

A Tribute to
Hájí Mullá 'Alí-Akbar Shahmirzadi
(Hájí Ákhúnd)

حاج ملا علی أكبر شهمیرزادی

Apostle of Bahá'u'lláh
Hand of the Cause of God

(1842-1910)

“LIGHT AND GLORY, GREETING AND PRAISE BE UPON THE
HANDS OF HIS CAUSE, THROUGH WHOM THE LIGHT OF
FORTITUDE HATH SHONE FORTH AND THE TRUTH HATH
BEEN ESTABLISHED THAT THE AUTHORITY TO CHOOSE RESTS
WITH GOD, THE POWERFUL, THE MIGHTY, THE
UNCONSTRAINED”

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

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SHORT SUMMARY

Name: Mulla'Ali-Akbar Shahmirzadi

Also known as: (Haji Akhund)

Born: 1842

Death: March 4, 1910

Place of Birth: Shahmirzad, Iran

Location of Death: Tīhrán, Iran

Burial Location: Golestan-e-Javid (Eternal Garden) Bahá'í Cemetery in Tehran, Iran – destroyed in the 1980s

'Ali-Akbar-i-Shahmirzadi, Haji Mulla (c. 1842-1910) Known as Haji Akhund, he was one of the four Hands of the Cause of God appointed by Bahá'u'lláh. On his conversion in about 1861 his religious students in Mashhad forced him to leave the town and thereafter he was frequently arrested and imprisoned. He was responsible for much of the teaching and administration of the Persian Bahá'í community and was named an Apostle of Bahá'u'lláh by Shoghi Effendi.

Bibliography:

'Abdu'l-Bahá - Memorials of the Faithful pages 9-12

Balyuzi, Eminent Bahá'ís, pp. 265-6

Taherzadeh, Revelation, vol. 4, Pp. 294-301

FROM A SHORT PARAGPH IN “MEMORIES OF NINE YEARS IN AKKÁ” BY YOUNESS KHAN AFROUKHTEH

MOOJAN MOMEN SHORT BIOGRAPHY FOR ENCYCLOPAEDIA IRANICA (1985)

Alí Akbar Šahmírzádí (Hájjí Akhund)
by Moojan Momen

Published in Encyclopaedia Iranica, Volume 1

New York: Columbia University, 1985

‘ALĪ AKBAR ŠAHMĪRZĀDĪ, HĀJJĪ MOLLĀ known as Hájjí Ākḡund, a prominent Iranian Bahā’ī. Born in Šahmírzáđ in 1258/1842, he was the son of Mollā ‘Abbās; he pursued a formal religious education in Mašhad, where he was converted to the Bahā’ī faith. His open expression of his new beliefs caused his expulsion from Mašhad and subsequently from Šahmírzáđ. Thenceforth he lived in Tehran where he is said to have become so well known as a Bahā’ī that whenever there was any trouble, he would put on his ‘abā and turban and sit awaiting the arrival of guards to take him away. He was arrested many times and imprisoned on at least the following occasions: in about 1285/1868 on the orders of Mollā ‘Alī Kanī; in 1289/1872 for seven months and in 1300/1882 for two years by Nā’eb-al-saltāna; in 1305/1887-88; in 1308/1891 for two years, when he was imprisoned with Hájjí Amīn and several political activists, though the Bahā’īs had not been active politically. He visited ‘Akkā three times: in about 1290/1873, about 1306/1888-89, and 1312/1894-95. Bahā’ allāh appointed him one of four Hands of the Cause (Ayāđī-e Amr Allāh), and he was entrusted with many important tasks such as the custodianship and transport of the remains of the Bāb and organizing and administering the Bahā’īs of Iran. He died in Tehran on 21 Rabī’ I 1328/4 March 1910.

Bibliography:

Abu’l-Baha, *Memorials of the Faithful*, tr. M. Gail, Wilmette, Ill., 1971, pp. 9-12.

‘Abd-al-‘Alī ‘Alā’ī, *Mo’assasa-ye Ayāđī-e Amr Allāh*, Tehran, 130 Badī’/1973, pp. 371-401, including a biographical account by Š. Rāseḡ and the Persian text of *Memorials of the Faithful*.

Fāzel Māzandarānī, *Zohūr al-ḡaqq VI* (Ms. in private hands), fols. 394-98; VIII, part 1, Tehran, 131 Badī’/1974, pp. 327-29

S. K. Samandar, *Tārīḡ-eSamandar va molḡaḡāt*, Tehran, 1975, pp. 233-36.

Mullá 'Alí-Akbar

Yet another Hand of the Cause was the revered Mullá 'Alí-Akbar, upon him be the glory of God, the All-Glorious. Early in life, this illustrious man attended institutions of higher learning and labored diligently, by day and night, until he became thoroughly conversant with the learning of the day, with secular studies, philosophy, and religious jurisprudence. He frequented the gatherings of philosophers, mystics, and Shaykhís, thoughtfully traversing those areas of knowledge, intuitive wisdom, and illumination; but he thirsted after the wellspring of truth, and hungered for the bread that comes down from Heaven. No matter how he strove to perfect himself in those regions of the mind, he was never satisfied; he never reached the goal of his desires; his lips stayed parched; he was confused, perplexed, and felt that he had wandered from his path. The reason was that in all those circles he had found no passion; no joy, no ecstasy; no faintest scent of love. And as he went deeper into the core of those manifold beliefs, he discovered that from the day of the Prophet Muḥammad's advent until our own times, innumerable sects have arisen: creeds differing among themselves; disparate opinions, divergent goals, uncounted roads and ways. And he found each one, under some plea or other, claiming to reveal spiritual truth; each one believing that it alone followed the true path—this although the Muḥammedic sea could rise in one great tide, and carry all those sects away to the ocean floor. “No cry shalt thou hear from them, nor a whisper even¹.”

Whoso ponders the lessons of history will learn that this sea has lifted up innumerable waves, yet in the end each has dissolved and vanished, like a shadow drifting by. The waves have perished, but the sea lives on. This is why 'Alí Qabl-i-Akbar could never quench his thirst, till the day when he stood on the shore of Truth and cried:

**Here is a sea with treasure to the brim;
Its waves toss pearls under the great wind's thong.
Throw off your robe and plunge, nor try to swim,
Pride not yourself on swimming—dive headlong.**

Like a fountain, his heart welled and jetted forth; meaning and truth, like soft-flowing crystal waters, began to stream from his lips. At first, with humility, with spiritual poverty, he garnered the new light, and only then he proceeded to shed it abroad. For how well has it been said,

**Shall he the gift of life to others bear
Who of life's gift has never had a share?**

A teacher must proceed in this way: he must first teach himself, and then others. If he himself still walks the path of carnal appetites and lusts, how can he guide another to the “evident signs²” of God?

This honored man was successful in converting a multitude. For the sake of God he cast all caution aside, as he hastened along the ways of love. He became as one frenzied, as a vagrant and one known to be mad. Because of his new Faith, he was mocked at in Tīhrán by high and low. When he walked through the streets and bázárs, the people pointed their fingers at him, calling him a Bahá'í. Whenever

¹ Qur'án 19:98.

² Qur'án 3:91.

trouble broke out, he was the one to be arrested first. He was always ready and waiting for this, since it never failed.

Again and again he was bound with chains, jailed, and threatened with the sword. The photograph of this blessed individual, together with that of the great Amín, taken of them in their chains, will serve as an example to whoever has eyes to see. There they sit, those two distinguished men, hung with chains, shackled, yet composed, acquiescent, undisturbed.

Things came to such a pass that in the end whenever there was an uproar Mullá 'Alí would put on his turban, wrap himself in his 'abá and sit waiting, for his enemies to rouse and the farráshes to break in and the guards to carry him off to prison. But observe the power of God! In spite of all this, he was kept safe. "The sign of a knower and lover is this, that you will find him dry in the sea." That is how he was. His life hung by a thread from one moment to the next; the malevolent lay in wait for him; he was known everywhere as a Bahá'í—and still he was protected from all harm. He stayed dry in the depths of the sea, cool and safe in the heart of the fire, until the day he died.

After the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, Mullá 'Alí continued on, loyal to the Testament of the Light of the World, staunch in the Covenant which he served and heralded. During the lifetime of the Manifestation, his yearning made him hasten to Bahá'u'lláh, Who received him with grace and favor, and showered blessings upon him. He returned, then, to Írán, where he devoted all his time to serving the Cause. Openly at odds with his tyrannical oppressors, no matter how often they threatened him, he defied them. He was never vanquished. Whatever he had to say, he said. He was one of the Hands of the Cause of God, steadfast, unshakable, not to be moved.

I loved him very much, for he was delightful to converse with, and as a companion second to none. One night, not long ago, I saw him in the world of dreams. Although his frame had always been massive, in the dream world he appeared larger and more corpulent than ever. It seemed as if he had returned from a journey. I said to him, "Jináb, you have grown good and stout." "Yes," he answered, "praise be to God! I have been in places where the air was fresh and sweet, and the water crystal pure; the landscapes were beautiful to look upon, the foods delectable. It all agreed with me, of course, so I am stronger than ever now, and I have recovered the zest of my early youth. The breaths of the All-Merciful blew over me and all my time was spent in telling of God. I have been setting forth His proofs, and teaching His Faith." (The meaning of teaching the Faith in the next world is spreading the sweet savors of holiness; that action is the same as teaching.) We spoke together a little more, and then some people arrived and he disappeared.

His last resting-place is in Tíhrán. Although his body lies under the earth, his pure spirit lives on, "in the seat of truth, in the presence of the potent King³." I long to visit the graves of the friends of God, could this be possible. These are the servants of the Blessed Beauty; in His path they were afflicted; they met with toil and sorrow; they sustained injuries and suffered harm. Upon them be the glory of God, the All-Glorious. Unto them be salutation and praise. Upon them be God's tender mercy, and forgiveness.

³ Qur'án 54:55

Chapter 20: Lives of the Hands of the Cause Appointed by Bahá'u'lláh

The stories of the four Hands of the Cause appointed by Bahá'u'lláh are among the most wonderful and uplifting testimonies of love for Him, of dedication to His Cause, of sufferings and imprisonments in His path, of utter self-effacement, of unrelenting whole-hearted service to the community, and of memorable achievements. A full account of their eventful lives is beyond the scope of this book⁴,¹ but the following stories will at least provide an outline.

Hájí Mullá 'Alí-Akbar (Hájí Ákhúnd)

This great Apostle of Bahá'u'lláh came from the village of Shahríráz in the province of Khurásán. As a youth he was so eager to acquire religious knowledge that he went to the city of Mashhad where he received the usual religious education in various theological schools. But the more he searched for truth the less he found it in those circles. 'Abdu'l-Bahá describes this period of his life so eloquently:

Yet another Hand of the Cause was the revered Mullá 'Alí-Akbar, upon him be the glory of God, the All-Glorious. Early in life, this illustrious man attended institutions of higher learning and labored diligently, by day and night, until he became thoroughly conversant with the learning of the day, with secular studies, philosophy, and religious jurisprudence. He frequented the gatherings of philosophers, mystics, and Shaykhís, thoughtfully traversing those areas of knowledge, intuitive wisdom, and illumination; but he thirsted after the wellspring of truth, and hungered for the bread that comes down from Heaven. No matter how he strove to perfect himself in those regions of the mind, he was never satisfied; he never reached the goal of his desires; his lips stayed parched; he was confused, perplexed, and felt that he had wandered from his path. The reason was that in all those circles he had found no passion; no joy, no ecstasy; no faintest scent of love. And as he went deeper into the core of those manifold beliefs, he discovered that from the day of the Prophet Muhammad's advent until our own times, innumerable sects have arisen: creeds differing among themselves; disparate opinions, divergent goals, uncounted roads and ways. And he found each one, under some plea or other, claiming to reveal spiritual truth; each one believing that it alone followed the true path--this although the Muhammadic sea could rise in one great tide, and carry all those sects away to the ocean floor. 'No cry shalt thou hear from them, nor a whisper even.'⁵

Whoso ponders the lessons of history will learn that this sea has lifted up innumerable waves, yet in the end each has dissolved and vanished, like a shadow drifting by. The waves have perished, but the sea lives on. This is why 'Alí Qabl-i-Akbar could never quench his thirst, till the day when he stood on the shore of Truth and cried:

⁴ A good deal of research on their lives has been carried out by the learned scholar of the Faith, Dr Shápúr Rássekh, and published in Persia in the Bahá'í periodical *Ahang-i-Badí'*, Nos. 3-5 (BE 107) and Nos. 7-12 (BE 129). The author is indebted to Dr Rássekh for much of the material in this chapter.

