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### Witnesses to Bábí and Bahá'í History

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- 15 The Voice of the Heroes: The Genesis of the Bahá'í Faith in Khurasan

O son of man!

Ponder and reflect.

Is it thy wish to die upon thy bed,  
or to shed thy life blood on the dust,  
a martyr in My path,  
and so become the manifestation of My command  
and the revealer of My light in the highest paradise?

Judge thou aright O servant!

Bahá'u'lláh (The Hidden Words)

Dedication

For  
Mírzá Asadu'lláh Fádil Mázandarání  
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Foreword

When thou seest in the path a severed head  
which is rolling towards our field,  
ask of it, ask of it our secrets,  
for from it thou mayst hear our hidden mystery.  
Rúmí (Diván Shams Tabríz)

The central features of the upheavals of Nayríz are known to those who have read about the millenarian Bábí religious movement of nineteenthcentury Qajar Iran.<sup>1</sup> Next to the incident of Zanján, where nearly two thousand Bábís perished, the Bábís of Nayríz in 1850 lost more men, women and children in the fiery ordeals that surrounded them than any

other Bábí community of that country. Moreover, unlike the other major Bábí incidents, the conflicts in this town were not limited to the one pogrom, but continued to unfold unabated for several more years and in the process took the lives of many hundreds more of the Báb's followers.

The present volume is an attempt to tell the story of the leading figure of that uprising, Vahíd Dárábí, and to bring a number of historical documents pertaining to these episodes of Nayríz along with a brief analysis to the attention of English-speaking readers.

By way of general background, it should be noted that the Bábís of Nayríz suffered two distinct though related incidents of persecution: one in 1850 and another in 1853. These will be referred to as Nayríz-I and Nayríz-II, respectively.<sup>2</sup> The first incident has already been told in such moving accounts as Shoghi Effendi's *The Dawn-Breakers* – an edited translation of Nabíl's *Narrative* – and Edward G. Browne's *Tárikh-i Jadíd*

– a translation of a revised narrative by Siyyid Husayn Hamadání. In 1 For introductions to the Bábí movement and its early history, see Shoghi Effendi's

*The Dawn-Breakers*; Balyuzi's *The Báb*; or Amanat's *Resurrection and Renewal*.

2 A third pogrom in the Spring of 1909 enveloped the descendants of the Bábís of

Nayríz, who by that time had become Bahá'ís. That incident will be referred to as

Nayríz-III and is outlined in Rabbani, *In the Land of Refuge*, chap 16.

2 The Bábís of Nayriz

addition, both of these sources provide a cursory glimpse into the 1853 persecution, namely, Nayríz-II. As moving and elegant as those two sources are, neither of the authors were themselves participants in the events, although much of their information comes from eyewitness accounts. Those underlying primary source materials are the focus of the present study.

### Discussion of Sources

A deeper historical perspective about any incident or social development can best be established after all or most of the documents about that event have been assembled, critically analyzed, and correlated. As a step towards a better understanding of what occurred in Nayríz during the 1850's – as a microcosm of the beleaguered Bábí community of Iran in that period – this monograph includes translations of many of the relevant primary accounts. Fortunately, there is a considerable amount of narrative data about the Bábí community of Nayríz and their siege from various sources, which can be divided into several broad categories:

#### 1. Contemporary Documents

Only a few contemporary narratives are available, one of these being the important description written shortly after the events by Siyyid Ibráhím Nayrízí, (see chapter 7). Since this interesting chronicle was inscribed on a wall in a relatively obscure mosque and covered in dust until 1940, it remained unnoticed and the information it contains was not reflected in subsequent accounts. To my knowledge, this document represents the only instance of a Muslim writing a detailed sympathetic eyewitness account of a Bábí incident.

It is known that Vahíd Dárábí had ordered one of the besiegers (who was his planned son-in-law), Muhammad-Ja‘far, to compose a jangnámih [war epic], telling of the daily events, but only one verse of this jang-námih is extant. It is cited in chapter 15. Should the full epic ever be located, it may be of capital importance.

Among Vahíd’s own writings, one important document is his daughter’s marriage certificate, which is translated and discussed in

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Appendix 2. Since this document is dated, it helps in establishing the time of the siege. It further establishes that the Bábís of Nayríz had implemented at least some of the laws of the Bayán and were conducting their daily lives in accordance with such ordinances. Other writings of Vahíd that I have been able to gather are translated in Appendix 3. These, for the most part, do not include much historical information as they belong to the genre of proof-texts.

## 2. Bábí Eyewitness Sources

As would be expected, many Bahá’í sources discuss the events of Nayríz and these can without exception be traced to earlier Bábí eyewitness accounts. However, before discussing the Bábí documents, it should be noted that the limitations of these sources reside in the totality of the Bábí disaster: virtually every adult Bábí of the Nayríz community was killed in the battles or the ensuing executions. Nevertheless, a few Bábí youngsters survived the slaughters and two of them wrote what they had witnessed in their youth.

The most detailed historical exposition is that of Mullá Muhammad Shafí‘, a narrative more fully introduced in chapter 5. By virtue of having witnessed both the 1850 and the 1853 insurrections and having closely known and interviewed the survivors, Mullá Shafí‘ was able to pen a moving and detailed chronicle. Though unscholarly by modern standards, the author has succeeded in holding back his sympathies and has produced an account unmarred by the bitter denunciatory comments that disfigure much of the early Bábí and Bahá’í narratives. What is more important, his account is free from the anachronistic application of later Bahá’í attitudes toward the religious

warfare of the Bábís. In addition to Nabíl, who based his chapter on Nayríz solely on this account, a copy must have been available to A.L.M. Nicolas, as his entire chapter on Nayríz essentially mirrors this source. Although it is not known when Mullá Shafí‘ composed his narrative, it is possible to theorize that it was in approximately the same period that Baha’u’llah called upon Mullá Muhammad Shafí‘, Mírzá Husayn Zanjání and Mír Abú-Tálib Shahmírzádí to write accounts of the

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Bábí incidents in Nayríz, Zanján and Fort Tabarsí , respectively.<sup>3</sup> And since it is known that the Zanján narrative was penned in 1880, this gives us an approximate date for Mullá Shafí‘’s account.<sup>4</sup>

The second account in this genre is by Hájí Muhammad Nayrízí, which focuses mostly on 1853 events. Though it provides less detail than Mullá Shafí‘, in some important ways it supplements the latter’s account. This account is presented in chapter 12.

An early account of the 1850 siege is given in The Nuqtatu’l-Káf, a history purportedly written by Hájí Mírzá Jání of Kashan (see chapter 6). A brief discussion of some of controversies associated with this history is given in that section and in the sources cited in the footnotes.

### 3. The Bahá’í Sources:

It is known that Mullá Shafí‘’s son, Shaykh Muhammad-Husayn, penned an account of considerable length, but the present writer has been unable to locate this source and cannot comment on its merits.<sup>5</sup> Judging from the information in the Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, volume 1, it seems likely that this source would prove useful in gaining information on the survivors of the 1853 holocaust, particularly as they endeavored to rebuild their community and transformed their religious identity to that of the Bahá’í Faith. Since Muhammad-‘Alí Faydí quotes from this history<sup>6</sup> it is almost certain that a copy must be extant either in Iran or among families from Nayríz residing outside Iran.<sup>7</sup>

3 Shahmírzádí’s and other accounts of Fort Tabarsí are the topic of a forthcoming

volume by the present writer.

4 For a discussion of the Zanzan accounts see Walbridge, “Document and Narrative

Sources for the History of the Battle of Zanzan”.

5 Sources For Early Bábí Doctrine and History, p. 178, states, “This work contains

accounts of the first and second Nayríz upheavals, based on eyewitness reports by

the author's father, Áqá Mullá Muhammad Shafí' Nayrízí. It was composed in 1345

A.H./1927 and runs to about 255 pages."

6 Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 113, n.1, and pp. 116-117.

7 In their 12 February 1997 communication, the Baha'i World Centre informed the

present writer that neither Mullá Shafí''s nor Shaykh Muhammad-Husayn's narratives were available in Haifa. A copy of the account by Mullá Muhammad Shafí' was immediately sent to the Bahá'í International Library for permanent

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Another early Bahá'í account of the event is given by Siyyid Husayn Hamadání which for the incident of Nayríz relies on the narrative of Hájí Mírzá Jání with some later additions. This narrative is more fully discussed in chapter 9. Although Prof. E.G. Browne published a translation of a later revision of this narrative, this text is sufficiently important to warrant inclusion in the present monograph. Of the later Bahá'í sources, several accounts by Qábil Ábádi'í are of considerable interest. Though these were written relatively late, his sources of information were the older members of the community, who had been contemporary with the incidents, such as Qábil's own non-Bahá'í father. As a whole, Qábil's line of information seems to be completely independent of the Nayrízí survivors. And while much of what he writes certainly reflects the memories of direct participants who had dispersed throughout the region, much of his account is more valuable for understanding the sort of historical folklore that had developed by the late nineteenth century among the Bahá'ís of Iran. Two of these accounts are introduced in chapters 13 and 14.

'Abdu'l-Husayn Áváríh (*Kawakibu'd-Durriyih*, vol. 1, pages 53-57) tells about the conversion of Vahíd Dárábí and pages 201-217 of the same volume are devoted mainly to Nayríz-I and a little to Nayríz-II. This source seems to be primarily based on the narrative of Siyyid Husayn Hamadání, contains almost no new information, and is therefore not included in this volume.

Muhammad Shafí' Rawhání, a grandson of Mullá Shafí', wrote the two-volume *Lam'átu'l-Anvár*, the first volume of which deals with the Bábí uprising of Nayríz. This source is based on Mullá Shafí''s and Shaykh Muhammad-Husayn's accounts, augmented by a few survivor's interviews.<sup>8</sup> This source proved useful for the annotations of many events and is frequently cited in the footnotes.

Muhammad-'Alí Faydí's *Hadrat Nuqtih Ulá*, pages 267-270, is a safekeeping.

8 Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, notes that interviews of the survivors of Nayríz I and II, some

40 years earlier, included Khájíh Muhammad; Mashhadí Zaynu’l-‘Abidin; Karbalá’í

Muhammad Sálíh; a daughter of ‘Alí Sardár, who was then married to Mullá Husayn;

Hájí Muhammad, son of Hájí Qásim; and the mother of the late Khájíh ‘Alí.

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brief account of Nayríz-I which is essentially a summary of The Dawn-Breakers and provides little new information. However, the same author’s Nayríz Mushkbíz, offers occasional nuggets.

All the later Bahá’í historians simply retell Nabíl’s account as presented in The Dawn-Breakers.

#### 4. Qajar Histories:

The most important of these is the Násikhu’t-Tavárikh [The Abrogator of Histories], written by the Qajar court historian Sipíhr. Included amid the accounts of army movements, uprisings, border disputes, and the appointments and firings of officials – mostly relatives of the Qajar monarchs – is a detailed account of the Bábí movement as it was known to the court. Sipíhr’s account is useful as he relied heavily on official reports and military dispatches. However, of all his Bábí subjects, his information on the Nayríz events proved to be the least valuable.

Nevertheless all the later Qajar accounts derive from Násikhu’t-Tavárikh, with the possible exception of the Fáršnjámih.

The Fáršnjámih Násirí is a massive two-volume encyclopedia of the province of Fars and its information on Nayríz – the only aspect of the Bábí Faith that it reports – seems to combine what is already available in the Násikhu’t-Tavárikh with supplementary data available to its welllettered author.

The Qajar histories are more fully described in chapter 8.

#### 5. European Sources

The battle of Nayríz in 1850 was of particular interest to European diplomats and their network of informants, and their reports of the time contain many references to the siege. Some of these dispatches represent firsthand knowledge of the scene, while others rely on Iranian officials for their information. However, a close study of them indicates that considerable confusion persisted among the European correspondents as to the chronology of the events. Many such dispatches are noted in various sections of the present study or in the footnotes.

It is surprising that in *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l’Asie*

Centrale, (1865), Gobineau makes no mention of Nayríz incident even

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though it was published two years after his return from Iran where he must have certainly heard of it, particularly since he used the Násikhu't-Tavárikh to gain most of his historical data.

A later description of Nayríz is provided by Kazem-Beg (ii. pages 224-239), but is very harsh on his assessment of Vahíd Dárábí. Browne has made a similar observation.<sup>9</sup> As noted earlier, Nicolas' account is a retelling of Mullá Shafí's.

Since these documents are available to Western readers, they have not been included in the present monograph.

#### 6. Nabil's Narrative:

Mullá Yár-Muhammad Zarandí, surnamed Nabíl A'zam by Bahá'u'lláh, became a Bábí towards the latter part of the 1840's and was closely associated with Baha'u'llah from early on. He followed the latter into Iraq and beyond and always sought his presence. He traveled extensively and played an important role in converting the Bábí community of Iran to the Bahá'í Faith. He settled in 'Akká sometime after the release of Baha'u'llah's family from the prison of that city, and by the early 1880's

had decided to compose a history of the Bábí and Bahá'í movements based on his own observations, his extensive conversations with early converts, which included almost every prominent Bahá'í (and many Bábí survivors), and various narratives available to him in 'Akká, some of which were commissioned by Baha'u'llah. In regard to his process of composition, Nabíl writes the following:

From the beginning of the composition of these pages it was decided that whatever was penned must be presented to His blessed Threshold [i.e. Baha'u'llah] so that after its completion whatever should be the will of the Beloved of the World regarding it should be carried out. Therefore, over the course of eighteen Arabian [i.e. lunar] months these sixty-three sections were gradually written. After completion of each section, without making a copy or any other considerations, it was sent to the Most Mighty and Exalted

<sup>9</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, A Traveler's Narrative, p. 39, n.1.

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presence so that after they were returned a finished copy

could be prepared with utmost care.

Ten complete months passed until, in these days of the month of Rabi-I 1308 A.H.,<sup>10</sup> some of those sections have kindly been received so that I could carefully consider and correct them, and send back [revisions] to the blessed Threshold. In the last batch, the final three sections of the book have been kindly returned [to me], and on this night of 26 Rabí'-111 their review has been completed.

Further I have noted that during these ten months [of waiting] much has occurred that is worthy of mention, and [additionally] certain of the rejuvenating events of the City of Peace [Baghdad] have often been related by the Beloved of the World to those in His presence which had not been recorded in treating the events of that city. I have therefore beseeched divine assistance to be able to briefly and in a few pages write about these [and append them to the text], as it may edify the wayward and aid seekers of certitude.<sup>12</sup>

It is clear from this description, as well as in another instance, that Nabíl wrote his narrative progressively in 63 sections and gave these to Mírzá Áqá Ján who would read them in the presence of Baha'u'llah. Apparently, the last of his chapters were written and sent to Baha'u'llah around February 1890. Ten months passed and he received no word. Then relatively rapidly he began to receive his drafts with instructions to edit and resubmit them to Baha'u'llah for further review. Having done so, Nabíl added some 23 pages of supplementary materials covering the preceding ten months, February-November 1890, and also some of the new stories told by Baha'u'llah of his days in Baghdad.<sup>13</sup>

To write his section on Nayríz-I, it is clear that Nabíl solely relied

10 15 October – 13 November 1890.

11 9 November 1890.

12 Nabíl's original manuscript, page 1007, copy in private hands.

13 See, *Memories of the Báb, Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, chapter 2, for some of the

stories told by Baha'u'llah during this period.

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on the narrative of Mullá Muhammad Shafí', a fact attested in *The Dawn-Breakers*, page 644. The same can be readily verified through a comparison of Mullá Shafí''s text as given in chapter 5 of the present study with *The Dawn-Breakers*, Chapter 22. (A few passages of Mullá Shafí' seems to be missing in *The Dawn-Breakers* and these have to do with the militant character of the Nayrízí Bábís – see the corresponding

footnotes in chapter 5.)

Nabíl's manuscript remained unpublished until the time of Shoghi Effendi who produced an elegant translation of the first half, covering the period up to 1853. Within the Bahá'í community, and with Shoghi Effendi's encouragement, this translation was immediately embraced as the standard history of the Báb and the Bábís.<sup>14</sup>

In many ways, Nabíl's history presents an excellent opportunity to study early Bahá'í historiography. However, a serious barrier towards this objective is the fact that the original Persian text is not available to researchers. A Persian edition by 'Abdu'l-Hamíd Ishráq-Khávarí indeed exists, but it is a Persian translation of an Arabic translation of Shoghi Effendi's English and therefore it is not useful for historical studies.<sup>15</sup> To overcome the present problem of lack of access to Nabíl's text, I devised a method of studying Nabíl's original narrative by proxy.<sup>16</sup> That is, to learn what Nabíl had written on Nayríz, Fádíl Mazandarání's Táríkh

Zuhúru'l-Haqq was used as a mirror document for Nabíl's. Let me elaborate:

In the early 1920's, the renowned Iranian Bahá'í scholar, Mírzá Asadu'lláh Fádíl Mazandarání, commenced composition of a monumental nine volume series on the history of the Bábí the Bahá'í

14 Messages to America (1932-46), 23 June 1932 cablegram refers to The Dawn-Breakers

as "unchallengeable textbook".

15 Another serious problem with Ishráq-Khávarí's edition is the fact that it lacks a

translation of the footnotes that Shoghi Effendi added to Nabíl's edited text,

augmenting the latter's information or presenting alternative accounts of the incidents. Also George Townsend's essay appearing at the beginning of The Dawn-

Breakers was left untranslated.

16 A manuscript containing some 250 pages of Nabíl's narrative is available in

private hands. However, for the most part, the pages are not contiguous and provide only a snippet of what Nabíl wrote.

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movements. Of these nine volumes, only one was published in his lifetime (1944) and that was volume 3, which dealt with the Bábí community and the life and activities of the principal Bábí disciples.<sup>17</sup> Volume 8 was printed many years after the author's death. The

remaining volumes were published electronically at:

<http://www.hnet.org/~bahai/index/diglib/mazand1.htm>

In studying *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq* series, I have come to the conclusion that one of the main sources used by Fádil Mazandarání to compose his history for volumes 2, 4 and much of 5, was Nabíl's original narrative. While a full discussion of sources used to compose *Zuhúru'l-Haqq* and its relation to Nabíl's narrative must await another occasion, it may prove useful to briefly outline a few observations pertaining to the relation of these two important histories insofar as the Nayríz incidents is concerned:<sup>18</sup>

1. Mazandarání's discussion of Vahíd Dárábí's visit to Yazd (*Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 2, pages 398-407) is identical to *The Dawn-Breakers*, Chapter 22. As explained in chapter 3, the primary source for this episode remains a mystery and in the absence of such a primary source, it is only logical to deduce

17 On 11 April 1950, the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran requested that a pamphlet be prepared over Fádil's signature, in which he repudiated 37 points of his

*Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 3, that differed in detail from Nabíl. It appears that this

concern with his history resulted in none of the other volumes being published to

date, with the sole exception of volume 8 which covered the life of prominent Bahá'ís during 'Abdu'l-Bahá's minister and did not overlap with *The Dawn-Breakers*

or *God Passes By*.

18 The vast majority of *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 2, correlates closely with *The*

*Dawn-Breakers*, to the point that one could almost say, for many sections, that Mazandarání seems to have lifted sections from Nabíl's original. However, the

ultimate proof of this hypothesis must wait until Nabíl's text is made accessible.

Also it should be noted that *Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, volumes 4 and 5, include many direct

and attributed quotations from Nabíl, indicating that the latter's text was the central

source of Mazandarání's information. This topic is the subject of a forthcoming

study by the present writer.

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that Mazandarání must have used Nabíl's text.<sup>19</sup> At any rate, the two texts are essentially the same.

2. *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 2, pages 408-428 covers the Nayríz-I episode. From page 408 to 426 it is essentially identical to *The Dawn-Breakers*. In a few instances where Nabíl has misread Mullá Shafí', the same errors appear in *Zuhúru'l-Haqq*. This suggests that Mazandarání was not using the original text of Mullá Shafí' (he probably did not have access to this manuscript), and instead was using Nabíl's account. While documentation of these discrepancies is provided in the footnotes to chapter 5 below, a few additional points can be noted:

A. In listing the Nayrízí people who went out to welcome Vahíd Dárábí in Rúniz, both *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 476, and *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 2, p. 408, note that Mírzá Husayn Qutb was the kad-khudá [chieftain] of the Bázár quarter. This fact is missing in the account of Mullá Shafí' and implies that Mazandarání was using Nabíl's narrative and not Shafí''s.

B. In the same paragraph, *The Dawn-Breakers* associates Bahá'u'lláh's Surih Ayyúb with Hájí Muhammad-Taquí, a fact not mentioned by Mullá Shafí'. *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 2, p. 408, makes an identical comment at the same point.

C. Both *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 478, and *Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 2, p. 409, state that 20 new converts joined Vahíd Dárábí in Rúniz. This fact is missing in Mullá Shafí''s account and further strengthens the thesis that *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 2, was based on Nabíl.

<sup>19</sup> In chapter 3, the present writer has advanced a hypothesis that Nabíl's source of

information on Yazd was the oral report of Mullá Ridá Manshádí.

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Perhaps even more interesting is that, despite the statement in *The Dawn-Breakers*, page 644, suggesting that Nabíl did not include a description of Nayríz-II, there are strong indications that a full account was given by Nabíl in his narrative, almost certainly based on Mullá Shafí''s text. Therefore the fact that Shoghi Effendi included only a very brief summary of this event in *The Dawn-Breakers*, page 643, would appear to be an editorial decision. As to my evidence for Nabíl providing a full account of Nayríz-II, I shall once more employ *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-*

Haqq, volume 4, as my proxy. Much of my evidence is set out in the footnotes in chapter 11 (and chapter 5), but a few additional clues can be noted. In describing the appearance of the Nayríz-II captives before the governor of the Fars, Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 55, n.1, states, "Nabíl Zarandí wrote, 'The late Qavámu'l-Mulk had said that upon seeing the illustrious captives, the scene of Karbala appeared before my eyes and it profoundly agitated me.'" Again, this statement is missing in Mullá Shafí's account and represents a piece of information available to Nabíl. Additional data of a similar character that seems to have been given by Nabíl and not by Mullá Shafí appears in the footnotes to chapters 5 and 11.

In short, the likelihood is that Nabíl's original work contained the full text of Mullá Shafí's description of Nayríz-II. However, confirmation of this hypothesis must await the release of Nabíl's original narrative for study.

Lastly, It should be noted that Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, page 23, line 9 to page 57, line 10, is nearly identical to the copy of Mullá Shafí's text in my possession. Any differences between the two have been documented in the footnotes. However, from page 57, line 11, to page 59, line 5, there are some additional materials, which have been translated in the present study and offered as footnotes in chapter 11. It is interesting that at the end of his section, Fádíl Mazandarání tells us that his source of information for Nayríz-II was the narrative of Mullá Muhammad Shafí, but I suspect he is echoing this comment from Nabíl as well.

#### Comments on Translations

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As the narratives collected in this monograph represent important primary historical source documents, much care was exerted in the process of translation to remain faithful to the character of the originals and to avoid any embellishments or modifications. The sole exceptions are the addition of subheadings and clarifying comments inserted in square brackets, both in texts and footnotes. In some instances when other sources have provided important details, these have been included in the footnotes.

Additionally, attention has been paid to certain historical clues, which may aid future researchers. For example, when a narrator speaks of someone who was deceased by the time of composition of the document, the author typically refers to him as "the late," and these indications have been maintained in the translation.

The system of transliteration will be apparent to those who have an interest in such matters.

Typically, any single Islamic year (noted as A.H.) overlaps with two Christian years. Where only the year of the event is known, the first equivalent Gregorian date is given.

#### Potential Further Research

As noted earlier, the present monograph on the Bábís of Nayríz is only the first preliminary step towards such a study and much more remains to be done. In this regard, it seems important to outline a few thoughts on further research that could usefully be undertaken in this arena:

1. While there are indeed many useful studies of isolated topics relating to the Bábí and Bahá'í histories and some that have analyzed Bábí and Bahá'í teachings and scriptures, there are few systematic academic studies that correlate the findings of the historical studies. A broad synthesis of the history of the Bábí and Bahá'í movements using modern scholarly and academic methodology is yet to be undertaken. Several reasons for this maybe suggested, among them, a tradition on the part of Bábí and Bahá'í writers of speaking of these two religious

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phenomena as discrete events, the lack of critical editions of many important texts, particularly those of the Bábí era, and the deficient cultivation of historiographical techniques within the modern Bahá'í tradition – the custodian and successor of the Bábí movement. In addition, the present histories of the two movements tend to be global in scope, with little effort to study the religions within the confined space of a single local community. Therefore it seems that studies of the emergence of the Bahá'í community from the ethos of the Bábí faith, particularly as focused on the development of a single caste of actors, such as the Nayrízís, will shed light on the relationship between the two religious communities. The present study is of course an example, but it must be supplemented by further transition studies of other local Bábí-Bahá'í communities.

2. The raw historical documents on the history of the Bábís and early Bahá'ís of Nayríz must continue to be gathered, translated and published. There is no doubt that many of the Bahá'ís who trace their ancestry to the early days of the religion in that city possess documents of prime importance, such as letters, poems, pictures, narratives, tablets, travelogues, etc, that must be culled for important historical clues and these will no doubt enormously enhance our understanding of formative events in that region.

3. In this study I have used volumes 2 and 4 of *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq* as a proxy for Nabíl's original text. While this detective work has yielded insights, scholarship would greatly benefit from a proper scholarly edition of the full Persian text of Nabíl's narrative. And while the present study establishes that Nabíl indeed did rely on the narrative of Mullá Muhammad Shafí' for his Nayríz sections, the broader question of Nabíl's sources needs to be studied in detail. In particular, it is known that at least some of his papers exist in the Bahá'í World Centre Archives and these must be carefully analyzed in

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conjunction with any other sources known to have been used by or accessible to Nabíl.

4. In time, the source materials of Bábí and early Bahá'í history in other places must be studied, published, and translated. These include the eyewitness accounts of Shaykh Tabarsí, the various histories of the Bábí-Bahá'í communities in Iranian towns (prepared at the instruction of Shoghi Effendi), the surviving letters and documents of the early converts, and the unpublished volumes of Fádil Mazandarání's *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, the most comprehensive history written thus far on the Bábí and Bahá'í religions.

#### Acknowledgments

In the preparation of this monograph, I have received generous assistance from a number of individuals and wish to hereby record my immense debt of gratitude. Abú'l-Qásim Afnán was most gracious in sharing a copy of the eyewitness account of Mullá Muhammad Shafí' and offering constant encouragement. Susan Maneck kindly shared a copy of Siyyid Husayn Hamadání's history that she had located in India. The Bahá'í World Centre kindly shared a few specimens of Vahíd Dárábí's handwritings that provided background information. My heartfelt gratitude is owed to my late father, Dr. Iraj Rabbani, a man of immense erudition who was most helpful with many suggestions and moral support.

Ahang Rabbani

Houston, Texas

July 1998.

Note: Although this monograph was completed in July 1998, obstacles outside my control delayed its publication. In the meantime, I have had a chance to reconsider parts of the manuscript and also benefit from

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comments of Prof. Sholeh Quinn, Sen McGlinn, Prof. Peter Smith and Ismael Velasco, who graciously read through all or parts of this monograph and offered several valuable suggestions. All errors and shortcomings, however, are mine.

The Review Committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom has graciously granted permission for the publication of this monograph.

A.R.

March 2007

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## Chapter 1

### The Shore of Certitude

Thus will thy Lord choose thee and teach thee the interpretation of stories and events and perfect His favor to thee and to thy posterity.

Qur'án 12:6

Siyid Yahyá Dárábí, surnamed Vahíd Akbar<sup>20</sup> [the great peerless one] by the Báb, was born of Siyyid Ja'far's Yazdí wife in Yazd<sup>21</sup> around the year 1226 A.H./1811, and was the eldest son of his renowned father.<sup>22</sup>

Though little is known of his early days, it is recognized that he spent his youth and young-adolescence mostly in Yazd and also partly in Burújjird. From an early age he attended the seminary school under the tutelage of his own father where, like other students, he memorized the whole of the Qur'án and many principal hadíth.<sup>23</sup> For his generation, a seminary education consisted of intensive study, almost all in Arabic, of a set of standard scholastic texts on law, jurisprudential reasoning, grammar, rhetoric, logic, theology, and sometimes mathematics and astronomy.<sup>24</sup> While rote learning was an essential tool in this education,

<sup>20</sup> Yahyá and Vahíd have the same numerical value, namely, 28, in the abjad system.

<sup>21</sup> There is contradictory information regarding Vahíd's birthplace: Táríkh Zuhúru'l-

Haqq, vol. 3, p. 473, and Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 41 maintain that he was born in

Yazd, while Seyyed Ali Mohammad dit le Bab, p. 233 and Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, vol. 1,

p. 326, n.1, suggest Dáráb near Shíráz. The reason that Vahíd is known as

Dárábí is

not because he lived there for any extended period of time, but rather due to his

ancestors', particularly his grandfather's association with this town; see Appendix 2.

22 *Kashfu'l-Ghatá*, p. 78, *Hadrat Báb*, p. 258, *Tárikh Burújird*, vol. 2, p. 314, and

*Kawákibu'd-Durríyih*, vol. 1, p. 53, state that he was the eldest son, while *Muhádirát*, p.

761, states he was the seventh son.

23 The science of hadíth studies the collection of traditions and utterances of the

Prophet and the Imáms and their chains of transmission.

24 For a discussion of Islamic seminarian education, see *Mottahedeh Mantle of the*

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the real training consisted of minute dialectical examination of the standard texts, with several iterations of each subject using increasingly detailed commentaries. It was an education especially strong in the analysis of language and the interpretation of texts, but not one that particularly encouraged imagination, creativity, originality, or urbanity. While it was a narrow education, it was very advanced and sophisticated, developing an exact knowledge of the tools needed for the work of religious interpretation and judgment, known as *ijtihád*. In the course of his studies, *Siyyid Yahyá* excelled all the other sons of *Siyyid Ja'far*, and emerged as one of most learned men of the region.

One of *Vahíd's* areas of expertise is known to have been the science of hadíth and concerning his achievements in this field, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is reported to have said:

This remarkable man, this precious soul, had committed to memory no less than thirty thousand traditions, and was highly esteemed and admired by all classes of people. He had achieved universal renown in Persia, and his authority and erudition were widely and fully recognized.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to being recognized for his scholarly achievements and his eloquence, he was famed for his amazing strength and courage.<sup>26</sup> *Fádíl Mázandarání* cites sources that report that *Vahíd* would often bend iron bars with his bare hands and that he had mastered the art of fencing and swordsmanship – skills that later served him well as the commander of the beleaguered Bábís of *Nayríz*.<sup>27</sup>

*Vahíd* established his home in *Yazd*, married in the 1830s and had

four children. During this period, he traveled extensively to many parts

Prophet.

25 *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 171, n.2, from a “manuscript relating to martyrdoms in

Persia.” *Lam‘ātu’l-Anvár*, vol. 1, p. 41, n.1, confirms that during the author’s visit to

Haifa in 1921, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated that Vahíd had memorized 30,000 hadíth, and

given that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at a young age had met Vahíd in Tihrán, this represents

primary source information.

26 *Guft va Shunúd Siyyid ‘Alí-Muhammad Báb bá Rúháníyun Tabríz*, p. 180.

27 *Tárikh Zuhúru’l-Haqq*, vol. 3, p. 464.

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of Iran, including Tihrán, Nayríz, Istahbánát, Burújird and other towns in Fárs. Of all the cities, he had a particular affinity toward Nayríz, and established another home there next to a large mosque known as the *Masjid Jami‘ Kabír*, constructed along traditional architectural lines. Until recently, this building has been among the finest homes and important historical sites of Nayríz.<sup>28</sup> Around 1840 he took a second wife, a woman by the name of Sughrá, daughter of the renowned Nayrízí divine and scholar, Hájí Shaykh ‘Abdu’l-‘Alí, and from her had a son named Siyyid Ismá‘íl. Since his father-in-law was the leading clerical figure of Nayríz,

this union further solidified Vahíd’s ties with the notables and ruling class of that city, establishing important political alliances. In particular, during this period he instituted close relations with Hájí

Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín

Khán, the governor of Nayríz.

In 1844, Vahíd moved to Tihrán and established his residence in the house of his brother Siyyid Isháq, in the neighborhood of the Imam-Zádih Yahyá.<sup>29</sup> It was known among the religious scholars and men of letters of the capital that Vahíd’s father had been one of the two leading

<sup>28</sup> *Lam‘ātu’l-Anvár*, vol. 1, p. 42, n.1. See the picture on the title page.

<sup>29</sup> *Tárikh Zuhúru’l-Haqq*, vol. 3, p. 465, and *Lam‘ātu’l-Anvár*, vol. 1, p. 42.

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clerics who had written extensively and convincingly about Qájár political legitimacy, particularly their claim to the throne. Through his groundbreaking works, Siyyid Ja‘far reasoned that the new dynasty, though it could not claim descent from the Prophet, like the Safavids, was nevertheless acting as the rightful “shadow of God” and could rule unhindered.<sup>30</sup> Vahíd enjoyed basking in his father’s fame as the leading political theorist for the Qájárs, and expanded his own popularity and influence in Tihrán. It is reported that he became the regular guest of Prince Tahmásb Mírzá, the Mu‘ayyadu‘d-Dawlih, grandson of Fath-‘Alí Shah through his father Muhammad-‘Alí Mírzá, and often stayed in that house for some time.<sup>31</sup> Nabíl describes his fame during this period:

He occupied a position of such pre-eminence among the leading figures in Persia that at whatever meeting he happened to be present, no matter how great the number of the ecclesiastical leaders who attended it, he was invariably its chief speaker. None would dare to assert his views in his presence. They all reverently observed silence before him; all testified to his sagacity, his unsurpassed knowledge and mature wisdom.<sup>32</sup>

The royal court and particularly the Prime Minister, Hájí Mírzá Áqásí, considered him an important ally among the clerics and frequently and openly paid homage to his learning and his loyalty. He was consulted regularly on difficult matters pertaining to religious doctrine and was often asked to marshal the support of other mujtahids. It is said that he wielded unusual influence with the monarch himself, mostly through the exposition of his father’s political writings. In this regard, Mírzá Habibu‘lláh Afnán notes: “The late Muhammad Shah was extremely devoted to him and trusted his judgment explicitly, to such degree that without his leave and fatwa<sup>33</sup> he would not undertake any acts nor show

30 See Appendix 2 and *The Shadow of God*, chapter 12.

31 Seyyed Ali Mohammad dit le Bab, p. 233.

32 *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 171.

33 Religious ruling issued by a mujtahid.

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forth any initiatives.”<sup>34</sup>

The Mission

In March of 1845, the Báb returned from his pilgrimage journey, and a number of his disciples came to see him. However their presence

attracted excessive public attention, bringing with it waves of repression. Eventually, the Báb dismissed them all, instructing most of them to proceed to Isfahán, retaining only Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím, to whom he assigned the duty of transcribing his writings. This prudent plan served to relieve him of the immediate danger of violence from the people of Shíráz, “enabling the captive Youth to celebrate the Naw-Rúz of that and the succeeding year in an atmosphere of relative tranquility in the company of His mother, His wife, and His uncle,”<sup>35</sup> and it also lent a fresh impetus to the propagation of his movement beyond the immediate environs of that city.

Meanwhile, the reform fever that had seized his followers, and particularly his appointed Letters of the Living who had spread throughout the country proclaiming to the multitudes the news of the new-born religion, was communicating itself to the members of the clergy and to the merchant classes and was also penetrating the higher circles of society: “Indeed, a wave of passionate inquiry had swept the whole country, and unnumbered congregations were listening with wonder to the testimonies eloquently and fearlessly related by the Báb’s itinerant messengers.”<sup>36</sup> The fame of the young prophet was exciting the entire nation and amazement and interest seized those who heard from the tongues of his chief propagators the tales of those signs that had heralded the birth of his manifestation. In this regard, Nicolas writes:

While these events were taking place in the north of Persia, the central and southern provinces were deeply roused by

34 Táríkh Amrí Fárs va Shíráz, pp. 87-88; translation in *In the Land of Refuge*, chapter 5.

35 *God Passes By*, p. 11. The uncle referred to is Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí, the second

uncle of the Báb.

36 *God Passes By*, p. 11.

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the fiery eloquence of the missionaries of the new doctrine. The people, flighty, credulous, ignorant, superstitious in the extreme, were struck dumb by the incessant miracles which they heard related every moment; the anxious priests, feeling their flock quivering with impatience and ready to escape their control, redoubled their slanders and infamous imputations; the grossest lies, the most bloody fictions were spread among the bewildered populace, torn between horror and admiration.<sup>37</sup>

The remarkable news of messianic fulfillment was spreading with

such rapidity and penetrating all strata with such force that even the monarch, Muhammad Shah, a man of mystical inclinations and Sufi proclivities and uninterested in the jurisprudential aspects of religion, was excited by it and wished to ascertain its truth. A number of officials in the court informed him that the Báb claimed a direct revelation from God and possessed hidden knowledge of Qur'anic mysteries. Others professed much enthusiasm about the events, all of which served to fuel the imagination of Muhammad Shah.<sup>38</sup> Coupled to these anecdotal reports were the writings of the Báb, first reportedly brought by Mullá Husayn to the capital, and later sent directly by the Báb from Búshihir, which greatly attracted the attention of the sovereign. Additionally, the continual stream of letters from Husayn Khán, the governor-general of Fárs, complaining about the Báb and people's excitement, was a cause of concern to the court and required immediate investigation and response.<sup>39</sup> In particular, Husayn Khán brought to the attention of the Shah the incident of the Báb's proclamation in the Masjid Vakíl.<sup>40</sup> In order to gain detailed information and receive a first-hand

37 Seyyed Ali Mohammad dit le Bab, p. 387. The presenter translator benefited from

Peter Terry's earlier translation.

38 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 87, claims that many in the royal circle and

government were either Bábí or attracted to the movement.

39 Kawákibu'd-Durríyih, vol. 1, p. 52, notes that the Shah was not interested in state

interference in affairs of religion and therefore delayed making a decision for as long

as he could. Eventually he had to give in to the pressure of the powerful clerics.

40 Seyyed Ali Mohammad dit le Bab, p. 233.

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unbiased report, through his Prime Minister, Muhammad Shah decided to entrust this mission to Siyyid Yahyá Dárábí, "one of the most erudite, eloquent, and influential of his subjects,"<sup>41</sup> to interview the Báb and to report to him the results of his investigations. The following is noted by Mírzá Habíbu'lláh Afnán:

After the spread of this Cause, the news of it reached the Shah who called Áqá Siyyid Yahyá into his presence stating, 'According to reports reaching the throne, a certain Person in Shíráz has advanced claims to the Qá'imíyyat and to the Bábíyyat, and as we have faith in your judgment, you must

proceed to Fárs and after careful investigation, inform us of the truth or falsehood of this matter, so that we may be informed of our religious duties. You must leave at once and are to report to us at your earliest opportunity.’ The sovereign then provided him with travel expenses and a steed and sent him off to Shíráz.<sup>42</sup>

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, a keen admirer of Vahíd and closely informed of the relevant events, further states:

By reason of the ‘ulamá’s lack of experience and skill in administrative affairs, and the continual succession of their decisions, comment was rife; and their interference with the Báb cast a clamor throughout Iran, causing increased ardor in friends and the coming forward of the hesitating. For by reason of these occurrences men’s interest increased, and in all parts of Iran some [of God’s] servants inclined toward Him, until the matter acquired such importance that the late monarch, Muhammad Shah, delegated a certain Siyyid Yahyá of Dáráb, who was one of the best known ‘ulamá and Siyyids as well as the object of veneration and trust, giving him a horse and money for the journey so that he might

41 God Passes By, p. 11.

42 Táríkh Amrí Fárs va Shíráz, pp. 87-88; translation in *In the Land of Refuge*, chapter 5.

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proceed to Shíráz and personally investigate this matter.<sup>43</sup>

Nicolas has suggested that Vahíd was commissioned to make contact with the Báb and to inform the central authority, as exactly as possible, of the political consequences which would result from the reforms proposed by the Báb. These seemed likely to unsettle the heart of the country.<sup>44</sup> Whatever the motives, it is clear that Muhammad Shah had implicit confidence in Vahíd’s impartiality, competence, and profound knowledge, and therefore delegated this task to the erudite cleric. Further, it was evident to the Shah, who tended to remain neutral on matters of a religious character, that because of Vahíd’s outstanding reputation among the ‘ulamá, his report and judgment would be acceptable to the other clergy and to the ruling class. The fact that Vahíd had come from a family whose loyalty to the throne remained unquestioned, must surely have influenced the Shah in selecting Vahíd as his trusted emissary.

Nabíl reports that the Shah confidentially signaled through Mírzá Lutf-‘Alí his desire that Siyyid Yahyá should proceed to Shíráz and

investigate the matter in person. "Tell him from us," commanded the sovereign, "that inasmuch as we repose the utmost confidence in his integrity, and admire his moral and intellectual standards, and regard him as the most suitable among the divines of our realm, we expect him to proceed to Shíráz, to inquire thoroughly into the episode of the Siyyid-i Báb, and to inform us of the results of his investigations; We shall then know what measures it behooves us to take."<sup>45</sup> The Shah reportedly provided him with a horse, a sword and a travel allowance totaling one hundred tumáns for this important mission.<sup>46</sup>

It is very likely that Vahíd himself desired to make this journey and meet with the claimant of so august an office, the Báb.<sup>47</sup> After all, some

<sup>43</sup> A Traveler's Narrative, pp. 7-8. Slight modification of E.G. Browne's translation.

<sup>44</sup> Seyyed Ali Mohammad dit le Bab, pp. 387-388.

<sup>45</sup> The Dawn-Breakers, p. 172.

<sup>46</sup> Kawákibu'd-Durríyih, vol. 1, p. 53.

<sup>47</sup> Násikhu't-Tawárikh, vol. 3, pp. 337-338, Rawdatu's-Safá, vol. 10, p. 311, and

Núzdah-Nutq, p. 39, suggest Vahíd had attended the meeting between the Báb and

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months earlier, Vahíd's father, Siyyid Ja'far, having heard about the Báb's

claims and being unable to meet with him in Shíráz, had gone in his search to Mecca where he was able to converse with the Báb. It is highly probable that upon his return, Siyyid Ja'far had acquainted his son with his observations and urged him to proceed to Shíráz for a meeting with the Báb.

Nabíl notes: "In those days Siyyid Yahyá was residing in Tihrán in the house of Mírzá Lutf-'Alí, the Master of Ceremonies to the Shah, as the honored guest of his Imperial Majesty."<sup>48</sup> However, since Vahíd was actually living with his brother, it seems more plausible that he was a frequent visitor of the house of Mírzá Lutf-'Alí (as opposed to living there). At least two historians have suggested that Mírzá Lutf-'Alí had become a Bábí at that time, possibly through seeing the correspondence and writings of the Báb that Mullá Husayn had brought with him from Shíráz.<sup>49</sup> Given the close association and the friendship of Mírzá Lutf-'Alí with Vahíd, the latter must have become intrigued by the messianic claim. Therefore, it is possible that Vahíd's departure for Shíráz was only

partly influenced by the Shah's command and was mostly due to his own desires, excited by his father and friends. In relation to this, Nabíl further

writes, “Siyyid Yahyá had been himself desirous of obtaining first-hand knowledge of the claims of the Báb, but had been unable, owing to adverse circumstances, to undertake the journey to Fars. The message of Muhammad Shah decided him to carry out his long-cherished intention. Assuring his sovereign of his readiness to comply with his wish, he

the governor, Husayn Khán, on 21 Ramadán 1261 A.H. (23 September 1845) where the merchant-prophet was rebuked and struck in the face, and on that occasion Vahíd had become deeply attracted to the purity of the Báb. However this information seems to contradict Vahíd’s own text (see Appendix 3) where he gives

the date of his meeting with the Báb as Jamádíyu’l-Avval 1262 A.H./27 April–26

May 1846. Kawákibu’-d-Durríyih, vol. 1, p. 53, theorizes that Vahíd initiated his

journey to Shíráz and learning of his intentions, the Sháh and the Prime Minister

supported his objective.

48 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 172.

49 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 87, Hadrat Nuqtih Ula, p. 174 and Nayríz Mushkbíz,

p. 8.

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immediately set out for Shíráz.”<sup>50</sup>

#### Journey to Shíráz

It is not clear whether it was at the instruction of the Shah or at the request of Vahíd that Mírzá Lutf-‘Alí was to accompany him on this journey, but they set out together. As Vahíd was born and raised in Yazd, and his first wife and four children resided there, he decided to stop in that city on the way to his destination.<sup>51</sup> Hájí Muhammad-Táhir Málímírí gives the following description of Vahíd’s arrival in Yazd:

The Sultan of Iran, Muhammad Shah, sent him [Vahíd] to Shíráz to investigate the truth of this Cause and to report his findings in writing. He left Tihrán and on the way [to Shíráz] arrived at Yazd, carrying a sword and mounted on a horse, and was met by several of the high ranking local ecclesiastics who accompanied him to the Musallá Safdar-Khán.<sup>52</sup>

Excited by the news of his arrival, several thousand of the town’s inhabitants had gathered to hear him speak. ‘O people of Yazd!’, Vahíd cried out, ‘An illustrious Siyyid in Shíráz has declared himself to be the Promised Qá’im and I am charged to proceed there and meet with him. If in my

judgment I find him to be an impostor, with this sword shall I deal with him; and if I judge him to be of the truthful, in his path I shall wage jihád.<sup>53</sup> Whosoever wishes may join me in this journey.’ People spontaneously responded that they

50 *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 172.  
51 Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, vol. 1, p. 326, states “... where his wife and four sons were

living.” However Vahíd had a daughter and three sons with his Yazdí wife. His fourth son was living in Nayríz with his mother Sughrá, Vahíd’s second wife.

52 Though less common than an ordinary mosque, the musallá is a place of worship

where the faithful gather on special occasions.

53 Holy War, as a means of spreading a religion, was later abrogated for Bahá’ís by

Bahá’u’lláh during the Ridván festivities in 1863. At the time that Vahíd spoke, it

was a common Islamic expectation that the Qá’im would launch a massive jihád to rid the earth of unbelievers.

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would abide with whatever Vahíd determined and signified their reliance in him by saying, ‘All of us in this assemblage, whether learned or illiterate, noble or commoner, rich or poor, consent for you to be our representative in this matter. Your decision is ours; and we will abide by your views and determination. Your knowledge and wisdom, as well as your piety, faith and discernment are well known to us and we hold your decision as our very own proof.’<sup>54</sup>

Mírzá Qábil, in his unpublished general history of the Bábí and Bahá’í Faiths, has noted:

When the illustrious Vahíd arrived in the Dárau’l-‘Ibádih<sup>55</sup> of Yazd, the divines and the nobles came to visit him and invited him to the mosque. The honored Vahíd came to the Masjid Rík and led a congregation numbering two thousands worshipers in offering their obligatory prayers. Afterward he announced, ‘On behalf of His Majesty the King, I am entrusted with a mighty mission and must proceed to Shíráz at this instant.’ With this, he came out from the mosque and

mounted his waiting horse. Some of the ‘ulamá inquired into the nature of his charge that required such a hasty departure. He replied, ‘I am instructed to proceed at once to Shíráz and investigate the claim of the Siyyid Báb. If I find His claim to be unfounded, I will behead Him with this very sword.’ Then he left quickly.<sup>56</sup>

54 Táríkh Shuhadáy Yazd, p. 5. A summary appears in Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 2, pp.

88-89. A slightly different translation appears in Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, vol. 1, pp. 326-327. It should be noted that it is fairly unlikely that these precise words were spoken on that occasion. Attributing such quotations is a literary device used in traditional Iranian histories. For instance, Nabíl’s narrative (partly translated as The Dawn-breakers) is filled with quotations attributed to the participants when it is unlikely that Nabíl would have known the exact words spoken by the actors. 55 Because of its many religious schools, Yazd was known during the Qájár time as

Dárau’l-‘Ibádih [the land of the worshippers]; see, Yádigárháy Yazd, vol. 1, p. 12.

56 Táríkh ‘Umumí Amr, p. 51.

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From these two accounts it is evident that Vahíd enjoyed widespread support in Yazd, to the point that his very arrival attracted the attention of many citizens, representing a substantial percentage of the population. This trust and popularity, as we shall see in the course of the subsequent events of 1850, served him well in launching a farreaching campaign in the promotion of the Bábí movement.

Upon his arrival at Shíráz, he went directly to the mansion of Husayn Khán, bearing the royal edict and accompanied by Mírzá Lutf-‘Alí. Husayn Khán, known as the Sáhíb-Ikhtiyár, was the governorgeneral of the province of Fárs, and Vahíd took up his residence in the Governor’s home as his special guest. As an emissary of the Sháh, and a man of renowned reputation, he was shown considerable respect. Husayn Khán inquired as to the nature of his mission, and Vahíd acquainted him with what had transpired and the court’s interest in this affair. On hearing of Vahíd’s desire to visit the Báb in his residence, Husayn Khán replied, “What need is there for you to trouble yourself

further by going to his abode? I will send my men to bring him to your presence.” “This person claims a great office,” replied Vahíd, “and as yet

I have not ascertained the veracity and accuracy of this assertion. I have come in search of Truth. If indeed his assertions are of God, then it behooves the entire world to prostrate themselves at his threshold; otherwise I shall deal with him.”<sup>57</sup>

Upon further inquiry about the Báb, Vahíd was informed that a plot was under way to slay him. Though all but a handful of the new converts had left Shíráz, and those who had remained there lived in obscurity, nevertheless the ecclesiastics were deeply concerned that the Báb’s message was being spread widely and that their own position and influence was in jeopardy. Three of them, namely, Shaykh Muhammad-‘Alí Mahallátí, Shaykh Husayn Zálím [the tyrant], the Názimu’sh-Shar‘yih, and Shaykh Mihdí Kájvarí had conspired to kill the Báb. They had prepared and issued a fatwá stating that because of his claims, it was warranted and indeed necessary for him to be eliminated. However, this

57 A.Q. Afnán, unpublished study on the history of the Bábís, vol. 2 (manuscript in private hands).

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edict was not implemented, so they had to design other means to achieve their objective. In fact, it was known among the people that Shaykh Husayn had been asked, “What if, out of respect for his holy lineage, no executioner could be found to slay this Siyyid. Who then will perform this act?” To which he had replied, “I will do so with my own hand using my own penknife.”<sup>58</sup>

It was against this backdrop that Vahíd began his inquiry. A few days after his arrival, while passing through the bazaar, he met some of his old colleagues, including Mullá Shaykh ‘Alí Turshizí, surnamed ‘Azím, with whom he had been intimately associated while in Mashhad, and asked him whether he was satisfied with the Báb’s claim. “You should meet Him,” ‘Azím replied, “and seek independently to acquaint yourself with His Mission. As a friend, I would advise you to exercise the utmost consideration in your conversations with Him, lest you, too, in the end should be obliged to deplore any act of discourtesy towards Him.”<sup>59</sup> Shortly before Vahíd’s arrival, Hájí Siyyid Javád Karbalá’í,

Shaykh Hasan Zunúzí and Shaykh Sultán ‘Arab had also come from ‘Iraq to Shíráz seeking an audience with the Báb.<sup>60</sup>

Meeting the Báb

Through ‘Azím’s intervention, Vahíd was able to attain the presence of the Báb in the house of his uncle, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí.<sup>61</sup> In a treatise

quoted in Appendix 3, Vahíd gives the date of his meeting with the Báb as Jamádíyu’l-Avval 1262 A.H./27 April–26 May 1846. The following account gives us a glimpse of the manner in which the Báb’s followers visited him during those days:

Because the governor-general had prohibited gatherings in

58 See *A Year Amongst the Persians*, p. 442, for details pertaining to the eventual

dreadful fate of the enemies of the Báb.

59 *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 172.

60 *Tárikh Zuhúru’l-Haqq*, vol. 2, p. 87.

61 *The Báb*, p. 90, suggests that this meeting was arranged by Hájí Siyyid Javád

Karbalá’í.

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the presence of the Báb, His Holiness had arranged through His uncle, the martyred Hájí Siyyid ‘Alí, for a few of the trusted believers to meet nightly with Him at the latter’s residence. The Báb would come through a small door connecting the two houses.<sup>62</sup> Every night we attained His presence and after having supper together, which according to Iranian custom was served some three or four hours into the night, He would retire to His own residence. Some of the friends used to spend the night at Hájí Siyyid ‘Alí’s, while others would return home if conditions permitted. It went thus until the illustrious Vahíd, Áqá Siyyid Yahyá Dárábí, upon him be the divine favors, arrived in Shíráz. He too met the Báb in the house of the martyred uncle<sup>63</sup> in a similar manner.<sup>64</sup>

Nabíl’s report of the meetings between the Báb and the questioning cleric is very detailed though he does not identify the source of his information, nor is there any further documentary evidence to support some of the specifics offered by him. Nevertheless, since in broad terms his outline is in agreement with other accounts that we will examine later in this chapter, and in many ways is more specific than those, it would be useful to consider it next. Nabíl notes that Vahíd, in his attitude towards the Báb, practiced the etiquette which ‘Azím had counseled him to observe:

For about two hours he directed the attention of the Báb to the most abstruse and bewildering themes in the metaphysical teachings of Islam, to the obscurest passages  
62 The House of the Báb was in the Shamshírgarhá Street and is different from the

residence mentioned in this passage which belonged to Áqá Mírzá ‘Alí, an uncle of the Báb’s mother and the father of Khadíjih Bagum, the Báb’s wife. This house was connected to the house of the Báb’s uncle, Hájí Siyyid ‘Alí, through a connecting tunnel. For details see, *In the Land of Refuge*, Appendix 1.

63 The second uncle of the Báb, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí, was martyred with six other

Bábís in Tihrán on 7 March 1850; see *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 445-458.  
64 *Kashfu’l-Ghatá*, pp. 77-78.

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of the Qur’án, and to the mysterious traditions and prophecies of the imams of the Faith. The Báb at first listened to his learned references to the law and prophecies of Islam, noted all his questions, and began to give to each a brief but persuasive reply. The conciseness and lucidity of His answers excited the wonder and admiration of Siyyid Yahyá. He was overpowered by a sense of humiliation at his own presumptuousness and pride. His sense of superiority completely vanished. As he arose to depart, he addressed the Báb in these words: ‘Please God, I shall, in the course of my next audience with You, submit the rest of my questions and with them shall conclude my inquiry.’ As soon as he retired, he joined Azím, to whom he related the account of his interview. ‘I have in His presence,’ he told him, ‘expatiated unduly upon my own learning. He was able in a few words to answer my questions and to resolve my perplexities. I felt so abased before Him that I hurriedly begged leave to retire.’ ‘Azím reminded him of his counsel, and begged him not to forget this time the advice he had given him.

In the course of his second interview, Siyyid Yahyá, to his amazement, discovered that all the questions which he had intended to submit to the Báb had vanished from his memory. He contented himself with matters that seemed irrelevant to the object of his enquiry. He soon found, to his still greater surprise that the Báb was answering, with the

same lucidity and conciseness that had characterized His previous replies, those same questions which he had momentarily forgotten. 'I seemed to have fallen fast asleep,' he later observed. 'His words, His answers to questions which I had forgotten to ask, reawakened me. A voice still kept whispering in my ear: 'Might not this, after all, have been an accidental coincidence?' I was too agitated to collect my thoughts. I again begged leave to retire.'

'Azím, whom I subsequently met, received me with cold indifference, and sternly remarked: 'Would that schools

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had been utterly abolished, and that neither of us had entered one! Through our little-mindedness and conceit, we are withholding from ourselves the redeeming grace of God, and are causing pain to Him who is the Fountain thereof. Will you not this time beseech God to grant that you may be enabled to attain His presence with becoming humility and detachment, that perchance He may graciously relieve you from the oppression of uncertainty and doubt?'

I resolved that in my third interview with the Báb I would in my inmost heart request Him to reveal for me a commentary on the Surih of Kawthar.<sup>65</sup> I determined not to breathe that request in His presence. Should he, unasked by me, reveal this commentary in a manner that would immediately distinguish it in my eyes from the prevailing standards current among the commentators on the Qur'án, I then would be convinced of the Divine character of His Mission, and would readily embrace His Cause. If not, I would refuse to acknowledge Him. As soon as I was ushered into His presence, a sense of fear, for which I could not account, suddenly seized me. My limbs quivered as I beheld His face. I, who on repeated occasions had been introduced into the presence of the Shah and had never discovered the slightest trace of timidity in myself, was now so awed and shaken that I could not remain standing on my feet. The Báb, beholding my plight, arose from His seat, advanced towards me, and, taking hold of my hand seated me beside Him. 'Seek from Me,' He said, 'whatever is your heart's desire. I will readily reveal it to you.' I was speechless with wonder. Like a babe that can neither understand nor speak, I felt powerless to respond. He smiled as He gazed at me and said: 'Were I to reveal for you the commentary on

65 Qur'án 108 reads: "Surih of Kawthar (Chapter of Abundance). In the name of

God, most gracious, most merciful. To thee have we granted the Fount (of Abundance). Therefore, to thy Lord turn in Prayer and Sacrifice. For he who hateth thee – he will be cut off (from Future Hope)."

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the Surih of Kawthar, would you acknowledge that My words are born of the Spirit of God? Would you recognize that My utterance can in no wise be associated with sorcery or magic?' Tears flowed from my eyes as I heard Him speak these words. All I was able to utter was this verse of the Qur'án: 'O our Lord, with ourselves have we dealt unjustly: if Thou forgive us not and have not pity on us, we shall surely be of those who perish.'<sup>66</sup>

It was still early in the afternoon when the Báb requested Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí to bring His pen-case and some paper. He then started to reveal His commentary on the Surih of Kawthar. How am I to describe this scene of inexpressible majesty? Verses streamed from His pen with a rapidity that was truly astounding<sup>67</sup>. The incredible swiftness of His writing, the soft and gentle murmur of His voice, and the stupendous force of His style, amazed and bewildered me. He continued in this manner until the approach of sunset. He did not pause until the entire commentary of the Surih was completed. He then laid down His pen and asked for tea. Soon after, He began to read it aloud in my presence. My heart leaped madly as I heard Him pour out, in accents of unutterable sweetness, those treasures enshrined

66 Qur'án 7:23.

67 The extreme rapidity with which both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh composed verses is

often offered by the Bábí and Bahá'í apologists as one of the signs of their divine

origin and on a number of occasions both have commented on this theme. For example, among other places, the Báb mentions this fact in the Persian Bayán (translation from *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 176): "God had given Him such power and

such fluency of expression that, if a scribe wrote with the most extreme rapidity

during two days and two nights without interruption, He would reveal, out of

this  
mine of eloquence, the equivalent of the Qur'án." And also in the Persian  
Bayán  
(translation from *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 176) we find: "Within five hours'  
time He  
revealed two thousand verses, that is He spoke as fast as the scribe could  
write. One  
can judge thereby that, if He had been left free, how many of His works from  
the  
beginning of His Manifestation until today would have been spread abroad among  
men."

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in that sublime commentary. I was so entranced by its  
beauty that three times over I was on the verge of fainting.  
He sought to revive my failing strength with a few drops of  
rose-water which He caused to be sprinkled on my face.  
This restored my vigor and enabled me to follow His  
reading to the end.  
When He had completed His recital, the Báb arose to  
depart. He entrusted me, as He left, to the care of His  
maternal uncle. 'He is to be your guest,' He told him, 'until  
the time when he, in collaboration with Mullá  
'Abdu'l-Karím<sup>68</sup>, shall have finished transcribing this newly  
revealed commentary, and shall have verified the correctness  
of the transcribed copy.' Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím and I devoted  
three days and three nights to this work. We would in turn  
read aloud to each other a portion of the commentary until  
the whole of it had been transcribed. We verified all the  
traditions in the text and found them to be entirely accurate.  
Such was the state of certitude to which I had attained that  
if all the powers of the earth were to be leagued against me  
they would be powerless to shake my confidence in the  
greatness of His Cause.<sup>69</sup>

Summing up Nabíl's description of this conversion, Shoghi  
Effendi notes: "Broad-minded, highly imaginative, zealous by nature,  
intimately associated with the court, he, in the course of three interviews,  
was completely won over by the arguments and personality of the  
Báb."<sup>70</sup>

Certainly the fact of writing a new commentary on a surih whose  
meaning is so obscure, should have deeply astonished Siyyid Yahyá, but  
it is reported that what surprised him even more was to find in this  
commentary the explanation that he himself had found in his meditation

68 In the Bábí literature, he is commonly referred to as Mírzá Ahmad Kátib [the scribe].

69 The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 173-176.

70 God Passes By, p. 12.

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on these three verses. Thus he found himself in agreement with the reformer in the interpretation that he had believed himself to be the only one to have reached and that he had not made known to anyone.<sup>71</sup> In an account provided by Fádíl Mázandarání, it is recorded that Vahíd described his visit to the Báb as follows:

During my first audience, I found His Holiness [the Báb] to be a pious, spiritual Youth, but devoid of scholarly proclivities, and as such considered myself superior in knowledge. After the second meeting, I concluded that the Báb was my equal. And in the third interview, after He revealed the commentary on the Surih of Kawthar, I recognized my own spiritual poverty and Him as the possessor of all divine and innate knowledge.<sup>72</sup>

Mullá 'Abdu'r-Rahím Qazvíní states that in the course of his first visit to the Báb, Vahíd asked for the demonstration of the secret of alchemy as a sign of his greatness.<sup>73</sup> The Báb at first ignored his request. This grieved Vahíd and he thought that if indeed the Báb was the bearer of a true mission from God, he must therefore of necessity possess all knowledge, and as such, if he failed to produce evidence of alchemy, then his claim could under no circumstances be considered true. These thoughts were on his mind when, during the course of the second interview, another visitor, who had brought as gift some fresh grapes for the Báb, entered the room. At the Báb's bidding, the grapes were placed on a tray and set in the middle of the room. The young claimant invited his guest to partake of the grapes, and after Vahíd had done so, the Báb instructed him to rub a grapevine against the copper tray where the

<sup>71</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 89.

<sup>72</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 3, p. 465, and Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 43.

<sup>73</sup> The Báb, p. 90 states:

He [Vahíd] told Hájí Siyyid Javád Karbilá'í that if only the Báb would show forth a miracle, his lingering doubts would vanish, to which Hájí Siyyid Javád replied that to demand the performance of a miracle, when faced with the brilliance of the Sun of Truth, was tantamount to seeking light from a flickering candle.

grapes were placed. To Vahíd's utter astonishment, upon being touched by the vines, the tray turned into purest gold. The Báb then remarked, "The purpose of God is not to turn copper into gold, but rather through the divine elixir and knowledge to turn the hearts of men to gold."<sup>74</sup> While the source of Nabíl's description of Vahíd's meeting with the Báb remains unknown, and therefore its accuracy is indeterminate, a reliable account of Vahíd's conversion is given in the description of Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl Gulpáygání in *Kashfu'l-Ghatá*,<sup>75</sup> based on his first-hand recollections of Hájí Siyyid Javád Karbalá'í's account:

"Áqá Siyyid Yahyá was the eldest son of Hájí Siyyid Ja'far Kashfí and was known for his knowledge and achievements. The late Muhammad Shah and Hájí Mírzá Aqasi, the Prime Minister, were especially disposed toward him. Once the call of the Manifestation of the Primal Point was raised and great multitudes among the learned, the merchants and the common men accepted Him, the late Áqá Siyyid Yahyá, hearing various accounts, decided to proceed to Shíráz and to attain His presence for the purpose of investigating the

<sup>74</sup> *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 3, p. 466.

<sup>75</sup> After the publication of the *Kitáb Nuqtatu'l-Káf* by E.G. Browne, who believed it

to be the long-lost narrative of Mírzá Jání Káshí, Mírzá Abú'l-Fadl, at 'Abdu'l-Bahá's behest, commenced a refutation known as the *Kashfu'l-Ghatá* [removal of veils]. He was particularly commissioned for the task, as he had seen the original of Mírzá Jání's manuscript in Tihrán when he served as a secretary to Mánikjí Sáhíb and assisted Siyyid Husayn Hamadání in gathering information for his narrative, published by Browne as *Tárikh-i Jadíd*. At an advanced age and in poor health, Mírzá Abú'l-Fadl had penned the first 132 pages of this book when he passed away. 'Abdu'l-Bahá then instructed the Hands of the Cause in Iran and Mírzá Na'ím of Sidih to assist a cousin of Mírzá Abú'l-Fadl, the renowned Siyyid Mihdí Gulpáygání in 'Ishqábád, to complete the text of the *Kashfu'l-Ghatá*, thereby proving that the

Nuqtatu'l-Káf had been interpolated. However, the Kashfu'l-Ghatá, did not meet with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's approval, presumably due to its harsh and frequently overzealous attack on Browne. Since Mírzá Abú'l-Fadl during the period 1293-99 A.H./1876-81 had been a close associate of Hájí Siyyid Javád Karbalá'í in Tihrán, these recollections represent important source material. For further details see, The Bahá'í Faith and E.G. Browne.

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matter on his own. Hájí Mírzá Áqásí, the Prime Minister, learned about this decision and informed the monarch, who in turn, through Mírzá Lutf-'Alí, the Chamberlain, asked the Siyyid to exert himself in this regard and upon a satisfactory study, to inform the Royal Court of his determinations.

"Once Áqá Siyyid Yahyá arrived at Shíráz," Hájí Siyyid Javád continued, "on several occasions he attained the presence of the Báb and asked of Him his questions, receiving full written and verbal replies. After each meeting, his humility and devotion increased, but as yet he had not attained certitude. It seemed as if he expected the disclosure of something specific, but because of his Host's kindness that had penetrated deep into his heart and enveloped his whole being, he would not divulge his request. Finally, because of our close friendship, he asked if it was possible for me to petition a special favor on his behalf. In reply, I said: 'Your case is like a person present at a magnificent banquet where every manner of delicious food and superb drink is to be found, yet he would satisfy himself with trifles. Indeed, I am unable to ask Him [such a request] on your behalf. Therefore, next time you attain His presence, you must ask your heart's desire.'

"A few nights later," Hájí Siyyid Javád told me, "when we were to attain the presence of His Holiness, Vahíd came bearing a treatise which he had penned on many complex and abstruse questions and asked that I present it to the Báb so that, should He so wish, it might be favored with a written reply. That night, after various discussions and after we had partaken of supper, the Báb left us to retire to His own House. As His servant, Mubáarak, was leaving, I handed him the treatise of Siyyid Yahyá and asked him to present it

to his Master. I emphasized that these were the questions of Siyyid Yahyá and not just anyone, and should be promptly presented to His Holiness.” The hájǐ’s intent with this comment was to prompt a quick reply.

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Hájǐ Siyyid Javád continued: “It was early dawn when, as is customary, I rose and was preparing for my morning prayers, when Mubárák arrived bearing a treatise in the hand of the Báb revealed in reply to the questions of Vahíd. On seeing this, Vahíd was overcome with deep joy. He took the treatise and with the aid of a candle read some of its passages. A wonderful expression of delight enveloped him. Though he was always the very essence of seriousness and sobriety, he began to dance and circle round the room. I asked him, ‘What has overcome you that you show such rapture?’ ‘Siyyid Javád, it is nearly a week,’ he replied, ‘that I have been composing the questions I submitted unto Him. His Holiness was here with us this past evening until nearly midnight, and doubtless after leaving us had to rest for four or five hours too. However, behold this treatise, indeed this mighty book, which was revealed and penned in only a very short interval!’”

“After that, in complete certitude, Vahíd returned to Burújird and Tihrán, and after proclaiming the new Faith to his father, Hájǐ Siyyid Ja‘far, known as Kashfí, and his acceptance, wrote a report of his efforts and investigations to Mírzá Lutf-‘Alí, the Chamberlain, to present the same to Muhammad Shah. Shortly after that, the incident of the brief imprisonment of the Báb at the House of ‘Abdu’llah Khán occurred which resulted in the scattering of all His loved ones.”

This is the substance of the arrival and acceptance of Áqá Siyyid Yahyá Dárábí, known by the name of Vahíd, which on numerous occasions I myself heard from Hájǐ Siyyid Javád and have now committed to paper.<sup>76</sup>

Another description of Vahíd’s visit with some notable differences to the above quoted reports is provided by Mírzá Qábil in his Táríkh

<sup>76</sup> Kashfu’l-Ghatá, pp. 78-81. Also quoted in Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 3, pp. 462-464,

n.1, and with slight variations also in Kawákibu’d-Durríyih, vol. 1, pp. 53-56.

'Umú mí Amr. In this account, however, once more we are confronted with deficiencies in the chain of transmission of the information and are therefore unable to verify the accuracy of the account. As will be discussed later, the narratives of Qábil Ábádi'í are useful sources of information as his descriptions are based on the oral traditions of the Bábís and early Bahá'ís of Yazd and its vicinity, who were closely aware of the history, at least in its folk dimension. Qábil writes:

When Vahíd arrived in Shíráz, he took up residence in a caravansary and rested for a while. Then he asked the innkeeper who knew the city well to come and show him the House of the Báb. Accompanied by him, Vahíd found the Blessed House and the innkeeper returned. The illustrious Vahíd knocked on the door and the maidservant inside inquired who it was. Before he could respond, the Báb commanded, "It is the honored Vahíd.<sup>77</sup> Open the door and invite him within." On hearing this exchange between the Báb and the maidservant, Vahíd was astonished as to how the Báb knew it was him at the door. He thought that perchance one of the Báb's acquaintances had seen him arrive in the city and had informed Him of Vahíd's visit. The maidservant opened the door and allowed him to go within. On seeing the Báb, he greeted Him and was welcomed. The Báb then came forward and warmly embraced him, kissing Vahíd on both cheeks, and they both sat to converse. The Báb inquired of the conditions of Yazd and Tihrán. After having two cups of tea, Vahíd commenced presenting his questions and raised certain complex and abstruse issues in diverse fields. For each of his inquiries, the Báb would provide a brief but sufficient response and He spoke with such manifest majesty and might that Vahíd was overwhelmed with wonder and astonishment. Mustering courage, Vahíd inquired of the nature of the Báb's claim. In response, he was told, "I am the Most

<sup>77</sup> The title Vahíd was given later by the Báb, perhaps in 1850 in his Kitáb Panj Shá'n.

Mighty Gate of God!" By this assertion, He meant that He was an intermediary for an exalted Personage that was as yet

concealed behind a myriad veils of glory and power.<sup>78</sup> In response, Vahíd asked, “The Author of such a stupendous claim must of necessity be the possessor of unrivaled knowledge and be able to present new Qur’án commentaries and reveal new verses. Therefore, I beg of You, as proof for Your august claim, to reveal a commentary on the Surih of Kawthar.” The Báb smiled and lifted His pen to write. Without the least hesitation or pause, as He was melodically murmuring the verses, He revealed a page filled with the most eloquent Arabic prose and gave the same to Vahíd saying, “Ponder these verses.” He then went inside the private quarters of the residence.

For a while and with absolute astonishment and bewilderment, Vahíd considered those verses and discerned that they represented a wondrous exposition on the Surih of Kawthar. He recalled that the Immaculate Imam had said, “None will be able to produce a commentary on the Kawthar, except the promised Author of the Revelation.” He therefore concluded immediately that, in the light of this proof, the Báb must be the Promised One. He therefore prostrated himself over that very page of revealed verses.

When the Báb returned to the room, Vahíd threw himself on His blessed feet and cried out in joy. He then rose and walked to the entrance of the room and as a lowly servant stood at attention with both hands folded reverently over his chest. The Báb showered him with many expressions of kindness and told him to be seated and continued to utter words that enthralled Vahíd with new vistas of understanding and delight.

After the supper was served, the Báb retired to rest.

Vahíd remained with his Master for several days and then

<sup>78</sup> Inclusion of this type of interpretive assertions suggests the lesser quality of the

source and its late nature.

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received instructions to travel throughout the land to propagate the new Message.<sup>79</sup>

The Bahá’í historian Siyyid Husayn Hamadání reports that, during this sojourn in Shíráz, Siyyid Yahyá and Shaykh ‘Alí ‘Azím also met with

Shaykh ‘Abid, who was a teacher of the Báb in his childhood. From him

they heard an astonishing story that he noticed one day that his new pupil, the Báb, had been writing certain things, without ever having received instruction in writing. On a closer examination, he discovered them to be “a dissertation on the mystery and knowledge of the Divine Unity, written in the purest and most eloquent style, and so profound that the keenest intellect would fail to penetrate its whole meaning.” Upon relaying this account, Shaykh ‘Abid went on to produce the tracts. Both Siyyid Yahyá and Shaykh ‘Azím “declared that they contained nearly four thousand verses, which differed in no respect from what was revealed after the Declaration of His Mission.”<sup>80</sup>

According to Fádíl Mázandarání, Nabíl Zarandí has written in the unpublished section of his narrative that the Báb revealed these sentiments: “The faith of any believer may be subject to badá’ [change] except the declarations of the faith made by Vahíd Akbar and Siyyid Javád Karbalá’í, which remain impervious to badá’.”<sup>81</sup>

79 Táríkh ‘Umúmi Amr, p. 52-53.

80 Táríkh-i Jadíd, p. 264.

81 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 3, pp. 242-243.

