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Transnational Baha'i Print Culture: Community Formation and Religious Authority, 1890–1921*

Persian and Arabic Baha'i publishing emerged during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when printing was becoming increasingly widespread in Muslim societies. This article examines how Baha'is employed printing in community consolidation, scriptural canonization, and apologetic encounters. It first considers the role of Baha'i leadership in promoting and defining the parameters of print activities. It then discusses the transnational commercial, travel and pilgrimage routes facilitating the preparation and distribution of printed materials throughout India, Egypt, Palestine, Russian Turkistan and Iran. Specific attention will be paid to individual Baha'is as cultural middlemen across geographical boundaries.

Introduction

Over the course of the 1890 to 1921 period, Baha'i print activities formed a crucial medium for establishing religious authority and consolidating and expanding the community. The Babi and Baha'i movements emerged in a context where Islamic institutions of learning, most notably the madrasah, mediated the relationship between orality and textuality. In the madrasah, the teacher's authority in transmitting religious knowledge was paramount and ideally an orally based activity. Given the absence of a similar religious institution of learning in the case of the Baha'i community, the use of print facilitated alternative modes of community formation. The proliferation of printed Baha'i scriptures aided in the canonization of key texts and provided a novel means of transmitting and reproducing religious knowledge distinct from the oral-textual complex of the Islamic madrasah system. The Baha'i leader 'Abdu'l-Baha, in particular, played a crucial role in overseeing early print ventures, both in order to ensure the "authenticity" of published scripture and

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to ensure other Baha'i publications were broadly consistent with his vision of the religion's message.

Baha'is located mainly in land and sea trade entrepots — including Bombay, Cairo, Ashkabad, and Tehran — published Persian and Arabic texts for a readership spanning the Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia. Baha'i publishing was enabled by the expertise of commercially successful printers, the print proficiency of bureaucrats serving in government presses, and the travels and cultural mediation of Baha'i scholars, scribes, and missionaries (*muballighin*). Through a series of printed apologetic encounters with other religious communities (such as Muslims and Zoroastrians), and secular ideologies and methods (including Marxism and Western academia), Baha'i missionaries and scholars helped define community boundaries in relation to other modes of thought.

Authority, Scripture, and the Printed Word

Since the Baha'i religion emerged out of an Islamic context, it is worthwhile to examine the relationship between the oral and the textual in Islam. The Qur'an, literally meaning recitation, was meant to be recited first and foremost. The written form of the text, while sacred, was essentially an *aide-memoire* for the believers' recitation. The authority of the other main Islamic textual corpus, the traditions (hadith), similarly rested on an oral foundation with the text serving a complementary role. With the formalization and institutionalization of Islamic institutions of learning through madrasahs, the authority of Islamic scholars (ulama) and the texts they produced was similarly transmitted from teacher to student through face-to-face interaction.[1] Brinkley Messick has aptly observed that manuscripts in the Islamic pedagogical tradition "were considered by-products of the learning process" adding that "students eventually received licenses to teach, which entailed permission for riwaya, the 'oral transmission' of a particular text or texts through recitation."[2] This mode of transmission had implication for the embodiment of knowledge. As Nile Green has observed, "knowledge was located primarily in persons rather than books" in many "Muslim religious circles."[3]

It would be tempting to read the introduction of print technology into Muslim societies as posing a threat to the ulama as the embodiment of knowledge and the oral nature of the madrasah system.[4] The attitude of the ulama towards printing, however, was far from uniform. In the case of early nineteenth-century Iran, the Shi'i ulama consented to the publication of a text

1. M. Cook, "The Opponents of the Writing of Tradition in Early Islam," *Arabica* 44, no. 4 (1997): 437–530; R. Mottahedeh, "The Transmission of Learning: The Role of the Islamic Northeast," in *Madrasa: La Transmission Du Savoir Dans Le Monde Musulman* [Madrasa: The transmission of knowledge in the Muslim world], edited by N. Grandin and M. Gaborieua (Paris: Éditions Arguments, 1997), 63–72.
2. B. Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 21–22.
3. N. Green, "The Uses of Books in a Late Mughal Takiyya: Persianate Knowledge Between Person and Paper," *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 2 (2010): 243.
4. F. Robinson, "Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print," *Modern Asian Studies* 27, no. 1 (1993): 229–51.

on jihad against the backdrop of the Russo-Iranian tensions in 1819.[5] The Iranian ulama did not appear to object to the Qur'an being lithographed; in fact, it was lithographed in Iran in the early 1830s without opposition.[6] Given the Qur'anic significance of the pen and the importance of calligraphy, the rapid adoption of lithography by Muslims, particularly in India, may have been due to its ability to act "as a direct extension of the manuscript tradition" and to "preserve . . . [the] cultural and ritual functions" of calligraphy.[7]

The advent of the messianic Babi movement in mid-nineteenth century Iran signalled the possibility for the reconfiguration of the relationship between text, orality, and religious authority. The Babis, composed predominantly of peasants, merchants, craftsmen, religious seminarians (*tullab*), and lower- to middle-ranked clerics, collectively challenged the dominant place of the higher ranking Shi'i mujtahids as guardians of religious interpretation and promised more direct access to scripture.[8] The founder of the Babi movement, Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad the Bab (d.1850), adopted a pragmatic attitude towards the printing of his central scriptural text, the *Bayan*, with an eye towards prioritizing the text's wider circulation:

> With regards to printing (*chap*) and that which is ordained. The summary of this chapter is that printing is permitted in the *Bayan* and whatever is written under its shadow and according to it, until the manifestation of He Whom God Shall Manifest . . . It is [to be produced] in the best of hands, not like what is customary today, insofar as they print whatever bad hand writing in their possession. It has reached a stage that the gift price of the Qur'an has been reduced to 28 *nukhud* of silver. If it was not out of concern for the poor [financial] means of most believers, no doubt this [i.e., printing] would not have been permitted but now [i.e., in the future] that all live in the shadow of the essence of God's grace, by his permission whoever can write the *Bayan* best, it is favorable for his own being rather than possessing even a well-printed copy.[9]

That the Bab envisioned a lithographed edition of the *Bayan* (i.e., produced by hand) rather than by moveable type suggests an aesthetic preference for calligraphy shared by many Muslims. By promoting the ready availability of scripture in printed form on economic grounds implies that he advocated a scripturalism that could circumvent the madrasah system by allowing each

5. C. Masroori, "Russian Imperialism and Jihad: Early 19-Century Persian Texts on Just War," *Journal of Church and State* 46, no. 2 (2004): 263–79. Prior to this, European Christian missionaries, often with the help of local Iranian Ni'matullahi Sufis, circulated Persian translations of the Bible in addition to other missionary documents. This did not, however, lead to a concerted response in the form of printed texts in Iran until later in the nineteenth century. N. Green, "Journeymen, Middlemen: Travel, Transculture, and Technology in the Origins of Muslim Printing," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, no. 2 (2009): 203–24.

6. U. Marzolph, "Persian Incunabula: A Definition and Assessment," *Gutenberg Jahrbuch* 82 (2007): 213.

7. I. Proudfoot, "Mass Producing Houri's Moles or Aesthetics and Choice of Technology in Early Muslim Book Printing," in *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought, and Society A Festschrift in Honour of Anthony H. Johns*, edited by P. G. Riddell, T. Street, and A. H. Johns (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 177, 180.