⁵ Qur'án 19:98.

**Here is a sea with treasure to the brim;
Its waves toss pearls under the great wind's thong.
Throw off your robe and plunge, nor try to swim,
Pride not yourself on swimming--dive headlong⁶.**

He was about nineteen years of age when he came in contact with the Bábís of the time. Bahá'u'lláh was then in Baghdád, and a few copies of the Kitáb-i-Íqán were circulating among the believers. It appears that a perusal of that heavenly Book in about the year 1861 ignited the fire of faith in his pure heart. This fire of the love of Bahá'u'lláh began to burn within him fiercely, and as time went on its heat could be felt by those who came in contact with him; indeed, he became the fulfilment of the words of Bahá'u'lláh revealed in a Tablet to Ibn-i-Asdaq describing the quality of a true Bahá'í:

O Friends! You must all be so ablaze in this day with the fire of the love of God that the heat thereof may be manifest in all your veins, your limbs and members of your body, and the peoples of the world may be ignited by this heat and turn to the horizon of the Beloved⁷.

'Abdu'l-Bahá describes him as a fountain:

Like a fountain, his heart welled and jetted forth; meaning and truth, like soft-flowing crystal waters, began to stream from his lips. At first, with humility, with spiritual poverty, he garnered the new light, and only then he proceeded to shed it abroad. For how well has it been said,

**Shall he the gift of life to others bear
Who of life's gift has never had a share?**

A teacher must proceed in this way: he must first teach himself, and then others. If he himself still walks the path of carnal appetites and lusts, how can he guide another to the 'evident signs'⁸ of God?⁹

Rank and fortune never came Mullá 'Alí-Akbar's way. Instead, sufferings and persecution were his lot from the early days of his conversion to the Faith. Soon after embracing the Cause of God he was forced out of the city of Mashhad by the fanatical theological students. He returned to his native village and began to teach the Cause there. Again the enemies became alarmed and attacked him in every way. Eventually he left his family and settled in Tihrán. Soon he became known as a Bahá'í there, and his teaching exploits evoked great opposition from the clergy. 'Abdu'l-Bahá writes of him in these words:

This honored man was successful in converting a multitude. For the sake of God he cast all caution aside, as he hastened along the ways of love. He became as one frenzied, as a vagrant and one known to be mad. Because of his new Faith, he was mocked at in Tihrán by high and low. When he walked through the streets and bázárs, the people pointed their fingers at him, calling him a Bahá'í. Whenever trouble broke out, he was the one to be arrested first. He was always ready and waiting for this, since it never failed¹⁰.

The first time he was imprisoned was by order of Hájí Mullá 'Alíy-i-Kaní¹¹, the highest religious dignitary of Tihrán. This is believed to have been around 1868.

⁶ Memorials of the Faithful, pp. 9-10.

⁷ Unpublished compilation, National Archives Committee, no. 27, p. 394.

⁸ Qur'án 3:91.

⁹ Memorials of the Faithful, p. 10.

¹⁰ Memorials of the Faithful, pp. 10-11.

¹¹ For his involvement in the martyrdom of Badí' see The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh Volume 3, p. 191.

The Pen of Bahá'u'lláh addressed a Tablet¹² to this clergyman which is wrathful in its tone and highly condemnatory in its contents. He informs this proud and tyrannical high priest that the Prophet of Islám wept aloud in the highest paradise because of his wicked deeds. He sternly rebukes him for issuing death warrants for the believers, proclaims to him the greatness of His Cause, asserts that if all the powers of the earth were to be leagued against Him they would utterly fail to prevent the establishment of His Faith in the world, and warns that God lies in wait and is watchful of his doings. In other Tablets Bahá'u'lláh foreshadowed that God would soon strike him down in the same way as He did the 'Wolf' and the 'She-serpent'¹³, and this what happened.

It is not known exactly how long Mullá 'Alí-Akbar was kept in this prison, but some years later in 1872 he was again taken to prison by the orders of Kamrán Mírzá the Náyibu's-Saltanih, the Governor of Tihrán¹⁴. This imprisonment, which lasted seven months, began only three days after his marriage to a certain Fátimih Khánum who became his devoted consort throughout his eventful life. It is reported that at the time of his marriage he was living in a dilapidated room and his earthly possessions consisted of a sheepskin and a kettle!

Mullá 'Alí-Akbar endured the hardships of imprisonment in a spirit of joy, of pride and of thankfulness to his Lord. He was kept in a narrow dark prison cell with a chain around his neck and stocks on his feet. He suffered greatly in this prison. In a Tablet¹⁵ Bahá'u'lláh describes how the inmates of the highest Paradise have raised their voices and announced the glad-tidings that 'Alí-Akbar had entered the prison in the path of God. He showers upon his soul His blessings and His love, and denounces the actions of the oppressors. In another Tablet¹⁶ He states that the Concourse on High have lamented for his sufferings, and urges him to become exhilarated with an abiding joy for he has endured severe hardships in the path of his Lord. Soon after his release from this prison he travelled to northern parts of Persia, where he was able to enthuse the believers and galvanize them into action. Bahá'u'lláh, in a Tablet⁹ revealed after this journey, praises his work, states that God has chosen him for the service of His Cause, and asserts that the greatest service to His Threshold is that of uniting the souls and causing them to love each other. He directs him to be engaged in this type of activity at all times, and assures him of divine assistance in his life.

Mullá 'Alí-Akbar went on pilgrimage and attained the presence of his Lord for the first time in 1873. He basked in the sunshine of Bahá'u'lláh's unfailing love and bounties for about six months. Then he returned to Tihrán and resumed his devoted services to the Cause he loved so much. He was constantly teaching receptive souls, deepening the believers, and encouraging them with the utmost love to serve the Faith of God. Mullá 'Alí-Akbar was taken to prison six times altogether and spent about seven years bound with chains and fetters in the gloomy surroundings that were the Persian jails. 'Abdu'l-Bahá speaks of this in these words:

Again and again he was bound with chains, jailed, and threatened with the sword. The photograph of this blessed individual, together with that of the great Amín, taken of them in their chains, will serve as an example to whoever has eyes to see. There they sit, those two distinguished men, hung with chains, shackled, yet composed, acquiescent, undisturbed¹⁷.

¹² Má'idíy-i-Ásamání, vol. 4, p. 360.

¹³ see above, ch. 6.

¹⁴ He was a son of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh, and an influential personality.

¹⁵ Mu'assisíy-i-Ayádíy-i-Amru'lláh, pp. 394-5.

¹⁶ Unpublished compilation, National Archives Committee, no. 19, p. 421.

¹⁷ For this photograph see vol. 3, facing p. 61. (A.T.) [In this compilation, go to the [Photographs section](#)]

Things came to such a pass that in the end whenever there was an uproar Mullá 'Alí would put on his turban, wrap himself in his 'abá and sit waiting, for his enemies to rouse and the farráshes to break in and the guards to carry him off to prison. But observe the power of God! In spite of all this, he was kept safe. 'The sign of a knower and lover is this, that you will find him dry in the sea.' That is how he was. His life hung by a thread from one moment to the next; the malevolent lay in wait for him; he was known everywhere as a Bahá'í--and still he was protected from all harm. He stayed dry in the depths of the sea, cool and safe in the heart of the fire, until the day he died¹⁸.

One of his imprisonments, which lasted about two years, was noteworthy in that Náyibu's-Saltanih arrested a number of outstanding personalities among the Bahá'ís in 1882 and interrogated them extensively about the Faith¹⁹. Another imprisonment was around the year 1887 and finally his two-year imprisonment which began in 1891, the first part in the prison of Qazvín for about eighteen months in company with Hájí Amín and the remainder in the prison of Tihrán. It was on the occasion of their imprisonment in Qazvín that Bahá'u'lláh revealed the celebrated prayer²⁰ for the Hands of the Cause.

Soon after the martyrdom of Badí' a severe famine swept over Persia. Mullá 'Alí-Akbar begged Bahá'u'lláh for it to come to an end. We have already described Bahá'u'lláh's response in the previous volume. One of his great achievements was the transportation and protection of the remains of the Báb in Tihrán, a detailed account of which also appears in the previous volume²¹.

When Bahá'u'lláh revealed the Kitáb-i-Aqdas He withheld the publication of certain laws. These included the text of the Obligatory Prayers²². In one of His Tablets²³ Bahá'u'lláh orders His amanuensis, Mírzá Áqá Ján, to send a copy of the Obligatory Prayers to Persia as a favour to Mullá 'Alí-Akbar who had asked for them. He confirms that the Obligatory Prayers had been revealed a few years earlier. Mírzá Áqá Ján gives the date of this release as one and a half hours after sunset on 27 October 1887.

In numerous Tablets addressed to Mullá 'Alí-Akbar, Bahá'u'lláh urges him, as He does other Hands, to move around the community and instil into the minds of the believers the power of the Faith, to illumine their faces with the effulgent light of His Revelation and to ignite within their hearts the fire of the love of their Lord.

Mullá 'Alí-Akbar attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh for the second time around the year 1888. When in His presence he would continually receive a share of the bounties of Bahá'u'lláh, and when away he used to write to Him regularly and receive various exalted Tablets. Once he wrote to Mírzá Áqá Ján, Bahá'u'lláh's amanuensis, and complained somewhat. When Bahá'u'lláh was informed He wrote that he had no right to complain, for so much spiritual food and imperishable benefits had been showered upon him from the heaven of divine bounty that he would be unable to reckon them. Therefore he ought to thank, and thank and thank (Bahá'u'lláh repeats the word nine times!) his Lord for the blessings He has vouchsafed to him²⁴.

It must be stated that one of the great services that all four Hands rendered to the Cause was the stewardship of the Bahá'í community after the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh. Through their loving care and vigilance they protected the believers

¹⁸ Memorials of the Faithful, p. 11.

¹⁹ For further details see below, pp. 379-80.

²⁰ see above, p. 288.

²¹ see Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh Volume 3, pp. 200-201, and Appendix 1, for these two incidents.

²² Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh Volume 3, pp. 348-51

²³ Unpublished compilation, National Archives Committee, no. 15, p. 435.

²⁴ Unpublished compilation, National Archives Committee, no. 15, p. 414.

from the onslaught of the Covenant-breakers, and enabled the faithful to remain steadfast in the Covenant.

'Abdu'l-Bahá pays a glowing tribute in this context to the memory of this great and godly man, who passed away in March 1910:

After the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, Mullá 'Alí continued on, loyal to the Testament of the Light of the World, staunch in the Covenant which he served and heralded. During the lifetime of the Manifestation, his yearning made him hasten to Bahá'u'lláh, Who received him with grace and favor, and showered blessings upon him. He returned, then, to Írán, where he devoted all his time to serving the Cause. Openly at odds with his tyrannical oppressors, no matter how often they threatened him, he defied them. He was never vanquished. Whatever he had to say, he said. He was one of the Hands of the Cause of God, steadfast, unshakeable, not to be moved.

I loved him very much, for he was delightful to converse with, and as a companion second to none...

His last resting-place is in Tihrán. Although his body lies under the earth, his pure spirit lives on, 'in the seat of truth, in the presence of the potent King.'²⁵ I long to visit the graves of the friends of God, could this be possible. These are the servants of the Blessed Beauty; in His path they were afflicted; they met with toil and sorrow; they sustained injuries and suffered harm. Upon them be the glory of God, the All-Glorious. Unto them be salutation and praise. Upon them be God's tender mercy, and forgiveness²⁶.

²⁵ Qur'án 54-5.

²⁶ Memorials of the Faithful, pp. 11-12.

H.M. BALYUZI – EMINENT BAHÁ'ÍS IN THE TIME OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Mirza Abu'l-Fadl has paid glowing tribute to the quality of Mulla Muhammad-Rida's courage and his unswerving faith. 'Abdu'l-Baha mentions it, when He Himself was lauding Mirza Abu'l-Fadl's humility and selflessness. 'Abdu'l-Baha recounted in a meeting, held in His house in Haifa after the death of Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, that despite his own brilliant contribution to the arguments conducted in the presence of Prince Kamran Mirza, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl always stoutly and meekly maintained that on those occasions the pride of place belonged to Mulla Muhammad-Rida and he outshone them all by his boldness, firmness and certitude.