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## Chapter 2

### An Itinerant Teacher

Those who leave their homes in the cause of God, and are then slain or die – on them will God bestow verily a goodly Provision: truly God is He Who bestows the best of Provisions.

Qur’án 22:58

The three months of May to July 1846 that Vahíd spent in Shíráz were a time of relative tranquillity for the Báb, as both the governor-general and the clergy were anticipating a harsh pronouncement from Vahíd against the Báb. In this interval, they had ceased to plot and agitate against the prophet-merchant, expecting that upon the royal court’s receipt of Vahíd’s report, the order for the execution of the Báb would be issued and their desire would thereby be fulfilled. Regarding Vahíd’s role in the events, Nabíl states:

As I [i.e. Vahíd] had, since my arrival at Shíráz, been living in the home of Husayn Khán, the governor of Fars, I felt that my prolonged absence from his house might excite his suspicion and inflame his anger. I therefore determined to take leave of Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí and Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím and to regain the residence of the governor. On my arrival I found that Husayn Khán, who in the meantime had been

searching for me, was eager to know whether I had fallen a victim to the Báb's magic influence. 'No one but God,' I replied, 'who alone can change the hearts of men, is able to captivate the heart of Siyyid Yahyá. Whoso can ensnare his heart is of God and His word unquestionably the voice of Truth.' My answer silenced the governor. In his conversation with others, I subsequently learned he had

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expressed the view that I too had fallen a hopeless victim to the charm of that Youth. He had even written to Muhammad Shah and complained that during my stay in Shíráz I had refused all manner of intercourse with the 'ulamá of the city. 'Though nominally my guest,' he wrote to his sovereign, 'he frequently absents himself for a number of consecutive days and nights from my house. That he has become a Bábí, that he has been heart and soul enslaved by the will of the Siyyid-i-Báb, I have ceased to entertain any doubt.'

Muhammad Shah himself, at one of the state functions in his capital, was reported to have addressed these words to Hájí Mírzá Áqásí: 'We have been lately informed that Siyyid Yahyáy-i-Dárábí has become a Bábí. If this be true, it behooves us to cease belittling the cause of that Siyyid.' Husayn Khán, on his part, received the following imperial command: 'It is strictly forbidden to any one of our subjects to utter such words as would tend to detract from the exalted rank of Siyyid Yahyáy-i-Dárábí. He is of noble lineage, a man of great learning, of perfect and consummate virtue. He will under no circumstances incline his ear to any cause unless he believes it to be conducive to the advancement of the best interests of our realm and to the well-being of the Faith of Islam.'

Upon the receipt of this imperial injunction, Husayn Khán, unable to resist me openly, strove privately to undermine my authority. His face betrayed an implacable enmity and hate. He failed, however, in view of the marked favors bestowed upon me by the Shah, either to harm my person or to discredit my name.<sup>82</sup>

Related to Muhammad Shah's reaction to the news of the conversion of Siyyid Yahyá, the French historian Gilbert has noted:

82 The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 176-177.

Upon hearing the news of the Manifestation of the Báb, Muhammad Shah dispatched to Shíráz a trusted divine by the name of Dárábí to investigate the matter... However the Shah was deeply bewildered to hear that his special emissary, who was sent to reduce the Báb, had instead become one of His selfless devotees.<sup>83</sup>

Apparently by this time Mírzá Lutf-'Alí, the influential Bábí friend of Vahíd, had departed for Tihrán, for 'Abdu'l-Bahá states that among the people that Vahíd chose to inform about his conversion was Mírzá Lutf-'Alí.<sup>84</sup> Some time after these events, at the instigation of the Prime Minister, Hájí Mírzá Áqásí, the trusted Mírzá Lutf-'Alí was dismissed

from office and preferred self-exile in his native town, the ancient city of Salmás. This act proved providential, for later he was able to assist and serve the pilgrims who passed through that town on their way to visit the Báb at Chihríq. He would prepare lunch and dinner for the Báb on a daily basis and send it to the Fort and was always ready to render any service required of him. On one occasion, when the Báb was being escorted to Tabriz by the regiment of Sulaymán Khán Sháhsún, he arrived at the residence of Mírzá Lutf-'Alí. The latter organized a splendid feast in honor of the Báb and looked after Sulaymán Khán and his men. Despite having many servants in his household, he insisted to wait upon the Báb himself and poured water for him to wash away the dust of the journey. In every manner possible, on that occasion and later on, he showed his fidelity to the Báb.<sup>85</sup>

'Abdu'l-Bahá states that immediately after Vahíd's conversion, "although he was wise and prudent and was wont to have regard to the requirements of the time, he wrote without fear or care a detailed

<sup>83</sup> M.T. Gilbert, *Sur les sectes dans le Kurdistan*, Journal Asiatique, 1873, 7th series, vol.

2, pp. 393-395. Quoted in 'Aqáyd Ba'zí az Dánishmandán, p. 39, and Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 38.

<sup>84</sup> A Traveler's Narrative, p. 8. Mírzá Lutf-'Alí's stay in Shíráz, if in fact he had ever

come to Shíráz, must have been of very short duration as none of the eyewitness

accounts mention him in that city.

<sup>85</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 3, and Nayríz Mushkbíz, pp. 23-24, n.1, (a summary).

account of his observations to Mírzá Lutf-'Alí, the chamberlain, in order that the latter might submit it to the notice of the late king, while he himself journeyed to all parts of Persia, and in every town and station summoned the people from the pulpit-tops in such wise that other learned doctors decided that he must be mad, accounting it a sure case of bewitchment.”<sup>86</sup>

#### Spreading the News of the Báb

While in Shíráz, in fulfillment of his earlier promise, Vahíd wrote to the prominent 'ulamá of Yazd. His letter opened with this verse where the story of Moses is invoked:

From afar, I see a glow, O friends,  
A Burning Bush, I sense its warmth.  
Methinks, the flame flares openly,  
revealing His Divinity.<sup>87</sup>

From the beginning of his movement, for security considerations, the Báb had issued specific instructions that his identity was only to be gradually disclosed. In particular, during the early phase of his ministry the Letters of the Living were not permitted to mention his name as they proclaimed the message of his appearance throughout the realm. Therefore, at this time when Vahíd wrote to the clergy in Nayríz – including his own father-in-law, Hájí Shaykh 'Abdu'l-'Alí – and shared

with them the news of his conversion to the faith of the Promised Qá'im and forwarded some of the Báb's compositions, he refrained from disclosing the identity of their author.<sup>88</sup> However, he did inform the

<sup>86</sup> A Traveler's Narrative, p. 8.

<sup>87</sup> Táríkh Shuhadáy Yazd, p. 6. On an earlier page, Málmírí indicates that in his letter,

Vahíd stated that each of his three audiences with the Báb lasted one hour.

<sup>88</sup> As an example, two pieces of such writings of the Báb in the hand of Vahíd have

survived (copies shared by the Bahá'í World Centre with the present writer).

Though of different style, both are in fact the same tablet which sets forth the Báb's claim to the Qá'imíyyat.

Nayrízís that the Báb's identity would soon be unveiled. Those proclamations proved sufficient for many in Nayríz to embrace the new religion as they fully trusted Vahíd and considered his recommendation binding.

After a stay of some three months in Shíráz, which he mostly devoted to transcribing the writings of the Báb, Vahíd was subsequently commanded to journey to Burújird in the province of Luristán and there to acquaint his father, Siyyid Ja'far, with the new message. The Báb urged Vahíd to exercise the utmost forbearance and consideration towards him. Though the reason for this mission is not known with precision, it can be conjectured that the Báb had hoped that the conversion of such an eminent figure as Siyyid Ja'far would further entice Muhammad Sháh to heed his reforms and perhaps even to embrace the movement.

#### Effect of Vahíd's Departure

Prior to Vahíd's arrival, the clergy had hoped that through his fatwá, the path to a quick execution of the Báb would be smoothed. However, by his conversion and subsequent close association with the Báb, and using his influential connections in Tihrán, he had stayed the combined forces of the governor and the 'ulamá. But now, with his departure from Shíráz, the temporary protection that his visit had brought was withdrawn. Once again, the clergy began to agitate against the Báb and as before directed their complains to the governor-general, urging him to seize and eliminate the reformer. In their appeal, they presented the possibility that Vahíd could soon convert the entire royal court to the new religion, and as such Islam would be lost forever in Iran, and both the clergy and the governor would be in disrepute. These appeals found ready sympathy in the ears of Husayn Khán, whose hostility was further fueled by the knowledge that, in total disregard of his command, sheltered and secure, the Báb was allowed to pursue the course of his activities and that he continued to enjoy the benefits of unrestrained fellowship with his family and kindred.

Comte de Gobineau, a close observer of the situation in Iran and

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the Bábís, has left the following insightful comment:

Extremely irritated, discontented and worried, the Mullás of Fars, unable to foresee the heights that popular indignation against them might reach, were not the only ones to be perplexed. The authorities of the town and of the province understood only too well that the people, who were under

their care but never very much under their control, were now quite independent of it. The men of Shíráz, superficial, mockers, noisome, quarrelsome, rebellious, insolent in the extreme, perfectly indifferent toward the Qájár dynasty, were never easy to govern and their administrators often passed wearisome days. What then would be the position of these administrators if the real chief of the city and of the country, the arbiter of their thoughts, their idol, were to be a young man who, undaunted, with no ties whatsoever, and no love of personal gain, made a pedestal of his independence and took advantage of it by impudently and publicly attacking every day all that which, until now, had been considered as strong and respected in the city?

In truth, the court, the government and its policies had not as yet been the object of any of the violent denunciations of the Innovator, but, in view of the fact that he was so rigid in his habits, so unrelenting against intellectual dishonesty and the plundering practices of the clergy, it was unlikely that he would approve the same rapaciousness so flagrant in the public officials. One could well believe that the day when they would fall under his scrutiny, he would not fail to see and violently condemn their abuses, which could no longer be concealed.<sup>89</sup>

Further, the French diplomat, A.L.M. Nicolas, has written the following description:

89 *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*, pp. 122-123.

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By the aid of his agents and spies, Husayn Khán, the Názamu'd-Dawlih, succeeded in obtaining accurate information regarding the Báb's movements and gauged the degree of following which He had aroused, and scrutinized the motives, the conduct, and the number of those who had embraced His Cause. However, the intensity of the situation soon increased considerably with the arrival of a letter from Hájí Mírzá Áqásí who, greatly dismayed at Vahíd's conversion and annoyed with the continual uproar about the Báb's Message, now instructed the governor to be done with the Reformer and have Him slain immediately and secretly.<sup>90</sup>

On receipt of this confidential communication, the governorgeneral summoned 'Abdu'l-Hamíd Khán, the chief constable of the city.

"Proceed immediately," he commanded him, "to the house of Hájí

Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí. Quietly and unobserved, scale the wall and ascend to the roof, and from there suddenly enter his home. Arrest the Siyyid Báb immediately, and conduct him to this place together with any of the visitors who may be present with him at that time. Confiscate whatever books and documents you are able to find in that house. As to Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí, it is my intention to impose upon him, the following day, the penalty for having failed to redeem his promise. I swear by the imperial diadem of Muhammad Shah that this very night I shall have the Siyyid Báb executed together with his wretched companions. Their ignominious death will quench the flame they have kindled, and will awaken every would-be follower of that creed to the danger that awaits every disturber of the peace of this realm. By this act I shall have extirpated a heresy the continuance of which constitutes the gravest menace to the interests of the State.”<sup>91</sup>

In his narrative, Mírzá Habíbu’lláh Afnán provides the text of a letter written on the same day by Hájí Mírzá Abú’l-Qásim, a brother-in-law of the Báb, which states that ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Khán proceeded to execute his task and together with his men, entered the Báb’s residence

90 Seyyed Ali Mohammad dit le Bab, p. 235.

91 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 195.

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on the night of 21 Ramadan 1262 A.H./12 September 1846.<sup>92</sup> This night was selected because of the sacredness associated with it and anticipation that the people would be preoccupied with religious duties, hence traffic on the streets would be minimal, which would in turn reduce the chances of any resistance by the Báb or a clash with his followers. He immediately arrested the Báb, collected whatever documents he could find, ordered Khadíjih Bagum and the Báb’s mother to remain in the residence, and conducted the Báb to the government house. The Báb, undaunted and self-possessed, was heard to repeat this verse of the Qur’án: “That with which they are threatened is for the morning. Is not the morning near?”<sup>93</sup>

No sooner had this party reached the marketplace than they discovered to their amazement, that the people of the city were fleeing in consternation, due to a sudden outbreak of cholera. ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Khán was struck with horror when he witnessed the long train of coffins being hurriedly transported through the streets, each followed by a procession of men and women loudly uttering shrieks of agony and pain. Upon inquiry, he learned that in the space of only a few hours, hundreds of people had already died, and that alarm and despair reigned in every house. The people were abandoning their homes, and in their plight

were invoking the aid of the Almighty. Some Bábís considered this event as the first sign of divine chastisement for an unrepenting people. The Báb refers to this incident in the *Dalá'il Sab'ih* [the Seven Proofs] in the following terms:

Recall the first days of the Manifestation, how many people died of cholera! That was one of the wonders of the Manifestation yet no one understood it. During four years the scourge raged among the Shi'í Muslims without anyone grasping its true significance.<sup>94</sup>

'Abdu'l-Hamíd Khán, terrified by this dreadful news, went quickly

92 *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 195, incorrectly gives this date as 23 September.

93 *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 195.

94 *Dalá'il Sab'ih*, p. 17.

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to the mansion of Husayn Khán where he was told of the governor's hasty departure from Shíráz, and of the ravages of the cholera which had devastated the governor's home and afflicted the members of his household. As such, he decided to conduct the Báb to his own home and keep him in his custody, pending instructions from his master. As he was approaching his house, 'Abdu'l-Hamíd Khán was struck by the sound of the weeping and wailing of the members of his own household. His two sons had been attacked by the deadly virus and were hovering on the brink of death. In his despair, he threw himself at the feet of the Báb and tearfully implored him to save his sons. He begged him to forgive his past transgressions and misdeeds and solemnly pledged his word that never again would he accept such a position. The Báb gave him a pomegranate and directed him to feed the same to his sons. This he said would save their lives. No sooner had 'Abdu'l-Hamíd Khán witnessed the signs of the recovery of his sons than he wrote a letter to the governor in which he acquainted him with the situation and begged him to cease his attacks on the Báb.<sup>95</sup> On receiving this letter, "Husayn Khán released the Báb on condition of his quitting the city."<sup>96</sup>

An Untiring Teacher

Armed with the Báb's command to travel the length and the breadth of the realm and spread the new teachings, Vahíd left Shíráz in the closing days of Rajab 1262 A.H./25 June – 24-July 1846 for Burújird to visit his father, Siyyid Ja'far. He arrived in that city on the opening days of Sha'bán (late July), and according to Hájí Mu'ínu's-Saltanih Tabrízí, Vahíd spoke thus:<sup>97</sup>

95 In the Land of Refuge, chapter 4, (a summary).

96 A Traveler's Narrative, p. 11.

97 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, pp. 45-46, notes that Siyyid Ja'far wrote of these

happenings to Hájí Mu'ínu's-Saltanih. However, the two did not overlap in time and

it is unclear how Mu'ínu's-Saltanih came upon such information.

Furthermore, a

close study of the text reveals that a segment contains many similarities with a

treatise of Vahíd; see Appendix 3.

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O distinguished father! As instructed by the government, I went to investigate the claim of the newly appeared Person, known as the Báb, and those divines and the learned that have gathered around Him. The Sháh bestowed a sum toward the expense of such a journey as well as a horse and other gifts.

Upon arrival at Shíráz and attaining His presence, I perceived Him to be a Youth aged twenty-five, with a brilliant and heavenly visage, much the same as has been mentioned in the traditions and holy texts about the promised Qá'im. He possesses extremely pleasing features, a well-proportioned face, and a small birthmark, exactly as anticipated in the traditions.

Though He is a commoner [as opposed to ranking among the `ulamá] and has never studied, yet He reveals verses, commentaries, books, treatises, prayers, homilies and scientific expositions of such quality as has not been seen or heard of since the days of Adam.

Our illustrious Ancestor, the Seal of the Prophets [i.e. Muhammad], though numbered among the learned and well-lettered men of Arabia, yet revealed the Qur'án, piece by piece, over the space of twenty-three years. Siyyid-i Báb, although He is Persian and is born to that language, nevertheless is able, should He so wish, to reveal [Arabic] texts equaling the Qur'án in matter of only a week.

Similarly, the homilies and prayers that the Báb reveals are quite distinct from those previously revealed by the Imáms, and in many ways, more elegant and developed. His expressions and words are not like those gone before Him, and in some important ways the treatises and expositions of the Báb, as well as His other qualities, are different from

those of all the `ulamá, both of past and present times:

1. His Holiness is a commoner and has never had schooling.
2. In the course of His elucidation on all topics, in the space

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of a few words, He discloses the essence of the truth.

3. His words and phrases are not similar to those of the divines and His expressions are original, innovative and unprecedented stemming from His innate knowledge and not the work of others. If He had indeed acquired His knowledge of others He would, of necessity, use their expressions, but this has never been observed.

4. When explaining a question, no matter how small the available paper, He will immediately provide a sufficient exposition on that piece of paper that will unravel the mystery. Other divines must however pen lengthy treatises in reply to similar questions.

5. His handwriting is the essence of beauty and elegance, despite the fact that He writes extremely fast.<sup>98</sup>

6. Of greatest importance is His bearing and conduct, which is the very essence of refinement. He sits on His heels, with arms extended beyond the hem of His 'abá, placing the right hand over the left.

7. His eating and drinking habits are unique and extremely frugal. For lunch, He consumes three bites and for dinner seven bites. In total, His daily food equals that of two mouthfuls in a normal person. He drinks tea however with great delicacy.

8. His Holiness never considers the books and writings of others, though He frequently quotes from them through His innate knowledge. When writing, the pen never pauses or stops and He never forgets a matter.

9. The manner of His communion and worship is altogether peerless and recalls the lengthy prayer sessions of the Imams 'Alí and Zaynu'l-'Ábidín.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>98</sup> As noted earlier, a requirement of fine penmanship in Persian and Arabic is to

write slowly, and yet the Báb (and later Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá) repeatedly

demonstrated his ability to write with extreme speed of rare quality of hand and

unmatched eloquence of composition.

99 Táríkh Hájí Mu‘ínu’s-Saltanih, p. 128; a shorter version appears in Táríkh Zuhúru’l-

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O kind father, such qualities, characteristics and signs cannot be found in ordinary men, and are limited to the Prophets and Chosen Ones of God. What has been seen in Him is beyond anything any man is capable of manifesting. One day when I was in His presence, I inquired, “May my life be a sacrifice unto You! I know not the science of the elixir, and I beseech You to please inform me of it.” He responded, “My cherished hope was for you to become celestial. The science of gold-making is for the earthbound.” “Were I to behold,” I said, “and then leave it behind, it would be better still.” He condescended to me and commanded me to arrange for the necessary materials. When I had them readied, he instructed, “Go into the garden in the courtyard and bring with you some of the vegetables.” I went into the garden and noticed that some beets were planted and, therefore, I gathered some of their leaves. The Exalted One [i.e. the Báb] instructed me to boil the leaves and I did. Then He said, place the copper into the furnace and melt it, which I also did. Afterwards He instructed, “Pour some of the water from the boiled leaves over the melted copper,” and when I did as bidden, the copper turned into gold. When I saw this, I threw myself at His feet and cried, “O Exalted One! The boiled leaves are bereft of such power to produce elixir, and only through Your might and sovereignty could such a miracle come to pass.”<sup>100</sup>

In the course of these discussions, Vahíd concluded that although his father was unwilling to repudiate the truth of the Báb’s revelation, he preferred to be left alone and be allowed to pursue his own way during the remaining days of his life.<sup>101</sup> Therefore, after staying in Burújird for a

Haqq, vol. 3, pp. 465-466, and Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, pp. 44-45.

‘Alí and Zaynu’l-

‘Ábidín were the first and the fourth Shi‘i Imáms, respectively.

<sup>100</sup> Táríkh Hájí Mu‘ínu’s-Saltanih, pp. 88-91.

<sup>101</sup> Kawákibu’d-Durríyih, vol. 1, p. 57, states that after Vahíd’s conversion, in a

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while, Vahíd proceeded to other cities of Luristán and with some caution spread the message. From there, he traveled to Isfahán, visiting his brothers Siyyid Síná, a teacher at the well-known Madrisih Kásihgarán<sup>102</sup>, and Siyyid ‘Isá, a textile merchant, and taught them his newfound faith. He then proceeded to Ardistán and taught his sister, and from there went to Yazd to visit his family and teach his brothers Siyyid ‘Alí, the prayer-reciter, Siyyid Hasan and a number of others. During this period, and especially in Yazd, Vahíd took care to speak about the Báb with the utmost wisdom and not to divulge too great a measure of his teachings.<sup>103</sup>

In accordance with the Báb’s instructions, he journeyed from Yazd to Tihrán and en route visited Hájí Mírzá Jání in Káshan, who inquired about his experiences in Shíráz. The guest’s description made a deep impression on the merchant-historian.<sup>104</sup> Vahíd arrived in Tihrán on Tuesday, 1 Safar 1263 A.H./19 January 1847<sup>105</sup>, taught his brother Siyyid Isháq, and acquainted a number of divine and learned figures of that city with the Báb’s claim. Of those who in those days embraced the Bábí faith through Vahíd was Mírzá Qurbán-‘Alí Astarábádí, the chief of the

Ni‘matu’lláhiyyih Sufi Order in Northern and Western Iran.<sup>106</sup> Upon his conversion, this influential mystic hastened to Kulain to meet the Báb. It is reported that in 1850 while he was planning to join Vahíd in Yazd, he

gathering of the divines, one of them said to Siyyid Ja‘far, “It is reported that your

son, Siyyid Yahyá, has lost his faculties.” “Yes, he has gone mad,”

Kashfí responded

in his son’s defense, “however, this madness is not of the loss of rational faculty but

an inheritance from his illustrious ancestor, the Prophet [Muhammad].”

<sup>102</sup> This school, presently a religious seminary, is located in the historic section of

the city and its inception dates back to the Safavid era. Its founder was the Hakímu’l-Mulk, one of the divines and learned men of the period of Shah Sulaymán

and Sháh Sultán Husayn Safavi.

<sup>103</sup> For a reference to Vahíd in Yazd see the letter of Mullá Shaykh ‘Alí ‘Azím cited

in *Tárikh Zuhúru’l-Haqq*, vol. 3, p. 167.

<sup>104</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>105</sup> Vahíd gives this date in a treatise; see Appendix 3.

<sup>106</sup> *Tárikh Zuhúru’l-Haqq*, vol. 3, p. 225, states that previously Mullá Husayn Bushrú’í

had spoken to Mírzá Qurbán-‘Alí, but it was Vahíd who confirmed his faith. It

seems that Vahíd’s background in mysticism allowed him to convey the teachings of the Báb to various practicing Sufis.

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was caught in the Tihrán upheaval and numbered among the Seven Martyrs of that city.<sup>107</sup>

In the early days of 1847, heeding the call of the Báb for the entire company of the believers to “Hasten to the Land of Khá,” Vahíd went to Khurásán. However, cognizant that his presence in Mashhad might bring undue attention to Quddús and Mullá Husayn, he remained in Burújjird and traveled extensively to other parts of the province of Khurásán. Nabíl comments:

He had resolved to win the majority of the inhabitants of those regions to the Faith of the Báb, and had intended to proceed from thence to Fárs and there continue his labors. As soon as he had learned of Mullá Husayn’s departure for Mázandarán, he hastened to the capital and undertook the necessary preparations for his journey to the fort of Tabarsí. He was preparing to leave [in the early days of the fall of 1848], when Bahá’u’lláh arrived from Mázandarán and informed him of the impossibility of joining his brethren [because of the siege of the Fort by the Shah’s army and His own troubles in Ámul and elsewhere]. He was greatly saddened at this news, and his only consolation in those days was to visit Bahá’u’lláh frequently and to obtain the benefit of His wise and priceless counsels.<sup>108</sup>

During this period, he also met Bahá’u’lláh’s younger half-brother, Mírzá Yahyá Azal, who later penned the following description: “The virtue and perfection of His Excellency Áqá Siyyid Yahyá were beyond all limits and bounds... Most of the people of Persia admitted his virtue and perfection. I myself in the days of my youth met him several times at night in my own house and elsewhere, and witnessed the perfection of his virtues and endowments.”<sup>109</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 3, pp. 225-226.

<sup>108</sup> The Dawn-Breakers, p. 465, and Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 2, pp. 399-400. For a

story of Bahá’u’lláh involving Vahíd see Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 3, p. 173.

<sup>109</sup> A Traveler’s Narrative, p. 255.

On hearing the news of the Báb's captivity in the fortress of Máh-Ku, Vahíd wished to be nearby in Qazvín so that in the event of any instructions from the Báb he could be quickly informed and respond readily. Therefore he proceeded to Qazvín, visiting his sister and the Bábís of that city. In his narrative, Mullá Ja'far Qazvíní has recorded that

Vahíd visited Qazvín a total of five times.<sup>110</sup> From these visits we gain a glimpse into the manner in which Vahíd's intellectual outlook changed and developed over time, and the influence of the Báb's revelation on his

110 Mullá Ja'far Qazvíní wrote a detailed account of the history of the Bábí

Dispensation in his own hand, which according to Shaykh Kázim Samandar (Tárikh

Samandar, p. 446) was mostly destroyed, except for a small portion which the latter

was able to include in his historical survey, Tárikh Samandar, pp. 447-498.

For some

unexplained reason, this section and the one narrating the history of the martyred

Hájí Nasír Qazvíní were removed in subsequent printings of this book, but reference to them was kept in the book's "Introduction." Mullá Ja'far's history is in

five sections and since this important document is not presently available in English

(though both Qazvíní's and Mullá Ja'far's accounts have been translated and

annotated by the present writer), a brief outline follows of the section that appeared

in the original printing of Tárikh Samandar.

Chapter 1: an autobiography, including a childhood dream about Shaykh Ahmad Ahsá'í; arrival of Shaykh Ahmad, meeting with him and the story of a miracle attributed to him; travels of Shaykh Ahmad and his passing; meeting Siyyid Kázim in fulfillment of an earlier dream; a prophetic dream about meeting the anticipated Qá'im; prophetic signs related to the Qá'im's appearance and recollections of Mullá Husayn of the Báb's arrival at Siyyid Kázim's class. Chapter 2: several dreams about the appearance of the Báb and events in Qazvín prior to the Báb's announcement in 1844. Chapter 3: the passing of Siyyid Kázim and preparation of his students to search after the Promised One; discovery of the Báb by Mullá Husayn and mission of Mullá 'Alí Bastámí to Karbalá; first arrival of the Báb's writings to Qazvín; travels of Vahíd Dárábí and his utterances; Báb's journey to

Isfahán and his eventual exile to Máh-Ku; author's meeting with the Báb and the offer of rescue rejected by the Báb; attempt on the life of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh and the resulting persecution of the Bábís; events in Qazvín. Chapter 4: life of Mullá Husayn and his travels; events of Fort Tabarsí; station of Quddús and his martyrdom; events in Qazvín during the siege of Fort Tabarsí. Chapter 5: On the arrival of the Báb's writings in Qazvín and their effect on the believers.

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proclivities. Mullá Ja'far Qazvíní notes:

Áqá Siyyid Yahyá Vahíd journeyed to Qazvín five times. In his first visit<sup>111</sup>, he ascended the pulpit at Hájí Mullá 'Abdu'l-Vahhab's mosque<sup>112</sup> and in the course of his sermon repudiated Shaykh Ahmad [Ahsá'í] and spoke in support of the mystics. In his second visit, he confirmed the sayings of both the Shaykhís and the mystics. During the third visit, he established the validity of the Shaykhí school and rejected the school of thought of Shaykh Muhyi'd-Dín Ibn 'Arabí and Mullá Muhsin Fayd. On the fourth visit, at a gathering in the house of Hájí Muhammad-Rahím Tabrízí<sup>113</sup>, he spoke of the signs of the appearance of the Promised Mihdí. In particular, on this occasion he spoke of the circumstances leading to the revelation of the commentary on the Surih of Kawthar by the Báb.

In the course of Vahíd's fifth visit, together with some other notables, including Mullá Qanbar and Hájí Mírzá Bazzáz, I attained his presence at the house of [Hájí Muhammad-Rahím] Tabrízí and asked him about his meetings with the Báb. Vahíd spoke openly of Him and in response to Mullá Abú'l-Husayn's query, said: "After hearing the news of His Call, I journeyed to Shíráz and sat before the Truth [i.e. the Báb] and asked Him to adduce proofs and verses and [in response] He offered many expositions. I asked Him for an elucidation on the Surih of Kawthar, the shortest chapter in the Qur'án, and He inquired: 'verbally or in writing?' I begged, 'In writing.' He took up pen and paper and consequently gems of inestimable value appeared on those pages. He would reveal

111 The first visit was prior to the declaration of the Báb in Shíráz in May 1844.

112 Hájí Mullá 'Abdu'l-Vahhab was among the great Shaykhí scholars and when

Shaykh Ahmad Ahsá'í was in Qazvín, the latter would visit the same mosque for the performance of his prayers, offering sermons and conducting his classes.  
113 A brother-in-law of Vahíd.

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them with such rapidity that it is impossible to describe it. Without the least pause or hesitation, He penned in excess of two thousand verses on that occasion and handed the papers to me. In beholding them, I recognized that it was beyond mere human ability to write with such speed and facility, and at that moment I arrived at the shore of certitude. Thereupon, the Báb declared: 'Henceforth, thou art Our helper and promoter.' I said, 'I do not own a sword.' Thereupon, He gave me a sharp, exquisitely jeweled saber." This fifth visit was when the Exalted Countenance [the Báb] was imprisoned in Máh-Ku and Vahíd went to visit Him, at which time there transpired what I have related.<sup>114</sup>

During this time, one of the affluent Bábís of Qazvín, a certain Hájí Asadu'lláh, had set up a sword-making shop in the basement of his home, supervised by Áqá Muhammad-Hádí. His aim was to produce a sufficient amount of weapons so that an uprising in support of the Báb could be organized.<sup>115</sup> Many of the Bábís in that city were armed with sabers and kept a quantity of arms in reserve. Being very strong and robust, we are told that Vahíd would often join his co-religionists and practice with these swords by halving trees in single strokes.<sup>116</sup> In this interval, as bidden by the Báb, Vahíd served as the focus of the Bábí communication network, sending messages and information to the Báb, receiving letters and instructions from him in return, and ensuring that they reached their intended destinations. Another important service he provided was relaying news between the Báb and his family in Shíráz.

<sup>114</sup> Táríkh Samandar, pp. 475-476 first printing. Quoted also in Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq,

vol. 3, pp. 469-470, and summarized in Kawákibu'd-Durríyih, vol. 1, pp. 56-57, and

Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, pp. 47-48.

<sup>115</sup> Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, vol. 2, p. 180, suggests these swords were intended for the

fort of Shaykh Tabarsí.

<sup>116</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 3, pp. 373-374.

#### Meeting the Báb in Máh-Kú

Having stayed a while in Qazvín, however, Vahíd could no longer hold back his longing, and therefore he proceeded on foot to the mountainous citadel to behold once again his heart's desire. This journey took place in the middle of winter and one can only imagine the joy and tranquility that such a visit brought to the heart and mind of Vahíd, and the excitement that stirred in the depths of his soul. Though we remain scantily informed of this arduous journey or of what transpired between Vahíd and the young prophet, we must note that it was the satisfaction engendered in this final visit that caused Vahíd to rededicate himself to the promotion of the faith and propelled him forward towards the next and final phase of his life.

It was still at the height of winter when, through much ice and snow, he returned to Tíhrán and was able to once more attend the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, who showered upon him much kindness and provided him with lodging. During this period, Bahá'u'lláh had devised a plan for the rescue of Tahirih in Qazvín. The following record is left by one of the Bábís of that city, Áqá Muhammad-Javád Farhádí. He briefly explains Tahirih's rescue and Vahíd's role in the affair:

The daughter of Hájí Siyyid Ja'far Kashfí [Vahíd's father] was a wife of Hájí Muhammad-Rahím Amíní [of Tabríz]. For this reason Hájí Siyyid Yahyá came to Qazvín and established his residence in their house. Hájí Muhammad-Hasan, a brother of Hájí Muhammad-Rahím, argued with Siyyid Yahyá over a particular subject and the latter called him an infidel and transferred his residence to the home of Hájí Asadu'lláh, where he stayed for four months and gave sermons in the Masjid Sháh.

Upon his return to Tíhrán, the call of the Báb had been raised throughout the land and Muhammad Sháh sent him forth to Shíráz to investigate the matter. After his recognition [of the Báb], he went to Yazd. Afterwards he came [to Qazvín and came] to my office and spoke with Áqá

Karbalá'í, my brother. Upon his departure he said to me, "Your brother will never accept [this faith] and as such I will no longer frequent your office. You are to come and visit me in my home."... I accompanied him from Káshán to

Yazd. The people of Ardakán came out to welcome Vahíd and in Shamábád they celebrated his arrival for a day and a night. Afterwards, the honored Vahíd proceeded to Ardakán and I went to Yazd.

After some time Vahíd came to Yazd and from there went to Tihrán. On hearing the news of the passing of Hájí Asadu'lláh, he returned once more to Yazd. He gave a memorial service for the Hájí in the Masjid Rík, and then returned to Tihrán. During this sojourn he met the honored Áqá Hádí, and took him into the presence of the Ancient Beauty. Bahá'u'lláh instructed Áqá Hádí to come to Qazvín and to conduct the honored Tahirih to Tihrán.<sup>117</sup>

In the course of this stay in Tihrán, Vahíd was able to associate closely with a number of leading figures of the Bábí community, including Tahirih who had come and was staying at the house of Bahá'u'lláh in northern Tihrán. In those days a steady stream of visitors

would come to visit her and, seated behind a curtain, she would converse with them. 'Abdu'l-Bahá relates that one-day "the great Siyyid Yahyá, surnamed Vahíd, was present there [at the house of Bahá'u'lláh]. As he sat without, Tahirih listened to him from behind the veil. I was then a child, and was sitting on her lap. With eloquence and fervor, Vahíd was discoursing on the signs and verses that bore witness to the advent of the new Manifestation. She suddenly interrupted him and, raising her voice, vehemently declared: 'O Yahyá! Let deeds, not words, testify to thy faith, if thou art a man of true learning. Cease idly repeating the traditions of the past, for the day of service, of steadfast action, is come. Now is the time to show forth the true signs of God, to rend asunder

<sup>117</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 3, p. 468, n.1. See also Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p.

191, and Táríkh Samandar, pp. 362-366, translated in Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, vol. 2, pp. 175-178.

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the veils of idle fancy, to promote the Word of God, and to sacrifice ourselves in His path. Let deeds, not words, be our adorning!"<sup>118</sup> It is unfortunate that Vahíd's response to this outburst has not been preserved.

In the course of his various visits to Tihrán, Vahíd continued to cultivate the old friendships he had with high ranking officials and the royal court, and to plead the case of the Báb to all whom he met. In so

doing, he enjoyed the total confidence of the Báb, as testified by his remark to Muhammad Sháh that whatever information the sovereign wished to know about him or to ascertain regarding his Cause, he might receive authoritatively and confidently from Vahíd:

Since in this world God hath ordained two witnesses for every cause, mystics and clerics among the friends are many too.<sup>119</sup> Call to thy presence those whom thou knowest, such as Áqá Siyyid Yahyá and Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Kháliq and inquire of them the proofs of this Cause. They will present verses and writings and tell all that hath transpired ... These two, one before the Manifestation and the other after, have recognized Me and know of My Person and disposition, and as such authorized to speak on My behalf.<sup>120</sup>

#### Further Travels

Not long thereafter, in the Spring of 1849, the news of the fall of Fort Tabarsí and the massacre of its defenders reached the Bábís in Tihrán and profoundly saddened and grieved the faithful. Long indeed had the entire Bábí community been praying for the deliverance of the incomparable Quddús, who because of the Báb’s confinement in the

118 Memorials of the Faith, p. 200.

119 Qur’án 2:282 enjoins that for every important matter two witnesses are required

and the Báb is upholding this injunction.

120 The full text of the Báb’s communication to Muhammad Shah is in INBMC 64:103-150 and the quoted passage appears on page 123. The same passage is quoted in Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 37.

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remote mountains of Adharbayján, had served as the de facto leader of the Bábí community during this entire period. Quddús, Mullá Husayn, eight other Letters of the Living and several hundred of the ablest Bábís had fallen as martyrs. In many ways, this event sealed the fate of the Báb’s religion and was the beginning of the end.

One day an unkempt dervish, wild in appearance, arrived at the house of Bahá’u’lláh. This was Mullá ‘Alí ‘Adí-Guzal of Marághih, better

known as Mullá ‘Alí Sayyáh. Some six decades later, on September 30, 1912, when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was en route from Salt Lake City to San Francisco during the course of His historic journey to North America, he recalled that day when, as a young boy, he had sat next to Vahíd and observed what transpired. On hearing that Sayyáh was coming from the

presence of the Báb, “Vahíd arose immediately and threw himself at the feet of Sayyáh, and with tears streaming down his face he rubbed his beard on Sayyáh’s feet saying, ‘He has come from the court of the Beloved.’ Although Vahíd was a renowned and illustrious person, still he was humble before the servants of the Threshold of God.”<sup>121</sup> This incident must have made a deep impression on the observers. Mírzá Áqá Kalím, Bahá’u’lláh’s faithful brother, reported it to Nabíl in this manner:

“It was the depth of winter when Sayyáh, returning from his pilgrimage, came to visit Bahá’u’lláh. Despite the cold and snow of a rigorous winter, he appeared attired in the garb of a dervish, poorly clad, barefoot, and disheveled. His heart was set afire with the flame that pilgrimage had kindled. No sooner had Siyyid Yahyáy-i-Dárábí, surnamed Vahíd, who was then a guest in the home of Bahá’u’lláh, been informed of the return of Sayyáh from the fort of Tabarsí, than he, oblivious of the pomp and circumstance to which a man of his position had been accustomed, rushed forward and flung himself at the feet of the pilgrim. Holding his legs, which

121 Mahmud’s Diary, p. 298. See also, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: The Centre of the Covenant of

Bahá’u’lláh, pp. 284-285 and Nayríz Mushkbíz, pp. 39-40.

Lam’átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p.

49, n.1, states that the author was present in Haifa circa July 1921 when this story

was related by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

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had been covered with mud to the knees, in his arms, he kissed them devoutly. I was amazed that day at the many evidences of loving solicitude which Bahá’u’lláh evinced towards Vahíd. He showed him such favors as I had never seen Him extend to anyone. The manner of His conversation left no doubt in me that this same Vahíd would ere long distinguish himself by deeds no less remarkable than those which had immortalized the defenders of the fort of Tabarsí.”<sup>122</sup>

Sayyáh tarried a few days in that home. He was, however, unable to perceive, as did Vahíd, the nature of that power which lay latent in his Host. Though himself the recipient of the utmost favor from Bahá’u’lláh, he failed to apprehend the significance of the blessings that were being showered upon him. I have heard him recount his

experiences, during his sojourn in Famagusta: “Bahá’u’lláh overwhelmed me with His kindness. As to Vahíd, notwithstanding the eminence of his position, he invariably gave me preference over himself whenever in the presence of his Host. On the day of my arrival from Mazindarán, he went so far as to kiss my feet. I was amazed at the reception accorded me in that home. Though immersed in an ocean of bounty, I failed, in those days, to appreciate the position then occupied by Bahá’u’lláh, nor was I able to suspect, however dimly, the nature of the Mission He was destined to perform.”<sup>123</sup>

122 As noted earlier, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had said that Sayyáh was on his way back from

visiting the Báb, while *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 432, has placed this visit after

23 January 1850, when Sayyáh had returned from pilgrimage to the fort of Tabarsí.

However, there are compelling reasons to believe that by January 1850 Vahíd had

already gone to Yazd (see *The Bábí and Bahá’í Religions 1844-1944*, pp. 107-108). The

*Bábí and Bahá’í Religions 1844-1944*, pp. 108-109, has argued that a more likely

scenario is that Sayyáh had returned from Máh-Ku and was on his way to fort Tabarsí. This would place this meeting in December 1849, giving sufficient time for

Vahíd to reach Yazd.

123 *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 432-433.

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When the news of Shaykh Tabarsí’s fall reached Tihrán, Vahíd realized that at long last the time for sacrifice had come. In late 1849, Vahíd decided to leave Tihrán in search of his own Karbalá, and he proceeded to Qazvín. “From there he left for Qum and Káshán, where he met his fellow-disciples and was able to stimulate their enthusiasm and reinforce their efforts.”<sup>124</sup>

Central Iran

One of the Bábís who has left impressions of meeting Vahíd in those days is the martyred Hájí Mírzá Jání of Káshán. “[T]hat illustrious personage [Vahíd] was instructed by His Holiness [the Báb] to proclaim the Word of Truth, and on the way to Yazd, I had the honor of meeting

him.<sup>125</sup> I observed in his august countenance the signs of a glory and

124 *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 465.

125 There is some confusion as to where this meeting took place. Browne's edition

of *Tárikh-i Jadíd*, p. 115, indicates that this meeting took place in Tíhrán. However,

both manuscripts of Siyyid Husayn Hamadání in the possession of the present writer place the meeting in Yazd. But from the text of the *Kitáb Nuqtatu'l-Káf*,

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power that I had not noticed during my earlier meetings with him, and I knew of a certainty that these signs portended the near approach of his departure from this world.<sup>126</sup> I heard him say several times in the course of various conversations, 'This is my last journey, and hereafter you will see me no more.' Often, explicitly or by implication, he gave utterance to the same thought. In one conversation he remarked, 'God and His nearones are able to foretell coming events, and I swear by that beloved True One in Whose mighty grasp my soul lies that I know and could tell where and how I shall be slain, and who it is that shall slay me. And how glorious and blessed a thing it is that my blood should be shed for the uplifting of the Word of Truth!'"<sup>127</sup>

Vahíd continued to Isfahán and then to Ardistán. Upon arrival at each of these cities he would immediately enter the central mosque and from the pulpit-top proclaim, with zeal and fearlessness, the fundamental teachings of the Báb. These efforts succeeded in winning a considerable number of able supporters to the reform cause. His sister resided in Ardistán and there he stayed for a while, and with the assistance of Zaynab Bagum and Mírzá Haydar- 'Alí Ardistání, was able to achieve great success.

From Ardistán he proceeded to Ardakán in close proximity to his own city of Yazd.<sup>128</sup> In that city, Hájí Mullá Báqir Ardakání, who ranked among the eminent 'ulamá of that region, met Vahíd and through him was able to recognize the true character of the Báb's mission. At Vahíd's bidding, he continued with his former occupation, but from then on would occasionally include some of the expositions of the Báb in his sermons. Because of this, as well as the remarkable transformation that had overtaken him, in a few years it was known throughout the town that he had become a Bábí, and the other jurists and divines arose to

though ambiguous, one could surmise that this meeting was en route to Yazd and may have taken place in Káshán.

126 The text states *inqita'* [detachment], however, in the context it is

understood to

express Vahíd's desire for martyrdom.

127 Nuqtatu'l-Káf, p. 203. Quoted in *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 465, n.1.

128 Vahíd's sequence of travels after his departure from

Bahá'u'lláh's presence is

given in *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 2, p. 400.

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severely oppose him and to complain to Yazd. However, the governor of that city, Amírzádih, was the eight-year-old son of Kirmán's governor-general, Khán Bábá Khán Sardár, and most ineffectual. As such, the clergy prepared a long petition, signed by many of their accomplices, and sent it directly to the Sardár in Kirmán. On seeing this missive, Khán Bábá Khán ordered Hájí Mullá Báqir arrested and brought forth to Kirmán in chains. Upon his arrival on 17 November 1853, he was conducted into the presence of the governor, where a number of other high-ranking officials were present as well. Hájí Mullá Báqir, a man of rare eloquence and wisdom, possessing a cheerful countenance and evident piety, spoke in such wise that the governor was enchanted with his utterance.<sup>129</sup> Khán Bábá Khán was completely won over, and as a token of apology, ordered a large sum to be given to the Hájí in compensation and in the utmost comfort he was allowed to return home. After a short stay in Ardakán, Hájí Mullá Báqir proceeded to the 'Atabát, where he busied himself for the next two years with studies, and subsequently with great ceremony was welcomed back in Yazd. From then on, he was the leading cleric of the city and years later, Vahíd's son, Siyyid Ahmad, would work in his office. In order to protect the Bábí-Bahá'í community of that realm, he kept his faith to himself, but he would always strive to shelter and guard the believers.<sup>130</sup>

129 Vaqáyyih 'Itifáqiyyih, no. 146, reprinted in *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 3, p 480

(opposite).

130 *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 3, pp. 481-482.

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Chapter 3

The Events of Yazd

Men said to them: "A great army is gathering against you" and

frightened them; but it only increased their faith. They said: "For us God sufficeth, and He is the best disposer of affairs."

Qur'án 3:173

Before proceeding to outline the story of Vahíd in Yazd, it is first necessary to briefly consider the historiography of this watershed event. It is something of an anomaly that unlike the subsequent Nayríz or other major Bábí incidents, no substantial primary source documents have thus far come to light for what occurred in Yazd in 1850. The only detailed description is the one offered by Nabíl Zarandí, and his sources remain unknown, though the present writer infers that Nabíl gained his information through personal contacts with Mullá Muhammad-Ridá Manshádí while both were resident in Baghdad. If indeed there are clues in Nabíl's text that would enable us to determine his source of information, this must await the time when his original Persian text is made available to the researchers. What can be offered at this stage is a glimpse into Nabíl's text through Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq as a proxy.<sup>131</sup>

As explained in the Foreword, there are reasons to believe that Mázandarání relied primarily on the original narrative of Nabíl and a close comparison between Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq and *The Dawn-Breakers* reveals that no significant details pertaining to the events of Yazd were left untranslated by Shoghi Effendi.<sup>132</sup> Later Bahá'í published histories essentially echoed Nabíl's outline of the events as given in *The Dawn-Breakers* and only rarely provided additional details. If there are personal memoirs or

131 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, pp. 400-407.

132 An exception to this is noted in a later paragraph in this chapter regarding a

section of Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, pp. 403-404.

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eyewitness accounts of this incident among the Yazdí families, they remain unpublished. Early Qájár histories are generally silent or provide very little concrete information on the Bábí uprising in Yazd. Nicolas gives a brief summary.<sup>133</sup>

Province of Yazd

The dating of this event is also problematic. Nabíl, and by extension, Fádíl Mázandarání, suggests that Vahíd arrived in Yazd on 15 March 1850, and departed on 10 May.<sup>134</sup> However, Balyuzi, and later Momen, have cast considerable doubt on the accuracy of these dates given by Nabíl and Momen has presented documentation that concludes, with near certainty, that the incidents of Yazd actually took place in January-February of 1850.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, it should be noted that Táríkh

Zuhúru'l-Haqq has placed the commencement of Vahíd's activities after the incident of the Seven Martyrs of Tihrán and two months prior to the events of Zanján.<sup>136</sup> John Piggot states that the events of Yazd took

133 Seyyed Ali Mohammad dit le Bab, pp. 388-390.

134 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 466, and p. 474 and Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 400 and

p. 407.

135 The Báb, p. 178, placed the events of Yazd in "the early weeks of 1850." See also,

The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944, pp. 106-109.

136 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 399. According to The Dawn-Breakers, p. 443, the

incident of the Seven Martyrs of Tihrán took place on 7 March 1850. The Bábí and

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place in May 1850.<sup>137</sup> Browne also states that Vahíd was in Yazd in May 1850, and in all likelihood, Browne relied on Muhammad Qazvíni, a trusted collaborator and the editor of the Nuqtatu'l-Káf, for this information.<sup>138</sup> With these important qualifications in mind, an outline the events of Yazd follows.

According to Nabíl, when Vahíd arrived in Yazd, he was warmly welcomed by his brothers, who resided in Yazd and "expressed their joy at his arrival and were greatly encouraged by his presence among them. Being a man of renowned influence, Vahíd possessed, in addition to his house in Yazd, where his wife and four sons<sup>139</sup> resided, a home in Dáráb, which was the abode of his ancestors, and another one in Nayríz, which was superbly furnished"<sup>140</sup> and was occupied by his other wife and son. From his arrival, day and night, a stream of visitors frequented his house to greet him and pay their respects.<sup>141</sup>

Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944, p. xxviii, gives the date of this event as 19 or 20 February

1850; see also The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944, pp. 100-105.

137 Persia: Ancient and Modern, p. 104.

138 A Traveler's Narrative, p. 255.

139 Vahíd's children in Yazd consisted of a daughter and three sons; see Appendix 2

for details.

140 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 466.

141 Kawákibu'd-Durríyih, vol. 1, p. 217, informs that Vahíd's home was in the Sh'ar-

báb quarter and was still standing into the twentieth century; a picture appears on the title page.

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Dating back to the years of Shaykh Ahmad Ahsá'í's stay in Yazd, 1806-1813, that city had become a Shaykhí stronghold, and many of its leading clerics identified their intellectual proclivities with that school of thought.<sup>142</sup> Vahíd's scholastic career, however had been completely outside of this Shi'í innovation and had remained orthodox, and publicly he was not known to be supportive of Shaykhí doctrines. Nevertheless all of the learned men of town showed him great respect and consideration. Therefore, in order to re-establish his ties with the community, according to Nabíl, Vahíd organized a splendid feast at his house and invited all the leading 'ulamá and notables of the city, as well as some from the nearby towns, to that joyous event. All readily attended and abundant sweets and food were in circulation.<sup>143</sup>

One of the Shaykhí 'ulamá present on that occasion was Navváb Radaví<sup>144</sup>, who deeply, but surreptitiously, distrusted any non-Shaykhí mujtahid. From the time of Vahíd's first visit to Yazd after his conversion in Shíráz, the Navváb outwardly pretended to be a companion of Vahíd and professed devotion to the Báb. He had even gone to such lengths as to name his son 'Alí-Muhammad, after the Báb, and in private he constantly urged Vahíd to proclaim more vigorously the newly inaugurated movement. However, these were all deceptions, for he harbored profound resentment towards Vahíd and was waiting for an occasion to show his deep-rooted animosity.<sup>145</sup>

On the occasion of that feast, Navváb Radaví thought it propitious to commence rebellion and maliciously hinted at the extravagance of that reception. "The Sháh's imperial banquet," he remarked, "can scarcely hope to rival the sumptuous repast you have spread before us. I suspect that in addition to this national festival which

142 Sharh Ahvál, p. 27.

143 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, ch. 8.

144 Some sources give his name as Navváb Mírzá 'Abdu'l-Hay, but Táríkh Zuhúru'l-

Haqq, vol. 6, p. 726, has clarified that these were two separate individuals though

both known as Navváb.

145 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, chapter 8.

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today we are celebrating, you commemorate another one beside it.”<sup>146</sup>  
Vahíd’s boldly retorted by reciting this verse of poetry:

For the lover each moment is two feasts,  
but for the spider, a fly sufficeth.

This answer provoked the laughter of those who were present.

“All applauded, in view of the avarice and wickedness of the Navváb, the appropriateness of Vahíd’s remark. The Navváb, who had never encountered the ridicule of so large and distinguished a company, was stung by that answer, [and quickly left the house and took his complaint to the authorities]. The smoldering fire that he nourished in his heart against his opponent now blazed forth with added intensity, impelling him to satisfy his thirst for revenge.”<sup>147</sup>

On that occasion, Vahíd seized the opportunity to proclaim, initially indirectly and through allusions, then openly and without reserve, the principles of the new faith, and to demonstrate their validity. Through the letters and copies of the Báb’s treatises which over the years he had already sent them, the majority of those present were partially acquainted with the central doctrines of the cause, but were ignorant of its full implications: the termination of the Islamic Dispensation and Islamic jurisprudence, and the end of temporal power of the clergy. Certain individuals, either based on previous correspondence or upon hearing Vahíd, were irresistibly attracted and readily embraced the message of the Báb. The rest, according to Nabíl, unable to repudiate its claims and remaining totally silent, denounced it in their hearts and vowed to extinguish its light by every means in their power. “His eloquence and fearless exposition of the Truth inflamed their hostility and strengthened their determination to seek, without delay, the overthrow of his influence.”<sup>148</sup> According to Mázandarání, that very day became the Judgment Day for all who heard the words of God and witnessed the polarization of the people and their separation into

<sup>146</sup> The Dawn-Breakers, p. 466.

<sup>147</sup> The Dawn-Breakers, p. 466.

<sup>148</sup> The Dawn-Breakers, p. 467.

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camps of friends and foes.<sup>149</sup>

Years later, A.L.M. Nicolas received information on this festivity and subsequent events and wrote: “Carried away by his zeal and overflowing with the love of God, he was eager to reveal to Persia the glory and joy of the one eternal Truth. ‘To love and to conceal one’s

secret is impossible,' says the poet; so our Siyyid began to preach openly in the Mosques, in the streets, in the bazaars, on the public squares, in a word, wherever he could find listeners. Such enthusiasm yielded fruit and the conversions were numerous and sincere. The Mullás, deeply troubled, violently denounced the sacrilege to the governor of the city."150 In this regard, Nabíl writes:

To destroy Vahíd became the central object of their activity. They spread the news that, on the day of Naw-Rúz, in the midst of the assembled dignitaries of the city, Siyyid Yahyáy-i-Dárábí had had the temerity unveil the challenging features of the Faith of the Báb and had adduced proofs and evidences gleaned both from the Qur'án and the Hadíth. 'Though his listeners,' they urged, 'ranked among the most illustrious of the mujtahids of the city, no one could be found in that assemblage to venture a protest against his vehement assertions of the claims of his creed. The silence kept by those who heard him has been responsible for the wave of enthusiasm which has swept over the city in his favour, and has brought no less than half of its inhabitants to his feet, while the remainder are being fast attracted.' 151

Such reports spread quickly throughout Yazd and the neighboring regions. It is recorded that subsequently and courageously Vahíd raised the banner of the faith and spoke of its challenging features before an immense audience at the city's renowned Masjid Sar Rík. The immediate effect of this proclamation, however, resulted in a massive uproar by the

149 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 400.

150 Seyyed Ali Mohammad dit le Bab, p. 390.

151 The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 467-468.

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clerics.152 "It kindled on the one hand, the flame of bitter hatred, and, on the other, was instrumental in adding considerable numbers to those who had already identified themselves with that Faith."153 From Taft, Ardakán and Manshád, as well as from the more distant towns and villages, rank upon rank of people, "eager to hear of the new Message flocked to the house of Vahíd. 'What are we to do?' they asked him. 'In what manner do you advise us to show forth the sincerity of our faith and the intensity of our devotion?' From morning till night, Vahíd was absorbed in resolving their perplexities and in directing their steps in the path of service."154

Nabíl states that for forty days this feverish activity persisted on the part of Vahíd's zealous supporters, and his house became the focal

point for an innumerable host of devotees. The news of such activities were constantly shared with the nearby towns, particularly Ardakán and Manshád, and many among their inhabitants joined the ranks of Vahíd's companions.<sup>155</sup>

Since the summer of 1844 when the Letters of the Living were instructed to disperse throughout the realm to teach the new reform, some had visited Yazd and spoke about the new teachings, though very few, if any, had actually enrolled as Bábís. On this occasion, however, many people from all walks of life readily gave their allegiance. Among those enrolled under Vahíd's banner during this time were such eminent personalities as the following:<sup>156</sup>

- Mullá Muhammad-Ridá, surnamed Rada'r-Rúh by Bahá'u'lláh, and his three brothers who were later martyred in Manshád: Áqá Ghulam-Husayn; Mullá 'Alí-Akbar; and Mullá Áqá Bábá'í.<sup>157</sup> These were the sons of the renowned

152 Kawákibu'd-Durríyih, vol. 1, p. 202.

153 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 467.

154 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 468.

155 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 469, and Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 400.

156 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, pp. 50-51 and Khátirát Málmírí, p. 23, n.1.

157 On the martyrdom of the brothers, see Sharh Shahadát Shuhadáy Manshád, translation in "The Martyrs of Manshád".

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cleric, Hájí Muhammad, the Mujtahid Manshádí, and each was learned in Islamic sciences in his own right, though Mullá Muhammad-Ridá had surpassed his brethren. On hearing that these brothers had joined Vahíd, the rest of the family followed suit, including their elderly father, who later endured much hardship in the path of the new religion.

- Hájí Mullá Mihdí 'Atrí [perfume-maker], the father of the martyred Varqá, together with his entire family.<sup>158</sup>
- Mírzá Muhammad-Ridá Tabíb Yazdí, a physician who years later was the recipient of Bahá'u'lláh's Lawh-i Tibb (Tablet to a Physician).<sup>159</sup>
- Shaykh 'Alí Gumnám.
- Sháttir Ridá Ardakání.
- Mullá Hasan Musalay'í.
- Hájí Mullá Husayn Baidkí Mahrízí.
- Hájí Siyyid 'Alí Mahrízí.
- Siyyid Husayn Manshádí, son of Siyyid Ridá Manshádí.
- Siyyid Muhammad-Báqir Mahrízí, renowned for his piety,

learning and spiritual insights, who had won the widespread affinity of the people. Occasionally various miracles were attributed to him.<sup>160</sup> He also brought with him his son, Siyyid Husayn, the carpet-weaver, and his brother, Hájí Siyyid Husayn, the prayer-reciter.

- Mírzá Ja‘far Vajhí, known as Yazdí, a seminary student who later accompanied Bahá’u’lláh from Baghdad to ‘Akká.
- Mullá ‘Alí-Naqí, the prayer-reciter.
- Mírzá Muhammad, known as Mulk.
- Muhammad-Zamán Násir, a merchant of note from Shíráz.

158 For biography see Khátirát Málmírí, pp. 39-45. Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 6, p.

726, notes that his son, Mírzá Husayn, visited Bahá’u’lláh in Baghdad and with him

brought the first copy of the Hidden Words to Yazd and gave tidings of his near declaration and the counter-claim of Mírzá Yahyá Azal.

159 See Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, vol. 3, p. 359, and Khátirát Málmírí, pp. 58-59.

160 Khátirát Málmírí, p. 19.

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- ‘Alí-Akbar Hakkák [the engraver].<sup>161</sup>
- Hájí ‘Abdu’r-Rahím Shamá’í.
- Áqá Muhammad-Sádiq Suf-Báf.
- Mírzá Hasan Áqá Fádil.
- Siyyid Ja‘far Yazdí, a noted cleric of the Malámír quarter of Yazd, who accompanied Vahíd to Nayríz.<sup>162</sup>
- Hájí Abdu’l-Ghafur and his brother Muhammad-‘Alí.<sup>163</sup>
- Hájí Bábá Sáhí.<sup>164</sup>
- Bábí Fatimih, known as Mahd-‘Ulyá.

These and many others, through the teachings of Vahíd, his recital of the writings of the Báb and his exposition of the central doctrines of the new dispensation, were aided to make the transition from the Shi‘i to the Bábí belief and undertook to dedicate themselves to the new cause and, for the rest of their days, to stand fast and firm in their resolve.

Toward the latter part of Muhammad Sháh’s reign, Yazd had fallen into revolt and Násiri’d-Dín Sháh had appointed Hájí Bízhan Khán Gurjí as its governor. However, Gurjí was ineffectual in the face of various upheavals and was soon replaced in 1265 A.H./1849 with Muhammad-Hasan Khán, titled Sardár Irvání, and known generally as Khán Bábá Khán.<sup>165</sup> The latter, however, was loath to leave the capital because of his financial and political interests and thus he appointed one of his relatives, Áqá Khán Irvání, as his deputy.<sup>166</sup> The success of Vahíd

in converting multitudes and the commotion that ensued consequently provided Navváb Radaví with a pretext for enlisting the support of Áqá Khán, the deputy-governor of Yazd, who was young and inexperienced in the affairs of government, in his efforts against his adversary. Nabíl 161 For an account of his martyrdom on 15 July 1852, see Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, vol.

2, pp. 46-51, and cited sources.

162 He was the husband of the paternal aunt of Hájí Muhammad-Táhir Málmírí and

the recipient of Bahá'u'lláh's Surih-i Nush.

163 The father and uncle of Muhammad-Táhir Málmírí; see, Khátirát Málmírí, p. 18.

164 Khátirát Málmírí, p. 19, gives her name as Hájí Bábí Sáhíh.

165 For a short biography see The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944, pp. 513-514.

166 Násikhu't-Taváríkh, vol. 3, p. 101.

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emphasizes that Navváb had succeeded in winning the support of the deputy-governor who “fell a victim to the intrigues and machinations of that evil plotter.”<sup>167</sup> The Navváb succeeded “in inducing him to dispatch a force of armed men to besiege the house of Vahíd. While a regiment of the army was proceeding to that spot, a mob composed of the degraded elements of the city were, at the instigation of the Navváb, directing their steps towards that same place, determined by their threats and imprecations to”<sup>168</sup> assault Vahíd and his companions.

On their approach to his house, but some distance away, the irregulars and armed men were confronted by a large group of Vahíd's followers who easily overpowered them, though, according to Nabíl, they refrained from causing any serious injuries. Defeated and powerless, the governor's men retreated to his headquarters and this time he ordered reinforcements and dispatched a regiment of the army for the same purpose, who were, once again, strengthened by rowdy constituents of the town.

On hearing the news that the second wave of attack was imminent, the companions of Vahíd added extra protective pillars to his house, fortified their defenses and prepared themselves for battle. In this regard, Nabíl notes:

Though hemmed in by hostile forces on every side, Vahíd continued, from the window of the upper floor of his house, to animate the zeal of his supporters and to clarify whatever remained obscure in their minds. At the sight of a whole

regiment, reinforced by an infuriated mob, preparing to attack them, they turned to Vahíd in their distress and begged him to direct their steps. ‘This very sword that lies before me,’ was his answer, as he remained seated beside the window, ‘was given me by the Qá’im Himself. God knows, had I been authorized by Him to wage holy warfare against this people, I would, alone and unaided, have annihilated their forces. I am, however, commanded to refrain from

167 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 468

168 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 469.

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such an act.’ ‘This very steed,’ he added, as his eyes fell upon the horse which his servant Hasan had saddled and brought to the front of his house, ‘the late Muhammad Sháh gave me, that with it I might undertake the mission with which he entrusted me, of conducting an impartial investigation into the nature of the Faith proclaimed by the Siyyid-i-Báb. He asked me to report personally to him the results of my inquiry, inasmuch as I was the only one among the ecclesiastical leaders of Tihrán in whom he could repose implicit confidence. I undertook that mission with the firm resolution of confuting the arguments of that Siyyid, of inducing Him to abandon His ideas and to acknowledge my leadership, and of conducting Him with me to Tihrán as a witness to the triumph I was to achieve. When I came into His presence, however, and heard His words, the opposite of that which I had imagined took place. In the course of my first audience with Him, I was utterly abashed and confounded; by the end of the second, I felt as helpless and ignorant as a child; the third found me as lowly as the dust beneath His feet. He had indeed ceased to be the contemptible Siyyid I had previously imagined. To me, He was the manifestation of God Himself, the living embodiment of the Divine Spirit. Ever since that day, I have yearned to lay down my life for His sake. I rejoice that the day I have longed to witness is fast approaching.’ Seeing the agitation that had seized his friends, he exhorted them to calm and patience, and to rest assured that the omnipotent Avenger would ere long inflict, with His own invisible hand, a crushing defeat upon the forces arrayed against His loved ones. No sooner had he uttered these words than the news arrived that Muhammad-

‘Abdu’lláh<sup>169</sup>, whom no one suspected of being still alive,

<sup>169</sup> The Dawn-Breakers gives his name as Muhammad-‘Abdu’lláh. However, Táríkh

Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 6, pp. 727-728, has clarified that it should be Muhammad, son of ‘Abdu’lláh.

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had suddenly emerged with a number of his comrades, who had likewise disappeared from sight, and, raising the cry of “Yá Sáhibu’z-Zamán!” had flung themselves upon their assailants and dispersed their forces. He displayed such courage that the whole detachment, abandoning their arms, had sought refuge, together with the [deputy-]governor, in the fort of Nárín.<sup>170</sup>

<sup>170</sup> The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 469-470.

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The soldiers and the regulars were thus instructed to begin erecting barracks and reinforce the fortifications of the fort of Nárín.<sup>171</sup>

<sup>171</sup> The Bábí and Bahá’í Religions 1844-1944, p. 108, notes that Prince Dolgorukov

briefly reported on Yazd troubles in the same 24 February 1850 dispatch in which

he recorded the episode of the Seven Martyrs of Tihrán:

A number of Bábís under the leadership of Siyyid Yahyá, who calls himself a disciple of the Báb, together with a crowd of the ruffians of Yazd, produced a serious disturbance in the town of Yazd. These Bábís assailed the residence of the Governor and killed 8 of the soldiers, wounding a further 26. The deputy governor has fled [the

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Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdu’lláh, formerly custodian of a caravansary, had a long and checkered history of revolt against the government. He had defied various governors, and led groups of town desperados in battles with military forces sent to subdue him, and was in hiding in those days.<sup>172</sup> Some time earlier, he had joined in support of Hájí Muhammad Karím Khán, who had claimed leadership of the Shaykhí faction in Kirmán, and after a period of troubles had left that city in favor of Yazd. Upon his arrival, the deputy-governor executed one of his men in a show of force, but this rash and ill-conceived act produced the opposite effect and caused Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdu’llah to rebel and to gather a considerable number of the insurgent elements around him.<sup>173</sup>

town] and sent his resignation to the Government.

The Bábí and Bahá’í Religions 1844-1944, p. 108, notes, “Áqá Khán-i Irvání having

tended his resignation, Khán Bábá Khán appointed his nephew, Shaykh Alí Khán,

to be Deputy-Governor.”

<sup>172</sup> Táríkh Naw, p. 343.

<sup>173</sup> Keith Abott, the British Consul who as part of his tour of south Iran visited

Yazd from 19 November 1849 to 7 December 1849, reports cited in The Bábí and Bahá’í Religions 1844-1944, pp. 106-107:

The Political state of the Province at the time of my visit, may be described in a few words. The City had, only a few months before, recovered from a state of rebellion and confusion subsequent to the death of Mahomed Shah, when the recently appointed Governor, Aghá Khán, a man of firmness, but a very unpopular character found himself besieged by a portion of the Inhabitants, headed by some notorious Characters, and obliged, after attempting to defend his residence to retreat into the Citadel. There he and his attendants found themselves almost destitute of provisions, but with four pieces of Ordnance, they contrived for some days not only to hold out, but seriously to annoy the townspeople. Finally, however, driven by want to negotiate, it was agreed they should be allowed provisions and beasts of burden, to enable them to quit the place. As soon as these were produced and admitted within the Citadel, the Governor (as he related to me himself) closed the gate, and refused to abide by the Conditions. The Camels and Asses, which had been provided, were then slaughtered, and served the Garrison for food, but they discovered that the bread they had received from the townspeople had been poisoned. Keeping up a frequent fire on the town, the

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This tumult continued for several days, until the merchants and the nobles of Yazd, seeing their business interests threatened by prolonged unrest, rose against Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdu’lláh declaring that he wished to ruin their economy and expose them to the wrath of the central authorities. Noting that his base of support was evaporating rapidly, Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdu’lláh and his men were forced to flee to Dihshír, where Áqá Khán sent a regiment in pursuit. Some of the insurgents were taken prisoner and some were killed, while Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdu’lláh and a small number fled secretly and went into hiding back in Yazd.<sup>174</sup>

#### A View of Yazd

Having emerged from hiding that evening, Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdu’lláh asked for an audience with Vahíd. Nabíl states that he assured

Vahíd of his devotion in the new found cause, “and acquainted him with the plans he had conceived for rushing the fort Nárín and subjugating” Inhabitants, being without Artillery, could not return, terms of accommodation were a second time, agreed to, and some troops arriving to the succour of the Governor, he was presently enabled to quit his Stronghold and again appear in the town. Some of the rebels were secured but it was not until after my departure that the Chief Leader, by name Mahomed Abdoollah, was taken and slain.

174 Bahadur, p. 464.

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the governor and his men. Vahíd sensed that his visitor and his renegade comrades could only cause further intensification of troubles and that their profession of faith was simply a ploy to give their aggression against the authorities a cover of respectability under the guise of religious dissent. Therefore, Vahíd responded to him: “Although your intervention has to-day averted from this house the danger of an unforeseen calamity, yet you must recognize that until now our contest with these people was limited to an argument centering round the Revelation of the Sáhíbu’z-Zamán. The Navváb, however, will henceforth be induced to instigate the people against us, and will contend that I have arisen to establish my undisputed sovereignty over the entire province and intend to extend it over the whole of Persia.”<sup>175</sup> Vahíd, wishing to dissociate himself from Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdu’lláh and his mutinous gang, advised him to leave the city immediately. “Not until our appointed time arrives,” he assured him, “will the enemy be able to inflict upon us the slightest injury.”<sup>176</sup>

The rebellious Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdu’lláh, however, was unwilling

to abandon this opportunity and preferred to ignore the advice of Vahíd. Nabíl notes his departing words: “It would be cowardly of me to abandon my friends to the mercy of an irate and murderous adversary. What, then, would be the difference between me and those who forsook the Siyyidu’sh-Shuhadá<sup>177</sup> on the day of Áshúrá<sup>178</sup>, and left him companionless on the field of Karbilá? A merciful God will, I trust, be indulgent towards me and will forgive my action.”<sup>179</sup>

Finding it unlikely that Vahíd would ally his forces with him, on the following day Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdu’lláh commanded his men to proceed to the Nárín Fort. By surrounding the castle, they compelled the governor and his forces to retreat within its walls and to temporarily cease hostilities. Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdu’lláh kept watch, ready to intercept whatever reinforcements might seek to reach the opponents.

175 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 471.

176 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 471.

177 “The Prince of Martyrs”, refers to Imám Husayn.

178 The tenth of Muharram, the day on which the Imam Husayn was martyred.

179 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 471.

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With the departure of Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdu’lláh and his men, the house of Vahíd seemed without adequate defenses. Seeing this, a day later, Navváb moved quickly in raising a general revolt in which multitudes of the city’s inhabitants participated. “They were preparing to attack the house of Vahíd when he summoned Siyyid ‘Abdu’l-‘Azím-i-Khú’í, better known as the Siyyid-i-Khál-Dár, who had participated for a few days in the defense of the fort of Tabarsí<sup>180</sup> and whose dignity of bearing attracted widespread attention, and bade him mount his own steed and address publicly, through the streets and bazaars, an appeal on his behalf to the entire populace, urging them to embrace the Cause of the Sáhibu’z-Zamán.”<sup>181</sup> Siyyid ‘Abdu’l-‘Azím leaped upon the steed and,

escorted by four of his companions, rode out through the market and called out, in a loud and resonant voice, the warning he had been commissioned to proclaim:

O people of Yazd! Know one and all we disclaim any intention of waging holy warfare against you, nor do we intend a revolt against the Sháh or the nation. Our Cause is the religion of Sáhibu’z-Zamán, for Whose early appearance each of you prays fervently, and Who has been promised in all the past Scriptures, traditions and the Qur’án. This illustrious Siyyid [Vahíd], whom everyone recognizes as unrivaled in piety and to whose knowledge and high

180 A native of Adharbáyján, Siyyid ‘Abdu’l-‘Azím had demonstrated considerable

valor in the course of the events at Fort Tabarsí. When the Fort had fallen and

Quddús and his companions were seized, each was subject to torments of the victorious gunmen and in the midst of these Siyyid ‘Abdu’l-‘Azím was told to spit

on the countenance of Quddús. He appeared ready to do so, but as he approached Quddús, instead he turned and spat into the face of the military commander, ‘Abbás-Qulí Khán, who in a fit of rage unsheathed his saber to slay him while crying

to his men to rend asunder this Bábí! However the Tabrizí gunners, unprepared to

see one of their native sons killed, came to his aid and aimed their artillery at

‘Abbás-Qulí Khán’s men. Sensing trouble, the Prince Mihdí-Qulí Mírzá, quickly

stepped forward and defused the situation. Siyyid ‘Abdu’l-‘Azím was spared on that

occasion. (Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 36, n.1, on authority of Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 2.)

181 The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 471-472.

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attainments both learned or unlettered testify, now, detached from all save God and not wishing to proclaim a jihad or cause bloodshed, has risen to guide you to the right path and true salvation. Why do you then believe the ungodly, and attack a descendant of the Prophet, and unsheathe your swords upon him and his companions?

Be forewarned, however, that if you persist in besieging the house of this Siyyid and continue your attacks upon him, we shall be constrained, as a measure of self-defense, to resist and disperse you all. If you choose to reject this counsel and yield to the whisperings of the crafty Navváb, seven of our companions will repulse your forces and crush your hopes.