8. A. Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844–1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).

9. S. 'Ali Muhammad Bab, *Bayan* (Tehran: n.p., n.d.), 288, cited in A. Amanat, *Apocalyptic Islam and Iranian Shi'ism* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 116. A slightly modified version of Abbas Amanat's original translation is used here.

believer to have a direct unmediated relationship with the text. As Juan Cole has observed, printing had the potential to facilitate scripturalism in Islamic reform movements.[10] Given the short-lived nature of the Babi movement and the fierce persecution of it leadership, there appears to have been little attempt at printing the Bab's works during his lifetime.

It was with the establishment of the Baha'i religion — a religion emerging from the Babi movement — that the printing of scriptures became a tangible reality eliciting commentary and reaction from its leadership.[11] The prophet-founder of the religion, Mirza Husayn Nuri Baha'u'llah (d. 1892), only began commenting on the usefulness of printing in the 1880s, apparently in response to the printing initiative of his followers.[12] It was, mainly during the ministry of Baha'u'llah's son and successor, 'Abbas Effendi 'Abdu'l-Baha (d. 1921), that Baha'i printing became widespread.

'Abdu'l-Baha's comments on printing were usually in response to questions posed to him by rank-and-file Baha'is. In his correspondence, he insisted on having Baha'i works sent to him for permission before publication. In response to one letter about the publication of such works, he stated: "each one of the beloved ones of God (believers in general who may wish to publish any writings or articles, etc.) should first send the same to the Holy Land, to be seen (or examined) and then printed. And this matter is general and this (message) was sent equally to America, Persia, India, and Turkestan."[13] The publishers of Baha'i texts, therefore, often invoked 'Abdu'l-Baha's authorization of a text as evidence of authenticity. For instance, in a compilation of Baha'u'llah's prayers, the text reads "This holy compilation has been approved for publication by the permission of his holiness [i.e., 'Abdu'l-Baha] by this lowly servant Faraj Allah Zaki al-Kurdi and the utmost effort and care has been taken in its editing."[14] In

10. J. R. Cole, "Printing and Urban Islam in the Mediterranean World, 1890–1920," in *Modernity and Culture from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, edited by L. Fawaz, C. A. Bayly, and R. Ilbert (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 354.
11. J. R. Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium: The Genesis of the Baha'i Faith in the Nineteenth-century Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).
12. C. Buck, "The *Kitab-i Iqan*: An Introduction to Baha'u'llah's Book of Certitude with Two Digital Reprints of Early Lithographs," *Occasional Papers in Shaykhi, Babi and Baha'i Studies* 2, no. 5 (1998) [accessed 5 July 2012], http://www.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/bhpapers/vol2/iqan&sn.htm.
13. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Bahai Publishing Society, 1909), 119. There are numerous examples of Baha'is writing to 'Abdu'l-Baha requesting permission to publish a given text. In response to one letter, he granted permission for the publication of a work entitled "Service in the Kingdom." 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1915), 466. In another letter requesting permission for the publication of a Baha'i magazine, he gave the following response: "thou hast written regarding the publication of a magazine. If thou shouldst edit one magazine every six months — two in a year — then forward it to the Holy Land to be corrected and returned, after due correction, for its publication — it is very acceptable and will be the cause of the penetration of the Word of God." 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1915), 471.
14. Baha'u'llah, *Adi'yah-i Hazrat-i Mahbub* [Prayers of Baha'u'llah], edited by F. Zaki al-Kurdi (Egypt: Faraj Allah Zaki al-Kurdi, 1920), 480. Similarly, in a collection of 'Abdu'l-Baha's letters, the editor, Faraj Allah Zaki al-Kurdi, states the publication was "in accordance to the permission of his holiness (i.e., 'Abdu'l-Baha) when he visited the Egyptian lands." 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Makatib-i Hazrat-i 'Abd al-Baha* [Letters of 'Abdu'l-Baha], ed. F. Zaki al-Kurdi (Egypt: Kurdistan Al-'Ilmiyah, 1911), 336. Muhyi al-Din Sabri used similar language when describing the permission he received to publish a compilation of Baha'i writings in 1920. See Baha'u'llah, *Majmu'ah-i Matbu'i-yi Alvah-i Mubarakah-i Hazrat-i Baha Allah* [A printed collection of the tablets of Baha'u'llah], edited by M. Sabri (Cairo: Sa'adah, 1920), 412.

all likelihood, however, 'Abdu'l-Baha did not examine all these books himself; he commissioned a circle of Baha'is around him to assist him in doing so.[15] Later in life, 'Abdu'l-Baha devolved the authority for reviewing texts to Baha'i assemblies.[16]

Through the introduction of a pre-publication review process, 'Abdu'l-Baha sought to assure some measure of consistency in how the Baha'i message was represented in print. The review and authorization of scripture, in particular, contributed to the canonization of an authoritative version of the text. This had implications for scriptural authority since, in place of an analogue to the orally transmitted and mediated knowledge of the Islamic madrasah system, Baha'is could access printed texts authorized by their religious leadership. This is not to say, however, that 'Abdu'l-Baha envisioned no role for face-to-face interaction and oral engagement in relation to scripture: he drew on analogies to the printing of the Qur'an and the experience of contemporary Muslim missionaries to inform his own position. As Juan Cole has pointed out, "the proliferation of relatively inexpensive lithographed copies of the Qur'an allowed the circulation of the sacred text much more widely among the non-elite, whose previous exposure to scripture was largely oral, involving memorizing or listening to those who had memorized."[17] For 'Abdu'l-Baha, the proliferation of cheap printed Qur'ans did not necessarily translate into conversion to Islam:

> Indeed, today the greatest affair is teaching the cause of God and the spreading of the divine fragrances; this is [done] through [oral] explanation (*bayan*) and the jewel of clarification (*jawhar-i tibyan*). It will not be attained through the printing (*tab'*) of books and the publishing of tablets (*nashr-i alvah*). Perhaps the publication and over abundance of tablets will be the cause of the lack of appreciation (*shikast-i qadr*) of divine scriptures (*asar allah*). Take for example the Qur'an. When it was published, they would wrap medicine in it. Also, take for example, how much it was published and spread and made available to other nations. They read it but have you ever heard that a soul became a believer in his Holiness the Prophet — may my life be sacrificed for him — from reading the Qur'an, whether from among the Christian, the Jews or other sects (*tava'if*)? So it is clear that they became guided through [oral] explanation and clarification, not through books and the distribution of tablets and the printing of scriptures. Therefore, the divine scriptures should be given value and respect.[18]

'Abdu'l-Baha's emphasis on explanation/speech (*bayan*) illustrates how he envisioned a renewed significance of the oral through the living subject — namely the missionary — in spreading the religious message. Elaborating on this point in a discussion of how the translation, publication and circulation of the "Torah and the Gospels" did not in and of itself lead to belief, he said "the teacher (*mubayyin*) should clearly explain the tablets [orally] (*alvah ra bayad mubayyin bayan namayad*) meaning that first the teacher should build a foun-