One night, it is related, Prince Kamran Mirza called Mulla Muhammad-Rida to his own private apartments to have dinner with him. Dinner over, he suddenly turned to the prisoner with this abrupt question: 'Akhund! Tell me: whom do you consider Baha'u'llah to be--an Imam or a Prophet?' Not at a loss for an answer, Mulla Muhammad-Rida replied: 'Your Royal Highness! We recognize in Him the Ancient Beauty, the Manifestation of God, the Dawning-Place of the Sun of Divinity, the Horizon whereupon has appeared the Light of the Unseen Who is beyond all comprehension. Should we do otherwise we would have denied all the Prophets Who came in past ages, and the Glad Tidings imparted by Them would have been made senseless, since They have foretold the Advent of the Lord of Hosts, the Heavenly Father, the day when men will come face to face with the Godhead. We refer to Him by these names, which are not of our own invention. Moreover, it is not names that we look up to, because Baha'u'llah is sanctified beyond all names, designations, appellation and description. He is both the Lord of Names and independent of names.'

Then Mulla Muhammad-Rida went on to present the Prince with proofs and pointers. The next day the prisoners were, as usual, brought to the assemblage where the great and mighty of the land had gathered, although that whole pretence of investigation was a mockery of justice, as is seen elsewhere in this volume. 'Well,' said Prince Kamran Mirza, turning to Haji Mulla 'Ali-Akbar-i-Shahmirzadi, known as Haji Akhund, 'what is your view of Mulla Muhammad-Rida; do you consider him to be a truthful person, is he an honest man?' To which query Haji Akhund replied: 'Indeed and indeed, he is a truthful person; he never lies.' Now Kamran Mirza found his chance to score a decisive point. 'If that is so,' he said, 'then the rest of you are all liars and deceivers. You have been telling me all along that in Baha'u'llah you witness the Return of Husayn [Rij'at-i-Husayni], whereas Mulla Muhammad-Rida tells me that the Light of the Invisible Godhead is shining in the Person of Baha'u'llah.' Haji Mulla 'Ali-Akbar was amazed and said mildly, 'Your Royal Highness! Mulla Muhammad-Rida is the Sufi of the Babis, waxing extravagant.' Then, Mulla Muhammad-Rida himself intervened: 'Your Royal Highness! You listen to me. What I have said is the truth. These are the samovar-centred Baha'is: when the samovar is boiling and they are seated somewhere safe and secure, they all say the same as I have told you. That is the belief of all; but now, at the time of testing, they draw a veil over it all and follow the dictates of circumspection.' After that there was only silence. Eminent Baha'is "In 1301²⁷ [sic], a number of the believers were arrested by Nayibu's-Saltanih, Kamran Mirza, in Tihran and kept in prison in harsh circumstances for two years. Every day they were interrogated and matters were made very difficult for them. I wrote to Nasiri'd-Din Shah saying: 'Why have you, without any reason and without my authorization [fatwa], caused such harm to befall them? It has been due to you that this Faith has spread among the peoples and countries. The Apostle of God [i.e., Muhammad] has said:

²⁷ AH 1300 was the year of these arrests, AD 12 November 1882 -- 1 November 1883.

"Mankind seeks after what is forbidden." Your prohibitions and persecutions have strengthened this cause. You must certainly, as soon as my letter arrives, send for the prisoners, be kind to them and set them free. And from now onwards, do not cause anyone to be killed on account of this matter.' After the arrival of my letter, Nasiri'd-Din Shah summoned the prisoners, gave them one sharafi each and set them free. Among them was Haji Mulla 'Ali-Akbar [-i-Shahmirzadi, Haji Akhund], Aqa Mirza Abu'l-Fadl [-i-Gulpaygani], Haji Amin, Mashhadi 'Aliyi-Qazvini and other important persons. That was one of the things that I did to serve the Cause.

MOOJAN MOMEN - AKHUND, HAJI (HAJI MULLA 'ALI-AKBAR SHAHMIRZADI) (1995)

Haji Mulla 'Ali-Akbar Shahmirzadi (1258/1842-1910), known as Haji Akhund, a prominent Iranian Bahá'í who was named by Bahá'u'lláh as a Hand of the Cause (q.v.). In the tablets of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá he is often addressed as "'Ali qabl-i-Akbar" ('Ali before Akbar)

Haji Akhund (the word Akhund means roughly the same as mulla, a cleric) was born in 1258/1842 in the village of Shahmirzad which is situated some thirty kilometers north of the town of Simnan, which is about one-quarter of the way along the road from Tehran to Mashhad. The village had been a stronghold of the new religion from the time of the Bab, and some of its inhabitants had been among the defenders of Shaykh Tabarsi (q.v.). Haji Akhund's father, Mulla 'Abbas, had been a follower of Aqa Mir Muhammad 'Ali, a prominent cleric of the area who had raised an adventist fervor among the people by prophesying the near advent of the Imam Mahdi. Mulla 'Abbas had accompanied Aqa Mir Muhammad 'Ali to Karbala and had become a Babi there. The defeat of the Babis at Shaykh Tabarsi, however, had put doubts into his mind and his ardor had cooled.

Haji Akhund thus grew up in a household in which there was some mention of the new religion. It was not, however, until he grew up, married his cousin, and went to Mashhad to further his clerical education that Haji Akhund learned more about the new religion. In Mashhad he enquired among many different religious groups: Sufis, Shaykhis, and the legal scholars. He eventually came across a copy of Bahá'u'lláh's Book of Certitude (q.v.) and, after discussions with Mulla Sadiq Muqaddas (q.v.) and others, he became a Babi in about 1861.

In Mashhad, Haji Akhund started to teach his new-found faith among his fellow students. Some were converted but most rejected and persecuted him. On his return to Shahmirzad, Haji Akhund again engaged the mullas of the area in religious debates about the new religion. This resulted in much antagonism towards him so that eventually he was forced to leave his home, his wife and child, and his possessions, and migrate to Tehran.

Haji Akhund's enemies in his home village did not leave matters alone, however, and wrote to Mulla 'Ali Kani, one of the leading mujtahids of Tehran, who ordered Haji Akhund's arrest and imprisonment in 1868. He was eventually freed through the intervention of Mirza 'Isa, minister to the governor of Tehran.

At about this time instructions came from Bahá'u'lláh in Edirne for Haji Akhund and Sayyid Jamal Burujirdi to remove the remains of the Bab from the shrine of Imamzadih Ma'sum where they had been concealed. This proved providential, as shortly afterwards the custodians of that shrine embarked on a program of reconstruction that would have led to the discovery of the remains. Haji Akhund and Sayyid Jamal took the remains to Shah 'Abdu'l-'Azim but could not find a safe hiding-place there, and so they set off for Chashmih-'Ali. On the way, they came across the dilapidated buildings of the Mosque of Masha'u'llah, where they buried the casket under bricks in a niche in the wall. Unfortunately, they found on the next day that the hiding-place had been discovered and the casket tampered with. They therefore took the casket to Tehran and managed to get it in past the guarded gates of the city. They deposited the remains in the home of one of the Bahá'ís, Mirza Hasan Vazir. Haji Akhund rented a room in this house and lived there as custodian of the remains of the Bab for a period of fifteen months. It happened, however, that word of the presence of the remains of the Bab spread, and Bahá'ís began to arrive in large numbers to pay their respects. There was a danger of the remains being discovered and so Haji Akhund wrote to Bahá'u'lláh seeking guidance. Bahá'u'lláh

sent Haji Shah-Muhammad Manshadi to remove the remains to another location that would be secret.

In Tehran, Haji Akhund lived in various Bahá'í households and was soon one of the focal points of the community there. He became one of the main channels through which the Bahá'ís communicated with Bahá'u'lláh and received his replies. He also became well-known to the authorities as one of the leading Bahá'ís and thus a target of persecution. 'Abdu'l-Bahá writes that whenever the Haji heard of an outburst of persecution of the Bahá'ís, he would wrap his cloak around him and await the arrival of the guards to arrest him (MF 11). Over the years he succeeded in renewing his father's faith, as well as converting his two brothers and four sisters, and other inhabitants of his home village.

In about 1287/1870-71, Haji Akhund traveled to Akka to visit Bahá'u'lláh. During his absence, his wife died and, on his return to Tehran, Haji Akhund married in 1289/1872 Fatimih Bagum of Isfahan, a descendant of one of the Safavid kings. On only the third day of their marriage, government officers broke into their home and arrested the Haji on the orders of the governor of Tehran, Kamran Mirza Nayibu's-Saltanih. Haji Akhund spent seven months in prison, until one day the Shah ordered prisoners in the 'Anbar prison of Tehran to be released as thanksgiving for his deliverance from serious injury in a fall from his horse. After staying in his home for about two months, Haji Akhund set off on a three-month tour of the Bahá'í communities in Mazandaran. After a further brief spell at home, Haji Akhund set off again for Akka, where he remained for six months.

At the end of 1882, Haji Akhund was again arrested as part of the general round-up of Tehran Bahá'ís that occurred on the orders of Kamran Mirza Nayibu's-Saltanih and at the instigation of the mujtahid Sayyid Sadiq Sanglaji. On this occasion, Haji Akhund remained in prison with his fellow-Bahá'ís for two years.

Haji Akhund was imprisoned on several further occasions. In 1305/1887 he was arrested together with a number of the Bahá'ís. He then traveled again to Akka and stayed for some time. It was at about this time that he was appointed a Hand of the Cause. In April 1891, when the Shah was trying to suppress the growing demand for reforms, he ordered the arrest of a number of the leading reformers. Among these, although they had no connection with the political agitation, were two Bahá'ís, Haji Akhund and Haji Abu'l-Hasan Amin (q.v.), who were kept in prison in Tehran and Qazvin for two years.

During this last imprisonment, Bahá'u'lláh had passed away and, when Haji Akhund was released, he departed for Akka in 1312/1894. He learned there of the rebellion of Mirza Muhammad 'Ali (q.v.) against 'Abdu'l-Bahá. With 'Abdu'l-Bahá's permission, Haji Akhund met with Mirza Muhammad 'Ali and tried unsuccessfully to persuade him to alter his stance.

Upon his return to Tehran, Haji Akhund began to emphasize the Covenant (q.v.) and moved to forestall the activities of the Covenant-breakers (q.v.). He acted in concert with the other Hands of the Cause in setting up a consulting assembly in Tehran in 1315/1897, which evolved into an elected Central Spiritual Assembly in 1317/1899. He died in Tehran on 4 March 1910 and was buried in the shrine of Imamzadih Ma'sum. He left behind one son and several daughters.

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THE NINETEEN APOSTLES OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH



The nineteen Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh

Below are very condensed profiles of the Nineteen Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh pictured in the photographic montage on the previous page.

Apostles who also had the honor of being Hands of the Cause are bordered in a darker shade of crimson.

[1] Mírzá Músá surnamed Áqáy-i-Kalím

میرزا موسی

(unknown – 1887)

Áqá – and Mírzá are persian terms of respect similar to “Sir” Kalím means “speaker” Músá is the Arabic for Moses, and the Arabic title for Moses was Kalímu'lláh, “the One Who spoke with God [on Mount Sinai] the title of Mírzá Músá, Áqáy-i-Kalím, could be a reference to his first name, calling out the Speaker in Moses in his given title.

Áqáy-i-Kalím was the only true brother of Bahá'u'lláh, meaning that they shared the same mother. He was later named by Shoghi Effendi as one of the nineteen Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh. The life of Mírzá Músá was so inextricably bound up with that of Bahá'u'lláh himself, that his life and background mirror the life and travels of Bahá'u'lláh. He was an integral part of correspondence between Bahá'u'lláh and the Bahá'ís. He experienced the same imprisonment, exile, assaults, and degrading circumstances that were given to the small band of family members associated with Bahá'u'lláh and ‘Abdu'l-Bahá. In the history of the Bahá'í cause, Mírzá Músá stands out as a loyal and faithful follower until the end.