Beware if you despise our plea. My lifted voice, I warn you, will prove sufficient to cause the very walls of your fort to tremble, and the strength of my arm will be capable of breaking down the resistance of its gates!<sup>182</sup>

Seeing the determination which Siyyid ‘Abdu’l-‘Azím and his four companions manifested, and hearing his stern call, the crowd quickly

dispersed. When he saw that the inhabitants refused to fight against Vahíd and his companions, the Navváb induced them to direct their attack against Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdu’lláh and his men, who had surrounded the Nárín Castle in Meybod district of Yazd and was engaged in sporadic battles with the governor’s battalion.<sup>183</sup> With the arrival of the irregulars gathered by the Navváb, the first battle ensued between them and the forces of Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdu’llah, and this

182 With slight modifications from *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 472 and *Nayríz Mushkbíz*,

pp. 46-47. The version in *Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq*, vol. 2, pp. 403-404, has much

embellishment and in absence of Nabíl’s original text it cannot be determined if the embellishments are additions of Mázandarání or were left out of the translation by Shoghi Effendi.

183 Some believe that the Nárín castles are descendants of ancient Persian fire-

temples; some of the castles in Meybod are also called nareng castles (orange castles),

possibly by folk etymology. Most of these castles are decaying and have not fared

well over the years.

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clash provided an opportunity for the deputy-governor to emerge from hiding and instruct his besieged regiment to join hands with the Navváb’s men in fighting the renegades. “Muhammad-‘Abdu’lláh was in midst of dispersing the untrained and unequipped mob that had rushed forth from the city against him, when he was suddenly assailed by the fire which the troops opened upon him by order of the governor.”<sup>184</sup> In the process, a number of his comrades were wounded and a few killed. He himself sustained a bullet injury to his foot that caused him to cease hostilities and “his brother hurriedly got him away to a place of safety, and from thence carried him, at his request, to the house of Vahíd.”<sup>185</sup> His men dispersed quickly into the countryside.<sup>186</sup>

The mob raised by the Navváb, and the governor’s armed men, spotted his retreat and followed him to that house, fully resolved to seize and slay him. Nabíl states:

The clamor of the people that had massed around his house [and were constantly discharging their guns and otherwise preparing to rush within,] compelled Vahíd to order Mullá

Muhammad-Ridáy-i-Manshádf, one of the most enlightened ‘ulamás of Manshád, who had discarded his turban and offered himself as his gatekeeper, to sally forth and, with the aid of six companions, whom he would choose, to scatter their forces. ‘Let each one of you raise his voice,’ he commanded them, ‘and repeat seven times the words ‘Alláh-u-Akbar,’ and on your seventh invocation spring forward at one and the same moment into the midst of your assailants.’

Mullá Muhammad-Ridá, whom Bahá’u’lláh had named Rada’r-Rúh, sprang to his feet and, with his

184 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 472.

185 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 473.

186 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 6, pp. 727-728, notes that two of Muhammad Ibn

‘Abdu’lláh’s companions, that is, his brother, Karbalá’í Husayn, and Áqá ‘Alí Isfahání, were later confined with Bahá’u’lláh in the Siyah-Chál of Tihrán and converted on that occasion.

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companions, straightway proceeded to fulfil the instructions he had received. Those who accompanied him, though frail of form, [badly under-equipped] and inexperienced in the art of swordsmanship, were fired with a faith that made them the terror of their adversaries. Seven of the most redoubtable among the enemy perished that day.<sup>187</sup>

Years later Mullá Muhammad-Ridá related the details of these events to Nabíl in Baghdad, and noted that a score of other foes were injured and the crazed mob was dispersed while none of the seven Bábí defenders sustained any harm. He added: “No sooner had we routed the enemy and returned to the house of Vahíd, than we found Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdu’lláh lying wounded before us. He was carried to our leader, and partook of the food with which the latter had been served. Afterwards he was borne to a hiding place, where he remained concealed until he recovered from his wound. Eventually he was seized and slain by the enemy.”<sup>188</sup>

In a dispatch from Tihrán, the British diplomat Justin Sheil reports to Lord Palmerston of the Foreign Office:

I have the honor to inform Your Lordship that a serious outbreak lately took place at Yezd, which however the

Governor of that city with the assistance of the priesthood succeeded in quelling.

The excitors of the insurrection were the partisans of the new Sect called Babeism, who assembled in such numbers as to force the Governor to take refuge in the citadel, to which they laid siege. The Moollas conscious that the progress of Babeism is the decay of their own supremacy determined to rescue the Governor, and summoning the populace in the name of religion to attack this new Sect of infidels, the Babees were overthrown and forced to take

187 *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 473.

188 *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 473. It was the next deputy governor of Yazd, Shaykh 'Alí

Khán, who succeeded in defeating and killing of Muhammad Ibn 'Abdu'lláh.

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flight to the adjoining province of Kerman. I have seen a letter from the Governor of Yezd to one of his friends in Tehran in which he earnestly calls for assistance and represents the state of disorganization within his government in strong terms; he has since resigned his appointment, and quitted Yezd without even waiting for permission to retire.<sup>189</sup>

In these three nights and days of fighting, a total of thirty from the opposition camp were killed, as well as a score of the defenders who gave their life in the path of the Báb's faith. Some of them were captured by the armed men and blown away from the mouth of cannons.<sup>190</sup>

Mázandarání reports that a total of twenty-two of Vahíd's supporters were killed in the battle of Yazd.<sup>191</sup> In this regard, the case of Hájí Siyyid 'Alí Míhrjirdí, one of the affluent landlords of the city should be noted.

After the situation had calmed down, one of the officials, Hájí Rasul Míhrjirdí, sent his men to arrest this important supporter of Vahíd. This remarkable man refused to recant his faith despite the confiscation of all his property and possessions. On several occasions he was so severely beaten that each time he became unconscious, and had to be revived for further punishment. Eventually, he was allowed to be taken away by his kinsmen and after six months he recovered to some degree. In time he

<sup>189</sup> *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944*, p. 107, and a more complete version

appears in *The Báb*, pp. 204-205. Since this report is dated 12 February 1850,

it

suggests with near certainty that Nabíl's placement of this event in early May 1850 is incorrect.

190 Jahangír Mírzá, son of 'Abbás Mírzá, the Náyibu's-Saltanih, records the following

summary in Táríkh Naw, p. 343:

During these months [1850], Siyyid Yahyá Dárábí styled himself a Bábí in the region of Yazd and caused mischief. Upon the killing of Muhammad Dálánbar [an innkeeper], he was unable to remain there and took flight to Fárs. And from what has been heard, in one of the districts of Fárs, he caused mischief and a crowd on behalf of the governor of the district went forth and killed him and 300 of his disciples.

191 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 3, p. 480.

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opened a modest store and passed away in Yazd at the age of 108.<sup>192</sup>

Vahíd's Departure from Yazd

Faced with such a stalemate and with his own young career at stake, the governor increased the number of his armed men considerably and had them surround Vahíd's house. The Navváb also instigated the population to join the governor's gunmen and to assault the believers – an appeal that some readily accepted. This frightened and disturbed some of the defenders, and on that night, Vahíd decided to ask his companions to disperse. He instructed them to exercise the utmost vigilance in securing a place of safety. Furthermore, he advised his wife to take two of their children<sup>193</sup>, Tubá and Siyyid Muhsin, to the home of her father and to leave behind the two older sons as well as all their possessions.<sup>194</sup> According to Nabíl, Vahíd spoke the following words to his wife on that occasion:

<sup>192</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 3, pp. 482-483.

<sup>193</sup> There is some confusion as to which children were left behind: The Dawn-Breakers, p. 474, and Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 49, state that Siyyid Ismá'íl and Siyyid 'Alí-

Muhammad were dispatched with their mother. This must be an error as Siyyid Ismá'íl was Vahíd's son through his Nayrízí wife and living not in Yazd but in

Nayríz. The other son was known as Siyyid Muhammad. Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p.

52, n.1, states that Tubá and Siyyid Muhsin were sent with their mother. The Dawn-

Breakers, p. 474, Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 399 and p. 406, and Hadrat Báb, p.

507, suggest that Vahíd's two sons, Siyyid Ahmad and Siyyid Mihdí, accompanied

him. However, no record exists that Vahíd had a son named Siyyid Mihdí.

Khátirát

Málmírí, p. 23, states that Vahíd was accompanied by his wife and daughter along

with Siyyid Ja'far Yazdí and his 3 children (2 sons and one daughter).

However, it is

unlikely that Vahíd would have taken his wife and daughter on such a perilous journey and further, Túbá's marriage certificate (Appendix 2) indicates

that she was

in Yazd, at least by the final days of the Nayríz battles.

194 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 473, reports that Vahíd instructed "his wife to remove ... all

their belongings ... and to leave behind whatever was his personal property."

However, this appears to contradict the words of Vahíd quoted in the same paragraph. Also logistically, it seems nearly impossible to move furniture and household goods in the middle of night while surrounded by vigilant soldiers and

irregulars.

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This palatial residence, I have built with the sole intention that it should be eventually demolished in the path of the Cause, and the stately furnishings with which I have adorned it have been purchased in the hope that one day I shall be able to sacrifice them for the sake of my Beloved. Then will friend and foe alike realize that he who owned this house was endowed with so great and priceless a heritage that an earthly mansion, however sumptuously adorned and magnificently equipped, had no worth in his eyes; that it had sunk, in his estimation, to the state of a heap of bones to which only the dogs of the earth could feel attracted. Would that such compelling evidence of the spirit of renunciation were able to open the eyes of this perverse people, and to stir in them the desire to follow in the steps of him who showed that spirit! 195

Nabíl further states that: "In the mid-watches of that same night, Vahíd arose and, collecting the writings of the Báb that were in his possession, as well as the copies of various treatises that he himself had composed, entrusted them to his servant Hasan, and ordered him to

convey them [by way of an uncommon road] to a place outside the gate of the city where the road branches off to [the village of] Mihríz.196 He bade him to await his arrival, and warned him that, were he to disregard his instructions, he would never again be able to meet him.”197

Hasan mounted his horse and prepared to leave secretly in accordance with the instructions given him. However, after traveling only a short distance, the cries of the governor’s sentinels, who kept watch over Vahíd’s mansion, and other people who had joined them, alarmed him deeply. Fearing capture and seizure of the precious manuscripts in his possession, he decided to follow a different route

195 The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 473-474, and Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 405.

196 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 2, pp. 405-406, and Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 49, suggest

that a second person was to accompany Hasan.

197 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 474.

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from the one outlined by Vahíd. As he was passing through the streets, the gunmen recognized him, shot his horse, and captured him.

On the same night, Vahíd decided to depart from Yazd. He left accompanied by his two sons, Siyyid Ahmad and Siyyid Muhammad, together with three of his companions who were all residents of Yazd and had asked permission to accompany him on his journey:

Ghulám-Ridá Buzurg, a man of exceptional courage; Ghulám-Ridá Kuchik, who had distinguished himself in the art of marksmanship; and a third, identified only as “a learned believer”198. He chose the same route that he had advised Hasan to take. Arriving safely at the appointed spot, he was surprised to find that his servant was missing. Vahíd sensed immediately that he had disregarded his instructions and had been captured by the enemy. He deplored his fate, and was reminded of the action of Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdu’lláh, who had similarly acted against his will and had in consequence suffered injury and misfortune.199

During the course of the next day’s events, Hasan was executed by being blown from the mouth of a cannon. It is reported that “when they would have bound him with his back towards the gun, he said: ‘Bind me, I pray you, with my face towards the gun that I may see it fired.’ The gunners and those who stood by looking on were all astonished at his composure and cheerfulness, and indeed one who can be cheerful in such a plight must needs have great faith and fortitude.”200

An hour later, a certain Mírzá Hasan, who previously had been the Imám Jum‘ih of one of the quarters of Yazd and who was a man of renowned piety, had also been captured and subjected to the same fate

on the charge of being a Bábí.

198 Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 50. Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 52, n.1, suggests that this third

believer was a brother of Vahíd who joined them en route. The Dawn-Breakers, p.

474, states that in addition to his two sons, two others accompanied Vahíd, both

named Ghulám-Ridá.

199 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 474.

200 Táríkh-i Jadíd, p. 117, and Nayriz Mushkbíz, p. 50.

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When Vahíd departed from Yazd, his opponents rose to fresh exertions. They rushed into his house and plundered his possessions. A.L.M. Nicolas has noted: "When [the governor] Áqá Khán had verified the disappearance of the rebel, he gave a sigh of relief. Besides, he felt that to pursue the fugitives would involve some peril and that, therefore, it would be infinitely more practical, more beneficial, more profitable and less dangerous to torture the Bábís, or those presumed to be Bábís – provided that they were wealthy – who had remained in the city. He sought out the most prosperous, ordered their execution, and confiscated their possessions, avenging thus his outraged religion, a matter perhaps of little concern to him, and filling his coffers, which pleased him immensely."<sup>201</sup>

201 Seyyed Ali Mohammad dit le Bab, p. 391.

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Chapter 4

Vahíd's Approach to Nayríz

And recite and teach what has been revealed to thee of the Book of thy Lord: none can change His Words, and none wilt thou find as a refuge other than Him.

Qur'án 18:27

The night of his departure from Yazd, with great haste and much difficulty, Vahíd, according to Nabíl, covered a distance of 42 kilometers on foot, while his companions carried his sons part of the way. During the next day, they concealed themselves within a cave in a neighboring mountain.<sup>202</sup> As soon as his brother, who resided in that vicinity and had

a deep affection for him, was informed of his arrival, he secretly dispatched to him the necessary provisions. On the same day, a regiment of the governor's cavalry, who had set out in pursuit of Vahíd, arrived at that village. They searched the house of his brother, where they suspected that he was concealed, and appropriated a large amount of his possessions. Unable to find Vahíd, they returned to Yazd.

Meanwhile, Vahíd made his way through the mountains until he reached the district of Bávanát in the province of Fárs. This area had been particularly friendly toward Vahíd's ancestors and most of its inhabitants counted themselves among his admirers. A large gathering was quickly organized in the central mosque and Vahíd spoke passionately about the appearance of the Báb and his reform-cause. Led by the well-known Hájí Siyyid Ismá'íl, the Shaykhu'l-Islám of Bávanát, a

large number of the inhabitants readily accepted the Báb's message as a result of Vahíd's urging and their unimpeachable trust in him and his  
202 *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 475. In order to travel such a distance during a dark evening, it is logical to infer that either Vahíd and his companions were using horses or they traveled the reported distance in course of several days.

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family.

**Shiraz-Nayriz Region**

In the company of a number of the believers from that town, Vahíd then proceeded from Bávanát to Shíráz. Nabíl explains:

All along his route, wherever he tarried, Vahíd's first thought, as soon as he had dismounted, was to seek the neighboring masjid, wherein he would summon the people to hear him announce the tidings of the New Day. Utterly oblivious of the fatigues of his journey, he would promptly ascend the pulpit and fearlessly proclaim to his congregation the character of the Faith he had risen to champion. He would spend only one night in that place if he had succeeded in winning to the Cause souls upon whom he could rely to propagate it after his departure. Otherwise he would straightway resume his march and refuse further to associate with them. 'Through whichever village I pass,' he often remarked, 'and fail to inhale from its inhabitants the

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fragrance of belief, its food and its drink are both distasteful to me.”<sup>203</sup>

Vahíd stayed in Shíráz for only a short time, and then decided to direct his steps to Nayríz. En route, thinking that possibly the people of Fasá would welcome the new teachings, Vahíd took a detour there, but to his astonishment found its inhabitants refusing to respond to the movement he invited them to follow.

Arriving at Rúníz, in the district of Fasá, Vahíd decided to stay for two days, in the course of which a large number in this village embraced the new faith.

While there, Vahíd wrote to his father-in-law, Shaykh ‘Abdu’l-‘Alí, and informed him of his near arrival in Nayríz. As soon as the news of his approach reached Nayríz, the entire population of the Chinár-Súkhtih quarter, having known Vahíd for many years and greatly admiring his qualities, hastened to the village of Rúníz, a distance of some thirty-three kilometers, to meet him. People from other quarters likewise decided to join them. Altogether, a crowd in excess of three hundred had gathered for that welcome.

Soon, Vahíd left Rúníz for the shrine of Pír-Murád, situated about a kilometer outside the village of Istahbánát<sup>204</sup>, in the country of his ancestors. There, he wrote to its leading ‘ulamá that he intended to tarry at that shrine for a day or two. He then proceeded to Istahbánát. Despite the interdiction pronounced by the ‘ulamá of that village against his entry, no less than twenty-three of them embraced the new faith and twenty-one of its inhabitants joined his procession to Nayríz.

According to Mullá Muhammad Shafi‘, there was such excitement in the air as they made their way to Nayríz, many were dancing and even Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Husayn, the pious old man, was running along and cheering.<sup>205</sup>

203 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 476.

204 Located 36 kilometers southwest of Nayríz.

205 The Bábí and Bahá’í Religions 1844-1944, p. 109, has noted that Nabíl’s assertion

that Vahíd’s journey from Yazd to Nayríz, with all the stops in between, took only

17 days, that is, from 10 May to 27 May 1850, is rather improbable.

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The Governor

It must be noted that fearing lest Hájí Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán, the governor of Nayríz, should object to their welcoming Vahíd, the

majority of Nayrízís had left stealthily at night. To understand the people's apprehension and the general turbulent conditions under which Vahíd arrived on the scene, one must look further into the past and examine the history of the governor and the manner in which he assumed his office and some of his policies.

Hájí Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán was a son of Muhammad-Husayn Khán Ibn Mírzá Hisámu'd-Dín 'Arab, of the Shaybání-Uzbek tribe of Fárs. In the later years of the reign of Karím Khán Zand (d. 1779), this tribe which by then had adopted strong Arab Bedouin influence, was exiled to Nayríz and its surrounding region, particularly the Qutriyih village which is situated some forty kilometers to the east of Nayríz. At that time, the governorship of Nayríz was in the hands of Hájí 'Alí-Sultán, son of Akbar-Sultán Nayrízí. As a gesture of kindness and as means to win him over, for seven consecutive years, the Qájár monarch exempted Hájí 'Alí-Sultán from paying taxes for the Nayríz region. This generosity enabled him to amass extravagant wealth, to such a degree that he often proudly jested: "Should God wish to reckon my wealth, it will take Him seven years." But during an unusually severe rainy season, he lost his entire herd of cattle and sheep and his many farms and was thoroughly bankrupted.<sup>206</sup>

Muhammad-Husayn Khán took advantage of the situation to extend his sphere of influence to Nayríz, and was able to win over many of its inhabitants. He then transferred his residence there and took one of Hájí 'Alí-Sultán's daughters as a wife, thereby cementing his relationship with the ruling circle. Soon thereafter, a weakened governor relinquished power in favor of his new son-in-law, who moved quickly to consolidate his own position. During his governorship, as a result of heavy taxes that he levied against the people, Muhammad-Husayn Khán

<sup>206</sup> Lam'átu'l-Anvár, ch. 6, (a summary).

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gathered a considerable fortune. When he died in the early 1830s, he was survived by his three sons: Muhammad-Báqir Khán, 'Alí-Asghar Khán and Hájí Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán.<sup>207</sup> By both tribal and religious laws, the

eldest of the brothers seemed destined to take office. However, the youngest brother, Hájí Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán had designs of his own, and through deceit and feuding with his brother, was able to win the government for himself. In order to consolidate his position, he ordered the assassination of Muhammad-Báqir Khán in his private residence. Having removed from the scene the main rival to the office, Hájí Zaynu'l-'Ábidín turned his attention to the children of his murdered brother and ordered them eliminated to ensure that no future rivalry

could undermine his ambitions.<sup>208</sup> He instructed that all five sons of Muhammad-Báqir Khán, namely, Muhammad-Ja‘far Khán, Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí Khán, Mírzá Muhammad-Husayn Khán, Ismá‘íl Khán, and Akbar Khán, be locked in a room and every entrance sealed so they might starve and suffocate. However, one of his gardeners, who was privately loyal to the family of Muhammad-Báqir Khán, had pity on these children, and secretly managed to carve a small hole in the walls, through which he sent water and food to the captives, thus allowing them to survive. It is reported that this act was masterminded by a group of dissidents led by Mírzá ‘Alí Sardár and Mullá Hasan Lab-Shikarí, the latter known to the sons of Muhammad-Báqir Khán as “Barádar Buzurg” [the elder brother]. Some days later, thinking that the young men had perished, the governor ordered the entrance opened, and found them still alive. Considering this an omen, he allowed them to live, but only on the condition that they leave that district. They readily accepted it and situated themselves in the Chinár-Súkhtih quarter. Simultaneously with these events, Hájí Zaynu‘l-‘Ábidín Khán had increased taxes to an exorbitant level – a move that made him extremely unpopular with the citizens. Very shortly before Vahíd’s arrival, the news of the governor’s heinous effort to eliminate the children of

<sup>207</sup> Lam‘átu‘l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 263, proposes existence of a fourth brother, Áqá

Muhammad-Ridá Khán, but no collaborative evidence is known for this assertion.

<sup>208</sup> It should be noted that the practice of eliminating the family of the rivals had

earlier roots in Iranian and Ottoman history.

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Muhammad-Báqir Khán became widely known. As a result of this and the general dissatisfaction with his taxation policies, widespread unrest and uproar ensued. Therefore, in addition to having a base of believers which he had cultivated since his own conversion, a home in Nayríz and familiarity with its people, another key reason that Vahíd decided to proceed in that direction was the knowledge that the atmosphere of Nayríz was so intensely charged with tension and turmoil. All that was needed was a spark and a massive social explosion was assured: Vahíd and the new Faith were that spark.

On previous visits to Nayríz, Zaynu‘l-‘Ábidín Khán had acted as a friend and admirer of Vahíd, and in many instances had publicly testified to his learning and piety. However, because of the adverse circumstances in the region, his own unstable condition and the news of troubles in Yazd, he decided that he could no longer afford to be known as an

associate of Vahíd and, indeed, recognized in him a potential adversary of great might. Furthermore, he was cognizant that if he failed to deal with Vahíd effectively, the new governor-general for the province of Fárs would take steps to remove him from office.

With this explosive situation at hand, a number of Nayrízís took advantage of the situation and rallied around the wretched children of Muhammad-Báqir Khán who had become the symbols of dissent and the foci of social unrest. One of these children was Muhammad-Ja‘far Khán, the eldest son, who immediately proclaimed his allegiance to Vahíd and became one of his close companions.<sup>209</sup> In fact, in order to further accentuate his differences with the governor, at a later date Vahíd accepted Muhammad-Ja‘far Khán as his son-in-law – a marriage that never took place.<sup>210</sup>

Before proceeding to examine the events of Nayríz through some early historical documents, let us pause to outline some general background on the history and geography of this city.

209 Lam‘átu‘l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 260, states that Mírzá Muhammad-Ja‘far went as far as

Rúníz to welcome Vahíd.

210 See Appendix 2.

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### Nayríz

Though a relatively obscure township in the modern Iranian landscape, Nayríz has become well known to Bahá‘ís because of the genesis of the Bábí movement in that region which subsequently gave rise to an important Bahá‘í base. Nayríz is the name of a district in the province of Fárs, which commands a region of 132 by 108 kilometers. The surrounding region was known by various names and one particular district was Ma‘ádín (plural of Ma‘dan) and each Ma‘dan was a county of its own. In total there were twelve Ma‘dans, or counties.<sup>211</sup> Within the heart of this district is situated the historic city of Nayríz, some 238 kilometers to the east of Shíráz, in the vicinity of Lake Bakhtigán, at an elevation of 1590 meters above sea level. For many centuries this strategically important town has enjoyed rural roads to such places of commerce as Shíráz, Fasá, Dáráb, Istahbánát and Sírján. On the north and east, Nayríz is flanked by a mountain range and therefore benefits from a cool climate.

This city traces its history to the time of the Achaemenian Empire in the sixth century B.C.E. and the Sassáníán Dynasty in the third century Christian Era. Excavations made in the region have revealed that at the time of the Achaemenid Dynasty, Nayriz was a major producer of weapons due to manufacture of steel from iron ore brought from Parpa,

40 miles to the east. During that time it was one of a cluster of cities around Persepolis, which were organized in a supply network to provide the capital with produce.

Since then, Nayríz has enjoyed a system of underground and aboveground aqueducts (qanát), known as Áb-i Zartusht (water of Zoroaster), which enabled it to irrigate many orchards and gardens, making its fruits and greens famous throughout the region.<sup>212</sup> The local soil is particularly suitable for agriculture and the region's warm climate

<sup>211</sup> Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 309, n.1. Other sources suggest that at one time there

were 24 villages in this county.

<sup>212</sup> The aqueducts were an engineering marvel. Starting as underground water systems, they run out above ground as aqueducts which get higher as the ground drops. The water ends in a vertical tower which continues underground into a pit, turning a water-wheel at the bottom.

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made it ideal for many tribal factions to settle there.<sup>213</sup> At one time Nayríz also possessed a heavy metals industry, and to this day remnants of that era are visible.<sup>214</sup> Over time great many men of letters and accomplishment lived and worked in Nayríz.<sup>215</sup>

#### Nayriz and Surrounding Villages

The decline of the city commenced with the Arab conquest of Iran in the latter part of the seventh century. Never being able to rescue herself from the clutches of fanaticism, Nayríz was to suffer over a long period of time at the hands of incompetent local tribal chieftains, whose allegiance was to their immediate tribe and ever-changing political landscape. Over centuries, this remarkable base of civilization was reduced to a shadow of its former self, with ruins and decay visible on all sides.

<sup>213</sup> Mostofi, A., H. Nasr and A. Zaryab (eds), Historical Atlas of Iran, Tíhrán University, 1971.

<sup>214</sup> In pre-Islamic days, the present Bázár quarter was called Sahad-kháníh in light of

its steel industry, which manufactured most of the swords and armor for the empire.

<sup>215</sup> For lists and biographical data see Fársmámih Násirí, vol. 2, pp. 1567-1572,

Lam'ātu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, pp. 31-38, and Nayríz Mushkbíz, pp. 201-203.

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In 1846, when the Bábí community of Nayríz was established, the city had a population of ten thousand<sup>216</sup> and was divided into four quarters separated by orchards. Within each quarter, streets and alleys further subdivided the neighborhoods. The four quarters were: Áb-i Zartusht; Bázár; Chinár-Súkhtih (referred to in the ancient times as Chinár-Sháhí)<sup>217</sup>; and Sádát, otherwise known as Kuchih Bálá. Major B. Lovett of the Royal Engineers visited Nayríz in 1872 and described the town as follows:

This town, which is situated about 12 miles east of the shores of the 'Deria Numuk,' [Daryá Namak, salt sea] is of considerable commercial importance. Its exports are chiefly almonds and figs, which are shipped in great quantities via Bunder Abbas for Bombay. The population is said to be about 3500, and the revenue paid to the Government of Fárs about 12,000 tomans. It is a large town with many

<sup>216</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 3, p. 291.

<sup>217</sup> Known among the people as the Bábí quarter, prior to the Islamic Revolution, it

was named the Pahlavi quarter.

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orchards, vineyards, [and] gardens interspersed between houses built of sun-dried bricks. It is divided into three parishes or 'mahalehs'; that is to the south, termed the 'Mahaleh Bala', is well known to be peopled almost entirely by Babis, who, though they do not openly profess their faith in the teachings of Syed Ali Mahomed, the Bab, still practice the principles of communism he inculcated. It is certain, moreover, that the tolerance which was one of the chief precepts inculcated by the Bab is here observed, for not only was I invited to make use of public hammam [bath], if I required it, but quarters also were assigned to me in the 'Madresseh.'<sup>218</sup>

The fact that Lovett reports three instead of four quarters for the city is perhaps due to Sádát and Bázár quarters often not having a clear demarcation between them.

Nayríz also enjoyed such schools as: Madrisih Ghiyáthiyih, constructed in 1100 A.H./1688; and Madrisih Khán, raised in 1230 A.H./1814 by Muhammad-Husayn Khán, then governor of Nayríz. Prior to the Arab conquest, the people of Nayríz were Zoroastrian, and to this day remains of their large temples are present.

One such temple, located in what later became known as the Chinár-Súkhtih quarter, was converted in 362 A.H./972 into the largest of the city's mosques, Masjid Jámi' 219 Kabír. This mosque was further expanded and repaired in 560-563 A.H./1164-67 and a 30 meter minaret was added, and an impressive dome over it was built during the Safavid era. It also enjoyed a well in its courtyard that provided water to the surrounding grounds and to the worshipers.<sup>220</sup> The mosque itself is an 218 Major B. Lovett, 'Survey on the Road from Shíráz to Bam', p. 203; quoted in The

Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944, p. 151.

219 Jami' or Jam'ih, means Friday.

220 For details see A. Godard, *Le Masdjid-e djum'a Níríz, Athár-e Iran* (i) 1936, pp. 163-

172. He reports this large Sassanid style mosque, with a large ayván, was standing in the 1930s. From his plans and photographs its clear that covered halls flanked the ayván on both sides. (Gratefully, the present writer acknowledges his debt to Sen McGlinn for this reference.)

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interesting survival of an indigenous Iranian iván-type with simple bricks forming patterns on the upper section.

This structure served as the Bábí stronghold during the uprising of the 1850s, when Vahíd gave sermons from a wooden pulpit known as Mihráb Imám Hasan.<sup>221</sup>

The Mihrab

221 Years later, this pulpit was burnt in an accident.

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A smaller mosque is located in the Bázár quarter and is known as Masjid Jámi' Saghír.<sup>222</sup> Other historic buildings in Nayríz include the Shrine of Siyyid Jalálu'd-Dín 'Abdu'lláh Qutb, commonly known as the

Shrine of the Siyyid. Vahíd was buried beneath a wall of this building.<sup>223</sup> For the Bábí and Bahá'ís, other places of particular importance include the house of Vahíd in the Chinár-Súkhtih quarter, and the fort of Khájih which was burnt in 1850, though its main structure remained intact. Several hundred of the Bábí martyrs of 1850 were buried in a marked spot in front of this fort. The Bábí fortifications raised in the mountains of Nayríz in 1853 are a short distance from the city and the majority of them stand to the present day. It was in these mountains that many hundreds of Bábís were slaughtered, with some remains being buried while others were simply left exposed in the wild.

222 An important historical document inscribed on the wall of this mosque is discussed in chapter 7.

223 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 3, p. 291, n.1, indicates that this Shrine is on a circle

outside Saray Sarvary.

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## Chapter 5

### Narrative of Mullá Muhammad Shafí' – Part 1

And say not of those who are slain in the way of God: "They are dead." Nay, they are living, though ye perceive it not.

Qur'án 2:154

#### Introduction

Among the fascinating eyewitness accounts of the Bábí revolution is a document written at Bahá'u'lláh's behest by Mullá Muhammad Shafí', outlining the events of Nayríz during the years 1850-53 – events which resulted in many-hundreds of the Báb's followers yielding life and possessions in the path of their belief.

Composition Date: Although the exact time that Bahá'u'lláh instructed Mullá Shafí' to write his recollections is not known, it seems likely that this may have occurred around 1880. At the very latest, this narrative must have been composed no later than 1887 when the famous historian-poet Nabíl Zarandí employed a copy – presumably given to him by Bahá'u'lláh – and incorporated the entire text, almost verbatim, in his history.<sup>224</sup>

The Original Manuscript: To compose his narrative, Nabíl Zarandí had gathered a number of early accounts, including Mullá Shafí''s history in the hand of its author, but it is not known what happened to this treasure-house of manuscripts after Nabíl's suicide. Fortunately, it

224 See The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 580-581. In his edited translation of Nabíl's

history,

Shoghi Effendi translated the first third of the narrative of Mullá Shafí' - sections pertaining to Nayríz-I. Shoghi Effendi included a brief outline of Nayríz-II as well; see *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 642-644.

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appears that Mullá Shafí' had kept a second copy, which his son, Shaykh Muhammad-Hasan, later used as the basis of a history of his own on the Bábí and Bahá'í community of Nayríz. A grandson of Mullá Shafí', Mírzá

Shafí' Rawhání-Nayrízí, states that the original manuscript of Mullá Shafí' was destroyed during the pogrom of Nayríz-III in March 1909.<sup>225</sup> However, according to Rawhání, some time later Mírzá Muhammad-Sálih Khán Rafsinjání located another copy of this manuscript, but in his private communications with Abú'l-Qásim Afnán, Rawhání noted that after the publication of his *Lam'átu'l-Anvár*, the Rafsinjání copy went astray. Fortunately, Tarázu'lláh Samandarí had seen to it that a copy was prepared for the private library of the Afnán family in Shiraz, which was serving as the nucleus of an archives associated with the House of the Báb in that city. When Hasan Balyuzi – a member of the Afnán family – commenced his research and writings on Bábí history, this copy was loaned to him by his cousin Abú'l-Qásim Afnán.

In the summer of 1995, Abú'l-Qásim Afnán commissioned the present writer to prepare a readable copy of the original manuscript in Persian and also to produce an English translation for publication. Once the Persian transcription was prepared, Mr. Afnán included it in the second volume of his planned trilogy on the history of the Bábís, which remains unpublished to this date.

The following is recorded on the margin of the opening page of this manuscript:

This copy is in the hand of Áqá Mírzá Abú'l-Qásim Mítháqí and the late Mírzá Ahmad, upon him rest the mercy of God. It was copied from the original of Áqá Mullá Muhammad Shafí', upon him be God's Grace. Apparently, the original text was sent to the Holy Land.

Page numbers of the original manuscript are noted in the present translation by angel brackets, such as, <p1>. A few passages that were unreadable are marked with ellipses.

225 *Lam'átu'l-Anvár*, vol. 1, p. 179, n.1

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An Early Translation: An analysis of the Nayríz episode presented by the French historian A.L.M. Nicolas indicates that his chapter on Nayríz is mostly a translation of the account of Mullá Shafí‘, with some slight modifications. However, it is not known how the French diplomat came upon this narrative – perhaps given to him by his Bábí or Azalí contacts.

Distinguishing Features: As the reader will note, the narrative of Mullá Shafí‘ is rich in detailed descriptions of events. Only a young boy at the time of the occurrences, the author later augmented his knowledge with the recollections of other survivors and, therefore, provides many particulars related to the organization of the believers, the identity of the defenders, tasks assigned to individuals during the upheavals, and many other details.

Narrative of  
Mullá Muhammad Shafí‘ Nayrízí

<p.1> In accordance with the instruction of the Abiding One<sup>226</sup> this has been written.

After the proclamation of the Cause of His Holiness the Exalted One – may the spirit of all except His be a sacrifice unto Him – and

the arrival of the honored Vahíd – upon him rest the Glory of God – in the Dáru‘l-‘Ilm<sup>228</sup> of Shiraz, and his acceptance [of the Báb’s Cause], he

wrote a treatise for the people of Nayríz, testifying to the truth of the Cause of His Holiness and informing them of the nearness of His Manifestation. “Soon will the Dawn appear,” he declared, “and the Sun of Truth will shine forth and be made manifest over the horizon of the East.”<sup>229</sup>

226 Bahá‘u‘lláh

227 The Báb

228 Dáru‘l-‘Ilm, lit. the City of Knowledge, is a traditional name for Shiraz since

many important literary figures of Iran came from that city.

229 Vahíd Dárábí must have written this communication at a time when the Báb did

not wish his name to be known among the generality of people.

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[1. Vahíd’s Approach to Nayríz]

Thereupon, the illustrious Vahíd proceeded to the Dáru'l-'Ibadih of Yazd and proclaimed the Words of Truth<sup>230</sup> to the inhabitants of that land, where some denied and a number embraced his Call. After the incident of Muhammad [ibn] 'Abdu'lláh,<sup>231</sup> he did not deem it wise to tarry any longer [in Yazd] and in the company of few others proceeded to Bávanát, in the vicinity of Shiraz, where a large number of its inhabitants, and a group of others, representing all segments of the population, including, Hájí Siyyid Ismá'íl, the Shaykhu'l-Islám of Bávanát, accepted [the new Faith]. In the company of some, he [Valid] proceeded towards Fasá where none among its nobles, wealthy or 'ulamá recognized [the new Message]. Subsequently, they left for the village of Rúníz, in the surrounding neighborhood of Fasá, and there tarried for two days.

[As soon as the news of his approach reached Nayríz,] the entire population of <p.2> the Chinár-Súkhtih quarter, from the downtrodden to the upper class, and a few from the other neighborhoods, came to Rúníz to hear [Vahíd] and to attain unto his presence. Fearing Hájí Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán, who was from Nayríz<sup>232</sup> and was its governor, many made their way at night. In their midst were: some one hundred of the seminary-students of the Chinár-Súkhtih quarter led by their chief, the late Hájí Shaykh 'Abd[u'l]-'Alí, the father-in-law of the illustrious

Vahíd, whose ancestors for several generations had occupied the position of religious leader; the late Akhúnd Mullá 'Abdu'l-Husayn<sup>233</sup>, a divine of renowned achievements, learning, piety and detachment; the late Akhúnd Mullá Báqir, the Imam-Jum'ih of that quarter; Mullá 'Alí Kátib [the scribe]; another Mullá 'Alí and his four brothers; and some

230 "Kalamát Haqq", referring to the teachings of the Báb.

231 For details see Chapter 3.

232 His father was originally from the village of Qutriyih.

233 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 476, and Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 55, suggest he was eighty

years old while Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 10 and p. 161, state he was seventy years old.

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others whose names I do not recall. In addition, a number of chieftains, elders and other citizens from every tribe joined in. And from the Bázár quarter, came: the late Mashhadí Mírzá Husayn<sup>234</sup>, entitled Qutb, whose details will be related in the course of the second episode<sup>235</sup>, together with his entire family and relations; the late Mírzá Abú'l-Qásim who was among the nobles and a maternal cousin<sup>236</sup> of [Hájí] Zaynu'l-'Ábidín

Khán, [the governor]; the late Hájí Muhammad-Taquí, surnamed Ayyúb [Job]; and his son-in-law Mírzá Husayn. And from the Sádát quarter: <p.3> the son of Mírzá Nawrá; Mírzá ‘Alí-Ridá, a son of Mírzá Husayn;

Áqá, a son of Hájí ‘Alí; and a number of others. Some stealthily and some fearlessly, some at daytime while others in the night season came forth from Nayríz and attained the presence of that illustrious personage [Vahíd] at Rúníz, and one and all embraced his call and command.

On hearing this news, Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán was perturbed and sent a messenger announcing that whoever journeyed from Nayríz and aligned himself with the Cause of that honored personage [Valid], would be persecuted, his house destroyed, his life put in peril and his wife taken from him. On seeing that the more he agitated, the fervor of people’s love for Vahíd grew fiercer and the more openly they defied his orders, he decided to escape from Nayríz and take residence in the village of Qutrih [Qutriyih], some eight farsangs<sup>237</sup> distance from the city. The aforementioned Khán<sup>238</sup> was originally from the village of Qutrih, owned much cattle and sheep and commanded a multitude of gunmen [in that vicinity].

The illustrious Vahíd also came forth from Rúníz and for a day or two stayed at the village of Istahbánát, at a shrine outside the village which was commonly known as Pír-Murád.<sup>239</sup> The ‘ulamá of the village

<sup>234</sup> The Dawn-Breakers, p. 476, and Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 408, note that he

was the kad-khudá [chieftain] of the Bázár quarter.

<sup>235</sup> Reference to the 1853 Bábí uprising.

<sup>236</sup> Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Báb, p. 393, has read him as a nephew.

<sup>237</sup> Farsang is equivalent to six kilometers.

<sup>238</sup> The author uses “the Khán” as shorthand for the governor, Hájí Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín

Khán.

<sup>239</sup> Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 53, n.1, states that the Shrine of Pír-Murád is located

one mile southwest of Istahbánát. That city had been an ancestral home of Vahíd

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had issued instructions that no one should render assistance to the Siyyid [i.e. Vahíd]; however a few of the believers from that town provided him with aid and comfort.<sup>240</sup>

[2. Vahíd’s Arrival at Nayríz]

Leaving that village in company of some twenty companions, at three hours into the day, [Vahíd] arrived at the Chinár-Súkhtih quarter [of Nayríz] and before going home proceeded directly to Masjid Jami‘ [Kabír].<sup>241</sup> Still wearing the same clothes he had worn on the journey, he ascended the pulpit <p.4> and to either side of him stood one of his companions with a ready sword.<sup>242</sup>

After offering praise and glorification to His Holiness the Appointed One [the Báb], he shared the Words of Truth.<sup>243</sup> From that quarter a crowd nearly one thousand strong, as well as a half to a third of the inhabitants of other neighborhoods had gathered on that occasion and all accepted his Call.<sup>244</sup>

and he enjoyed considerable support among its people.

<sup>240</sup> Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 53, n.2, states that in Istahbánát twenty-three people

converted to the Bábí faith, of which twenty accompanied Vahíd on the subsequent journey.

<sup>241</sup> The Dawn-Breakers, p. 478, and Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, pp. 56-57, give the date of

Vahíd’s arrival as 15 Rajab/27 May 1850. Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 409,

suggests 5 Rajab, but most likely this is a copyist error.

<sup>242</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 409, mentions the presence of two armed

bodyguards, but this is missing in The Dawn-Breakers.

<sup>243</sup> Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, pp. 57-58, explains that on the first day Vahíd told the

congregation that he was bearer of a mighty message but as the assemblage was not

large enough, he would speak of it on the following day. The second day he stated

the same, but on the subsequent day, when the masjid was overflowing with people,

he spoke of the appearance of the Báb.

<sup>244</sup> Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 54, estimates the congregation at 2,500 people.

However,

given the size of the mosque, this estimate seems inflated, unless many stood in the

courtyards or neighboring homes and streets.

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“The purpose of my visit,” that illustrious person [Vahíd] informed them, “was to share the Words of Truth with you, and my stay will no longer outwardly profit you. If I were to remain here, your governor, out of enmity towards you, will seek assistance from Shiraz, and bearing decisive force, guns and soldiers, will exert every effort to eliminate you. You will be killed, your possessions plundered and taken as spoil, your wives taken captive, your houses burnt, and your heads carried away from town to town. You will be deprived of food and water to the degree that you will be desperate even for the vegetation of the

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wild and even that will be denied of you.”<sup>245</sup>

In response to these stern warnings, the crowd [as a mark of willingness for self-sacrifice] spontaneously placed burial garbs over their shoulders, unsheathed their swords and readied their guns. In addition to the men, the womenfolk, moved to hysteria, circled him, crying: “We are eager to sacrifice our homes, our possessions, our children, our honor and all in the path of Truth. Should they even slay everyone present, we will not let you leave us.”<sup>246</sup>

<sup>245</sup> Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Báb, p. 395, reports a different version of the same

speech (Translation of the French Footnotes of the Dawn-Breakers, p. 54):

He ascended the pulpit and cried out: ‘Am I not he whom you have always considered your shepherd and your guide? Have you not always depended on my teaching for the direction of your conscience in the path of salvation? Am I not he whose words of counsel you have always obeyed? What has happened that you should treat me as though I were your enemy and the enemy of your religion? What lawful deeds have I forbidden? What illicit action have I permitted? With what impiety can you charge me? Have I ever led you into error? And behold! That because I have told you the truth, because I have loyally sought to instruct you, I am oppressed and persecuted! My heart burns with love for you and you persecute me! Remember! Remember well, whosoever saddens me, saddens my ancestor Muhammad, the glorious Prophet, and whosoever helps me, helps Him also. In the name of all that is sacred to you let all those who love the Prophet follow me!’

<sup>246</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 410, states:

With his arrival at Nayríz, great signs of commotion became apparent. Some of the people remained perplexed and undecided while a large group rejected his call and rose in opposition and enmity. The governor of Nayríz, Mírzá Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán, grew apprehensive of Tihrán’s reaction and feared for his own rule. Therefore, he sent a

message [to Vahíd] urging him to immediately quit the city, as further stay would be imprudent. ‘Since I have been traveling for some time,’ responded that honored personage, ‘and have remained far from my family and friends, now they would not consent to my departure. If the governor does not wish to arise in my support and succor, then, in consideration of our past association, at least he should desist from forcing me to leave the city and my home.’ On hearing this response, the governor was overtaken by rage and spite and with great fervor

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They wailed and pleaded so much that Vahíd consented to stay for nearly ten days, and each day, from the pulpit he would share the Words of Truth, <p.5> which caused the multitude to grow by the hour.<sup>247</sup> Meanwhile, the aforementioned Khán had gathered a force of nearly a thousand gunmen from such diverse tribes as Turks and Tájiks, consisting of both cavalry and infantry. Once this news was shared with his holiness [Vahíd], he commissioned the same twenty believers who had accompanied him from Istahbánát, led by Áqá Shaykh Hádí, son of moved to provoke the people [of the Bázár quarter] against him, and urged hindrance and destruction of that honored person. His purpose was that through a great rebellion, the citizens would rush and force him from town. Alarmed by the situation, Vahíd went to the Masjid [Jami‘ Kabír] and ascended the pulpit. Before a vast multitude that had gathered, he spoke eloquently and forcefully of the wrongs that he had endured and the Truth that he so manifestly had brought for them. He evoked the moving example of Imam Husayn and the manner in which he was invited to Kufih and the treachery and enmity of the governor. The entire congregation was deeply stirred to tears over what had taken place and a large number rose from their seat to give him their allegiance. They assured him of their devotion and readiness to withstand any trial and to sacrifice life, possession and all in the path of the Beloved.

Kawakibu’ d-Durriyih, vol. 1, pp. 204-205, provides essentially similar information,

though it seems to be based on the narrative of Siyyid Husayn Hamadaní.

Tárikh

Zuhúru’ l-Haqq, vol. 2, pp. 410-411, continues relating that it was then that the

governor left Nayríz for Qutriyih to assemble an armed force for confrontation with

Vahíd. Kawakibu’ d-Durriyih, vol. 1, p. 205, reports that a series of minor scrimmages

took place at that time.

247 *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 2, p. 409, informs that by the end of the first week,

some four hundred people had converted to the Bábí movement. The Dawn-Breakers, p. 477, notes, “Although the Báb had revealed a general Tablet addressed specially to those who had newly embraced His Cause in Nayríz, yet its recipients remained ignorant of its significance and fundamental principles. It was given to Vahíd to enlighten them regarding its true purpose and set forth its distinguishing features.”

In presenting the same information, *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 2, p. 409, states that these believers were converted at an earlier date and the Báb’s tablet was received sometime prior to these events. Therefore, this confirms that Nayríz was already enjoying a nascent Bábí community prior to 1850.

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Karbalá’í<sup>248</sup> Muhsin, to occupy a fort known as Khájih in the vicinity of Chinár-Súkhtih quarter.<sup>249</sup> The residents of the quarter also strengthened the gates, fortified the towers, and erected defensive walls.

[3. Beginning of the Battles]

In the middle of night<sup>250</sup>, the aforementioned Khán and his gunmen entered Nayríz and took position at the governor’s mansion in the Bázár quarter, a fortified stronghold with towers and turrets overlooking the other dwellings, and began to reinforce the walls. In addition, they occupied the house of Áqá Siyyid Abu-Tálib, the chieftain of the quarter, situated immediately outside the neighborhood’s gate. The ruthless gunmen, under the command of Muhammad-‘Alí Khán, who was married to the governor’s sister-in-law, took position there and began

<sup>248</sup> *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 481, gives “Shaykhí” as the title, but *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*,

vol. 2, p. 411, refers to him as Karbalá’í. When Nabíl’s original text is made

available, it should be checked to see if “Shaykhí” is an error of transcription

introduced by him.

<sup>249</sup> *Kawakibu’d-Durriyih*, vol. 1, p. 205, states that initially Vahíd and seven others

took position in the fort. It should be noted that at that time the fort was about one kilometer southeast of Chinár-Súkhtih quarter and remained in the possession of the Bahá'í community until the recent Islamic Revolution in Iran. When they came under military pressure and other avenues were closed to them, the Bábís always retreated to a castle as a means of protection – they did so in Mázandarán, Yazd, Nayríz and Zanján. It is noteworthy that the Ismá'íliyih sect, who starting in the eleventh century established themselves in strategically located castles constructed on the mountaintops. From such elevations they could monitor the coming and goings of the foes for great distances and when needed, emerge from the heights to attack them. The Bábís, on the other hand, generally miscalculated by taking positions in poorly situated forts (often not of their own choosing, but dictated upon them by circumstances). For instance, Shaykh Tabarsí was surrounded with thickly wooded jungles that afforded the enemy the advantage of hiding behind the trees. In both Nayríz and Zanján, the forts were in close proximity of the population centers and on the same plane as the enemy's forces allowing the latter to easily fire artillery shells into the Bábí fort.

250 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 62, gives the date of this event as 18 Rajab 1266

A.H./30 May 1850.

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firing [upon their adversaries] for the first time.

The previously-mentioned Akhúnd Mullá 'Abdu'l-Husayn, who had ascended the rooftop, was struck in the right foot during the course of the first volley by the wayward gunmen, and his was the first blood spilled on that land.<sup>251</sup> When this news was brought to the illustrious Vahíd, he wrote him: "Rejoice that your Excellency was the first to be honored with this great blessing and exult in that your station has been exalted."

251 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 481, notes he "was offering his prayer on the roof of his

house” at the time. Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 57, suggests he was in the fort of Khájih when injured. Such minor differences between The Dawn-Breakers and Nayríz Mushkbíz may stem from the fact the former relied on the narrative of Mullá Muhammad Shafí‘, while Nayríz Mushkbíz gleaned its information from an account written by one of the sons of Shafí‘, namely, Shaykh Muhammad-Husayn. Since Shafí‘ was present in the events and his son was not, it seems reasonable to settle all such differences in favor of Shafí‘ and by extension, The Dawn-Breakers.

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#### [4. The First Battle]

Gradually there was agitation in God’s Army<sup>252</sup>, and that night, fearing the Khán, a few lukewarm believers broke ranks and joined his forces.<sup>253</sup>  
<p.6> In light of this occurrence, the illustrious Vahíd, together with several of his chief lieutenants, rode at the hour of dawn towards the fort of Khájih and encamped there.

The aforementioned Khán and his older brother, ‘Alí-Asghar Khán, and about one thousand of their Turk and Tájik men surrounded the Fort where that illustrious personage [Vahíd] and some seventy<sup>254</sup> of his companions had taken position against them. That day a fierce battle occurred and those that fell as martyrs were: the late Táju’d-Dín, a farmer whose business was manufacturing woolen hats and who was renowned for his bravery and fearlessness; Zaynal, son of Iskandar, a farmer; and Mírzá Abú’l-Qásim, who [initially] sustained injuries and after a few days passed away.<sup>255</sup>

After this event, having previously appealed to the authorities in

252 Jundu’llah (lit. the Army of God) is a Bábí term signifying the body of the believers.

253 The governor had ordered his men to bombard the Bábí homes and to cause as

much damage as possible. Not satisfied with that, he issued warnings to all new converts that they and their families were in grave peril and moreover began to circulate misinformation about the severe casualties sustained by the Bábí forces. It

seems that the combined effect of these efforts resulted in a few Bábí breaking ranks with Vahíd’s camp.

254 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 482, has elected to report this figure as 72 – the same

number of faithful who stood with Imam Husayn at the plain of Karbalá.

Tárikh

Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 411, gives the figure as 70 which may suggest that Nabíl had

reported the same figure as Mullá Shafí', but in translation of The Dawn-Breakers it

was rounded to 72. Later Bahá'í histories (e.g. Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 62, and

Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 57) continued to echo the same figure as The Dawn-Breakers.

255 Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 411, reports,

Of the three men, the first two were emissaries of Vahíd to the governor, bearing an urgent communication imploring an end to hostilities as the defenders made no claim to the government and only sought to promote belief in the appearance of the Qá'im. However, on leaving the fort for the camp of the governor, both were captured and after much torture, unceremoniously killed, without ever being able to deliver their message.

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Shiraz and having received instructions to thoroughly eliminate Vahíd and his companions, the Khán sent one of Prince Nusratu'd-Dawlih's attendants as a messenger to Vahíd.<sup>256</sup> On attaining the presence of that venerable personage [Vahíd], the courier conveyed the communication of the Khán: "Now that the situation has reached such a state, should you consider it prudent, it would be best for you to escape." "My two sons and two companions are all the company I have with me," replied Vahíd, "and if my departure will benefit you, I have no quarrel with doing so. However as you have cut off access to water for the People of Truth [i.e. the Bábís], if you immediately relinquish control [over the flow], then all would be well. Otherwise, be warned, that this very night I will see to it that water flows freely." [In reply,] the Khán sent a second messenger, <p.7> stating, "If you are the Prince of Martyrs, then I am no less than Shimr. I will not allow you or your companions a drop of water."<sup>257</sup>

[5. The Second Battle]

That very night [Vahíd] instructed two groups of seven men each – some of whom had reached the age of maturity and some who had not, and 256 Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 412, states,

During that time, the new governor-general of Fárs, Fírúz Mírzá, the Nusratu'd-Dawlih, an uncle of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh, was proceeding for his post from Tihrán and Mírzá Zaynu'l-'Ábidín informed him of the details through Mírzá Fadlu'lláh Khán, the Nasíru'l-Mulk, who served

as the deputy governor-general. Fírúz Mírzá advised that it was best to deal with Vahíd wisely and calmly. However, Mírzá Zaynu'l-‘Ábidín Khán ordered the fort completely surrounded and blockaded water supplies to the besieged.

257 A reference to the events surrounding the martyrdom of Imam Husayn in Karbalá

on 10 October 680 AD; see, *An Introduction to Shi‘i Islam*, pp. 28-33.

Refusing water to

the defenders was the way that Imam Husayn was treated at Karbalá. Therefore by

telling and emphasizing this aspect of events, Mullá Shafí‘ is evoking a parallel between

the two incidents. This parallel and its symbolism is further accentuated by equating

Vahíd with Imam Husayn and the governor with Shimr, the Imam’s chief adversary.

Bábí and early Bahá’í histories generally attempted to portray the events as a return or

reenactment of early Islamic happenings.

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none of their names do I recall now – to attack from either side the enemy’s camp and to surprise them. In the course of the ensuing bitter battle, water was presently made available once again, the enemy sustained a decisive defeat and was dislodged from their camp.

‘Alí-Asghar Khán, the elder brother of the Khán, was killed<sup>258</sup> and his sons captured, and the believers triumphantly brought back the tents, the furniture and other items from the enemy’s camp.

The Khán and the remainder of his men retreated once more to the village of Qutrih and for the second time he petitioned the Prince Nusratu’d-Dawlih, requesting artillery and infantry reinforcement.

[6. The Organization of the Bábís]

The illustrious personage [Vahíd], for his part, gave orders that the Fort’s

258 He was slain by his nephew, Muhammad-Ja‘far Khán, who had joined Vahíd; for

details on this nephew’s planned marriage to the daughter of Vahíd see, Appendix 2.

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turrets be strengthened, that a water-well<sup>259</sup> be dug within its enclosure, and that the tents they had carried away from the enemy's camp be pitched outside its gates. That day he also appointed Karbalá'í Mírzá Muhammad as the gatekeeper; the late Shaykh Yúsuf as the custodian of the funds; Karbalá'í Muhammad, son of Shamsu'd-Dín, as the commander-in-charge of the gardens adjoining the fort and its barricades; Mírzá Ahmad, the uncle of 'Alí Sardar (whose details will be given in the second episode), was appointed the officer in charge of the mill-tower known by the name of Chinár, situated in the vicinity of the fort; and Shaykha<sup>260</sup> was appointed the executioner. <p.8> A paternal cousin of the Khán and one of the believers, Áqá Mírzá Muhammad-Ja'far, had composed a jang-namih<sup>261</sup> for this occasion and Vahíd appointed Akhúnd Mullá Fadlu'lláh as the reciter of this poem. Mashhadí Taqí Baqqál [grocer] was named the jail-keeper; the late Hájí Muhammad-Taqí, was made the registrar, whose duty was to secure a written testimony from those wishing to join the God's Army of their willingness to forfeit life, property and family [in the path of God] and joining the fort was conditioned upon signing such a statement. The overall command was entrusted to Áqá Ghulam-Ridá Yazdí, who had accompanied Vahíd from Yazd.

He [i.e. Vahíd] barred many brave and able persons from joining [the defenders in] the fort and instead assigned each to a specific duty in town: one was placed in command of the [forces on the] roof of Masjid Jami' [Kabír] which reckoned among the strongholds of the Chinár-Súkhtih quarter; and another was appointed the gatekeeper of [an area where] nearly five hundred people lived.

None were permitted entrance [to the fort of Khájíh] despite their willingness to sacrifice life, except the original seventy who had accompanied [Vahíd] during the first night, which included some inhabitants of Istahnabat, the Bázár quarter and some of his own

259 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 483, and Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 413, have read the

original as water-cistern.

260 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 483, gives his name as Shaykh-i-Shivih-Kash; Táríkh

Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 414, gives Shivih-Kash.

261 A metrical description of the events, typically of great wars.

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relatives. Through the intercession of the late Áqá Siyyid Ja'far [Yazdí]<sup>262</sup>,

who ranked among the 'ulamá, and the late Shaykh 'Abd-'Alí, Vahíd's father-in-law, and after much imploring and supplication on their part,

several more were <p.9> admitted into the fort.<sup>263</sup>

The influence of his holiness [Vahíd] was unrivaled among the general population and particularly the believers. One by one each of the non-believers who had committed a transgression since [Vahíd's] arrival was captured and every day he would order the execution of two or three of them, which a certain Shaykhá would carry out through decapitation.<sup>264</sup> Of the power and authority of his holiness the following example should suffice: One of the non-believers had brought an exquisite rifle as a present to his holiness [Vahíd]. The latter took the gun and surveyed it and then turned to his treasurer, the late Shaykh Yúsuf, saying, "Take this rifle," but before he could finish the sentence, the owner, Mírzá 'Abdu'lláh, thinking that Vahíd had ordered something else [perhaps his execution], had a convulsion and instantly dropped dead.

262 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 414, reports,

Vahíd was soon joined by a group of distinguished citizens of Nayríz, led by Siyyid Ja'far Yazdí, a well-known divine of Bazár quarter with great influence among the authorities and owner of the choicest properties in that region. Upon entering the fort, the entire membership of this group expressed their devotion to Vahíd and took their place among the defenders. Their arrival greatly cheered Vahíd and encouraged him in this struggle. At his bidding, Siyyid Ja'far returned to the Masjid Jum'ih and continued to deliver sermons deepening the knowledge of the friends on the details of the new Dispensation, strengthening their fortitude and propagating the new Message with the aim of winning new converts. He was particularly suitable for this duty as he was a man of great influence in the community, and possessed profound knowledge and eloquent speech. After completing this mission, he returned to the fort and was at a later time captured as one of the prisoners.

263 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 414, notes that by that time 400 believers stood

with Vahíd either in the fort or in the Chinár-Súkhtih quarter.

Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol.

1, p. 63, places this number at 600 men.

264 This comment needs to be understood in the context of the justice system in the

mid nineteenth century Iran where local chieftains had complete judicial authority.

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They tied his body to the back of a mule and brought him to the city to his home so that the customary burial rituals, including washing and

shrouding of the body, could be carried out. However his neighbor, a certain affluent Siyyid Mutlab, on hearing what had transpired and seeing this scene, also had a seizure and died instantly as well.<sup>265</sup>

[7. Governor's Appeal to Shiraz]

Eventually, Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán prepared [yet another] lengthy appeal to the Prince Nusratu'd-Dawlih requesting cannons, cavalry and soldiers, and enclosed a sum of five thousand tumans as a gift, and entrusted this letter to one of his most intimate attendants, Mullá Báqir, known for his eloquence of speech, powers of persuasion, and his intrepidity and bravery, and instructed him to deliver it in person to the Prince and to acquaint him with the details of occurrences.<sup>266</sup> <p.10> Mullá Báqir took a route unfrequented by travelers.

Meanwhile, Hájí Siyyid Ismá'íl, the Shaykhu'l-Islám of Bávanát, had obtained leave from his holiness [Vahíd] and was on his way to Bávanát, and after a day's journey reached a place called Dahú-Dashtak<sup>267</sup> village where various tribes roamed the country and their sheep grazed the land.<sup>268</sup> He dismounted near the pitched tents to

<sup>265</sup> This paragraph is missing in *The Dawn-Breakers* and except for the first sentence

and a half it is also missing in *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 2. What is described in this

paragraph is a common motif in Islamic literature, as a way of showing an extreme

degree of respect; see, for example, many examples in Al-Ghazali's *On Death* where

holy people are so full of the fear and veneration of God that they think of it and

suddenly drop dead from awe. See also Rudolf Otto's explanation of "holy dread"

as a response to the "numinous" the awe inspiring qualities of the holy.

<sup>266</sup> Mullá Báqir was one of the close associates of the governor and resided in the

Sádát quarter of Nayríz. His descendants have adopted the surname Shahídí [martyred] and some still reside in Nayríz. This Mullá Báqir is not to be confused

with Mullá Báqir, the Imam-Jum'ih, who together with his children were among the

believers and companions of Vahíd.

<sup>267</sup> *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 484, has read the village name as, Hudastak.

<sup>268</sup> According to *Fársnámih Násirí*, vol. 2, p. 1045, the main tribes of the region are

Ghaz-fayuj and Ghurbatiha.

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refresh and have some food when he saw a strapping horse tethered to the ropes, and, knowing that the natives could not afford such a horse, inquired as to its owner. Being informed that it belonged to one of the attendants of Zaynu'l-‘Ábidín Khán Nayrízí, he paused a bit and then sprinted to his feet, approached the horse and mounted it. Mullá Báqir was unaware of these occurrences and was sitting in a tent engaged in conversation with its owner. Unsheathing his sword, the Shaykh [Hájí Siyyid Ismá‘íl] sternly spoke these words to the owner of the tent with whom Mullá Báqir was still conversing: “Arrest this man, who has fled from the sword of the Commander of the Cause, whom I serve and one of Whose companions I am.” Affrighted by the words and the manner of the Siyyid [Ismá‘íl], the villagers gathered and immediately bound Mullá Báqir’s arms and delivered the rope with which they had tied him to him [Hájí Siyyid Ismá‘íl], who compelled his captive to follow him with occasional whippings. At a distance of two <p.11> farsangs from Nayríz, he reached the village of Rastáq and delivered his captive into the hands of its headsman whose name was Hájí Akbar<sup>269</sup>, telling him that this man had escaped from Vahíd’s camp, and urged him to conduct Mullá Báqir into the presence of Vahíd, which was done instantly. [When brought before Vahíd,] the latter inquired as to the purpose of his journey and the nature of his mission, to which Mullá Báqir gave a frank and detailed reply. His holiness confronted him and instructed him to repudiate his deeds and to accept the truth of the new Manifestation, to which [Mullá Báqir] responded negatively. [Vahíd] therefore immediately ordered his execution, which was carried out by decapitation.<sup>270</sup>

269 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 415, gives his name as Hájí ‘Alí-Akbar.

270 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 485, states that Vahíd was willing to forgive Mullá Báqir,

but nevertheless his companions killed the messenger. The version in Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 415, is consistent with the narrative of Mullá Shafí‘. Nayríz

Mushkbíz, p. 61, presumably based on the narrative of Shaykh Muhammad-Husayn, offers the theory, “Vahíd instructed his companions to leave him alone as the divine

Avenger would deal with him justly. The Bábís thus let him leave and immediately

after his departure, he was captured by the governor’s men in that vicinity and on

the assumption that he had traitorously dealt with the governor and had joined Vahíd and was now leaving on a mission on behalf of the latter, killed him

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The news of this event greatly increased the enmity of the Khán who dispatched several of his men, loaded with gifts and carrying a detailed written entreaty to the Prince. He also addressed several appeals to the leading 'ulamá, the siyyids and other dignitaries [of Shiraz]. The Prince readily instructed the Shuja 'u'l-Mulk<sup>271</sup>, and the commanders of the Hamadání and Silakhurí regiments, together with a force of cavalry and artillery to set out at once [for Nayríz].<sup>272</sup> He, moreover, instructed men from the districts of Nayríz, including four parishes of Istahbánát, and the villages of Iraj, Panj-Ma'dan, Qutrih [Qutriyih], Bashnih, instantly."

<sup>271</sup> The Dawn-Breakers, p. 485, gives his name as 'Abdu'lláh Khán and Táríkh Zuhúru'l-

Haqq, vol. 2, p. 416, gives it as Mihr-'Alí Khán Núrí. Later Bahá'í histories, such as,

The Báb, p. 240, n. 19, give Mihr-'Alí Khán. He was a son of Shukru'lláh Khán Núrí

and a nephew of Mírzá Áqá Khán Núrí, the Prime Minister. The following is

recorded in Fáršnjámih Násirí, vol. 2, p. 977,

Hájí Mihr-'Alí Khán was born in 1232 A.H. [1816] in Shiraz and from youth until his passing was always appointed to prominent posts. For a while he was a colonel in the Shírází regiment and then became governor of the Kuh-Giluiyih and Bihbahán region [in 1851], where he managed to establish order and after a few years was named commander of the armed forces in Fárs [leading the Iranian forces in the Anglo-Persian War of 1856-57], in charge of the treasury of the province. He died in 1287 A.H. [1870] in Tihrán.

<sup>272</sup> The governor-general further provided three field cannons and artillery officers

led by general Mustafa-Qulí Khán Qaraguzlu, the I'timadu's-Saltanih.

Kawakibu'd-

Durriyih, vol. 1, p. 206, reports the other commander was Muhammad-'Alí Khán

Dúnbagí, son of Hájí Shukru'lláh Khán Yúzí. The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944,

pp. 109-10, reports, "The British Agent in Shiraz, Mírzá Mahmúd, referred to the

commencement of the upheaval in his report for the period 24 May to 5 June 1850:

Syed Yahyáh, a disciple of Báb, who was some time ago in Istahbanat, has, it is said, assembled 1500 men, and proceeded to Nereez where Zeynool Abedeen Khán wishes to seize him. Outside the Town he

has erected a Fort, and is engaged in skirmishes. According to what is reported the Khán has had 80 men killed. When this news reached Shiraz, the Nuseer-ool Mulk ordered a Regiment of Sirbaz [soldiers] with two Guns to proceed to Nereez for the purpose of seizing Syed Yahyáh.' In the same report, Mírzá Mahmúd records: 'On the 3rd June Mehr Ally Khán by order of the Nuseer-ool Mulk, with one Regiment and two Guns proceeded to Nereez to seize Syed Yahyáh.'

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Dih-Chah, Mushkan, and Rastáq (which is one of villages of Nayríz), in addition to the members of the desert tribe of Vaysbagluyih<sup>273</sup> and nonbelievers of Nayríz, to join [Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán's] army.

#### [8. The Third Battle]

In the space of a single day, an innumerable host suddenly securely surrounded the fort [of Khájíh], and began to dig trenches around it and to construct barricades.<sup>274</sup> On the same day, they opened fire with all their cannons and guns. <p.12> A cannon-shell struck a horse, while another penetrated the turret above the gate. At that time, one of the men of God's Army, uttering the name of the Lord, fatally shot the officer in charge of the artillery, as a result of which the cannons and guns were immediately silenced, and the assailants took cover within the trenches. That night his holiness [Vahíd] left them alone.

The second night, however, Vahíd appointed Ghulám-Ridá Yazdí the leader of two groups of seven men each, consisting mostly of men of advanced age – one being a ninety-year old shoemaker – and the rest being young lads who had not reached the age of maturity. They were ordered to launch a nocturnal surprise attack. As instructed, simultaneously raising the cry of "Alláh-u-Akbar" they attacked the enemy's strongholds from both sides first with their guns and then with unsheathed swords.

The entire opposing camp also began to fire their guns and cannons in such wise that the darkness of the night turned bright as a day. For nearly eight hours the Army of God was engaged in battle with the men of Satan.<sup>275</sup> A large contingent from the host of Truth came to the aid of their companions, of which some sixty fell as martyrs and a large number were injured. Though I do not recall all the names, some

<sup>273</sup> The Dawn-Breakers, p. 485, has read the tribe's name as, Visbaktariyyih, which may

well be a more accurate reading.

<sup>274</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 416, places the number of soldiers and irregulars

at 5,000 strong.

275 Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 72, reports by that time Vahíd’s support in the fort

stood at 1,000 men strong.

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thirty of the [martyrs] come to mind: a certain Ghulám-Ridá Yazdí<sup>276</sup> and his brother; ‘Alí, son of Karbalá’í Khayru’lláh; <p.13> Khájih Husayn

Qannád, son of Khájih Ghaní; Asghar, son of [Mullá] Mihdí, whose occupation was tile making; Karbalá’í ‘Abdu’l-Karím; Husayn, son of Mashhadí Muhammad; Zaynal<sup>277</sup>, son of Mashhadí Báqir Sabbágh; Mullá Ja‘far Mudhahhib; ‘Abdu’lláh, son of [Mullá] Músá; Muhammad, [son of] Mashhadí Rajab [Haddád]; Karbalá’í Hasan, [son of] Karbalá’í Shamsu’d-Dín Malikí-Duz [sandal-maker]; Karbalá’í Mírzá Muhammad Zári‘ [farmer]; Karbalá’í Báqir Kaffásh [shoemaker]; Mírzá Ahmad, [son of] Mírzá Husayn Kashí-Sáz [tilemaker]; Akhúnd Mullá Hasan, son of Mullá ‘Abdu’lláh; Mihdí<sup>278</sup> Hájí Muhammad; Abú-Tálib, son of Mírzá Ahmad Nukhúd-Biríz; Akbar, [son of] ‘Ashur<sup>279</sup>; Taqí Yazdí; Mullá ‘Alí,

[son of] Mullá Ja‘far; Karbalá’í Mírzá Husayn Mu’adhdhan Madrisih; Husayn Khán, [son of] Sharíf; Karbalá’í Qurbán; Khájih Kázim, son of Khájih ‘Alí; Áqá ‘Alí; Áqá, son of Hájí ‘Alí, one of the region’s noblemen; and Mírzá Nawrá, son of Mírzá Mu‘iná, one of the region’s wealthy notables.

Except for Mashhadí Ismá‘íl Malikí-Dúz, who suffered five wounds from cannon shrapnel and is presently living under the shadow of the Cause, and a certain Mullá Muhammad, I do not recall the names of those who sustained injuries. A number of these men were later martyred in Tihrán – an event that will be described later in this narrative.

Despite the fact that many fell as martyrs, a decisive defeat was delivered to the opposing army. In truth the reason for the enemy’s defeat was the exulting cheers of the [Bábí] womenfolk who had rushed to the rooftops of the city and raising cries of exhilaration, encouraged their men to fire and to fight on, to the point that it utterly demoralized <sup>276</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 417, states his name was Kuchak [small] and he

had accompanied Vahíd from Yazd.

<sup>277</sup> The Dawn-Breakers, p. 487, and Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 418, have read him

as Zaynu'l-'Ábidín.

278 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 487, and Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 418, refer to him as

Mashhadí, which may be a more accurate reading.

279 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 487, and Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 418, give his name

as, Akbar, son of Muhammad-'Ashur.

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the opponents and assured their complete defeat, and the Army of God returned triumphant and victorious.

[9. The Deceit]

After their complete failure, the opposing camp recognized that no earthly power or force could subdue or compel to submission the men of the fort, so they devised a scheme to achieve their objective through the standard of peace after they had gained the confidence of the People of Truth [i.e. Bábís].<sup>280</sup>

<p.14> For several days they remained quiet, after which they sent a messenger to the illustrious Vahíd stating: "Hitherto, we were ignorant of your true purpose and have behaved most contemptuously and indecently towards your honored person. Now there is no mistake that you are a descendant of the Messenger of God, our example and a son of our religious exemplar, our master and a son of our guide, and we are now remorseful and repentant of our previous conduct. We will obey

280 Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Báb, p. 403, states: "Although the losses were almost

even this time, the imperial troops were nonetheless frightened; things were dragging on and might moreover end in the general confusion of the Mussulmans, so they resolved to resort to deceit." Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p.

418, notes that

at this time the opposing forces were augmented with fresh Silakhurí soldiers led by

Valí Khán Silakhurí. The Dawn-Breakers, p. 488, states,

As was the case with the army of Prince Mihdi-Qulí Mírzá, who [in Mázandarán] had miserably failed to subdue his opponents fairly in the field, treachery and fraud proved eventually the sole weapons with which a cowardly people could conquer an invincible enemy. By the devices to which Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán and his staff eventually resorted, they betrayed their powerlessness, despite the vast resources at their disposal and the moral support which the governor of Fárs and the inhabitants of the whole province had extended to them, to

vanquish what to outward appearance seemed but a handful of untrained and contemptible people. In their hearts, they were convinced that behind the walls of that fort were clustered a band of volunteers which no force at their command could face and defeat. By raising the cry of peace, they sought, through such base cunning, to beguile those pure and noble hearts.