15. A. F. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq* [The history of the manifestation of truth], vol. 8 (Tihran: Mu'assasah-i Milli-i Matbu'at-i Amri, 1975), 878.
16. S. Effendi, *Baha'i Administration* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1968), 23.
17. Cole, "Printing and Urban Islam in the Mediterranean World," 352.
18. 'Abd'ul-Baha, *Muntakhabati az Makatib-i Hazrat-i 'Abd al-Baha* [A selection of the letters of 'Abdu'l-Baha], vol. 6 (Hofheim: Mu'assasah-i Matbu'at-i Amri-yi Alman, 2005), 1–2.

dation, then after having establishing [a foundation] and bringing forward proofs should he read a tablet. Only then will it be effective."[19]

The "technologizing of the word" through print, to borrow Walter Ong's prescient phrase, had two interconnected implications for the relationship between scripture and authority in the Baha'i Faith.[20] First, it resulted in canonical and authoritative scripture as a fixed text, accessible to every literate believer, and, perhaps more importantly, unmediated through any body of religious scholars. Second, print technology reconfigured the place of orality in the Baha'i community: orality was no longer the authoritative means for the transmission of religious knowledge; instead, it was seen as a core component of religious propagation alongside the printed text.

Cultural Middlemen and the Geographical Distribution of Baha'i Publishing

Having examined the attitude of Baha'i leadership towards printing and its implications for orality, textuality, and authority, an exploration of the socio-economic profiles of authors, calligraphers, and publishers and their geographical distribution sheds light on the transnational circuits facilitating print activities.[21] In Iran and Russian Turkistan, Baha'i print pioneers gained expertise through employment in government press operations. In India and Russian Turkistan, the financial support of merchants for printing ventures sometimes determined whether such an operation could be established in the first place. Egypt was a somewhat unique case insofar as publishers printed non-Baha'i texts for a wider Muslim audience.

Publishing relied on travelling middlemen who played a crucial role in the circulation and production of texts. In Persianate zones where lithography dominated — namely Iran and India — calligraphers and scribes were key figures ensuring the production of aesthetically pleasing manuscripts. Baha'i missionaries and pilgrims — often doubling as printers and calligraphers — crisscrossed several borders by sea and/or land to deliver manuscripts for publication or to circulate printed texts to far-flung areas. Often engaging in debates and dialogue along the way, many Baha'i missionaries published apologetic texts as well.

19. 'A. Ishraq-Khavari, ed., *Ma'idah-i Asmani* [The heavenly feast], vol. 9 (New Delhi: India Publishing Trust, 1984), 32–33.

20. W. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London, New York: Methuen, 1982). With the emergence of the Internet, a similar technological shift is occurring in the interpretation of Islam. For an exploration of this theme, see J. W. Anderson, "The Internet and Islam's New Interpreters," in *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere*, edited by D. Eickelman and J. W. Anderson, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 45–60.

21. My thinking on this issue has been informed by Nile Green's study of the print technology transfer in the early nineteenth-century Persianate world. Since print technology was quite widespread by the late nineteenth century when Baha'i printing emerges, this study is less concerned with this technological dimension. Many of Green's observations about the "founding figures of Muslim printing" hold for their Baha'i analogues as well: many Baha'i printers were engaged in travel, "employed as servants of the state," and "demonstrated the ability to cross and combine the forms and norms of cultural spheres that they drew together in their projects." Green, "Journeymen, Middlemen," 218.

The political and socio-economic contexts in which cultural middlemen operated are crucial to understanding the geographical distribution of Baha'i printing. Baha'i printing overlapped with well-integrated global networks of human, communication, and capital flows. The four main cities where the bulk of Baha'i publishing occurred — Bombay, Cairo, Tehran, and Ashkabad — were major land and sea trade entrepots. Baha'i middlemen often followed Indian Ocean maritime networks connecting Iran and India that had been established in medieval Muslim societies and intensified by British imperial domination of sea travel.[22] On the political level, Baha'i publishing thrived where state censorship was absent or temporarily relaxed. In Russian Turkistan and British-controlled India, Egypt, and Palestine, they benefited from favourable imperial policies towards religious minorities. Over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Baha'is travelling between Palestine, India, Egypt, Russian Turkistan, and Iran produced the crucial networks through which Persian and Arabic texts could be published and circulated among a growing religious community.

Mandatory Palestine

From the late 1860s onwards, Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha were exiles in Palestine. Palestine quickly became the spiritual center of the Baha'i community, although most print activity was to take place elsewhere. The lack of printing during this period was connected to Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha's status as prisoners in the Ottoman Empire: any attempt at printing would have in all likelihood resulted in state scrutiny and censorship.[23] It was only in the 1920s, with a dramatic change in the political atmosphere and the establishment of a British mandate in Palestine, that 'Abdu'l-Baha encouraged publishing of a single Baha'i text, a hagiography of early Baha'i personalities. Muhammad Husayn Kahraba'i Yazdi, the publisher of this text, had wider ambitions of enlightening "public thought" (*afkar-i 'umumi*) through the publication of "holy books" (*kutub-i muqaddasah*) for people of every "craft and class" (*sinf va tabaqah*) and every "party and sect" (*hizb va ta'ifah*). He apologized for the quality of the print and the paper used for this publication, suggesting there were serious material barriers to undertaking a new publishing venture in Mandatory Palestine.[24] The bulk of Baha'i publishing, therefore, took place outside of

22. N. Green, "Saints, Rebels and Booksellers: Sufis in the Cosmopolitan Western Indian Ocean, c. 1850–1920," in *Struggling with History: Islam and Cosmopolitanism in the Western Indian Ocean*, edited by E. Simpson and K. Kresse (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 127–29.

23. For a history of the Baha'is in the Ottoman Empire and early Turkish republic, see N. Alkan, *Dissent and Heterodoxy in the Late Ottoman Empire: Reformers, Babis and Baha'is* (Istanbul: Press ISIS, 2008). The only case of a Baha'i text being published in the Ottoman Empire, a translation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's *Tablet of the Hague* (*Lawh-i Layah*) into Ottoman Turkish, occurred just a few years before its ultimate collapse when state censorship was severely weakened. See M. 'A. Gulistani, "Bahai Hareketi Hakkında" [Regarding the Baha'i movement], *İkdâm* (November 1921), 4; M. 'A. Gulistani, "Bahai Hareketi Hakkında," *İkdâm* (December 1921), 4; M. 'A. Gulistani, "Bahai Hareketi Hakkında," *İkdâm* (January 1922), 5.

24. 'Abd'ul-Baha, *Tazkirat al-Vafa* [Memorials of the faithful] (Haifa: al-Matba'ah al-'Abbasiyah, 1924), 311. For further information about this work, see N. Muhammad-Husayni, *Hazrat-i Bab* [His Holiness the Bab] (Dundas, Ontario: Persian Baha'i Studies Institute, 1995), 34.

Palestine and the Ottoman Empire, although transnational connections to Palestine would remain central in the preparation and circulation of texts.

