarandi, *The Dawn-Breakers* (trans. Shoghi Effendi) 518.

⁵³ Zhukovskii, *Bakulin*, 46–7. Translation from the original Russian by Dr Youli Ioannesyan. Here, Zhukovskii is referring to 'Abdu'l-Baha's reference in *A Traveler's Narrative* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980, 27) that the morning after the execution, the Russian consul took an artist with him to the execution scene so he could record a faithful rendition of what he saw.

⁵⁴ See Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti, *Risāliyy-i Uṣūl-i 'Aqāyid*, Tehran: Lajniy-i-Milliy-i-Mahfaziyy-i-Āthāri-i-Amrī, 133 B.E. (1976–7), 241–2. 'Abdu'l-Baha refers to this Shi'i belief in *A Traveler's Narrative* 2:45. Note that Browne's translation of the relevant passage is inaccurate. He has rendered 'javareh' as 'wounds', but it actually means 'predatory birds or animals'. Authors' note: These references are found in the letter of 17 June 2009 from the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice to Dr Youli Ioannesyan.

⁵⁵ Louis Alphonse Daniel (A. L. M.) Nicolas, *Seyyed Ali Mohammed dit Le Bab*. Les religions des Peuples Civilises, Paris: Dujarric & Cie, Editeurs, 1905 (original publication date). Digital copy is available on H-Bahai: Lansing, Michigan, 2004: <http://www.h->

net.org/~bahai/diglib/books/K-O/N/LeBab/LeBab.htm. William Miller also reproduced Nicolas's image on page 17 of his polemical work, *The Bahá'í Faith: Its History and Teachings* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1974).

⁵⁶ The 'rose and nightingale' (Persian: *gol o bolbol*) is a popular literary and decorative theme in Persian literature and art. Together, they represent the lover and beloved par excellence. 'The rose is beautiful, proud, and often cruel, while the nightingale sings endlessly of his longing and devotion.' Adding this theme to the purported image of the Bab is the artist's way of representing the Bab as the rose – or the Beloved – and his followers as nightingales, or lovers. cf. Layla S. Diba, 'Gol o Bolbol', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater, vol. 11, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2001, 52–7. Available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gol-o-bolbol>.

⁵⁷ Provisional translation of the image caption on p. 36: 'Some believed this portrait was that of the Bab, which was based on the black ink and pen drawing [by Aqa Bala Bayg]. However, after the black ink and pen drawing was seen in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha, it became clear that this was not the Bab's portrait, as the Bab would have been younger and better-looking and his turban would have been much smaller. More recently, it has been accepted that this is the portrait of Sayyid Kazim Rashti, the son of Aqa Sayyid Qasim Tajir Hariri who, according to oral accounts, was a merchant in Rasht.'

⁵⁸ The captain's letter to a European friend depicts, in gruesome details, the degree of savagery inflicted by Persians of different social strata on the Babi martyrs and the incredible fortitude exhibited by the followers of the Bab in the face of inordinate cruelty at the hands of their killers. A copy of this letter can be found in Peter Avery's *Modern Iran* (New York: Fredrick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1965, 60–2) and H. M. Balyuzi's *Bahá'u'lláh: The King of Glory* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1980, 84–6).

⁵⁹ Thanks to Steve Cooney for pointing out this edition of Atrpet's book to us.

⁶⁰ A copy of this image appears in a Russian article titled *Babidskiye Vosstaniya v Mazanderane, Zendzhane i Neyrize* [Babi Uprisings in Mazandaran, Zanjan, and Nayriz], published in the sixth volume of the Russian encyclopedia *Vsemirnaya Istoriya* [World History] in 1959. The text of the article is available online here: <http://historic.ru/books/item/f00/s00/z0000036/st355.shtml>

⁶¹ Atrpet's interactions with Jalil Khu'i might have contributed to his negative view of the Baha'is. For example, see a translation of his article that appeared in the Armenian periodical *Sourhandag*. It denied that the Baha'is played any significant role in the Persian Constitutional Revolution of 1905–11. A translation of this article can be found in ALM Nicolas, 'Le Club de la fraternite' *Revue du Monde Musulman*, vol. 13, Paris, 1911, 180–4 (quoted in Momen's *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* 39). Additionally, there is also a tablet from 'Abdu'l-Baha in which he is evidently referring to the fabricated image of the execution scene: "The photograph thou hast sent is not that of His Holiness, the Báb. A contemptible person hath given it to that hapless Russian author and even taken from him a sum of money in return for lies and slander. Announce this to all the friends" (With permission from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United Kingdom, from private correspondence dated 10 May 2015 between them and the Department of the Secretariat).