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your command and follow your guidance if we can be certain of the truth of your cause and the validity of your claim. Therefore, should you consider it prudent, with a few of your companions, come forth at your earliest for us to meet one another. Since that honored person fears not the presence of soldiers and guns, and the companions do not wish to leave the fort, then you must come forth and assure us [of the character of your belief]. Then, our men, cavalry and the entire camp will submit unto your command and in whatever direction you wish we will proceed and with whomsoever you command we will wage battle in your favor.”<sup>281</sup>

They affixed their seal on the Qur'án, made promises, and sent the Holy Book to his holiness [Vahíd], who on receiving it uttered: “‘I am of God, and unto Him I return.’ The promise of our Lord is now fulfilled.”<sup>282</sup> With these words he rose from his seat and announced, “Now is the time for departure for the camp,” and, accompanied by five attendants, among whom were Mullá ‘Alí Mudhahhib<sup>283</sup> and the treacherous Hájí Siyyid ‘Abid (whose details will be narrated in the course of the second event), set out for the enemy’s camp.<sup>284</sup> He left behind everyone else, whether commander or fighter, and adjured them to continue to discharge their duties, and ordered them to suspend all manner of hostilities until further notice <p.15> was received from him.<sup>285</sup> He bade his companions farewell and departed.

<sup>281</sup> The version given in *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 488-489, is considerably lengthier.

*Kawakibu’ d-Durriyih*, vol. 1, pp. 207-208, gives a summary of a letter from Mustafa-Qulí Khán to Vahíd.

<sup>282</sup> *Kawakibu’ d-Durriyih*, vol. 1, pp. 208-209, notes an elaborate speech by Vahíd at

the moment of his departure from the fort.

<sup>283</sup> It is reported that he was one of the finest artists in the region, whose paintings

were greatly admired by all. His son, Mullá Muhammad-Hasan, excelled in the same

field and was one of the defenders in the fort. He survived the ordeal and served the Bábí and Bahá'í communities with distinction for many years. His own son, Mullá

'Alí, named after his gifted grandfather, served the Bahá'í faith through the arts as well.

284 Kawakibu'd-Durriyih, vol. 1, p. 209, reports that Vahíd left with only one

companion.

285 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 79, n.1, reports,

The companions were, however, greatly perturbed by the turn of

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Some distance from the camp, the commander, soldiers, cavalry, and the Khán accompanied by the Shuja'u'l-Mulk came out to welcome him, and with utmost respect and honor, ceremoniously conducted him to the camp and then to a furnished tent where he was housed. He seated himself upon a chair, while the rest of the company stood before him as he motioned the commander, the Khán and the Shujá'u'l-Mulk to be seated.<sup>286</sup>

For three days it went on thus and the people were eager to hear his utterances and obey his wishes.<sup>287</sup> Though outwardly they paid him events and deeply concerned for what lay ahead for Vahíd. His words, intimating that the final chapter of his eventful and glorious life was about to unfold, had profoundly touched his followers and many sobbed, as they feared that they would never see their master in this world. Though they heard him recognize that the governor's offer was an elaborate trap for his elimination, yet they felt powerless to change his mind. On departing the fort, when Vahíd had taken some four-hundred steps towards the enemy's camp and had reached a large maple tree under which he often pitched his tent and which stands to this day, he paused and once again addressed his companions who had all gathered on the walls and outside of the fort to see him go forth. With warm words of consolation, he tried to ease their pain and uplift their spirit. Once more he bade them farewell and warned them not to fall victim to any attempt of trickery or treachery. His final words were a verse of the Qur'án which he always uttered at the moment of making important decisions.

286 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 490, states,

The words in which he addressed them were such that even a stonehearted man could not fail to feel their power. Bahá'u'lláh

immortalized that noble appeal, in the ‘Suriy-Sabr,’ and revealed the full measure of its significance. ‘I am come to you,’ Vahíd declared, ‘armed with the testimony with which my Lord has entrusted me. Am I not a descendant of the Prophet of God? Wherefore should you have risen to slay me? For what reason have you pronounced my death-sentence, and refused to recognize the undoubted rights with which my lineage has invested me?’ The majesty of his bearing, combined with his penetrating eloquence, confounded his hearers. 287 Kawakibu’ d-Durriyih, vol. 1, pp. 209-210, reports that after the first day Vahíd was

placed in confinement in his tent. His companion escaped and urged the defenders at the fort to attack. During the ensuing battle the army sustained great losses when

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respect, yet secretly they plotted to cause him harm and trouble. In their [private] consultations they recognized that, were they to inflict upon him the least injury while his companions remained in the fort, they would be exposing themselves to a peril still greater than the one they had already been compelled to face. They also knew that until that illustrious person [Vahíd] issued orders, the defenders would not vacate their position.<sup>288</sup>

Therefore, they decided to compose a message in the hand of Vahíd addressed to his companions still in the fort, announcing, “A complete peace had been effected, and anyone seeking my good pleasure should leave the fort and its barracks, towers and ramparts behind and return home.”<sup>289</sup> And as is reported, they asked his holiness to prepare

Mustafa-Qulí Khán came to Vahíd and implored him to order the cessation of hostilities. Vahíd signaled his men to desist from fighting and to return to their positions in the fort.

<sup>288</sup> The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 490-491, states:

They trembled at the fury and vengeance of their women no less than at the bravery and skill of their men. They realized that all the resources of the army had been powerless to subdue a handful of immature lads and decrepit old men. Nothing short of a bold and well-conceived stratagem could ensure their ultimate victory. The fear that filled their hearts was to a great extent inspired by the words of Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán, who, with unrelaxing determination, sought to maintain undiminished the hatred with which he had inflamed their souls. Vahíd’s repeated exhortations had aroused his apprehensions

lest he should succeed, by the magic of his words, in inducing them to transfer their allegiance to so eloquent an opponent.

289 Nayríz Mushkbíz, pp 62-63, states that after passage of three days, the companions in the fort grew weary and thought possibly Vahíd had been slain or otherwise neutralized. As such, they decided to launch an attack that would serve in part as a rescue mission, should he still be alive. Their attack, however, was not well organized and failed in its purpose. Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán complained to Vahíd about this act of aggression, to which Vahíd replied that naturally his comrades had grown concerned over his prolonged absence and had decided to intervene. Seeing the restlessness of the defenders assembled in the fort and the increased tension, the governor and his officers quickly agreed to a mutual disarmament and requested Vahíd to address, in his own hand, a message to his companions who were still within the fort, to inform them that an amicable settlement of their differences had

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such a message, to which he consented. However, confidentially he wrote a second letter to the effect that the first missive was at the request of camp's commanders and was [part of] an elaborate scheme and warned them not to fall victim to the evil designs of the enemy, and further instructed them to send forth several of the ablest and best skilled men <p.16> in the middle of the night to ambush the camp. He entrusted this private letter to Hájí Siyyid 'Abid – upon him be what befits his kind – who numbered among his companions and had accompanied him to the camp, instructing him to deliver it to the defenders and the men of Truth.

That wretched man [Hájí Siyyid 'Abid] treacherously showed that letter to the Khán who was thrilled at the betrayal and sought to induce his further cooperation with the promise of a property in the village of Ray. The first letter was given to this messenger for delivery to the fort whose occupants were eager to receive direction from their master. Further, that messenger, Siyyid 'Abid<sup>290</sup>, informed them orally that peace had been firmly established. Though extremely bewildered, the companions had no choice but to be resigned to the wishes of Vahíd, as they considered his command the final authority. Obediently, in the middle of the night, they left the fort and its barracks, some discarding their arms, and entered the city.

[10. Martyrdom of Vahíd and Massacre of the Bábís]

Anticipating all along that the [fort's] militia would immediately obey the instructions of his holiness, [the governor] had dispatched a large number of his soldiers [on a mission] to intercept their path [into town]. He was confident and the infidels eager. The wronged-ones [Bábís] were soon encompassed by a multitude of armed assailants who were continually reinforced from the army's camp, while only God was on the side of the defenders. The cry of "Allah-u-Akbar" rose from every tongue and with the aid of swords, rifles, rocks and pieces of wood, they been effected, and to urge them to either join him at the camp or return home. 290 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 83, n.1, explains that during Nayríz-II he was

kidnapped by the Bábís who as a measure of revenge killed him after much torture.

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rushed the infidels like ferocious lions and delivered a decisive defeat, sending some to hell, while also sustaining a number of martyrs <p.17> or injured on their own side. The rest [of the Bábís], notwithstanding considerable losses, succeeded in gaining shelter at the Masjid Jámi', which had strong walls and fortifications.<sup>291</sup>

Meanwhile several of the Khán's gunmen, led by Mullá Hasan, [son of] Mullá 'Alí-Muhammad, who was most brutal, succeeded in reaching and concealing themselves in one of the minarets of that Masjid before the arrival of the Army of God and from there opened fire on the believers. A certain brave man of Truth [Bábí] by the name of Mullá Husayn scaled the minaret and with his rifle shot Mullá Hasan, and hurled him to the ground. The latter was carried away and later, when the Khán gained control of the situation, was able to receive medical help through the governor's doctor, resulting in his recovery, and allowing him to live on to cause the believers many injuries and atrocities [during Nayríz-II]. In short, the men of God were compelled to hide in whatever place of safety, such as orchards, homes or other places they could muster.<sup>292</sup>

In the camp, too, they began to act disrespectfully towards the honored personage [Vahíd]. When they decided to slay him, the commander<sup>293</sup> of the cavalry force rudely stated, "While you have taken a solemn oath not to harm this Siyyid, I have made no such promise as I am charged by the government to severely punish those deemed guilty." Of course this had all along been their secret design. He immediately called upon all whose kinsmen had perished to exact revenge and to execute the death-sentence pronounced against Vahíd. The first to

<sup>291</sup> Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 86, n.1, reports that 400 Bábís were

massacred on that

day.

292 The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944, p. 112, notes that on 25 June 1850 Justin

Sheil reported the end of the Nayríz episode to Lord Palmerston of the Foreign Office:

His [the Báb's] followers in Fárs have received a severe check. Syed Yaheeha who fled from Yezd to that province with a large force of Babees has been defeated and captured having however previously twice repulsed the Shah's troops.

293 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 494, gives his name as 'Abbás-Qulí Khán.

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present himself was Mullá Ridá, son of Mashhadí Muhammad, whose brother Mullá Báqir, had been executed on the orders of his holiness. Mullá Rida snatched the turban from the head of Vahíd and wound it around his neck. The next was a certain Safar, whose brother <p.18> Sha'bán had perished in the course of events. The third was Áqá Ján<sup>294</sup>, whose father, 'Alí-Asghar Khán, the elder brother of the Khán, had suffered the same fate.

Then they committed such unnumbered indignities as no pen dare describe nor any tongue recount, until at last they martyred him in the most inhumane manner.<sup>295</sup> "The wrath of God be upon the oppressor."<sup>296</sup> A rope was tied to his blessed feet <p.19-20><sup>297</sup> and the

<sup>294</sup> Siyyid Ali-Muhammad dit le Báb, p. 406, has also read him as Áqá Ján, but The Dawn-

Breakers, p. 494, has him as Áqá Khán.

<sup>295</sup> Not surprisingly, there is a fair amount of disagreement over the date of Vahíd's

assassination. The Dawn-Breakers, p. 499, notes: "The day of Vahíd's martyrdom was

the eighteenth of the month of Sha'bán, in the year 1266 A.H. Ten days later, the

Báb was shot in Tabríz." This date corresponds to 29 June 1850. Táríkh Zuhúru'l-

Haqq, vol. 2, p. 422, states that Vahíd was kept alive for one day after the massacre

of the Bábís. Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 428, gives the same date for Vahíd's

slaying as The Dawn-Breakers. Táríkh Shuhadáy Yazd, p. 7, gives Sunday, 26 Sha'bán [7

July] as the date of Vahíd's martyrdom, and Muhammad Qazvíní in his article, "Vafiyat A'yán", (Yadgár journal, Year 3, No 10, section discussing the life of Vahíd's brother Siyyid Rayhánu'lláh, p. 32), gives 28 Sha'ban [9 July] as the date of his martyrdom. Browne (A Traveler's Narrative, p. 45, n.1) states that Vahíd's assassination occurred on the same day as the Báb's martyrdom and attributes this information to a "reliable tradition." The same author (A Traveler's Narrative, p. 253) gives the date as 28 Sha'bán 1266 A.H. (9 July 1850). Táríkh-i Jadíd, p. 411 clarifies that Browne's informant was Mírzá Yahyá Azal who in giving the date of this event as 28 Sha'bán indicates that it was "one day after the martyrdom of the Lord." Kawakibu'd-Durriyih, vol. 1, p. 573, gives 26 Sha'bán and states 400 of his disciples were killed on the same occasion. Echoing Nabíl's translation, Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 75, suggests 18 Sha'bán as the day that Vahid was slain. 296 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 494, states:

The indignities that were heaped upon him reminded those who witnessed that awful spectacle of the tragic end of the Imam Husayn, whose body was abandoned to the mercy of an infuriated enemy, and upon which a multitude of horsemen pitilessly trampled. 297 Page 19 was left blank in the original manuscript.

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other end bound to a horse, and in company of a large mob of rogue and despicable spectators they dragged him to the city and threw his remains in front of the gate of Masjid Nazar-Biykí in the Bázár quarter. The infidels gathered in multitudes, shouting exultation while rank upon rank beat his sacred remains with rocks and sticks.<sup>298</sup> [Throughout this spectacle,] the women of the Sádát quarter were stirred to the highest pitch of excitement.<sup>299</sup>

298 The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 494-495, states:

[The women of the Sádát quarter] pressed from every side around the corpse, and, to the accompaniment of drums and cymbals, gave free vent to their feelings of unrestrained fanaticism.

They danced merrily around it, scornful of the words which Vahíd, in the midst of his agony, had spoken, words which the Imam Husayn, in a former age and in similar circumstances, had uttered: 'Thou knowest, O my Beloved, that I have abandoned the world for Thy sake, and have placed my trust in Thee alone. I am impatient to hasten to Thee, for the beauty of Thy countenance has been unveiled to my eyes. Thou dost witness the evil designs which my wicked persecutor has cherished against me. Nay, never will I submit to his wishes or pledge my allegiance to him.'

Thus was brought to an end a noble and heroic life. Such an eventful and brilliant career, distinguished by such vast learning, such dauntless courage, and so rare a spirit of self-sacrifice, surely required for crown a death as glorious as that which completed his martyrdom. 299 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, chapter 7, reports (in summary):

With Vahid's decapitated body remaining motionless in the streets, a ravaging turmoil was taking place all around him. Men and women of the Bázár quarter were shouting out exultation, and, taking the severed head, they tore off the skin, stuffed the skin with straw and sent it as a trophy and a sign of victory, along with the heads of other Bábí martyrs, to a feasting Prince in Shiraz. The bloodthirsty crowd tied a rope to Vahíd's feet and tied the other end to a horse compelled to roam the streets and alleys. Once the horse dragging behind it the remains of Vahíd reached the Masjid Nazar-Baykí, the wild mob, having no sense of shame or decency, set upon it once again, and while hundreds cheered on, infuriated and crazed men and women beat the remains with sticks and rocks, and cursed it all they could and did not refrain from any manner of mistreatment. Unsatisfied with that, some attempted to tear it apart limb by limb,

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but by then so many stones had accumulated upon it that it was inaccessible, so they ceased and moved on to the house of Vahíd to plunder all his possessions.

Next day, once the crowd had gone on to murder other Bábís, a few, out of respect for Vahíd's lineage, gathered his corpse and buried it unceremoniously and unwrapped at a location known as Buq'ih Siyyid (Shrine of the Siyyid), which had served as the Shrine of Siyyid Jaláli'd-Dín 'Abdu'lláh, known as the Siyyid. The body was buried beneath the eastern wall. For many centuries this particular Shrine, situated in the heart of the Bázár quarter, in front of the Marví caravansary, had been a site of visitation for the Muslims and enjoyed deep respect in the eyes of the inhabitants. Since then it has also been the site of pilgrimage for Bahá'ís and some years ago was repaired by

one of the descendants of Siyyid Jaláli'd-Dín.

It is reported that upon hearing the news of the decapitation of Vahíd, a kind-hearted woman of that quarter, known as BÍ-BÍ Khánum, the mother of Áqá Mírzá Sádiq Khaza'í, who was among the affluent persons of the region, instructed her servant to locate and retrieve Vahíd's severed head. [Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 71, n.1] The servant searched the fields where Vahíd was martyred and found the severed head, with the skin having been removed, (as it had been filled with straw and sent to Shiraz), and brought it to her. That very night she placed it in a special case and hid it from all eyes. A few days later, after most of the commotion had subsided to some degree, she removed the head, washed it from all dust and debris, wrapped it in a silk cloth and buried it next to Vahíd's body, beneath the wall of Buq'ih Siyyid, where it has remained to this day. [Nayríz Mushkbíz, pp. 199-200.] The case that for a few days contained the severed head remains to this day with the family of that woman as an article endowed with special potency and an object of remembrance of the venerated Vahíd.

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[11. Aftermath and Captives]

It was then that the company of believers took to flight and sought shelter in the [surrounding] mountains and wilderness and some concealed themselves in various homes. The soldiers, the cavalry and the foot-men were commissioned to capture the believers and seize their property. Suddenly, about three or four thousand of the assailants, perhaps a little fewer or more, commenced this villainous task.<sup>300</sup> Wherever the male believers were located, they were seized, chained and

<sup>300</sup> The Dawn-Breakers, p. 495, gives this figure as "no less than five thousand."

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conducted away. Their women were captured as well and taken from place to place.<sup>301</sup> The entire [Chinár-Súkhtih] neighborhood fell into the

<sup>301</sup> Mírzá Abú-Tálib Shahmírzádí has recorded the following in his unpublished

eyewitness account:

In the year eighty [1280 A.H./1863], I saw a man from 'Iraq, (in the ancient geography of Iran, the regions of Hamadán, Káshán and Sultán-Ábád, to the border of Isfahán, were called 'Iraq 'Ajam). This

man lived in the utmost poverty and misery in a small room in Madrisih Qadariyyih. He always appeared deeply despondent and desolate and would utter, “May God have mercy on me and may He accept the repentance of my misdeeds for I was young and foolish!” Once I asked him, “What act did you commit in your youth that you are so remorseful now and are always sorrowful?” He then told me of his days in Nayríz.

He said, “Immediately prior to the commencement of the battles, my father died and though very young, I inherited his position in the military and was appointed one of the commanders in the regiments fighting the Bábís. I wielded considerable authority. When the commanders realized that they would never be victorious in the battlefield, they invoked the Qur’án and swore on it that if the Bábís were to emerge from the fort they would remain unmolested. The honored Áqá Siyyid Yahyá [Vahíd] came to our camp and in his tent even the commanders stood behind him in performing their prayers. They said to him, ‘You are a descendent of the Prophet and both yourself and your father rank among the most illustrious figures of this age. Our humble supplication is that you forgive our transgressions.’ He responded, ‘May God forgive you, but I know that you will not honor your promise.’ ‘We have taken solemn oath on the Qur’án,’ they said. He responded, ‘Nevertheless you will slay us all and now you are waiting for the warrant of our death-sentence to arrive from Shiraz.’ He would say things such as this.

Soon, we saw that several mounted men came from Shiraz bearing a fatwa from the ‘ulamá stating, ‘Kill all the men and leave none standing. Seize the women and bring them to Shiraz.’ When this fatwa was received, they removed the carpets in the tent and placed a large bowl in the middle of the room and cut his head in the vessel. Then they went out and martyred his companions, while the rest [of the Bábís] were seized and together with women and children sent to Shiraz. May God’s curse be upon the ones that ordered the murder of that illustrious personage – the ones that showed no shame before the

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hands of the nonbelievers who confiscated all properties, destroyed all homes to the point that even the lumber from the rooftops was taken away and the fort of Khájih was burned to the ground.<sup>302</sup>

Of the captive believers, whoever was wealthy or owned properties was thrown into prison, and the less fortunate were bound and sent to Shiraz in the company of soldiers and gunmen. Soon the camp was disassembled and moved from Nayríz.<sup>303</sup>

In Nayríz, the Khán entrusted the captives to the hand of his myrmidons, who would parade them through the streets <p.21> and the

bazaars of Nayríz while beating them with sticks as they went, and compelled each to withstand all manner of ghastly mistreatment. Such tortures included, crucifixion with four nails, insertion of sticks under [prisoners'] nails, tying barbed wires around the skull, branding with hot irons, depriving the victims of bread and water and forbidding the people from offering the captives any aid or food, and incisions made in the noses of such esteemed personages [Bábís] through which a rope was driven. In such a wretched and piteous state each of these illustrious souls was dragged through the streets.

Among [the captives] was the honored Áqá Siyyid Ja'far Yazdí who [previously] numbered as one of the 'ulamá.<sup>304</sup> But now his turban was burnt and himself taken from door to door [as he was forced to beg] for money. In the depth of winter, the late Hájí Muhammad-Taqi<sup>305</sup>, Prophet of God!"

302 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 423, states:

They wrote a report of their triumph and sent it forthwith to Fírúz Mírzá, the Nusratu'd-Dawlih, the governor-general of Fárs. In this communication, the date of arrival of the captives to Shiraz was fixed. They skinned the severed head of Vahíd and filled it with straw. The other martyrs were also decapitated.

303 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 130, notes that 5,000 soldiers and irregulars continued

for a month to ransack Chinár-Súkhtih quarter and hunt and kill the Bábís.

304 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 498, states,

So great was the respect they owed him that Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán gave him precedence over himself and treated him with extreme deference and courtesy.

305 The Dawn-Breakers, p. 498, states:

Another victim of their tyranny was Hájí Muhammad-Taquí, who had

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surnamed Ayyub, was thrown into a pond and lashed bitterly. Each day, the honored Áqá Siyyid Ja'far, the esteemed Hájí Shaykh 'Abdu'l-'Alí,

together with the illustrious Ayyúb and the venerable Áqá Siyyid Husayn, all of whom ranked among the nobles, the affluent and the 'ulamá, were doomed to sit while people were ordered to spit on their faces and beards in return for a pound of corn or millet for daily consumption.

Only those who possessed a trace of decency or shame would endure hunger rather than perpetrate such an abominable act.

The aforementioned Áqá Siyyid Abú-Tálib, the chieftain of the quarter, who was among the affluent and wealthy citizens and was wellknown to

all and even to the royal monarch, was bound in chains and sent in secret by the governor to [the village of] Ma‘dan, in the vicinity of Nayríz. The authorities in Fárs inquired of him, but the Khán replied that he was killed, as he did not wish to see this man perish [in the hands of the central authorities]. Eventually the seditious and evil-minded Hájí Mírzá Nasru‘llah, the soothsayer, who in former days had ordered His Holiness the Exalted One [the Báb] – may all spirits be a sacrifice unto Him – to kiss the hand of Shaykh <p.22> Abú-Turáb<sup>306</sup> before the assemblage of the ‘ulamá, now insisted that Siyyid Abu-Talib was an infidel and the very source of all the troubles, and secured a fatwa ordering his death, which was carried out through poisoning in Ma‘dan.

enjoyed, in days past, such a reputation for honesty and justice that his opinion was invariably regarded by the judges of the court as the determining word in their judgment.

<sup>306</sup> He was the Imam Jum‘ih of Isfahán.

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## Chapter 6

Excerpts from The Kítáb Nuqtatu‘l-Káf

Based on the Narrative of Hájí Mírzá Jání

And if ye are slain, or die, in the way of God, forgiveness and mercy from God are far better than all they could amass. And if ye die, or are slain, Lo! It is unto God that ye are brought together.

Qur‘án 3:157-8

### Introduction

Among the earliest historical descriptions of the events associated with the life of Vahíd Dárábí, and of the episodes of Yazd and Nayríz which led to his martyrdom and that of his companions, is the one provided by the Bábí merchant-historian, Hájí Mírzá Jání, in the Kítáb Nuqtatu‘l-Káf.

Much has been written on the question of the authorship of the Nuqtatu‘l-Káf and it is beyond the scope of the present study to enter into that debate.<sup>307</sup> Hájí Mírzá Jání embraced the Bábí faith through Mullá

<sup>307</sup> It is known that Hájí Mírzá Jání had penned a short history of the Bábí movement

until the time of his own martyrdom. For a more detailed discussion of the merits of

this history see, *Kashfu‘l-Ghatá*; E. G. Browne and the Bahá‘í Faith, pp. 62-88; *Resurrection*

and *Renewal*, pp. 423-424; and *Sources for Early Bábí Doctrine and History*, pp. 134-152. In

1910, Prof. E. G. Browne published a narrative titled *Kítáb-i Nuqtatu'l-Káf* that he claimed was the long lost narrative of Mírzá Jání, and he also included two long introductions, one in Persian and another in English. Later it became known that Muhammad Qazvíní had penned the Persian Introductions and extensively “edited” the historical narrative (see Ahang Rabbani, “‘Abdu'l-Bahá’s Meeting with Two Prominent Iranians”). Subsequent to this publication, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá issued instructions for Mírzá Na‘ím of Sadih and the Hands of the Cause in Tíhrán to search and locate the original of Mírzá Jání’s history. ‘Abdu'l-Bahá had hoped that thereby it could be established beyond question that the published *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* had been extensively tampered with and interpolated by the Azalís, particularly

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Husayn’s visit to Káshán and later when the guardsmen were escorting the Báb to the prison-fortress of Máh-Ku, Hájí Mírzá Jání had been greatly honored and thrilled to receive him in his own home in Káshán. A devout and zealous believer, he eventually fell victim to the pogrom of the summer of 1852.

*Nuqtatu'l-Káf* contains two sections that are purported to be Mírzá Jání’s recollections of meeting Vahíd, and the present translator has no reason to believe that these passages were penned by anyone other than Hájí Mírzá Jání of Káshán. In fact, from the nature of the details disclosed it is quite evident that only he could have written these descriptions, and if other passages of the *Nuqtatu'l-Káf* have indeed been subject to interpolation by foreign hands, these two sections reveal no such corruption.

The first section is from the top of page 120 to line 11 of page 122 of the printed text, while the second part begins on line 7 of page 223 and concludes on the top line of the page 230.

It should be noted that both of these sections appear in the narrative of Siyyid Husayn Hamadání, who must have had access to a manuscript of Hájí Mírzá Jání because he quoted from it - a fact also confirmed by his intimate associate, Mírzá Abú'l-Fadl, in *Kashfu'l-Ghatá*.

However, a close comparison of the two narratives indicates that Hamadání considerably embellished the text, and in fact one section that

he attributed to Hájí Mírzá Jání does not appear in the Nuqtatu'l-Káf at

all. I should be clear that this, however, does not necessarily mean that the Hamadání's text was not Mírzá Jání's original, as it is quite certain

Muhammad Qazvíní. This effort, however, remained unsuccessful. Iraj Ayman has brought to my attention that the original of Mírzá Jání's text was a small book of

about 80 pages in possession of a well-known non-Bahá'í in Tihrán. Because of the

owner's deep regards for Fádil Mázandarání, he allowed the latter to read the text,

but not to make a copy. To the present day, this valuable text remains in the possession of the same family. (Private communication, September 1997.) Recent research in Princeton University's Archives (presumably among Jalal Azal's papers)

has confirmed the early dating of the Nuqtatu'l-Káf (see, William McCants and

Kavian Milani, "The History and Provenance of an Early Manuscript of the Nuqtat

al-Kaf dated 1268 (1851-52)"). When this manuscript is made available to researchers, it may change some of inferences in this chapter.

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that not all of the Nuqtatu'l-Káf is Jání's so at this time is hard to establish

in the absence of an original, which secondary text edited the original. Since this book as a whole remains untranslated, it seemed prudent to include a translation of these two sections in order to complete the sources. To the extent possible, the present translation has been modeled after E.G. Browne's rendering of Hamadání's narrative to facilitate the comparison of the two texts.

The Nuqtatu'l-Káf, pages 120-122

Áqá Siyyid Yahyá was in Yazd when His Holiness [i.e. the Báb] instructed him to proceed to Tihrán, and it was during this journey that I had the honor of meeting him.<sup>308</sup> This was at a time when snow had covered the earth and the air was bitterly cold, beyond all description. Nevertheless I beheld in him such tranquility as though the snow of the plains were a satin bed for him. I inquired of him what had been the means of his conversion and how he had come to believe in His Holiness, and he answered:

After the report of the claim of that illustrious One had

been noised abroad, men would ask of me, “What say you of Him [i.e. the Báb]?” to which I was forced to reply, “Presently, I am silent about His Cause, but once I have beheld Him, and ascertained somewhat more about Him, then I shall be able to impart to you that which I have understood.” After a while I set out for Shíráz. In my first interview with His Holiness, I spoke, after the manner of divines, in a somewhat arrogant fashion, asking numerous questions. His Holiness answered me, but, my eyes being still covered with a veil of egotism, his words found no favor in my sight. Indeed, I began to feel disappointed that I had troubled myself to no purpose. However, His Holiness smiled much upon me and treated me very graciously. On 308 This meeting in Kashan must have occurred in the opening days of 1847 as Vahíd

arrived in Tihrán on 17 January of that year; see, Appendix 3.

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returning to my lodging, I said to some of His disciples who were deeply versed in knowledge, “You are more learned and far wiser than this Personage; for what reason do you acknowledge the truth of His claim?” “If you will but be patient,” answered they, “for a little while, you too will understand.” I had decided to return to my home when my illustrious companions prevented me, saying, “You too will be fully convinced.” I inquired on what grounds they based their belief. They replied, “Experience has taught us that anyone to whom His Holiness shows affection, is in the end invariably persuaded, even though initially he be filled with antagonism; while, on the other hand, anyone on whom His Holiness looks not favorably turns aside, even though at first he may incline to believe.”

To be brief, one night His Holiness summoned me, and very graciously said, “What dost thou desire of Me?” I replied, “I am a man of learning, and learning is my daily bread. I have in mind several questions, and shouldst thou grant me a sufficient answer, I shall know that the Point of Divine Knowledge is in Thy hand, and henceforth I shall bow to Thy command.” “Write down your questions,” said He, “that I may answer them in writing.”

I had in mind three questions. Two of these I wrote down and handed to His Holiness, Who at once took a pen, and, without reflection or hesitation, wrote, as fast as pen

could travel, answers of surpassing merit. Then he took another sheet of paper and wrote, “The third question that you have in your heart is this, and this is its answer.” [When I had considered these answers,] I was bewildered with excitement and then took place that about which you have heard. Indeed, I yielded so entirely to the mighty influence He exerts, that, at a mere hint on His part I am thrilled to undertake a journey in this cold winter weather. Consider the fact that [prior to meeting Him,] I was not a man without rank and standing, or knowledge and

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achievements. I swear by the One Exalted Lord, I would be ashamed even to make mention of the learning and merits of many other divines of my time. My father, Áqá Siyyid Ja‘far Dárábí, known to all as Kashfí, was well acquainted with all the sciences and philosophies, renowned throughout the land of Iran and known to every possessor of knowledge and virtue. I have served him [and studied with him], and he did declare that I was second only [in learning] to him. In fact, I had my own pulpit and classes, and many students and disciples both in my own town and in other regions, and was known and admired by the court of the Shah and his household. Yet I am bewildered as to how the love of this Shírází Youth [i.e. the Báb] has penetrated my being so that I have set aside all material considerations, and I have so willingly placed upon my neck the yoke of servitude and obedience unto Him, that at a mere hint on His part, I travel so in this bitter winter in the utmost joy and happiness. My only hope is that He will, of His grace and favor, accept me as the servant of His servants, and that I may be permitted to shed even a drop of my blood in the furtherance of His cause.’

In truth, that scion of the wilderness of sincerity and devotion exerted himself until he fell a sacrifice to the love of the King of the lovers. Whomsoever is informed of his acts in Yazd and Nayríz, will assuredly grasp the truth of the claims of that Lord of the realm of adoration, and were this ephemeral soul to describe them, the result would be a boundless book.

In short, I asked of him: “O peerless one of the age! What did thine illustrious father say regarding the Truth proclaimed by that Essence of Reality [the Báb]?” “He is silent and ambiguous,” he replied, and went on to say, “I swear by the One true God, that should my

father, with his dignity of bearing and exalted station, deny the Manifestation of the All-Glorious, most certainly, I shall slay him with my own hands in the path of the divine Beloved, and this even though

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the eye of creation hath rarely seen a father such as him or a son such as I.”

At any rate, shortly thereafter, that unique pearl of the ocean of knowledge, in accordance with His instructions, proceeded to Tihrán.

The Nuqtatu'l-Káf, pages 223-230

The events associated with Siyyid Yahyá in Yazd and Nayríz occurred after the episode of the slaying of the Seven Martyrs [of Tihrán]<sup>309</sup>, but to describe that event would make this narrative much too long.

However, in brief, that illustrious personage was instructed by His Holiness [the Báb] to proclaim the Word of Truth, and on the way to Yazd, I had the honor of meeting him.<sup>310</sup> I observed in his august countenance the signs of a glory and power that I had not noticed during my earlier meetings with him, and I knew of a certainty that these signs portended the near approach of his departure from the world.<sup>311</sup> I heard him say several times in the course of various conversations, ‘This is my last journey, and hereafter you will see me no more;’ and often, explicitly or by implication, he gave utterance to the same thought. In one conversation he remarked, ‘God and His near-ones are able to foretell coming events, and I swear by my Beloved, the True One, in the grasp of Whose hand lies my soul, that I know and could tell where and how I shall be slain, and who it is that shall slay me. And how glorious and blessed a thing it is that my blood should be shed for the proclamation of the Word of Truth!’

Sanctified be God! I know not what wonder this be, that such an illustrious man of learning, achievement and piety, could thus foretell his own death and yet, with utmost joy and enthusiasm, hasten to the abode

<sup>309</sup> See The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 445-458. The martyrdom of these seven Bábís took

place on 7 March 1850.

<sup>310</sup> There is considerable confusion among sources as to where this meeting took

place; see, Chapters 2 and 9.

<sup>311</sup> The text simply says inqitá‘ [detachment], however, in the context it is understood

to express Mírzá Jani’s understanding of Vahíd’s desire for departure from the world.

of sacrifice. Indeed,

Whoso hath recognized Thee, what else should he do with life,  
Of what worth possessions, children and wife?

In short, Áqá Siyyid Yahyá set out for Yazd. Upon arrival, in the utmost wisdom he would speak of the Cause of Truth in various gatherings and gradually began to openly proclaim the truth and convert a great multitude. At length, the governor [of Yazd] was informed of what was taking place and, fearing for himself, he sent a body of men to arrest Siyyid Yahyá and his companions. A trifling collision occurred between the two parties, and thereupon the governor prepared [for battle], and in response, Áqá Siyyid Yahyá retired [with a number of his followers and friends] into the citadel of Yazd. Soon the citadel was surrounded and the matter came to actual warfare, in the course of which some thirty or more of the governor's men were killed, while seven of Siyyid Yahyá's followers were also slain, and the rest were besieged for some time, till his followers manifested their lack of faith and dispersed. Siyyid Yahyá too escaped from the citadel and together with another left for Shiraz and thereafter proceeded to Nayríz.

Meanwhile the governor [of Yazd] soon overcame [Siyyid Yahyá's] followers. Several of them tasted the sweetness of martyrdom, while from the rest, after they had suffered divers torments, fines of money were exacted. Among the martyrs was one named Hasan, from Yazd, who had for years waited in attendance upon Siyyid Yahyá, and had displayed in his service the utmost faithfulness and devotion. When Siyyid Yahyá had decided to leave the citadel, he said, "If one of you could manage to lead out my horse, that would be good." Hasan had responded, "With your permission, I will lead out the horse." "They will capture and slay you," replied Siyyid Yahyá. "In the path of your affection," rejoined Hasan, "that is easy to bear. I have no ambition beyond it." So Siyyid Yahyá allowed him to go, and [the soldiers] took the youth captive outside the citadel and brought him before the governor, who ordered him to be blown from the mouth of a cannon. When they would have bound him with his back towards the gun, he

pleaded, "Bind me, with my face towards the gun." And when they inquired of the reason behind this request, he said, "That I may see it fired." all the people were astonished at his steadfastness and

cheerfulness, and indeed one who can be cheerful in such a plight must needs have great faith and fortitude.

In short, the illustrious Siyyid Yahyá arrived at Shiraz where, due to his many visits, he was well known, and there he also proclaimed the Cause of Truth [i.e. the Bábí faith]. It was then that Áqá Siyyid ‘Abdu’l-

‘Azím Marághi’í returned from a visit to the Báb bearing a very large Haykal [i.e. talisman] and a Tablet for Siyyid Yahyá. After becoming exceedingly renowned in that town, he proceeded for Nayríz.

Now when Siyyid Yahyá had come to Nayríz, which was the abode of his family and where he had many friends, he declared the Cause of Truth, resulting in some becoming believers, others deniers and yet others remaining undecided. The governor of that district, though he had formerly professed the most devoted attachment and humility before him, no sooner perceived a deterioration in his government and its passing out of his hands, that, being accountable to the monarch and generally fearing that his world would fall into turmoil, he sent word to Siyyid Yahyá saying, “I do not consider it expedient that you continue any longer in this province and you should depart to some other place.” To this Siyyid Yahyá, made reply, “What leads you to order me thus to quit my own abode? I do not expect you to arise to champion my cause, but why insult me thus? It is, therefore, most evident that all those expressions of devotion that you afforded me in past days were solely in order to secure worldly influence, and now that you are convinced otherwise, you have turned your back on the Truth, express enmity, and fear not God, nor have you shame before His apostle.”

When that accursed-one [i.e. the governor] heard such truthful declarations, he was filled with obstinate spite, and strove to raise a tumult, inciting such men among every class and kind as were most wicked and mischievous to make a disturbance and drive out Siyyid Yahyá, who, perceiving the strength and resolve of the enemies and the fewness of his friends, repaired to the mosque, and ascended the pulpit formerly occupied by his illustrious grandfather. After speaking a homily

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in the utmost eloquence and of rare composition, and having given praise and salutation to the Almighty Lord, His illustrious Prophet, and the Holy Family, he said:

O people! I am a descendant of the Prophet of God and I stand amongst you wronged. I suffer in the clutches of tyrants and beseech you to assist me. No harm have I done beyond speaking words of truth, and today my situation is even as that of my illustrious forefather, the martyred Imam

Husayn. Whosoever hears the plea of this oppressed one and does not arise to his aid, has forfeited the intercessions of my illustrious Ancestor.

He spoke to this effect and some wept bitterly and a few gave him their allegiance, saying, "O son of the Prophet of God! May our fathers and mothers be a sacrifice for thy pure spirit! We will abide by whatsoever thou doest command and offer possessions, family and life in the path of thy devotion."

Then Siyyid Yahyá came forth from the mosque and alighted in a ruined castle in the vicinity, those friends who bore him company being not more than seventeen in number.

On hearing of his quitting the city, his enemies in a great multitude came forth and surrounded the castle in the hope of capturing them all. Then Siyyid Yahyá commanded seven of his men to go out and defend him against hostilities, and gave them instructions as to the ordering of the battle, adding that whoever should rush from a certain direction would drink of the cup of martyrdom through a wound in the breast, and whosoever out of his love and own free-will wished to be the first among the martyrs should now announce it. Then a young man with a heart yearning to behold the Countenance of the Beloved, sprang to his feet announcing, "My master! I desire to be the pioneer of this muchwronged band." And Siyyid Yahyá kissed him on the cheek, and breathed a prayer for him. Then the defenders uttered a prayer and sallied swiftly forth, attacked that godless host of hypocrites, and ere long scattered them like helpless flies, slaying a number of them. That

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youth, as he had himself desired, drained the draught of martyrdom and faithfulness. But the rest of the friends of Truth returned victorious to the castle, having learned the meaning of "verily we belong to God, and unto Him do we return."

At the very time when these events were in progress, Prince Firuz Mírzá came to assume the government of Shiraz. On being informed of what had taken place, he sent an army to Nayríz. A considerable force surrounded the castle, determined to kill all the harried defenders. Several encounters took place that resulted in sound defeats for the army and the capture of goodly spoils by the companions of Siyyid Yahyá. And all this while the companions observed the many prodigies which Siyyid Yahyá wrought, and grew stronger in their devotion, faith, and love for him. Siyyid Yahyá repeatedly reminded his companions of the approaching time for his and their martyrdom, emphasizing the ephemeral nature of this world and the glory and exaltation of the world beyond.

After the forces of the enemy had failed to prevail over them in these battles, and despairing of the final issue, they resorted to the treachery which is so characteristic of them, and wrote to Siyyid Yahyá expressing curiosity about his mission, making excuses for their past deeds, declaring themselves to be desirous of inquiring into the matter, and begging for instruction. They further pledged, with oaths sealed on the Qur'án, that if he would be good enough to come out to them, they would accept whatever terms he might propose.

So Siyyid Yahyá prepared to go forth, but his followers surrounded him, saying, "Our master, we are fearful about your going out, for this host is more faithless than the men of Kufa<sup>313</sup>. No reliance can be placed on their oaths and promises." To this Siyyid Yahyá replied, "By God, I clearly perceive their perfidy, as well as my illustrious Ancestor<sup>314</sup> knew the faithlessness of the men of Kufa. But what else am

312 The text states Prince Farhád Mírzá, which is an obvious error.

313 The people of Kufa, by their promises of support, induced the Imam Husayn to

take up arms, but failed Him in the day of need. See *An Introduction to Shi'í Islam*, pp.

28-33.

314 A reference to Imam Husayn, from whom Vahíd was descended.

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I to do with what they have written, as it is incumbent on me to go and complete the proof. You abide here till you receive my written instructions." Then he mounted his horse and took a last farewell of his companions, saying, "Verily we belong to God, and verily unto Him do we return." And his followers wept bitterly.

So Siyyid Yahyá came to the enemy camp, and at first they treated him with all respect and deference, such respect as Ma'mún ibn al-Rashíd observed towards the holy Imam 'Alí ibn Musá-Ridá<sup>315</sup>, upon Him be peace, while inwardly bent on His death. In short, they spent that night in conversing on various topics, and agreed to postpone all discussion of terms till the morrow. But when morning was come, the sun of sedition appeared over the horizon of calamity, and the Cherubim<sup>316</sup> in the Concourse on High, bewildered by what had transpired, uttered, "Ah, a thousand times alas! The morn of the family of the Prophet has turned dark, and the night of the evil-doers is brightened." As Siyyid Yahyá wished to go forth from his tent, the sentinels prevented him, saying, "It is not permitted."

No sooner had tidings of this reached the faithful followers than, unable to restrain themselves, like brilliant flames rising above the firetemple of love, they emerged from their castle, and with unsheathed

sabers hurled themselves upon the infidels. The senior officers, seeing this, hastened into Siyyid Yahyá's presence, grabbing the garment of his compassion, saying, "O master! Was it not agreed between us last night that for peace's sake we would abide by your wishes?" "Aye," said he, "but how do explain your conduct this morning?" "It was done without our knowledge," answered they, "that some of our men, who have lost kinsmen in the warfare, offered you this insult without our sanction. You, who are merciful and generous, must overlook their fault." "What", he replied, "would you have me do?" "Write", said they, "to these men of yours, bidding them evacuate the castle and return to their own

315 The Eighth Imam, 'Alí ar-Ridá (765-818 AD); see, An Introduction to Shi'i Islam, pp.

41-42.

316 A traditional hierarchy of angels, known as the celestial hierarchy, ranked from

lowest to highest into the following nine orders: angels, archangels, principalities, powers, virtues, dominions, thrones, cherubim, and seraphim.

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homes, that the minds of our soldiers and the people may be reassured in you and we will then arrange matters."

Siyyid Yahyá accepting this, wrote, "O my companions! You should gather up your own gear, leaving the spoils you have won, and return to your own homes." And the companions obeyed his behest. But the following day their foes attacked their houses, captured some, carried off their goods as spoil, destroyed their dwellings, and brought them as prisoners to the camp.

There was with Siyyid Yahyá a certain believer of Yazd who had served him faithfully both at Yazd and Nayríz, and in the path of the Truth, out of sincerity and devotion, had closed his eyes to all earthly concerns. And when word was brought that the executioner was on his way from the city charged with decapitating that illustrious personage [i.e. Siyyid Yahyá] and his Yazdí companion, the master said, "It is thee, not me, whom this headsman shall slay; he who shall slay me will arrive tomorrow." When the morrow was come, after he had completed the Morning Prayer, he said again, "He who is to slay me is now come." About an hour after this, a party of farrashes arrived and led out Siyyid Yahyá and the Yazdí from the tent. Then the executioner administered to the youth the draught of martyrdom; but, when his glance fell on Siyyid Yahyá, he said, "I am ashamed before the face of God's Apostle and will not lift my hand to slay His offspring," neither would he

consent to do their bidding. Then one whose two brothers were consigned to hell on the orders of the Siyyid, and therefore cherished a deep resentment, said, "I will kill him." And he loosed the shawl wherewith Siyyid Yahyá was girt, cast it round his neck, and drew it tight. And other evildoers beat his holy body with sticks and stones, dragging it hither and thither over the plain, till his soul soared falcon-like from the cage of body to the branches of paradise. Then the executioner severed his glorious head from his body, skinned it, stuffed it with straw, and sent it, with other heads, along with the captives and accompanied by minstrels and musicians to Shiraz.

And the people came out from the town in large numbers and each commented according to his own understanding. Some of the captives were martyred, while others were imprisoned for a while and

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then released at a later time. The night before, when the raid had been made on the houses of the Siyyid's companions, twelve of them had escaped. These, however, were subsequently captured in the neighborhood of Isfahán and brought to Shiraz, where they suffered martyrdom.

Sanctified be God, above the cruelty of the oppressors and the cry of the meekly! I take refuge in His holiness as He sends down His calamity and His wrath upon the people. Yet they observe all these conflicts and are not awakened; consider their own life worthy but others as insignificant. They call crazed such glorious figures as are indeed the finest among the people of Islam and the like of whom, in nobility and learning, are scarce to be found. And they consider their own mind, which is consumed with base thoughts and desires, as the standard for reason. It is a thing to marvel at, that ere the believers in this sublime Faith had embraced the new doctrine, all men readily admitted their virtue, sincerity, and integrity. To wit, Siyyid Yahyá ranked unquestionably among the most eminent divines of Islam. Whenever he entered any town within the lands of Islam he was met and honored by all the divines and nobles of the district. But upon embracing this Cause, he was subjected to such bitter sufferings and was martyred, his holy head stuffed with straw as though it had been the head of a Turkman or Baluch, and borne from town to town. Not one of the Muslims asked, "What has this illustrious Siyyid wrought, other than to spread the teachings of the descendants of Muhammad?" May God, as a mercy upon those who attained His presence, guide the meek and lowly, and rigorously punish the guilty.

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## Chapter 7

### Narrative of Siyyid Ibráhím

But those who are slain in the way of God, He will never let their deeds be lost.

Qur'án 47:4

#### Introduction

Another account of Nayríz-I and subsequent events was written by a citizen of that city in 1270 A.H. [1853] and inscribed on the inner wall of the Masjid Jámi‘ Saghír<sup>317</sup> (The Smaller Friday Mosque) of the same town. In the colophon of this important historical document, the author introduces himself as Siyyid Ibráhím, son of Áqá Siyyid Husayn Nayrízí, and the present writer knows no other biographical information about him. Muhammad-‘Ali Faydí reports that Shu‘lih<sup>318</sup> in the introduction of his poetry collection, known as *Khusraw va Shírín*, has noted, “... Eventually the government provided support to the local forces and, as is written on the wall of the Masjid Jami‘ Saghír by the hand of the late Siyyid Taqí Khúshnivís Nayrízí and is reflected with some minor differences and errors in the *Násikhu’t-Taváríkh*, Siyyid Yahyá was slain...”<sup>319</sup>

This particular mosque was located in the Bázár quarter of Nayríz and had always been in the possession of non-Bábís. The fact that such a history was preserved on its walls indicates the deep impression that this event made on the consciousness of the people of Nayríz. Although written in a seemingly neutral language, this document does not fail to

<sup>317</sup> This mosque is not to be confused with a larger mosque by the same name in the

Chinár-Súkhtih quarter that served as a Bábí stronghold.

<sup>318</sup> Shu‘lih [the flame] was the sobriquet of Mírzá Muhammad-Ja‘far Khán, a

nephew of the governor of Nayríz.

<sup>319</sup> Nayríz *Mushkbíz*, pp. 91-92.

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convey the depth of admiration and respect for the Bábís that the incidents of Nayríz had evoked in the heart of the writer. Clearly the writer, who resided in the quarter whose inhabitants had battled the Bábís and had been himself an observer, or perhaps even a participant in the events, had developed such admiration towards the besieged party that he took the not inconsiderable risk of penning this sympathetic

narrative in a public place.<sup>320</sup>

For many years this singularly important narrative remained unnoticed and protected under a cover of dust and dirt and only in 1940 did it come to light, when an archaeologist examining historic buildings discovered its existence. The dust and debris was carefully removed from this inscription until finally the actual text became fully visible. This archaeologist, who according to Rawhání was friendly towards the Bahá'ís, provided the Spiritual Assembly of that city with a copy of the inscription.<sup>321</sup> The full text is reproduced in Nayríz Mushkbíz and Lam'átu'l-Anvár<sup>322</sup>, and while some minor differences exist between them, both sources have been utilized in this translation.<sup>323</sup> In terms of style, this document was composed in the customary

320 The Báb, p. 182, notes about Siyyid Ibráhím:

Although he had to write with circumspection to avoid being denounced, he composed his narrative in such a way that one can, without difficulty, read more of it between the lines. His account bears out the fact that Vahíd was given solemn assurances, that he was received with great esteem and reverence, that those who had pledged their word broke their pledges, that the quarter of Chinár-Súkhtih, which was then a stronghold of the Bábís of Nayríz, and the quarter of Bazar were sacked, that houses were demolished, huge sums of money extorted, and Nayríz was reduced to a state of desolation.

321 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 306, n.1. The same source indicates that the Bahá'í

community was unaware of the existence of this document as no Bahá'í was permitted entrance into this mosque, situated in a quarter that was historically

antagonistic towards the Bábís and Bahá'ís.

322 Nayríz Mushkbíz, pp. 92-102; and Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, pp. 306-318.

323 Abú'l-Qásim Afnán has brought to the notice of the present writer that Dr. Iraj

Afshar has published a picture of the original text in one of his books, however I was unable to locate this source.

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Qájár mode, which included a generous use of abstruse language, excessive ambiguities and many laudatory titles. To the degree possible, these have been retained in the translation to ensure authenticity and a taste of this style of composition.

Narrative of Siyyid Ibráhím

He is God, the Exalted.

Of the events of this transient and seditious world and of the occurrences of this unfaithful plane, one that came to pass at the end of the heavenly reign of Muhammad Shah, the sovereign Qájár king and the light of God in His dominion, and at the beginning of the reign of the pivot of the world, Násiri'd-Dín Sháh, was the appearance of certain beliefs and utterances by Mírzá 'Alí-Muhammad, the Báb, in the year 1263 A.H., in the Dáru'l-'Ilm<sup>324</sup> of Shiraz. This led to uprising and sedition among the people in the civilized nation of Iran, particularly in Zanján, the province of Mázandarán, and even in 'Iraq and Fárs in the year 1266 A.H. [1849-50].

An effulgence of that blazing and insurgent fire reached the hearts of some inhabitants of this realm and in the whirlwind of events, it destroyed the foundations of many lives and washed away many others in the water of annihilation.

An evidence of but one of the flames of that fire is Áqá Siyyid Yahyá, who numbered among those enamored [of the Báb] and desirous of freedom, who for sundry reasons was associated with the people of this region over a period of some years, and had ties of friendship and camaraderie with many citizens. As such he was able to plant the seeds of revolt in many hearts.

The above-mentioned Siyyid, having come upon this path [i.e. the Bábí faith] in the Dáru'l-'Ilm of Shíráz, had gone to the Daru'l-'Ibád [i.e.

Yazd] and had lit the fire of Muhammad ibn 'Abdu'lláh's sedition. A district in that city that admired him had come to follow him.

324 Lit. the City of Knowledge, a title of Shíráz.

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Consequently, by order of the governor of that region, the possessions and the families in that district perished. After this incident, and being taken with fright, the Siyyid escaped to Bávanát, on the border of this region. He selected this location as he had many enthralled followers, predisposed and ready for his Faith. Wherever he went, he spoke of his beliefs and wrote many treatises until he arrived at the Shrine of Khájih Ahmad Ansári<sup>325</sup>. His honor Hájí Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán, out of consideration for the monarch and the well-being of his people, did not consider it prudent for the Siyyid to enter [into Nayríz], and forbade him from doing so. The Siyyid therefore moved to the village of Istahbánát where he tarried for a while, and many joined him in his belief. From thence he proceeded to the town of Fasá, where [its governor] Áqá Mírzá Muhammad, a confidant of the monarch, discerned the Siyyid as a

[potential] cause of commotion, and with gentleness dislodged him from that town. Therefore, once more he set out for the village of Istahbánát where he paused for a few days. From that base, he was able to rally a number in his support and, united in his cause, immediately decided to proceed thence towards Nayríz.

Upon arrival he went directly to the Masjid Jami‘ Kabír, in the Chinár-Súkhtih quarter, where his followers had gathered from all corners, preparing for battle. The congregation numbered nine hundred men armed with guns and swords as he ascended the pulpit with his ready saber. He spoke to the assembled people and prepared them for combat, and in that quarter raised the standard of revolt.

At the time of the arrival of the Siyyid and the conversion and alliance of people, the honored Hájí Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán, mentioned earlier, had gone to the Qurtiyih district. When he was apprised of the situation, he rose in defense and gathered fifteen hundred of the tribal men of Ma‘ádin and other regions and arrived at his home [in Nayríz], which was a fortified stronghold.

For four days before the fighting commenced, many of the nobles and respected inhabitants of this town and the divines of Istahbánát exerted much time and effort to counsel them, but it was to no avail and

325 A shrine for one of the companions of Prophet Muhammad, located seven kilometers to the west of Nayríz.

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their hearts remained unmoved. Therefore the matter came to battle and resulted in the separation of the Chinár [Súkhtih] quarter. Many took refuge with the governor and thereby outwardly protected themselves from this inconvenience. As the state of the people came to this, at nighttime, the above-named Siyyid together with one hundred and eighty or perhaps two hundred of his followers managed to reach the fort of Khájih and establish his stronghold therein.

On the morrow, when the Khán was apprised of this escape, being confident in the number of his men and their support, he sent about five hundred gunmen and cavalry to the vicinity of the fort. From the fort, the Siyyid sent out his gunmen who killed all the governor’s soldiers. His efforts proving vain once more, the Khán sent forth more of his men, who were reduced as well.

When the state of affairs reached this point and the matter of revolt had come to such a pitch, the honored Hájí Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín

Khán himself, and his older<sup>327</sup> brother, ‘Alí-Asghar Khán, who had ruled this town for fourteen years<sup>328</sup>, along with all their relatives and men, arrived with utmost confidence and surrounded the fort. They pitched

their tents on the eastern side of the fort, where they passed the first night.

On the following eve, a great host from the fort suddenly attacked them and killed or injured forty of the relatives and gunmen of the Khán, while many of the rest took to flight. The following night saw many more fall victims to the same fate, that is, many were killed or taken hostage and the rest escaped. None were left unmolested. The honored 'Alí-Asghar Khán, older brother of the aforementioned Khán, whose qualities were previously described and who ruled the region, was slashed into pieces and slain. Together with a few of his servants, the Khán took refuge at his home, which he had built strong and greatly protected. He passed the day there and once the dark night fell, he had

326 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 310, has read "revolt" as "proof of God," which most

likely is a misreading.

327 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 310, has read "older" as "martyred."

328 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 310, n. 1, informs that 'Alí-Asghar Khán was the

governor of the surrounding districts.

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ridden with great haste to the fort at the village of Qutriyih.

In this manner, the Siyyid and his followers established their rule, and through the control of the fort were able to live unhindered. After shedding so much blood, he instructed his executioner, a certain Shaykh, to behead twelve more men.<sup>329</sup> Untold fright and utmost trepidation overcame the hearts of the men, to the point that they renounced their worldly goods, their wives and children. The descendants of the Prophet, who were the cornerstones of the community and the upholders of virtue, for fear of their lives fled to the village of Bábak, where for fifty days the noblemen of that town were able to enjoy their company and profit from their accomplishments. Many were frightened and agitated to such an extent that they collapsed and passed away.

When the illustrious governor of Fárs, the Nusratu'd-Dawlih, was appraised of these events and was told that this revolt had passed all bounds, he appointed Mihr-'Alí Khán, the Shujá'u'l-Mulk, and Mustafa-Qulí Khán Qarihuzlu as commanders of cavalry and soldiers, and together with some other officials, instructed them to hasten to the fort and rectify the matter. The regiments came and camped across the fort. The Khán also joined them from his safe hiding place, armed with the necessary guns, powder and cannons.<sup>330</sup>

Confident in his forces and his own strength, the Siyyid decided on a nighttime surprise attack, and arranged that from one side his men from the town, and from another direction, his men in the vicinity of the fort, would attack the camp and destroy it thoroughly. This they proceeded to do with much bravery and courage. Like the moth circling the flame, they attacked the hellish fire of the cannons and sacrificed all they had. At the conclusion of this first night attack, forty warriors from the fort were found to have lost their lives. In the course of the second night, some others also gave their lives in the encounter.

329 No collaborative evidence is known for this assertion. It should be noted that it

is common for Muslim historians of the Qajar era (and later periods) to make unsubstantiated, and often false, accusations against the Bábís, including murder and other aggressions.

330 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 312, n. 1, indicates that the governor was in hiding at

this village of Qutriyih for these 50 days.

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Since the killing by the opposing sides lasted for some time and the battle raged unabated, the army camp planned a plot of deception and perfidy. In short, they offered gifts<sup>331</sup> and supplications to the chosen disciples of the Siyyid and presented declarations of submissiveness to the Siyyid himself, which contained promises of allegiance, trust and devotion to his cause. They wrote him, "We are all deeply devoted to you and consider obedience to you our greatest privilege. Should you decide to emerge from the fort and enter our camp, then rest assured that we would consider the dust beneath your feet as the kohl of our eyes." With such sweet words and colorful expressions, conveyed through letters or messengers, they induced and robbed the Siyyid of his deductive powers and rational thoughts.<sup>332</sup> Straightway he mounted his horse and, accompanied by a few chosen disciples, arrived at their camp where he was greeted by all the soldiers, to the sound of the military band playing and the generals welcoming him warmly. With utmost majesty, he was received in a special tent and was seated with resplendent glory. From every direction they offered him compliments and congratulatory expressions. However, when the time came for him to leave, by a myriad obstinate and roguish means, the Yúz-Báshí [the captain] detained the Siyyid saying "Orders have just been received from the honored Navváb to detain you and your commanders, and this renders your departure impossible." Guards were therefore placed

around his tent. The soldiers then seized the fort and its defenses and killed all his companions.

In four days time, in accordance with the instructions of the Prince Nusratu'd-Dawlih, the executioner arrived at the camp of Mustafa-Qulí Khán and conveyed the order that Siyyid Yahyá was to be delivered to the honored Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán as a ransom for the blood of his brother and some other fallen men. So, by order of the Prince, the Siyyid was delivered into the hand of the Khán and a receipt

331 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 313, n. 1, states that it was Siyyid 'Abid who

traitorously bartered his allegiance in promise of favors and properties.

332 It appears that in order to appease orthodoxy, the writer has made no mention

that, on the back of a Qur'án, the opposing camp penned a promise that Siyyid

Yahyá would not be harmed, and sent this sealed assurance to the fort.

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obtained. When this occurred, all the soldiers, those that had lost kinsmen and some others, attacked him with sticks, stones, bayonets and guns and killed him forthwith. The next day, they buried his remains under the southern<sup>333</sup> wall of the Shrine of Siyyid Jalálu'd-Dín 'Abdu'lláh, known as the Siyyid, in the Bázár quarter.

This astonishing and bewildering event took place in the month of Rajab of the year 1266 A.H.<sup>334</sup>

After the capture of the Siyyid and his followers, colonel 'Alí Khán<sup>335</sup> arrived at the camp, leading a regiment of Sílákhúrí soldiers. Upon arrival, he proceeded directly to the Chinár-Súkhtih quarter, and accompanied by the sound of music, his soldiers plundered that whole district. They remained in that quarter for twenty days or perhaps a month, and ransacked the whole neighborhood and stole whatever treasures were hidden beneath the earth or within the walls. No one recalls such pillage having occurred ever before! Had they plundered any other major city, they could not have amassed such great wealth and possessions! Some of the streets and neighborhoods associated with the Bázár quarter were also pillaged.<sup>336</sup> Beyond this, by the decree of the exalted Prince Nusratu'd-Dawlih, five thousand tumáns were obtained from the citizens and given to the Khán and whatever land, orchards, aqueducts, homes and possessions were owned by the residents of the Bázár were confiscated with extreme brutality and excruciating tortures. Indeed, in this regard, what transpired in Bázár quarter did not come to pass in the [Chinár-Súkhtih] quarter.

Verily, such intense fear and fright overcame this region that no

tongue can recount one thousandth fraction of its black incidents. What oceans of blood were spilled and how many bodies were scattered to dust in the wilderness!

333 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 315, n. 1, states that Vahíd was buried under the

northeastern wall.

334 13 May - 11 June 1850.

335 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 418, gives his name as Valí Khán.

336 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 316, n. 1, indicates that some of the affluent Bábís,

such as Áqá Siyyid Ja'far Yazdí and Hájí Muhammad-Taquí were residents of Bázár quarter.

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During these conflicts close to one thousand lives were lost on both sides.<sup>337</sup> The account of the ensuing massive pillage remains beyond any imagination, conception or description. Whichever of the men of the [Chinár-Súkhtih] quarter were not killed, had to take flight to other regions and towns.

This is but a brief account of the events of Nayríz, of Siyyid Yahyá and the followers of His Holiness the Báb. "Such is the bounty of God, which He bestows on whom He will; and God is the Lord of the highest bounty."<sup>338</sup>

After these happenings day by day the sufferings inflicted on the followers of this sect increased in intensity, and by way of retaliation and <sup>337</sup> Hadrat Nuqtih Ulá, p. 311, informs that the Nayríz upheaval was for a period of

one month and three days. Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 3, p. 292, states that this event

lasted four months.

<sup>338</sup> Qur'án 62:4.

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revenge, the Khán carried out to the fullest extent the decree of the government.

Gradually, after three years from the inception of this event, renewed animosity emerged which led to another strange and wondrous

event. That is, five days after the Naw-Rúz of 1269 A.H.339, when Zaynu'l-‘Ábidín Khán was in the public bath one hour after sunrise, Karbalá’í Muhammad with his three sons and Qásim, the brick layer, who had hidden themselves in that place, emerged and attacked his naked body, grabbing his head and shoulders and stabbing him with knives and razors. They cut off his arms that were as strong as any man’s. Even though about fifty of his kinsmen were present in that bath, as the Almighty God would have it, not one of them came to his aid. The Khán, wounded with some sixty cuts on his chest and body, was brought from the bath alive. Late that night, however, he left this plane of suffering. Indeed he was a worthy, wise and distinguished man. He ruled with prudence and was a knowledgeable statesman. There are many signs of his generosity and goodwill evident in this town, including many buildings. His servants put his slayers to death in that very place. Written in the year 1270 A.H. [1853] by the least of the servants, [Siyyid] Ibrahim Nayrízí, son of Áqá Siyyid Husayn.

339 26 March 1853.

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## Chapter 8

### Narratives of the Qájár Historians

They are the ones that say, of their brethren slain, while they themselves sit at ease: “If only they had listened to us, they would not have been slain.” Say: “Avert death from your own selves, if ye speak the truth.”  
Qur’án 3:168

#### Introduction

Continuing the earlier traditions of Iranian historiography, the historians of the Qájár era were essentially chroniclers. They described year by year, either briefly or in great detail, the activities of the monarch, gave dramatic, though at times unreliable, accounts of battles and traced the intricacies of court intrigue. Their philosophy was fairly simple. Victories in war, prosperity, security, and order were attributed to the will of God and the wisdom of sovereign – His shadow on earth – while defeat, famine, enemy invasion, and natural disasters were blamed on evil fortune or some magical force. The historians of the Qájár period commanded a readable and often eloquent style, because for them historical writing was considered a branch of literature. If the story read well, was instructive, and, most important of all, pleased the King, the author could be justly proud of his efforts – particularly since most of these histories were commissioned by the royal court. The idea of identifying source materials, or of making reference to military and diplomatic dispatches and eyewitness accounts to substantiate historical

details, was completely unknown to most of them. Where a personal account or experience is shared, it is accidental and designed to further advance the writer's agenda.

As a rule, the Qájár historian used to depend on imitating, often word for word, earlier writers, when they dealt with periods before their own. The only original part of their writings was that in which they dealt

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with their own age. Very few among them tried to criticize, analyze, or compare. Fewer still had the courage to give their own opinion in their writing, mostly because of their continued employment depended on pleasing their patrons. Since they often utilized the form of annals for their histories, the facts that formed the material of their books are particularly disjointed and lack unity and continuity.

The best known of these are the two official chronicles of the mid-nineteenth century, the Násiku't-Taváríkh and the Raudatu's-Safá Násirí, which both pay considerable attention to the rise of the Bábí religion. Both of these accounts discuss the Bábí uprising in Nayríz. In addition, the Fáršnjámih Násirí has devoted several pages to this event and that text will be considered in this section as well.

1. Extract from the Násikhu't-Taváríkh by Mírzá Taqí

Mustawfí, the Lisánu'l-Mulk [the Tongue of the Kingdom], often known by his poetical nom de plume of Siphir.

As the book's title implies, this ambitious history was intended to supersede all preceding works of a similar style. It consists of a series of large volumes, each of which deals with a particular period in the Islamic history. The last volume is entirely devoted the Qájár dynasty and is divided into three parts: (1) the origin and the rise of the Qájárs and the reigns of Áqá Muhammad and Fath-'Alí Sháh; (2) the reign of Muhammad Sháh; and (3) the reign of Násiri'd-Dín Shah up to the time of the composition of this history in 1267 A.H./1850. A further supplement was published separately extending the narrative to the year 1273 A.H./1856.

In general the wealth of information on the Bábí movement in parts 2 and 3 of volume 3 makes this book one of the important sources for the study of this religion. In addition to his firsthand knowledge of events, Siphir, unlike other Qájár historians, seems to have had access to a wide variety of military dispatches, field reports and other military intelligence that enabled him to provide very detailed descriptions of battles (including troop movements, dates of battles, appointments of officials and officers, and so on) between the Bábís and the government

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forces, particularly for the fort Tabarsí incident.<sup>340</sup>  
However, despite its useful data, deep-rooted bias and cynicism grossly mar this history, which is loaded with exaggeration and accusations to discredit the movement and please the authorities. For this reason, most of Bahá'í authors have ignored this valuable chronicle, their position perhaps best informed by the following expression by Bahá'u'lláh:

Each year, Hájí Muhammad-Karím Khán Kirmání wrote a book of refutation, as did other ignorant people known as possessors of knowledge. The author of Násikhu't-Tavárikh hath written of the Exalted One [i.e. the Báb] that which no infidel dared to pen. We beseech God to enable His servants to consider with justice and fairness that which hath been revealed and sent down by God.<sup>341</sup>

The following is a translation of a section of the Násikhu't-Tavárikh, vol. 3, pages 121-124, which deals with Nayríz-I events:<sup>342</sup>

The Description of Áqá Siyyid Yahyá Dárábí's insurrection in Nayríz and his propagation of the religion of Mírzá 'Alí-Muhammad, the Báb.

Áqá Siyyid Yahyá was a son of Áqá Siyyid Ja'far Dárábí, titled Kashfí. Áqá Siyyid Ja'far ranked foremost among the 'ulamá and his interests lay outside the philosophy of Shaykh Ahmad Ahsá'í and the doctrines of [Mullá] Sadru'd-Dín Shírází. In Qur'anic interpretation and esoteric exposition of the hadith, he differed from other

340 Later Iranian historians all seem to have copied Siphir and ignored Raudatu's-Safá.

It should be noted that Siphir's account was rewritten by the I'tidádu's-Saltanih, a literary Qájár Prince, and was published under the title of Fitnih Báb. It has all the same information without Siphir's pompous style, along with additional details.

341 Iqtidárát, p. 16.

342 See A Traveler's Narrative, pp. 173-188, for an outline of all the Bábí related

entries in the Násikhu't-Tavárikh.

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contemporary jurists and often was heard to say, “On a certain journey, I was with Khidr and discovered seventy inner meanings of the Qur’án.” His contemporaries did not take issue with such utterances, as he possessed unrivaled learning, perfect piety and many goodly qualities. The other learned men considered his books and treatises most authoritative.

However, his son, Áqá Siyyid Yahyá, was unequipped in the field of learning, but ambitious in securing an exalted position and wealth. After living with his father, he left for Tihrán and spent some days in association with the governmental authorities, proving however unsuccessful in his goal. Therefore, he hastened to Mírzá ‘Alí-Muhammad Báb and became one of his disciples, and once more returned to Tihrán where he remained ineffectual. Fearing that his affiliation would be discovered, he left that city for Yazd. In the latter place, as noted previously, he unveiled his intentions and began to summon people [to the new Cause]. For a while, he fought with Áqá Khán, the deputy-governor, but this sedition and rebellion too proved fruitless.

Therefore he left Fárs, and first arrived at Fasá where he invited the people to the religion of the Báb. This event took place at a time when the Prince Bahrám Mírzá had been dismissed as the governor-general of Fárs and was residing in Tihrán, and his brother, Fírúz Mírzá, the Nusratu’l-Dawlih, was appointed in his place but had not yet arrived. In consequence, the affairs of the province were left in the capable hands of the vizier, Mírzá Fadlu’lláh, the Násiru’l-Mulk, to whom the nobles of Fasá wrote, complaining that Áqá Siyyid Yahyá was untiring in deceiving people [i.e. in converting them to the Bábí faith]. Therefore, the Násiru’l-Mulk wrote him, “A man such as you should not engage in such activities. Leave these thoughts behind and come forth into our presence, so that we may spend some days together in joy and felicity.” “Such accusations

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[against me] are nothing but exaggeration and lies,” Áqá Siyyid Yahyá wrote in response, “Why do you heed such slanders and write to a friend such as me in this manner? Soon I will leave this place and journey to you.” Receiving this assurance, the Násiru’l-Mulk was satisfied. After a while, though, news was received from Fasá that, “five hundred devotees have circled round Áqá Siyyid Yahyá and soon a

mighty upheaval may occur.” On hearing this intelligence, the Násiru’l-Mulk wrote once more and sent an emissary, but when he arrived, together with his disciples, Siyyid Yahyá had already left Fasá in haste for Nayríz and was half way to his destination. In such wise, the messenger was not able to deliver his charge and returned forthwith.

It so happened that during this time the people of Nayríz had risen against the governor of that land, Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán, and considered the arrival of Siyyid Yahyá a great omen. Some of the people became enamored of his beliefs [in the Báb] and bowed their heads in obedience to him. Some others, in order to force Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán from office, also placed their trust in the newcomer. In short, Siyyid Yahyá and three hundred of his disciples took position in one of the decayed castles of Nayríz and began to strengthen its walls and turrets. The people of Nayríz also rose in his support.

When he discerned the nature of the situation, Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán gathered two thousand Nayrízis on his own side and wrote an account of the occurrences to the Násiru’l-Mulk. The latter wrote Siyyid Yahyá, “Before this fire that you have kindled, for sundry reasons grows and consumes the world, it is best for you to reduce its fury and hasten to me.” When the directive of the Násiru’l-Mulk was received by him, he replied, “At this time a crowd has gathered around me determined to rebel against the government. It is conceivable that should I leave them and proceed thither, they may injure me on the way. If you are

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able, send a force to rescue me from this trouble and conduct me unmolested to Shiraz.” With this message, he sent back the emissary.

That very night Siyyid Yahyá prepared for battle, and when darkness had enveloped the land, his disciples, crying their battle cry, surprised Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán and rushed the city putting to the sword both men and women. The older brother of the governor, ‘Alí-‘Askar Khán<sup>343</sup>, together with a number of his relations and some other nobles of the city were slain. The three sons of ‘Alí-‘Askar Khán were seized and brought back to the fort. With great difficulty, Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán escaped from that battle and withdrew twelve farsangs. From there he prepared some gifts, which, together with a report of the occurrences, he

sent to the Násiru'l-Mulk.

Meanwhile, after this victory, the people of Nayríz came in unison to Siyyid Yahyá and embraced his beliefs. The properties and possessions of 'Alí-'Askar Khán and Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán were taken as battle spoil by his disciples. By such means, Siyyid Yahyá gained much strength and arrayed a force in excess of two thousand ready men. At that time, proceeding from the Capital to Fárs, Fírúz Mírzá, the Nusratu'd-Dawlih, was four days journey from Shiraz when he learned of the situation. The Prince wrote a command and entrusted the same to a messenger to deliver it in haste to Shiraz. Therein it was written that, with the consent of the Násiru'l-Mulk, Mihr-'Alí Khán Núrí, the Díván-Baykí of Fárs, who was titled the Shujá'u'l-Mulk, together with General Mustafá-Qulí Khán, should lead two regiments of men, one a new formation and the other an existing battalion, and proceed to reduce Siyyid Yahyá. Upon receipt of this command, the Násiru'l-Mulk sent forth Mihr-'Alí Khán with one hundred men and wrote to Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán to assemble as many men from the 343 Other sources have given his name as 'Alí-Asghar Khán.