India

Benefiting from a thriving tradition of Persian lithography and less restrictive regimes of censorship, pioneering Baha'i printers set up operations in India. Baha'i publishers, like Baghdadi Jews printing in Bombay at roughly the same time, were predominantly engaged in oceanic trade connecting the Persian Gulf to India.[25] In a real sense, Baha'is printing in Bombay were part of the "Bombay religious economy" that included Zoroastrians, Ni'matullahi Sufis, Isma'ilis, among many others.[26] Transnational flows linking Baha'i merchants also overlapped with Baha'i pilgrimage routes. Since many Baha'is embarking on pilgrimage to Palestine did so by sea, Bombay appears to have become a popular location for Baha'i "print tourism" by pilgrims seeking the latest published scriptures.[27]

Mirza Ibrahim Afnan, a Shirazi merchant residing in Bombay, established the Nasiri press, the first Baha'i press of its kind.[28] Two early publications of the Nasiri press included Baha'u'llah's *Kitab-i Iqan*, an apologetic work defending the claims of the Bab, and 'Abdu'l-Baha's political reformist text *Risalah-i Madaniyah*.[29] Both texts had a Muslim audience in mind and made no explicit reference to their authors' identity. The overwhelming majority of publications were devotional works, including collections of prayers and other scriptures for the consumption of the Baha'i community.[30]

Calligraphers and scribes acted as cultural brokers mediating between the Baha'i leadership located in Palestine and the Nasiri press in India. Since lithography could faithfully reproduce hand-written text, calligraphers and

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'Abdu'l-Baha refers to the near completion of the *Tazkirat al-Vafa* in a letter to Faraj Allah Zaki al-Kurdi dated 22 October 1921. See 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Makatib-i Hazrat-i 'Abd al-Baha*, edited by F. Zaki al-Kurdi, vol. 3 ([Cairo]: Kurdistan Al-'Ilmiyah, 1921), 325–26.

25. O. Bashkin, "Why Did Baghdadi Jews Stop Writing Their Brethren in Mainz? — Some Comments About the Reading Practices of Iraqi Jews in the Nineteenth Century," in *History of Printing and Publishing in the Languages and Countries of the Middle East*, edited by P. Sadgrove (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 95–110. For a discussion of Baghdadi Jews in Burma, see R. F. Cernea, *Almost Englishmen: Baghdadi Jews in British Burma* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007).

26. For an important examination of Baha'i printing within the broader context of Bombay Muslim print culture, see N. Green, *Bombay Islam: The Religious Economy of the West Indian Ocean, 1840–1915* (Cambridge, UK, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 122–25.

27. A. Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Baha'u'llah*, vol. 4 (Oxford: George Ronald, 1988), 178.

28. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8: 1149–50.

29. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Jild al-Awwal min Asrar al-Ghaybiyah li-Asbab al-Madaniyah* [The secret of divine civilization] (Bombay: Nasiri, 1892/1893); Baha'u'llah, *Kitab-i Iqan* [The book of certitude] (Bombay: Nasiri, 1892/1893). Baha'u'llah later restricted the circulation of the *Kitab-i Iqan*, apparently fearing a potential backlash against Baha'is in Iran. See Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Baha'u'llah*, 4: 321–22. Christopher Buck rightly points out the ambiguity of terminology used in this tablet and the problems with Taherzadeh's use of the term "printed" for what could just as likely be translated as "reproduced" or "disseminated." C. Buck, "The *Kitab-i Iqan*."

30. Other works of 'Abdu'l-Baha included *Maqalah-i Shakhs-i Sayyah kih dar tafsil-i qaziyah-i Bab nivishtah ast* [A traveler's narrative written to illustrate an episode of the Bab] ([Bombay]: [Nasiri], 1890); *Risalah-i Siyasiyah* (Bombay: [Nasiri], 1893).

scribes were significant agents in the early history of Baha'i publishing.[31] Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha dispatched a number of calligraphers and scribes to Bombay, including Mishkin Qalam, Muhammad Husayn Khurtumi, and Jamal al-Din Effendi,[32] in order to engage in a range of tasks related to publishing, varying from delivering manuscripts for publication to preparing lithographed texts.[33] These texts found their way to Iran often through the efforts of these same middlemen. For instance, the itinerant Baha'i scholar Mirza Abu al-Fazl disseminated nineteen lithographed copies of the Bombay *Kitab-i Iqan* during a trip to Tabriz.[34]

By the mid-1890s, the Nasiri press was at the center of both financial and religious controversy. Presses in India, whether publishing in Persian, Urdu, or Hindi, were rarely successful commercial ventures despite a large potential readership domestically and, in the case of Persian, abroad in Iran and Central Asia.[35] This was especially the case with a Baha'i press whose potential readership was sparse and geographically dispersed. With the death of Baha'u'llah in 1892, the Nasiri press found itself embroiled in the ensuing controversy over succession between 'Abdu'l-Baha and his half-brother, Mirza Muhammad 'Ali.[36] By 1894 to 1895, Mahal al-Barakah, the company in charge of the press, had fallen on hard financial times. The press's proprietors, Hajji Sayyid Mirza [Ibrahim] Afnan and Hajji Sayyid Muhammad, decided to side with Mirza Muhammad 'Ali, in part because of their disagreement with 'Abdu'l-Baha over how to finance the company:

> Hajji Sayyid Mirza [Ibrahim Afnan] wanted 'Abdu'l-Baha to take the company [Mahal al-Barakah], divide it into one thousand shares of nineteen *tumans* each, and command the Baha'is to buy (shares in it). Hajji Sayyid Muhammad then could take this decree (*amriyah*) to various countries and lands. (And he said i.e., to 'Abdu'l-Baha) 'Every cause and movement needs a press. Through this means, the Baha'i cause will gain strength and spread.' He (i.e., 'Abdu'l-Baha) did not accept it and consequently the aforementioned Hajji Sayyid Mirza and Hajji Sayyid Muhammad

31. There was at least one exception to this general rule, however. The 1896 *Aqdas-i Buzurg va chand Lawh-i Digar* [The most holy book and several other tablets] published by the Nasiri press was done by typeset printing.
32. H. Balyuzi, *Eminent Baha'is in the Time of Baha'u'llah* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1985), 122. According to several accounts, Jamal Effendi published a version of Baha'u'llah's work, *Haft Vadi* (Seven Valleys) claiming to be its author. See Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8: 1154 cited in M. Moojan, "Jamal Effendi and the Early Spread of the Baha'i Faith in Asia," *Baha'i Studies Review* 9 (1999) [accessed 5 July 2012], http://bahai-library.com/bsr/bsr09/9B2_momen_jamal.htm.
33. According to Mazandarani, Baha'u'llah supported the press in order for the expanding Baha'i community to have greater access to "scriptures" (*alvah*); he therefore ordered the scribe Zayn al-Muqarribin to prepare several volumes of his writings. Baha'u'llah then dispatched his son Muhammad 'Ali and his grandson Mirza Shuja Allah to Bombay in 1307/1889–1890 for the purpose of publishing these texts. This was apparently followed by a second trip for publishing Baha'i materials by Muhammad 'Ali and Hajji Mirza Abu al-Qasim. See A. F. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, vol. 5 (n. p.), 430, 512.
34. 'A. S. Ardakani, *Masabih-i Hidayat* [lamps of guidance], vol. 2 (Tihran: Mu'assasah-i Milli-yi Matbu'at-i Amri, 1950), 274.
35. U. Stark, *An Empire of Books: the Naval Kishore Press and the Diffusion of the Printed Word in Colonial India* (Ranikhet, India: Permanent Black, 2007).
36. Mirza Muhammad 'Ali was accused of not publishing all the texts he was entrusted by Baha'u'llah. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 5: 431.