[2] Mírzá Áqá Buzurg-i-Nishapuri (Badí‘)

بدیع

(1852 – 1869)

Given the title “The Pride of Martyrs” or Fakhru'sh-Shuhada' : فخر الشهداء

Badí‘ is most famous for being the bearer of a tablet written by Bahá'u'lláh to Nasiri'd-Din Shah, for which he was tortured and killed at the age of 17. The Bahá'í calendar, known as the Badí‘ calendar, was named in his honour. Shoghi Effendi named him one of the Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh

[3] Mírzá Muhammad-Hasan

سید محمد حسن

(1833 – 1879)

Given the title Sultánu'sh-Shuhada' "King of Martyrs": الشّهداءسلطان

Mírzá Muhammad-Hasan and Mírzá Muhammad-Husayn were Siyyids, descendents of His Holiness the Prophet Muhammad. Mírzá Muhammad-Hasan, King of Martyrs, was beheaded in 1879 with his older brother, Mírzá Muhammad-Husayn, given the title Beloved of Martyrs or 'Maḥbúbu'sh-Shuhadá': الشّهداءمحبوب. The brothers are called Núrayn-i-Nayyirayn: نيران نورين or Twin Shining Lights.

[4] Mullá Abu'l-Hasan-i-Ardikání (Hájí Amín)

ملا أبو الحسن أرديكاني

(1831 – 1928)

Surnamed Amín-i-Iláhí and better known as Hájí Amín. Hájí is an honorific, a title applied to those who have made pilgrimage to Mecca and Amín means trustworthy, a title thath embodies the absolute, enduring, exemplary trustworthiness of a trustee of Huqúqu'lláh, then and now.

Mullá Abu'l-Hasan-i-Ardikání surnamed Amín-i-Iláhí, better known as Hájí Amín was an eminent follower of Bahá'u'lláh. Hájí Amín served as the second trustee of Huqúqu'lláh, and was posthumously appointed a Hand of the Cause of God by Shoghi Effendi, who also identified him as one of the nineteen Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh.

[5] Mírzá Muḥammad or Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl-i-Gulpáygání

میرزا أبو الفضل گلپایگانی

(1844 – 1914)

Mírzá Muḥammad or Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl-i-Gulpáygání was the foremost Bahá'í scholar who helped spread the Bahá'í Faith in Egypt, Turkmenistan, and the United States. He is one of the few Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh who never actually met Bahá'u'lláh. His given name was Muhammad, and he chose the alias Abu'l-Faḍl (progenitor of virtue) for himself, but 'Abdu'l-Bahá frequently addressed him as Abu'l-Fada'il (progenitor of virtues).

[6] Mírzá ‘Alí-Muhammad (Varqá)

میرزا علی محمد

(ورقا)

(unknown – 1896)

Varqá born Mírzá ‘Alí-Muhammad was an eminent follower of Bahá’u’lláh. Varqá was referred to by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as a Hand of the Cause of God, and identified as one of the nineteen Apostles of Bahá’u’lláh. Bahá’u’lláh wrote a tablet addressed to Varqá regarding the high station of the King and Beloved of Martyrs. Varqá is well known as the father of Rúhu’lláh. The two of them were the first among a large group to be martyred in 1896 by Persian authorities.

[7] Mírzá Maḥmúd-i-Furúghí

میرزا محمود

فاضل فروغی

(unknown – 1927-8)

Fáḍil is a word for scholar while Furúgh means radiance.

Mírzá Maḥmúd-i-Furúghí also known by the appellation Fádil-i-Furúghí, was an eminent follower of Bahá’u’lláh. He was the only Iranian Bahá’í teacher who was given the chance to meet face to face with a Qajar Shah, was later identified as one of the nineteen Apostles of Bahá’u’lláh.

[8] Ḥají Mullá ‘Alí-Akbar Shāhmírzádí (Ḥají Ákhúnd)

حاج ملا علی اکبر شه میرزادی

(1842 – March 4, 1910)

Ḥají, as we’ve seen with Ḥají Amín is a title for someone having made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and Akhúnd is a kind of Muslim religious cleric, a theologian.

Ḥají Mullá ‘Alí-Akbar Shāhmírzádí known as Ḥají Ákhúnd was an eminent follower of Bahá’u’lláh. He was appointed a Hand of the Cause, and identified as one of the nineteen Apostles of Bahá’u’lláh. He suffered frequent imprisonments for his staunch Faith. It is recorded that when there was an outburst against the Bahá’ís in Tíhrán, he would wrap his cloak around himself and sit waiting for the guards to come and arrest him. He was arrested many times in Tíhrán: in 1886 on the orders of Mulla ‘Alí Kani, in 1872 for seven months by Nayibu's-Saltanih, in 1882 for two years by Nayibu's-Saltanih, in 1887, and in 1891 for two years with Ḥají Amín. He visited ‘Akká, where Bahá’u’lláh and his family were prisoners, on three occasions: in 1873, 1888, and 1899. He was given the task of transferring the remains of the Báb from various secret locations to ‘Akká, where they remained for several years until they were eventually entombed in the Shrine of the Báb. He was one of the four Hands of the Cause appointed by Bahá’u’lláh himself, and was responsible for much of the Bahá’í activity in Iran until his death on 4 March, 1910.

[9] Áqá Muḥammad-i-Qá'iní (Nabíl-i-Akbar)

نبیل الأكبر

(1829 – 1892)

Áqá Muḥammad-i-Qá'iní also known as Fadil-i-Qa'ini (the Learned One of Qa'in) surnamed Nabíl-i-Akbar, was a distinguished Bahá’í from the town of Qá'in. He is one of 19 Apostles of Bahá’u’lláh, and referred to by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as a Hand of the Cause of God. In the abjad notation the name 'Muhammad' has the same numerical value as 'Nabíl'. Nabíl-i-Akbar was the recipient of a tablet from Bahá’u’lláh, the Tablet of Wisdom.

[10] Afnán-i-Yazdí

أفنان اليازدي

(1830 – August, 1911)

Afnán-i-Yazdí, also known as Ḥájí Mírzá Muḥammad-Taqí, surnamed Vakílu'd-Dawlih was an eminent follower of Bahá'u'lláh. He is identified as one of the nineteen Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh and was entitled Vakílu'l-Haqq (Representative of the True One) by Him.

He was an Afnán, a cousin of the Báb. His father was Haji Siyyid Muhammad, the Uncle of the Báb, and the recipient of the Kitáb-i-Iqán, the Book of Certitude in 1862.

Afnán-i-Yazdí met the Báb in Shiraz and Bushihr as a youth. He later wrote about meeting the Báb at the age of fifteen:

"I remember that every Sunday I used to go to the house of my illustrious aunt, the mother of the Báb, where I had the great privilege of attaining His presence...I remember especially on one occasion He permitted me to sit in His presence, and graciously cut a slice of melon which He gave to me. He was busy writing some prayers and verses. He then handed me one of the prayers He had revealed during the week and asked me to chant it in His presence...The Báb left Shiráz for Mecca via Búshihir that same week or the week after...Two or three months later I went to Búshihir to join my father...On His return from Mecca the Báb came to our house in Búshihir where I spent several days in His presence. During those days every moment of His time was spent in revealing the verses of God and writing prayers...One evening with tearful eyes I begged Him in all sincerity to pray for me so that I might spend my days in the service of God and in the end attain to His good pleasure. He assured me that it would be so."

ADIB TAHERZADEH – THE REVELATION OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH VOLUME 1

Afnán-i-Yazdí was the chief builder of the first House of Worship in 'Ishqábád, present day Turkmenistan, which had been initiated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in or about 1902.

[11] Ḥájí Mírzá Muḥammad-Taqí

ابن ابهر

(1853/54 – 1917)

Ḥájí Mírzá Muḥammad-Taqí known as Ibn-i-Abhar, was an eminent follower of Bahá'u'lláh. He was appointed a Hand of the Cause, and identified as one of the nineteen Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh. He Throughout his life he was able to visit the Holy Land eleven times, and he traveled extensively inside Iran, the Caucasus, Turkmenistan and India.

[12] Mullá Muḥammad-i-Zarandí

نبيل أعظم

نبيل زرندي

(July 29, 1831 – 1892)

Mullá Muḥammad-i-Zarandí, more commonly known as Nabíl-i-A'zam "the Great Nabíl" or Nabíl-i-Zarandí "Nabíl of Zarand", was an eminent Bahá'í historian during the time of Bahá'u'lláh, and one of the nineteen Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh. He is most famous for authoring *The Dawn-breakers*, which stands out as one of the most important and extensive accounts of the ministry of the Báb. He learned about the Bábí religion at the age of 16 and met Bahá'u'lláh in 1851. He made several journeys on behalf of Bahá'u'lláh, was imprisoned in Egypt and is the only person known to have made the two pilgrimages to the House of the Báb in Shíráz and the House of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád in accordance with the rites set out by Bahá'u'lláh. After the passing of Bahá'u'lláh, and at the request of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, he arranged a Tablet of Visitation from a compilation of Bahá'u'lláh's writings which is now used in the Holy Shrines. Shortly afterwards, overcome with grief, he walked into the sea and drowned.

[13] Shaykh Kázim-i-Samandar

كاظم السمندي

(February 1844 – February 5, 1918)

Known as Samandar, Shaykh Kázim-i-Samandar was a favored Apostle of Bahá'u'lláh.

He was born to a prominent Bahá'í family of Qazvin of Bábí and Shaykhi background.

Samandar was born Muhammad Kázim Qazvíní on February 1844 in Qazvin, the eldest surviving son of Shaykh Muhammad Qazvíní. Shaykh Muhammad was an early Bábí and later Bahá'í. His father was bastinadoed in Qazvín and attained the presence of the Báb in Máh-Kú. Later Shaykh Muhammad was entitled Nabil by Bahá'u'lláh.

His mother was a disciple of Táhiri.

Bahá'u'lláh renamed Muhammad Kázim Qazvíní as “Samandar” a Persian word meaning “Phoenix.”

Bahá'u'lláh also sent Samandar numerous tablets and prayers in his honour, much of which is still extant. The most famous is perhaps Lawh-i-Fu'ád (tablet of Fu'ád) which was addressed to Samandar. He worked tirelessly teaching the faith in Persia and traveled all around the country teaching people of the Bahá'í Faith and its principles. 'Abdu'l-Bahá also kept in regular correspondence with him.

He had many children; a mixture of boys and girls of whom all married into prominent Bahá'í families of Persia.

His most famous child is possibly Taráz'u'lláh Samandarí, a Hand of the Cause of God.

He made two pilgrimages to 'Akká to visit Bahá'u'lláh and the Bahá'í holy family ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Ásíyih Khánum, Bahíyyih Khánum and Munírih Khánum).

Samandar died February 5th, 1918. Shoghi Effendi described him a “flame of the love of God” and identified him as one of the Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh. His memoirs *Tárikh-i-Samandar* was regularly referred to and seen a source of valuable Bahá'í history.

His relatives are known by the surname Samandarí.

[14] Mírzá Muhammad Mustafá

میرزا محمد مصطفی

(1837 – 1910)

Served the Baha'is travelling to Akká while living in Beirut on instructions of Bahá'u'lláh. He also met some of the Bab's Letters of the Living and hosted Tahíríh.

The father of Mirza Muhammad Mustafay-i-Baghdadi, Shaykh Muhammad Shibi, was a distinguished follower Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti. He became a Babí when visiting the Letter of the Living Mulla 'Aliy-i-Bastami when he was imprisoned in Baghdad.

Later, Tahíríh another Letter of the Living, stayed at the house of Shaykh Muhammad Shibl in Baghdad for a period. When she was expelled from Iraq, Shaykh Muhammad and Mírzá Muhammad Mustafá accompanied her to Qazvin and then travelled on to Tihran, where they met Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i.

Mirza Mustafa became devoted to Baha'u'llah during the time He was in Baghdad

Later, Baha'u'llah instructed him to take up his residence in Beirut where he was frequently of service to those Baha'is travelling to 'Akká. After the ascension of Baha'u'llah, he moved to Alexandretta (Iskandarun), where he died in 1910.

[15] Mírzá Husayn-i-Isfahání

مشکن قلم

(unknown – 1912)

Mírzá Husayn-i-Isfahání surnamed Mishkín-Qalam, meaning either “Musk-Scented Pen” or “Jet Black Pen” was a famous calligrapher of 19th century Persia.

‘Abdu'l-Bahá called him a second Mír ‘Imád, a sixteenth-century calligrapher of the Safavid dynasty who is perhaps the most celebrated Persian calligrapher. Mishkín-Qalam was also a skilled astronomer.

When visiting Bahá'u'lláh in Adrianople, he would often write out the phrase Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá (O Glory of the All-Glorious) in many different forms, some taking the form of a bird, and send them everywhere. One of his renderings of this phrase is now one of the three common symbols of the Bahá'í Faith, known as the Greatest Name.