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region and the mountain [tribes] as he could, and to join Mihr-'Alí Khán. He further sent Mustafa-Qulí Khán Qaraguzlú with soldiers, two cannons, and artillery forces in the same direction. These three forces came together en route and proceeded towards Nayríz.

One day, Siyyid Yahyá was by a tent that had previously been taken in battle and was now pitched by the castle, and his men stood in front of him with their ready swords and listened most attentively to his sermon. Siyyid Yahyá said to them, "Never fear guns and cannons, nor dread any army. Because if I so will it, the cannons will not fire and the enemy's bullets will return and strike the very shooter." He was saying such things when the dust of the enemy's army was discerned over the horizon and Mihr-'Alí Khán, Mustafa-Qulí Khán and his artillery forces arrived. From a distance they fired their cannon and it struck the pillar of the tent, while the mounted men standing on the other side allowed the tent to collapse over Siyyid Yahyá. It then became obvious that cannonballs did not follow the commands of Siyyid Yahyá.

Upon their arrival, the army decided not to wage

battle and instead engaged in raising breastworks. Discerning the cannonballs to have a will of their own, Siyyid Yahyá went within the castle and ordered the walls and turrets fortified. For five days, the two armies contemplated their next move. During these days, Mustafa-Qulí Khán greatly exerted himself so that this unrest and rebellion might be subdued peacefully, but he was unsuccessful. On the sixth night, Siyyid Yahyá wrote certain words on scraps of paper and asked his men to wear these amulets around their necks and said to them, "These prayers will protect you from all harm on the ground and in the air."<sup>344</sup> Thereupon three hundred of his men emerged for a

<sup>344</sup> It was common for the Bábí men to wear talismans in the form of a five-pointed

star as protective prayers. The women wore circular talismans.

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surprise attack, some with unsheathed swords and some carrying wooden maces, and crying loudly they attacked the enemy's camp. The battle lasted from the middle of the night to dawn-tide. They came so close within the trenches that Mustafa-Qulí Khán was struck severely by the clubs. In that battle one hundred and fifty of [the Bábís] were killed. In the morning they carried their dead with them to the fort, realizing that the scraps of paper would not protect against cannonballs and bullets. With all this bravery, they had killed only four soldiers and injured five more.

In short, Siyyid Yahyá gave instructions for the dead to be buried that very night behind the wall of the fort, so that the enemy would not know the number of the fallen. However, one by one or two by two, the people of Nayríz, recognizing the spurious nature of Siyyid Yahyá's claim, began to leave him and return home.

After three days, once more his disciples launched a surprise attack and advanced on the army. However, Mihr-'Alí Khán and Mustafá-Qulí Khán fought bravely and ordered the cannons and guns to rain fire upon them. Soon the attackers were unable to endure and retreated to the fort. When Prince Fírúz Mírzá arrived in Shíráz, he instructed Valí Khán Sílakhúrí to lead the regiment under his command to reinforce the army in Nayríz. However, before their arrival, recognizing the gravity of the situation and the depletion of his men, Siyyid Yahyá commenced peace

negotiations. Mustafá-Qulá Khán welcomed these efforts and provided further incentives. Pleased with his offers, Siyyid Yahyá dispersed his few remaining companions, and with ease of mind proceeded towards Mustafá-Qulí Khán. The latter welcomed him at his camp and even once stood behind him in prayer. Then he said unto the Siyyid, “Since you own a residence in Nayríz, it is best for you to spend the night in your own dwelling in peace so that people would recognize the cessation of hostilities and this trouble be

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subdued.” Siyyid Yahyá found this suggestion agreeable, and that night in company of an attendant proceeded towards his own residence. On the way, though, ‘Alí-‘Askar Khán’s sons and some others who had been released from the fort, attacked him and killed him with knives and swords. After his death, Mihr-‘Alí Khán and Mustafa-Qulí Khán, seized Siyyid Yahyá’s two sons and thirty other companions, and in chains and fetters brought them to Shiraz. In consideration of their holy lineage, the Nusratu’d-Dawlih spared [Vahíd’s] sons, but dealt with the companions as they deserved and cleansed the world of their presence.

2. Outline of the Raudatu’s-Safá Násirí, vol. 10, by Ridá-Qulí Khán Hidáyat. The final volume of this series, penned by the talented historian known commonly as Lali-Báshí, contains essentially the same information as the Násikhu’t-Tavárikh. For this reason, instead of a full translation of the section dealing with Nayríz insurrection, we present an outline of its content (vol. 10, pages 456-458):

- The uprising of Nayríz took place when the governorgeneral of Fárs, Bahrám Mírzá, was summoned to Tihrán and Fírúz Mírzá was appointed in his place, though he had not arrived.
- Siyyid Ja‘far Kashfí was deeply learned, but his son, Siyyid Yahyá was unlettered and ambitious.
- After Yazd, he went to Nayríz and converted some to the Babi Movement.
- His arrival coincided with a general uprising in Nayríz where the inhabitants had forced their governor, Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán, son of Muhammad-Husayn Khán, to quit the city.
- Siyyid Yahyá took advantage of the ongoing rebellion, and ordered the elimination of the governor’s brother,

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'Alí-Asghar Khán, and some others among his kinsmen, which was carried out immediately.

- At a distance of four days from Shiraz, Fírúz Mírzá ordered Mustafá-Qulí Khán to lead two regiments of Hamadání soldiers against the Nayrízís and these were augmented by Mihr-'Alí Khán and his men.
- On the first night of their arrival, Siyyid Yahyá's men attacked them, but suffered many casualties and prisoners taken.
- Siyyid Yahyá requested aid from the surrounding villages and several more sorties took place, but eventually the besiegers were reduced.
- Siyyid Yahyá and some of his men were captured and brought to Shiraz where they were executed.
- Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán regained his post but was murdered some time later in a public bath.
- Mihr-'Alí Khán and Mustafá-Qulí Khán were rewarded by the governor-general and given other important assignments.

The same source (page 560) gives a very brief account of Nayríz-II, which reads, "During this period the remnant of Siyyid Yahyá's followers in Nayríz rose in opposition. Several of them were anticipating an opportunity and found the governor, Hájí Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán, alone in the public path and because of the past conflicts, injured him fatally. These assailants were captured and punished. Then a large number of them went into the mountains and planned revolt. By order of the governor of Fárs, Mírzá Muhammad-Na'ím Núrí, the son of Muhammad-Zakí Khán, led a large army against them and reduced the insurgents. Most of the rebels were brought to Shiraz and were punished accordingly."

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3. Outline of Táríkh Burújjird by Ghulám-Ridá Mawlaná.<sup>345</sup> The account of Siyyid Yahyá is based for the most part on the Raudatu's-Safá, though it provides a few additional pieces of information, (Táríkh Burújjird, vol. 2, pp. 306-313). The following is an outline:

- Siyyid Yahyá Dárábí was the eldest of Siyyid Ja'far's sons, but the least educated.

- Quotes Tara'iq (vol. 3, p. 456), where (allegedly) Siyyid Ja'far had predicted the trouble-filled future of his son.
- Siyyid Yahyá was born in 1226 A.H. [1811] and killed at the age of 40 in 1267 A.H. [1850] in Nayríz.
- Because of constant bickering with his father, Siyyid Yahyá left for Tihrán where he heard about the Báb's claim and on meeting Him converted in order to advance his own ambitions.
- He returned to Tihrán in order to teach the Báb's doctrines.
- He went to Yazd, Burújird, Shiraz and Fasá, where (at the last location), two thousand were converted to his movement, and he trained them in the art of war.
- Fírúz Mírzá charged the Násiru'l-Mulk, Valí Khán, Mihr-'Alí Khán and Mustafá [-Qulí] Khán to battle him.
- After a series of sorties, Siyyid Yahyá and 354 of his companions were killed and the troubles ended.
- Thirty more of the Bábís and Vahíd's two sons were sent to Shíráz, where the Bábís were killed and the sons sent home.
- This occurred in 1267 A.H. [= Nov 1850 - Oct 1851].

4. Extracts from Fáršnjámih Násirí by Hájí Mírzá Hasan Fasá'í:  
One of the most useful sources for the history, people, culture,

345 The present writer is grateful to Prof. Sholeh Quinn for sharing a copy of this reference.

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geography and architecture of the province of Fars, the well-regarded Fáršnjámih Násirí contains almost nothing about the Bábí movement, even though it had its origin in Shíráz and many of its early events took place in that region.<sup>346</sup> Despite this glaring omission, a brief outline of the first episode of Nayríz is presented in Fáršnjámih (vol. 1, pages 792-794) and because of its overall importance, a translation is recorded below:<sup>347</sup>

The Naw-Rúz celebration fell on the evening of 6 Jamádu'l-Avval of the year 1266 A.H.<sup>348</sup> At the beginning of that year, the Prince Bahrám Mírzá, the Mu'azzu'd-Dawlih, proceeded from Shiraz to Tihrán and the governorship of Fárs was conferred upon the Prince Fírúz Mírzá, the Nusratu'd-Dawlih.

In the early part of Muharram of that year [1266

A.H.] , Siyyid Yahyá, son of the celebrated renowned

scholar, Áqá Siyyid Ja‘far Dárábí, known as Istahbánátí, would invite people to embrace the newly invented religion in the name of Mírzá ‘Alí-Muhammad Báb. Due to his having a father [as famed] as Áqá Siyyid Ja‘far, he was welcomed with great honor at each locality he arrived at. At the end of the previous year, he had come from Yazd to

346 The only reference to the Báb is on pages 784-785 where the author notes:

That year [1262 A.H./1846], the disturbance of the Bábís took place. They considered themselves followers of the merchant Mírzá ‘Alí-Muhammad, son of the shopkeeper Mírzá Ridá Shírází. As the chronicles and journals are full of descriptions of this occurrence, we have avoided it in the Fársnámih. May the Almighty God grant strength and power to the Faith of Islam and the Muslim Monarch and humiliate and reject the heretics and mischief-makers!

347 It should be noted that the present rendering has benefited from an earlier

translation of the first section of the Fársnámih dealing with the history of that

province and published by Heribert Busse: *History of Persia under Qájár Rule*; 1972,

Columbia University Press.

348 20 March 1850.

349 Muharram 1266 A.H. corresponded to 17 November to 16 December 1849.

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Fasá, ostensibly to preach, teach, and expatiate on the ordinances pertaining to forbidden and lawful aspects of the religion of the Lord of the World of Being, the illustrious Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad ibn ‘Abdu’llah, but actually to spread the religion of Mírzá ‘Alí-Muhammad Báb. The governor of Fasa, Áqá Mírzá Muhammad, welcomed him with honors and assigned him suitable lodging. He tried in various ways to win sympathy [for his beliefs], and spent the nights in discussion<sup>350</sup> and the days preaching, and eventually a number accepted his teachings. Then he propagated his teachings openly. When Áqá Mírzá Muhammad was informed of the latter’s faith, he summoned him and said, “The inhabitants of this district are firm in their profession of the true Religion of Islam and are immovable in their faith. Should they gain knowledge of your profession, it might happen that they would stain their hands with your blood. The best thing you can do is to leave

this town and proceed to another place.”

And he sent a report of this occurrence to Shiraz.

Because the Prince Mu’azz’d-Dawlih had left Shiraz and the Prince Nusratu’d-Dawlih had not yet arrived, the responsibility lay with Mírzá Fadlu’lláh, the Násiru’l-Mulk, and Áqá Mírzá Muhammad was given no clear reply. At his wit’s end, he sent Siyyid Yahyá a large sum of money as a gift<sup>351</sup> and ordered a group of people to proceed in the middle of the night to the latter’s house and to threaten him with death.

At the end of Safar of the year 1266 A.H.<sup>352</sup>, Siyyid Yahyá went from Fasá to Istahbánát. The inhabitants of this town, too, were not willing to have anything to do with him, and since he did not know what to do, he chose as his abode

<sup>350</sup> Original “musahirát” implies keeping night vigils.

<sup>351</sup> The original “Niyáz” suggests a gift given to mystic orders.

<sup>352</sup> Last day of Safar corresponded with 17 January 1850.

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the town of Nayríz, where the evildoers<sup>353</sup> had risen in rebellion against their governor, Hájí Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán. Siyyid Yahyá won over the evildoers as his friends, and made his intentions public without reserve. All the evildoers, about five hundred in number, accepted his teachings. He abrogated the injunctions of the Islamic religion, and his reputation increased every day.

Then he chose a ruined fortress outside Nayríz as his abode and repaired its defense works. He moved to that fortress and decided to wage a religious war [jang madhhabí] with Hájí Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín. Every day his followers brought the people of the bazaar forcibly before him, and he would demand a sum of money before releasing them. After some time, anyone who had been brought before him and was not willing to enter into a covenant with him<sup>354</sup>, had either to pay a large sum of money as a ransom or to prepare to be executed. This procedure was applied to several people. One day a man was brought before him; when he crossed the courtyard and saw Siyyid Yahyá, he fell down and died on the spot

When Hájí Zaynu’l-‘Abidín Khán saw things going on in this manner, he gathered an army and prepared for battle with Siyyid Yahyá. Siyyid Yahyá’s men, however, anticipated the attack and at midnight, sword in hand, threw themselves

upon Hájí Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán's host and killed close to 150 people, sparing neither men nor women. Among those killed was 'Alí-Asghar Khán, the eldest brother of Hájí Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán. His body was brought to the fortress and thrown into a water conduit.<sup>355</sup> Three of the governor's

353 Busse in History of Persia under Qájár Rule has pointed out that the original term,

“Ashrár”, refers to different kinds of opponents of the Qájár rule, without distinguishing their political aims.

354 Meaning, had not become a Bábí.

355 Since the fort was old, there might have been dry, abandoned conduits that lay

open. Otherwise, it is not likely that corpses were placed near running water, as it

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sons were taken prisoner and brought to the fortress in chains. Hájí Zaynu'l-'Ábidín, with great effort, mounted an unsaddled horse and hastened to the village of Qatru, nine farsangs east of Nayríz, and informed Nasiru'l-Mulk in writing of the occurrence.

Upon this victory, the inhabitants of Nayríz and the surrounding villages had no choice but to join Siyyid Yahyá and accept his teachings. The houses of Hájí Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán and 'Alí-Asghar Khán and their followers were plundered and the booty was distributed among the companions of Siyyid Yahyá. The inhabitants were so afraid of the Bábís that they delivered everything they were asked for without delay. The people [i.e. Bábís] were firmly convinced that they would subdue Fárs and even beyond within a short space of time and that they would destroy the religion and the state. The power of the Bábí community was increasing every day; the unflinching warriors numbered more than three thousand men.

The honored Prince Nusratu'd-Dawlih was informed of this before his arrival at Shiraz. Four stations from Shiraz, he wrote to Násiru'l-Mulk saying that Mihr-'Alí Khán Núrí, the Shujá'u'l-Mulk, commander of the Shírází horsemen, was to march with great haste, together with General Mustafá-Qulí Khán Garaguzlú, the I'timádu's-Saltinih, and two detachments of Qaraguzlú soldiers, and to attack Siyyid

Yahyá. Accordingly, the Násiru'l-Mulk supervised the preparations of these troops and made them march off with two pieces of artillery.

Upon his arrival at the village of Qatru, Hájí Zaynu'l-'Abibín Khán summoned the aldermen of the mountains and the districts around Nayríz, and about two thousand men came to his support. Near Rustáq, three farsangs from Nayríz, he joined the troops of the Shujá'u'l-Mulk and the I'timádu's-Saltinih; together they marched to Nayríz and would severely contaminate the downstream flow.

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encamped opposite the fortress of Siyyid Yahyá. Five days elapsed without any fighting. On the sixth night, Siyyid Yahyá wrote a few words on scraps of paper and fixed them to the belts of his men and said: "This scrap of paper will protect you from the fire of muskets and guns." Then he selected three hundred of them for a night attack on the I'timádu's-Saltinih's camp. He gave each of them a scimitar, and at midnight they came out of the fortress, hurried to the camp with great clamor, and invaded the breastworks without fear. They killed several people and caused I'timádu's-Saltinih and Shujá'u'l-Mulk much trouble. They fought in the camp until sunrise. The spears and muskets of the soldiers killed several Bábís. The rest of them returned to the fortress. Then it became known that one hundred and fifty of the Bábís and three hundred men of the camp had been killed during the night.

The Bábís realized that the paper scraps were of no use, and their faith dwindled; groups of five or ten people deserted from Siyyid Yahyá's camp, at first in secret, then quite openly, and his army was diminished.

Three days after this event, Siyyid Yahyá made new preparations and selected three hundred men for another night attack, and they assaulted the camp making a lot of noise. The people of the camp leveled their guns at them, and cannon and musket fire killed about fifty Bábís.

However, the rest of them invaded the breastworks with great bravery, and about one hundred men of the camp were killed. The I'timádu's-Saltinih and Shujá'u'l-Mulk fought back courageously and threw the Bábís out of the camp.

During the battle another group of Siyyid Yahyá's followers deserted him and went its way. When he saw that

his army was diminishing, he began peace negotiations. After the exchange of messengers and letters, Siyyid Yahyá, five days later, came out of the fortress with twelve of his adherents, entered the camp with all honors, and was put in

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I'timádu's-Saltinih's tent. After spending one night with honors, he and his adherents were arrested and killed the next day by the heirs of 'Alí-Asghar Khán; two of Siyyid Yahyá's sons and thirty of his followers were put in fetters and sent to Shiraz. The thirty followers were executed and the two sons of Siyyid Yahyá, who were not yet grown up, were sent to Burújird and surrendered to their learned grandfather, Áqá Siyyid Ja'far.

5. Outline of Fatsafih Níkú by Hájí Mírzá Hasan Níkú Burújirdí, vol. 3, pages 119-120:

- Together with Lutf-'Alí, the chamberlain, Vahíd was commissioned to investigate the Báb and was given a horse and 100 tumáns;
- He met the Báb at the house of His uncle through the intervention of Áqá Siyyid Javád Karbalá'í;
- In response to his questions, Tafsír Kawthar was revealed;
- A series of travels was undertaken until eventually he joined forces with Muhammad [ibn] 'Abdu'lláh.

6. Outline of Vápasín Junbish Qurún Vustá'í dar Dúrán Fiúdálí [The Last Medieval [social] Movement in the Feudal Period] by Muhammad-Ridá Fisháhí: Though a relatively recent study, pages 126-128 offers innovative analysis of the undercurrents of social dissatisfaction of Nayrízís which led to the Bábí rebellion.

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Qájár Records Pertaining to Nayríz-II

7. Notice of Zaynu'l-'Abidín Khán's Assassination

The following notice was posted in Rúznámah Waqáyi'í Ittifáqiyya<sup>356</sup>, no. 117, Thursday, 19 Rajab 1269 A.H./28 April 1853:

News of Fárs: According to the reports in the Fárs newspapers, on 15 Jamádú'th-Thání<sup>357</sup>, Hájí Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán Nayrízí had gone to the public bath where several

malefactors had beforehand taken position and at an opportune moment had rushed and murdered him. After he had entered the bathhouse, they had emerged from hiding and caused him injuries on the left side and as apparently no one was with him, people heard the commotion and informed his attendants who came quickly and dealt with the four assassins accordingly.<sup>358</sup>

#### 8. Outline of Haqayiqu'l-Akhbar Násirí on Nayríz-II

Some of the underlying causes for the second Nayríz uprising are noted in this source, which are not mentioned elsewhere:<sup>359</sup>

- The Prince Tahmásb Mírzá, the Mu'ayyadu'd-Dawlih, was appointed governor-general of Fárs in 1269 A.H.<sup>360</sup>
- Though a competent governor, he was hamstrung by the Prime Minister who was the brother-in-law of Mírzá Na'ím Núrí.

<sup>356</sup> Journal of Current Events, first established on 7 February 1851, by Mírzá Taqí

Khán Amír-Kabír, the Prime Minister, as a weekly organ of national news. For further information, consult E.G. Browne, *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>357</sup> 26 March 1853

<sup>358</sup> Quoted in *Nayríz Mushkbíz*, p. 90, n. 1.

<sup>359</sup> Quoted in *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 4, p. 27, n. 1.

<sup>360</sup> October 1852 to October 1853.

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- The governor was unable to prevent the injustices and oppressions of Mírzá Na'ím in the administration of Nayríz, the intrigues of Mihr-'Alí Khán and the wretched and impoverished Bábís in Nayríz and Dáráb.
- Tahmásb Mírzá remained unresponsive to the complaints of the Bábís of Nayríz.
- Frustrated with the status quo, the remnant of the Bábís emerged from hiding and rose in opposition against the deputy governor.
- Mírzá Na'ím misrepresented the situation to the governor-general, who sent him to Nayríz in company of an army and two cannons.
- Mírzá Na'ím arrived during the last ten days of Muharram<sup>361</sup>.
- The battle started on 1 Safar<sup>362</sup>.

- A large number of the Bábís were massacred and the remaining were brought to Shiraz as prisoners of war.
- The Prince interrogated the Bábís, killed the insurrectionists and sent the remaining number to Tihrán.

#### 9. Nayríz-II uprising in the Government Newspaper

The following is recorded in the Rúznámah Waqáyi'i Ittifáqiyya, no. 148, Thursday, 29 Sifr 1270 A.H./1 December 1853:

News of Fárs - According to the newspapers of that region, once again, Bábís have insurrected and about five or six hundred of them gathered with their wives in a mountain near Nayríz, constructed a large number of fortifications and caused mischief and trouble. The illustrious Prince, Tahmásb Mírzá, the Mu'ayyadu'd-Dawlih, the governorgeneral of Fárs, together with the honored Mírzá Na'ím, the  
361 23 October – 2 November 1853.  
362 3 November 1853.

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Lashkar-Nivís<sup>363</sup>, and the governor of Nayríz, and General Luft-'Alí Khán, in the company of a Qashqá'í regiment and another regiment maintained in Fárs and several heavy artillery pieces and cavalry, were sent to reduce the insurgents. A fierce battle took place between this misguided band and the all-powerful regiments at the end of Muharram and beginning of Safr<sup>364</sup>. Our forces were eventually victorious and captured two or three of their fortifications in the mountain, killing in battle about one hundred of their number and raising their heads upon spears. The rest were captured along with their wives and children and sent to Shiraz.

Praise be to God that because of the unceasing divine confirmations surrounding the person of the monarch, the said group [i.e. the Bábís] were thoroughly routed and not one among them remained, as all were either killed or captured. Also according to these reports, the mountain where the battles took place was extremely difficult to pass, and only after intense battle was the army able to secure it. Several soldiers and royal attendants were injured in these events.<sup>365</sup>

#### 10. Muntazam Násirí

Fádil Mázandarání quotes the following passage from this source,

“About five or six hundred of the Bábís gathered in Nayríz and raised fortifications in the nearby mountains. The Prince Mu’ayyadu’d-Dawlih, the governor of Fárs, instructed Mírzá Na’ím Lashkar-Nivís, governor of Nayríz and General Lutf-‘Alí Khán to proceed with a division of Qashqá’í and other soldiers and several cannons to reduce and eliminate them. After a fierce battle, their fortifications were conquered and some one hundred of them slaughtered by swords, while the remaining

363 Chief registrar or the secretary of an army

364 3 November 1853.

365 Quoted in Nayríz Mushkbíz, pp. 118-119.

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number were captured as prisoners.”<sup>366</sup>

366 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 39, n.1.

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## Chapter 9

### Narrative of Siyyid Husayn Hamadání

And their Lord hath accepted of them, and answered them: “Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female: ye are members, one of another; those who have left their homes, or been driven out therefrom, or suffered harm in My cause, or fought or been slain, verily, I will bolt out from them their inequities, and admit them into gardens with rivers flowing beneath; a reward from the presence of God, and from His presence is the best of rewards.

Qur’án 3:195

### Introduction

A Bábí and Bahá’í of many years, Siyyid Husayn Hamadání had held civil service posts in the government, and had once been a member of the Sháh’s retinue when the monarch visited Europe in 1873. Some time later, Mírzá Husayn was imprisoned because of his religious affiliations and afterwards accepted a position in the Tihrán office of Manekjí Sábih, who had come to Iran seeking royal exemption on payment of religious taxes (jaz’iyh) for the Zoroastrian community – an effort that took him to Baghdad and led to a meeting with Bahá’u’lláh, probably in 1861. In addition to Siyyid Husayn, Manekjí employed the celebrated Mírzá Abú’l-Fadl as a secretary and according to the latter, Manekjí was an avid book collector and always encouraged and persuaded talented people to

write and compose for him. Being fascinated with the rise of the Bahá'í faith and its relation to the Bábí religion, Manekjí commissioned Siyyid Husayn to prepare a detailed history of the Bábí movement. In consultation with Mírzá Abú'l-Fadl and with his encouragement, Siyyid Husayn readily undertook this charge and produced a remarkably moving account which relied substantially on the narrative of Mírzá Jání

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and the Násikhu't-Taváríkh.<sup>367</sup>

However, after the completion of this task, it was not known what became of Mírzá Husayn's original manuscript. Manekjí, despite of his weak grasp of the Persian language, had the habit of editing such texts and it is evident that he attempted to "improve" Siyyid Husayn's composition. This revised text did survive and should be labeled as "Manekjí's text." A copy of this was acquired by the London Museum and was later labeled "Codex L" by Prof. E.G. Browne. Also, the renowned Bahá'í scholar-teacher, Mullá Muhammad Qá'iní, surnamed Nabíl Akbar, decided to further edit Manekjí's text and produced what is presently known as Táríkh Badí' Bayání. This later text is more than 90% the same history prepared by Siyyid Husayn. It is the view of the present writer that Browne acquired a copy of this text, which he labeled "Codex C" for the Cambridge manuscripts, and mistakenly thought it was the original of Siyyid Husayn.<sup>368</sup> Despite its limitations, Browne's translation of Siyyid Husayn's revised narrative, published under the title of Táríkh-i Jadíd, remains one of the most important and moving accounts of the rise and struggles of the Bábí community.

Fortunately, after the passage of these years, Susan Maneck was able to locate the original text of Siyyid Husayn's narrative, which includes some of Manekjí's interpolations, and I am grateful to her for kindly sharing a copy with me. In her cover letter she states, "...

Although Manekjí's library had been reported as destroyed by white ants (his grandson told me this) I in fact found that at least part of it was housed in the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute in Bombay. There were cards written in Persian identifying each manuscript. Besides photocopying each Bahá'í manuscript I copied those notes. Unfortunately I could not locate them as I was getting ready to mail you this manuscript. They will

<sup>367</sup> Táríkh-i Jadíd, p. xxxii, gives the date of this composition as 1297-8 A.H. (1880).

<sup>368</sup> For instance, in Táríkh-i Jadíd, p. 131, n.1, Browne concludes that this section had

been a subsequent addition to the original text, which seems a reasonable inference.

However, Browne identifies Nabíl as Mírzá Muhammad Zarandí and refers to

the translation of A Traveler's Narrative for details concerning him. As noted earlier, the

evidence suggests that by Nabíl is meant Mullá Muhammad Qá'iní.

Concerning Nabíl

Akbar see Eminent Bahá'ís in the time of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 112-115,

and Memorials of the

Faithful, pp. 1-5.

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turn up eventually and I will send you the entire list. The notes identified the texts, the authors, the types and quality of calligraphy and the calligrapher. Hamadání was listed as the calligrapher and the author."

This aged text stands at a total of 261 densely written pages and will be referred to as "Hamadání's manuscript." It is the earliest text of Hamadání's Tarikh-i Jadid known to the present writer.

In addition to the newly found manuscript of Siyyid Husayn's text,

I am in possession of a later revision scribed by a certain Hájí

Muhammad-Sádiq, son of the martyred Muhammad-'Alí, who completed his copying on 10 Ramadán 1317 A.H.369. This text is in 327 pages and will be referred to as "Muhammad-Sádiq's manuscript."

Hamadání's manuscript accords very closely to Browne's Codex L, but there are some notable differences. For instance, on page 120, n.1, of Táríkh-i Jadíd, Browne notes that both his manuscripts refer to Prince Farhád Mírzá. However, both manuscripts in my possession have Prince Fírúz Mírzá (Hamadání, p. 81, line 18; and Muhammad-Sádiq, p 166, line 8). Another example is in the next line, where Browne refers to Mihr-'Alí Khán, but the manuscripts in my possession name him as Muhammad-'Alí Khán, and leave out his title, the Shujá'u'l-Mulk. There are many other minor differences that are beyond our present purposes to describe and hopefully will be documented in a separate study.

Yet a third version of Siyyid Husayn's narrative pertaining to Vahíd and the Nayríz struggles appears in the Lam'átu'l-Anvár.<sup>370</sup> It is apparent that Rawhání was not familiar with the complicated history of Siyyid Husayn's narrative and in error thought that it was penned by Hájí Mírzá Jání, whom he thought a Bahá'í.<sup>371</sup> For the most part, the text used

by Rawhání follows Muhammad-Sádiq's manuscript, but towards the end begins to diverge completely and also shows a number of other corruption. Therefore, it was decided not to use this version and to limit the study to the original of Siyyid Husayn and the revised Muhammad-Sádiq's. It should be noted that Muhammad-Sádiq's version is utilized primarily to illustrate how such texts change through transcriptions and

369 12 January 1900.

370 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, pp. 319-336.

371 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 319.

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revisions. To facilitate a comparison of the present translation with Táríkh-i Jadíd, to the extent possible, Browne's actual words have been used, though they been modified as demanded by the two cited manuscripts.

Notations:

[] comments added to enhance clarity

{ } appears only in Hamadání Manuscript

<> appears only in Muhammad-Sádiq Manuscript

Narrative of Siyyid Husayn Hamadání

{Yet more bewildering than the Mazandaran episode is that which befell Áqá Siyyid Yahyá Dárábí}372, son of the late Áqá Siyyid Ja'far Kashfí. He

was eminent amongst mujtahids373 and the learned, [divinely] gifted with supernatural faculties and high spiritual attainments, notable for his sanctity, and unrivalled in discourse and revelation, austerity of life and piety. When he heard the tidings of the Manifestation, he went to Shiraz expressly to inquire into the matter. There he met with a certain eminent and illustrious mujtahid truly learned in divine knowledge and wise in the wisdom of the Eternal, one whose being is an ever-stirring sea harboring pearls and jewels of understanding. But men know him not by this name [of Babi], for the All-Wise hath till now kept him under the shadow of His protection for the edification and perfection of His servants, the guidance of such as wander in the valley of search into the straight path of recognition, and the deliverance from darkness of such as seek after truth.374 With this illustrious personage and several other learned and pious believers did this thirsty pilgrim in the path of inquiry [i.e. Vahíd] meet on his arrival at Shiraz. He was eager to obtain forthwith an

372 <The amazing episode of Áqá Siyyid Yahyáy-i Dárábí in Yazd and Nayríz occurred

in the year 1266 A.H. He was>

373 Those certified to issue rulings on matters of Islamic religious laws.

374 Presumably a reference Áqá Siyyid Javád Karbalá'í.

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interview with the Bab, the object of his search, but permission was for sundry reasons deferred, and [Siyyid Yahyá] spent this interval in examining some of the revealed verses. {Finding in them no ground for objection or denial,}375 he said in confidence to the illustrious divine and exalted Siyyid already referred to [i.e. Hájí Siyyid Javád Karbalá'í], “These

luminous words bear witness to the truth of this claim, and leave no room for doubt; yet were it permitted to me to behold some miracle or sign beyond this, I should gain a fuller measure of certitude and assurance.” To this the illustrious Siyyid answered, “For such as have, like us, beheld a thousand marvels stranger than the fabled cleaving of the moon, to demand a miracle or sign from that Perfect Truth would be as though we should seek light from a candle <or be satisfied with a lighted wick> in the full blaze of the radiant sun:

In presence of the sun's effulgence bright  
Should we from lamp or candle seek for light,  
'T would surely be an act as vain as rude,  
A proof of folly and ingratitude.  
The sun, in sooth, requires no further sign  
Than the slant sun-beam's long-protracted line.376”

<For a while, in a state of doubt and quandary Áqá Siyyid Yahyá tarried in that town. Thereafter, he set down in writing several hard questions of his own devising, and one night, about five hours after sunset, sent this paper by means of the aforementioned eminent divine to His Exalted Holiness, (may the spirit of all that dwell on earth be a ransom for Him). In the morning the messenger brought the answer, wherein were nearly three thousand verses of text and commentary sufficient to dispel all hesitancy. No sooner had Áqá Siyyid Yahyá glanced at these than he was filled with wonder, and said to that illustrious personage, “I have beheld a marvel a hundred-thousand-fold

375 <Although outwardly he testified to the eloquence and sublimity of those verses,

yet inwardly he was hesitant and desired to witness something extraordinary and truly  
miraculous.>

376 This quotation is from the Mathnaví. (E.G.B.)

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beyond what I sought, {for,} with all my learning and scholarship, I spent <eight or> nine whole days in writing one single page of questions containing not more than twelve lines. Most wonderful, therefore, does it seem to me that over two thousand exalted verses and illustrations of

such exceeding eloquence and beauty of style should be revealed and written down during five {or six} hours of the latter part of the night, which is the time for His Holiness's repose."

When, therefore, Áqá Siyyid Yahyá had well considered that treatise, and the solutions therein offered of the hard questions which he had propounded, his doubts were completely removed; and, after a sojourn of some little while, during which the honor of an interview was accorded to him <which completed his enchantment>, he received permission to depart, and set out for Yazd. The late Hájí Mírzá Jání writes:<sup>377</sup>

Áqá Siyyid Yahyá, at the behest of His Exalted Holiness [i.e. the Báb], came from Yazd to Tihrán, and it was during this journey that I had the honor of meeting him.<sup>378</sup> This was at a time when snow had covered the earth and the air was bitterly cold, and snow and rain threatened travelers with destruction and rendered movement almost impossible. Nevertheless I beheld in him such tranquility and contentment as knew no limit. I inquired of him what had been the means of his conversion and how he had come to believe, and he answered as follows: '<Although it requires a great deal of explanation to outline the manner in which I recognized Him, as I was immersed in doubts and tarried in the land of dilemma and uncertainty for much too long, I shall endeavor to acquaint you with a brief outline.> After the report of the Manifestation had been spread abroad,

<sup>377</sup> The first two paragraphs of the section that follows are similar to the Nuqtatu'l-

Káf, pages 120-122, quoted in Chapter 6. However, one will note a number of additional details in the present section.

<sup>378</sup> As noted earlier, this meeting in Kashan must have occurred in the opening days of

1847 as Vahíd arrived in Tihrán on 17 January of that year; see, Appendix 3.

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men would ask of me, "What say you of Him [i.e. the Báb]?" to which I was forced to reply, "Not having seen Him, what can I say? Once I have beheld Him, and ascertained somewhat more about Him, then I shall be able to impart to you that which I have understood." Later I set out for Shiraz to inquire into the matter and ascertain its truth. After staying in Shiraz for some time, I was granted the honor of attaining His presence. In the first interview with His

Holiness, I spoke, after the manner of divines, in a somewhat arrogant fashion, asking numerous questions, and conducting myself haughtily, as men of learning are wont to do. His Holiness answered me, but, my eyes being still covered with a veil of egotism and self-centeredness, His words found no favor in my sight. Indeed, I began to be somewhat sorry <and disappointed> that I had troubled myself to no purpose, and fruitlessly undertaken so long and tedious a journey. <What had I desired to witness had not transpired and in fact the very opposite was the case.> However, His Holiness smiled much upon me, and treated me very graciously. On returning to my lodging, I said confidentially to some of His disciples, who were profoundly versed in knowledge and entrusted with the divine treasures, “You are more learned and far wiser than this Youth; for what reason do you acknowledge the truth of His claim and admit the cogency of His proofs?” “If you will but be patient,” answered they, “for a little while, you too will confess and yield allegiance.” Deeply disappointed, I wished to return to my home, and was actually intending to commence the journey, when my companions <stopped and> prevented me, saying, “You too will be fully convinced and become a believer. <Since you have troubled yourself with this journey, do not hasten to return until the doubts have been dispelled and the veils lifted.>” I inquired on what grounds they based their belief. They replied, “Experience has taught us that anyone whom His Holiness

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receives graciously, and to whom He shows affection, is in the end invariably persuaded, even though he be filled with antagonism and aversion; while, on the other hand, anyone on whom His Holiness looks not favorably turns aside, even though at first he may incline to believe.”

“To be brief, I delayed my departure [from Shiraz] during which time I observed certain events that increased my desire to discover the truth and, in fact, brought about a limited degree of assurance. However, one night His Holiness summoned me, [and, after receiving me,] very graciously, said, “What dost thou then desire of Me? I replied, “I am a man of learning, and learning is my daily bread. I have in mind several questions, and shouldst thou grant me a sufficient answer, I shall know that the Point of Divine Knowledge is in Thy hand.” “Write down your

questions,” said He, “that I may answer them in writing.” Now I had in mind three questions. Two of these I wrote down and handed to His Holiness, Who at once took a pen, and, without reflection or hesitation, wrote, as fast as pen could travel, answers of surpassing merit. Then he took another sheet of paper and wrote, “The third question which you have in heart is this, and this is its answer.” When I had considered these full and sufficient answers, and the reply given to the question which I had in my heart and which I regarded as more weighty and important than the other two, but deemed unanswerable, and observing a number of other details <including His innate splendors, divine attraction and power and might over all things>, I became certain that in truth the expected Proof and the fashioner of the worlds seen and unseen, was none other than Him. Indeed, I submitted so entirely to the power of attraction and influence which He possesses that, oblivious of any danger and peril that might await me, at a mere hint on His part I was proud and glad to undertake a journey in this cold winter weather, my only hope being that He would,

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of His grace and favor, accept me as the servant of His servants, and that I might be permitted to shed even a drop of my blood in the furtherance of His cause.’

When, after the lapse of some time, I again had the honor of meeting Áqá Siyyid Yahyá in Yazd<sup>379</sup>, I observed in his august countenance signs of a glory and power which I had not noticed during my first interview with him in the capital [i.e. Tihrán], nor at other encounters, and I knew of a certainty that these signs portended the near approach of his departure from the world. In subsequent meetings I heard him say several times in the course of conversation, ‘This is my last journey, and hereafter you will see me no more;’ and often, explicitly or by implication, he gave utterance to the same thought. Sometimes when we were together, and the conversation took an appropriate turn, he would remark, ‘The near-ones to God are able to foretell coming events, and I swear by that beloved True One in the grasp of Whose power my soul lies that I know and could tell where and how I shall be slain, and who it is that shall slay me. And how glorious and blessed a thing it is that my blood should be shed for the uplifting of the Word of Truth!’ Sanctified be God! I know not what these personages

thus perceived that they surrendered the realm of self to divine attraction. And what marvel has He wrought, that such illustrious men of learning, achievement and piety, can foretell their own deaths and be informed of the slayer and the killing place, and yet, with utmost joy and enthusiasm, hasten to the abode of sacrifice. It is as though they were detached from this world and all that is therein, and indeed had grown weary and disgusted with all earthly things.<sup>380</sup>

379 Táríkh-i Jadíd, p. 115, indicates that this meeting took place in Tihrán. However,

both manuscripts in my possession have the meeting in Yazd.

380 The above two paragraphs closely correlate with the Nuqtatu'l-Káf, pp. 223-230;

see Chapter 6.

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In short, Áqá Siyyid Yahyá, after he had believed and made submission, took leave [of the Báb], and set out from Shiraz for Yazd. For a time at the beginning of his mission he expounded the Báb's doctrines only in gatherings of such as were prepared and fit to hear them. <He would share with certain companions and believers, the glad tidings of the Manifestation and the Truth of His Cause. Gradually as the flame of love for the Beloved grew stronger in the heart of the seeker, and the heat of recognition engulfed him, he would express a greater measure of the truth.> But afterwards, according to the purport of the verse-

“Prudence and love can ne'er walk hand in hand,”

and the verse

‘Love and fair fame must wage eternal war;

O lover, halt not at the loved one's door!’”

he began openly to proclaim the truth, and converted a great multitude <from ranks of the both the learned and the common>, beside leading many who had not reached the stage of conviction and the haven of assurance to profess devotion and sympathy. At length, through the exertions of certain meddlesome and mischievous people, the governor of Yazd was informed of what was taking place. He, fearing for himself, sent a body of men to arrest Siyyid Yahyá <and his companions>. A trifling collision occurred between the two parties and thereupon the governor prepared to effect his capture by force of arms, and prepared for battle.

Áqá Siyyid Yahyá retired with a number of his followers and friends into the citadel of Yazd, while the myrmidons of the governor surrounded it and commenced hostilities. At length the matter came to actual warfare, in the course of which some thirty or more of the governor's men and the rogues and vagabonds of the city who had joined them were killed, while seven of Áqá Siyyid Yahyá's followers were also slain, and the rest were besieged for some time, till some,

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unwilling to endure further disaster or withstand trial, dispersed. Siyyid Yahyá thereupon determined to set out for Shiraz, and said one night, "If one of you could manage to lead out my horse, so that I might diffuse this untoward situation, and convey myself to some other <preordained> place, it were not amiss." One Hasan <Yazdí> by name, who had been for some time in attendance on Siyyid Yahyá, and had displayed in his service the utmost faithfulness and devotion, having witnessed on the part of his august master many a display of miraculous and supernatural faculties, made answer, saying, "With your permission, I will lead out the horse." "They will capture and slay you," replied Siyyid

Yahyá. "In the path of servitude to you," rejoined Hasan, "that is easy to

bear. I have no ambition beyond it. <My purpose has been to attain detachment from worldly things and the blessings of martyrdom, particularly in the fulfillment of your wishes.>" So Siyyid Yahyá allowed him to go, and, even as he had announced, they took the youth captive outside the citadel and brought him before the governor, who ordered him to be blown from the mouth of a cannon. When they would have bound him with his back towards the gun, he begged the gunners, "Bind me, I pray you, with my face towards the gun, that I may see it fired." The gunners, and those who stood by looking on, were astonished at his composure and cheerfulness, and indeed <such behavior is a cause of wonder and amazement as> one who can be cheerful in such a plight must needs have great faith and fortitude.

Siyyid Yahyá, however, succeeded in effecting his departure from the citadel with one other, and set out for Shiraz <where he stayed only briefly>, whence he proceeded to Nayríz. After his withdrawal the governor soon overcame his followers. Several of them were taken captive and put to death, while from the rest, after they had suffered divers torments, fines of money were exacted. <This also provided an excuse to round up a number of affluent citizens, and despite their having remained aloof from the events, to forcibly extract from them considerable sums before releasing them.>

Now when Siyyid Yahyá was come to Nayríz, which was the

abode of his family and many friends, <in the course of a short while>, he caused many to believe, while others denied, and many remained

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hesitant and undecided. The governor of that district, <that is, Mírzá Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán>, though he had formerly professed the most devoted attachment to him, no sooner perceived <that some of the town's population had sided with Siyyid Yahyá while others were decidedly antagonistic, and feared that> a struggle was imminent <among the commoners,> and that the government would pass out of his hands, than he sent word to Siyyid Yahyá saying, "I do not consider it expedient that you should continue any longer in this province. It is best that you should depart with all speed to some other place." To this Siyyid Yahyá made reply, "I have returned hither, after a prolonged absence, to learn how matters fare, and to see my wife and family, neither do I wish to interfere with anyone. What makes you order me to quit my house, instead of affording me protection and observing towards me the friendship and respect which are my due? <It is most unseemly to order me to depart in such a hurry.> Do you not fear God, and have you no shame before His apostle?"

So when the governor, <Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán>, saw that Siyyid Yahyá heeded not his words and answered him sharply, he was filled with obstinate spite, and strove to raise a popular tumult, inciting such men of every class and kind as were most wicked and mischievous to make a disturbance and drive out Siyyid Yahyá, who, perceiving this, repaired to the mosque, and, after performing his devotions, ascended the pulpit formerly occupied by his illustrious grandfather, and spoke as follows:

O good Muslims! Am I not he whose opinions and prescriptions ye were wont to follow in all religious questions? In your hour of need and trial, as well as in all matters of doctrine and practice, did ye not use to prefer my word to that of any other? Was not my belief, and the judgment which my studies had led me to form, the criterion of all your actions? What has come to you that you meet me now with opposition and enmity? What forbidden thing have I sanctioned, or what lawful thing have I forbidden, that you thus without reason charge me with

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heresy and error? I stand here amongst you wronged and oppressed for no other cause than that I have, for your awakening and enlightenment, spoken true words and held faithful discourse, and that I have, out of sympathy for you and desire for your welfare, made known to you the path of guidance. This being so, let each who slights or supports me know of a certainty that, howsoever he acts in my regard, he acts so in regard to my illustrious Ancestor.

When he had spoken words to this effect, some were sorry, and some wept bitterly, saying, “We still continue in our former allegiance and devotion to you, and all that you say we hold true and right.” Then Siyyid Yahyá came forth from the mosque, left the city, and alighted in a ruined castle hard by, those friends who bore him company being not more than seventeen in number. But even after he had left the city his malicious and mischievous persecutors ceased not from their evil designs, for they followed him with a great multitude, scouring the country in all directions until they discovered his retreat. Thereupon they laid siege to the castle and opened hostilities. Then Siyyid Yahyá commanded seven of his men to go out and drive them away, and gave them full instructions as to the ordering of battle, adding that whoever should occupy a certain position would be slain by a wound in the breast, and that such as went in a certain direction would return unhurt. One amongst those present, a young lad of Yazd, good of heart and comely of countenance, arose and said, “I pray you suffer me to be the pioneer of this much-wronged band and to precede my comrades in martyrdom.” And Siyyid Yahyá kissed him on the cheek, and breathed a prayer for him. Then the defenders of the castle sallied swiftly forth, and attacked that godless host of hypocrites, and ere long scattered them and put them to flight. But the Yazdí lad, even as his master had foretold, and he had himself desired, drained the draught of martyrdom, escaped from the bonds of earth’s deceits, and gained the everlasting world and life eternal. The rest returned victorious, having learned the meaning of “verily we belong to God, and unto Him do we return.”

At the very time when these events were in progress, Prince Firuz

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Mírzá, the Nusratu’ d-Dawlih, came to assume the government of Shiraz, and was informed of what had taken place. He at once collected a considerable force, which he dispatched under the command of Muhammad-‘Alí Khán Díván-Begi, son of Hájí Shukru’lláh Khán of Núr, and General Mustafá-Qulí Khán Qaraguzlú, to subdue and take captive the insurgents. When this force reached the castle, the number of Siyyid Yahyá’s followers had increased to at least seventy. Several

encounters took place between the two forces, and on each occasion the Bábís routed and dispersed their opponents and obtained possession of abundant spoils. Meanwhile the devotion, faith, and love of Siyyid Yahyá's companions were much increased by the many prodigies which he wrought, so that each was fully prepared to lay down his life. Siyyid Yahyá had repeatedly described to his companions the circumstances of his approaching end, and all had, for the good pleasure of the Beloved, washed their hands of life, and, quit of earthly ties, awaited martyrdom. Those who had come to take them, being unable, notwithstanding all their efforts, to prevail by force of arms, and despairing of the final issue, had recourse to treachery, and wrote to Siyyid Yahyá expressing perplexity as to his mission, making excuses for past deeds, declaring themselves eager to inquire into the matter, and begging for instruction. They further pledged, with oaths sworn on the Word of God [the Qur'án], that if he would be good enough to come out to them, they would obey whatever terms he might propose.

So Siyyid Yahyá, out of respect for the Qur'án, prepared to go forth. But his followers surrounded him on every side, saying, "We are fearful and anxious about your exit, for this host is more faithless than the men of Kufa.<sup>381</sup> No reliance can be placed on their oaths, neither ought you to believe their promises." To this Siyyid Yahyá replied, "By God, I clearly perceive their perfidy, faithlessness, and treachery, and I know it as well as my saintly Ancestor<sup>382</sup> knew the perfidy of the men of Kufa. But how can I resist their wiles, these being in accord with the divinely-appointed destiny? Because of what they have written and

381 The people of Kufa by their promises of support induced the Imam Husayn to take

up arms, but failed Him in the day of need. (E.G.B.)

382 A reference to Imam Husayn from Whom Vahíd descended.

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pledged themselves on the Qur'án to perform, it is incumbent on me to go and complete the proof. You abide here till you receive my written instructions." Then he mounted his horse and took a last farewell of his companions, saying, "Verily we belong to God, and verily unto Him do we return." And his followers wept bitterly.

So Siyyid Yahyá came to the warring camp, and there alighted. At first they treated him with all respect and deference, such respect as Má'mún ar-Rashid observed towards the holy Imam 'Alí<sup>383</sup>, upon Him be a thousand blessings and salutations, while inwardly bent on His death. And they agreed to postpone all discussion of terms till the morrow, and spent that night conversing on various topics. But when morning was come, and Siyyid Yahyá would have gone forth from his

tent, the sentinels prevented him, saying, "It is not permitted for you to go out." So he remained a prisoner in the tent.

No sooner had tidings of this reached Siyyid Yahyá's faithful followers than, unable to restrain themselves, they emerged from their castle, hurled themselves upon the center of the army, and, in the space of one hour, threw the whole camp into confusion. The senior officers, seeing this, hastened into Siyyid Yahyá's presence, saying, "Was it not agreed between us last night that there should be peace and concord?" "Aye," said he, "but your scheming last night and your conduct this morning provoked this reprisal." "It was done without our knowledge," answered they, "and without our sanction. Some of our men, who have lost kinsmen and relatives in this warfare, offered you this insult ignorantly and without our knowledge. You, who are merciful and generous, must overlook their fault." "What", said he, "would you have me do?" "Write", said they, "to these men of yours, bidding them evacuate the castle and return to their own homes, that the minds of our soldiers may be reassured; and we will then arrange matters as you may determine, and act agreeably on your suggestions."

Siyyid Yahyá had no resource but to write to his followers, "Come what may, you must submit to the divinely ordained decree; meanwhile there is no recourse but that you should gather up your own gear, leaving the spoils you have won exactly as they are, and return to your homes. 383 The eighth Imam. 'Alí ar-Ridá (765-818).

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Let us wait and see what God wills, and what's behind the veil of predestination." So these poor companions, being constrained to obey his behest, departed to their homes. But no sooner did they arrive there than their foes attacked their houses, <captured them singly,> carried off their goods as spoil, destroyed their dwellings, and brought them in chains, bound hand and foot, to the camp.

There was with Siyyid Yahyá a certain believer of Yazd who had served him faithfully both at Yazd and Nayríz, suffering much for his sake, and attaining the exalted station of servitude by renouncing all earthly possessions. And when word was brought that the executioner was on his way from the city charged with the killing of that illustrious Siyyid [Yahyá], this man began to make great lamentation. But his master said, "It is you, not me, whom this headsman shall slay; he who shall slay me will arrive tomorrow." When the morrow came, about an hour after the time of the Morning Prayer, he said again, "He who is to slay me is now come." Shortly after this, a party of farrashes arrived and led out Siyyid Yahyá and the Yazdí from the tent. Then the executioner, just as Siyyid Yahyá had foretold, proffered to the youth the draught of martyrdom; but, when his glance fell on Siyyid Yahyá, he said, "I am

ashamed before the face of God's Apostle and will never lift my hand to slay His offspring," neither would he, for all their importunity, consent to do their bidding. Then one who had lost two brothers in the earlier part of the war and therefore cherished a deep resentment, said, "I will kill him." And he loosed the shawl wherewith Siyyid Yahyá was girt, cast it round his neck, and drew it tight. And others beat his holy body with sticks and stones, dragging it hither and thither over the plain, till his soul soared falcon-like to the branches of paradise <and took his place near the Lord of Oneness>. Then they severed his head from his body, skinned it, stuffed it with straw, and sent it, with other heads, along with the captives to Shiraz. And they sent an announcement of their victory and triumph to Prince [Firuz Mírzá], and fixed a day for their entry into Shiraz. And when on the appointed day they drew near, the city was decorated, and the people were busy enjoying themselves and making merry, most of them having come out from the town to meet the

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victorious troops and gaze on the captives.<sup>384</sup> The late Hájí Mírzá Jání writes:<sup>385</sup>

One Kuchak 'Alí Beg, the head-man and chief of the Basirí<sup>386</sup> tribe of Shiraz, related what follows: 'After they had slain Áqá Siyyid Yahyá, they came to take camels from our people, intending to set the captives on their bare backs. I was distressed at this, but could not resist the governor's order. I therefore rode away from my tribe at night and came to Shiraz that at least I might not be amongst my people and have to endure the insolence of the soldiers. When I was come within half a farsang of Shiraz, I lay down to sleep for a while to rid myself of weariness. When I again mounted, I saw that the people of Shiraz had come out in large numbers with minstrels and musicians, and were sitting about in groups at every corner and cross-road, feasting and making merry with wanton women. On every side I noted with wonder drunken brawls, wine bibbing, the savor of roasted meats, and the strains of guitars and lutes. Thus wondering I entered the city.

'After a while, unable to endure the suspense, I determined to go out and see what was taking place. As I came forth from the city-gate, I heard an old man asking another, "What has happened today that the people have thus left their houses and gone out of the town as though to see some great sight, and why do they thus make merry?" The other, a youth, replied, "You must surely be a stranger

384 The portion detailing Vahíd's activities in Yazd and Nayriz closely correlates with

the section in the Nuqtatu'l-Káf; see Chapter 6.

385 This entire section is not in the published Nuqtatu'l-Káf. At least two possibilities

exist: (1) Hamadání was using a text of Hájí Mírzá Jání's narrative that differed from

Browne's edition of the Nuqtatu'l-Káf by at least this one section; or (2) he simply

added this material and attributed it to Mírzá Jání, much like other writers who

attribute their writings or poems to earlier recognized figures.

386 The Basirí is one of the Khamsa (Arab) nomad tribes of Fárs and Laristán. See Lord

Curson, Persia, vol. 2, p. 114. (E.G.B.)

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not to know about the heretic who renounced our faith and creed of Islam and rebelled against His Majesty the Shah, and how a great force of troops was sent against him. Well, they have taken and slain him, and made captive his family, companions {and followers} whom they will bring into the city today." "By which gate," asked the old man, "will they enter?" "By the Sa'dí gate," answered the other.

{ 'He was a wise old man,' continued Kuchak 'Alí Beg, 'and had seen the world and read its history!387 As soon as I had heard what passed between him and the youth, it at once recalled to me the story of Sahl ibn Sa'íd, how he questioned the man of Damascus, and how just such a dialogue ensued, the latter saying, "They will enter Damascus by the gate of Sa'at."388 I was much struck by the coincidence, and my wonder increased. } When I had gone <somewhat> further, I saw such feasting and rejoicing as I had never before witnessed. Most of the men were engaged in making merry and toying with their wanton women. After a little while I saw the camels approaching, whereon there

387 The narrator means, I suppose, to imply that the old man, struck by the resemblance between the episodes of Nayríz and Karbala, intentionally asked this

question to bring out this resemblance more clearly. (E.G.B.)

388 In illustration of this narrative, I subjoin the translation of a passage occurring in a

manuscript collection of ta'ziyas belonging to the University Library of Cambridge

(Add. 423, f. 63b): "It is related on the authority of Ibn 'Abbás that Sahl-i Sa'idí related

as follows: 'I had gone on business to Damascus. One day I arrived at a village in the neighborhood of Damascus. I found that orders had been issued for the village to be decorated, and that the people were flocking out as though to see some sight, with rejoicing and beatings of drums and kettledrums. I said to myself, 'Surely these people must have some festival not common to other men.' I asked one what was toward. He replied, 'O Shaykh, art thou then an Arab of the desert?' I answered, 'I am Sahl-i Sa'idi, and one of the companions of our Holy Prophet.' The man heaved a sigh and began to weep and make lamentation, saying, 'It is wonderful that the heavens do not rain down blood at this calamity.' Then said I, 'Speak more clearly.' Then quoth he, 'The people of Damascus are rejoicing and making merry over the blessed head of Imam Husayn which they of Iraq have sent to Yazid.' I said, 'From which gate of the city will they bring forth that head?' He answered, 'From the Gate of Sa'at.'..." (E.G.B.)

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were set some forty or fifty women. Many of the soldiers bore on their spears the severed heads of the men they had slain. And till this time the towns-folk had been busy with their merrymaking, but no sooner did their eyes fall on the severed heads borne aloft on spears and the captives set on barebacked camels than they burst unrestrainedly into tears. 'Thus they brought the captives into the bazaars, which had been decorated and adorned, and though it was no great distance from the bazaars to the citadel, yet such was the throng of spectators who purposely retarded the passage of the captives that it was after mid-day when they reached the governor's palace. The Prince was holding a pleasure-party in the summer-house called Kuláh Farangí<sup>389</sup> and the garden adjoining it, he sitting on a chair, and the nobles and magnates of the city standing. On one side was

drawn a curtain, behind which the women of the Prince's household were ensconced. And the captives all bound to one chain were led in this sad plight into the garden and brought before the Prince. Then <colonel> Muhammad-'Alí Khán, Mírzá Na'ím, and the other officers recounted their exploits and their glorious victory, with various versions and many embellishments, to the Prince, who on his part kept inquiring the names, rank, and family of the captives, and throwing in an occasional, "Who is this?" and "Which is that?" And all the captives were women, with the exception of one child four or five years of age who was with them. And that {sickly} child was in truth a partaker of the sufferings of these unfortunate women.

'Now when the conversation had been extended for a long while, suddenly a very tall woman who was amongst the captives cried out, "O son of Marjina<sup>390</sup>, hast thou no

<sup>389</sup> Lit. "The European's hat", is the name of a summerhouse of the Fars' governor,

which E.G. Browne states he visited in the spring of 1888; see, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, p. 317.

<sup>390</sup> Shimar ibn Jawshan, one of the murderers of Imam Husayn. See Sir Lewis Pelly,

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fear of God nor shame before my Ancestor<sup>391</sup> that thou thus lookest on his offspring before all these strange men?"<sup>392</sup>' Here Kuchak 'Alí Beg added an oath before continuing, 'The woman's words produced such an effect on the hearts of those who were present, moving them to tears, that had the sight-seers and townfolk been there and witnessed what took place there would assuredly have been a disturbance and revolt. The Prince first ordered the woman killed, but afterwards, seeing the mood of the bystanders greatly changed, he grew apprehensive, and ordered the captives dismissed.'

The night before, when the raid had been made on the houses of the {captives}<sup>393</sup> [at Nayríz] {and they had been taken prisoner}, twelve people had succeeded in effecting their escape. These, however, were subsequently captured in the neighborhood of Isfahan and brought to Shiraz, {where they suffered martyrdom.}

But in spite of all this, [as it would seem two years later,] they again

waged protracted mountain warfare with the believers [of Nayríz], who, because of the cruelties and exactions to which they were subjected, were for a long while hiding in the mountains with their wives and children. Their persecutors, having captured and killed the men, seized, together with their children, at least thirty-five of the women, or according to another reckoning some forty of them, <on account of their enmity> they placed the women and children in the midst of a cave, heaped up in the cave a vast quantity of firewood, poured kerosene, and set fire to it. One of those who took part in this deed related what follows: “Two or three days later, we ascended that

Miracle Play of Hasan and Husayn, vol. 2, p. 258, and Tabari’s Annales, series ii, vol. i, p.

377, 1. 6. (E.G.B.)

391 The Prophet Muhammad, or his cousin and son-in-law ‘Alí b. Abi Talib, from

whom the woman, as belonging to a family of Siyyids, claimed descent. (E.G.B.)

392 i.e. men beyond the circle of those whose nearness of kinship to a woman entitles

them to look on her unveiled. (E.G.B.)

393 <companions>

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mountain and removed the door from the cave. We saw that the fire had sunk down into the ashes; but all those women with their children were seated, each in some corner, clasping their little ones to their bosoms, and sitting round in a circle, just as they were [when we left them]. Some, as though in despair or in mourning, had suffered their heads to sink down to their knees in grief and all retained the postures they had assumed. I was filled with amazement, thinking that the fire had not burned them. Full of apprehension and awe I entered. Then I saw that all were burned and charred to a cinder, yet had they never made a movement, which would cause the crumbling away of the bodies. As soon as I touched them with my hand, however, they crumbled away to ashes. And all of us, when we had seen this, repented of what we had done. <But of what avail was this?>”

<In the course of conversation, I myself heard the following from a certain learned divine who was unrivalled in piety and saintliness, and which increased my astonishment at these people [i.e. the Bábís]. Of the details he shared, a summary is this: One day during the period when Áqá Siyyid Yahyá and the body of his companions were surrounded by the gunmen and the standard of war and battle was raised high, one of them was struck by a bullet. “My injury is fatal,” he informed his friends,

“the time for my earthly separation from you draws nigh. However as long as I am able to move, even stumblingly, use my body as a shield and get behind me. Thus, as they shoot at us, [the shots] will spare you and strike me instead, and as I am already dying, the greater the injuries, the quicker will be my departure.>

But at that time the Bábís were subject to so rigorous a persecution, and matters went so hard with them, that none dared so much as utter their name, or allude to them in any way, or inquire concerning them. The full narrative of these events, therefore, would greatly exceed what is here recorded, but that which is set forth is all that could be ascertained. And these details were for the most part related by persons who were not believers, though candid and truthful after their own fashion. {“Excellence is that whereunto foes testify.”} Even this brief summary, however, will suffice for the appraisal of unprejudiced persons. The truth of the matter is, indeed, sufficiently

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indicated by a tradition of Jabir, who, speaking of the promised Proof, says, “He shall manifest the perfection of Moses, the splendor of Jesus, and the patience of Job. His chosen ones shall be abased in His day. Their heads shall be offered as presents even as the heads of Turks and Daylamites. They shall be slain and burnt. Fear shall seize them; dismay and alarm shall strike terror into their hearts. The earth shall be dyed with their blood. Their womenfolk shall bewail and lament. These indeed are my friends!”<sup>394</sup>

Glory be to God, {His Prophets, and the sacred religion}! <Now consider how in the Hadith [known as] Tablet of Fatimih,> a thousand years before this Manifestation the signs and tokens whereby its saints might be distinguished were thus explicitly declared by the imams of our holy religion for the information of this misguided people and their deliverance from error. The fulfillment of this announcement is now clearly seen; yet still the majority of mankind, thus blinded by willful prejudice, refuse to recognize this, and pay no heed to the accomplishment of the prophecy handed down by tradition from the Imams of old, the blessings of God be upon Them all. Yet have they clearly seen and heard how the heads of these true believers were sent as presents from land to land, how they were slain and burned, how their wives and children and those of their households were led captive from city to city, and how, just as the Imams foretold, the earth was dyed with their blood. Still do many, accounting as sound reason their own erring and wilful judgments, stigmatize as misguided or deranged men such as these, who were in truth kings in the spiritual world, gracious proofs of the Point of Unity {exemplars of “I was a Hidden Treasure. I wished to be made known, and thus I called creation into being in order that I

might be known,”<sup>395</sup> to whom, moreover, such words as “These indeed are my friends” were addressed}. And the greatest marvel is that before those who believed in this sublime and holy faith had embraced the new doctrine all men readily admitted their virtue, learning, sincerity, integrity, wisdom, and piety, and granted them their being incontestably superior to their contemporaries in austerity of life, godliness, intelligence, and

394 Translation by Shoghi Effendi as it appears in the *Kitab Iqan*, p. 245.

395 Translation from the *Kitáb-i Aqdas*, n.23.

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good works. Thus Siyyid Yahyá, for example, was admittedly one of the most eminent divines of Islam, being remarkable not only for his singular holiness of life, but for his rare insight and miraculous faculties. Whenever he entered any town within the lands of Islam he was met by all the divines, nobles, and great men of the district, and was brought into the city with every mark of deference and respect. It was considered an honor to serve him, and at whatever house he alighted the owner thereof would glory over his fellows. In short, all men regarded his society as a privilege, and converse with him as a legitimate cause for pride. But when he had, after most careful and diligent enquiry, recognized the Lord of the world, and, actuated only by a desire to please God, set himself to save from error those who still wandered in the wilderness <of heedlessness and delusion>, and to guide them {to the shores of certitude and fulfillment and} into the haven of peace <and assurance> then, because bat-like they hated the light of Truth and effulgence of understanding, they acted according to their evil nature and their ancient custom, and, in return for his charity and kindness towards them, stirred up strife and blood-shed, persecuted and afflicted him, stuffed his holy head with straw as though it had been the head of a Turkman, Baluch, or Deylami, and bore it from town to town. Then, just as the holy Imams had foretold, they grievously afflicted and slew his friends and followers, cruelly burned their bodies with fire, and sent their heads as a show and a gift from land to land, as though to say, “This is the meaning of ‘Love’s portion is affliction,’ and this the way of such as

are permitted to draw near to the courts of God!

{ ‘The guest whose place is highest in this banquet  
They ply most often with the wine of woe.’ }

Thus they acted as they had done of yore in the time of God’s Apostle, dealing with these sorely afflicted people as they dealt with the Prince of Martyrs [Imam Husayn], upon Him be a thousand blessings and salutations, and His followers on the plain of Karbala, and as they

had dealt with the Holy Spirit of God [Jesus] and His disciples. But the cruelty, hardness of heart, and unbelief which they had displayed towards

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Moses and the other Prophets of bygone time appeared in this Manifestation with redoubled intensity, revealing to all discerning persons the infidelity which permeated every recess of these men's beings. For just as in every previous age they slandered the Prophets and saints, accounting it a work of merit to slay them, burn them, saw them asunder, and crucify them in blind obedience to their priests' commands; just as they reviled, cursed, and rejected them, and convened assemblies to devise means for the shedding of their blood; just as they set in order proofs for the justification of their own assertions and actions, and arguments for the falsity of the claims advanced by those who announced themselves to be God's messengers; just as they accounted their miracles naught but magic or slight-of-hand, and their revelations mere tales and "fables of the ancients<sup>396</sup>," so in this Manifestation did they say and do more than ever they had said or done, in days gone by. <In truth, many of the divines who considered themselves men of influence and guides of people in the realms of God, without any scrutiny or careful determination, and solely based on personal pride on material learning and for protection of their position and leadership, caused all these misdeeds and agitation. They brought untold tumult and bloodshed. Unchecked and without the least questioning, they gave instructions for the eradication of these servants of God. In truth, no criticism is directed at the Monarch, as his majesty the Shah was urged, indeed forced into this unseemly violence against this community, because the divines exerted such influence over the nation and the government that the power and the authority of the Throne is insignificant compared with the mastery and rule of the divines. By such disagreements and divisions, they have reduced the religion of God to a mere name, they have rendered the government impotent and the monarchy an empty shell. Indeed, the Throne is a lifeless vessel, and much like a slaughtered bird moves its wings and legs, but its agitation is a sign of decline and impending death. Or their behavior can be likened to a ship wherein these unholy divines have gathered, each considering himself the competent captain and the independent and unrivaled leader of this vessel. In their competitiveness and hidden rivalries, one

396 Qur'án 4:25, 8:31 and 16:26.

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commands the vessel to go east, while another, for no better reason, calls for the west, and the third, based solely on his own vain imaginings, directs it north. None have been given the understanding and insight to discern the path to salvation, and to safely guide its inhabitants to the shores of deliverance. Whatever directions they give are futile, and whatever they instruct is useless. As soon as winds of opposition blow, they will all assuredly perish in the depths of oblivion.>397

{And these events took place in the year 1266 A.H.}

397 Hamadání manuscript has two lines of Mathnaví.

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## Chapter 10

### Companions of Vahíd

Even as it hath been recorded ... in the 'Tablet of Fátimih', concerning the character of the Qá'im: 'He shall manifest the perfection of Moses, the splendor of Jesus, and the patience of Job. His chosen ones shall be abased in His day. Their heads shall be offered as presents even as the heads of Turks and Daylamites. They shall be slain and burnt. Fear shall seize them; dismay and alarm shall strike terror into their hearts. The earth shall be dyed with their blood. Their womenfolk shall bewail and lament. These indeed are my friends!'

Kitáb-i Iqán, p. 245

The extinction of Vahíd's life was the signal for a fierce onslaught on the life and property of those who stood identified with the new movement. For Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán it was time to exact his long awaited revenge, which he satisfied by ordering the capture and massacre of all who had been associated with Vahíd or had rebelled against his own tribal rule. Several thousand men, led by Colonel Mihr-'Alí Khán, were commissioned for this villainous task. Some of the men were among the Silákhurí regiment while others were the armed gunmen sent from Shiraz, and yet others had been the irregulars gathered from the surrounding tribes allied with the governor. For a period of no less than a month these men committed that which had never before occurred in the history of the young movement – not even in Mázandarán.

The companions of Vahíd who had scattered in hiding to various homes, orchards and wilderness were, one by one, hunted, seized, chained, tortured, and eventually slaughtered. Their women and children were captured and subjected to heinous brutalities, wholly unparalleled in the history of the region. Fádíl Mázandarání writes: "On account of their mistreatment, some of the [Bábí] women decided to commit suicide and

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threw themselves into wells and perished. It is reported that they cut the breasts of some other women and several infants were stabbed and lifted from their cradle by bayonets and tossed some distance. They placed forty women in a cave and burned them alive.”<sup>398</sup>

The properties of all Bábís were confiscated and their homes destroyed. Soldiers vandalized the homes in such wise that even the floorboards and roof-lumber were taken away. What remained, was burnt to the ground and obliterated. The Chindár-Súkhtih quarter, the scene of the arrival of Vahíd and the first Bábí mass conversion in Nayríz, was so completely demolished that for decades much of it remained uninhabited. Those portions of Fort Khájih made out of wood were burned to the ground and no trace of many of its segments was left standing. The luxurious home of Vahíd, which at one time had been a source of pride for the inhabitants, and had witnessed Vahíd's matrimony, was ransacked and every article from it taken away.<sup>399</sup> The armed men of Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán continued to hunt the companions of Vahíd and one by one located them, and anyone else remotely related to them or associated with that unfortunate band. The captives – men, women and children – were roped together, paraded at first through the streets of Nayríz, after which they were subjected to atrocious treatment in the hope of extracting from them whatever material advantage their persecutors had hitherto been unable to obtain. Having satisfied the greed of their captors, the victims were made to suffer an agonizing death. Many men had to endure having horseshoes nailed to their feet, and in that piteous state they were made to walk, each of them dragged through the streets an object of contempt and derision to all the people. Afterwards, they were all beheaded and their women and children made to walk over their severed heads and decapitated bodies.

Those affluent Bábís whom Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán for purposes of

<sup>398</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 422. Other sources indicate that the incident of

burning forty Bábí women and children took place subsequent to the battles of Nayríz-II.

<sup>399</sup> Years later this house was purchased by the Bahá'í institutions in whose possession

it remained until the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

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personal benefit had plunged into dark and subterranean dungeons were, as soon as his object was achieved, brought out and forced to sign the deeds of their properties over to him, or to offer exceedingly large ransoms, only to be delivered into the hands of his soldiers who perpetrated upon them acts of unspeakable cruelty.

Shortly after the fort's fall, the three-hundred and fifty unarmed Bábís who had been massacred outside the fort of Khájih, were buried without any religious ceremony, even such as was required by the Islámic laws, in a ditch near the entrance of the fort, wearing the same clothes they had on when they died.<sup>400</sup>

#### Taking Captives to Shiraz<sup>401</sup>

Having now completed the task entrusted to it, the army sent some months earlier to eradicate Vahíd and his companions by Prince Fírúz Mírzá, the Nusratu'd-Dawlih, was now prepared to return to its base. Feeling victorious and wishing to take a prize to their leader in Shiraz,

<sup>400</sup> During 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry, a member of the Spiritual Assembly of Nayríz,

Mírzá Muhammad-Ibráhím, son of Mírzá 'Alí-Bayk, purchased the land and much of the surrounding ground where the fort of Khájih was situated. Through the community's efforts, sections of the fort were restored to their original condition.

However, in 1923, a flood caused considerable damage and Shoghi Effendi instructed

special fundraising in both the eastern and western hemispheres for reconstruction

purposes. With those funds, an additional Bahá'í cemetery was also constructed

nearby. Under the supervision of the Spiritual Assembly of Nayríz and in collaboration

with the Shíráz Assembly, several of the survivors of the 1850 pogrom, including

Karbalá'í Muhammad-Sálih and Hájí Muhammad Nayrízí, were brought to the

location, and the exact burial spot of the three-hundred and fifty companions of Vahíd

was identified. A special shrine was constructed on that spot and a memorial stone

installed. Also, the room in the fort where Vahíd had stayed was restored and refurbished much the same as it existed during his brief occupancy. Moreover, in

accordance with Shoghi Effendi's instructions, the remains of the eighteen martyrs of

Naw-Rúz 1909, who were initially buried in public cemeteries, were exhumed and also

brought to this location and buried next to their spiritual brethren of an earlier generation.

401 The information in the following sections is gleaned from *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*,

vol. 3, pp. 292-301, and *Lam'átu'l-Anvár*, vol. 1.