> and Hajji Mirza Husayn were unsuccessful and openly expressed opposition . . . and strengthened their relationship with Mirza Muhammad ‘Ali.[37]

‘Abdu’l-Baha’s policy of vetting Baha’i texts prior to publication should be understood against the backdrop of these divided loyalties. While he recognized the potential for print in propagating the Baha’i message, he also realized it could be used to back contesting claims to authority.

Many early Baha’i apologetic works engaging Zoroastrians and Muslims were published in Bombay. For instance, the Ni‘matullahi Sufis, whose maritime devotional paths similarly connected Shiraz and Bombay, encountered Baha’is in India.[38] Mirza Hasan Khurtumi wrote an apologetic work for the Ni’matullahi Sufi Husayn Safi Allah Shah while the Baha’i poet Mirza ‘Ali Ashraf Lahijan ‘Andalib printed a short “proof text” (*istidlaliyah*).[39] The first wave of publications at the Nasiri press seems to have petered out and given way to a far more diffuse pattern of Baha’i publishing in India: neither of the two works published by Mirza Abu al-Fazl Gulpayigani in India bear the imprint of the Nasiri press.[40] Iranians were replaced by local Indians in the realm of printing: the Indian Baha’i ‘Abbas Quli Butt Kashmiri published several apologetic works in these years.[41]

By the 1920s, the itinerant Baha’i teacher, Mirza Munir Nabilzadah, was at the centre of a number of Iranian propagation efforts in India.[42] As if directly responding to ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s call for the prioritization of oral engagement over the mere textual circulation of scripture, Nabilzadah’s publications were usually the direct outcome of face-to-face encounters. Sometime in the mid-1920s, he published an advertisement in three Bombay newspapers inviting people to a dialogue on the Baha’i Faith. Local journalists covered the ensuing debate between Nabilzadah and his Shi‘i and Zoroastrian interlocutors.[43]

In response, an Iranian Muslim ‘Abd al-Husayn Sipanta and an Iranain Zoroastrian Shah Bahram [Shahrukh], allied themselves with local Parsis in

37. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8: 1151–52. For a discussion of this episode, see M. ‘A. Fayzi, *Kitab-i Khandan-i Afnan* [The Afnan family] (Tihran: Mu’assasah-i Milli-yi Matbu‘at-i Amri, 1971), 63.
38. Nile Green comments on how many Iranian Ni’matullahi Sufis “travelled to, or settled in, Bombay during the late nineteenth century.” Green, “Saints, Rebels and Booksellers,” 137.
39. For references to Khartumi’s *Najm al-‘Irfan fi Rajam min I‘tiraz ‘ala al-Iqan* see A. F. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq* vol. 6 (Tihran, n.d.), 486; Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8: 514. For a discussion of ‘Andalib’s text, see Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 5: 431.
40. A. Gulpayigani, *Sharh-i Ayat-i Mu’arrikhah* [In explanation of sacred verses that prophesy dates] (Agra, India: ‘Azizi, 1925); A. Gulpayigani, *Sharh-i Shajarahnamah-i Mubarakah* [Description of the genealogy of Baha’u’llah] (Bombay: Mustafa’i, 1903). This appears to be true of Mirza Mahmud Zarqani’s account of ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s travels to America, also published in India. M. Zarqani, *Kitab-i Bada’i‘ al-Asar* [The book of wondrous traces], 2 vols. (Bombay, 1914).
41. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8: 1165.
42. Nabilzadah was the author of four apologetic works published in India. The first two works, *Iran Dustan Bikhwanand* and *Rushana’i-yi Rah-i Rastigari*, were in response to Zoroastrian critiques of the Baha’i Faith. The other two works, *Tabin-i Haqiqat* and *Al-Hujjat al-Balighah*, were in response to Shi‘i critiques. ‘A. S. Ardakani, *Masabih-i Hidayat* vol. 4 (Tihran: Mu’assasah-i Milli-yi Matbu‘at-i Amri, 1973), 308.
43. Ardakani, *Masabih-i Hidayat*, 4: 267.

debating Baha'is.[44] They organized a conference at the Zoroastrian Fire Temple (*atashkadah*) in Bombay aimed at refuting Baha'i messianic claims to being the fulfillment of the Zoroastrian tradition. They enlisted the expertise of the famous Iranian Muslim Iranologist and scholar of Zoroastrianism, Ibrahim Purdavud. A series of articles questioning the validity of the Baha'i claim that Baha'u'llah was the promised Zoroastrian messiah Sayoshant were published in the Indian newspaper *Jam*.[45] Nabilzadah described his response to these articles as "teeth-shattering" (*dandan-shikan*) and as leaving his opponents silenced.[46]

The history of Baha'i publishing in India demonstrates the shift in the use of print from a medium primarily geared towards an Iranian reading public — including both Muslims and Baha'is — to one concerned increasingly with the local Indian context and missionary efforts there. Nabilzadah's debates and publications indicate how Baha'i propagation combined a face-to-face engagement with the publication of apologetic texts.

Egypt

In contrast to India, Baha'i publishing in Egypt was part of a much more successful commercial enterprise. Cairo, like Bombay, had an established tradition of publishing in the region and lacked strict censorship regimes targeting religious minorities. Baha'i publishers here employed moveable type — which was generally preferred in Arabic print culture — instead of lithography, the printing method of choice in Persianate Iran and India.[47]

Ironically, the origins of Baha'i publishing emerged from teaching circles associated with one of Sunni Islam's most prominent institutions of learning, Al-Azhar University.[48] During his time at Al-Azhar, Mirza Abu al-Fazl converted two seminarians, Muhyi al-Din Sabri and Faraj Allah Zaki al-Kurdi, who went on to become successful publishers in Cairo.[49] Both men did not limit themselves to Baha'i publishing; in fact, their very success was based in their ability to publish non-Baha'i Arabic works. They published works by a range of medieval Muslim authors, including the theologian Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (d. 1111), Yahya Suhrawardi (d. 1191), and the conservative theologian Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328).[50] Faraj Allah and Muhyi al-Din, both ethnic

44. Sipanta was the first Iranian to produce a talkie film, *Dukhtar-i Lur* [The Lur girl], in India. See 'A. al-Husayn Sipanta, *Dukhtar-i Lur: Filmnamah* [The script of the Lur girl], edited by B. S. Farabi (Tihran: Bunyad-i Sinima'i-i Farabi, 2000).

45. Presumably the *Jam* referred to here is none other than the Parsi daily *Jam-i Jamshid*. For more on Parsi publishing, see S. S. Maneck, "The Death of Ahriman: Culture, Identity and Theological Change Among the Parsis of India," (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 1994).

46. Ardakani, *Masabih-i Hidayat*, 4: 268–69.

47. For a discussion of why moveable type printing dominated in Egypt and the Ottoman Empire while lithography dominated in Iran and India, see Proudfoot, "Mass Producing Houri's Moles," 161–67.