[16] Hájí Mírzá Ḥasan-i-Adíbu'l-'Ulamá

حاجي مرزا حسن أديب العلماء

(1848 – September 2, 1919)

Hájí Mírzá Ḥasan-i-Adíbu'l-'Ulamá, known as Mírzá Ḥasan or Adíb, was an eminent follower of Bahá'u'lláh and was one of the four Hands of the Cause appointed by Bahá'u'lláh. After the passing of Bahá'u'lláh, he became instrumental in dealing with the activities of Covenant-breakers in Iran. He later participated in the meetings that evolved into the Central Spiritual Assembly of Tíhrán, which later became the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran, of which he was the chairman. He travelled to India and Burma to help spread the Bahá'í Faith in those areas.

[17] Shaykh Muhammad 'Alí-i-Qá'íní

شيخ محمد علي قائني

(February 2, 1849 – April 1924)

Nephew of Nabil-i-Akbar. Traveled to India and later Haifa and taught about the Bahá'í Faith. He was later sent to Ishqábád by Abdu'l-Bahá to take care of the education of children there. Along with other followers he helped in completing the unfinished writings of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl.

Shaykh Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Qa'ini was the nephew of Nabil-i-Akbar. He was possessed of many talents, excelling in oratory, calligraphy and music. He was born in Naw-Firist near Birjand in AH 1277 (AD 20 July 1860 -- 8 July 1861). His parents died when he was young and he was brought up by an uncle, Mulla Aqa 'Ali. While still a young man undertaking religious studies at Mashhad, he was apprised of the <p274> Baha'i Faith and soon became an ardent believer. He became the close companion of his erudite uncle Nabil-i-Akbar until the latter's death in 1892. He lived in 'Ishqabad for a while and then in Tihiran where he married the daughter of Nabil-i-Akbar. In 1903, he was instructed to accompany Mirza Hasan-i-Adib to India, but while travelling there he was caught up in the upheavals against the Baha'is in Isfahan during that year. He was stripped of his possessions, severely beaten, and was fortunate to escape with his life. He had to return to Tihiran but later reached India and remained there for one-and-a-half years. He then travelled to Haifa. Here 'Abdu'l-Baha asked him to go to 'Ishqabad and to take charge of the education of children there.

He established himself in 'Ishqabad and, apart from various journeys made for the service of the Faith, he lived there for the rest of his life. After the death of Mirza Abu'l-Faḍl-i-Gulpaygani, Shaykh Muhammad-'Ali was asked to go to Haifa to bring to completion, with the help of others, the unfinished writings of Mirza Abu'l-Faḍl. He was in Haifa for one-and-a-half years after the First World War, leaving for 'Ishqabad shortly before 'Abdu'l-Baha's passing. He fell ill in 'Ishqabad and after a prolonged illness died in April 1924.

[18] Mullá Zaynul-Ábidín (Zaynul-Muqarrabín)

ملا زين العابدين

زين المقرّبين

(May 1818 – 1903)

Bahá'u'lláh gave him the surname "Zaynul-Muqarrabín" which means "the Ornament of the Near Ones"

Doctor of Islamic law. He is the one who submitted questions to Bahá'u'lláh regarding the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Bahá'í book of laws, which have been published in an appendix to the book.

Mulla Zaynu'l-'Abidin, surnamed by Baha'u'llah Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin (the Ornament of the Near Ones) was noted among the companions of Baha'u'llah for his wit and humour, his learning and calligraphy, but above all for Baha'u'llah's high regard for him. He was born in Rajab 1233 (May 1818) in one of the villages of Najafabad near Isfahan of a family of Muslim clerics. He himself underwent a religious education and was made a preacher at a mosque in Najafabad. Although he heard of the Bab's claim in 1844 while he was on pilgrimage to Karbila, it was not until 1851 that he was taught the new religion and became a believer. Many others were converted in Najafabad and the town soon became a stronghold of the Babi Faith. Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin decided to visit Baghdad and meet the leading Babis who were in exile there. He failed to find Mirza Yahya who was keeping himself hidden from the believers, and Baha'u'llah was at this time on His two-year sojourn in the Sulaymaniyyih area. Disappointed, Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin set off for home. As he approached <p275> Najafabad, however, he learned of a violent outburst of persecution against the believers and that officials of the Governor were searching for him. He therefore retraced his steps to Baghdad and was fortunate in meeting Baha'u'llah on this occasion, an encounter that confirmed his faith in the new religion. Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin became one of the pillars of the Babi community in Najafabad and Isfahan, and when he heard of Baha'u'llah's claim to be the One promised by the Bab, he unhesitatingly accepted.

A further outburst of persecution in 1864 precipitated Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin's departure from Najafabad. He settled in Baghdad and occupied himself with transcribing Tablets. In 1870 the Baha'is in Baghdad were rounded up and exiled to Mosul. The Baha'is in Mosul, under the leadership and guidance of Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin, soon became a model Baha'i community reflecting something of the spirit of the 'Akka community. While there, it became Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin's task to transcribe the Tablets of Baha'u'llah that arrived from <p276> 'Akka on their way to Iran. Thus these Tablets could be distributed more widely and each of those to whom a Tablet was addressed could have a copy.

In Dhu'l-Hijjah 1302 (September -- October 1885) Baha'u'llah gave permission for Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin to come to 'Akka where he took up residence in the Khan-i-'Avamid, continuing to transcribe Tablets and frequently having the honour of being in Baha'u'llah's company. Following the ascension of Baha'u'llah, Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin remained faithful to the Covenant until his passing in 1903.

[19] Mírzá 'Alí-Muḥammad-i-Khurásání
(Ibn-i-Aṣdaq)

مرزا علي محمد خراساني

(1850 – 1928)

Mírzá 'Alí-Muḥammad-i-Khurásání known as Ibn-i-Aṣdaq, traveled to Baghdad as a child of 10 with his father on 1860, where they met with Bahá'u'lláh. Upon their return to Mashhad they were arrested and taken to Tehran and imprisoned in the Siyah Chal for twenty-eight months. In 1875 he became the first Baha'i to visit Ashgabat.

When he was thirty years old, in 1880, Ibn-i-Asdaq wrote to Bahá'u'lláh, requesting that he be allowed to sacrifice his life for the Cause. Bahá'u'lláh refused this request. He sent the same request again in 1882, and Bahá'u'lláh entitled him Shahid Ibn-i-Shahid (Martyr, Son of the Martyr) in response, and revealed a Tablet for him:

"We, verily, have ordained for him this exalted station, this high designation. Well it is with him that he attained this station prior to its appearance, and We accepted from him that which he intended in the path of God, the One, the Single, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed."

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH CITED IN HM Balyuzi "Eminent Bahá'ís in the Time of Bahá'u'lláh"

"Today, the greatest of all deeds is service to the Cause... This martyrdom is not confined to the destruction of life and the shedding of blood. A person enjoying the bounty of life may yet be recorded a martyr..."

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH CITED IN HM Balyuzi "Eminent Bahá'ís in the Time of Bahá'u'lláh"

He traveled extensively within Iran to teach the Bahá'í Faith. His wife, 'Udhra Khanúm, was descended from the Qajar family which allowed him to teach the Faith to many nobles and royals of the country. With the encouragement of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, he travelled abroad to India, Burma and Turkmenistan, where he founded a school and a hospice, and began working towards the construction of a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

At home in Tehran, and he played an important role in establishing teaching classes for women in the city. 'Abdu'l-Bahá later instructed the Hands of the Cause to teach the importance of the Covenant to the Bahá'ís of Iran and establish the first Spiritual Assembly in Tehran on 1899, which eventually became the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran.

Ibn-i-Asdaq and Ahmad Yazdani were sent to the Hague by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to deliver a tablet to the Central Organization for a Durable Peace in 1919.

Ibn-i-Asdaq who had lifelong craved martyrdom, lived an long and rich life of service, dying in 1928 at the age of 78. He was one of the few Apostles to live into the time of Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian.

APPENDIX – THE TRANSFER OF THE REMAINS OF THE BÁB (FULL SECTION FROM ADIB TAHERZADEH – THE REVELATION OF BAH'ÁU'LLÁH VOLUME 3)

The Transfer of the Remains of the Báb

The remains of the Báb and His disciple Mírzá Muhammad-Alíy-i-Zunúzí who was martyred with Him were taken to the edge of the moat outside the gate of the city of Tabríz on the evening of the day of martyrdom, 9 July 1850, and ten sentinels were posted to guard them.

The person who became instrumental in removing the remains of the Báb and His companion from the edge of the moat was His courageous and faithful follower Hájí Sulaymán Khán, the son of an officer in the service of the father of Muhammad Sháh. He was a highly influential man. Amír Nizám, the Prime Minister of the time, was induced to spare his life, in spite of the fact that many of his fellow believers were being put to death.

However, two years after the death of his Master, he too died as a martyr in a spirit of jubilant heroism, and shed a great lustre upon the infant Cause of God. It was he in whose body several incisions were made and burning candles inserted. He chanted the praises of His Lord as he was being paraded in the streets of Tíhrán prior to his martyrdom with blood pouring all over his body and his flesh sizzling with the flame of the candles²⁸.

The following words, uttered prior to his martyrdom and when he was informed that his life could be spared if he recanted his faith, are indicative of the courage and devotion of one who had set off from Tíhrán for Tabríz with the intention of rescuing the Báb from the imminent danger that threatened His life. Having arrived two days too late, he instead had carried out the dangerous and most difficult task of removing the remains of the Báb from the hands of the enemy:

'Never, so long as my life-blood continues to pulsate in my veins, shall I be willing to recant my faith in my Beloved! This world which the Commander of the Faithful²⁹ has likened to carrion will never allure me from my heart's Desire.' He was asked to determine the manner in which he wished to die. 'Pierce holes in my flesh,' was the instant reply, 'and in each wound place a candle. Let nine candles be lighted all over my body, and in this state conduct me through the streets of Tíhrán. Summon the multitude to witness the glory of my martyrdom, so that the memory of my death may remain imprinted in their hearts and help them, as they recall the intensity of my tribulation, to recognise the Light I have embraced. After I have reached the foot of the gallows and have uttered the last prayer of my earthly life, cleave my body in twain and suspend my limbs on either side of the gate of Tíhrán, that the multitude passing beneath it may witness to the love which the Faith of the Báb has kindled in the hearts of His disciples, and may look upon the proofs of their devotion³⁰.'

He died exactly as he had wished.

Only a few hours after his arrival in Tabríz, Hájí Sulaymán Khán, with the help of the Mayor of the city (who was a personal friend) succeeded in planning his

²⁸ For details of his martyrdom see *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 610-21.

²⁹ Imám 'Alí. (A.T.)

³⁰ Nabíl-i-A'zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 617-18.

strategy for the rescue of the remains of the Báb. The Mayor called on the venturesome Hájí Alláh-yár, a courageous and daring man, to render this service to his friend. In the middle of the night Hájí Alláh-yár took some of his men accompanied by two Bábís from Milán (a town in the province of Adhirbáyiján) to the spot where the remains of the Báb and His disciple lay. The soldiers guarding the bodies did not dare to challenge the Hájí's men, and in the morning they had no choice but to announce that the wild beasts at night had devoured the bodies!

The sacred remains were wrapped in the 'abá^{31*} of one of the believers and delivered to Hájí Sulaymán Khán who with the help of Husayn-i-Milání took them to the silk factory of Hájí Ahmad, a believer of Milán. Husayn-i-Milání (who was one of the two believers accompanying Hájí Alláh-yár on that historic night) was later martyred in Tihrán on the same day that Hájí Sulaymán Khán laid down his life in the path of his Beloved. For two days the remains were left in the silk factory. They were wrapped in shrouds and hidden under the bales of silk. They were then placed in a special casket and transferred to another place of safety. Hájí Sulaymán Khán communicated the news to Bahá'u'lláh and awaited His instructions.

It is important to realize that the arrival of Hájí Sulaymán Khán at Tabríz was an act of providence directed by Bahá'u'lláh Himself. As soon as He was informed that the martyrdom of the Báb was imminent, Bahá'u'lláh had summoned Hájí Sulaymán Khán to His presence and instructed him to proceed immediately and speedily to Tabríz.