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they collected the heads of many Bábí martyrs which lay scattered in the fields and hoisted them high on spears, among them the straw-filled, skinned head of Vahíd himself. They also assembled from among those unfortunate survivors some thirty men and fifty women, captured and taken as a battle trophy.<sup>402</sup> The men, conducted in chains, were made to walk barefoot all the way to Shiraz over harsh and hostile terrain; while the womenfolk, most barely clad, were made to ride on barebacked camels. The leaders of the victorious party led the procession, while the captives followed in miserable conditions and the cheering foot soldiers proceeded from behind. To the sound of drums and trumpets, they marched to their destination. Of this, Áqá Mírzá Áqá Afnán, titled Núri'd-Dín, has recorded the following in his unpublished diary:

The martyrs' heads and the captives were brought into Shiraz from Dariyun, Tang-Sargán and Tang-Sa'dí. In Tang-Sargán, opposite a place near Sitlan and Burhid, and in the proximity of the entrance to Tang-Sa'dí, there is a place known as Qabr Bábí [Bábí burial]. It is named thus because when the caravan reached that location, three of the Bábís could no longer walk and therefore they were decapitated, their heads raised above the points of spears along with other heads, and the remains were buried in that spot.<sup>403</sup>

Also related to the arrival of the Bábís in Shiraz, Fádil Mázandarání writes:

The soldiers traveled in great haste until they reached Shiraz. The governor-general had decreed the day of arrival of the captives and the severed heads to be a day of citywide celebration. The people therefore had left their homes and gone outside the city, carousing and merrymaking, watching the arrival of the wretched party. The formation of the procession coming to Shiraz was as follows: The military

402 *Nayríz Mushkbíz*, p. 71.

403 *Núri'd-Dín's Diary*, p. 76.

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commanders rode in front, while those of lower ranks were riding behind them. Compelled to march behind them were the captive Bábí men numbering in excess of thirty, all bound and chained, and in their midst were some fifty women prisoners riding unsaddled camels. Surrounding them were soldiers, each carrying a severed head raised on a long lance, [with the rest of their numbers following behind]. The soldiers were jubilant and exceedingly cheerful and in such manner arrived at the city.<sup>404</sup>

404 A Traveler's Narrative, p. 258, n. H, summarizes:

The heads of the victims were stuffed with straw, and bearing with them these grim trophies of their prowess, together with some forty or fifty Bábí women and one child of tender age as captives, the victorious army returned to Shiraz. Their entry into that city was made the occasion of general rejoicing; the captives were paraded through the streets and bazaars and finally brought before Prince Fírúz Mírzá, who was feasting in a summerhouse called Kuláh Farangí. In his presence Mihr-'Alí Khán, Mírzá Na'ím, and the other officers recounted the details of their victory, and received congratulations and marks of favor. The captive women were finally imprisoned in an old caravansary outside the Isfahan gate. What treatment they experienced at the hands of their captors is left to our conjecture.

Seyyed Ali Mohammad dit le Bab, p. 407, states:

This day was a fete day, so an eye witness tells us. The inhabitants were scattered about through the countryside, bringing with them their food and many among them drinking, on the sly, whole bottles of wine. The air was filled with musical strains, the songs of musicians, the screaming and laughter of lewd women. The bazaars were adorned with flags; joy was general. Suddenly there was absolute silence. They saw thirty-two camels coming, each carrying an unfortunate prisoner, woman or child, bound and thrown crosswise over the saddle like a bundle. All around them were soldiers carrying long lances and upon each lance was impaled the head of a Bábí who had been slain at Nayríz. The hideousness of the sight deeply affected the holiday population of Shiraz and they returned, saddened, to their dwellings. 'The horrible caravan passed through the bazaars and continued to the palace of the governor. This personage was in his garden where he had gathered in his kiosk (called Kuláh Farangí) the

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Upon their arrival, in accordance with the Prince's instructions, all the Bábí prisoners were brought before him in the government house and, with much delay each was presented to the governor who closely considered each of the men and women brought to him. Thereupon, he ordered some of the prominent figures among the captives, such as the aforementioned Ghulám-Ridá Yazdí<sup>405</sup> and Shaykhuná<sup>406</sup>, martyred with utmost cruelty and torture. The rest were placed in prison.<sup>407</sup> They acted so brutally towards them however, that certain ones among them, such as, [Mírzá] Mihdí, the uncle of 'Alí Sardár, expired in captivity. Some of the others were released after a considerable passage of time. Included among those released were the two sons of Vahíd. Of the Bábí women who were eventually released some returned to Nayríz while others chose other destinations.<sup>408</sup>

Initially the Bábís brought to Shiraz were locked in a decayed caravansary where guards were posted to watch over them. Each day rich, the eminent citizens of Shiraz. The music ceased, the dancing stopped and Muhammad-'Alí-Khán as well as Mírzá Na'ím, two small tribal chiefs who had taken part in the campaign, came to tell of their brave deeds and to name one by one the prisoners.'

<sup>405</sup> A companion of Vahíd from Yazd.

<sup>406</sup> Fort Khájíh's executioner.

<sup>407</sup> A Year Amongst the Persians, p. 317 states:

It was in this building [Kuláh Farangí], I believe, that the Babi captives taken at Niriz were exhibited to Firuz Mírzá, the governor of Shiraz. These captives, consisting entirely of women and little children (for the men had all been slain on the spot), were subsequently confined in an old caravansary just outside the Isfahan gate, where they suffered great hardships, besides being exposed, as the Babi historian asserts, to the brutality of the soldiers.

Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 197, states that women and children were placed in a house next to a military barrack while the men and the bags containing the severed

heads were imprisoned in Sháh Mír Abú'l-Hamizih Caravansary.

<sup>408</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 423.

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they were brought forward to town's central square and made the object

of the contempt and insults of the citizens.<sup>409</sup> As the condition of the prisoners deteriorated and the city's population was no longer amused by tormenting them, a decision was reached to divide them into two groups: one being released unconditionally, who for the most part left the city and dispersed across far regions, and the second group, who were returned in chains to Nayríz and handed as a gift to Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán. Among the latter group were: Áqá Shaykh Yúsuf; Karbalá'í Mírzá Muhammad; and Shír-'Askar, uncle of Táju'd-Dín who had been among the first martyrs of the fort.

An illuminating perspective on the events is gained from the intelligence communications of Mírzá Mahmúd, the British Agent in Shiraz, who filed a series of reports on the incidents, the first of which was for the period 4 to 20 June 1850:

I wrote to you previously that by the order of H.R.H.<sup>410</sup>, a Regiment of Sirbaz [soldiers] and two Guns had been sent to Nereez. Information has now been received, that the followers of the Báb made a night attack upon the Sirbaz, and killed and wounded several. The next day Moostuffa Gooly Khán Sirteep [General] commanded the Sirbaz to attack and take the Babees and to destroy the Tower, in which was Syed Yahyáh. The latter on hearing this, came out and ordered his followers to attack the Sirbaz. Accordingly an engagement ensued which continued from morning until noon, when the Babees prevailed, and the Sirbaz were

<sup>409</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wife, Munírih Khánúm, reports that Khadíjih Bagum, the widow

of the Báb, stated to her: "One day I noticed that the city of Shiraz was particularly perturbed and the people were exceedingly jubilant, with the sound of trumpets and horns heard on every side. Then I learned that the heads of the Bábí martyrs of Nayríz were brought into the city on that occasion and in the same manner the captives of Nayríz arrived and conducted to their prison. How I longed to meet at least one of the kinsmen of the martyrs! But, alas, it was not possible. One night, however, two of them came to our house begging. Even then, it was not possible to speak with them." (Translated from Khándán Afnán, p. 165.)

<sup>410</sup> By His Royal Highness is meant the governor-general of Fárs.

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defeated. Many on both sides were killed and wounded. When H.R.H. heard this news He commanded a Regiment of Sirbaz with 50 Horsemen and two Guns under Mahomed Wulee Khán to proceed and reinforce Mehr Ally Khán and Moostuffa Ally Khán. On the 19th [of May] Mahomed Salah Khán Yoozbashee with 50 Horsemen proceed to Nereez. On the 20th [May,] Mahomed Wulee Khán Sirteep, with two Guns and the Sallakhoonee Regiment followed to the assistance of Mehr Ally Khán. The Prince says 50 were killed and 40 wounded ... The Prince having ordered the Heads of the slain Babees to be brought in, on the 9th [June] Mehr Ally Khán arrived with 12 heads. H.R.H. commanded the Sirbaz to perambulate the streets with these Heads on the point of their Bayonets. This was accordingly done, with drums beating. It is said however in the City, that these heads did not belong to the Babees but to the Sirbaz. After they had been paraded in the streets, the heads were suspended at the Isfahan Gate ... On the 23rd [June?] H.R.H. received a letter from Mehr Ally Khán reporting that the Babees had been defeated, and that Syed Yahyáh and his followers would be speedily sent to the Prince.<sup>411</sup>

The second secret report of Mírzá Mahmúd is for the period 23 June to 3 July:

On the 24th [June] Mehr Ally Khán having sent to Shiraz 13 Heads of the Babees, the Sirbaz placed them on their Bayonets and carried them to the Prince. H.R.H. ordered them to be paraded through the streets with drums beating, and after to be suspended at the Gate... on the 26th two Ghoolams arrived from Mehr Ally Khán with news of the capture Syed Yahyáh. H.R.H. gave dresses of honor to both of them. It is reported that finding he could not escape, Syed Yahyáh with 4 of his men surrendered on the 17th  
411 The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944, p. 110.

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Instant to Mehr Ally Khán. He made four requests 1st that his followers should be permitted to go free, 2nd that if doomed to die, his Captor should intercede with the Prince for a respite of three days, 3rd that if taken to the City, not be escorted by Sirbaz, 4th that in the place of the Executioner one of the Moojtehids should put him to death, after receiving his last words. All these requests were refused by Mehr Ally Khán, who said he waited orders from the

Prince for his disposal. On the 25th H.R.H. sent an Executioner with two Furrashes to put him (Syed Yahyáh) to death, but before their arrival he and his followers had been killed by the Sirbaz. It is reported that the Sirbaz have plundered Nereez, and taken all the women captives.<sup>412</sup>

The final operative communication pertaining to the Bábí struggle filed by Mírzá Mahmúd, the British agent in Shiraz, is for the period 1 to 16 July 1850:

On the 8th July Mehr Ally Khán sent to H.R.H. eleven followers of Bab, they have all been imprisoned. 10th July... Mehr Ally Khán and Moostufa Gooly Khán, who had been sent against Syed Yahyáh, have returned to Shiraz bringing with them 25 of the Babees Sect, together with the head of Syed Yahyáh and 13 others, as an offering to H.R.H. who ordered the Prisoners to be confined. The Prince has received these two Khans with great favor. It appears that only one Mahala [quarter] of Nereez was plundered and destroyed. The Sirbaz had with them a good quantity of the stolen property. Syed Yahyáh is reported to have had four or five vessels of Pomegranate Syrup, a single drop of which was sufficient to make a man become a Babees and join them. One bottle was drunk by four Sirbaz, who instantly turned Babees, and fought against their own Commanders.

412 *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944*, pp. 110-111.

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They say this Syrup has been brought to the Prince.<sup>413</sup>

Momen notes, "The matter of the pomegranate syrup is of course typical of the ridiculous stories circulated about the Bábís by their enemies in order to explain the success of the Bábís and their own inadequacies."<sup>414</sup> The same sort of story is reported by Ferrier, dated 25 July 1850. He concludes, "The Persian can say nothing nor do anything without adding miracles to it. But what is certain is that all the sectaries who have been executed up to this day have borne their punishment with a courage and a faith worthy of the heroic times of the first martyrs."<sup>415</sup>

Fádíl Mázandarání writes: "Regarding the severed heads of the Bábís sent to Shiraz, these were all buried in that city, except eleven, which according to Prince's order were sent to Tihrán along with some other Bábí heads. Upon reaching the village of Ábádih, the imperial orders were received to bury them in that place, which they obeyed."<sup>416</sup>

## Complaining To Tihrán

The preeminent historian of the Bábí and Bahá'í faiths, Fádíl Mázandarání has written:

After the martyrdom of the honored Áqá Siyyid Yahyá Vahíd Akbar and his companions, in order to protect themselves from the ensuing atrocities and murder, a number of believers, though hungry and unclothed, dispersed into the wilderness. Their foes constantly pursued them and did all they could to persecute the families of those wretched souls. To seek justice, a group<sup>417</sup> of these wronged ones left for Tihrán and when they had reached

413 The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944, p. 111.

414 The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944, p. 111.

415 The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944, p. 111.

416 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 426.

417 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 425, gives their number as 12.

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two days distance from the city, they retired to rest a little.

At that time a number of officers from the province of Fárs, who were returning from the capital, recognized them. They immediately seized all the Bábís save one who succeeded in escaping and reaching Tihrán.<sup>418</sup> The remainder were brought to Shiraz and presented before the governor of that province who instructed them to recant – an order that was summarily refused. Therefore, he instructed them martyred on the city's square.<sup>419</sup>

The one who succeeded in reaching Tihrán petitioned the authorities for alleviation of the wrongs against the Bábís, and for the establishment of justice and order in Nayríz. When this news reached the governor, Mírzá Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán, it further inflamed his enmity and hatred towards this helpless community and solidified his resolve to show no mercy to the men, the women, the old or the young. At this time, a number of the Bábí captives were returned from Shiraz and were presented to the governor.

When in chains and fetters Shaykh Yúsuf was brought before him, the Khán instructed the ears of that wronged one cut and several more were beaten with sticks so mercilessly that they expired from their injuries. The

418 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 425, gives the name of the believer who reached

Tihrán as Karbalá'í Zaynu'l-'Ábidín. He remained there for many years.

419 Seyyed Ali Mohammad dit le Bab, pp. 408-409, states:

Some Bábís, eager to see Mírzá Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán punished, started for Tihrán to protest to his Majesty against the atrocities which had been committed. They were but two or three stations away from the capital and, after the fatigue of the journey were enjoying a little rest, when a caravan of Shírází people went by and recognized them. All except one who escaped were arrested and taken to Shiraz where the Prince immediately ordered them executed, and so these men, Karbalá'í Abú'l-Hasan [Káshí-Sáz], a dealer in crockery, Áqá Shaykh Hádí, uncle of the wife of Vahíd, Mírzá 'Alí and Abú'l-Qásim Ibn Hájí Zayná, Akbar Ibn 'Abid, Mírzá Hasan and his brother Mírzá Bábá all died for their faith at this time.

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governor's attendants threw their remains in a well. He ordered the noses of others to be pierced, and rope passed through the incisions.<sup>420</sup>

Among the Bábís of that city, Mullá Muhammad, Hájí Qásim, Mullá Ahmad and Husayn 'Alí-Naqí, managed to effect their escape and reach Tihrán. Together with the believers in that city, they petitioned for justice.<sup>421</sup>

Captives of Nayríz

Of Vahíd's companions, Zaynu'l-'Abidín Khán kept fifteen in his prison.

420 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 22, n.1, states:

Certain eyewitnesses have stated that since some of the governor's enemies [i.e. the Bábís] gathered in a mountain known as Bálá-Tarám and attacked and killed a number of his men, and his guards were unable to track the assailants, then the Khán rose in fierce indignation. He gave orders for all the Bábís in the prison and in chains to be murdered, including Ghulám-Ridá Yazdí, Shaykhá and Mihdí. Two of the women threw themselves into a well. He sent three of the Bábís to Tihrán, namely: Mullá Muhammad; Hájí Qásim; and Husayn, son of 'Alí-Naqí. They perished in the holocaust of 1268 A.H. [1852]. Mullá Ahmad died while imprisoned by the Khán. A few others escaped and reached as far as two or three days' journey to Tihrán. When they were sleeping, a few of the Farmán-Farmá's men, who were carrying the triumphant news of Nayríz to the monarch, accidentally came upon them, seized them and took them to Shiraz for their master. These Bábís were: Karbalá'í Abú'l-Hasan; Áqá

Shaykh Hádí, an uncle of Vahíd's wife; Mírzá 'Alí; Abúl son of Hájí

Zaynu'l-'Ábidín; Akbar, son of 'Abid; Mírzá Hasan and his brother, Mírzá Bábá. These eight were martyred in the courtyard of the garrison. Áqá Shaykh Yúsuf and some others were sent to Nayríz in chains and the Khán ordered the ears of Shaykh Yúsuf cut and several others killing by beating with sticks. The ones martyred were Karbalá'í Mírzá Shír-'Askar and Táju'd-Dín, who were slain at night

and their remains thrown in a well.

With some minor alterations, the same information is given in Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq,

vol. 2, p. 426.

421 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, pp. 22-23.

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Each day, the governor would have one of the unfortunate captives taken from his cell and paraded in the streets. At each stop, the prisoner would be severely beaten until the citizens gave enough money and gifts to the governor's men to make them stop mistreating the wretched prisoner. The French historian Nicolas writes:

It would seem, alas, that all this bloodshed would have been sufficient to appease the hatred and the lust of the Muhammadans. Not at all! Mírzá Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán, finding himself filled with a desire for revenge on those he had betrayed and vanquished, gave neither truce nor rest to the surviving ones of the sect. His hatred knew no bounds and it was to last as long as he lived. It was actually the very poor that had been sent to Shiraz, the rich had been kept back. Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán had entrusted them to a guard who was ordered to walk them through the city beating them as they went. The people of Nayríz were greatly entertained at that time. They hung the Bábís by four nails and everyone came to gloat over their anguish. They placed burning weeds under the nails of these unfortunate martyrs, they branded them with hot irons, they deprived them of bread and water, they cut holes through their noses, and running through them a cord they led them as one would a bear!<sup>422</sup>

Only a few of the prisoners survived those horrid conditions and the rest were dropped in a well, which was later filled with earth. Of these fifteen brave and faithful men, we know the names of eight:

## 1. Áqá Siyyid Ja‘far Yazdí

In former days he had exercised considerable influence as one of the ‘ulamá and had been greatly honored due to his learning and piety. So great was the respect they owed him that it is reported the governor of 422 Seyyed Ali Mohammad dit le Bab, p. 408.

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Nayríz gave him precedence over himself and treated him with deference and courtesy.

Initially a native of Yazd, he had settled in the Bázár quarter of Nayríz and had established his luxurious home next to that of Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán. When Vahíd arrived in Yazd, Siyyid Ja‘far immediately came to meet him and soon was won over to the cause.<sup>423</sup> On his return to Nayríz, having enjoyed great prestige as a divine and being endowed with a wonderful power of exposition, at the instruction of Vahíd, he began to preach openly about the new faith, particularly in the Bázár quarter where he resided and was most influential. Through him, many were converted to the Bábí faith.

On hearing the conversion of Siyyid Ja‘far and his active role in the new movement, Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán was thoroughly agitated and instructed that the Siyyid be permanently debarred from entering his own residence. As such, Siyyid Ja‘far settled in the Masjid Jámi‘ Kabír and later moved to the fort along with Vahíd and was numbered among his close advisors.<sup>424</sup>

Because of his knowledge and power of utterance, the governor regarded Siyyid Ja‘far as one of those most responsible for the conversion of people to the Bábí faith. He ordered that the Siyyid’s turban be befouled and flung into the fire. Shorn of the emblem of his lineage, he was exposed to the eyes of the public, who marched before him and overwhelmed him with abuse and ridicule, as he was taken “from door to door making him beg for money.”<sup>425</sup> In addition, by daily beatings and torture, Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán was able to extract the deeds to all the personal properties of the Siyyid.

The Nayríz battles and their aftermath, which lasted several

<sup>423</sup> Khátirát Málmírí, p. 21, and Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, vol. 1, p. 138, suggest that Siyyid

Ja‘far became a convert in Yazd and left that city for Nayríz after the persecutions. As both of these authors were related to Siyyid Ja‘far, this information takes precedence over other sources, such as, Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 143, and The Dawn-Breakers, pp.

496-498, which suggest he converted in Nayríz. Also, Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 148, incorrectly states that Hájí Muhammad-Táhir Málmírí was a first cousin of Siyyid

Ja'far. The exact relationship is given in Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, vol. 1, p. 138, n.1.

424 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 3, p. 293.

425 Seyyed Ali Mohammad dit le Bab, p. 408.

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months, brought widespread poverty and famine to the region. The troops engaged in this conflict had drawn too heavily upon the meager resources of the local community, and after their departure, food became almost unobtainable and many poor people were starving. In the meantime, the governor had hoarded a large stock of corn to sell to the public at an inflated price. When, however, the situation became desperate, he consented to distribute the corn among the people at the fair market price. When the ration was given out, Siyyid Ja'far would be brought from the dungeon and posted at the entrance to the barn. The governor's orders were that all those who wished to obtain corn must first spit upon this man's face. Failure to do this would deprive them of their ration. The following extract from a biography of Siyyid Ja'far reveals something of this ordeal and other indignities heaped upon him and a companion:

For hours this champion of the Cause of God [Áqá Siyyid Ja'far], this once revered man of learning, stood by the door of the barn while hundreds of men and women spat upon his blessed face as they filed through that door, looking at him with bitter hate and prejudice.

In the face of this dire humiliation, Áqá Siyyid Ja'far's feelings were not those of disgust, intolerance or indignation. On the contrary, he remained calm and resigned throughout his ordeal and manifested a spirit of sublime joy and love and thankfulness towards those who offended him.

Once during the ordeal, it is authoritatively stated, he noticed several people who hesitated to come forward for their share. Apparently the ghastly deed of spitting upon his face kept them away. With a face beaming with heavenly joy he beckoned them and said: 'You had better come and get your share before it is too late; it won't matter if you spit upon my face; I'll wipe it off with my handkerchief...'

A deed such as this, so rare, so Christ-like, constitutes a shining proof of the transmuting power which is latent in

the words of the Manifestations of God.

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Very probably, as he stood by the door of the barn that day, his thoughts went back to those glamorous days in Yazd, where each Friday at the close of his sermon, standing on the steps of the pulpit, he would receive the homage and the tumultuous ovation of the vast audience. Now how striking was the contrast! Although the object of the vilest indignity, he was extremely happy, because his beloved Lord had revealed to his eyes the glorious vista of a new life and bestowed upon him the crown of eternal glory. Little wonder therefore, that those bitter persecutions could not becloud the radiance of his heavenly joy...

This monstrous treatment meted out to Áqá Siyyid Ja'far was but a prelude to a period of agonizing tortures for himself as well as for his illustrious companion<sup>426</sup>. Among other things, the ruthless governor ordered that the *bastinado* be inflicted on Áqá Siyyid Ja'far in public. Each day he was conducted from the dungeon to the gate of the house of a well-to-do-citizen where this heart-rending scene was staged. There he was beaten until, as was the fashion, the occupants of the house as well as passers-by would secure the victim's temporary release by offering money to the torturers as a ransom. Then, next day, the scene would be shifted to another point along the street.<sup>427</sup> After a while, as a result of this daily torture, Áqá Siyyid Ja'far's legs and feet became so horribly sore and swollen that they could no longer support his body...

The fate of his companion, Hájí Muhammad-Taquí, was even more cruel and appalling. Daily, he was conducted to the governor's mansion where, stripped of his clothes, he was flung into the pool. A number of men, placed around

<sup>426</sup> A reference to Hájí Muhammad-Taquí, titled Ayyúb.

<sup>427</sup> Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 146, reports that often his wife and children were brought

to witness these daily beatings so that additional money could be extracted from them

as well. On such occasions, seeing the terrible ordeal of their father, bitter tears pour

from their eyes and with broken hearts they would return home.

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and armed with long sticks, would administer severe blows upon his body. The standing order was that the beating should be continued until the water around him turned reddish with blood.

However, the mighty Hand that had raised up and reared these wondrous beings was now to stay the tide of suffering which was about to engulf them. They were destined to live to receive the greatest privilege of all, having their eyes illumined by gazing upon the heavenly countenance of Bahá'u'lláh.

It was the governor's wife who, as the result of a dream, was prompted to secure their freedom.<sup>428</sup> She approached her husband with an earnest appeal to release these unfortunate victims, but her intercession proved of no avail. Moreover, she was rebuked for being too soft and sentimental. Undismayed by her husband's ruthless attitude, she decided to work secretly towards that end.

With the goodwill and support of a few trusted persons at her disposal she worked out a plan and made the necessary arrangements with utmost caution. Then, late one evening the prison door was opened and the pitiable figures of Hájí Muhammad-Taquí and Áqá Siyyid Ja'far were taken out, propped up on donkeys and entrusted to a muleteer with the express order to carry them at full speed to Harát – a small town beyond the area of jurisdiction of the governor of Nayríz.

Eventually, when these oppressed souls reached Harát they were utterly exhausted. The sight of their appalling condition presented a study in grief and aroused the sympathy of the headman of the village who received and treated them with the utmost kindness.

They remained in Harát for a number of months to

<sup>428</sup> Khátirát Málmírí, p. 28, states that she dreamt that several figures clad in black

clothing descended from the heaven and said to her, "Wow betide Zaynu'l-'Ábidín

Khán for treating a descendent of the Prophet with such contempt!"

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recuperate and heal their terrible wounds.<sup>429</sup> Afterwards they traveled to Yazd.<sup>430</sup>

These two men were imprisoned in Nayríz for nine months. After a short stay in Yazd, in 1852, Siyyid Ja‘far and his family returned to Harát and once more became the object of people’s affection as he commenced service as the Imám-Jum‘ih in a local mosque. It was during this time that, having received communications from Bahá’u’lláh in Baghdad, he reached the conclusion that Bahá’u’lláh represented the fulfillment of the Bayán’s promise. Some four years later, he moved his family back to Yazd.

At a later stage yet Siyyid Ja‘far followed the example of his old companion in sufferings, Hájí Muhammad-Taquí, and walked to Baghdad to attain Bahá’u’lláh’s presence. Those feet that had received such beastly

tortures for nine months did not fail to carry him all the long way to the abode of his heart’s desire, where he was showered with heavenly bounties. Years later, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá recalled that pilgrimage in a tablet for

Siyyid Ja‘far’s son, Siyyid Muhammad.<sup>431</sup> In reply to one of his supplications, Bahá’u’lláh, some time prior to his declaration in 1863, honored him with an important composition known as the Suriy Nush.<sup>432</sup>

Renewed and encouraged by his visit to Bahá’u’lláh, Siyyid Ja‘far embarked on a life of service in Yazd. His enthusiasm knew no bounds and the fire of his faith touched many souls. A daughter and two sons

<sup>429</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 3, p. 294, and Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 147, note that

through the insistence of his wife, Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín released the men from the prison

and sent them to his own village of Qatriyih. It was there that due to past association

with Siyyid Ja‘far, the inhabitants looked after them and later in defiance to the

governor’s order to return them to Nayríz, sent them with their respective families to

Yazd.

<sup>430</sup> “Bahá’í News and Reviews”, a Journal of the National Spiritual Assembly of the

Bahá’ís of Iran, no. 7, December 1947. This account was written by Habib Taherzadeh

and appears in slightly edited form in Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, vol. 1, pp. 139-140.

<sup>431</sup> For the text see Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, pp. 432-434.

<sup>432</sup> For a brief discussion of this Tablet, see Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, vol. 1, p. 142. For

text see Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, pp. 350-379.

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survived him: Fátimih Bagum, Siyyid Músá and Siyyid Muhammad.<sup>433</sup>

## 2. Hájí Muhammad-Taquí Nayrízí

Another victim of the governor’s tyrannies was Hájí Muhammad-Taquí, who in earlier days had enjoyed such a reputation for honesty and justice that his opinion was most influential over the jurists. Though young, he had acquired great wealth by being a successful merchant. It is also reported that he acted as a local bank where people would deposit their savings with him and often exchanged his receipts in place of currency.<sup>434</sup>

Hájí Muhammad-Taquí was previously acquainted with Vahíd, and once he learned from Vahíd’s father-in-law of his arrival at Istahbánát, he hastened there to welcome Vahíd and immediately accepted the movement. In Vahíd’s company, Hájí Muhammad-Taquí returned to Nayríz and en route looked after Vahíd’s two young sons, and when they were tired, carried them on his shoulders. Upon his arrival at Nayríz, Hájí Muhammad-Taquí hired several town criers to broadly announce the public meetings where Vahíd would fearlessly proclaim the new message. When the troubles unfolded, he became one of the early defenders, first in the Masjid Jámi‘ and later at the Fort. Because of his wealth, during the entire period of the upheaval, he bore all the expenses of the Fort and fought valiantly at their side. One of his duties was to direct those desiring to join their ranks to write a statement and fix it with their seal, testifying to their readiness to sacrifice life and belongings.

Upon the conclusion of the battles, Zaynu’l-‘Adibín issued a special order for his capture together with the aforementioned Siyyid Ja‘far. It is reported that the governor had instructed his chief lieutenants: “The wealth of Hájí Muhammad-Taquí and the eloquence of Siyyid Ja‘far were the mainstay of the defenders. They must be captured and punished so that a befitting example is set for all others.”

As one of the venues of torture, Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán had ordered that during the winter months, each day one of the prisoners be

<sup>433</sup> For further details see Khátirát Málmírí, pp. 28-31.

<sup>434</sup> Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 132, n.1.

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thrown in the pool and beaten until the cold water had turned red. In all instances, Hájí Muhammad-Taquí, being younger and more robust than

others, would present himself in place of other companions and submit to this inhuman act. This great and esteemed man was, in the depths of winter, stripped of his clothes, thrown into a pond, and lashed severely until the water of the pool had turned red with his blood. His nearly dead body was pulled out each day, in anticipation of yet another day of such treatment. Despite his severe injuries, which caused him nearblindness and significant disfigurements, each day the governor's men would take him out into town and subject him to still further humiliation so that a sum could be extracted from passers by for the cruel spectacle. Finally, he was rescued in the manner described earlier and together with his family was able to settle in Yazd and seek much needed medical treatment. Some time later, he learned that Bahá'u'lláh was the new leader of the Bábí community and resided in Baghdad, and desiring to meet him, Hájí Muhammad-Taquí departed with his family for that city. Joining a caravan on its way to the twin holy cities of 'Iraq where many pilgrims trudged on foot, he also walked the distance of no less than fifteen hundred kilometers. En route, one of the fellow-pilgrims, someone obviously well provided for the long journey, approached him and after having a good look at him invited Hájí Muhammad-Taquí as his guest as far as Karbalá. "In my dream last night," the man said, "Imám Husayn, Himself, commanded me to take you as my guest." In this miraculous way, the Hájí reached Baghdad and the presence of Bahá'u'lláh.<sup>435</sup>

For the next three years, he was extremely happy and content. Continually he enjoyed association with Bahá'u'lláh and was the recipient of his love and tender considerations. A person who in his youth had been a tower of strength and might, but through the nine months of the governor's beatings had been reduced to a disfigured, bent man, was now receiving his basking in happiness.

When he passed away in Baghdad, Bahá'u'lláh participated in the procession that led to his burial. He was buried at the Baghdad cemetery. He will always be known as the recipient of Bahá'u'lláh's Suriy  
435 Bahá'u'lláh the King of Glory, p. 130.

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Sabr, known also as Lawh Ayyúb, composed on the first day of Bahá'u'lláh's arrival at the Garden of Ridvan.<sup>436</sup> In that tablet, his imperishable memory and name is recalled and the title Ayyúb [Job] is bestowed upon him.<sup>437</sup>

Hájí Muhammad-Taquí's wife was a daughter of one of the martyrs of the events of 1850, Hájí 'Abdu'l-Husayn. In years past, during one of his many visits to Nayríz, Vahíd had presided over the marriage ceremony of Hájí Muhammad-Taquí and his bride. This union had resulted in a son named Muhammad-'Alí, and a daughter known as

Gawhar. While in Baghdad, this son was fatally shot in the nearby palmgroves. Upon learning of this, the Hájí had smiled and with good cheer turned to the lad's fallen body, raising his hands, saying, "Praise be God, that in the path of resignation to Thy good will, I was called to give up my only earthly attachment, this son." Solacing him, Bahá'u'lláh had remarked, "Hájí Muhammad-Taquí has surpassed the patience of Job." Shortly thereafter, Bahá'u'lláh revealed a tablet honoring the fallen son and bestowing blessings upon the family.

After the passing of Hájí Muhammad-Taquí, his wife grieved bitterly and was overwhelmed with sorrow over the loss of both her husband and son. To remedy her aching heart, Bahá'u'lláh instructed that a young man named Ahmad-'Alí, who was of the same age as her fallen son, be given to her as her new son. He further advised her that she should endeavor to raise this new son with the same zeal and love as she had shown towards her former child. After remaining in Baghdad for a total of five years, the wife of Hájí Muhammad-Taquí, together with her daughter Gawhar and her new son, Ahmad-'Alí, returned to Nayríz.<sup>438</sup>

### 3. Mullá Mírzá Muhammad Nayrízí

436 Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 6.

437 The original Arabic text is published in *Lam'átu'l-Anvár*, vol. 1, pp. 379-408.

438 For a detailed outline of the descendants of Hájí Muhammad-Taquí through his

daughter, Gawhar, see *Lam'átu'l-Anvár*, vol. 1, pp. 137-141. A slightly different

biography of Hájí Muhammad-Taquí is given in *Bahá'u'lláh the King of Glory*, pp. 130-131.

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The eldest son of the affluent Hájí Sifr-'Alí, he had been a brave defender in the Fort. He possessed great wealth, pleasant features and unequalled artistic abilities.<sup>439</sup> He had married at an early age, and had two sons, Muhammad-Karím and Muhammad-Rahím<sup>440</sup>, who at the time of Vahíd's arrival at Nayríz were two and a half, and one and a half years old, respectively.

Some time after joining Vahíd and the other defenders, deeply worried over his fate, Mullá Muhammad's mother, wife and two young sons came to Fort Khájih pleading with him to return home. The mother cried bitterly, and his wife, pressing the children to his breast, lamented their condition and loneliness. She begged him to return, but the more they sobbed, the less was its effect on Mullá Muhammad. In fact, it is reported that at one point, to demonstrate his resolve, he pulled his knife

and said to them that he was prepared to sacrifice his two sons so all would recognize the depth of his commitment and that his devotion could not be curtailed by such concerns. Seeing his immutable resolve, the mother, wife and children returned home.

Throughout the battles, Mullá Muhammad showed unusual bravery. One night, ordered to carry out a particular mission, he left the Fort on horseback, but was spotted by the soldiers and shot in the face. The governor's men captured him, but after a few days the governor's brother, 'Alí-Asghar Khán, who had been childhood friend and classmate, intervened and arranged for his release. Together with his wife, two sons and his father, he proceeded to Istahbánát to receive medical attention for his injuries.

Meanwhile, the fort fell and a savage pogrom took place. In the course of this massacre, a younger brother of Mullá Muhammad, only twelve years old and blind from birth, was captured. As a means of extracting the family estate, he was cruelly tortured in front of his sobbing mother; property and wealth were forcibly transferred to the

439 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 3, p. 298, Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 151, and Táríkh

Shuhadáy Amr, vol. 3, p. 219, suggest that Mullá Muhammad scribed in naskh style

better than others, save the legendary Mírzá Ahmad Khúshnavís.

440 Also known as Hájí 'Abdu'r-Rahím Nayrízí, he is the maternal grandfather of

Habib and Adib Taherzadeh; Khátirát Málmírí, p. 24.

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governor. This savage act was repeated several times until the entire estate of Hájí Sifr-'Alí was confiscated. At the end, the young boy expired.

After some six months in Istahbánát, Mullá Muhammad returned to Nayríz to learn of what had transpired.<sup>441</sup> Profoundly disturbed by these savage acts, Mullá Muhammad decided to proceed to Tihrán and eliminate the source of injustice and tyranny, the reigning Monarch. On hearing this, his mother handed him the only remaining family possession, a pearl necklace, to be used towards his journey's expenditure and the fulfillment of his objective. Leaving that same night, in Shiraz he met with some other militant Bábís<sup>442</sup>, and with them proceeded to Tihrán to revenge the death of his fallen brother and companions. There he joined Sádiq Tabrízí<sup>443</sup> and his band. This small group, having tasted first-hand the bitter drought of persecution, planned the disastrous assassination attempt of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh.<sup>444</sup>

Mullá Muhammad was martyred in the course of that event, in the Níávarán district of Tihrán, sometime during 3 to 10 of Dhi'l-Qa'dih 1268 A.H. [19-26 August 1852].

The weekly newspaper, Waqáyi' Ittifáqiyyah reports the following in its issue no. 81, published on Thursday, 3 Dhi'l-Qa'dih 1268 A.H.:

A short distance from the Prime Minister, the most holy threshold [the Sháh] had issued instructions for the attendants to mount their steeds when suddenly one of the accursed from Nayríz of Fárs who had garbed himself as a villager, bravely ran forth crying: "I have a supplication!" A few of the servants observing him came forth to see what that vagrant had to say, but before they could apprehend

441 Khátirát Málmírí, pp. 25-26.

442 Mullá Muhammad Shafí' names two other believers as Hájí Qásim and a certain

Husayn, son of 'Alí-Naqí.

443 Martyred on 15 August 1852 in Tihrán. For details consult Táríkh Shuhadáy Amr,

vol. 3, pp. 216-218.

444 For further details, consult The Dawn-Breakers, chapter 26, Bahá'u'lláh: the King of

Glory, chapter 15, and Táríkh Shuhadáy Amr, vol. 3, pp. 216-223.

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him, he pulled a gun and fired upon the monarch. However by divine grace, the bullet missed its mark.

In the next issue of the newspaper (no. 82), published the following week, it is reported:

Mírzá Muhammad Nayrízí who had participated in all the battles of Nayríz, Zanján, and Mázandarán and bore many cuts from those past battles, was shot to death by the attendants, armed guards, servants and officers of the royal forces, and thereafter his body was beaten with rocks and sticks until it became one with the soil.

#### 4. Asghar

He was the younger brother of the above-mentioned Mullá Muhammad, and was captured as a means of extracting the wealth of their father, Hájí Sifr-'Alí. Each day his mother was called to the prison where the young, blind boy was kept, and made to watch severe torture that often included placing hot iron bars on his body. On seeing such a heart-wrenching

sight, the mother willingly would sign over yet another piece of property to the governor so that the barbarous men would leave her son alone for another day. Each day, the same act was repeated. One by one, the entire vast possessions of Hájí Sifr-‘Alí were confiscated by

Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín

Khán. As the result of this torture, the young boy died in the prison.

#### 5. Hájí Qásim

Another of the defenders taken prisoner was Hájí Qásim Nayrízí. For a whole year this brave man was subject to beating and torture, including being thrown in the ice-filled pool in the middle of winter and then while still wet flogged or hit with sticks until he became unconscious. These afflictions were intended to, and succeeded in, extracting from him his entire estate. At long last, one of his friends, Haydar, was able to secure his freedom by the payment of one hundred tumáns, a considerable sum

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at that time.

Once freed from captivity, Hájí Qásim left the region quickly and proceeded to Tihrán to revenge the wrongs that he was subjected to, as he considered the person of the Sháh the source of all evil in the despotic regime of the Qájár.<sup>445</sup> In Tihrán, he joined forces with a group of Bábí dissidents who had gathered for the express purpose of eliminating the monarch, and on 15 August 1852, he, Sádiq Tabrízí and Mullá Muhammad Nayrízí, attempted their ill-conceived plot of killing Násiri’-d-Dín Sháh. Tabrízí was killed on the spot, while as noted earlier,

Mullá Muhammad was slain some days later after extensive violence and torture. The same fate awaited Hájí Qásim. The following is reported in Waqáyi‘ Ittifáqiyyah newspaper, issue no. 81:

His [Mullá Muhammad Nayrízí’s] work was not finished when a third evil-one, much like his two comrades, suddenly appeared and fired upon the exalted one [i.e. the Sháh].

Those in company of the monarch at first thought that his bullet has also missed the mark as there was no change in the countenance of the King, however when at the request of the prime minister and the Mustuff’l-Mamálik and some others, the monarch arrived at the nearby gardens of Sandúq-Kháneh, it was determined that a few pellets had penetrated the skin above the shoulder bones and only caused a superficial scratch and a slightly deeper cut.

And the following week, on 26 August 1852, the same newspaper reported:

Hájí Sulaymán Khán, the son of Yahyá Khán Tabrízí, whose

445 Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 155, reports that he participated in the Nayríz II events

and survived that event as well. The information provided by Mullá Muhammad Shafí‘

and Táríkh Shuhadáy Amr, vol. 3, pp. 254-256, as well as other sources cited in this

chapter, indicate that he was among the Bábís who went to Tihrán to assassinate the

Shah. Haqáyiqu’l-Akhabár Nasirí 116-117 reports that Hájí Qasim claimed to be the

successor to Vahíd. The same is noted in Mu‘ínu’d-Dín Mihrábí’s Quratu’l-‘Ayn, p. 126.

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situation was described earlier, together with Hájí Qásim Nayrízí who was the successor of Siyyid Yahyá [i.e. Vahíd] were brought [from Níávarán] to the city by Áqá Hasan, the vice-general. Their bodies were pierced with lit candles and to the sound of trumpets were paraded in the streets for the people to see, but were prevented from being stoned. At the gate leading to [the shrine of] Shah ‘Abdu’l-‘Azím, the executioners cut their bodies into four pieces, each piece being displayed by one of the city’s gates.<sup>446</sup>

It is reported that when they wanted to slay Sulaymán Khán, he had said, “First martyr Hájí Qásim Nayrízí and let him attain unto this exalted bounty, as he is eminent over me.”<sup>447</sup>

Hájí Qásim was survived by two sons, Hájí Muhammad and Mullá Husayn, who during Nayríz-III showed great bravery.

#### 6. Mullá Karím

Yet another believer who after the fall of the Fort spent time in the governor’s jail and suffered his tortures was Mullá Karím. Together with other inmates, he was taken on daily parades where humiliation awaited them. While they were exposed to the cold, the scum of the people were hired to heap upon their shivering bodies abominable cruelties. Unable to resist the temptation and in need of the promised bag of wheat or barley, people would spit upon the prisoners and thus win the governor’s favor. After Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán had forced him to transfer the title to all his properties, he was released.

#### 7. Mírzá Muhammad ‘Abid

His wife was a niece of Muhammad-Ridá Khán, an uncle of Zaynu'l-  
446 The two newspaper extracts appear in Táríkh Shuhadáy Amr, vol. 3, p.  
255. For

other details on the failed assassination attempt see Haqáyiqu'l-Akhabár  
Násirí, pp. 113-

117, and The Dawn-Breakers, chapter 26.

447 Vápasín Junbish Qurún Vustá Dar Dúrán Fu'adalí, p. 131.

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‘Ábidín Khán, and through this family connection, and payment of a  
considerable ransom, she was able to persuade the governor to release  
him. Mírzá Muhammad also fought bravely in the Nayríz II and III  
upheavals and we will have occasion to refer to him again.

#### 8. Áqá Siyyid Abú-Tálib

A son of Hájí Siyyid Ahmad, he was very affluent. In earlier days he  
served as chieftain of the Bázár quarter and his fame was even known to  
the monarch in Tihrán. On Vahíd's approach, he had gone as far as  
Rúníz to welcome him to the region, and together with his two brothers,  
Siyyid Hasan and Siyyid Husayn, he embraced the new faith, joined the  
defenders and exhibited great bravery at the Fort. After the termination  
of battles, he was imprisoned for a time, during which all his possessions  
and properties were confiscated and he himself was subject to severe  
daily tortures. Shortly thereafter, the central authorities ordered that he  
be sent to Shiraz for further public humiliation, but the governor  
preferred to keep him close by and falsely reported that he had perished  
in battle. Soon, though, he was bound in chains and sent by the governor  
to Ma'dan Shikárú, in the vicinity of Nayríz. At the instigation of Hájí  
Mírzá Nasru'lláh Nayrízí, the rawdih-khán, a fatwá was secured for his  
death, which was carried out by poisoning while he lay in the prison of  
Ma'dan.

#### 9-15. The remaining eight prisoners

According to Rawhání, the remaining prisoners all died from their  
tortures while in captivity.<sup>448</sup> A well was dug in the prison courtyard,  
where their bodies were dumped and soil was poured over them. Their  
identities remain obscure.

448 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 158.

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Dispersed Defenders

In addition to those that were captured and imprisoned, a number were able to disappear in the countryside and hide from the vengeance of the governor. The identities of some of these are known and most participated three years later in the Nayríz-II episode.

#### 1. Shaykh ‘Abdu’l-‘Alí

He was Vahíd’s father-in-law and the leading cleric of Nayríz, as well as a judge of great repute, whose faith in the Báb and support for Vahíd were unassailable. Together with his two sons, Shaykh Hádí and Shaykh Muhammad (seventeen and fourteen years of age, respectively), he fought bravely in the Fort and showed great self-sacrifice. Upon Vahíd’s martyrdom and following the end of the battles, by an unfrequented route, he hastily sent his daughter who was Vahíd’s wife, Sughrá Khánum, and her son, Siyyid Ismá‘íl, together with some other kindred, to the house of Vahíd’s sister and her husband, Hájí Muhammad-Ismá‘íl Lárí, in Istahbánát. By so doing, he rescued them from certain humiliation and death. Shaykh ‘Abdu’l-‘Alí then sought hiding in the countryside and nearby mountains, and from time to time would visit Nayríz stealthily.<sup>449</sup> This situation continued until the start of the Nayríz-II upheaval, when once again he joined the defenders, along with his family. After the battle, his captors first decapitated his two sons in his lap, then murdered him. On that day, his captive wife managed to escape to the home of her brother, Siyyid Ibráhím, but as he was not a Bábí, he refused her entry. She then proceeded to the home of Karbalá’í Ridá Hammámí who in former days had been an attendant of theirs. That very night she passed away.<sup>450</sup>

449 Mullá Shafí ‘ notes that Shaykh ‘Abdu’l-‘Alí together with Siyyid Husayn, Siyyid

Ja‘far and Hájí Muhammad-Taquí were conducted from house to house for daily beating and humiliation.

450 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 3, pp. 294-295.

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#### 2. Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Husayn

A renowned jurist of Nayríz and the local prayer-guide, this old man and his family had gone to Istahbánát to welcome Vahíd and embrace the new reform movement. At the dawn of the troubles, he was the first person to be injured<sup>451</sup>, which propelled Vahíd and his disciples to take position in the Fort of Khájíh. Among those first occupants of the Fort was Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Husayn with his three brothers and five sons.<sup>452</sup> After the Fort’s fall, Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Husayn and his family took refuge in the nearby mountains and kept in hiding and occasionally would visit Nayríz under the cover of darkness. As we shall see in the

course of the subsequent chapters, he and his sons took part in the Nayríz-II episode, where he lost all his children. At the conclusion of that event, he was captured and sent to Tihrán. However, some three days distance outside Shiraz, at a Siyyidán village, Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Husayn expired. He was decapitated and his severed head joined those of the other martyrs, while his body was buried in the same location, at a known spot.

### 3. Khájih Qutb

Fádil Mázandarání gives his name as Mírzá Muhammad-Husayn and states that he was among the leaders of the Bábís in Fort Khájíh, and after Vahíd’s martyrdom went to Tihrán. On his return, he announced himself the successor to Vahíd Akbar and the avenger of his blood and the blood of the Báb.<sup>453</sup>

### 4. Mírzá ‘Alí Sardár

Mírzá ‘Alí was born in either 1237 or 1238 A.H./1823 to a well-regarded  
451 Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 82, suggests that he was among the first occupants of the fort

where he sustained his injuries.

452 Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 161, indicates that one of his sons, Mullá ‘Alí-Naqí, the

father of Mullá Muhammad Shafi‘, suffered martyrdom during Nayríz-I. However,

Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 83, states this occurred during Nayríz-II.

453 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 24.

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family. From early youth he showed extraordinary bravery and courage, and soon was given a position in the city administration by Hájí Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín. Because of his skills, the governor entrusted the supervision of his own properties in Rastáq and Qutriyyih to him. The first time that Sardár’s fame became widely known was when one evening, together with his childhood friend, Hasan Mírzá, he tracked, disarmed and arrested a gang of seventy highway robbers near the village of Rastáq. As the thieves promised that they would never engage in such deeds, Mírzá ‘Alí released them – an act which solidified his reputation as a fairminded but courageous commander. Even though the governor continued to entrust important assignments to him, Mírzá ‘Alí Sardár grew increasingly hostile towards the regime, partly in recognition that Zaynu’l-‘Abdidin Khán had assumed office through the unjust murder of his brother, the rightful successor to their father, and had further exerted efforts to eliminate the children of his fallen brother. However,

for some time the Sardár concealed his hostility, waiting for the right moment to strike. By the time Vahíd arrived on the scene in 1850, Mírzá ‘Alí was ready to break all ties with the governor, and the news brought to Nayríz by Vahíd, and his zeal in establishing a just government in line with the Báb’s teachings, was a welcome alternative which he readily embraced, dedicating the rest of his life to its achievement. Following a period of two years hiding in the wilderness subsequent to Vahíd’s martyrdom and the general massacre of the Bábís, the Sardár returned to Nayríz and was ready to complete the task commenced by Vahíd. He was the key figure in organizing the dispersed Bábís and became their rallying point during Nayríz-II. He taught them the art of warfare and served as the chief military commander of the Bábís.

#### 5. Khájih Muhammad-Husayn

For three years, he was secure in the nearby village of Karbál where the governor’s men failed to locate him. He did not take part in Nayríz-II, but his wife and some other kindred participated. On hearing that his wife had been captured and subjected to indignities, he was overcome with depression and died shortly thereafter.

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#### 6. Siyyid Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Istahbánátí

He was in hiding during the period of three years separating the Nayríz I and II events. After Nayríz-II, his whereabouts are not known.

#### 7. Ibráhím, son of Sálíh

He managed to keep away from the governor’s men and participated in Nayríz-II, where he was captured and taken as a prisoner to Shiraz. He was released some time later.

#### 8-9. Siyyid Husayn and Siyyid Hasan, sons of Hájí

Siyyid Ahmad

Together with their brother, Siyyid Abú-Tálib (see above), they had gone out as far as the village of Rúníz to welcome Vahíd and joined him in the Fort as defenders. After the fall of the Fort, these brothers escaped, but reemerged from hiding in three years’ time to participate in Nayríz-II. No further news of them is known, except that Siyyid Hasan survived the event as one of the prisoners.

#### 10. Mullá Hasan, son of Karbalá’í Qásim

After a period of hiding, he too participated in Nayríz-II and was captured and sent to Shiraz, where he was released after a while. He then returned to Nayríz.

#### 11. Shaykh Muhammad-Ismá‘íl,

son of Mullá

Muhammad-Báqir

He followed the same fate as the above-mentioned Mullá Hasan.

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12. Mullá 'Alí-Akbar, son of Mullá Muhammad

Istahbánátí

He had come to Nayríz in the company of Vahíd and had stood by him during all the events. He was captured, subsequently released, went into hiding and then emerged again during Nayríz-II, when again he was captured and eventually released.

13. Shaykh Yúsuf

He was extradited from Shiraz and spent some time in the governor's dungeon. He was released on the condition of leaving Nayríz. Later, he participated in Nayríz-II, where he was subsequently captured and sent to Shiraz as a prisoner. Upon release, he returned to Nayríz again, but soon rebelled against the local authorities who had caused his imprisonment and torture, as a result of which he was severely injured and disfigured. His daughter, the wife of Karbalá'í Muhammad-Sálih, was also imprisoned after the Nayríz-II events.

14. Lutf-'Alí Qá'id

During the battles, he showed much bravery, but was struck by a cannon shell that resulted in the amputation of his left hand. After the Fort's fall,

though severely injured, he managed to escape and remained in the wilderness for nearly three years until the gathering of the forces for the Nayríz-II uprising, when once more he joined the Bábís in defending themselves. After the uprising's conclusion, he was imprisoned for some time and eventually released and sent home.

15. Mírzá Muhammad, son of Mírzá Muhammad-'Abid

After successfully remaining in hiding for two years, he joined the Bábí community during the Nayríz-II episode and was later captured and sent to Shiraz. En route, he threw himself into Bakhtigán Lake to commit suicide, but was rescued and released a while later. Eventually, he

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returned to Nayríz.

16. The Istahbánátí Bábís

Of the twenty-one converts that had accompanied Vahíd from Istahbánát, two defected. The first was Hájí Míhrizí, who broke his

allegiance at the height of battles and caused great hardship to the remnants of the community after the Fort's fall. The second was Ismá'íl Mazíjání. He asked for Vahíd's daughter in marriage and on receiving a negative response, was disappointed, but remained in the Fort and endured the subsequent events. After the battle, he made his escape by stealing Vahíd's steed (given to him by Muhammad Sháh) and returned to his native town where he set himself up as a religious cleric.

It appears that the remaining nineteen Bábís from Istahbánát remained faithful and those that survived the battles were able to return home and rebuild the Bábí community of that village.

#### 17. Descendant of Mullá 'Abdu'l-Samí'

A native of Shiraz, this learned mystic had become tutor to the Qájár princes and was greatly admired by many. However, because of the jealousy of other clerics, he left Shiraz for Nayríz where he spent the rest of his days and there attracted the attention of Hájí Zaynu'l-'Ábidín.

Two sons survived him: Mullá Báqir and Mullá Hasan Lab-Shikarí.<sup>454</sup> Much like his father, Mullá Báqir excelled in the acquisition of knowledge and emerged as one of the foremost jurists of the region, occupying the position of marja'-taqlíd [the source of religious emulation] in the city. As such appointments often required, he married a niece of Shaykh Abú-Turáb, the Imám-Jum'ih of Shiraz, adding significantly to his personal prestige. He served as the Imám-Jum'ih of the Masjid Jami' Kabír of Nayríz and the custodian of its properties, all of which distinguished him in the eye of the citizens. At the time of Vahíd's arrival and because of their prior association, he went out as far

<sup>454</sup> Lab-Shikarí played an important role in Nayríz-II uprising.

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as Rúníz to welcome him, and enlisted among his most devoted companions. However, outwardly he adopted a more neutral stance and due to his influence, the governor left him alone, a situation that permitted Mullá Báqir to clandestinely assist other Bábís. He passed away a few years later. He was survived by four sons who later converted to the Bahá'í faith: Shaykh Muhammad-Husayn, surnamed Vafá by Bahá'u'lláh; Mírzá Abú'l-Hasan; Shaykh Ahmad; and Shaykh Abú'l-Qásim.

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## Narrative of Mullá Muhammad Shafí‘ - Part 2

Let those fight in the cause of God who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter; to him who fighteth in the cause of God, whether he is slain or gets victory, soon shall We give him a reward of great value.

Qur’án 4:74

A Comment by the Translator

The first part of Mullá Shafí‘’s account was given in chapter 5 and an annotated translation of the remaining portion is provided below.

However, before we turn our attention to this narrative, a brief comment – perhaps an attempt at contextualizing the history of Nayriz-II – is in order.

Following the events’ chronology, chapters 5 through 10 have provided glimpses into the intense persecution that beset the Bábí community of this town in the aftermath of Vahíd’s martyrdom and the Bábí defeat in the summer of 1850 – a persecution that continued in various forms and unabated for some two years. By then, the Bábí community of Iran in general, and Nayriz in particular, was faced with an unprecedented challenge. Its Prophet-founder, the Báb, was martyred. Its most nationally recognized promoter, Vahíd, was slain. The faith’s chief lieutenants, Quddus, Mullá Husayn, Táhirih and eight other Letters of the Living, were murdered and the rest were either missing, in hiding or in doubt. Nearly five-hundred of the ablest devotees of the Báb had been eliminated in Shaykh Tabarsí. The charismatic and learned Hujjat and two thousands of his companions had perished in Zanjan. Its supposed leader, Yahyá Azal, was utterly incompetent and in hiding. Bahá’u’lláh’s influence was neutralized by being exiled for some 10 months to Karbala. In August 1852, an ill-conceived attempt on the life of Nasiri’d-Dín Shah resulted in a Bábí bloodbath in Tihran and the

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surrounding regions which essentially annihilated the remaining leadership of the community or its learned members. What remained of the notables of the community – including Bahá’u’lláh – were then seized and imprisoned in Siyah-Chál, most to suffer execution.

In Nayriz, the situation for the Bábís was particularly ominous.

Having lost most of its men and many of its women members, the Chinar-Sukhtih quarter – the Bábí stronghold – was reduced to rubble, its Bábí residences were robbed of all their possessions and compelled to disperse in the countryside and mountains, and forced to live in the wilderness with no provisions or shelters for some two years. One can only imagine the intensity of their sufferings stretched over such a long period, especially during the bitterly cold winter seasons.

As Mullá Shafí‘’s narrative in the following pages will reveal and is

supported by subsequent documentations provided in later chapters, by the Fall of 1852 gradually some of the Bábís began to return to their native town and once again the nucleus of a community was formed. But this was a drastically different community. Having lost all its prominent and learned members, it was now a community that knew very little about the Báb's wide range of teachings nor did it have a cohesive leadership in form of the wise and learned Vahíd when he guided its affairs in 1850. It was a community that bore the deep scars of intense and cruel sufferings of these two agonizing years. Naturally, anger and desire for revenge burnt brightly in many hearts.

It was under such circumstances and without a charismatic leader of Vahíd's caliber, that the community was once more formed and in absence of a strong leadership, it allowed a few of its members on the fringes to commit certain desperate acts, chief among them being the assassination of the town's governor – the man most responsible for their prolonged sufferings – an act that precipitated another cycle of bloody and severe persecution that lasted for many more months, costing the lives of many more hundreds of the believers. As the situation grew increasingly gloomy and desperate, in addition to the governor's assassination, as will be outlined in these documents, the beleaguered Bábís committed several other desperate acts – acts that had Vahíd or a leader of his qualities been around, would not have been

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permitted.

The above comments are made in hope that as the reader considers the details provided in these documents, he would bear in mind the backdrop of the situation and the bitterness of the community's experiences which shaped certain of their decisions. That is, I feel compelled to warn the reader that a few incidents in these documents indeed portray a degeneration that characterizes men in desperate situations, or perhaps are characteristics of every religious community at the conclusion of their spiritual cycle. Without keeping the historical backdrop in mind, it is feared that the reader might be tempted to view with too critical an eye the Bábí community of Nayriz in 1852-53 or perhaps pronounce a harsh judgment against them that would be ahistorical in nature.

Narrative of Mullá Muhammad Shafí' - Part 2

[12. The Transition]

In short, for about two years, 455 perhaps less or more, the situation passed thus. Meanwhile the believers who had been dispersed located one another in the mountains. Many were planning vengeance. However, the Khán was shrewd and cautious, never leaving himself alone, and

when he rode, he was always accompanied by a large number of guards and gunmen. And on the occasions when he visited the city, he never went to the residence of others and kept to his own well-protected mansion. Every day a new scheme was designed [by the believers to eliminate the governor], but none could be implemented.

Eventually, in the Fall season, when the grapes were ripe in the mountainous vineyards and ready for syrup-making, the believers attacked a syrup-making facility belonging to the Khán that was situated on the Bálá-Taram mountain, and injured two or three of the workers. On hearing the news, the Khán sent his men to capture them [Bábís],

455 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 23, gives this period as one and a half years.

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but it was to no avail. The believers, however, were no closer to their goal of capturing and eliminating the Khán.

Of those taken in chains to Shiraz, several were martyred, including Áqá Ghulám-Ridá, an attendant of his holiness [Vahíd] who was from the city of Yazd, and Shaykhá, the executioner, who was martyred with the utmost brutality and savagery.<sup>456</sup> The rest were thrown in the dungeon. A certain Mírzá Mihdí, a maternal uncle of 'Alí Sardár, died of exhaustion in that location. After some time the remaining believers were released from the dungeon; some returned to Nayríz, while others preferred to disperse in far away regions.

[In Nayríz] rather than be taken prisoner, two of the [Bábí] women threw themselves into a well and perished. Three of the men, Mullá Muhammad, Hájí Qasim and Husayn, son of 'Alí-Naqí, proceeded to Dáru'l-Khaláfih<sup>457</sup> Tihrán [to express their grievances], and during the upheaval after the assassination attempt on the monarch and the episode of Sulaymán Khán, two of them were martyred.<sup>458</sup> A few others had gone [to Tihrán seeking justice], but during the same upheaval <p.23> were captured and thrown into the dungeon – one of them was a certain Mullá Ahmad who passed away in captivity, while the others were eventually released.

Of the ones mentioned earlier who were determined to exact a revenge, several went to Dáru'l-Khaláfih Tihrán in the hope of making their case to the monarch, thinking that this would bring ruin upon the Khán. They were but two or three stations away from the Land of Tá [Tihrán] and were enjoying a short rest, when several soldiers carrying a communication from Shiraz went by and recognized them as belonging to this people [i.e. Bábí]. They were all arrested except Karbalá'í

456 The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944, p. 112, notes that in Mírzá Mahmúd's

report for the period 23 September to 10 October 1850, the following is recorded to

have occurred on 6 October:

On the same day two Babees were delivered by Mehr Ally Khán to H.R.H. One of them was the executioner, and the other a Sirdar [commander] of Syed Yahyáh. Both were beheaded.

457 Lit. the city of rulers, it is a designation for Tihrán as it has served as the seat of

central government for a long time.

458 Sulaymán Khán was martyred on 15 August 1852.

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Zaynu'l-'Ábidín who succeeded in reaching Tihrán, where eventually he came to possess a house and other properties and passed away some time later. The others were taken to Shiraz where the Prince instructed a number of them to curse and recant [their new found Faith], and when they refused to do so, immediately ordered their execution in the courtyard of the army's barracks. These martyrs included: Karbalá'í Abú'l-Hasan, a crockery-maker; Áqá Shaykh Hádí, maternal uncle of the wife of the illustrious Vahíd; Mírzá 'Alí and Abúl, sons of Hájí Zayná;

Akbar, son of 'Abid; Mírzá Hasan and his brother Mírzá Bábá.<sup>459</sup>

The late Áqá Shaykh Yúsuf and the rest of the captives were brought in chains and fetters to Nayríz as a gift for the Khán – a prize that made him extremely happy and excited. With his own hand he slapped the honored Áqá Shaykh Yúsuf, issued instructions for the nose of another one to be pierced and a rope passed through it, and yet another was ordered beaten with sticks. In fact, several of them died during these brutal beatings, including Karbalá'í Mírzá Muhammad who had served as the gatekeeper of the fort and was martyred on the first day while being beaten with sticks; also a certain Shír-'Askar, paternal uncle of Táju'l-'Ayn<sup>460</sup> who had been among the first martyrs of the fort, was viciously martyred at night in the dungeon and his remains thrown into a well.

[13. The Nucleus of Dissent]

And the manner in which [Mírzá] 'Alí Sardár came to leadership was this:

459 The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944, p. 112, notes that in a report of the British

agent Mírzá Mahmúd for the period 10 to 27 August 1850, it is recorded, On the 20th His Royal Highness summoned ten Babees and commanded them either to curse Syed Yahiyeh or to suffer death; as they remained silent, it was concluded they were steadfast in their

faith. The Prince however respited them for an hour, when they submitted to His Royal Highness' will. Some persons then interceded for them and the Prince forgave them... The Prince has been rather unwell for some days past, on which account, it is said, he will release all the imprisoned Babees.

460 Most likely a copyist error for Táju' d-Dín.

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after two years of being a refugee, he returned to Nayríz in secret.<sup>461</sup> Upon arrival, at nights, armed with a sword, he quietly visited the homes of the believers, searched home after home, and wherever he found anyone hungry, unclothed or without other necessities, he would gather the provisions and <p.24> unbeknownst to the needy, deliver them to that household. And when the non-believers would chance to see him engaged in such undertakings, he would pretend that he was occupied with something else. The reports, however, eventually reached the Khán, who ordered his path intercepted and [the Sardár] arrested. The

461 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, pp. 173-179, states (in summary):

Gradually, the network of contacts was expanded and regular communication was established with those who had dispersed, and food and other necessities were arranged for them as well. This circle of believers and sympathizers grew larger by inclusion of the believers released from the governor's prison, and soon an organized and active nucleus of dissent was formed.

The first such cell, or assembly, was formed in the number of the Bayánic vahíd, that is, 19, and consisted of: 'Alí Sardár; Hájí Mírzá

Husyan Qutb; Hájí 'Abdu'l-'Alí, Vahíd's father-in-law; the two sons of Hájí of 'Abdu'l-'Alí; Mullá 'Abdu'l-Husayn and his four remaining

sons; and nine other believers - all residents of what had remained of the Chinár-Súkhtih quarter. This assembly began to meet in earnest and its first decision was to charge two of its members who were among the 'ulamá, namely, Hájí 'Abdu'l-'Alí and Mullá 'Abdu'l-Husayn, to deepen and educate the Bábí remnant and to instill in their hearts devotion to the Cause and obedience to the laws of the Faith.

Through their consultation, the assembly recognized that sporadic guerilla attacks on the governor's vast estate had been utterly ineffectual and ultimately an organized uprising was needed against him. They resolved that the two youngest members, the Sardár and Qutb, would try to locate and attract the believers who had dispersed in the mountains, and would urge their return to the city for this purpose. Therefore, these two brave members of the assembly set out

to spread the good news that once more the community was being consolidated, and to encourage and fortify everyone's faith and cooperation. Day by day, the number of those returning to Nayríz increased and many more were encouraged to emerge from hiding and to once again join their brethren.

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governor decreed severe tortures. It was through the Divine Will that he was released. Once again his only thought was the need of the poor, the ill, the destitute, the widows and the orphans. At night he would gather the believers, and speak and encourage them, and constantly urge them to unity and cooperation.

It was at that time that the late Mírzá Husayn, surnamed Qutb, returned from Tihrán to Nayríz. He was a brave and magnificent man and acted with such sincerity and fidelity that all believers were deeply attracted to him. Due to his generosity and forbearance, all the learned and affluent members of this community [i.e. the Bábís] felt called to obey him.<sup>462</sup>

Each night, they would gather some seventy or eighty believers in various assemblies and urge and encourage them to slay the Khán<sup>463</sup> and

<sup>462</sup> Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 177, places the number of Bábís at this time in excess

of "kul-shay" (=361). The same source continues to state (in summary): Through the constant efforts of the learned men in their rank, the knowledge and devotion of the Bábís to the Cause grew stronger and the flame of the fire of the love of God blazed fiercer through regular study of the Báb's writings in their possession.

In a few months' time, a large number of the inhabitants of Nayríz yet again stood firmly identified with the new Revelation and the basis for another massive uprising against the tyranny of the authorities and the defense of the community was now set.

During this time, the influence of the governor and his agents was waning considerably, as each day the number of believers increased and their morale grew. Soon Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán was sufficiently alarmed that he too began to plot a second suppression. The news of his concerns and schemes for severe retaliation reached the believers and they readily recognized that in due time the governor would once again gather his forces and would attempt to purge the region of its Bábí elements and sympathizers.

<sup>463</sup> Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, pp. 170-172, state:

One of the believers who rejoined the community at this time was Mullá Hasan Lab-Shikarí, a son of Mullá 'Abdu's-Sami', and a

younger brother of the influential Mullá Bâqir, the Imam-Jum‘ih. Mullá Hasan had been appointed by Shaykh Abú-Turáb, the Imam-Jum‘ih of Shiraz, to supervise his properties in the village of Kushak-Mullá, and many years earlier had the good fortune to accompany the

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revenge the sacred blood of the illustrious Vahíd.<sup>464</sup> However, no opportunity presented itself, until five of the residents of the [Chinár-Súkhtih] neighborhood who were also relatives of the Khán, namely, Karbalá’í Muhammad and his three sons, Khájih Mahmúd, Khájih Hasan

Báb in one of His journeys to Bushihr, and though he had remained unaware of the Latter’s claim to being the promised Manifestation, he had been greatly attracted to the young Siyyid, and day and night exerted himself to serve His every need. At the conclusion of the journey, out of His infinite benevolence, the Báb had given His own precious ring to Mullá Hasan, which the latter treasured to his last breath.

When Vahíd arrived in the region and proclaimed the new Cause, Mullá Hasan and his brother embraced the Faith and while Mullá Bâqir outwardly projected a neutral disposition towards the Bábí Movement, Mullá Hasan was very much in the thick of things and would openly proclaim the Faith and propagate its interests. In addition, he had been a close family friend of Muhammad-Bâqir Khán, the governor’s brother who was assassinated at Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán’s bidding, to the point that his sons called him ‘brother.’

It was through the intervention of Mullá Hasan that the children of the slain Mullá Bâqir Khán were secretly provided food and provisions and thus rescued – a fact that had added to the disdain of the governor. It had become known that Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán had put together a plan to slay Mullá Hasan and his comrades, Sardar, Mírzá Husayn [Khájih] Qutb, and a few others. Therefore, with evergreater fervor, Sardar and Qutb preached the importance of eliminating the root cause of troubles, namely, the despicable governor.

<sup>464</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 23, states:

Day by day, Mírzá Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín grew in enmity and grievance. He confiscated the properties and possessions of all the believers and left them with no dwelling to live in. Consequently, the Bábís dispersed in the mountains and began to gradually organize themselves against the governor and the ‘ulamá. They recognized that no matter where they went, they would never be able to live in tranquility and would always be a target for the despotism and tyranny of this corrupt order.

Therefore, they resolved to eliminate the governor and his hatchetmen and to avenge the blood of Vahíd and his companions.

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and Khájih 'Alí, together with Ustád Qásim, who was a banná (construction taskmaster) at the governor's home, and all had become resentful of the Khán, decided to murder him.<sup>465</sup>

On a Thursday night, the Khán informed his Farrásh-Báshí [attendant], Karbalá'í Sádiq, "In the morning I will go to the bath-house,

and when I return I wish to go for a ride in the country-side. You are to take a large contingent of our men and proceed to the Chinár-Súkhtih quarter where, according to our list, some seventy of these people [i.e. Bábís] reside. Seize and place them all in jail as I have decided to put them in a pot and boil them." A trusted friend informed the five [wouldbe assassins] of this conversation and they in turn, bid farewell to their wives, and before dawn proceeded to the public bath and concealed themselves in its dark chambers.

Ever concerned with security, the Khán would place sharpshooters on the roof of the bathhouse as well as on the turret of his own mansion that was next door, and would take every precaution during his visits, and ensure that the bathhouse was vacant prior to entering. [On that day,] when the Khán arrived at the bath, at an opportune moment, the five men <p.25> emerged from their hiding place and, armed with razor blades, other sharp objects, the masseur's knives, injured the Khán with several cuts and slit his stomach open. The masseurs called out to his attendants and guards who rushed in and quickly martyred the five. Ustád Qásim was still barely alive when he heard the cry of the Khán coming from the dressing room and dragging himself there shouted: "O accursed one! They martyred my four brothers and you are still alive?!" And even though he was held back by the attendants, he freed himself momentarily and lunged forward, putting his hand on the Khán's cut, pulling out his intestines and other organs. Had he not committed this act, the injuries of the Khán were not fatal and the five men would have sacrificed their lives fruitlessly. The Khán lived for only one more day and then went to where he belonged. Ustád Qásim was immediately martyred.<sup>466</sup>

<sup>465</sup> Manábi' Táríkh Amr Bahá'í, pp. 56-57, states that these five were Bábís. Kawakibu'd-

Durriyih, vol. 1, p. 213, refers to them as the remnant of the Bábí martyrs and captives.

<sup>466</sup> The governor's death took place on 26 March 1853; for documentation see the

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[14. The New Governor]

In those days, the Prime Minister in Tihrán would name the local [senior] officials, and he had given the governorship of Nayríz to Mírzá Na'ím<sup>467</sup>, who in turn had passed it on to [Zaynu'l-'Ábidín] Khán.<sup>468</sup> Out of pride though, the Khán ruled

Qájár newspapers cited later in this monograph. Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 302,

notes:

Grossly agitated over the murder of his father, Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán, and unable to exact a full revenge, Fath-'Alí Khán decided to slay Mullá Hasan Lab-Shikarí, who was one of the believers suspected of masterminding the assassination plot. His attendants carried out this murder while Mullá Hasan was visiting Fort Sayf-Ábád in the vicinity of Nayríz. This martyr was survived by two sons: Mullá Áqá Baba and Mullá Muhammad-'Alí.

Mullá Muhammad-'Alí and a son of Mullá Áqá Baba, also named Mullá Hasan, were martyred in the course of Nayríz III.

<sup>467</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 27, n. 2, quotes from Fárshámih Násirí:

Mírzá Na'ím, the Lashkar-Báshí, was born in Shiraz in 1219 A.H. [1804] into one of the Núrí families residing in Shiraz. His job was Lashkar-Nivís-Báshí [the officer in charge of the logistics] of the military forces assigned to Fárs. For a while, he was the governor of Nayríz, Dáráb, Jahrum, and some other regions and eventually died in Shiraz in the year 1292 A.H. [1875].

Mírzá Na'ím was a brother-in-law and a cousin of the ruling Prime Minister Mírzá

Áqá Khán Núrí.