48. For translations of Abu al-Fazl's works into English, see A. Gulpayigani, *Letters and Essays, 1886–1913*, translated by J. R. Cole (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1985); A. Gulpayigani, *Miracles and Metaphors*, translated by J. R. Cole (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1981).

49. Muhyi al-Din also later travelled throughout Qatar, Egypt, Iraq, India, and parts of Africa as an itinerant missionary. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8: 1148.

50. These include but are not limited to the following works: 'A. Sanandaji, *Lata'if al-Ma'arif* [The book of curious and entertaining information] (Cairo: Sa'adah, 1917); Y. al-Suhrawardi, *Hayakil al-Nur* [Bodies of light], edited by M. Sabri al-Kurdi (Cairo: Sa'adah, 1916); 'A. Ibn

Kurds and apparently the first Kurds to own a printing press, also used their press to publish a sixteenth century Persian history of the Kurds, the *Sharafnamah*.[51] Baha'i works published in Egypt included prayer books, scriptures, letters, and speeches of 'Abdu'l-Baha, the apologetic works of their former teacher, Mirza Abu al-Fazl, and the first semi-official history of the Baha'i religion.[52]

Russian Turkistan

Ashkabad, in Russian Turkistan, was home to a large Baha'i community. Mirza Abu al-Fazl Gulpayigani suggested local Baha'is establish a magazine, but without a prosperous merchant community or independent commercial printers, initial attempts at publishing faltered.[53] Another prominent Baha'i, Mirza Haydar 'Ali, hoped a community press in Ashkabad would be an appropriate venue from which to respond to articles published about Baha'is in the late nineteenth century Istanbul Persian newspaper, *Akhtar*.[54]

It was only twenty years later, in the aftermath of the Russian revolution in 1917, that Mirza Abu al-Fazl's vision for a Baha'i magazine was realized through the efforts of his nephew, Sayyid Mahdi Gulpayigani. Sayyid Mahdi made his livelihood as the editor of the Russian imperial government's Persian

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Badrun, *Sharh Qasidah Ibn 'Abdun* [A commentary of Ibn 'Abdun's Qasidah], edited by M. Sabri al-Kurdi (Cairo: Sa'adah, 1921); 'A. al-Ghazzali, *Maqasid al-Falasifah* [The aims of the philosophers], edited by M. Sabri al-Kurdi (Cairo: Sa'adah, 1912); A. al-Ghazzali, *Mizan al-'Amal* [The criterion for action], 2nd ed., edited by M. Sabri al-Kurdi (Cairo: Sa'adah, 1923); A. al-Ghazzali, *Ma'arij al-Quds fi Madarij Ma'rifat al-Nafs* [The ascent to the divine through the path of self-knowledge], edited by M. Sabri al-Kurdi (Cairo: Sa'adah, 1927); 'A. Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Fusul al-Tamathil fi Tabashir al-Surur* [Copious figures on the harbingers of happiness], edited by M. Sabri al-Kurdi (Cairo: Sa'adah, 1925); A. Hashimi, *Jawahir al-Adab fi Sina'at insha lughat al-'Arab* [The jewels of literature in the craft of composing in the Arabic language] (Cairo: Sa'adah, 1901).

51. A. Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, 1918–1985* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 170. According to Mehrdad R. Izady, Faraj Allah Zaki al-Kurdi published the *Sharafnamah* in 1886. See M. R. Izady, "An Introduction to the *Sharafnama*, including Notes on Translation, Commentaries, Bibliology," in S. Bidlisii, *The Sharafnama, or, The History of the Kurdish Nation, 1597*, translated by M. R. Izady (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2005), xxx.

52. A. Gulpayigani, *Kitab al-Durar al-Bahiyah fi jawab al-as'ilah al-Hindiyah* [The book of shining pearls in response to the questions of an Indian] (Cairo, 1900); A. Gulpayigani, *Kitab al-Fara'id* [The book of precious pearls] (Cairo: Hindiyah, 1898); 'A. Avarah, *Al-Kawakib al-Durriyah* [The brilliant stars], 2 vols. (Cairo: Sa'adah, 1923); 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Khitabat Hazrat 'Abd al-Baha fi Awrubba wa Amrika al-Juz al-Awwal* [The speeches of 'Abdu'l-Baha in Europe and America, part I] (Cairo: Faraj Allah Zaki al-Kurdi, 1921); 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Makatib-i Hazrat-i 'Abd al-Baha*; 'Abdu'l-Baha, *al-Risalah al-Madaniyah al-Sadirah fi sanat 1292* [The secret of divine civilization] (Cairo: Kurdistan Al-'Ilmiyah, 1911); A. Suhrab, *al-Risalah al-Tis'ah 'Ashariyah* [The treatise of nineteen] (Cairo: Sa'adah, 1919); Baha'u'llah, *Majmu'ah-i Matbu'ah-i Alvah-i Mubarakah* [A published collection of holy tablets], edited by M. Sabri (Cairo: Sa'adah, 1920); Baha'u'llah, *Ad'iyah-i Hazrat-i Mahbub* [The prayers of Baha'u'llah], edited by F. Zaki al-Kurdi (Cairo: Faraj Allah Zaki al-Kurdi, 1920); A. Gulpayigani, *Majmu'at Rasa'il Hazrat Abi al-Faza'il* [A collection of Abu al-Faza'il's treatises] (Cairo: Sa'adah, 1920); A. Gulpayigani, *Risalih Istidlaliyih dar Bayan Haqiqat Markaz 'Ahd* [A proof treatise explaining the truth of the center of the covenant], edited by M. Sabri (Cairo, 1911); 'Abdu'l-Baha, *al-Nur al-Abha fi Mufavazat 'Abd al-Baha: Guftigu bar sar-i Nahar* [Some answered questions], 2nd ed. (Cairo: Faraj Allah Zaki al-Kurdi, 1920).

53. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 5: 348.

54. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 6: 372.

magazine, *Majmu'ah-i Mavara-yi Bahr-i Khizir*. When this newspaper was shut down due to the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war, he worked with a Baha'i tea merchant in Marv. He spent the next few years working as a scribe, publisher, and book-seller.[55]

With the outbreak of the Russian revolution, Baha'is were presented with new publishing opportunities. The Kavir press, operated by Zabih Allah and Nurat Allah Asad Allahov, published Baha'i works in Tashkent.[56] In 1917, 'Abdu'l-Baha appointed an association (*anjuman*) to run the operations of the press and to establish a Baha'i magazine, *Khurshid-i Kavar*.[57] Mirza Mahdi drew on his previous printing expertise to publish the magazine, using it in part to respond to what Mashhad newspapers would write about the Baha'i Faith. Since the magazine was blocked from being imported into Iran from Khurasan, it was often brought to Gilan — a province in which Baha'is were in charge of customs duties — and circulated from there.[58] *Khurshid-i Khavar* included articles by the likes of Hasan Fu'adi who introduced Baha'i readers to a range of topics including Iranian and Turkish nationalism, the possibility of a universal language and script, and Baha'i teachings on women.[59] Nabilzadah similarly published from Ashkabad with an Iranian audience in mind: he wrote a tract in response to the charge that Baha'is were seditious because of their internationalism, which he had sent to the Shah and various Iranian ministers.[60]