Now, when the latest news reached Him, He directed His faithful brother, Mírzá Músá (entitled Áqáy-i-Kalím) to send a trusted person to Tabríz and bring the casket to Tihrán. This was done and the sacred remains were taken via Zanján (where they were kept for one night) to Tihrán. The casket arrived at a time when Bahá'u'lláh had departed from Tihrán for Karbilá. According to His instructions the casket containing the remains of the Báb and His companion was delivered to Áqáy-i-Kalím who placed it in the Shrine of Imám-Zádih Hasan³² in a safe location. The only other person who was involved in this mission was Mírzá 'Abdu'l-Karím-i-Qazvíní, known as Mírzá Ahmad.

From there they transferred it after some time to the house of Hájí Sulaymán Khán in Tihrán; later it was placed in the Shrine of Imám-Zádih Ma'súm. It was concealed in a northern corner of the shrine and a wall was constructed in front of it.

No one except these men knew its whereabouts. But Mírzá 'Abdu'l-Karím and Hájí Sulaymán Khán were both martyred in Tihrán in 1852 during the great massacre of the Bábís following an attempt on the life of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh. The only person left who knew of its exact whereabouts was Áqáy-i-Kalím.

The sacred casket remained concealed in Imám-Zádih Ma'súm until AH 1284 (1867-68). From Adrianople, Bahá'u'lláh directed Mírzá Áqá of Káshán (entitled Muníb³³) to transfer the remains to another place. Áqáy-i-Kalím briefed him as to its exact location, but Muníb failed to find it. Bahá'u'lláh then addressed a Tablet to Mullá 'Alí-Akbar-i-Sháhmírzádí, known as Hájí Ákhúnd³⁴, and Jamál-i-Burújirdí³⁵ instructing them to remove the casket immediately. The details of its whereabouts were again furnished by Áqáy-i-Kalím.

31 Cloak worn by Persian men at the time.

32 A Muslim shrine in Tihrán.

33 see Adib Taherzadeh – The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh Volume 1, pp. 283-7.

34 He was appointed later as a Hand of the Cause of God. We shall refer to his life and services in the next volume.

35 He was an outstanding teacher of the Faith who later became a Covenant-breaker, see vol. 2.

The transfer of the remains proved to be an act of providence directed by Bahá'u'lláh. For very soon after, the custodians of the Shrine of Imám-Zádih Ma'súm carried out extensive reconstruction work which would have definitely revealed the secret of that precious trust reposing behind one of the walls of the Shrine. Such a discovery could have had disastrous consequences for the protection of the sacred remains.

Hájí Ákhúnd and Jamál succeeded in finding the casket and removing it from the Shrine of Imám-Zádih Ma'súm. They carried it to a village outside Tihrán in which stands the celebrated shrine of Sháh 'Abdu'l-'Azím. Finding conditions unsatisfactory for depositing the casket in that area, they moved towards the village of Chashmih-Alí. On the way they came upon the Mosque of Máshá'u'lláh, an old and dilapidated building which was not commonly visited by people. They waited there until sunset. Hájí Ákhúnd opened the casket and in the dim twilight gazed upon the remains of the Martyr-Prophet of the Faith. What feelings of awe, reverence and grief must have descended upon his soul and what emotions must have erupted in his heart at that time, no one can tell. But knowing the degree of his faith and devotion to the Cause and the vibrant nature of his personality we can imagine the impact of such a mighty event on his soul. It is said that he found a flower which had dried up placed on the old shroud, probably a symbol of loving devotion by Hájí Sulaymán Khán.

Hájí Ákhúnd and Jamál wrapped yet another silken shroud around the remains and closed the casket. They placed it in a niche in a wall and bricked it up with old bricks which could be found in plenty in that dilapidated building.

That night the two returned to a village near by. The next morning they decided to visit the place on their way to the capital. Upon arrival at the spot they discovered to their consternation that someone had opened up the section of the wall and broken the casket. But soon they were relieved to find that the remains were untouched. This was the work of some men who must have seen the two placing the casket inside the old mosque and thought it was treasure of some sort, leaving it alone when they discovered it to be otherwise. Immediately Hájí Ákhúnd and Jamál closed the casket and took it away. Both were riding on donkeys; one of the men held the casket in front of him and in this way proceeded towards Tihrán.

In those days guards were placed at the gates of the cities and used to search people entering. Hájí Ákhúnd and Jamál were extremely worried in case the officials might attempt to open the casket. But Providence played its part in this episode. As the two approached the city gate, a severe gale unexpectedly arose, heavy rain began to pour and gusty winds blew it hard in every direction. Crowds of people ran through the city gate to find shelter and with them went Hájí Ákhúnd and Jamál.

They took the sacred casket to the home of Mírzá Hasan-i-Vazír, a believer of note. Hájí Ákhúnd rented that house and lived in it as a custodian of that sacred trust. For about fourteen

months it was kept in that house, but after some time its whereabouts were no longer a secret. Believers used to come from all over the country to visit the house and pray at the threshold of the room in which it was kept. Alarmed at the possible consequences of this discovery, Hájí Ákhúnd reported the matter to Bahá'u'lláh who by that time was imprisoned in the barracks of 'Akká. On receiving the news, Bahá'u'lláh ordered His Trustee Hájí Sháh-Muhammad to proceed immediately to Tihrán and remove the holy remains to another place of safety.

Soon after this Hájí Sháh-Muhammad arrived in Tihrán. He handed to Hájí Ákhúnd a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh addressed to him. In that Tablet Bahá'u'lláh had directed Hájí Ákhúnd to hand over the sacred casket to Hájí Sháh-Muhammad. The emphasis was on secrecy and Bahá'u'lláh had bidden Hájí Ákhúnd not to question

the bearer of that sacred trust as to the place of its safe keeping. Once Hájí Ákhúnd had consigned the casket to the Trustee of Bahá'u'lláh, he did not even look to see in which direction it was carried.

Hájí Sháh-Muhammad, assisted by one of the believers, succeeded in burying the casket beneath the inner sanctuary of the Shrine of Imám Zádih Zayd, where it remained for about sixteen years.

In the year AH 1301 (1884-85) Bahá'u'lláh instructed Mírzá Asadu'lláh-i-Isfahání³⁶, one of the believers resident in Tíhrán, to remove the remains from Imám Zádih Zayn and take it to another place of safety. The exact location of the casket was charted by Bahá'u'lláh and the chart sent to Mírzá Asadu'lláh. It must be borne in mind here that the act of burying a casket in an Islámic shrine without anyone seeing it, and later removing it in similar circumstances, called for great wisdom, caution

and courage. There is no doubt that all those who were charged by Bahá'u'lláh to carry out this important mission were assisted by the invisible forces of divine Providence.

Mírzá Asadu'lláh succeeded in removing the casket from the Shrine. He first took it to his own house and kept it there for some time, then he transferred it to other localities including the houses of Husayn-'Alí-i-Isfahání (entitled Núr) and Muhammad Karím-i-Attár where it remained hidden till the year AH 1316 (1899).

The manner in which the remains of the Báb were taken to these homes is interesting. It demonstrates that those who were charged with their protection carried out their task with great caution and wisdom.

The following is the translation of the spoken chronicle of Mírzá Husayn 'Alí-i-Isfahání concerning the transfer of the remains of the Báb to his house:

It was about the year 1269 (AH solar) (AD 1891) that Mírzá Asadu'lláh-i-Isfahání accompanied by his wife came to stay with me at my home in Tíhrán...After a few days they intimated to me that they were on their way to the Holy Land, and wished to entrust me with a case containing some important items. They indicated that they would collect it on their return home. But they emphasized that I should pay great attention to its safe keeping. I agreed. The next day, he and his wife brought a wooden case and with much reverence placed it in a room near the entrance to the house. He requested that the room be locked and no one enter it for a day or two. We locked the room and he took the key.

The following day Mírzá Asadu'lláh and his wife brought an empty steel case. They went into the room and pulled the curtains across. No one could see what they were doing inside. For about four hours they stayed inside the room. Then they opened the door and called me in and said "This is the trust which is given to your care."

I saw the steel case, which was new, placed in the middle of the room, padlocked and sealed; a strong scent of attar of rose had filled the room. We placed the case inside an alcove in the room and one of the Bahá'í youths who was a bricklayer closed it in with bricks³⁷.

36 He had married the sister of Munírih Khánum (the wife of 'Abdu'l-Bahá). Dr. Faríd was their son whose contemptible behaviour brought much sorrow to the heart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and who was eventually announced as a Covenant-breaker. Mírzá Asadu'lláh himself also defected towards the end of his life.

37 * It was common practice by the believers in those days to place the Holy Writings in a steel case and bury it in the ground or place it inside a cavity in the wall and close it in with bricks, or other material.

The protection and safekeeping of any trust is a difficult task, especially if one suspects that the items he is entrusted with are Tablets and Holy Writings in the handwriting of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.

This is why after Mírzá Asadu'lláh's departure, I committed myself wholeheartedly to the safekeeping of his trust. At night I used to stay in that room for hours to guard it. For some time I used to sleep in that room, but after a while I gave up sleeping there.

About two years had passed when the enemies of the Faith in Tíhrán renewed their persecution against the Bahá'ís and imprisoned certain believers...There were rumours that the houses of the friends could be plundered.

This news caused us great anxiety as we were afraid that the enemies might attack the house and take away the case which was entrusted to us. Therefore we held a family consultation and decided that it should be hidden in a safer place. Immediately we transferred the case into another room...We made an opening in one of the walls, placed the case vertically in the middle and re-built the wall in front of the case and plastered it during the night. We even lighted a big fire inside the room so that by morning the plaster had dried and it did not look different from the rest of the wall. That day I wrote a letter to Mírzá Asadu'lláh-i-Isfahání informing him of the disturbances in Tíhrán where the fanatical mob and the ruffians were threatening to harm this innocent community and if they found it possible they might attack and plunder the homes of the believers...Therefore I suggested to him to return to Tíhrán as soon as possible and take away his trust.

Some time passed and a reply came from Mírzá Asadu'lláh saying that at an appropriate time he would mention the situation to the Master, and when permission was granted he would return to take away the case. He arrived in Tíhrán about one year later, and came to our house. We took out the case from the wall and handed it to him. After careful examination of the case, he took it away and deposited it in the house of another believer, Áqá Muhammad-Karím-i-Attár.

About six months passed by when I received a letter from Mírzá Asadu'lláh thanking me for all my efforts in protecting the case which had been entrusted to me for about four years. He went on to say that the trust which had been kept in my house was so precious that even my descendants in the future would pride themselves on its safekeeping in that house...He then revealed to me that the case contained the sacred remains of the blessed Báb!...

Immediately after reading this letter I invited some of the believers to the house and read the letter to them. We had such a glorious meeting, the like of which has seldom been experienced...The lovers of that Beloved of the world were ecstatic. They prostrated themselves at that holy place and chanted joyous melodies and prayers.

The remains of the Báb were kept in the house of Áqá Muhammad-Karím-i-Attár until the year AH 1316 (AD 1899). As directed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Mírzá Asadu'lláh, together with a number of other believers who did not know what the case contained, transported the sacred remains to the Holy Land via Baghdád, Damascus and Beirut. They arrived safely in 'Akká on 31 January 1899.

For ten years the sacred remains were secretly kept in the Holy Land, for a time in the home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 'Akká and later in a place on Mount Carmel. In the meantime 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in spite of great difficulties and in the midst of disturbances created by His enemies and misrepresentations by the Covenant-breakers, succeeded in building six rooms for the Shrine of the Báb on Mount Carmel at a site chosen by Bahá'u'lláh Himself³⁸. 'Abdu'l-Bahá asked the Bahá'ís of Rangoon to order the construction of a marble sarcophagus. This was done and the sarcophagus was presented to 'Abdu'l-Bahá as a gift. It was carved out of solid stone

38 We shall refer to this in greater detail in the next volume when describing Bahá'u'lláh's visit to Mount Carmel.

and had the Greatest Name in the handwriting of Mishkín-Qalam³⁹ engraved on its sides. This together with a casket made of hardwood arrived in Haifa by sea. As there were no vehicles for its transportation, the crate containing the sarcophagus was placed on wooden rollers and dragged by men from the pier all the way up the mountain.

Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Faith, describes the historic and moving occasion when 'Abdu'l-Bahá laid to rest the sacred remains of the Báb and His companion in the Shrine He had built on Mount Carmel:

Finally, in the very year His royal adversary lost his throne, and at the time of the opening of the first American Bahá'í Convention, convened in Chicago for the purpose of creating a permanent national organization for the construction of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, 'Abdu'l-Bahá brought His undertaking to a successful conclusion, in spite of the incessant machinations of enemies both within and without. On the 28th of the month of Safar 1327 AH, the day of the first Naw-Rúz (1909), which He celebrated after His release from His confinement, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had the marble sarcophagus transported with great labour to the vault prepared for it, and in the evening, by the light of a single lamp, He laid within it, with His own hands--in the presence of believers from the East and from the West and in circumstances at once solemn and moving--the wooden casket containing the sacred remains of the Báb and His companion.

When all was finished, and the earthly remains of the Martyr-Prophet of Shíráz were, at long last, safely deposited for their everlasting rest in the bosom of God's holy mountain, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Who had cast aside His turban, removed His shoes and thrown off His cloak, bent low over the still open sarcophagus, His silver hair waving

about His head and His face transfigured and luminous, rested His forehead on the border of the wooden casket, and, sobbing aloud, wept with such a weeping that all those who were present wept with Him. That night He could not sleep, so overwhelmed was He with emotion.

'The most joyful tidings is this,' He wrote later in a Tablet announcing to His followers the news of this glorious victory, that the holy, the luminous body of the Báb...after having for sixty years been transferred from place to place, by reason of the ascendancy of the enemy, and from fear of the malevolent, and having known neither rest nor tranquillity has, through the mercy of the Abba Beauty, been ceremoniously deposited, on the day of Naw-Rúz⁴⁰, within the sacred casket, in the exalted Shrine on Mt. Carmel...By a strange coincidence, on that same day of Naw-Rúz⁴¹,* a cablegram was received from Chicago, announcing that the believers in each of the American centres had elected a delegate and sent to that city...and definitely decided on the site and construction of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár⁴².'

39 see Adib Taherzadeh – The Revelation of Bah'á'u'lláh Volume 1, pp. 26-8.

40 [Naw-Rúz] *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*; Prayers and Meditations, p. 67; The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, vol. 1, 2, 3, 4

41 See Adib Taherzadeh – The Revelation of Bah'á'u'lláh Volume 1, p. 268, for another important incident on that day. (A.T.)

42 God Passes By, p. 276.

TABLETS AND PRAYERS FROM BAHÁ'U'LLÁH TO HAJÍ AKHÚND

THE PRAYER FOR THE HANDS OF THE CAUSE

Circumstances of the Revelation of the Lawh-i-Dunyá (Tablet of the World)

This Tablet⁴³ was revealed in 1891 in honour of Áqá Mírzá Áqáy-Afnán, entitled Núru'd-Dín. His mother was a sister of Khadíjih Bagum, the wife of the Báb,† and Áqá Mírzá Áqá was born two years before His Declaration. In a Tablet to His wife revealed in the prison of Máh-Kú the Báb assures her that when Áqá Mírzá Áqá reaches the age of maturity he will be her helper and protector. These prophetic words of the Báb were fulfilled, for Áqá Mírzá Áqá dedicated his life to the service of his beloved aunt, whom he revered and served with unbounded devotion. Khadíjih Bagum lovingly taught him the Faith and at the age of thirteen Áqá Mírzá Áqá recognized the truth of the Mission of the Báb. It was through his efforts that Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad, the eldest maternal uncle of the Báb, went to meet Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád and as a result became the recipient of the Kitáb-i-Íqán which assured him of the truth of the Báb's Revelation.

ADIB TAHERZADEH – THE REVELATION OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH VOLUME 3

In 1891 Hájí Akhúnd and Hájí Amín were imprisoned in Qazvín for 18 months. See the Photographs section for a picture of their blessed countenances, peaceful, resilient and fully accepting in heavy chains and fetters at their geolor's feet.

It was on the occasion of their imprisonment in Qazvín that Bahá'u'lláh revealed the celebrated prayer⁴⁴ for the Hands of the Cause.

ADIB TAHERZADEH – THE REVELATION OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH VOLUME 3

The *Lawh-i-Dunyá* was revealed in Haifa, and a copy handed by Bahá'u'lláh to Hájí Mírzá Buzurg, the son of Áqá Mírzá Áqá in whose honour it was revealed. This Tablet dates from the time when the Hand of the Cause of God Mullá 'Alí-Akbar and the Trustee of Bahá'u'lláh, Hájí Abu'l-Hasan-i-Amín⁴⁵ were both imprisoned in Qazvín. Bahá'u'lláh bestows His bounties upon the two in the opening paragraph of this Tablet:

Praise and thanksgiving beseem the Lord of manifest dominion Who hath adorned this mighty Prison with the presence of their honours 'Alí Akbar and Amín, and hath illumined it with the light of certitude, constancy and assurance. The glory of God and the glory of all that are in the heavens and on the earth be upon them.

Light and glory, greeting and praise be upon the Hands of His Cause, through whom the light of fortitude hath shone forth and the truth hath been established that the authority to choose rests with God, the Powerful, the Mighty, the Unconstrained, through whom the ocean of bounty hath surged and the fragrance of the gracious favours of God, the Lord of mankind, hath been diffused. We beseech Him--Exalted is he--to shield them through the power of His hosts, to protect them through the potency of His dominion and to aid them through His indomitable strength which

⁴³ The full text revealed in Persian has been translated into English and is published in *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 83-97.

Additionally, you can read the full *Lawh-i-Dunyá* [here in English](#) and [here in Persian](#) in the Bahá'í Reference Library website.

⁴⁴ see above, p. 288.

⁴⁵ Hájí Amín was posthumously designated a Hand of the Cause of God by Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Faith.

prevaileth over all created things. Sovereignty is God's, the Creator of the heavens and the Lord of the Kingdom of Names⁴⁶.

The 'mighty Prison' is the prison of Qazvín. As already mentioned earlier (p. 306) a group of political agitators were imprisoned by the Persian government in 1891. Three eminent Bahá'ís, Ibn-i-Abhar, Mullá 'Alí-Akbar and Hájí Amín were also cast into prison at the same time in order to appease the enemies of the Cause, by order of Kámrán Mírzá the Náyibu's-Saltanih, the Governor of Tihrán. The last two were put in chains and taken to the prison of Qazvín where they remained for eighteen months in chains and fetters⁴⁷; afterwards they were transferred to the prison of Tihrán. Mullá 'Alí-Akbar was released after six months while Hájí Amín's imprisonment was prolonged further; he was released after the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh.

Excerpt from the Tablet of the World (Lawh-i-Dunyá) in English

IN MY NAME, CALLING ALOUD IN THE KINGDOM OF UTTERANCE

Praise and thanksgiving besem the Lord of manifest dominion Who hath adorned the mighty prison with the presence of their honors 'Alí-Akbar and Amín, and hath illumined it with the light of certitude, constancy and assurance.¹ The glory of God and the glory of all that are in the heavens and on the earth be upon them.

Light and glory, greeting and praise be upon the Hands of His Cause, through whom the light of fortitude hath shone forth and the truth hath been established that the authority to choose rests with God, the Powerful, the Mighty, the Unconstrained, through whom the ocean of bounty hath surged and the fragrance of the gracious favors of God, the Lord of mankind, hath been diffused. We beseech Him—exalted is He—to shield them through the power of His hosts, to protect them through the potency of His dominion and to aid them through His indomitable strength which prevaileth over all created things. Sovereignty is God's, the Creator of the heavens and the Lord of the Kingdom of Names.

The Great Announcement proclaimeth: O people of Persia! In former times ye have been the symbols of mercy and the embodiments of affection and kindliness. The regions of the world were illumined and embellished by the brightness of the light of your knowledge and by the blaze of your erudition. How is it that you have arisen to destroy yourselves and your friends with your own hands?

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

⁴⁶ *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 83.

⁴⁷ They were photographed wearing these chains, see Adib Taherzadeh – *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh* Volume 3, facing p. 61 [or in this compilation go to the section [Photographs](#)].

Excerpt from the Tablet of the World (Lawh-i-Dunyá) in Persian

لوح دنيا

بسمى التاطق فى ملكوت البيان

حمد و ثنا سلطان مبين ر الاثق و سزاست كه سجن متين ر ابحضور

حضرت على قبل اكبر و حضرت امين مزين فرمود و بانوار ايقان و

استقامت و اطمينان مزين داشت عليهما بهاء الل و بهاء من فى

السموات و الارضين

التور و البهآء و التكبير و الثناء على ايدى امره الذين بهم اشرق نور

الاصطبار و ثبت حكم الاختيار لل المقتدر العزيز المختار و بهم ماج بحر

العطاء و هاج عرف عناية الل مولى الورى نسئله تعالى ان يحفظهم بجنوده و

يحرسهم بسلطانه و ينصرهم بقدرته التى غلبت الاشياء الملك لل فاطر

السماء و مالک ملكوت الاسماء

Short Excerpted Paragraph used as the “Prayer for the Hands of the Cause” in English

Light and glory, greeting and praise be upon the Hands of His Cause, through whom the light of fortitude hath shone forth and the truth hath been established that the authority to choose rests with God, the Powerful, the Mighty, the Unconstrained, through whom the ocean of bounty hath surged and the fragrance of the gracious favors of God, the Lord of mankind, hath been diffused. We beseech Him—exalted is He—to shield them through the power of His hosts, to protect them through the potency of His dominion and to aid them through His indomitable strength which prevaieth over all created things. Sovereignty is God’s, the Creator of the heavens and the Lord of the Kingdom of Names.

Short Excerpted Paragraph used as the “Prayer for the Hands of the Cause” in Persian

النور و البهَاء و التّكبير و الثّناء على ايادى امره الذين بهم اشرق نورُ الاصطبار و ثبت حكم الاختيار لله المقتدر العزيز المختار و بهم ماج بحر العطاء و هاج عرف عناية اللّ مولى الورى نسئله تعالى ان يحفظهم بجنوده و يحرسهم بسلطانه و ينصرهم بقدرته الّتى غابت الأشياء الملك لله فاطر السّماء و مالک ملكوت الاسماء

TABLETS

This list was obtained from a comprehensive index of Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh to be found [on this page](#) of “La médiathèque Bahá'ie”

Lawh-i Haji Akhund dar barih-i nuzul-i Kitáb-i Aqdas

- Addressee is Haji Mullah ‘Ali Akbar Shahmirzadi, Haji Akhund.
- Tablet regarding the revelation of the Kitáb-i Aqdas
- Place of revelation: ‘Akka
- Gregorian date: 11 July 1873/15
- Muslim date: Jamadiyu'l-Avval 1290
- Iqbal, Puzuheshnameh 2:1 page 103.

Mention of the Tablet in “Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh”

In a Tablet* written by Mírzá Áqá Ján, Bahá'u'lláh's amanuensis, dated 15th of Jamádiyul-Avval 1290 (11 July 1873), it is stated that the Kitáb-i-Aqdas was revealed around that time. It also refers to the circumstances which led to its revelation. For some years, the believers had been asking questions about the laws of the Faith, but Bahá'u'lláh did not find it timely to respond to them. While in Adrianople He revealed a number of laws in His Persian writings, but did not release them to the believers. Questions continued to come to him while in 'Akká, and when the time was propitious, Bahá'u'lláh revealed the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. But from the beginning He stressed to His followers the need to be discreet and wise in the implementation of its laws. He advised them not to practise any of its provisions which might prove to be untimely or could cause agitation or disturbance among the people.

* Quoted by Fádíl-i Mázinárání, *Amr Va Khalq*, vol. I, p. 10

... و در این ایام کتاب اقدس از سماء مقدس
نازل طوبی لمن ینظر فیه و یتفکر فیما نزل من آیات ربه
المهیمین القیوم و سبب آنکه در سنین معدوده از اطراف
بعضی مسائل در احکام الهیه سؤال نمودند و لکن ظلم
اعلی متوقف در ارض سر بلسان پارسی فختصری نازل و لکن
بافرغی ارسال نشد بحسب الامر در محل محفوظ بود تا
آنکه درین ایام مجدداً اعرابین سائلین بساحت اقدس
حاضر لذا بابدع الحان بلسان آیات این کتاب بدیع منیع
نازل و چون جناب آقا ح م علیه بهاء الله در اینجنا
تشریف داشتند آنچه حال مصلحت اظهار آن بود
بایشان عنایت فرمودند یعنی اذن فرمودند که نسخه از
آن بردارند انشاء الله بآن فائز خواهید شد و بمقتضای
حکمت عمل خواهید نمود طوبی لذائقه یجد حلاوتها
و لذی بصر یحرف ما فیها و لذی قلب یطلع بر موزها و اسرارها
تالله یرتعد ظهرا للكلام من عظمة ما نزل و الاشارات -
المقتنعة لشدة ظهورها .