<sup>468</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 26, states:

At the beginning of the Spring of 1268 A.H. [circa March 1852], Mírzá Taqí Khán, the Amír-Atábak, fell into disfavor with the monarch. This was because of his vanity, pride and despotism, as he would ignore the royal decrees and would reject and dismiss the king's direct orders. He would carry out what he thought best, and he considered the sovereign a youth incapable of royal rule. As he had a particularly acrimonious nature and would deal with others in an extremely harsh manner, the vast majority of the governors strongly disliked him. Once, he reduced the rank of the military officers and they rose against him. As a result, he had to appeal to Mírzá Áqá Khán [Núrí], the I'timadu'd-Dawlih, who helped him rectify his

independently, and until the end never wore the gifted robe of honor.

The news [of Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán's assassination] was sent to the governor of Fárs, the late Prince Tahmasb Mírzá, the Mu'ayyadu'd-Dawlih.<sup>469</sup> Being extremely pleased with the turn of events, Mírzá Na'ím

relations with the commanders. In the end, the Shah dismissed Mírzá Taqí Khán from office, isolated, exiled and incarcerated him in Káshán.

Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 26, footnoted the following from Muntazam Násirí:

On 25 Muharram, Mírzá Taqí Khán, the Atábak A'zam, was deposed from office as chief military commander and Prime Minister, lost the title of Atábak and all other privileges, offices and honors. Mírzá Áqá Khán, the I'timádu'd-Dawlih, was installed in his place as Prime Minister.

Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, pp. 26-27, continues:

Eventually, at the royal bidding, he was slain in the Hammám Fin. When the King's executioners informed him of his fate, he became repentant about the true reason for his punishment and confessed his wrongdoing saying, 'Of a certainty, it was not prudent to oppose the Siyyid-i Báb and His followers. I gravely erred in slaying this Siyyid and now I must suffer the due punishment.' The aforementioned Mírzá Áqá Khán [Núrí] was appointed Prime Minister by the Shah and gradually given complete authority and independent rule in military and political matters, and raised to the rank of Sadr A'zam. With much innate statesmanship, wisdom and skill he began to organize the affairs of the realm, particularly the situation of the Bábís.

At that time, the uncle of the Shah, Tahmasb Mírzá, the Mu'ayyadu'd-Dawlih, was the governor of Fárs. Because of the troubles in that region, Mírzá Áqá Khán separated the rule of Nayríz from the province of Fárs and granted its rule to Mírzá Na'ím Núrí who was sent with a great many men to that city. Mírzá Na'ím was instructed by the Prime Minister in the art of statesmanship and was told to deal with the Bábís calmly and prudently, to grant them liberty and freedom of movement, and then to seize them all.

<sup>469</sup> Fírúz Mírzá, the Nusratu'd-Dawlih was the governor-general of the Fárs from the

beginning of 1266 A.H. [December 1849] and served until he was replaced with Tahmasb Mírzá, the Mu'ayyadu'd-Dawlih, a cousin of Muhammad Shah, in Sha'bán

1269 A.H. [May 1853]. Tahmasb Mírzá served in this capacity until 1858 and

once

more during 1860-62. He was a son of Muhammad-‘Alí Mírzá, son of Fath-‘Alí Shah.

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quickly dispatched his maternal uncle, Mírzá Baba, to Nayríz in the company of several soldiers. Upon their arrival, they did not discuss their mission with anyone until a month later when Mírzá Na‘ím, commanding a large contingent of cavalry and soldiers, arrived triumphantly [in Nayríz].<sup>470</sup> Among the welcoming party were ‘Alí Sardár and the believers, who thought they could breathe easy now.

Two or three days after his arrival, Mírzá Na‘ím was privately approached by the wife of the slain Khán, who encouraged him to revenge the blood of her husband on the promise of gaining whatever he wished. He inquired as to the means of accomplishing this, to which she responded, “There is no other way except to lure them through kindness.” Finding this approach pleasing, on the following day he sent a messenger to the believers [in the Bábí quarter] declaring, “All those who have sustained an injustice through Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín <p.26> Khán or have had their property confiscated, should gather at the government house and provide the details so that their property may be separated from the estate of Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán and returned to them.” The believers did not know about the scheme designed to trap them, but sensed that something was stirring, therefore, they decided to tell the new governor that they no longer had a claim on any property taken from them and absolved the Khán of all he had committed, leaving him to divine judgment and justice.

Therefore, [on the appointed day], many of them went to the government house. Prior to their arrival, however, the soldiers and the gatekeeper were instructed that upon their entrance, the gate should be quickly shut and [if necessary] the gunmen should open fire on them ensuring that no one, from either within the building or outside, would dare move. In short, some one hundred and fifty<sup>471</sup> of the leading believers were arrested and imprisoned that day and some received severe beatings. Among them Mashhadí Mírzá Husayn, surnamed Qutb, ‘Alí Sardár, and some other braves.

Some time passed while the [Bábí] men remained imprisoned and

<sup>470</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 28, estimates the number of his men as two

divisions.

<sup>471</sup> Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 174, gives this figure as 130.

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their womenfolk apprehensive. Eventually Mírzá Na'ím decided to journey to Shiraz and he prepared a list of the prisoners, whom he entrusted to his uncle, Mírzá Baba, and together with his soldiers he returned to Shiraz. Meanwhile, the aforementioned Shujá'u'l-Mulk informed the Prime Minister that Mírzá Na'ím had rendered a great service by capturing in the space of one hour some one hundred and fifty of the enemies of the throne<sup>472</sup> in such a manner that not even one had a nose bleed. The Prime Minister in turn presented the text of that communication to the monarch, who was very pleased, instructing him to respond that the entire group of the prisoners must be sent to Tihrán. After Mírzá Na'ím's departure for Shiraz, the inhabitants of Qatrih [Qutriyih], one of the villages of Nayríz, refused the orders of Mírzá Baba, the [temporary] governor of Nayríz, on account of excessive taxation. No matter how many emissaries, soldiers or gunmen Mírzá Bábá sent, it was futile and the villagers would not budge. Mírzá Baba was informed that the only men whose influence could sway the situation was 'Alí Sardár and the other lion-hearted [Bábí] warriors <p.27> presently in prison, and that he had no option but to release 'Alí Sardár and send him to Qatrih [Qutriyih]. He complied as advised and offered the Sardár a robe of honor and commissioned him for the task.<sup>473</sup> On hearing the news of his approach, in spite of their strength and resolve, the villagers retreated and the Sardár was able to collect all owed taxes and to send the money to Mírzá Bábá.

Duly impressed, Mírzá Bábá released the [remaining captive] believers and dealt with them justly and respectfully. It was then that the monarch's officials arrived in Shiraz in order to conduct the Bábís to Tihrán and Mírzá Na'ím was informed of their mission, and in turn, he sent several of his men to Nayríz [to bring with them the Bábí captives].<sup>474</sup> However, before the arrival of the officers in Nayríz, the

<sup>472</sup> The original, qiblih 'álam (lit. the pivot of the world) is one of Násiri'd-Dín Shah's

titles.

<sup>473</sup> Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 175, states that it was Mírzá Na'ím who met with the

Sardár and asked for his help. However, according to Mullá Shafí ', by then Mírzá

Na'ím had long left for Shiraz.

<sup>474</sup> Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 176, notes that during this period a number of the

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believers in Shiraz learned of the details and quickly dispatched a messenger to Nayríz to inform the friends.<sup>475</sup>

The believers [of Nayríz] consulted and divided into three groups. The first group consisted of the akhúnds [clerics] who gathered in the house of one of their own, Mullá Muhammad Mu'min. 'Alí Sardár and his expert riflemen gathered at his house, while Mashhadí Mírzá Husayn, titled Qutb, led another group to the vineyards outside the city limits. Every hour they would send messengers back and forth to ensure they were fully informed of each other's situation.

Mírzá Bábá was contemplating ways to trap the Bábís [for dispatch to Tihrán]. He decided to send an envoy [with the false pretense] that some particular region had rebelled and that they were needed to come and prepare to do battle [with the insurgents] on the following day. He thought that the believers were unaware of what had been decreed [by the monarch], and when they came, he would be able to seize them. However the believers responded, "We are under no compulsion to aid the government in its dealings with the rebels and will not come." [Undaunted, Mírzá Bábá] sent a second emissary, and yet again they refused to come.

Fearing the royal wrath, Mírzá Bábá summoned to the government house a few Muslim gunmen from the same quarter that were uninformed of the events <p.28> and placed them in confinement. He thought that if eventually he failed to capture the Bábís, at least he could send these plebeians in their place to Tihrán. However he soon realized that unless a few Bábís were also forcibly seized and placed among them, his plan was futile.

'ulamá in Shiraz, such as Shaykh Husayn Nazimu'sh-Shari'ih, known as Shaykh

Zálim [the tyrannical Shaykh], Mullá Muhammad-'Alí Mahallátí and Shaykh Mihdí

Kajvarí, every day most vehemently denounced the Báb's religion and anyone associated with the nascent Faith.

<sup>475</sup> From the early years of the Bábí faith into the opening decade of the Twentieth

Century, a number of political and administrative figures of Fárs were Bábí, or Bábí

sympathizers. Some of them were believers in Bahá'u'lláh as well; for details see,

Ahang Rabbani, *In the Land of Refuge*. Therefore, it is likely that senior officials in

Shiraz leaked the plot against the Bábís to the community.

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[15. First Battle, the Fall of 1853]

[Therefore in order to apprehend some of the Bábís,] he ordered his soldiers and footmen to encircle the vineyard [where a group of the believers had taken refuge]. However, none among his men dared to enter.<sup>476</sup> Eventually, several farrashes were sent in to overcome and arrest the believers, but they met the swords, sticks, pistols and stones of the defenders, and had to retreat in great haste. Raising the cry of “Alláhu-Akbar,” the Bábís continued to chase them outside the orchard. Similar shouts were raised by the Bábí ‘ulamá, as well as the men under the command of ‘Alí Sardár who were all emerging from their locations, creating a most fantastic spectacle with the cry of “Alláh-u-Akbar” raised from all three directions.

A contingent of mounted soldiers was positioned at the orchard’s gate when one of the believers named Muhammad, son of Mír[zá] Ahmad, emerged from within with burial garb on his shoulders<sup>477</sup> and wielding a sword. The courage manifested by this one man caused the soldiers to flee before him. Soon the soldiers retreated to the government house, managing only to seize and imprison a single Bábí.<sup>478</sup> On that day the believers stood approximately two hundred strong and were surrounded by the soldiers and gunmen from all four directions. Using the protection of the aqueduct’s wall, the believers joined the battle, and the noise of five or six hundred guns was heard constantly until dusk. In their haste to join their comrades, however, several of the believers were captured. Among them was a certain Mullá Muhammad-’Alí Qabid; and I do not recall the name of the others caught.<sup>479</sup> These were also incarcerated.

<sup>476</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 30, gives the number of soldiers and irregulars on

this occasion as 2,000. But this seems inflated and may reflect the number of opponents assembled a week or so later.

<sup>477</sup> As a sign of readiness for self-sacrifice, at times, burial cloth is worn in battles.

<sup>478</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 30, indicates that it was the same believer,

Muhammad, who was captured.

<sup>479</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 30, states that altogether three Bábís were

captured.

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The believers that were confined by then included: the aforementioned Muhammad, son of Mír[zá] Ahmad; Mahmúd, son of Haydar-Bayk; ‘Abdu’lláh, <p.29> son of ‘Askar Shabán; Ahmad, son of Mashhadí Ismá‘íl; ‘Alí and Murád Síjrání; and Ridá from the Qanqarí

region of Bávanát. The traitorous Khájih Ghafar, who in former days had been among the companions of the illustrious Vahíd, joined these seven. They were all placed in a room beneath the tower of Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán’s mansion. In the course of their consultations, they decided to make a hole in the tower’s wall, through which they could escape. Using a knife and by pouring out water, they dug through the night, and were aided by Khájih Ghafar. However when the task was nearly complete, the latter informed Mírzá Na‘ím, “You have seized me in error as I am not a Bábí, but these others are. They are planning their escape by excavating a hole in the tower.” After it was determined that indeed the prisoners had attempted to carve a hole in the wall, he was told to further prove his disassociation with other prisoners by beheading them, to which he readily consented. They were all brought forth from confinement and, in front of the Masjid Nazar-Baykí, a certain Áqá Ridá, son of ‘Alí-Naqí, with his pistol shot and killed one of

them, namely, Muhammad, son of Mír[zá] Ahmad. Khájih Ghafár decapitated the remaining believers and was released. [After this occurrence and deeply ashamed by his son’s heinous betrayal,] Khájih Ghafár’s father would repeatedly and indignantly roar, “He is a bastard and not a son of mine!”

At night time, the army division withdrew to its barracks and the believers went to an orchard half a farsang away from town at the foot of the mountains known as Bídlang<sup>480</sup>, where Vahíd had planted the trees with his own blessed hands. For two days they tarried there until all the believers had gathered. In their discussions, they recognized that given their imperiled circumstances, there was no hope for outward victory and that instead they should prepare for life everlasting [and martyrdom]. Gradually the number of the men reached four hundred.

480 Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 180, refers to it as Bid-Bikhubih and Háji Muhammad

calls it Bid-Najviyyih. This mountain is 14 kilometers south of Nayríz.

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[16. Retreat to Mountains]

There are many modest fig-orchards at the base of that mountain, and all the Nayrízís, of whatever rank, own an orchard there. At that time <p.30> about half of the city’s inhabitants were there working their

groves. [In their desperation,] the believers decided that since it was certain that they would be killed and their wives [and children] taken captive, they might as well exact a measure of revenge. They searched the orchards for anyone who had at one time persecuted, humiliated or injured them and would then slay them. Each day, several corpses [of the non-Bábís] were brought to town.

The governor of Nayríz pleaded for assistance to the Prince and Mírzá Na‘ím [in Shiraz] and himself assembled a two thousand strong force from the nearby villages and regions.

The Army of God also resolved that while they still stood, no harm would be allowed to come to their womenfolk; and after they had perished, whatever would be, would be. On the third night, they removed their families and other necessities from town and returned to the mountain. At that time the number of men was four hundred and of women six hundred. The families were left in the vineyards and the men went further up the mountain, securing all pathways leading to their positions and placing fortifications on all the strategic points.

A few days later, Mírzá Na‘ím arrived with artillery, infantry and cavalry, leading four divisions and the Khamsih tribesmen. Also arriving some twenty days later were one thousand Istahbánátí gunmen, and another thousand ‘Aynálú men led by their commander, Ma‘sum-‘Alí Khán Qurt, making their way through Iraj-Kih-Dihí, a village of Istahbánát situated at a distance of four farsangs from Nayríz. Mírzá Na‘ím and his camp, horsemen and soldiers joined them by way of Darb-Shikáf, which is the entrance to the mountain region.

To their ranks were added another thousand Nayrízí men, perhaps more, assembled from the nearby regions and villages, who made their way through a mountainous passage known as Dúr-Qalat, and led by: Mírzá Yúsuf, the Kalántar of Nayríz; <p.31> Muhammad-Ridá Khán, brother of the slain [Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín] Khán; Mullá Hasan, son of Mullá

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‘Alí-Muhammad, mentioned previously as having been shot in the Masjid’s minaret; and several other nobles and chieftains from various quarters.<sup>481</sup> In short, from all four directions the mountain was

<sup>481</sup> The following report was filed in October 1853 by the British Agent in Shiraz,

Mírzá Fadlu’lláh Qazvíní (quoted in The Bábí and Bahá’í Religions 1844-1944, pp. 147-148):

Merza Naeem having falsely accused the people of Neireez of being Babees, obtained an order from the Government to seize one hundred and seventeen of the inhabitants, put them in chains and

sent [sic] them to Tehran to be punished. Thus empowered he proceed to Neireez with a number of people and there he pillaged and plundered the houses of the people and committed every kind of excess. The Neireezees fled, some to the mountains and others to various places, and a large body of them took sanctuary a few days ago in a Shrine outside the city. Meerza Naeem then bribed the worthless characters who frequent the city to assist his people in seizing the Neireezees and dragging them from their place of sanctuary, and at night he sent his people thus aided to effect this. A dreadful uproar ensued and in the confusion one young lad was seized and conveyed to Meerza Naeem's house, where he was beaten with bastinado until he died. Hajee Kavam [Hájí Mírzá 'Alí-Abkar, the Qavámu'l-Mulk] the Vezeer of Shiraz on learning this, sent people to prevent the seizure of the rest of the Neireezees. In truth should Meerza Naeem be permitted to remain here he will drive the people into rebellion, for they are quite annoyed at the conduct of the Government in acting in this manner at the instigation of a man like this.

Alee Beg who had been send to Sheeraz to take charge of the above people accused of Babeism having arrived at Neireez where he committed every kind of outrage, the people returned and having withdrawn their families from the place, again fled to the mountains where they have conveyed provisions, enough to maintain them for three or four months.

Meerza Naeem has demanded and received from the new Governor, who knows nothing of the matter, a force amounting to four hundred soldiers, two guns with artillerymen and ammunition, and he has started for the purpose of seizing these poor people and sending them to the Capital. The Governor has also given him orders to receive aid from the different Districts in the vicinity. But the

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thoroughly surrounded.<sup>482</sup>

For their part, the Army of God erected about forty fortifications and each was assigned to the command of one of its members.<sup>483</sup> For instance, the fortification at the entrance of Darb-Shikáf was under the command of a certain [Mashhadí] Darvish, and another in command of Khájih Qutb, and yet another in command of Mír[zá] Ismá'íl, and another assigned to Hájí Qásim, and another to Mullá Shah-'Alí, and so forth.<sup>484</sup> Each was assigned a commander, and there were a few other brave souls who routinely visited and supervised the fortifications.<sup>485</sup> Among the believers were seven men known as the Haft-Nafari<sup>486</sup> [i.e. the seven men], who performed all the heroic deeds, and they were: Báqir, son of Mír[zá] Ahmad; Karbalá'í 'Askar Bíraq-Dár [the

standardbearer]; <p.32> Hájí, son of Asghar; ‘Alí, son of Ahmad, known as Garmsiry; Husayn, son of Mashhadí Ismá‘íl; Husayn, son of Hádí Khayrí; and Hasan, son of Mírzá.<sup>487</sup>

Neireez people have fixed upon a very strong place in the mountains for their quarters and there is only one road to it, so it is believed that the troops will not be able to seize them. They made a descent upon Neireeza and killed those that had remained there and were hostile to them.

482 Mírzá Na‘ím’s strategy was to effect a complete blockade of the mountain so that

the Bábís would starve to death. He also utilized the tribesmen as his frontline, as

they were more familiar with the terrain and the mountain passes.

483 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 32, indicates that each fortification was marked by

a red flag.

484 Hájí Muhammad Nayrízí reports that the lowest fortification was named Mádár

Sami‘ [Mother of Sami‘]. This fortification served as both the lookout post and the frontline of defenses.

485 The military organization of the Bábís manning the barricades was that each

fortification was assigned a commander and eighteen other believers for a total of

nineteen defenders equal to the numeric value of “váhíd.”

Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p.

272, suggests that eighteen believers manned each fortification, and the nineteenth one

was considered to be the person of the Báb, who was believed to be present and an aid

to each group of the Bábí defenders. Whether 18 or 19 men were assigned to each

group, it is clear that a deep sense of commitment to the Báb and reliance on divine

confirmation characterized the Bábí struggle.

486 Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 272, refers to them as haft-barádarán (seven brothers).

487 The concluding three words in this sentence are not readable to the present

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And of those obeyed by all, one was the honored Mashhadí Mírzá Husayn, whose instructions were considered irrefutable and divinely inspired, and the other, ‘Alí Sardár, who knew the art of warfare and battle.<sup>488</sup> Some of the men were among the akhúnds, both ‘ulamá and mystics, whose ranking members included: the late Hájí Shaykh ‘Abdu’l-‘Alí, the Qádí [judge]; the late Akhúnd Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Husayn and his sons; Mullá ‘Alí; another Mullá ‘Alí and his sons<sup>489</sup>; and a certain Karbalá’í Hádí. The task of logistics, compiling the daily records, and trumpets, was given to Mullá ‘Alí-Naqí, son of Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Husayn. The youngest son of the aforementioned akhúnd, that is, Mullá Muhammad-Taquí, had gone to Harát to visit Áqá Siyyid Ja‘far Yazdí when he heard the news [of the uprising] and immediately came to the mountain, and eventually ranked among the martyrs. In short, each person was assigned a particular task.<sup>490</sup>

[17. First Mountain Battle]

translator.

<sup>488</sup> Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 272, states that the overall command resided with an

assembly of nine men. The commander-in-chief was ‘Alí Sardár, and Khájih Qutb

served as the second-in-command, having a quasi-spiritual authority, while the other

seven helped with various command decisions.

<sup>489</sup> The sequence of the names given here is conspicuously similar to that given for the

people mentioned as welcoming Vahíd at Istahbánát.

<sup>490</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, pp. 33-34, notes:

For a number of days while Mírzá Na‘ím was in process of organizing his camp, the believers would descend the mountain in search of water-springs, which always resulted in clashes with the tribesmen. For each of these attacks, one of the fortifications would be chosen and one of its defenders would remain behind while the other eighteen believers, having placed burial garbs over their shoulders, would rush forth crying ‘Yá Sáhib Zamán!’ and attack the guards placed around the water-springs. Quickly dispersing the guards, they would fill their sheepskin bags with water and return to their position. Mírzá ‘Alí Sardár often led these battles and exhibited unsurpassed bravery; occasionally, a few of the Bábís were killed or injured in the battles.

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Unexpectedly, the Istahbánátí gunmen launched a surprise attack. However, five of their akhúnds broke ranks and carrying a large cache of arms joined the Army of God in the mountains and eventually attained the glory of martyrdom. They were: Mullá Fadlu'lláh, son of Mullá Abu'l-Qasim, the Qadi of Istahbanat; Mullá Muhammad-'Alí; Mullá Muhammad-Báqir; Karbalá'í Sifr; and [Karbalá'í] Muhammad-Ismá'íl.

At

about that time, some fifteen hundred 'Aynálú, Qurt, Chayan and Istahbánátí men who had been assured by their 'ulamá that slaying the Bábís would win them the good pleasure of God, surrounded and attacked the believers.<sup>491</sup> These men over-powered their foes [i.e. the Bábís] and captured some thirty fortifications while pushing the believers into two or three fortifications. <p.33> The two camps were then standing toe to toe.

One of the Istahbánátí sharp-shooters positioned himself behind a large rock and martyred three of the believers: Ismá'íl Khájih Ahmadí, the custodian of the Khájih Ahmad shrine located about one farsang's distance from Nayríz; Sha'bán, son of 'Ábidín; and Muhammad.

Moreover, this gunman also shot Mullá Husayn, a son of Mullá 'Alí-Muhammad<sup>492</sup>, and son of Áqá Bábá, who were injured, and passed away after a few days. As soon as the rifle of the Istahbánátí sharpshooter was empty, Taqí, son of Safr, flew forth like a hawk and with his sword struck him so hard that from his upper lip the top of his head was sundered, and then he returned to his fortification.

About then, 'Alí Sardár came to them bitterly tired and asking for food. Some dried bread and walnuts were given to him. He then asked for a water-pipe and a certain believer, Muhammad, prepared it and as he was bringing it to him was shot in the head and killed instantly. 'Alí Sardár sprang to his feet like a ferocious and esurient lion and rushed forth from the fortifications charging the enemy which stood strong as a mountain. A group of the people of Truth [i.e. the Bábís] joined him from behind and the mighty forces of the enemy were put to flight. With ready sabers, the Bábís continued to chase after them and twenty-one of the ungodly assailants were cornered and all beheaded on the spot and

<sup>491</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 33, places their numerical strength at 2,000.

<sup>492</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 34, gives his name as Mullá 'Alí.

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thrown down the mountain. The rest were so frightened by the audacity displayed by the Bábís that they retreated four farsangs to the village of Iraj, and at about one hour past noon the Army of God returned triumphantly to its original position. It was then one hour into the

afternoon.

Mírzá Na‘im and the Nayrízí gunmen were unaware of this defeat [and withdrawal], <p.34> so they prepared a communication for the [Istahbánátí] troops, with instructions, “Tomorrow, four hours into the day you are to commence an offensive from the direction of the Qiblih, and the Nayrízí and Vaysbagluyih men, under the command of Muhammad-Ridá Khán and Mírzá Yúsuf Kalántar, from the eastern front will open fire with cannons, and using foot-soldiers will proceed through the Darab Shikáf passage. Swiftly we are to thoroughly eliminate them [i.e. Bábís] and thereby win the good pleasure of the Shah, which will bring us honor and glory.” This dispatch was entrusted to a messenger named Mashhadí Ja‘far, who on his way was spotted and seized by the believers’ watchmen. They decapitated him and threw his remains down the mountain. In this manner the defenders were informed of the contents of that [military] directive.<sup>493</sup>

Suddenly, gunmen, soldiers and commanders began to appear in the opposing entrenchments, unaware of the messenger’s fate. Gradually their number increased to about four hundred, and included some Nayrízí citizens whose wives had embraced the Cause of Truth [and were now among the defenders in the mountain], while they themselves remained in opposition. They asked, “Why have you brought our wives [to this mountain]?” “They are no longer your wives,” [the Bábís responded,] “as now you are not permitted to one another.”<sup>494</sup> For a while they continued to converse [with the Nayrízís], who would ask, “How is it that you have recognized the Lord and yet we have failed?”<sup>495</sup>

<sup>493</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 35, has additional materials on this incident.

<sup>494</sup> According to the law of the Bayán, a woman believer may not be married to an

unbelieving husband. The above reference is further evidence that the Bábís of Nayríz

had sought to implement the laws of the Bayán.

<sup>495</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 35, provides a Bábí response:

You have failed in your recognition much the same that Salmán and

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Meanwhile, ‘Alí Sardár instructed several skilled riflemen to [circle and] approach the army, instructing, “We will keep them occupied with conversation [while you position yourselves], and suddenly we both will open fire. Through God’s assistance, perhaps we will manage to untie this knot.” One of the braves by the name of Hasan, son of Mírzá, took several men with him and implemented what was commanded.

Simultaneously the two groups of believers opened fire, and then with unsheathed <p.35> swords attacked the enemy, who, deeply frightened, left behind their tools, weapons, and provisions, and escaped forthwith. That day, after initial hardship, victory was ours! Many of our men were near-death with hunger and half of the men of Truth [i.e. Bábís] did not have weapons. Carrying away all the arms, bread, clothing, lead, gunpowder, rifles and swords that were left behind they returned to their position.

On that day the true cowardly character of the unbelieving Nayrízís became well-evident: two thousand men, selected among the ablest, could not withstand the charge of twenty [Bábí] men, and not one of them discharged his gun, and they all took to flight in greatest haste! It was near sunset when this skirmish was concluded. As mentioned earlier, supported by an unnumbered host of soldiers and troops, Mírzá Na‘ím was lurking in ambush near Darab Shikáf, unaware of this defeat, and expecting to circle the believers from all four directions on the following day, in accordance with the written instructions earlier given to his messenger.

Someone remarked, “Presently we are all tired, but tomorrow we will go after them [i.e. Mírzá Na‘ím’s forces].” However, ‘Alí Sardár

responded that it was best to deal with the problem that very night so that the following day we could rest easy. Everyone concurred.

Nineteen men were sent to the entrance of the passage Darab Shikáf, and nineteen others, led by Mashhadí Mírzá Husayn, proceeded towards the Ásbúrán Mountains. They agreed that once they were certain that the enemy had fallen asleep, from the heights of the mountain they would open fire and dislodge the camp. Siyyid Husayn

Abú-Dhar recognized the Prophet of Islam while the ‘Arabs and the Jews with all their divines remained deprived.

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was one of those approaching the camp from the [Ásbúrán] heights, and as he had frail eyesight, <p.36> he knocked some rocks in the darkness of the night, which rolled down the mountain and alerted the camp. Raising the cry of “Alláh-u-Akbar,” the believers immediately opened fire, causing the camp to fall into total disarray and the soldiers to hastily disperse in all directions. One of the believers set fire to one of the yúrts<sup>496</sup> and quickly other friends emulated the same, and several yúrts, made of lumber, were set ablaze. Soon the whole area was as bright as day, which allowed the soldiers to find their escape route, including Mírzá Na‘ím who left on the back of one of his men. The believers ended the hostilities and brought back with them the cannons and the

arsenal.<sup>497</sup> If they had not set fire to the yurts, the entire company of the soldiers would have perished that very night.

At any rate, the Army of God returned victorious and triumphant, having won the guns and ammunition, and for nearly a month the situation was peaceful.<sup>498</sup> In this period of tranquility, they lived with some comfort, every morning and evening firing cannon shots of salute, and always reminding each other of the Words of Truth. They incessantly urged and encouraged one another to martyrdom and would remind their family and womenfolk that soon they would be taken as captives and slaves, saying, “When you are taken as prisoners, wear old, worn cloths. Never cry, lament or shed tears over what will transpire, and never concern yourselves with the cold, heat, hunger, thirst or with being unclad. Manifest patience and forbearance, and be heedless of the

<sup>496</sup> The nomads of central Asia refer to their circular skin- or felt-cover tent, with

collapsible frame, as *yúrt*. In the Persian and Turkish contexts it refers to a wooden

tent, room, house, or lodging. *Lam‘átu’l-Anvár*, vol. 1, p. 185, refers to soldiers’ tents as

“*Bikhus-Karan*,” a local phrase.

<sup>497</sup> According to *Tárikh-i Jadíd*, after having first beheaded the officer in charge of

the gun, the Bábís took with them the cannon and the arsenal. Finding themselves

unable to push the entire cannon up the mountain, they removed the wheels and carriage, and using ropes pulled the gun barrel up to their location. They positioned

it against a large tree and planned to use it in future conflicts.

*Lam‘átu’l-Anvár*, vol. 1,

pp. 181-182, suggests this cannon was captured in the course of the second battle.

<sup>498</sup> *Tárikh Zuhúru’l-Haqq*, vol. 4, p. 37, states that it was 40 days in between the

battles.

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scorn of the enemies.”

In those quiet days, a few of the virulent enemies who had perpetrated much harm to the community, such as the treacherous Hájí Siyyid ‘Abid who had turned against the illustrious Vahíd <p.37> and had caused the scattering of the believers, were put to death after much torture and torment. Another such individual was Mírzá Husayn, the

soothsayer, who in former days used to frequent the nightly gatherings of the friends, and with much humility and meekness represented himself as one of them, but by day he would report the entire proceedings to Zaynu'l-‘Ábidín Khán. He too was put to a harsh death.<sup>499</sup>

[18. Second Mountain Battle]

Being extremely agitated, Mírzá Na‘ím appealed to the authorities in Shiraz. The Prince [Tahmásb Mírzá] Mu‘ayyadu’-d-Dawlih instructed the commander of the Qashqa’i division, Lutf-‘Alí Khán<sup>500</sup>, to prepare at once together with armed men and cavalry from Gulpáyigán, Sarvistán, Istahbánát, Iraj, Panj-Ma‘ádin, Qatrih, Yashnih, Dih-Cháh, Mushkán, Ghúry, and Rasátíq, and the outlying regions such as, Dahmurád, Khájih Jamálí, Chár-Ráhy, Qarání, Lashtí, Nayrízí, Bahárlú, and Aynálú, under the command of Ahmad Khán, Khán Mírzá and Ma‘sum Khán Qúrt – the commander who had suffered a terrible and complete defeat in the first battles.<sup>501</sup>

<sup>499</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 37, suggests that these two were killed when 95 of

the Bábís attacked the city.

<sup>500</sup> Fársnamih Násirí notes: “General Lutf-‘Alí Khán, son of Muhammad-‘Alí Khán

Ilkhání ibn Jání Khán, who was the tribal leader of the Qashqa’ís, became army general after the passing of his father. Several times he was given missions in Sitán and the mountains of Giluiyyih. He died in the 1270’s [1854-64]. His son, Hájí Muhammad-Sádiq Khán, settled in Ábádih because of his mother’s family ties with that region.” A report of an interview with Hájí Muhammad-Sádiq Khán is recorded later in the present monograph.

<sup>501</sup> The British Agent in Shiraz, Mírzá Fadlu’lláh, reported the following on 14

November 1853 (quoted in *The Bábí and Bahá’í Religions 1844-1944*, pp. 148-149):

On the 1st Mohurrum [4 October 1853] news reached Sheeraz

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concerning the conflict of the People of Neereez in the mountains.

I wrote you word last month that Meerza Naeem had proceeded with Sirbaz [soldiers] and Guns, and a body of villagers to exterminate the Neereezes. On reaching the foot of the mountains, where the enemy lay, Meerza Naeem incited and urged the Sirbaz, villagers, and the artillery to ascend the single pass that leads into the heart of the mountain, (along which the Neereezes had erected a few towers, and in each one planted a number of men armed with firelocks), and having reached the interior, to cut all the people to pieces. Yielding to the pressing importunities of Meerza Naeem, the army ascended, and, as luck would have it, they reached the first tower about Sunset – garrison (located therein) were perfectly quiet – not a Sound was heard – so still did they remain that one would have thought the tower deserted and empty:- the troops gaining confidence pressed onwards to number two tower, where they found the same stillness prevailing, and having passed them all they entered the mountain itself. (No sooner had they done so than) Neereezes, who were in the van of Troops, backed up by those who were in the rear in the Towers, fell upon and commenced slaughtering the men of the unfortunate and ill-starred army:- there being no mode of escape, and the disaster having come upon them thro' the ill-management of their commander, the Neereez women clambered up the rocks, and, beating their mouths with their hands, vented forth cries of exultation. Night was succeeded by darkness – the troops were scattered over the mountain, and one of their guns fell into the hands of the Enemy.

Being desirous that so severe a calamity should be kept secret, a story was put in circulation that two of the Gulpaeganee Sirbaz had been killed in the fray, and some few had gone astray in the mountains, who would shortly return.

From the villagers, who accompanied the forces, however, it became known that many were killed, that the Neereezes had carried off the horses, and everything pertaining to the army; in short that Meerza Naeem and his army had been shamefully discomfited. The new Ruler proposes sending a fresh commander with fresh troops. Report has it that Meerza Naeem had been in two or three engagements prior to this one, and in one and all was defeated. Neereez has to pay Revenue 5,500 Tomans:- the Governor and Revenue Collectors were wont in former days to levy 10,000 Tomans at the very least, but so completely has Meerza Naeem

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In all, about twelve thousand<sup>502</sup> men from diverse tribes and regions surrounded the mountain. Supported by a Gulpáyigání division, a number of elite Nayrízí figures and a contingent of skilled sharpshooters,

Mírzá Na‘ím encamped at a homestead known as Bayd-Khánih, situated in the vicinity and under the first fortification of the ruined the Country, and that too out of pure selfish motives, that expectation of payment of Revenue hereafter must be out of question altogether. Hosts of inhabitants have been slain and many yet will follow ...

On the 15th Mohurram [18 October 1853] 600 of the Kashkaee [Qashqá‘í] Sirbaz and Two Guns, with complement of Gunners and ammunition, the whole under command of Lutf Alee Khán Sirteep, were in orders to proceed to the assistance of Meerza Naeem in Neereez.

Enclosing the above report and the one sent by the same agent quoted earlier, W.

Taylor Thompson, the British Chargé d’ Affairs, sent his own assessment of the

situation (quoted in *The Bábí and Bahá’í Religions 1844-1944*, p. 149):

The enclosed Extracts from the monthly Report of the British Agent at Shiraz, received on the 14th Instant, communicate the discomfiture of a small body of the King’s troops sent against Neereez, a district in the neighbourhood, whose inhabitants would appear to have been driven into rebellion by the oppressive and extortionate conduct of Meerza Naeem Nooree, a relation of Sadr-i-Azim [the Prime Minister]. Accused by this individual of being Babees, orders had been issued by the Persian Ministers for the translation of a number of their principal men to Tehran, the execution of which they now determined to resist by force of arms. That some few followers of the sect are present in that part of the Country seems to be very generally believed: but the measures taken to suppress them have been certainly unfortunate, and may give to more serious complications.

Tahmasb Meerza, the new Governor of Fars, is mentioned by our Agent as devoid of the talent and energy requisite to conduct his charge, and to keep in subordination the several factions into which the notables of the Province are divided. He is accompanied too by a large number of relatives and needy retainers for whom employment and emolument could only be provided at the expense of influential persons whose loss of place must render them inimical to his administration.

502 Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 184, gives this figure as ten thousand.

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people of Truth. He exerted every means to demonstrate his glory and means in comparison to the condition of the people of Truth. However the people of Truth thoroughly ignored his army and men. At times the

sound of bugles, trumpets and drums filled the air, and at other instances the soldiers participated in military exercises and practiced their march. But the believers still paid no attention to them, though they prepared for eventual martyrdom.

Gradually, Mírzá Na'ím gained courage and with his men came near Darab Shikáf passage in a field known as Áqá-Miry, <p.38> in the vicinity of an important fortification of the people of Truth, and raised his own defenses. There was a spring in that area known as Yaqúτί which served as the source of water for the people of Truth, and Mírzá Na'ím cut off access by placing his ablest soldiers and gunmen on its perimeters. Therefore, the honored 'Alí Sardár and the seven brave believers mentioned previously, together with a few others, including Karbalá'í 'Askar, the standard-bearer, for a total of fourteen [men], attacked at once the camp of that accursed one [i.e. Mírzá Na'im]. The gunmen standing guard by the spring began to fire and a bullet struck the right arm of Karbalá'í 'Askar, the standard-bearer. Firmly planting the standard on the ground and not allowing it to fall, he wielded a sword in his left hand and chased after the enemy, succeeding in killing several of the attackers. The standard was then lifted by Mírzá Zaynu'l-'Ábidín, an able and skilled young nephew of Mashhadí Mírzá Husayn, who, like a lion in chase of her prey, pursued the opposition, slaughtering one after another, to the point that the cry and lamentation of the entire camp was raised high. On their triumphant return, the believers brought the fat from the stomachs of fallen soldiers as medicine for their own injuries. On that day none of the believers were killed and their loss was limited to the injuries sustained by Karbalá'í 'Askar.

The Bahárlú men, whose bravery and skill with rifles was unrivaled in the entire province of Fars, suddenly, by way of the village of Iraj, circled the two fortifications known by the name of their commanders, Hájí Qásim and Khájih Qutba'í, and began to execute a [military] campaign. First they hid their foot soldiers and sharpshooters in the

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forest behind <p.39> large boulders and inside ditches. Then, they sent some men to ride their mounts in the open field while declaiming and haranguing loudly, [presumably to goad the Bábís into action].<sup>503</sup>

'Alí Sardár was completely unaware of the gunmen in the ambush. His [customary] strategy was to rush the enemy with only two or three men, and he never attacked their camp with more than three.<sup>504</sup> On this occasion as well, he emerged from the fortifications in company of two or three other gun-carrying believers and gradually made his way to the

503 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, pp. 186-187, notes:

This time Mírzá ‘Alí Sardár sensing that the end was upon them, assembled the commanders of each of the fortifications and several of the Bábí divines to consult on their desperate situation. He told his brave companions: ‘The days of our lives have drawn to a conclusion as our food, powder and bullets have been nearly depleted. Those wishing to save themselves, should depart now before the enemy overwhelms our forces and slays our men.’ None among his men was willing to leave, and in unison they proclaimed their readiness to stand with him to the bitter end.

The Sardár praised their fortitude, but he added: ‘In the forthcoming battle, I shall be killed. If they decapitate me, you can still recognize my remains by this ring that I wear. And if they decide to take the ring as booty, then surely they must cut off this finger which will allow you to recognize my fallen body by the missing finger. You are to bring back my body and to bury it next to the fortification named after me.’

It is reported that they also placed all the money and jewelry that they had with them in a copper pot and buried it at a fixed spot so that those surviving the ordeal might have means of support. The following day, bidding the friends farewell, the Sardár mounted his horse, but how strange that on this occasion the steed did not heed his command and remained immobile – it seems as if his horse also knew the fate that awaited him. Eventually though, the horse gave way to the flow of destiny and galloped ahead.

Regarding the Sardár’s comment about his ring, a similar event occurred with Imam

Husayn and with the Bábí leader, Hujjat Zanjání (see, In the Land of Refuge, chapter

6). Evoking parallels between Imam Husayn and Karbalá and their own situation was a common feature of Bábí historiography.

504 Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 187, suggests on this occasion he attacked with 18

other men for a total of 19.

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horsemen. Oblivious of the identity of ‘Alí Sardár, the riders continued to jockey and parade, and in no time the Sardár had penetrated their company and the battle was joined. Slowly but deliberately, the armed equestrians began to withdraw and the Sardár chased after them down the valley in the company of three of his ablest companions, two of whom were: Mírzá Muhammad, son of the Akhúnd Mullá Musá; and Áqá Siyyid ‘Alí, son of the late Mír[zá] ‘Abdu’l-Husayn.

Then, without warning, the foot soldiers emerged from hiding and

opened fire and a bullet struck the Sardár on the leg. He tried to discharge his rifle, but it jammed and did not fire; nor did his pistol; and when he attempted to draw out his sword, it became entangled with its sheath. Meanwhile some six hundred gunmen, more or less, were approaching him with volleys of fire, and were soon joined by the cavalry. The believers standing on the mountain could not see clearly what was transpiring and thought that the Sardár had won the battle and was resting in a safe location. In fact, ‘Alí Sardár was martyred by bullets on that spot.

Áqá Siyyid ‘Alí, another of his companions, also sustained many injuries, including a ghastly cut under his throat, but was still barely alive – though the troops thought him dead. The foes had no intimation that they had martyred ‘Alí Sardár. However, ‘Alí, son of Karbalá’í Bâqir and a brother of Táju’d-Dín who had fallen martyr during the episode of the illustrious Vahíd, was standing on a hill <p.40> and from that position beheld the motionless remains of the Sardár. Profoundly agitated by this scene and sobbing unceasingly, he rushed forth and threw himself on the Sardár’s body. He, too, was martyred.

Until that afternoon, neither side realized that the Sardár had been killed. When the Nayrízí soldiers passed through the field and came upon his remains, they recognized his remains and gave their comrades the glad tidings of the death of ‘Alí Sardár.<sup>505</sup> It has been reported that it

<sup>505</sup> Hájí Muhammad Nayrízí tells that despite his injuries, the Sardár was able to drag

himself back to the Bábí fortifications and passed away at that location. He was buried

beneath a fortification named after him. Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 113, n. 1, reports that

Shaykh Muhammad-Husayn, son of Mullá Muhammad Shafí’, has written in his history:

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was Khán Mírzá Bahárlú who recognized that illustrious personage and murdered him.

[The soldiers] took the blessed head of the Sardár and, together with the heads of two other [Bábís], sent them to Mírzá Na‘ím who rewarded them with prizes and honors. Amazingly, they left the body of Siyyid ‘Alí unmolested and he remained motionless until that evening when he made his way back to the fortification and to the friends.

Without exaggeration, he bore in excess of two hundred cuts. “After I

was shot,” he related to the companions, “I was beaten severely with rocks and sticks and cut repeatedly by sabers, waiting to be beheaded like my comrades. In a state of unconsciousness I heard a voice calling unto me, saying, ‘Arise and inform your friends of the Sardár’s martyrdom. You will be taken to Tihrán and martyred in that city.’” He then became senseless from his injuries, and as will be related later, was eventually taken to Tihrán and slain in that land.

In short, one evening, a certain Karbalá’í Hádí, who was one of the commanders, accompanied by ninety-five other companions, returned to town [Nayríz] and entered the Sádát quarter; [that particular quarter was chosen] because the womenfolk of that neighborhood had exulted when the illustrious Vahíd was beheaded.<sup>506</sup> A fierce battle took place that night <p.41> such that many of the non-Bábí Nayrízís took to flight and retreated to the safety of the mountains. Some thirty-five of their womenfolk, though, were slain and two of the companions were martyred that night as well.<sup>507</sup>

After Mírzá ‘Alí Sardár was struck by bullets and fell from his mount, the soldiers surrounded and killed him in a hail of gunfire. Then they cut off his head and the heads of the two others and took them to Mírzá Na‘ím who prized them.

<sup>506</sup> Considerable division existed between the residents of Chinár-Súkhtih quarter,

who were for the most part Bábís and were now in the mountains, and the residents

of the Sádát quarter who earlier had been Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán’s base of support

and now were the main force behind the efforts to eliminate the Bábís.

<sup>507</sup> Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 183, states that the Bábís also assaulted the military

barracks of the soldiers where a number of regulars were killed. The rest, fearing for

their lives, along with many of the Nayrízís, escaped into the wilderness and hid in

various places. Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 37, places this event during the 40

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Ahmad Khán and Khán Mírzá Bahárlú, the commanders of the opposition, sent a messenger [to the Bábís] saying, “Our purpose has been achieved and we have no further quarrel with your remaining numbers. The royal decree was for the arrest of ‘Alí Sardár and as good fortune had it, he was killed by our hands. Under the cover of night, you

should take your families and evacuate this area since your forces are no match for [the army of] the king. Each day a thousand men can be added to our ranks and arrayed to kill you. The fewness of your numbers, coupled with lack of command and this cold wintry weather, portends a hopeless outcome for you.” “That which should not have taken place,” the believers responded, “has occurred. Now that you have shown such courtesy, allow us to bury our dead and then we will leave.”<sup>508</sup>

The [Bahárlú] camp withdrew a distance of a mile, presenting an opportunity for the believers to collect the decapitated remains of their companions and to bury them in a mass grave, wearing the same bloodied clothing they had on. After this, our men and women grew extremely depressed and changed all the standards from red and green to black. According to one report, the martyrs had no clothing and were buried unclad.<sup>509</sup> “The Truth is with God.”

It was decided by the honored Mashhadí Mírzá Husayn, the esteemed Mírzá Ahmad and several of the illustrious akhúnds to collect the womenfolk from the various fortifications and yurts and to relocate them to the Ásbúrán orchard. They also instructed the men to withdraw from all the fortifications and to gather in the Ásbúrán barricade immediately above the spot where their families were to assemble – a fortification that had previously demonstrated solid defenses.

Afterwards, they sent an envoy to the Bahárlú leaders <p.42> bearing the message, “Though you have martyred our commander [‘Alí

days of quiet in which Mírzá Na‘ím was rearming. Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, pp. 182-

183, states that it was at this time that the Bábís moved further up the mountain to the

Bálá-Tarám location. The same source (p.183) indicates that frequently at night the

Bábís would go into town to acquire provisions, which typically would result in

opposition.

<sup>508</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 41, attributes this response to Mashhadí Mírzá

Husayn Qutb, Mírzá Ahmad and other Bábí ‘ulamá.

<sup>509</sup> The implication being that the enemy took their clothing as booty.

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Sardár], in now withdrawing your camp and allowing us a passage to leave, you have shown much generosity. We are indeed grateful.

However it appears that you are not fully informed of our cause. For four years now, we have resigned ourselves to suffer martyrdom and for our women to endure captivity and slavery. The sooner we sustain that

fate, the greater will be our [heavenly] reward. Your charge is to massacre us. Therefore, do not condemn yourself before the royal throne. If you do not slay us, another will be sent for this purpose. Therefore, bring your camp closer. And if you have some consideration in your hearts towards us, then, after our martyrdom, shelter our families.”

[19. The Final Days]

The womenfolk were assembled in the aforementioned place and the men in a nearby fortification. By then our entire food supply was depleted save for a small quantity of rice, some figs, and a few donkeys, one of which was, each day, slaughtered and its meat distributed among the men and women. Though weak with fatigue and near starvation, the women refused the rice and were satisfied with a few figs as they knew that the men needed their nourishment in order to fight battles.

There was only a small spring in that mountain and its flow was insufficient for the needs of our people. Therefore, the women decided to fetch water from the Yáqutí Spring, which had considerably better flow, but was now in the hand of the enemy. To this end, a band of them proceeded to the spring, some hoisting the standards while others were without them. The soldiers opened fire on them [forcing their retreat], and one of the women was shot and wounded, dying a martyr's death a few days later in captivity. “May the wrath of God be upon the oppressors.”

In those days, the weather was bitterly cold. <p.43> We had no clothes, not even shoes, and were faced with an extreme shortage of food and water. The men had exhausted their supply of lead and powder. Even the few animals that they had with them had died of thirst. In short, conditions had grown so miserable that no pen dare describe nor tongue attempt to tell them.

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Lutf-‘Alí Khán moved his cannons, cavalry and foot-soldiers closer, along with Cháhr-Bulúk sharpshooters and Istahbánátí gunmen, and erected a fortification opposite the one occupied by the Army of God. From another direction, the Bahárlú men returned as well and established their own position. From their own fortification, each group began to fire and it went thus for two or three days, while God's Army was very frugal with their shots as they suffered from an acute shortage of bullets and powder. All the bullets fired upon them by the opposition struck the fortifications and caused no damage, nor were the cannonshells very effective, except that they would explode among the rocks and the resulting shrapnel injure a number of the friends.

The number of the enemy was increasing each day, while the God's Army became considerably weaker as the result of extreme

shortages of food and clothing. The late Mashhadí Mírzá Husayn would constantly urge and encourage the believers, saying, “While a breath of life is left in us, we must exert ourselves and then rejoice in martyrdom.”

[20. The Final Battle]

The infidels soon recognized the futility of sounding their drums and trumpets, and firing guns and cannons from the safety of their fortifications. Therefore, they devised a scheme, much like the one they had used against the illustrious Vahíd. From afar they shouted, “Are you devoid of your senses by subjecting yourself to such sufferings?! If you have religious arguments, then come forth and let us hear your presentation and you can also consider ours, and, if we find your points compelling and agreeable, then we will accept and you can join us under the royal banner. We will intercede on your behalf with the monarch and can assure you of his reprieve.”

<p.44> In response, Mullá ‘Alí, who was among akhúnds and known for eloquence and experience in promotion of the Cause of God, and who had washed his hands from life, bid the companions farewell and proceeded to the camp of Lutf-‘Alí Khán. There he shared the Words of Truth and in response, peace [and cessation of hostilities] was offered.

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Mullá ‘Alí returned to the friends and acquainted them with the proposal. “We are not seeking truce,” the companions cried out [towards the enemy’s camp], “and have no claim other than maintaining that the Truth has been made manifest. If you wish to battle us, here we stand. Otherwise, move your camp.”

Suddenly the sound of trumpets signaling the army to attention was raised from their camp and all the soldiers and gunmen gathered. About a thousand Istahbánátí riflemen and a number from other locations stealthily took position behind the trees and large boulders, and the remaining regiments moved in unison forward as well. To the sound of drums and trumpets was added the discharge of guns at the rate of about one hundred thousand shots each hour. In the midst of these events, a light drizzle caused a thick fog to envelop the region to the point that no one could see his neighbor and only by voice were they able to recognize one another. The distance separating the enemy’s defenses from the fortification of the God’s Army was a quarter of a farsang and a thickly wooded valley covered this stretch. [According to a scheme that they had devised,] the soldiers left their own fortification for about two hundred steps and approached the defensive lines of the people of Truth, while rank upon rank of the Istahbánátí gunmen remained hiding in ambush.

As customary, the army of Truth also emerged from their fortification and after a round of gunshots, unsheathed their sabers and rushed forth towards the soldiers, who quickly turned around and retreated to their own fortification. At that moment, all at once, the Istahbánátí gunmen burst forth from their place of hiding and opened fire upon the believers from all four directions. <p.45> Immediately, their forces were augmented by the foot soldiers [that now returned to the battle field].

The people of Truth were hopelessly paralyzed. Whichever direction they turned, they met with large volleys of fire and by then their path to retreat was also completely blocked by the opposing riflemen. At long last, with much trouble and suffering, they managed to regain their fortification, [and as they could not see], began to call out to their comrades when they noted some fifty of their ranks were missing.

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They waited for two hours and then searched the field for the absent number. Though bitterly tired, frustrated and, because of prolonged starvation being on the verge of collapse, nevertheless under the darkness of night they reemerged from their haven and began to search the field, enduring that piercing cold in their thoroughly drenched clothing. Having located many of their comrades and finding them dead, with great difficulty they brought with them the injured.

That night was extremely agonizing. [Out of fear of providing a target for the enemy's sharpshooters], fire was not made in their midst all night. The injured were unconscious most of the time, but when they woke would beg for warm water, of which none could be provided.

They could hear the sound of drums and soldiers rejoicing in the opposite camp and their constant barrage of remarks about the events of the next day and the fate of their wives. Constantly the late Mashhadí Mírzá Husayn would encourage the friends and urge them to exert even greater heroic deeds while still each of them was left with a breath of life. However, fearing what tomorrow had in store, two or three persons left their company under the cover of dark. That night all the bedding was pulled over the injured to protect them from the piercing cold of winter.

[21. The Massacre]

The next morning, with cheers and jubilation, and to the sound of drums and trumpets, the enemy moved in upon them. The remnant of the believers rushed forth as well and joined the battle. In no time the opposition prevailed and was thoroughly victorious. They massacred a number, seized some others and beheaded all the injured.

Seeing this, a group of the people of Truth <p.46> joined hands and resolved that they would not turn their back to the enemy and would

stand their ground, prepared for the ultimate sacrifice. The late Mullá ‘Alí-Naqí<sup>510</sup> urged them all to yet again rush forward despite their frailties, and bringing his hand up to encourage an attack, was struck by a bullet which went through his hand and head and killed him instantly.<sup>511</sup>

510 Father of the narrator, Mullá Muhammad Shafí‘.  
511 Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 129, n. 1, quotes from an unpublished narrative of Shaykh

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The rear flank [of the Bábí defense] was still engaged in the battle when they noticed the womenfolk falling captive. The late Mírzá Ahmad with his remaining men, who numbered either fifteen or sixteen, launched a final offensive, but the infidels circled and martyred them one by one.

In the course of this, a number of believers were running down the mountain so fast that they lost their footing and fell to their martyrdom. And of those who the night before had taken to flight, many were lost in the mountain and were confronted by the enemy who killed some and seized others.<sup>512</sup>

[22. Taking Captives to Nayríz]

Meanwhile, the womenfolk had garbed themselves in modest clothing, discarding and leaving behind for the infidels all their jewelry. The main group apprehending them was Bahárlú tribesmen, who earlier had martyred ‘Alí Sardár, and now plundered their possessions, but caused them no harm. The [Bábí] women were moved to Bísámán Mountain and along the way were protected [by the Bahárlú].

Two of the older believers that were unfit for battle were among the women and these were both martyred. One was Mullá Musá Namad-Mál, and the other was Mashhadí Báqir Sabbágh, who was martyred by Mírzá ‘Alí-Bayk Nayrízí, the hard-hearted commander of the Nayrízí soldiers from the Ashqíya’ tribe. After killing Mashhadí Báqir with his pistol, <p.47> he beheaded the victim and handed the severed head to one of the Bábí children instructing the child, “Carry it as a gift to Mírzá

Na‘ím.” Placing a black veil over the head of the very young granddaughter of Mashhadí Báqir, he placed her on his own horse and rode hard to the camp of Mírzá Na‘ím, situated on Bísámán Mountain as well. Using a large rock as a seat, Mírzá Na‘ím was surrounded by his senior

Muhammad-Husayn ‘Ahdiyih where the same incident is outlined. The present translator has not been able to locate ‘Ahdiyih’s manuscript.

512 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 44, states that the entire duration of mountain

siege was six months. Further on page 47, the same author indicates that the period of Bábí wars with the regular army was four months.

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officers and attendants who were ecstatic with their triumph and dancing wildly. Reaching this festive gathering, Mírzá 'Alí Bayk threw the head of Mashhadí Báqir to the feet of Mírzá Na'ím and hurled the young girl to the ground saying: "O Commander! That which thou didst desire, has been achieved and all the Bábís have been reduced." Mírzá Na'ím and his entire company praised God and shouted congratulatory cries.

At that time, the women, numbering about six hundred and three, were placed in a trench. Akhúnd Mullá 'Abdu'l-Husayn was brought to the presence of Mírzá Na'ím, who asked: "O Akhúnd! You are a wise man. But how did it come to pass that after a life-time of learning and self-discipline, [you converted to the Bábí Faith] notwithstanding the consequences of the death of your sons and the thralldom of your wife?" "I am too weak to respond," the divine replied, "I only know, 'All laws are abrogated.'<sup>513</sup>"<sup>514</sup> On hearing this, that accursed one instructed his mouth to be filled with dirt, and subsequently one of the attendants shot him in the head with his pistol, which only caused a superficial injury. As they were preparing to martyr him, Mírzá Na'ím exclaimed, <p.48> "This man is one of the 'ulamá of this people and must be sent to Tihrán [to stand trial] before the throne!"

At Mírzá Na'ím's instructions, the captives were moved from that location with the men being bound tightly. The path chosen was a specially excruciating route with deep valleys and thick woods through Mount Bísámán. Among the women led as prisoners some were old, some young, some pregnant, some nursing, some having never walked far, some having been raised in comfort, and all mournful over the death of their husbands, sons, brothers and relations.<sup>515</sup>

<sup>513</sup> The independence of Bábí jurisprudence from the Islamic legal system was announced at the Badasht conference in July 1848 and from that point forward many

Bábís fearlessly proclaimed the new Dispensation as the abrogation of the Islamic Shari'a.

<sup>514</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, pp. 45-46, gives a much more elaborate proof

speech by the Bábí divine.

<sup>515</sup> The following statement is communicated by the British official Kemball to W.

Taylor Thomson (quoted in *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944*, p. 150):

The details of the massacre of Nereez are confirmed by a letter from another party. The inhabitants – for the most part not Bábís – having

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At that time I was nine years old. My mother carried my younger brother, Asadu'lláh, on her back. [Before his martyrdom,] my father had expressed his wish that when taken captive, we were to wear used clothes, but my mother had not removed the child's hat and even placed a small decorative memorabilia on the hat. In such a state, my mother was carrying him. She also had tied a rope to my hand with the other end being tied to her own waist. When I asked her of the purpose of the rope, she responded, "When they are about to kill you, I want to be near and to see it with my own eyes so that I may not have to live with uncertainty about you."

As we were proceeding, one of the riders spotted the child's [embellished] hat and bringing his horse near, reached for the hat, but instead grabbed both the hat and my brother's hair. When he rode away, the child was pulled from my mother's back and thrown some ten yards away, while the man rode away with the hat and the scalp. <p.49> We ran to my brother and noted that he lay on ground motionless and unconscious. My mother picked him up and embraced him tenderly.<sup>516</sup> In short, that is how the captives were brought to a mill known as Takht, situated some distance from a maydán from the town [Nayríz]. The women were all seated together while the men were chained in rows of ten. The heads of the martyrs were piled high and the soldiers began to skin the heads.

[23. List of Martyrs]

From what I witnessed and recall, the number of those suffering martyrdom during this period in the mountain was one hundred and

given all the proofs required that they did not belong to the obnoxious Sect, were induced by the most solemn protestations of safety to surrender themselves when 100 of the men were ruthlessly butchered and the women handed over to the soldiery.

<sup>516</sup> The same event is told in the narrative of Shaykh Muhammad-Husayn, son of Mullá Muhammad Shafí', and is captured in *Nayríz Mushkbíz*, pp. 116-117.

Since no

further mention of the young boy is made in any of the references, it is presumed that

he was killed in that incident.

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eighty [Bábís], in addition to a large number who were taken to Shiraz and Tihrán [who perished for the most part]. Among the prisoners was Karím, son of Muhammad, who in former days had been a skilled hunter-marksman. As soon as Mírzá Na'ím and the decapitated heads [of the Bábís] reached the aforementioned mill, he ordered Karím to be blown from the mouth of a cannon.

Some of the names of the remaining martyrs whom I recall:

Zaynál, brother of the above-mentioned Karím; Karbalá'í Yúsuf Najjár [carpenter]; son of Mashhadí Muhammad; Khájih Zaynu'l-'Ábidín; son of Khájih Ghaní; Mashhadí Báqir Sabbágh [painter]; Mashhadí 'Askar, son of Mashhadí Báqir; Mullá Muhammad-Taquí and Mullá 'Alí-Naqí<sup>517</sup>, sons of Akhúnd Mullá 'Abdu'l-Husayn; Mullá 'Alí, Mullá Hasan, Mullá Mu'man and Mullá Ahmad, sons of Akhúnd Mullá Músá; Muhammad Kuchak, son of Mashhadí Rajab; Mashhadí Mír[zá] Muhammad; Mullá Darvish; Zaynu'l-'Ábidín, son of Mullá Muhammad; Zaynu'l-'Ábidín, son of Ustád Muhammad; <p.50> Mashhadí 'Alí, son of Najf; Karbalá'í Báqir and his son Mullá Muhammad; Mashhadí Taquí Baqál [shopkeeper], son of 'Abid; Mírzá Ahmad, son of Mullá Sádiq, uncle of 'Alí Sardár; Akhúnd Mullá Ahmad, son of Muhsin; Akhúnd Mullá 'Alí Kátib [scribe], son of Mullá 'Abdu'lláh; Muhammad 'Abdu'l-Karím; Mírzá 'Alí; Mullá

Sádiq; Asadu'lláh, son of Mírzá 'Alí; Mírzá Yúsuf, son of Mírzá Akbar;

'Abid Yár-Kash; Malik, son of Mullá 'Alí; Báqir; Abú-Talib, son of Mír[zá] Ahmad; Muhammad, known as Yíkih; Mírzá Hasan and his son; Hasan, son of Ya'qúb; Mullá Husayn and 'Abid, sons of Mullá Barkhurdár; Barkhurdár, son of Mullá Husayn; Lutfu'lláh Shumál; Karbalá'í Muhammad; Karbalá'í Shamsu'd-Dín, who was martyred in Nayríz by Áqá Ridá Áqá; 'Alí-Naqí; Asadu'lláh Mírzá Mihdí; Ahmad Hájí

Abú'l-Qásim; Muhammad Mullá Musá; Husayn, son of Rajab; Hasan Mírzá, one of the brave ones; Karbalá'í Husayn, son of Hájí; Karbalá'í

Ismá'íl; Mashhadí 'Ábidín; Mírzá Bábá; Mírzá Ahmad; sons of Khájih

Hasan; Hájí, son of Karbalá'í Báqir, and his son, 'Askar; Muhammad-'Alí; Shaykh Hasan; Husayn-'Alí, son of Mírzá Áqá; 'Alí, son of Karbalá'í

Báqir; Mashhadí 'Alí, son of Sulayman; Hasan, son of Mashhadí Muhammad; Muhammad-'Alí and his son Kázim; Mullá Hájí

517 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, places his martyrdom during Nayríz-I.

Muhammad; Hájí Shaykh ‘Abd-‘Alí; Áqá Shaykh Muhammad, and his son Husayn; <p.51> Hádí Khayrí, who was martyred in Shiraz in a manner to be described later; Husayn Mashhadí Ismá‘íl; ‘Abdu’lláh Karbalá’í Akbar; Muhammad-Sádiq Husayn; Khájih Burhán; ‘Askar, son or ‘Alí; Sádiq; Mír[zá] Husayn; Mír[zá] Akbar; Husayn, son of Zamán; Muhammad, son of Akbar Farzí; Mullá Shah-‘Alí; Khájih Ismá‘íl; Khájih ‘Alí Karam; Ustad ‘Askar; Karbalá’í Hasan; Mashhadí Sifr; Muhammad, son of Mullá ‘Alí; Sharríf Karbalá’í Rajab; Muhammad-‘Alí Naw-Rúz; Akbar Muhammad-Qásim; Ustád Ja‘far; Muhammad-‘Alí Hájí ‘Alí-Sháh; Ahmad, son ‘Isá; ‘Abid Mashhadí Muhsin; Ghulám-Ridá Yazdí; Khájih Ustád Nabí; Muhammad, son of Ridá; Mullá ‘Alí-Muhammad, son of Mullá Áqá Bábá; Taqí, son of Sifr; Siyyid Husayn; Siyyid Nazar; son of Mullá ‘Alí-Naqí; son of ‘Alí Murád; ‘Abdu’lláh ‘Alí; Akbar, his son; Hájí Muhammad Mullá ‘Ashurá; Hájí Naqí; Karbalá’í ‘Askar Bíraq-Dár [the standard-bearer]; Rahím Ustád ‘Alí-Naqí; ‘Alí, son of Mashhadí Ahmad; ‘Alí and Husayn, sons of Qásim-Sifr; Mu‘min Ustád Ahmad; Muhammad, son of Báqir; Husayn Ustád Ahmad; Shamsu’d-Dín, son ‘Askar; Muhammad, son of Karbalá’í Naqí; Akbar Muhammad-Sháh; Muhammad Karbalá’í Mahmúd; Mullá Husayn ‘Abdu’lláh; Karbalá’í Qurbán; Sha‘bán, son of ‘Ábidín; ‘Abdu’lláh, son of Mullá Muhammad; Mír-Shikar ‘Alí, son of Mullá ‘Ashurá; Karbalá’í Báqir; Ustád Taqí, whose slayer was Mír-Shikar Rajab; Muhammad-‘Alí; Sádiq and ‘Ábidín, sons of Karbalá’í Ismá‘íl Hammámí; Mullá ‘Ábidín; Mírzá Muhammad-Husayn; Mírzá Taqí, [martyred] on the way to Tihrán; Taqí and Karam, sons of ‘Alí; <p.52> son of Ustád Taqí; Mashhadí Muhammad-‘Alí, son of Naw-Rúz; Abú-Tálib, son of Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín; ‘Abdu’lláh, son of ‘Askar; another Abú-Tálib; Mashhadí Mírzá Husayn, surnamed Qutb; Mírzá Husayn; Mírzá Musá; Mírzá Ahmad; Mírzá Zaynu’l-‘Abdidin, nephews of Mashhadí Mírzá Husayn; Mírzá Muhsin Áqá Nasru’lláh; Karbalá’í Muhammad-Ja‘far, son-in-law of Hájí Muhammad-Taqí Ayyúb; Mullá Akbar, brother of Karbalá’í Ja‘far; Karbalá’í Hádí; Mírzá Mihdí; Hasan Haydar Bayk; ‘Alí-Murád, brother of the slayer of the illustrious Vahíd [Dárábí]; Murád Lurr; Karbalá’í Sádiq, son of Mashhadí Rajab; Husayn, brother of Karbalá’í Ridá; Hasan and ‘Alí, sons of Mullá Qásim; Mullá ‘Ashurá; Hasan-‘Alí, son of Nurí, and his mother; Safr Karbalá’í

Zamán;

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Hasan Mashhadí Safr; 'Askar, son of 'Alí; Mullá Abú'l-Qásim; and Hasan, son of Ustád 'Alí.

These are the names penned by the learned and elders [of the Bábís] who participated in this episode. Because so many of the present believers were mere infants at that time – the time when their fathers were martyred – many names have disappeared from memories.

There were a great many martyrs who were slain on the way to Shiraz, or in Shiraz itself, or on the way to Tihrán or in the dungeons of Tihrán, [whose names have also been forgotten]. What I remember, I commit to paper “by the sovereignty of God and His might.”

[24. Captives in Nayríz]

As described previously, when Mírzá Na'ím, the captives and the heads [of the martyrs] arrived at the aforementioned mill, Hájí Mírzá 'Abdu'l-

Vahhab Rawdihkhán [prayer-reciter] reached in the presence of Mírzá Na'ím. This Hájí Mírzá 'Abdu'l-Vahhab Rawdihkhán was a brother of the previously-discussed Hájí Mírzá Nasír, who had insulted His Holiness the Exalted One [the Báb] – may all spirits be a sacrifice unto Him – by asking Him to kiss the Shaykh's<sup>518</sup> hand. It was then that he spotted Mírzá Abú'l-Hasan, son of Mírzá Taqí, the martyrdom in the mountains of whose brother, Mírzá Muhammad-Hasan, was mentioned earlier.<sup>519</sup> In order to please Mírzá Na'ím, <p.53> on the charge of being a Bábí, he began to severely beat that wronged-one [Mírzá Abú'l-Hasan] with a club while he was still chained. At a later point, the details of Mírzá Abú'l-Hasan's martyrdom in Tihrán will be related.

Soon thereafter, mounting his steed, Mírzá Na'ím ordered the severed heads [of the martyrs] to be placed on the points of spears and in front of this procession, drums and trumpets were blasting while the prisoners were forced to march between two columns of cavalry and whoever could not endure the pace was dealt with by bayonet. It was about sunset when the procession commenced and numerous torches

<sup>518</sup> Reference to the Imam-Jum'ih of Isfahán.

<sup>519</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 47, indicates that Mírzá Abú'l-Hasan was one of

the Bábí divines.

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illuminated the path before Mírzá Na‘ím. Though it was only a short distance [to the city], perhaps nearly a maydán, for six hours the captives were delayed and tormented on the way to their destination. Barefoot, the women were forced to march with great speed on the brushwood and nettles. In the bitter cold of the night [and as a further measure of torture], whenever they reached a creek, the captives were thrown in the freezing water. For instance, a long-suffering older woman who was carrying two small children in her arms was thrown in a stream and nearly drowned while a large multitude of non-believers gathered about, with women cheering and men exulting.<sup>520</sup>

Under such conditions, the captives reached the caravansary in the Bázár quarter [of Nayríz] in the middle of night. This small inn was situated next to an Imám-zádiḥ and was covered with filth and refuse, and soiled water ran all through it. By then it was two full days since they had eaten anything. Hungry, cold and unclad, the six hundred captive women and children shivered there all night, consumed with thoughts of the troubles and sufferings that tomorrow would bring.

When the morning came, men and women [of Nayríz] congregated <p.54> around them. The noble [Bábí] women, the merest corner of whose eyes had until then been seen by no one, were now brought forth from the caravansary unclad and subjected to all manner of mistreatment. Some stoned these wretched ones, while others clubbed them, or spat on their faces, and yet others cursed them. And yet a number of others were weeping over the plight of this pitiful band. In such condition, the captives were moved to the madrisih [seminary school] of that quarter. Another day passed and still no food or drink was given them, save what they could drink from a filthy and fetid pool in the school-court.<sup>521</sup>

<sup>520</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 50, states this old woman was drowned on that

occasion.

<sup>521</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 50, notes that among the captive men was Shaykh

‘Abdu’l-‘Alí, the father-in-law of Vahíd, who had fought alongside Vahíd in 1850

with his two young sons, Shaykh Hádí and Shaykh Muhammad. In order to exact a degree of revenge, his two sons were decapitated in his own lap, and then he himself was martyred through the severest forms of torture. Their heads were collected and added to the other piles. Some of their relatives still hiding in town

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Soon Mírzá Na‘ím ordered the captives taken to Shiraz and

provided just enough nominal food to remain alive. Each evening, twelve man<sup>522</sup> of cornbread – tasting worse than soil – was given them. Some [of the believers] had resolved that they preferred death by starvation before touching the bread brought by these most vile and despicable of people – these captives ate only a few tiny scraps found in the courtyard, such as the skin of onions or fruit skins.

Twenty days went by in such manner. Meanwhile, Lutf-‘Alí Khán, his commanders, cavalry and troops, had camped by the mill. He proclaimed: “Anyone who brings one of these people [Bábís], dead or alive, will receive a handsome reward.” Therefore, those suspected of being believers were seized and taken to that accursed one who spent his days engaged in beating and tormenting his prisoners. For instance, a certain Karím, who had been the loader of a harquebus during the battles, was blown from the mouth of a cannon. <p.55> Every night, after getting drunk, Lutf-‘Alí Khán would order some captives tortured by having their beards burnt with candles.

#### [25. Sending First Group of Captives to Shiraz]

Eventually, orders were given for about eighty of the [male] captives to be taken to Shiraz without any food, clothing or shoes. These were bound in groups of ten, and were accompanied by one hundred soldiers [who also carried with them baskets filled with the severed heads of the Bábís]. En route, for three days no sustenance was given to them until they reached a place known as Khánih-Gird. Having pity on them and for the love of God, one of the soldiers gave two sheep skins to the prisoners to fry over the fire and eat. When this news was brought to accursed Mírzá Na‘ím, he severely whipped the soldier, protesting, “Why did you give them these skins as they will gain strength and may flee at

came together that night and by means of a diversion allowed Shaykh ‘Abdu’l-‘Alí’s

wife to escape and hide in one of their houses. However, overwhelmed with the grief of seeing her sons and husband killed in such a horrible manner, she too died

that very night.

522 Man is equivalent to 3 kilograms.

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night or attempt to kill us?”

In the midst of this, because of hunger and cold, a helpless Siyyid known as Mír[zá] Muhammad ‘Abid died in that location.<sup>523</sup> He was decapitated and his remains left lying on the ground while the soldiers prevented his burial. It is reported that after three days, people from the Báyír tribe who raised their herds and farmed in that region, buried his remains next to an Imám-zádih [shrine].<sup>524</sup>

Two or three other believers were also martyred on the way; however I do not know their names. Their heads were also cut off and taken [to Shiraz]. At every village where they stayed, the captives were entrusted to the inhabitants and a receipt secured for them, [while the soldiers rested]. It went this way until they reached one day's distance from their destination.