In the immediate aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution, Baha'is increasingly confronted secular modes of thought. As was the case in India, publishing and public debates often went hand-in-hand. In 1919 to 1920, Sayyid Mahdi entered into a public debate with communists on a range of economic and religious issues resulting in the publication of a treatise on socialism and the Baha'i Faith.[61] Sayyid Mahdi's engagement with secular modes of thinking included *Kashf al-Ghita*, a posthumous expanded version of his uncle's refutation of the British scholar E. G. Browne's works on the Baha'i Faith.[62] 'Abdu'l-Baha censored the book for its overly polemical tone, once again demonstrating his active monitoring of printed Baha'i books.[63]

Baha'is in Ashkabad became pioneers in the publication of a new genre of Baha'i literature: the textbook. As the community's numbers grew, Baha'i

55. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 6: 386; Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8: 1010, 1076.
56. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8: 1131.
57. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8: 1011. Fath Allah Khan Sardar Mansur, a rich tax-farmer of the Customs Department of Gilan, allowed Baha'is to play a prominent role there. His two brothers were Baha'is. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8: 776–77, 796–97.
58. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8: 1004.
59. 'A. S. Ardakani, *Masabih-i Hidayat*, vol. 5 (Tihran: Mu'assasah-i Milli-yi Matbu'at-i Amri, 1962), 402–404.
60. Ardakani, *Masabih-i Hidayat*, 4: 307.
61. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8: 1012. For further references to this important work, see Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 6: 388–389; Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8: 1014; 'A. S. Ardakani, *Masabih-i Hidayat*, vol. 3 (Tihran: Mu'assasah-i Milli-yi Matbu'at-i Amri, 1950), 41; N. Bayza'i, *Tazkirah-i Shu'ara-i Qarn-i Avval-i Baha'i* [A biography of poets of the first Baha'i century] (Tihran, 1969), 333.
62. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 6: 388.
63. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8: 1011; D. Maceoin, *The Sources for Early Babi Doctrine and History: A Survey* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 136.

classes shaped a new generation's communal identity.[64] Two textbooks were published in Ashkabad:[65] The first, composed by Nabilzadah, included religious proofs and an explanation of the social utility of religion.[66] The second, and apparently most widely circulated Baha'i textbook of this period, was a lithographed text by Aqa Shaykh Muhammad 'Ali Qa'ini called *Durus al-Diyanah*.[67] In the aftermath of the Russian revolution, Baha'i publishing thrived, but the anti-religious campaigns of Stalin brought such activities to a screeching halt.[68]

Iran

While Iran was home to the largest Baha'i community during this time, state persecution and censorship seriously curtailed its print activities. Since the reign of Nasir al-Din Shah, all publications were subject to state censorship, making it unlikely that Baha'i texts would be approved.[69] Nasir al-Din Shah's successor, Muzaffar al-Din Shah, had a more favourable attitude towards Baha'is. They were able to publish semi-clandestinely through alternative print technologies, such as the lithograph and jellygraph, that proved difficult to regulate.[70]

Baha'is were also active in the early history of Iranian newspapers where, so long as they made no explicit reference to their religious affiliation, they could thrive and prosper.[71] Mirza Mahmud Khan was the editor of the late nineteenth century Isfahan-based newspaper *Farhang*, a copy of which was regularly sent

64. Baha'i classes should be distinguished from Baha'i-operated schools, such as the ones later established in Iran, since the latter followed the government curricula and catered to Baha'is and non-Baha'is alike. M. Momen, "Baha'i Schools in Iran," in *The Baha'is of Iran; Socio-historical Studies*, edited by D. Brookshaw and S. Fazel (New York: Routledge, 2008), 104. For a book-length study of Baha'i schools in Iran, see S. Shahvar, *The Forgotten Schools: The Baha'is and Modern Education in Iran, 1899–1934* (New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2009).

65. Mahdi Gulpayigani also wrote a textbook titled *Durus al-Diyanah* but it was never published. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8: 1042.

66. This textbook was titled *Hadiqah al-Baha'iyyah fi Durus al-Ibtidayyah*. Ardakani, *Masabih-i Hidayat*, 4: 307.

67. It was definitely used in Baha'i schools in Ashkabad although it is not clear to what extent it was used in Baha'i schools in Iran. 'A. S. Ardakani, *Masabih-i Hidayat*, vol. 6 (Tihran: Mu'assasah-i Milli-yi Matbu'at-i Amri, 1973), 393, 413. Qa'ini was also involved in setting up the school curriculum for Baha'i girls. See Ardakani, *Masabih-i Hidayat*, 6: 414.

68. M. Momen, "The Baha'i Community of Ashkhabad; Its Social Basis and Importance in Baha'i History," in *Cultural Change and Continuity in Central Asia*, edited by S. Akiner (London: Kegan Paul International, 1991), 291.

69. A. Karimi-Hakkak, "Censorship," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 5 (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1992), 135–42. For a comprehensive history of press censorship, see G. Kuhan, *Tarikh-i Sansur dar Matbu'at-i Iran* [The history of censorship in Iranian publishing], 2 vols., 2nd ed., (Tihran: Agah, 1984).

70. Hajj Akhund Khurasani, Mirza Aqa Nayrizi, and Mirza 'Ali Akbar Khan Milani Muhibb al-Sultan were instrumental in introducing jellygraph to Iran in 1898–1899. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8: 319.

71. In one case, they were involved in spreading the print technology to various parts of Iran. Mirza Ahmad Rawzahkhwan Kashi, known as "the Printer" (*Chapi*), introduced the press to Kashan. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 5: 514. This section on the role of Baha'is in Persian newspapers has benefited from Moojan Momen's unpublished scholarship on the topic. M. Momen, "The Baha'is of Iran: the Constitutional Movement and the Creation of an 'Enemy Within'," (paper presented at The Iranian Constitutional Revolution 1906–1911, Oxford, U.K., 30 July to 2 August 2006).

to 'Abdu'l-Baha in 'Akka.[72] Sayyid Faraj Allah Kashani edited the newspaper *Surayya* in Egypt, Tihran, and Kashan during the 1903–1910 period. With the outbreak of the Constitutional Revolution in 1906, Baha'is continued to play a part in publishing newspapers. In the capital Tehran, Sayyid Ahmad Khavari Kashani published the newspaper *Mizan*. During these years, the Baha'i female activist Ta'irah published a series of articles in the leftist newspaper *Iran-i Naw*.[73] Another Baha'i, Muhammad 'Ali Hidayat, established his own press, Matba'ah-i Khurasan, and published two newspapers: *Bisharat* and the constitutional-era *Tus*. His foray into printing was short-lived; he abandoned it because of restrictions he encountered and instead embarked on a career as a merchant trading between Mashhad and Marv.[74]