Lawh-i Haji Akhund (III)

- Third tablet to Haji Akhund, ‘Ali-Akbar Shahmirzadi
- ‘Akka, 1298 AH
- No original Persian or reference to its contents found

Lawh-i Haji Akhund (IV)

- Fourth tablet to Haji Akhund
- No original Persian or reference to its contents found

Lawh-i Haji Akhund (I) wa Jamal-i Burujirdi

- Tablet to Mulla ‘Ali Akbar-i Shahmirzadi, known as Haji Akhund, and Jamal-i Burujirdi
- Edirne or early ‘Akka
- Contained instructions regarding the removal of the Bab's body from the Shrine of Imam-Zadieh Ma’sum

Mention of the Tablet in “Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh”

Bahá’u’lláh then addressed a Tablet to Mullá ‘Alí-Akbar-i-Sháhmírzadí, known as Háji Ákhúnd,* and Jamál-i-Burújirdí** instructing them to remove the casket immediately.

***He was appointed later as a Hand of the Cause of God. We shall refer to his life and services in the next volume.**

****He was an outstanding teacher of the Faith who later became a Covenant-breaker, see vol. 2.**

THE REVELATION OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH VOLUME 3 PAGE 425

Lawh-i Haji Akhund (II)

- Second tablet to Haji Akhund
- ‘Akká
- Containing instructions to deliver the sacred remains of The Báb to Haji Shah-Muhammad

Mention of the Tablet in “Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh”

“ Soon after this Háji Sháh-Muhammad arrived in Tíhrán. He handed to Háji Ákhúnd a Tablet of Bahá’u’lláh addressed to him. In that Tablet Bahá’u’lláh had directed Háji Ákhúnd to hand over the sacred casket to Háji Sháh-Muhammad. The emphasis was on secrecy and Bahá’u’lláh had bidden Háji Ákhúnd not to question the bearer of that sacred trust as to the place of its safe keeping. Once Háji Ákhúnd had consigned the casket to the Trustee of Bahá’u’lláh, he did not even look to see in which direction it was carried.

ADIB TAHERZADEH – THE REVELATION OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH VOLUME 3 PAGE 427

Unnamed Tablet

- Addressee Haji Mulla 'Ali-Akbar-i Shahmirzadi, known as Haji Akhund
- Revealed in 'Akká
- Regarding the martyrdom of Badí and the Divine Chastisement of famine in Iran that ensued

Mention of the Tablet in "Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh"

“ In one instance this took the form of a famine which soon after the martyrdom of Badí claimed the lives of a great many people in that land. The effect of the famine was so devastating that Háji Mullá 'Alí-Akbar-i-Sháhmírzádí, known as Háji Ákhúnd,* wrote a letter to Bahá'u'lláh, begged forgiveness for the people of Persia and asked for relief in their sufferings. In a Tablet to him**, Bahá'u'lláh affirms that the famine was God's punishment for the martyrdom of Badí, declares that prior to that He had prophesied in His Tablets impending afflictions and tribulations, and states that were it not for the sake of the believers, the whole nation would have been struck down by God. He then responds favourably to Háji Ákhúnd's intercession and assures him that soon the situation would change and God would grant them relief.

*** One of the four Hands of the Cause whom Bahá'u'lláh appointed a few years before the end of His life. We shall write about this in the [next volume](#).**

**** Quoted by Faizi, L'álíy-i-Darakhshán, p. 411-412**

ADIB TAHERZADEH – THE REVELATION OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH VOLUME 3 PAGES 200-1

Original Persian Tablet

و این که در تنگی و قحطی ایران مرقوم فرموده بودید، این از وعده الهی بود در الواح، چنانچه در همان سنه که لوح منیع به ید بدیع ارسال شد، در الواح ذکر شداید و بلایا و قحط آن دیار تصریحاً نازل شده و وعید الهی کلّ را احاطه نموده، چنانچه آیه‌ای نازل که مضمون آن این است، اگر نظر به ملاحظه احباب نبود کلّ هلاک می‌شدند، ولكن بعد از وصول مکتوب آن جناب تلقاء عرش حاضر شدم و استدعای آن جناب را معروض داشتم. فرمودند، شفاعت ایشان قبول شد. سوف یرون انفسهم فی رخاء مبین. و بعد فرمودند: ای علی، هنوز اثر دم بدیع از ارض محو نشده و تو میدانی که آن مظلوم به کتابی فرستاده شد که ابداً از برای نفسی در آن عذری باقی نمانده و اصل امر به کمال تصریح اظهار شد. مع ذلک ورد علیه ما ورد.

TABLET FROM 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ FOR THE MARTYRDOM OF THE BÁB

Provisional translation in English

The original text of this Tablet in Persian is published in *Ayyám-i-Tis'ih* [The Nine Holy Days], pp. 187-88, Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1981 and can also be found online at the following address:

<http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/c/AT/at-187.html>

<http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/c/AT/at-188.html>

The first provisional translation was done by Dr. Khazeh Fananapazir in May 2004.

The second provisional translation was done by Adib Masumian and contains this note with two links, one for an explanation on provisional translations and the second to the person who assisted him in the translation:

What follows is a provisional (in other words, not official or authorized; [see here](#) for more) translation of a Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá written to commemorate the Martyrdom of the Báb. Joshua Hall and I worked together to produce this translation. (Adib Masumian)

It can be found on Mr. Masumian's website at the address below:

<https://adibmasumian.com/>

He is the All-Glorious

O 'Alí-Akbar!

The Day of the Martyrdom of the Most Exalted One is come—
may My spirit be a sacrifice for His hallowed blood!

This is the Day when the Sun of Truth was eclipsed by the clouds of divine solicitude!

This is the Day when that Shining Moon set beneath the horizon of the world!

This is the Day when that pure and precious Form fell upon the dust and weltered in His blood!

This is the Day when that Breast—innocent of rancor and like unto a stainless mirror—was pierced by innumerable bullets!

This is the Day when that Lamp Divine was broken free of His mortal glass!

This is the Day when the cry of the Concourse on High is raised aloud!

This is the Day when the denizens of the heavenly kingdom, with tearful eyes and hearts aflame, are wailing in grief and lamentation!

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

فصل چهارم

بوم ۲۸ شعبان شهادت حضرت ربّ اعلیٰ جلّ اسرّالاعلیٰ

مشعل برشش مطلب

مطلب اول

حضرت عبدالبهاء جلّ شأنه در لوح حضرت علی قبل اکبر میفرماید: قولنا الأهلی

هو الأبھی

یا حضرت علی قبل اکبر بوم شهادت حضرت اعلیٰ روحی لدمه المطر قد است الیوم

بومی است که آفتاب حقیقت در پس سحاب عنایت رفت امروز روزیست که آنند

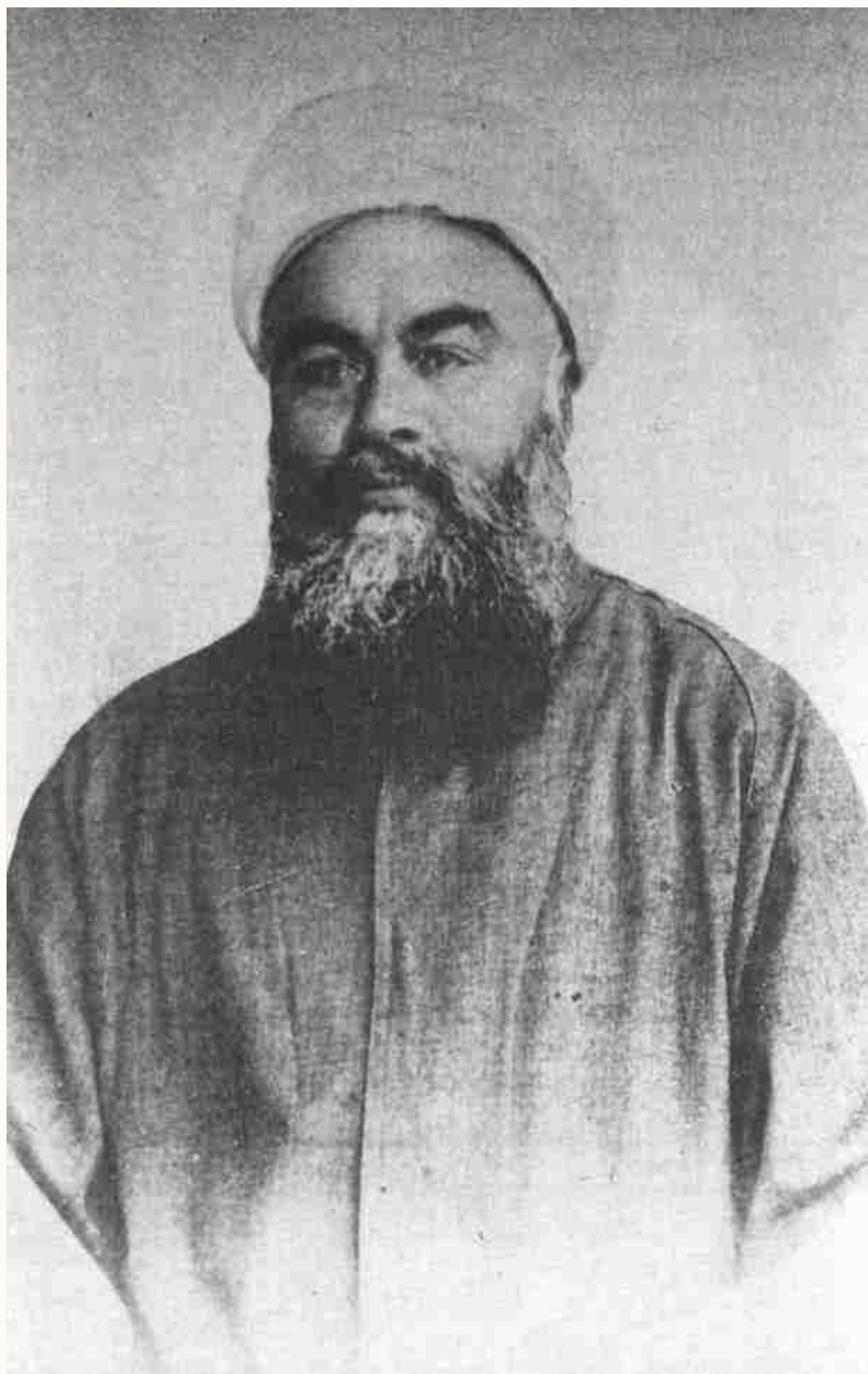
تابان افول نمود امروز روزیست که آن بن نازنین پاک در خاک و خون غلطید

امروز روزیست که آن سینبلی کینه چون آئینه از هزار رصاص مشتک شد امروز روزیست

که آن سراج آسمی از رجاج جسمانی انفکاک نمود امروز روزیست که ناله علاء اعلیٰ بلند است

امروز روزیست که احل ملکوت با چشمی گریان و قلبی سوزان در فریاد و فغانند ع ع

PHOTOGRAPHS



Adib Taherzadeh's Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh Volume 3



Closeup of photo from Adib Taherzadeh's Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh Volume 3



1899, Central Spiritual Assembly in Tehran (with four Hands of the Cause)

“

The first Bahá'í Assembly that existed in Tíhrán was singularly blessed! In one year it had grown so rapidly that its members had increased to nine times their original number.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - PARIS TALKS



Hají Akhúnd in chains with his feet in iron shackles



ḤAJÍ AKHÚND (left) and ḤAJÍ AMÍN (right)

In the prison of Qazvín. Their feet are in stocks and their necks chained, with the gaoler in attendance

“ Again and again he was bound with chains, jailed, and threatened with the sword.

The photograph of this blessed individual, together with that of the great Amín, taken of them in their chains, will serve as an example to whoever has eyes to see.

There they sit, those two distinguished men, hung with chains, shackled, yet composed, acquiescent, undisturbed”



Hají Akhúnd (Photograph from Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh montage)



**“He died in Tehran on 4 March 1910 and was buried in the shrine of Imamzadih Ma’sum”
(Moojan Momen article)**

This compilation was prepared by Violetta Zein,
a Bahá'í residing in the Republic of Congo (not DRC)

Contact information: violettaz@gmail.com