⁶² Jalil Khu'i was the recipient of Baha'u'llah's *Ishrāqāt* (Glad Tidings) tablet. 'Abdu'l-Baha tried to dissuade him from association with Jamal and Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, but to no avail. His *Lawḥ-i Hizār Bayṭi* (Tablet of One Thousand Verses) was addressed to Jalil and focused on the importance of the Baha'i covenant.

⁶³ Denis MacEoin, 'Early Shaykhí Reactions to the Báb and His Claims', In Moojan Momen (ed.), *Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1982) 1:2. In the same year, this image also appeared in M. S. Ivanov's book, *Antifeodálníye Vosstaniya v Irane v Seredine XIX Veka (Anti-Feudal Uprisings in Iran in the Mid-19th Century)*, Moscow: Nauka, 1982, 90.

⁶⁴ The same image now appears as Sayyid Kazim in other sources, including the entry for him in Wikipedia: despite the fact that Shaykhis use a different image for him at the entrance to their Kermanshah religious centre: <http://alabar.info/images/mashayekh/-2.jpg>. The authors learned about this Shaykhi mosque through correspondence with a Baha'i who lives in Kermanshah. Another somewhat similar image of Sayyid Kazim is found in Moojan Momen's *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1985, 191.

⁶⁵ The concept of *Point* or *Nuqteh* is based on a Muslim tradition that says 'Knowledge is a single *point* that the ignorant have multiplied' [Emphasis mine]. This tradition appears to be linked to another tradition attributed to Imam 'Ali, who is believed to have said, 'All of the knowledge of all the holy books is in the Qur'an, and all of the knowledge of the Qur'an is in the *Fatiha* [the first sura], and all of the knowledge of the *Fatiha* is in the *Basmala* [i.e. the invocation *Bismi'llāhi'r-Raḥmāni'r-Raḥīm*], and all of the knowledge of the *Basmala* is in the letter *ba*, and all of the knowledge in the *ba* is in the point [*Nuqteh*] under the *ba*, and I am that point" [Italics mine]. Through the ages, many Muslim texts – including Isma'ili, Nuqtavi and Shaykhi texts – have discussed this concept. For an example of a Shaykhi text, see pp. 91–6 of Sayyid Kazim's *Sharh Qasida Lamiyya Li-'Abd al-Baqi Effendi*. Lithograph, n.p., Tabriz, n.d.

⁶⁶ The caption appears to have been written on a rectangular piece of paper and superimposed onto the image. If there was genuine intent to identify the person in the portrait, the artist could have done so on the image itself without needing to do it on a piece of paper. The addition could not also be considered an artistic style intended to enrich the artwork.

⁶⁷ Igor S. Zonn, et al., *The Caspian Sea Encyclopedia*, London and New York: Springer Heidelberg Dordrecht, 2010, 317.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ For references to Naghiev's story in Persian Baha'i sources, see Dr Habib Mu'ayyad, *Khatirat-i Habib*, vol. 1, Tehran: Mu'assasah-i Milli-i Matbu'at-i Amri, 118 B.E. (1962), 6–7. Digitally republished, East Lansing, MI: H-Bahai, 2007 (<http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/areprint/authors/muayyad/muayyad.htm>) and Parivash Samandari Khoshbin, *Taraz-i Elahi*, vol. 1, Mu'assasah-i Ma'arif Baha'i, Ontario, 2002, 226–7. Digital copy available at: <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/o/T11/ti1-252.html>.

'Abdu'l-Baha believed Naghiev could have been a source of great accomplishments as a Baha'i. However, Naghiev's procrastination prevented him from doing more. After the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, all his wealth was confiscated. For Persian references by 'Abdu'l-Baha to Naghiev, see 'Abdu'l-Hamid Ishraq-Khavari, *Ganjineh-yi Hudud va Ahkam*, Tehran: Mu'assasah-i Milli-i Matbu'at-i Amri, 134 BE (1978), 104. Digital copy available at: <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/c/GHA/gha-113.html#pg104>.