In the capital Tehran, the Imperial Press (*Matba'ah-i Shahi*) sometimes employed Baha'is where they engaged in clandestine Baha'i publishing. Mirza 'Ali Akbar Rawhani Milani Muhibb al-Sultan was a case in point. Muhibb al-Sultan lived in Central Asia for several years, including in Bukhara and Samarqand, before making a pilgrimage to 'Akka in 1895 to 1896. He stayed there for six months, copying Baha'i texts, before returning to Ashkabad. Two years later, he once again made pilgrimage to 'Akka, copied Baha'i texts, but this time he travelled and settled in Iran. Reaching Tehran in 1898/1899 he worked for the Imperial Press. Two Baha'is close to Muzaffar al-Din Shah — Ahmad Khan Sani' al-Saltanah and his son Mirza Ibrahim 'Akkasbashi — had established the press thereby providing Muhibb al-Sultan crucial access to print technology.[75] In addition to his involvement with the Imperial Press, 'Akkasbashi was Muzaffar al-Din Shah's court photographer and the first Iranian to record a motion picture.[76] Muhibb al-Sultan was appointed the director and editor of the Imperial Press. In his spare time, he published a great number of Baha'i publications through jellygraph (*tab'-i 'aksi*) in his own handwriting. The fall of the Qajar dynasty and the rise of Riza Shah provided Muhibb al-Sultan the opportunity to use type-set printing for Baha'i Persian publications in Iran for the first time.[77] The life of Muhibb al-Sultan in some ways parallels that of Mirza Mahdi Gulpayigani. Like Mirza Mahdi, he travelled extensively through Central Asia, Iran, and made pilgrimage to Palestine. Both men benefited greatly from being involved in government print operations and utilized their expertise to produce Baha'i publications.

72. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 6: 192.
73. J. Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906–1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy and the Origins of Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 197–99; Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium*, 180–81.
74. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8: 249.
75. For more on 'Akkasbashi, see N. Rastigar, *Tarikh-i Hazrat-i Sadr al-Sudur* [The history of Sadr al-Sudur] (Tihran: Mu'assasah-i Milli-yi Matbu'at-i Amri, 1948), 20.
76. For 'Akkasbashi's importance to the early history of Iranian cinema, see H. Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema: The Artisanal Era, 1897–1941*, vol. 1 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).
77. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8: 481–483. Another individual highly involved in the early history of Baha'i publications in Iran was Jahangir Musavvar Rahmani. He attended the Rushdiyah school of Mirza Hasan Rushdiyah where he first heard about the Babis and Baha'is. In 1901–1902, Jahangir Musavvar entered the Photography Workshop ('*Akkaskhanah*). Through his conversations with 'Akkasbashi's brother, Mirza Taqi Sani' al-Sultan, he became a Baha'i. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8: 501–502.

Unlike India and Russian Turkistan, where the publishing of apologetic works sometimes grew out of oral debates, Baha'is in Iran were much more restricted in publishing their versions of such encounters. This did not, however, stop them from challenging their Muslim interlocutors to do so. For instance, during a debate in Iran between a Baha'i and a Muslim cleric, the Baha'i insisted that the contents of the debate be published by a disinterested third party so that people could judge objectively between the two parties.[78] Through the efforts of Muhibb al-Sultan's clandestine press, the popular Baha'i poet Na'im was able to publish his apologetic works meant to assist Baha'is in their propagation efforts.[79] 'Abdu'l-Baha even commissioned the translation of an English apologetic work into Persian with the intention of having it published by Muhibb al-Sultan for the Iranian community.[80]

Iranian Baha'is generally greeted the 1906 Constitutional Revolution with enthusiasm, viewing it as an opportunity to be granted greater rights as citizens.[81] The revolution prompted Muhibb al-Sultan to publish a collection of 'Abdu'l-Baha's letters concerning the Constitutional Revolution.[82] Iranian Baha'is, like their co-religionists in Russian Turkistan, printed texts for educational purposes. Aqa Baba Nayrizi produced lithographed copies of texts for use in Baha'i classes.[83] The Baha'i merchant Aqa Sayyid Aqa Afnan established Baha'i printing in Shiraz during the early twentieth century.[84] With the rise of Riza Khan in the early 1920s, Baha'is produced the first Baha'i journal in Iran called *Akhbar-i Amri*, which, according to Vahid Rafati, included "holy writings of the Bahai Faith, domestic and foreign Bahai news, official announcements of Bahai administrative bodies, and articles on various aspects of the faith."[85]

78. Ardakani, *Masabih-i Hidayat*, 3: 526.
79. Two of Na'im's works were published during this time. The first, *Natijah al-Bayan*, had a Babi audience in mind since it sought to demonstrate that Baha'u'llah fulfilled the Bab's prophecies. The second, *Istidlaliyah-i Manzum*, was a rhymed apologetic work with a wider audience in mind. Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 6: 271; Mazandarani, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, 8: 364–5; Ardakani, *Masabih-i Hidayat*, 3: 154–55.
80. In Iran, Muhibb al-Sultan Ruhani Milani published a translation of the book in 1900–1901. Y. Afrukhtah, *Khatirat-i Nuh Salah* (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1983), 62, 525–26; 'A. Ishraq Khavari, *Rahiq-i Makhtum* [The sealed wine], vol. 1 (Tihran: Mu'assasah-i Milli-yi Matbu'at-i Amri, 1946), 48. The original English work was by I. Kheirullah, *Bab-ed-Din: the Door of True Religion* (Chicago: C. H. Kerr, 1896).
81. For recent studies on the role of Baha'is in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, see M. Momen, "The Baha'is and the Constitutional Revolution: The Case of Sari, Mazandaran, 1906–1913," *Iranian Studies* 41, no. 3 (June 2008): 343–63; K. Milani, "Baha'i Discourse on the Constitutional Revolution," in *The Baha'is of Iran; Socio-historical Studies*, edited by D. Brookshaw and S. Fazel (New York: Routledge, 2008), 141–55; M. Yazdani, *Awza-yi Ijtima'i-yi Iran dar 'Ahd-i Qajar az khilal-i asari-i mubarakah-i Baha'i* [The social condition of Iran in the Qajar era based on the Baha'i holy writings] (Hamilton, Ontario: Association for Baha'i Studies in Persian, 2003).
82. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Majmu'ah-i Mubarakah* [The holy compilation] (Tehran: 'Ali Akbar Milani Muhibb al-Sultan, 1908).
83. Rastigar, *Tarikh-i Hazrat-i Sadr al-Sudur*, 44–46. There is also a list of students who were part of this school in 1905–1906.
84. A. Rabbani, "The Afnan Family: Some Biographical Notes," in H. Afnan, *The Genesis of the Babi-Baha'i Faiths in Shiraz and Fars*, translated by A. Rabbani (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 296–360.
85. V. Rafati, "Bahai Faith or Bahaism — The Baha'i Community of Iran," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 3 (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1989), 457.

Conclusion

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Baha'i calligraphers, missionaries, scholars, merchants, and government bureaucrats acted as cultural mediators circulating Baha'i manuscripts and printed texts over a broad geographical area spanning India, Egypt, Palestine, Russian Turkistan, and Iran. International commercial, travel and pilgrimage routes facilitated connections between a Baha'i readership of Arabic and Persian printed texts. Baha'is employed printing for a number of interrelated purposes, ranging from the consolidation of religious authority through scriptural canonization to the expansion of its membership through missionary activities. The history of Baha'i publishing provides an illuminating vector through which to examine the relationship between the orality, the printed text, and religious authority. Since the Baha'i religion emerged in a predominantly Muslim context where printing was becoming increasingly widespread, its members articulated alternative notions of scriptural authority often rooted in printed texts instead of the embodied authority of a living religious teacher who transmitted knowledge orally.