

Untold History

A Letter from Āqā Siyyid Ḥusayn on the Báb's Transfer from MáKú to Tabríz

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24 May 2025

Introduction:

Established Bábí-Bahá'í historical records indicate that the Báb was transferred from the fortress of Chihríq to the city of Tabríz on two occasions—first for interrogation in 1848 CE, and subsequently in 1850 CE prior to His martyrdom. These sources, however, make no mention of any transfer from the fortress of MáKú to the city of Tabríz.

In a letter penned in his own hand, Āqā Siyyid Ḥusayn—the amanuensis of the Báb—addressed to Khál-i-Aṣghar (Siyyid Ḥasan-‘Alí), the Báb's younger maternal uncle, there emerges a previously undocumented detail concerning the Báb's transfer to Tabríz during His earlier confinement in the fortress of MáKú.

Following a narration of the Báb's arrival in Tabríz, His subsequent exile to the land of Basāt² (MáKú), and the account of His confinement therein—accompanied by a poignant portrayal of His sufferings, tribulations, and His serene resignation to the divine will—Siyyid Ḥusayn proceeds to write:

“...May my life be offered for thee! Thou hadst inquired from the Lord (رب)³ concerning the reason for His descent unto the land of Ṭā (Tabriz). The cause of this affliction was a youth among the youths, devoid of judgment—namely, Nāṣir al-Dīn Mírzá, and those wicked ones who surrounded him. However, not long thereafter, two firm decrees were issued by the Sovereign⁴, ordering that the Báb be returned to His previous place of confinement, and that their foolish actions be annulled. Praise be to God, Who delivered us from the company of the wrongdoers and sheltered us in His refuge, and freed us from all else besides Him...”⁵

Considering the dates of the letters dispatched from MáKú—whether penned by the Báb Himself or by His companions—it may be reasonably inferred that His arrival at that

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² In the Abjad system of numerical reckoning, the word Basāt (بساط) and MáKú (ماكو) each have a total value of 72. In Arabic, the word Basāt (بساط) signifies 'openness,' 'expanse,' and the quality of being 'spread out,' and is often used to describe open expanses or states of spiritual simplicity.

³ In the abjad system, the word Rab (رب, the Lord) has the same numerical value as 'Alī Muhammad (the Báb's name); both equal 202. The Báb customarily refers to Himself as 'Alī Muhammad, Rab (علي محمد, رب).

⁴ Muhammad Shah.

⁵ Translated from the original Persian by the author.

remote fortress occurred in the latter part of the month of Jumádá al-Awwal 1263 A.H. (corresponding to the latter part of May 1847 CE). At that juncture, Bahman Mírzá⁶ occupied the post of governor of Ādhirbáyján. (Āqá Mírzá Abú'l-Qásim Afnán, Ādh-i-A'lá, p. 273; author's translation).

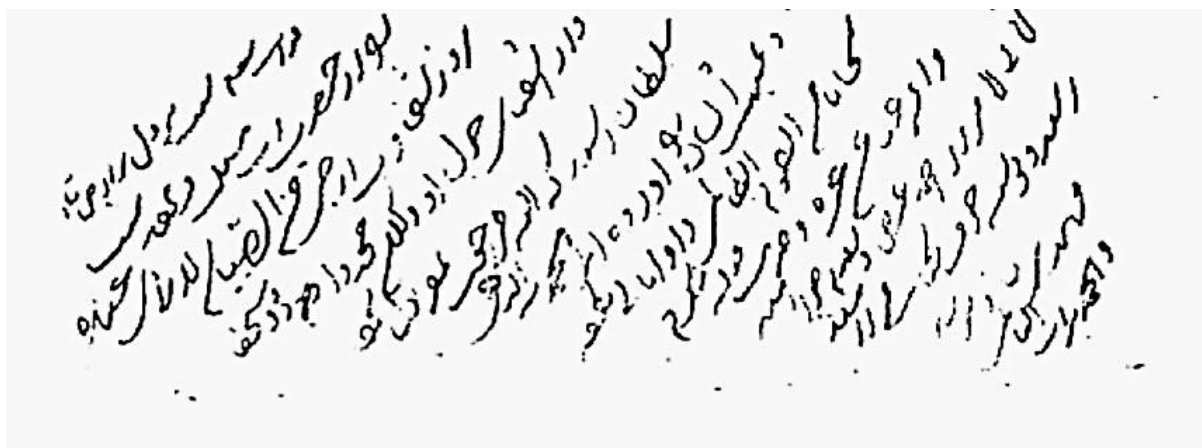
Not long after the Báb's initial months of incarceration in Mákū, Bahman Mírzá was dismissed from his position, and Nāṣir al-Dīn Mírzá was appointed in his stead. In referring to this political transition, Āqá Siyyid Ḥusayn employs the phrase *ṣabīyyun min al-ṣibyān, lā ra'y 'indahū*—"a youth among the youths, devoid of judgment"—a pointed allusion drawn from the sayings of Imám 'Alí, the Commander of the Faithful, who foretold that the Qā'im of the House of Muhammad would arise during the reign of a juvenile ruler lacking in discernment and wise counsel. (Āqá Mírzá Abú'l-Qásim Afnán, Ādh-i-A'lá, p. 273; author's translation).

From these details, one may conclude that it was Nāṣir al-Dīn Mírzá—either acting of his own volition or swayed by the counsel of others—who gave the order for the Báb's transfer from Mákū to Tabríz. However, by the express decree of the Sháh (Muhammad Shah), He was ultimately returned to His original place of confinement.

⁶ Bahman Mírzá (1810-1884) was a Persian prince who was appointed governor of Ādhirbáyján in January 1841 and remained in office until late 1847. He sought asylum at the Russian legation in Tehran on 1 March 1848 and left Iran with his household on 15 May 1848, settling first in Tiflis and later in Shusha.

An excerpt (typed and original version) from the letter composed by Āqā Siyyid Ḥusayn in Mákū, addressed to the Khál-i-Aṣghar

فدايت شوم سبب نزول بر ارض تارا از حضرت رب مسئلت فرموديد. سبب بروز شقاوت از صبی من الصبيان لا رأي عنده ناصر الدين ميرزا و از اشقيای حول او ولكن مجدداً که دو دستخط سلطان رسيد که البته مراجعت بمقر اول شود و عبث ایشان را آورده اند الحمد لله الذي نجانا من القوم الظالمين واوانا في كهفه وافرغنا عن غيره



The entire letter written by Āqā Siyyid Ḥusayn from Mākū to the Khál-i-Aṣghar, in his own hand

Handwritten Persian text in a dense, cursive script, likely a letter or document. The text is written in black ink on a light background. The script is highly stylized and compact, characteristic of traditional Persian calligraphy. The text is arranged in several columns, with some lines being longer than others, creating a dense, flowing appearance. The ink is dark and the lines are well-defined, though there is some variation in the thickness of the strokes, typical of cursive writing. The overall impression is one of a formal, yet personal, communication.