The news reached the Prince, who ordered the shops closed [in Shiraz] and sent all the soldiers and enlisted men at his disposal to welcome the advancing party. Minstrels and bands merrily played and went out as well, as did multitudes of people. Cannons and artillery were fired as tokens of joy. <p.56>

Some three hours into the day, Lutf-'Alí Khán and his men entered [Shiraz] from the Sa'dí Gate, parading the prisoners in rows of ten, and before each row, some twenty heads of martyrs raised on long lances.<sup>525</sup>

It was about one hour before sunset when the captives were sent to prison and all were placed in shackles and manacles. By order of the

523 Mír Muhammad 'Abid was survived by a son named Siyyid Muhammad Báqir.

524 From ancient times, Iranian nomads understood that leaving corpse decaying above ground could cause hygienic problems for dairy animals and crops, and always buried the dead.

525 There is conflicting information as to whether Lutf-'Alí Khán returned with his

men to Shiraz. The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944, p. 149, n. 3, reports:

Mírzá Fadlu'lláh [the British Agent in Shiraz] in his report of the termination of this episode states, 'On the 6th Suffur [8 November 1853] H.R.H. wrote words to Lutf Alee Khán nephew of the Eel Khaneh, 'Now the affairs of the Neereezees have come to such pass, you must by no means return to Shiraz, but proceed to Laristan and Sabijat, and there await my arrival.'

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authorities, they were denied food and water, except in the afternoons when a piece of bread was given to each prisoner.

[26. Second Wave of Captives Sent to Shiraz]

In Nayríz, sixty [of the believers] who had escaped earlier were captured by Mírzá Na'ím [and placed with the other captives].<sup>526</sup> He had kept two hundred of the Gulpáyigání soldiers and gunmen from every other tribe. [One day, the captive Bábí] women were brought out from the madrisih and were soon surrounded by [Nayrízí] men and women, when one of the attendants began to divide the [Bábí] women into two groups, with

one group being [dismissed and] sent home, and the second group told that they must proceed to Shiraz. In this manner, families were torn apart with some mothers being sent in one direction, and their children in another.

For this journey, about 302 women were mounted on donkeys, with two women riding on each steed. Groups of ten captives [Bábí men] each were bound together and assigned to a group of soldiers and cavalry who had responsibility for a number of captive women as well.<sup>527</sup> [On the day of their exit, the people of Nayríz gathered one more time to heap upon them all manner of abuse, and] with a great deal of torment and agitation, they came forth from the city and commenced their march to Shiraz.

God only knows what manner of hardship transpired on that journey conducted in the middle of winter, having to endure bitter cold of winter without any clothing or food. On the way, the believers pleaded that one of their companions, Mullá Muhammad-‘Alí Qábid, being too old and frail, be released from the bounds of this mortal plane, which the soldiers granted by severing his head <p.57> and carrying it with them [to Shiraz]. In short, not one in a hundred thousand of the

<sup>526</sup> To this number soon were added several hundred more of the believers who had

remained in the Chinár-Súkhtih quarter.

<sup>527</sup> Two hundred Bábí male prisoners were part of this march, and undoubtedly they

were accompanied by several hundred Bábí children, many of whom, most likely, expired on the way.

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terrible miseries they suffered have been related in these pages.

When they reached a village situated three farsangs from the city, the news of their imminent arrival was sent forth to the authorities in Shiraz, on whose order once again a citywide celebration was commenced. The marketplace was decorated and the entire population of the city, including the ‘ulamá, the siyyids, the nobles, the influential and essentially all the men and women of the city came forth to observe the procession. They stood there pointing to various heads [raised high on spears] paraded before the cavalcade and the captives. Some threw rocks, some spat upon them, while others cursed the captives, and yet others shed bitter tears [over their condition].<sup>528</sup> In such a state the women were taken to the Sháh Mír-‘Alí Hamzih<sup>529</sup> caravansary, outside of Isfahan Gate, and the men were conducted to the same prison where their comrades were chained.<sup>530</sup>

The next day, the Prince called the male prisoners to his presence in the government house. One of the despicable and vagabond characters of Nayríz, a man by the name of Jalál, had accompanied Mírzá Na‘ím and knew all the believers and for this reason Mírzá Na‘ím had named him, Bulbul<sup>531</sup>. He too was summoned. Because of the many afflictions which had rendered him particularly frail, the late Akhúnd Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Husayn was unchained; the Prince said to him, “Hájí Qavam wishes a word with you, so pay attention.” The Qavam addressed the old man, “Akhúnd, what have you wrought?! Did you think that with a handful of people you could attempt to overtake the throne and cause much mischief, or did you have another goal in mind?”

528 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 53, states that the Bábí captives were brought to

the city through the Sa‘dí Gate, which indicates Fádil Mázandarání was relying for

this part on either The Nuqtatu’l-Káf or the narrative of Siyyid Husayn Hamadání.

529 Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 197, gives the name of this inn as Sháh Mír Abú’l-

Hamzih.

530 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 54, indicates that the Bábí prisoners were added

to the Bábí captives already in prison since Nayríz I, over three years earlier.

Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 197, states that women and children were placed in a house

next to the military barracks while the men, and the bags containing the severed heads,

were confined in the caravansary.

531 lit. Nightingale; alludes to Jalál’s spying.

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You divines must edify the unlettered, <p.58> and now instead you have become author of these events!” “I have no strength to comment,” replied the Akhúnd [Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Husayn], “two of my sons were beheaded in front of my very own eyes, and now my wife and other sons are imprisoned. Let me be.” The Qavam pressed further, “What were you really after?” to which the old man responded, “The essence of our claim is that ‘All laws are abrogated.’”<sup>532</sup>

After that, the aforementioned Jalál began to introduce [the prisoners] and mentioned each person’s role in the battle and their respective duties. [When it was Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Husayn’s turn,] he was

introduced as the source of all mischief. The Prince instructed the captives to curse [the Báb], which they refused to abide. Orders for the execution of several were issued, which were carried out in the courtyard. Included among them were: Hájí, son of Asghar; ‘Alí Garmsiri; Hasan, son of Hádi Khayrî; Sádiq, son of Sálîh; and Muhammad, son of Muhsin.<sup>533</sup> The first three were martyred by spears and the others were beheaded.<sup>534</sup> The rest were returned to the prison.

<sup>532</sup> Tárîkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, pp. 54-55, provides extensive dialogue between the

Bábí divine and the governor in the course of which the divine repeatedly and emphatically asserts his belief in the proclamation of the Qá’im and their effort to

propagate His Message. He further offered the martyrdom of so many hundreds as evidence for the truth of the Báb’s claim.

<sup>533</sup> Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 197, n. 1, notes (on the authority of Fársnámih Násirî)

that after the martyrdom of the Bábís in Shiraz, an earthquake on 25 Rajab 1269

A.H./7 May 1853 wrecked hundreds of homes in that city. This resulted in thousands losing their lives and the majority of schools and mosques being severely damaged.

<sup>534</sup> Mírzá Fadlu’lláh, the British Agent in Shiraz, provided the following report of the

termination of the Nayríz battles and the fate of the Bábís (quoted in *The Bábí and*

*Bahá’í Religions 1844-1944*, pp. 150-151):

On the 5th Suffur [7 November 1853] the Prince Governor dispatch Abdul Hassan Beg to Capital with letters detailing the proceedings at Neereez. Report hath it that Luft Alee Khán and Meerza Naeem – both Officers of the Army sent against Neereez – contrived by means of promises and oaths to conciliate the Neereezees and to induce them to cease fighting. No sooner however had they become passive than the Army (treacherously) fell upon them, cut off the heads of

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[Soon, sixty of the men who had not participated in the battles and were not among the influential elements of the Bábí community were released along with] the women<sup>535</sup>, though some of their children had

about 100 men, youths, and children, and took 300 male prisoners.

The Sirbaz and Artillerymen have likewise made 300 women and

maidens captives, and violently compelled them to become their wives – whatever goods and property came to hand was also plundered and carried off ...

Masoon Khán Ainaloo, one of those who proceeded against Neereez, stated, on the 9th instant as follows:

The Neereezees came forth from their defenses on the day of 28th Mohurram [31 October 1853], and cried aloud ‘We are no Babees – a curse upon Báb and everything belonging to Báb [There is no corroborative evidence that the Bábís defiled their faith. Ed. Momen] – seeing that Meerza Naeem has robbed us of all we possessed and, not satisfied with our property, has sent in false accusations against us to the King. Moreover Alee Beg Furash has come to bind us with chains, and carry us away captives, hence, fearing for our lives and afraid of the Tyrant Meerza Naeem, we have betaken ourselves to these mountains – were we assured that our lives were not in jeopardy we would not fight or resist – let therefore one of Lutf Alee Khán’s people come contending.’ Messengers of Peace were sent by either party, and after many oaths and promises (of safety) the Neereezees became relieved of all fear. No sooner however had they been conciliated by the above promises than the Army fell upon them, cut off the heads of above one hundred, and made some 300 women and maidens prisoners.

Meerza Naeem arrived in Shiraz on the 22nd Sufur [24 November 1853] bringing with him the Neereez prisoners. 4 of the number, said to have killed many Sirbaz, were bayoneted by the order of the Prince. The rest of the male captives they shut up in storehouses. Of the 300 women and maidens, all such as seemed fitting were taken by the Sirbaz and Government Servants. The rest being set at liberty are scattered about the city of Sheeraz, and seek their bread by begging. The heads of one hundred slain in action have also been kept for transmission to the Capital.

535 Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 276, notes that the widow of the Báb, Khadíjih Bagum,

looked after the Nayrízi women and would do all she could to improve their conditions. A few of the Nayrízis remained in Shiraz in the service of the House of

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died in Shiraz due to hunger, cold and lack of clothing.<sup>536</sup> Some of these gradually returned to Nayríz while many stayed in Shiraz and to this day reside in that city.<sup>537</sup>

The monarch commanded that the remaining seventy-three captives along with the heads of the martyrs be sent to Tihrán.<sup>538</sup> The

prisoners were conducted in chains to the capital and en route twentytwo of them expired. The heads of the dead were cut off and added to the pile, while their bodies were thrown in ditches. It went thus till this procession reached the town of Ábádih, and anyone that died was decapitated and the head added to others for Tihrán. When they reached Ábádih, a royal messenger arrived with instructions to bury the heads there [and to bring the prisoners to Tihrán].<sup>539</sup>

the Báb.

536 *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 4, p. 55, notes:

Upon their arrival at Shiraz, all were deprived of bread and water. Afterwards, in the evenings, each prisoner was rationed a piece of bread. Some of the children perished at this time. Among the captives was a woman with two daughters and an infant son. The four of them had to endure the bitter cold of the nights shivering without any clothing, and during the days had to tolerate all manner of injury, insult and mockery. She kept her infant son heated in the warmth of her bosom while tightly embracing her two young daughters. In this way they would pass the night. However, the two girls died because of the cold. The people of Shiraz, passing by the prisoners, became remorseful over their condition and gradually began to show mercy towards the Bábí women and children. Hájí Qavámu'l-Mulk appealed to the governor on their behalf, and soon they were released.

*Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 4, p. 55, added a remark that Nabíl Zarandí has written in

his narrative, "The late Qavámu'l-Mulk had said, 'Upon seeing the illustrious

captives, the scene of Karbalá came to mind and my condition was thoroughly agitated.'" This statement does not appear in *The Dawn-Breakers*.

537 For one such mention see, Ahang Rabbani, *In the Land of Refuge*, chapter 10.

538 *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 4, p. 56, informs that a total of 140 Bábí men were

imprisoned – some from Nayríz I. Of these 67 had perished and their heads were

added to the existing pile of severed heads. *Lam'átu'l-Anvár*, vol. 1, p. 192, places the

number of remaining captive men at 100.

539 *Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 4, p. 56, states that the Bábí heads were buried in a

ditch near a place known as "Áb-i Khayrát" (the water of charity).

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[Some others who died en route:] the honored Akhúnd Mullá

‘Abdu’l-Husayn died in Sídn540 and his head was carried away; ‘Alí Karbalá’í Zamán541 died in Ábádih; Akbar Karbalá’í542 Muhammad died in Ábádih; Hasan, son of ‘Abú’l-Váhid; Mullá ‘Alí-Akbar, brother of the honored Amír, died in Isfahan; Karbalá’í Báqir, <p.59> son of Muhammad, and his brother Hasan; Dhu’l-Faqár Karbalá’í Taqí, son of Fardí and his son ‘Alí; Valí Khán; Mullá Karím Akhúnd; Akbar Ra’ís; and [Siyid] Ghulám-‘Alí Pír-Muhammad543, Taqí and Muhammad-‘Alí, sons of Muhammad ibn Jamál. Nothing is known of many others who perished either en route or in Tihrán.

On the day the captives arrived in the capital, fifteen of them were told to curse [the Faith] and upon refusing to do so, were martyred.544 Of their names, those known to me are: Áqá Siyyid ‘Alí, whose many injuries and whose vision while he lay unconscious that he would be martyred in Tihrán were mentioned in the description of events of the battle of Mount Nayríz; Karbalá’í Rajab Salmání; Sífu’d-Dín; Sulaymán

Karbalá’í Salmán; Ja‘far Fardí; Murád Khayrchí; Husayn Karbalá’í Báqir;

Mírzá Abú’l-Hasan; Mírzá Taqí, whose beating by Hájí Mírzá ‘Abdu’l-

Vahhab while chained to please Mírzá Na‘ím was mentioned earlier; and Mullá Muhammad-‘Alí, son of Áqá Mihdí. The names of the remaining martyrs do not come to mind.

Twenty-three others perished in the dungeons of Tihrán, but their 540 Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 193, states that he died at Sa‘adat-Ábád, a distance of

three days journey outside of Shiraz on the way to Ábádih.

541 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 56, gives his name as ‘Alí, son of Karbalá’í

Zamán.

542 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 56, has as Mullá in place of Karbalá’í.

543 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, p. 56, states that this 21-year-old Bábí was so

severely ill that the nobles of Ábádih felt remorse over him and ransomed the armed guards for his release. However, he died a few days later.

544 Táríkh Shuháday Amr, vol. 3, pp. 333-334, reports that the Bábís responded:

If we were prepared to denounce and refuse this Cause, then why did we endure so much pain and sacrifice in this path? Know ye verily that we have accepted captivity for ourselves and our families and loss of all that is dear to us to proclaim widely that the Qá’im of the House of Muhammad has appeared and that we hold Him as the True One.

names are not known to me except 'Alí, son of Mír-Shikár Báqir.

Thirteen others were released after three years' imprisonment and eventually returned [to Nayríz], and these included: Karbalá'í

'Alí-Yár,

who passed away in the Abode of Peace [Baghdad] and is buried in Hamrá cemetery; Ustád 'Innáyát and Ibráhim ibn Sharraf, both of whom are still living and are accomplished men; Áqá Siyyid Hasan; and Ustád 'Alí, son of Mashhadí Sifr. For the most part, because of the extreme poverty and afflictions caused by the enemies, those that returned [to Nayríz] expired shortly after their arrival.

A certain Karbalá'í Zaynu'l-'Ábidín remained in Tihrán and passed away after a few years. The other names are not known to me.<sup>545</sup>

545 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, pp. 57-59, states:

What has been described commenced toward the end of 1267 A.H. [the Fall of 1851]. The battles lasted from the first of Dhi'l-Hajjih 1269 A.H. [5 September 1853], which was the beginning of the fall season, until the end of Rabí'u'l-Avval 1270 A.H. [31 December 1853] and during this time, as some have recorded, 400 of the [male] believers of Nayríz fought against 30,000 foes.

At the beginning of 1273 A.H. [circa summer of 1857], the captives in Shiraz were released and some returned to Nayríz. Of the baqiyatu's-sayf [remnants of the sword] of Nayríz for both events, some were noted in the previous volume and others will be outlined now. Siyyid Muhammad-Báqir, son of the aforementioned martyr Mír[zá] 'Abid, was released through the intervention of certain persons and returned to his native town where he formed a family and had descendants.

Of the following companions of 'Alí Sardár, some freed themselves in Nayríz and some gained their liberty in Shiraz by payment of ransoms: the master-hunter Muhammad and Hájí, the sons of Hájí Kázim; Mírzá Báqir, son of Mullá Musá; Mullá Zaynu'l-'Ábidín, son of Mullá 'Abbás; Hájí, son of Mullá Zaynu'l-'Ábidín;

Ja'far, son of Mullá Zaynu'l-'Ábidín; 'Abdu'lláh, son of 'Askar; Ra'ís;

'Abbás, son of Muhammad-'Alí; Áqá Shaykh Muhsin; Hájí Ahmad, son of Mullá Muhammad; Karbalá'í Muhammad-Sálih, son of Mullá Muhammad; Karbalá'í Asghar Ra'ís; Karbalá'í Muhammad with his three sons, Lutfu'lláh, Hájí Muhammad and the master-hunter 'Alí; Mullá Qanbar, son of Karbalá'í Ridá; Karbalá'í Mírzá, son of Ghiyáth;

Mírzá Yúsuf, son of Mírzá Ahmad, Áqá Siyyid Áqá, son of Siyyid

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Abú-Tálib; Siyyid Ismá'íl, son of Hájí Siyyid 'Alí; and

Karbalá'í Mírzá

Qásim.

On their return, once more they established themselves and began working as either farmers, breeders, shoemakers, coppersmiths, or in other occupations. Out of fear of their foes, some became lukewarm in their convictions, but the majority remained fast and firm in their faith and taught their children the same.

Moreover, some youngsters whose fathers had been martyred, or had escaped, or because of being underage had been released [from prison], returned as well. Included among them were: Mullá Husayn and 'Alí, the sons of the martyred Karbalá'í Ismá'íl; Áqá Shaykh Muhammad, son of the martyred Darvish; 'Alí-Muhammad, son of Ibráhím; the son of Sálíh who together with his father were among the captives taken to Shiraz, but were freed; Mírzá Yúsuf, son of Mírzá Ahmad; Hájí Mírzá Ja'far and Mírzá Fathu'lláh, who together with their mother were captured after the martyrdom of their father and upon arrival at Nayríz were released through the efforts of their kinsmen; Khájjih Muhammad, son of Karbalá'í Báqir, who after the martyrdom of his father was seized and together with his mother and two sisters taken to Shiraz where the sisters died of cold, but he and his mother succeeded in gaining release, returned to Shiraz and after great many difficulties were able to establish themselves; and Áqá Siyyid Muhammad-Báqir, son of Mír[zá] Muhammad-'Abid, who was seized after the martyrdom of his father, but upon arrival at Nayríz was the subject of intercessions for his release and was allowed to regain his freedom. Yet another was Hájí Muhammad, son of Hájí Qásim, who at the age of eleven participated in the battle of fort [Khájjih] and afterwards was in hiding in Nayríz or in the mountains, and during the mountain battles joined his father and two brothers as defender. He managed to live through that ordeal and escaped with his life. His father and two brothers were seized however and were sent to Shiraz.

After they were released, Hájí Muhammad became an attendant to one of the nobles and succeeded in gathering his family and sending them to Nayríz. He went to Baghdad and on his return, in order to protect his family from the darts of the enemies, moved them to a village some seven farsangs from Shiraz.

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## Chapter 12

### Memoirs of Hájí Muhammad Nayrízí

Say: “Can you expect for us any fate other than one of two glorious things, martyrdom or victory?”

Qur’án 9:52

#### Introduction

Among the important eyewitness accounts of the Nayríz-II event is the one narrated by Hájí Muhammad Nayrízí, a survivor of both the 1850 and 1853 episodes. At the age of fourteen, Hájí Muhammad and his father, Hájí Qásim Nayrízí, had stood with Vahíd at fort Khájih and fought fearlessly for their new found faith. At the conclusion of that event and following the general massacre of the Bábís, Hájí Qásim was seized as a prisoner and in captivity subjected to severe beatings and tortures. After the passage of some months, a certain Haydar was able to secure his freedom at long last and rescued him from certain death by the payment of a ransom. Upon his release, Hájí Qásim set out for Tihrán to avenge the cruelty of the government by assassinating Násiri’-d-Dín Sháh. Having weathered the storm of Nayríz-I, Hájí Muhammad was once again caught in the midst of the second interlude, where he and his family were made prisoners.

The oral memoirs left by Hájí Muhammad describe the events through the time that the captives, himself among them, were taken to Shíráz. He was fortuitously released from captivity at that time, but decided to stay in that city for a while. A few years later, he moved to Dáríyun<sup>546</sup>, but some time later returned to his native town of Nayríz as the new governor, Fath-‘Alí Khán, had taken a solemn oath to remedy

<sup>546</sup> A village at a distance of 180 kilometers from Nayríz and 42 kilometers from Shiraz

and on the way of the caravan leading the Bábí captives to Shiraz.

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the past misdeeds of his father. There he was occupied with farming and raising sheep, and as he was a strong, robust man, often engaged in working the fields. Soon Fath-‘Alí Khán, having explicit faith in the trustworthiness of Bahá’ís, asked Hájí Muhammad to supervise his personal properties in the Rastáq region. The house of the Hájí at both Rastáq and Nayríz was the abode of visiting Bahá’ís passing through the region and he served them with great distinction and devotion. He married a niece of ‘Alí Sardár, who was a daughter of Mullá Husayn, and

she brought him six children: Fadlu'lláh; Muhammad-Qásim; Faraju'lláh; Habíbu'lláh; Qudratu'lláh; and Sakíni. His descendants suffered extensively in the course of Nayríz-III, thus making this family one of the chains that connects the Bábí and Bahá'ís of Nayríz across the span of several generations in this panorama of suffering and steadfastness. In all his days, Hájí Muhammad was fond of recalling the events of his youth, particularly the 1853 episodes. He lived to be nearly a hundred years old and passed away in 1935 in Nayríz<sup>547</sup>. A tablet composed in his honor by 'Abdu'l-Bahá immortalizes his memory.

The value of this account lies foremost in the fact that it is told by one who participated in the events. Though in many ways it does not convey the rich detail of the narrative of Mullá Muhammad Shafi', it is nevertheless an independent description which closely corroborates the account of the former, and in a few instances provides some additional amplifications. Having noted this, one must understand that by the time this narrative was committed to paper, Hájí Muhammad was at a relatively advanced age and the passage of time had taken its toll, so that a few of the minor details are conflated, (see footnotes below). The original of this recollection appears in Muhammad-'Alí Faydí, *Nayríz Mushkbíz*, pages 108-116.

This account begins in the spring of 1853 when the Bábís commenced reorganizing and re-emerging as a distinct community and tells of the brutal response that awaited them.

<sup>547</sup> *Nayríz Mushkbíz*, p. 116, suggests that he lived to the age of 115. However since it is

known that he was 14 years old at the time of Vahíd's arrival in 1850, that suggests his

birth took place circa 1836, placing his age at the time of passing at about 100.

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*Memoirs of Hájí Muhammad Nayrízí*

After the arrival of the soldiers, they launched an attack against us aided by many from the town. This resulted in the believers retreating from Nayríz and taking refuge at the foot of the mountains at a location known as Bíd Najviyyih famous for its fresh air and vivifying climate.

The attackers continued to pursue us to that spot, continually assaulting our camp with increasing intensity and severity. For that reason, we proceeded further up the mountain to an area known as Darb Shigáf, and raised a number of makeshift dwellings commonly referred to as yurt constructed from wood and tree branches and roofed by twigs and leafs.

Each day witnessed a considerable increase in the number of

besiegers who had surrounded us from all sides and we were placed in dire need and grave hardship. In response, led by Mírzá ‘Alí Sardár, our group put forth defensive measures and pushed back the attackers who beseeched Shíráz to augment their number with additional forces. At this time, Mírzá Na‘ím went forth to Shíráz and in his reports exaggerated the scope of the events which resulted in a large number of artillery pieces, ammunition and cannons being sent back with him, supplemented by several groups of tribal gunmen. Soon a large camp was raised, surrounding us from all directions, and they launched a massive offensive. A devastating battle took place between the opposing sides that resulted in our dwellings (yurts) being burnt completely. Even though our numbers were relatively few in comparison to the armed camp, by spectacular bravery, coupled with undaunted fortitude and steadfastness, the believers were able to deliver a decisive defeat to the foes resulting in the complete disarray and flight of the attackers. In the course of their retreat, the soldiers left behind a large cache of arms including a cannon that was brought up to the mountain and used thereafter.<sup>548</sup>

At that time, we proceeded to another section of the mountain

<sup>548</sup> Most sources indicate that the capture of this cannon occurred at the next battle.

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known as Bálá-Tarám and stayed there for a while. This was beneficial as it allowed us relative safety and tranquility, and we even organized several weddings during this period. On the instructions of Mírzá ‘Alí Sardár, our group constructed nineteen fortifications in the number of váhids of the Bayán. Each was named after a certain participant, such as, one was named after ‘Alí Sardár, and another after Khájih Qutb and yet another that was defended by the womenfolk was known as Mádár Samí‘ [mother of Samí‘]. The remains of these fortifications stand to this day. During this time a number of clashes took place, until Mírzá Na‘ím was once again able to gather a considerable number of soldiers and gunmen, and from the direction of Darb Shigáf entered the region and raised his camp. Mírzá ‘Alí Sardár organized two groups of nineteen each to rush and surprise the camp, one attacking from the higher elevations while the other was to circle and attack from beneath the camp. However, in the dark of night and having frail eyesight, Siyyid Husayn, the leader of one of the two groups, tripped over a rock that was dislodged and rolled down the hill. This event caused the camp to become aware that a night attack was underway and eliminated the element of surprise. A fierce battle was waged between the two sides that witnessed a great many gallantries by Mírzá ‘Alí Sardár who at each

instance, single-handedly, would raise the cry of “Yá Sáhib Zamán” as he fearlessly rushed the soldiers with his saber and scattered their forces. The other believers and companions also manifested exceptional courage, fortitude and self-sacrifice in their efforts, and even the womenfolk joined in by throwing rocks and stones at the enemy. All of this resulted in a bitter defeat for the camp and the flight of the soldiers from the field of battle. Even the camp’s leader, Mírzá Na‘ím, was so overwhelmed with trepidation that he was unable to escape on his own and soldiers had to carry him away on their backs to save his life. Fearing for their very being, all in his camp escaped and scattered throughout the countryside.

After this defeat, Mírzá Na‘ím wrote to the Prince Mu‘ayyadu’d-Dawlih, the governor of Fárs, explaining his own pathetic condition and that of his fallen men and yet again asking for military assistance, a request that was rewarded with four regiments of men. That is, orders

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were issued that gunmen from all villages, hamlets and tribes in the neighboring regions were to gather at [Mírzá Na‘ím’s] camp so that once and for all the Bábís would be eliminated. Lutf-‘Alí Khán Qashqá’í came

accompanied of both foot and cavalry forces, and they were joined by Ahmad Khán Baharlú who brought five hundred of his well-known sharpshooters. The enemy’s camp was rapidly growing in number and each day their siege increased in intensity.

Prior to this, the Sardár assembled us and informed all that our remaining days were only few, and said that if anyone wished not to suffer at the hand of the enemy, it would be best for them to leave at once. None among the believers preferred to abandon him and all remained faithful and steadfast. The number of our group at that time was four hundred men and six hundred women.

This time the battle was particularly severe. Sardár, in accordance with his usual practice, raised the cry of “Yá Záhib Zamán” and riding high on a mount charged the enemy. In this campaign, a number of Baharlu gunmen had hidden behind the rocks and trees and from there were able to shoot and severely injure Sardar, who dragged himself to our fortification where the bird of his spirit was released from the prison of self. He was buried next to the fortification named after him.

After Mírzá ‘Alí Sardár was slain, his companions remained steadfast until the last breath, even though a number of them were killed and the rest seized by the soldiers and tribal gunmen, who perpetrated uncounted cruelties upon their prisoners. Of the captives, all men aged twenty and over were slain and their heads piled in large baskets which, together with the women and children and a remnant of elderly men,

were paraded back in Nayríz in the company of an exuberant army. Upon arrival, the prisoners were confined to the Madrisih Khán and guards ensured that no one contacted us.

After we were kept under such miserable conditions for a few days, together with the basket of heads, we were sent to Shíráz. En route, because of the sufferings and hardships, a number of the captives expired and they too were decapitated and their [severed] heads added to the piles. One such case was Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Husayn, the judge and soothsayer of Nayríz, who had stood with the illustrious Vahíd and had

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survived the first episode and was among the baqiyatu’s-sayf, and now was included in the company of the captives. As the incarcerated believers were being conducted from Shiraz to Tihrán, upon reaching the village of Siyyidan, a distance of two days journey to Ábádih, having endured immeasurable afflictions, Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Husayn passed away and the soldiers beheaded his body, taking the head with them and burying the remains in that locality.

Proceeding in such heart-wrenching conditions, when our caravan of captives reached Tang Sa’dí, news was sent to the governor of Fárs and inquiry was made about the manner of entry into the city. The governor sent long spears equal to the number of the severed heads and instructed that each be raised above these spears, and to the beat of drums and cymbals to enter Shiraz. In such a pitiful and tormented state, the women, children and elderly men walked barefoot in the midst of columns of soldiers, who each carried a spear bearing the severed head of one of the loved ones of our pitiful band. By order of the governor, a number of noble and distinguished citizens of the city had come forth to observe this sad spectacle. On seeing the situation, many of the citizens were moved to tears over the miserable state of the prisoners and sobbed loudly, while others were bewildered by the cruelty of the armed men, and yet others tormented the wronged captives by assaulting them verbally and heaping abuse upon them and indeed some even spit on their faces. It was in the course of this agonizing scene, where every observer was profoundly moved with deep emotions of regret, that the Qavámu’l-Mulk Shírází, who was among the onlookers, was moved to cry out to Mírzá Na‘ím, reproaching him with such words: "O Na‘ím! Have you sought to recreate Karbalá? Even the plane of Karbalá did not witness such misery!"<sup>549</sup>

In such poignant and pitiful state, our band of wronged ones was brought forth to the city and placed in the Sháh Mír-Hamzih

<sup>549</sup> Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 196, reports that afterwards, the indignant Qavám

sought an audience with the governor of Fárs and stated, “With these heinous deeds, Mírzá Na‘ím has indeed recreated the field of Karbalá and the taking of the Holy Household to Damascus. The only thing lacking is decorating the city; and once that is accomplished, then the scene will be completely recreated!”

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caravansary. One day the governor of Fárs called a number of the captives to his presence and in the course of interrogation instructed some to repudiate their faith [in the Báb], and as they remained steadfast, issued orders for their execution. These included: Sádiq, son of Sálíh; ‘Alí

Garmsiry; Husayn, son of Hádí; Hájí, son of Asghar; and Muhammad, son of Muhsin.

Soon, instructions were received from Tihrán to send the severed heads to that city and to free the women and children, and so the baskets of heads and the elderly men were sent forth towards Tihrán. However, when they reached Ábádih, further orders were received to bury the heads at that spot. The captives were taken to Tihrán however, and there some were freed while others were martyred.<sup>550</sup>

<sup>550</sup> A brief account of Nayríz-II is given by Mírzá Yahyá Azal, translated by E.G.

Browne in *Tárikh-i Jadíd*, pp. 415-416:

So once more fresh troubles arose in all parts of the country, and some they took captive, and some they slew, carrying off their possessions; until at length they again made an assault on Nayríz. For after the martyrdom of His Excellence Áqá Siyyid Yahyá the people of Nayríz dispatched the governor, who was the originator of the mischief, to the bottomless pit. Quarrels arose anew, until at length pacification was effected. In the end they brought so many prisoners from Nayríz to Shiraz that (their number) was beyond all limits. And that crowd of captives they brought in to Shiraz was in this wise: numbers of women and men, aged and young, bound by chains and bonds; and the soldiers with the heads of the slain set on spears, amongst these being the head of His Holiness Áqá Siyyid Yahyá, which they had brought from Karbala [i.e. Nayríz] in such wise as you have heard. Thus did they bring these poor people into Shiraz, whence they conveyed them to Isfahan and Kashan, and (finally) brought them to Tihrán to the sound of drums and trumpets, as they themselves related. It may be imagined what the sufferings of these women and men were ere the end of the matter; such as seek for the truth will assuredly hold them in regard of their lofty view.

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### Chapter 13

Narrative of Mírzá Qábil Ábádi'í:  
An Extract from his General History

Of those who answered the call of God and the Apostle, even after being wounded, those who do right and refrain from wrong have a great reward.

Qur'án 3:172

#### Introduction

The following is an extract from Tarikh 'Umúmi Amr [The General History of the Cause], pages 73-77, composed by Mírzá Qábil of Ábádih. For this important history, Qábil explains that he interviewed many of the elders in the community, including some who had converted during or shortly after the Bábí Dispensation. The importance of the following extract lies not so much in the details, but in the fact that very likely Qábil used sources independent from the Nayrízí accounts and relied on the information current among the Bahá'ís of Yazd and Ábádih of the late 1800's. In other words, this account is an example of Bahá'í folklore

about the Nayríz-II incident in the late nineteenth and the early part of this century.

Mírzá Qábil states that sometime after the failed assassination attempt on Násiri'd-Dín Sháh, the Prime Minister intervened with the monarch to reduce the Bábí killings, but the Shah had spoken harshly against the millenarians. Qábil then notes:

An excellent pretext was found by the governors and administrators of all the cities and districts of Iran to plunder and seize the possessions of Bábís and to collude with one another in killing and injuring them. In Nayríz in

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particular, the wicked Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán commenced pillage and rose to eradicate all Bábís of that city. Each day, he would seize one and after penalizing and torturing the victim would slay him. Therefore, Bábís decided that by whatever means possible he was to be eliminated. This [intelligence] caused him to be overwhelmed with fear to the point that eight or nine armed guards always accompanied

him. And when he was to visit the public bathhouse, other clients would be evicted from the building. [As was customary,] one day together with his gunmen, he went to the bathhouse where his men waited outside by the entrance. A certain construction worker (banná) was working within and the governor did not think that this man could be a Bábí. Lying in the middle of the bath and being massaged by a salmání<sup>551</sup>, the banná came forth of a sudden from where he had been working and with his sharpened knife and tools slit open the governor's stomach. Hearing the cry of the salmání, the attendants rushed within and found their master covered in blood. They seized the banná and placed the injured governor on a cart while he was giving instruction for the doctor to be summoned at once to attend to his cut. Unexpectedly, with a quick movement, the banná freed himself and reaching Zaynu'l-‘Ábidín Khán pulled his intestinal organs out while crying, "O accursed one! Are you still talking and wishing for recovery?!" With that the governor died and his gunmen riddled the banná with bullets.<sup>552</sup>

The relatives of the slain Zaynu'l-‘Ábidín Khán hastened to Shiraz and complained to the governor-general about the Bábís of Nayríz. Therefore he sent forth a regiment of soldiers, led by Luft-‘Alí Khán Qashqá’í, charged with the extermination of the Bábís.

<sup>551</sup> Lit. the barber, they often acted as masseurs and bathhouse managers.

<sup>552</sup> The idea of a single assassin may have been inspired by Fársmámih Násirí, vol. 2,

pp. 1566-1567.

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Prior to their arrival, however, the honored ‘Alí Sardár, who was the chief of the Bábís, ordered the believers to gather all their possessions, livestock, and families and to proceed to an elevated mountain near Nayríz. Therefore, the Bábís, young and old, took position in that mountain range. When the army arrived, they learned that the Bábís, fully armed, had left for the mountains and had raised such fortifications around their positions that none could approach that mountain. On several occasions, the soldiers were ordered to attack those fortifications and each time would suffer decisive defeats and return with many casualties.

General Luft-‘Alí Khán wrote to Shiraz that his assigned task was well nigh impossible to achieve and that he needed additional forces sent to him immediately. Five regiments of men together with cannons and artillery were sent for him. One day, he had ordered one of the cannons to be situated near a [Bábí] fortification and readied for fire when a group of the armed women believers attacked them, causing the gunners to flee and securing the cannon and ammunitions. They carried the cannon and its provisions with them to the higher elevations and for a while used it to bombard the enemy’s camp.

Occasionally during some nights, some of the believers would enter the city and attack certain mischiefmakers, and after having gathered the necessary food and provisions, would return to their place of safety.<sup>553</sup>

These battles and scrimmages lasted nine months until eventually the governor of Shiraz issued strict orders for the elimination of the Bábís. A large multitude of men from [such ethnic groups as the] ‘Arabs, Turks and Tajíks came to Nayríz and thoroughly surrounded the mountainside. Even though they sustained great many casualties, they did not withdraw and eventually broke through the fortifications.

<sup>553</sup> Reader is referred to translator’s comment at the beginning of Chapter 11.

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They seized and massacred the men and captured the women and bound them with ropes. Seventy or eighty of the Bábí women and their infants had taken refuge in a cave and when found, a large quantity of brushwood was brought forth and placed at the opening of the cave. Then they lit a fire and burnt alive all those within. With other women, Lutf-‘Alí Khán would take their infants from them and with one hand toss them into the air, cutting them in half with the sword in his other hand. All their possessions were plundered. Four hundred of the fallen men were decapitated and their heads raised upon spears. Some others among the men were bound in chains and the women roped together. In such manner, the army proceeded towards Shiraz. With utmost difficulty and intense brutality, the captives were forced to run next to the galloping cavalry. Six or seven of the women expired en route because of the harsh treatment. On the day of the captives’ arrival in Shiraz, the city was immersed in celebration, lights and decorations were

visible in all sides and the people would congratulate one another. The ‘ulamá issued a fatwá that on that day the citizens of Shíráz were free to express their joy in any manner they wished and none would be questioned for his doings. Therefore, all the rogues and vagrants came out with music and wine and were joined by rank upon rank of wanton women carrying drums, trumpets and cymbals and busily merrymaking. They came to watch the arrival of the wretched captives and the severed heads of the Bábís and were thoroughly absorbed in their festivity. Those same people however, once they saw the heads raised on lances and the condition of the captives, were overwhelmed with grief and raised their voices in lamentation and remorse. They cried bitterly over what had befallen these people and tears poured from their eyes like spring showers, and their cry of sorrow was heard from all sides.

This news was brought to the governor and he was

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told that seeing the condition of the captives and the raised heads had greatly perturbed the people, and if the procession were allowed to enter the city by way of the bazaar, most likely a revolt would overwhelm the city. Consequently, he ordered the prisoners to be brought to the government house through a passage behind the main city gate. When the captives were presented, the governor was sitting in the place of honor with many nobles surrounding him. From within the throng of the Bábís, a brave woman stepped forward and with a resonant voice spoke, “O crazed man! What crime have we wronged ones committed deserving such murder, pillage and brutality? Is it not true that our sole claim is that the Promised Author of the Cause has appeared and His recognition and acceptance is obligatory upon all? Does such an assertion deserve such cruel treatment?” The governor ordered them taken out and given a place to rest. After a few days, he released the women and sent the men and the raised heads as a gift for the monarch in Tíhrán. In this way, the prophecy, “His [Qá’im’s] chosen ones shall be abased in His day. Their heads shall be offered as presents even as the heads of Turks and Daylamites. They shall be slain and burnt. Fear shall seize them; dismay and alarm shall strike terror into their hearts. The earth shall be dyed with their blood. Their womenfolk shall bewail and lament. These indeed are my friends!554” stood fulfilled.

Accompanied by several regiments of soldiers and marching to the sound of drums, trumpets and cymbals, they arrived at Ábádih. At that time a messenger arrived from the central government in Tihrán and presented a royal instruction to the commander of the procession. On reading this order, he learned that he was to bury the Bábí heads in whatever location he had reached, and then conduct the captives to Tihrán. Therefore, behind the same decayed building in which the captives were housed, he ordered a

554 Kitáb-i Iqán, p. 245.

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large pit dug and the heads buried therein.

This sorrowful event of the second Nayríz conflict took place in the year eight of the dawning of the Morn of Guidance.

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Chapter 14

Narrative of Mírzá Qábil Ábádi'í:

The Garden of the Merciful in Ábádih

Think not that those slain in God's way are dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord. They rejoice in the bounty provided by God: and with regard to those left behind, who have not yet joined them in their bliss, the martyrs glory in the fact that on them is no fear, nor have they cause to grieve.

Qur'án 3:169-70

Introduction

As noted earlier, the heads of over two hundreds of the Nayríz Bábí martyrs were brought to Ábádih and buried in that town. Because of the importance of this site, the following extracts are shared telling in outline of this event.

Mírzá Qábil Ábádi'í has penned an important and unpublished history of Abadih, titled Táríkh Amrí Ábádih, which outlines the history of the first 80 years of the Bábí and Bahá'í faiths in that town in 147 pages, divided into 14 chapters. In the first section, pages 2-5, the following is recorded:

In the year 1268 A.H., corresponding to 1852, in accordance with the instructions of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh, a savage and

bloodthirsty army was unleashed on Nayríz for the purpose of the execution and elimination of the dearly loved believers in that region. This caused the fire of the second battle of Nayríz to smolder and the spiritual friends were severely persecuted. In those days in Nayríz, the muchesteemed commander, the honored ‘Alí Sardar, discerned

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that it was prudent for the friends, men and women alike, to quit the city and take position in an elevated mountain in the vicinity of that region. Therefore they all took with them the necessary provisions and made their exodus to that location. The barbarous army of the Sháh soon surrounded them and the details of what transpired next are recorded in the histories of Nayríz. In short, the majority of the [Bábí] men were murdered, their possessions plundered, and women and children were made captive or slaughtered by swords. A group of them were also burnt alive.

Many martyrs severed heads were raised upon spears and, together with the captives and accompanied by drums, cymbals and music, were brought to Shiraz, which was decorated for the occasion. The entire city was especially lighted and much celebration took place. After some days, the women prisoners were released. In accord with the royal command, the army moved the men and the martyrs’ heads toward Tihrán as a ransom for the sovereign. The secret of the Tablet of Fátimih now stood manifest.

In short, the royal army, the heads and the captives reached a distance of two farsangs from Ábádih when it was broadcast in the city that on this day the prisoners of Nayríz would arrive to the beat of drums, trumpets and music. The people of Ábádih were thrilled with the prospect and in great joy rushed forth to observe this spectacle. In such conditions, the captives and the severed heads were brought into the city and placed on a desolate and forsaken field.<sup>555</sup> On that day, a great multitude, young and old, men, women and children, came forth from all the surrounding regions to watch the captives of Nayríz and the severed heads of the believers. What an incredible sight and what an amazing

<sup>555</sup> Nayríz Mushkbíz, pp. 72-73 and p. 120, reports that on two separate occasions,

namely, 1850 and 1853, heads were brought to Ábádih and buried in the same spot.

The same source (p. 120) reports that this field was outside of the city and near the public cemetery.

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exhibition! On seeing them, to win the good pleasure of the Almighty, the people would spit on the faces of those heroic souls and upon the decapitated heads. Some would chant, while others clapped for joy; yet others heaped upon this innocent band all manner of insults and injuries. Is this not how all the Prophets and chosen ones have been dealt with? And when a few in this large gathering felt remorseful over the condition of the bound and offered them a few drops of water, they immediately became targets of the scorn and disdain of the others, particularly the 'ulamá and the divines. They even urged the children to heap abuse upon the confined believers and offered examples on how to ill-treat and denounce them.

While this hellish scene was unfolding, suddenly a messenger arrived from Tihrán carrying an order from the central authorities for the commander of the armed guards. The contents of that envelope instructed that wherever the soldiers were met by the messenger, to bury the heads in that very spot and to continue conveying the captives to the capital. On seeing this mandate, the commander immediately ordered his men to bury the severed heads. However, the people of Ábádih refused to allow the Bábí heads to be buried in the Muslim cemetery out of fear that it would defile that ground – they considered it honorable to insist on this refusal. Therefore, the commander decided to bury them in a desolate field, in one large pit.

Among the believers bound in chains was a young man of twenty years of age. He had suffered bitterly en route and by then had fallen gravely ill and was nearly unconscious. One of the most distinguished nobles of the city, Áqá Siyyid Muhammad-'Alí, known as Mullá Áqá Ján, felt deeply remorseful over the condition of this muchwronged youth. He immediately petitioned the commander of the guards, "Among the captives is one who is profoundly weak with illness and unable to travel any

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further. Undoubtedly he will expire en route to Tihrán, perhaps not even very far from this town. As a consideration towards my Holy lineage, allow me to take him home with me and look after him until he is well. Perchance he will then convert to the religion of Islam and be guided.” Faced with an appeal from such an illustrious personage, the commander responded, “Since you are of noble character and wish to render a goodly deed, I will grant your request. But first you must give ten tumáns as gratuity to my men for the troubles they have shouldered. Then this youth may be yours.”

By the time that the honored Áqá Siyyid Muhammad-‘Alí had managed to raise the sum, the armed guards had moved the captives to Shúristán, a distance of five farsangs from Ábádih. Siyyid Muhammad-‘Alí, [determined to rescue the young Bábí], quickly reached the guards, paid the sum, and secured the release of Áqá Siyyid Ghulám-‘Alí, the wretched Bábí. He mounted the sickly youth on his own steed and walked on his side all the way to Ábádih. On gaining his home, he immediately summoned Áqá Muhammad-Husayn, the Hakímباشí [traditional physician], who spent the next several days with the Siyyid Ghulám-‘Alí and sought to revive him. But, alas, the young man expired. Áqá Siyyid Ghulám-‘Alí was buried in Ábádih’s public cemetery, in the vicinity of the fort of Muhammad-Hádí, though his exact burial location is not known as Ábádih did not have any believers when this incident occurred.

The land where the martyrs’ heads were buried remained unnoticed and untouched for many years, and providentially its desolation served to protect the treasures hidden within its breast.

Mírzá Qábil continues to tell that Ábádih remained without believers in the Báb for some time until 1280 A.H./1863, when

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Bahá’u’lláh declared his mission in Baghdad.<sup>556</sup> At that time, two of Ábádih’s residents happened to be students in Isfahán.<sup>557</sup> These two were Áqá Mírzá ‘Atau’lláh, later surnamed Siráju’l-Hukamá, and Mullá

Muhammad-Husayn. The news of Bahá’u’lláh’s proclamation, according to Mírzá Qábil, greatly perturbed the seminary students in Isfahán as they had thought that with the Báb’s martyrdom the messianic

movement had ceased to exist. The seminarians' reaction impelled these two students from Ábádih to investigate Bahá'u'lláh's claim. Through an

intermediary they met with the prominent Bahá'í of that city, Mírzá Muhammad-Hasan, the Sultánu'sh-Shuhadá, and in the course of a few sessions embraced the new faith.<sup>558</sup>

At about the same time, another resident of Ábádih, a certain Dá'yí Husayn, later designated by Bahá'u'lláh as Bá'yí, proceeded to the

'Atabát to visit the Shrine of Imám Husayn. On reaching that region in April 1863, he learned that a great commotion was taking place in Baghdad and upon inquiry was informed that Bahá'u'lláh was being further exiled from that city and presently tarried at a garden on the outskirts of Baghdad. Years later, the same Dá'yí Husayn reported the events to Mírzá Qábil in such words, "I was told that outside of the city of Baghdad, He [Bahá'u'lláh] had raised a majestic tent and was residing temporarily there. Soon He was to proceed towards a new destination in the company of government authorities. While in this garden, I was told He had raised the standard of divinity and advanced the claim of divine authority. In this regard, He had revealed a great many Tablets and sent these to the 'ulamá in Najaf and Karbalá and called on all to recognize

<sup>556</sup> Although Abadih was established over a thousand years ago, the city gained importance during the Zand dynasty. In fact the name of this town is said to have

been given by Karím Khán Zand himself. The town's significance was in its location

via the migratory routes of the Qashqa'í tribes.

<sup>557</sup> Táríkh Amrí Ábádih, pp. 6-7.

<sup>558</sup> There are some minor inconsistencies in Táríkh Amrí Ábádih. For instance, on

page 7, Qábil reports that upon conversion in 1863, the two new believers received

a copy of Bahá'u'lláh's tablet to Násiri'd-Dín Sháh in the hand of the Sultánu'sh-

Shuhadá. However, this tablet was not made public for at least another decade and

therefore in all probability, the new converts saw some early Baghdad writings of

Bahá'u'lláh.

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His station of divinity. Further, He had styled Himself Zuhúru'lláh

[Manifestation of God] and with no hesitation had declared that He was the Promised One of the Qur'án. Rank upon rank of people were proceeding to His presence and partaking of His utterances. This servant also decided to go and behold this spectacle, but then I feared that perchance my travel companions would accuse me of visiting Bábís and that I would be known by this name. Therefore, I decided against going.”<sup>559</sup>

On returning to his native town, Dá'yí Husayn eventually learned of the conversion of Mírzá 'Atau'lláh and Mullá Muhammad-Husayn and joined them in the new faith. Thus the nucleus of the Bábí-Bahá'í community was established in Ábádih. According to Qábil, during the next decade, this community grew rapidly and during 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry, Bahá'ís decided to acquire the land where the heads of Nayríz martyrs were buried. The following is recorded in Mírzá Qábil's narrative:<sup>560</sup>

Some of the Bahá'í leaders consulted and decided to purchase the land where the sacred heads of the martyrs in the path of the Almighty was buried. They resolved to secure that land from the non-believers by any means necessary and enable it to come into the Faith's possession. Soon the honored Siráju'l-Hukamá, who was charged with this task, was able to acquire that desolate land from its owner, Hájí Muhammad Khán, son of Hájí Mihdí, who was indeed the re-incarnation of Abú-Jahal. This acquisition brought immense joy to the friends and they decided it was imperative to construct a well or an underground aqueduct, as building a shrine or cultivating this land required access to water. Therefore, the Siráju'l-Hukamá, Hájí 'Ayní-Khán, the honored Bá'yí and Mírzá Husayn Khán spent a considerable sum of their own money and were able to construct an aqueduct which they named Hayrat [bewilderment]. After a

<sup>559</sup> Táríkh Amrí Ábádih, p. 8.

<sup>560</sup> Táríkh Amrí Ábádih, p. 14.

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few years, that land had access to water and this news was communicated to the Center of the Covenant ['Abdu'l-Bahá]. Some time thereafter, a Tablet of Visitation addressed to the Siráju'l-Hukama was revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá for the martyrs buried in that location.<sup>561</sup>

Mírzá Qábil tells that after this visitation tablet was received in Ábádih, he took a copy to the village of Najaf-Ábád, a distance of

sixteen miles from Ábádih, where Hájí Muhammad-Sádiq Khán, son of Lutf-‘Alí Khán Qashqá’í, resided. In 1853 Lutf-‘Alí Khán had commanded the army forces against the Bábís of Nayríz, but his son, Hájí Muhammad-Sádiq Khán, had become a believer in Bahá’u’lláh. Qábil recited the newly received visitation tablet for his host and then stated, “O honored Khán, consider in what manner the divine grace and benevolence surround all in this mighty Dispensation! Ponder what magnificent and exalted words have been revealed in honor of those heads severed by the orders of your father and sent as a gift to Násiri’d-Dín Sháh, thinking that such a heinous act would be of aid to him in advancing his career! Now consider how brilliantly the Sun of might and exaltation has dawned!”<sup>562</sup> In response, Hájí Muhammad-Sádiq Khán, not knowing about the early history of the Bábí movement had asked, “Honored Áqá Mírzá, please tell me a little of the events of Nayríz and the barbarous deeds of my father so that I may be informed of the manner in which he dealt with God’s chosen ones.”<sup>563</sup>

Mírzá Qábil states:

Without the least hesitation or consideration, I said to him, ‘In accordance with the instructions of the authorities, your father, General Lutf-‘Alí Khán, led his bloodthirsty army against the believers in Nayríz. For six months the friends withstood his onslaught and offered a vigorous defense. At

<sup>561</sup> ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s visitation tablet is quoted in *Tárikh Amrí Ábádih*, pp. 14-17, and

*Nayríz Mushkbíz*, pp. 121-122.

<sup>562</sup> *Tárikh Amrí Ábádih*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>563</sup> *Tárikh Amrí Ábádih*, p. 18.

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the end, however, they were reduced and the victorious soldiers massacred all the men, seized the women, and put the children to the sword. Your own father, with one hand would toss the infants into the air and with the saber in the other hand would hew them in half. One by one, the innocent children were hacked into pieces while their wretched mothers were forced to watch. Some of the women were placed in a cave and burnt alive. Some others among the women, together with the severed heads of their men, were brought to Shíráz in the company of a feasting army. The heads, together with some of the men, were sent to Tihrán, and on reaching Ábádih the soldiers were told to bury the heads. It is because of this background that this

sacred land is the recipient of such resplendent and unique favors from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and is the point of adoration of the Supreme Concourse.’

Profoundly moved on hearing these details, Hájí Muhammad-Sádiq Khán cried unceasingly for quite a while. He then said, ‘Áqá Mírzá Qábil, I am deeply ashamed of myself and fear that my belief and recognition may not be accepted before God. I say this because I have heard that the Blessed Perfection has said that should one, with the utmost sincerity, become a firm believer in Him, then his parents would be forgiven by God, even should they not rank as believers. Now I realize that such a father as mine is not worthy of divine forgiveness and because of him, I fear that my own recognition may not be accepted either.’ ‘Tomorrow we will write to the blessed presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,’ I replied to him, ‘and inquire of this matter.’ Next morning we wrote to the Holy Land and after a while I received a Tablet revealed in my honor.<sup>564</sup>

Mírzá Qabil quotes the text of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s tablet which among other matters states, “... Inform the honored Muhammad-Sádiq Khán  
<sup>564</sup> Táríkh Amrí Ábádih, pp. 19-20.

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that day appears after the black night and that world-enveloping light breaks through from the cover of darkness. The rose comes forth from a thorny stem and diverse flowers are raised from the lowly soil. Luscious fruits appear on the wooden branches of trees and ‘He causeth the living to issue from the dead, and He is the one to cause the dead to issue from the living.’<sup>565</sup> ... Therefore, do not despair. Pray unto the divine threshold of the Almighty and fervently beseech Him to forgive your father through the divine breezes of celestial absolution, to waft over him a wave from the ocean of His mercy and to cleanse him from the filth of wrongdoing and transgression. ... If the burial shrine of the heads of the martyrs is raised with utmost spirituality and beauty, it would assuredly cause nearness to the court of divine unity.”<sup>566</sup>

Likewise, Hájí Muhammad-Sádiq received a communication from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in which the same sentiments were expressed.<sup>567</sup> After receiving these correspondences, Hájí Muhammad-Sádiq contributed toward construction of a memorial building over the spot where the heads of the martyred Nayrízís were buried.<sup>568</sup> Muhammad-

<sup>565</sup> Qur’án 6:95

<sup>566</sup> Táríkh Amrí Ábádih, pp. 20-21.

<sup>567</sup> For the text see Táríkh Amrí Ábádih, p. 21.

568 The following is recorded by E.G. Browne in the notes accompanying his translation of *A Traveler's Narrative*, pp. 259-261, and the original appears in *A Year*

Amongst the Persians, pp. 440-442:

When I was in Yezd in the early summer of 1888, I became acquainted with a Bábí holding a position of some importance under the government, two of whose ancestors had taken a prominent part in the suppression of the Níríz insurrection. Of what he told me concerning this the following is a summary taken from my diary for May 18th, 1888:

'My maternal grandfather Mihr 'Alí Khán Shuja'u'l-Mulk and my great-uncle Mírzá Na'ím took an active part in the Níríz war – but on the wrong side. When orders came to Shiraz to quell the insurrection, my grandfather was instructed to take command of the expedition sent for that purpose. He did not like the task committed to him and communicated his reluctance to two of the 'ulamá, who, however, assured him, declaring that the war on which he was about to engage was an holy enterprise sanctioned by Religion, and that he would

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'Alí Faydí reports that the construction project commenced on the anniversary of the Báb's declaration in 1324 A.H., which corresponds to 27 June 1906. The Siráju'l-Hukamá took the lead in the effort, himself contributing the cost of raising a tall fence surrounding the grounds. In the same year, he completed the northern rooms of the building and arranged many verdant and beautiful gardens around the main structure. He continued to spend a portion of his personal estate towards completion of the building and the beautification of the surrounding grounds and in his will appointed his son, Áqá Badí'u'lláh Ágáh as the

custodian of the site. When he passed on 14 November 1913, he was buried in the first room of this edifice. During this time, the ground was

receive reward therefore in Paradise. So he went, and what happened happened. After they had killed 750 men, they took the women and children, stripped them almost naked, mounted them on donkeys, mules, and camels, and led them through rows of heads hewn from the lifeless bodies of their fathers, brothers, sons, and husbands towards Shiraz. On their arrival there, they were placed in a ruined caravansary just outside the Isfahán gate and opposite to an Imamzadeh, their captors taking up their quarters under some trees hard by.

Here they remained for a long time, subjected to many insults and hardships, and many of them died.

'Now see the judgement of God on the oppressors; for of

those chiefly responsible for these cruelties not one but came to a bad end and died overwhelmed with calamity.

‘My grandfather Mihr ‘Alí Khán presently fell ill and was dumb till the day of his death. Just as he was about to expire, those who stood round him saw from the movement of his lips that he was whispering something. They leant down to catch his last words and heard him murmur faintly “Bábí! Bábí! Bábí!” three time. The he fell back dead.

‘My grand-uncle Mírzá Na‘ím fell into disgrace with the government and was twice fined, 10,000 tumáns the first time, 15,000 the second. But his punishment did not cease here, for he was made to suffer diverse tortures. His hands were put in the el-chek and his feet in the Tang-i-Kajar; he was made to stand bare-headed in the sun with treacle smeared over his head to attract the flies; and, after suffering these and other torments yet more painful and humiliating he was dismissed a disgraced and ruined man.’

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generally known as Bagh Hakím [the garden of Hakím].

Muhammad-‘Alí Faydí reports that in 1337 A.H./1919, Dr.

Badí‘u’lláh Ágáh and a group of Bahá’ís from Ábádih met with ‘Abdu’l-

Bahá while on Bahá’í pilgrimage.<sup>569</sup> One day he was summoned into ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s presence and was given the text of a visitation tablet written in honor of his father. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá remarked, “Surely, you have understood the meaning of this Tablet. This Tablet is revealed for your father.<sup>570</sup> In truth, he was the first to raise the standard of the Faith in Ábádih. By what name do the people refer to the burial place of the martyrs in that city?” Dr. Ágáh responded, “Bahá’ís call it Bágh Ru’us’sh-

Shuhadá [Garden of the Martyrs’ Heads] and other people call it Bagh Hakím.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá paused for a moment and then, while standing, revealed a tablet bestowing upon him the permanent custodianship of that site and named it “Hadiqatu’r-Rahmán” [The Garden of the Merciful]:

He is God.

To the honored Mírzá Badí‘u’lláh Khán, the illustrious son of Mírzá ‘Atau’lláh Khán, upon both rest the Glory of God, the Most Glorious.

He is God.

O God! These heads were severed in Thy path and became the ornament of Thy garden and are buried in the Hadiqatu’r-Rahmán. O Lord! Make this land a verdant spot,

and this realm to be filled with flowers and sweet verdure,  
and make it radiant through Thy divine favors. Grant the  
custodianship of the Hadiqatu'r-Rahmán to Thy servant,  
Badi'u'lláh Ágáh, so that among his descendants this grace  
may bring forth divine favors.

569 Nayríz Mushkbíz, pp. 124-125. This source states that the information on  
Ábádih

is extracted from a family biographical account penned by Dr. Badi'u'lláh  
Ágáh.

570 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visitation tablet for the Siráju'l-Hukamá is  
quoted in Táríkh Amrí

Ábádih, pp. 26-27, and Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 124.

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'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás.571

Subsequently 'Abdu'l-Bahá composed a visitation tablet to be  
recited at the Hadiqatu'r-Rahmán and portion of it reads:

That sanctified earth that was ennobled by the severed heads  
of the martyrs is, of a certainty, holy and resplendent. Verily  
it transcends the highest pavilions of creation. The dwellers  
of the Supreme Concourse perpetually circumambulate that  
resplendent shrine and the hearts of the near ones are  
humbled before it.<sup>572</sup>

571 Táríkh Amrí Ábádih, p. 24, and Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 125.

572 Muhádirát, p. 782.

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## Chapter 15

### Transition from Bábí to Bahá'í Community

Be thou as a flame of fire to My enemies and a river of life eternal to  
My loved ones, and be not of those who doubt.

Lawh-i Ahmad

Although bitterly tried and tested on two separate occasions, the Bábís  
of Nayríz proved themselves utterly resilient and undefeatable in the face  
of the combined forces of the Qájár State, corrupt feudalism, and  
religious fanaticism. With each incident of persecution and bloodshed,

the community's members grew deeper roots of faith and resolve, and the community developed its own distinct identity. As devastating in its immediate effect, and as painful and heart-wrenching as it was to witness the heroic sacrifice of many hundreds of the Bábís, these episodes of persecutions proved providentially the source of life for that community and guaranteed its eventual consolidation and endurance.

What took place next is of paramount importance in the process of transition from a Bábí to Bahá'í community, as the Bábís of Nayríz were able to successfully and thoroughly transfer their allegiance from their initial apocalyptic devotion to the Báb, to the religion of Bahá'u'lláh

and to embrace the new teachings as they unfolded. For this reason, this community offers a prime opportunity to study this transition from a militant, messianic, revolutionary group, to a peace-loving, law-abiding, progressive-minded society of people. As this process unfolded, however, it was anything but simple and painless. The sufferings, the heroism, the sacrifices and all the deeds that gave sustenance to the nascent community continued to propel the transition process forward. It seems that the best way to gain a perspective into this transformation is to examine the lives of a number of survivors from the pogroms of 1853 and to see how they dealt with this transitional period. Through

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their story, the central features that helped build a Bahá'í community can well be discerned.

#### 1. Mullá Muhammad Shafí' Nayrízí<sup>573</sup>

Mullá Muhammad was born in A.H. 1260 (A.D. 1844) to a family known for learning and piety across several generations. His grandfather, Mullá 'Abdu'l-Husayn, had been closely associated with Vahíd Dárábí in earlier

days and, on hearing the news of his approach to Nayríz in 1850, hastened to welcome him in the company of his five sons, three brothers and a large multitude from the Chinár-Súkhtih quarter of their native town. This group went as far as Rúníz, a distance of sixty kilometers from Nayríz, to meet the celebrated Vahíd. On hearing him recount the news the Báb's proposals and reforms, they all readily embraced the new movement. Throughout the succeeding events of 1850, Mullá 'Abdu'l-Husayn and his sons stood firm by Vahíd, rendered many important services, showed much valor, and suffered injuries in the ensuing battles. For the next two years, while his father had taken refuge in the mountains, the young Muhammad Shafí', his mother and infant brother, lived with their wounded grandfather till the events of the summer and fall of 1853 unfolded, when once again a severe pogrom against the Bábí

community was launched. For the second time, the entire family joined several hundreds of their co-religionists in defending their religion, this time in the nearby mountains. The family of Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Husayn showed remarkable bravery and fortitude and all five of his sons along with other male members of the family perished during the events. Taken captive were the eighty-year old Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Husayn, the nineyear old Muhammad Shafí‘, his young and defenseless mother and his toddler brother (who was killed shortly thereafter), and they joined hundreds of other Bábís as prisoners of a victorious enemy. As a gift for a tyrannical governor, this unfortunate band was sent to Shiraz, accompanied by the heads of their loved-ones impaled on spears. In that town the women and children were thrown into dungeons

573 Information in this section is culled from Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1.

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and the men sent to Tehran to stand accused before the royal throne. However, Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Husayn, frail with sufferings and old age, passed away en route to Tehran in the village of Sa‘ádat-Ábád<sup>574</sup>, where he was beheaded by guards and his body left in a ditch. His head, together with the heads of over two hundred other martyrs, was eventually buried in Ábádih.

Muhammad Shafí‘ and his mother, being the sole survivors of the entire clan, were released from captivity after a period of time. The Imám-Jum‘ih of Shiraz, who in former days had been a close associate of the family and somewhat sympathetic to the Bábí reform, took the young lad under his tutelage and saw to his education. By dint of perseverance and natural talent, Muhammad Shafí‘ excelled in his studies and some years later, when the Imám-Jum‘ih’s grandson died and his office as the prayer-leader at Nayríz’s Masjid Jami‘ Kabír was left vacant,

Mullá Shafí‘ was appointed to this prestigious and influential post.<sup>575</sup> After the passing of his first wife, the same Imám-Jum‘ih in Shiraz arranged for his grand-daughter, Khávar-Sultán, to be married to Mullá Shafí‘ thereby expanding the influence of the new son-in-law and solidifying his position in the community.<sup>576</sup>

Having established himself, Mullá Muhammad Shafí‘ set out to rebuild the Bábí and the Proto-Bahá’í community. He exerted much effort in gathering the scattered Bábís and consolidating the nucleus of the community. To this end, he would arrange living-quarters for those in need and ensure that employment awaited them at the time of their arrival. In looking after the poor, it is reported that he would bring supplies to the homes of the needy, and unbeknownst to them, leave provisions for the household. Through the efforts of Mullá Shafí‘, once

more, the Chinár-Súkhtih quarter was occupied by the survivors of the 1850-53 persecutions and their descendants, who by this time had transferred their allegiance to the Bahá'í faith and would regularly

574 Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 129, gives the village as Siyyidán.

575 Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 131, reports that after Mullá Shafí' the same post was

entrusted to his son, Shaykh Muhammad-Husayn.

576 See Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 2, p. 436, for a letter of 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed to

Khávar-Sultán.

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organize activities, such as the observance of nineteen-day feasts and Bahá'í holy days, on a large scale.

The dwelling of Mullá Muhammad Shafí' became the place where all Bahá'í visitors would arrive and enjoy his hospitality. Once again Nayríz emerged as an important center of activity and many prominent promoters of the religion, such as Hájí Mírzá Haydar-'Alí, Mírzá Muharram, Mírzá Mahmúd Zarqání and Mírzá Jalál Zarqání came through that region, and Mullá Muhammad Shafí' would see to their comfort and needs.

The devotion of Mullá Shafí' to the service of his fellow man was recognized and encouraged in several communications of Bahá'u'lláh. In the summer of 1858, Mullá Shafí' and a companion, Karbalá'í Muhammad-Sálih, were permitted to visit Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdad.<sup>577</sup> It is said that in this journey he recognized the station of Bahá'u'lláh who as yet had not declared a formal role for himself.

In this regard, Mullá Shafí' began to educate the community in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and to familiarize them with his vision and approach. Year by year, the dynamic of the community began to change and bonds of friendship between the Bahá'ís and other sectors of society grew stronger, to the point that considerable commerce was taking place between the two groups. Fath-'Alí Khán, the son of the slain Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán<sup>578</sup>, determined that the wisest course for government was to ensure peace in the region and he began to establish important ties with the Bahá'í community. Mullá Shafí' was able to secure a peace-treaty

in the course of one of his contacts with Fath-'Alí Khán, guaranteeing that for the rest of the governor's term, he would not interfere with the affairs of the Bahá'ís. In turn, Bahá'ís set aside their age-old complaint

about having lost their loved-ones and properties in the two previous waves of Bábí persecution, foregoing taking active steps for restitution.

While he was in office, Fath-‘Alí Khán observed the agreement to deal

577 Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 131.

578 As noted previously, Haji Zaynu’l-‘Abidin Khan was the governor of Nayríz

who, though in earlier days he had been a friend of Vahíd Dárábí, instigated the first

Bábí persecution there in 1850. His assassination by the Bábís in 1852 sparked the second wave of the Bábí repression in Nayríz.

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with the community fairly and amicably.<sup>579</sup> In fact, at a later time he wrote to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, who expressed his acknowledgement.<sup>580</sup> Having dealt with potential sources of external pressure, the Bábí-Bahá’í community was now in need of protection from another quarter, namely, the writings of Mírzá Yahyá Azal, who declared himself to be the Báb’s appointed successor, and derided the claims of his halfbrother, Bahá’u’lláh. Mullá Muhammad Shafi‘ and a few other welllettered members of the community saw to it that correspondence and writings from Azalís were returned unread. It is very likely that because of his influence, Azalís were never able to gain a foothold in Nayríz. All through these years, Mullá Shafi‘ organized weekly classes to expand the community’s understanding of the Bábí the Bahá’í writings and visitors were asked to bring copies of new communications received from ‘Akká, which were studied with great concentration. It was partly because of these activities that when, after the passing of Bahá’u’lláh, Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí began to advance claims against ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,

<sup>579</sup> Hájí ‘Ali Sayyáh, writes the following in his autobiography (Khátirat Hájí Sayyáh,

p. 171):

Towards the end of Ramadan 1295 A.H. [September 1878], I arrived at Nayríz. I walked through the streets and bazaar and saw the city desolate and the people destitute. I asked, “Who is the governor of this town?” They said, “It is Siyyid Báqir Khán Tafrrushi, a malicious and ill-tempered man. Previously Fath-‘Alí Khán held this post, but [the governor-general of Fárs,] the Mu’tamidu’d-Dawlih, summoned him to Shiraz and demanded excessive gratuity [in form of taxes] although the people were unable to pay. Incapable of complying, the order for the execution of Fath-‘Alí Khán was issued. Siyyid Báqir Khán took advantage of the situation, paid the required sum and ransomed Fath-‘Alí Khán’s life on the condition that he would never return to Nayríz. Now, [being the governor of this town], he believes

that he owns the life and possessions of all the wretched Nayrízís and therefore commits all manner of atrocities. Since previously the people in this quarter were Bayánís [i.e. Bábís], their homes have been ruined. Out of fear that if they complain, then Siyyid Báqir Khan would accuse them of being a Bábí, no one says anything.”

580 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s letter to Fath-‘Alí Khán is quoted in Nayríz Mushkbíz, pp. 134-

135.

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none in Nayríz heeded his call and the community remained unaffected. All his communications and those of his brothers and followers were either destroyed or returned to them – a fact praised by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Another important step undertaken by Mullá Shafí‘ was to commence business association with Áqá Mírzá Áqá Afnán, surnamed Núrí’d-Din by Bahá’u’lláh, and to engage a number of others from Nayríz in this activity. These commercial dealings not only provided a number of Bahá’ís with means of livelihood, but also enabled them to establish important ties with the prominent figures of commerce and industry in Nayríz, which further served to protect the community from potential enemies. Many of these associations with Nayríz businessmen resulted in their conversion to the Bahá’í faith.

Towards the end of his life Mullá Shafí‘ was in regular communication with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, which resulted in his being encouraged to undertake new services. He began to travel extensively throughout the region and for a while lived in Rafsinján and helped with the consolidation of that Bahá’í community. He returned to Nayríz and passed away at the age of fifty-five in A.H. 1315 (A.D. 1896), initially buried in the public cemetery, and later re-interred in the Bahá’í cemetery.<sup>581</sup>

Mullá Shafí‘ was survived by seven children: Shaykh ‘Abdu’l-Husayn; Nurijan Rawhání<sup>582</sup>; Shaykh Muhammad-Husayn ‘Ahdiyih; Gawhar Khánum Shua‘; Túbá Shua‘; Jahán Thábit; and Fátimih ‘Irfán. These descendants played significant roles in the unfolding destiny of the Nayríz community, and together with other Bahá’ís of Nayríz, they suffered extensively in Nayríz-III, the next massive pogrom in that region.<sup>583</sup>

581 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 1, p. 578.

582 Two of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s letters addressed to her are in Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 2, pp.

436-437.

583 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 6, p. 870, gives a brief, but slightly

different, biography

of Mullá Shafí‘:

Mullá Muhammad Shafí‘ Nayrízí was a grandson of the martyred Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Husayn and his father was martyred as well. At the age of fourteen, together with his mother, he was sent to Shiraz as a prisoner of war. After two years, he was released and returned to his

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On the news of the passing of Mullá Shafí‘, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá composed a tablet of visitation in his memory.<sup>584</sup>

In addition to the his important narrative recorded earlier in these pages, it is known that Mullá Shafí‘ has written several historical accounts, one of which is the Táríkh Amrí Ardistán [History of the Cause in Ardistán] which remains unpublished.

## 2. Children of Siyyid Ja‘far Yazdí<sup>585</sup>

The story of Siyyid Ja‘far was outlined in earlier pages. Three of his children were important actors in the Nayríz community’s transition from a Bábí to a Bahá’í way of life.

### 2.a. Fátimih Bagum

She was born in 1843 and from an early age was educated by her father in the Persian and Arabic languages, and soon excelled in both. Her early years were spent in great comfort, as Siyyid Ja‘far ranked among the influential citizens of Nayríz. As noted earlier, upon the conclusion of

native town. Mírzá Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán, the governor of Nayríz, took his mother in marriage and provided him with education. Soon Mullá Muhammad Shafí‘ emerged as the principal religious figure of the region, as well as a wealthy man. He constantly looked after the needy and the poor, and this attracted the attention of the citizens.

Fath-‘Alí Khán, son of Hájí Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín Khán, who became the governor of Nayríz, was an admirer of Mullá Shafí‘ and through the latter sent a missive to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and was honored with the favor of a reply. Because of this, the Bahá’ís of Nayríz were not harassed by the ill-wishers. After some time, Mullá Shafí‘ married a granddaughter of the Imam-Jum‘ih of Shiraz. Though known to all as a Bábí, he had much influence in religious rulings and affairs. He was the recipient of tablets from Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and passed away in 1315 A.H. [1896]. A tablet of visitation was revealed in his honor by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

<sup>584</sup> Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 432, Nayríz Mushkbíz, pp. 138-139, and a facsimile of

the original in Nayríz Mushkbíz, p. 137.

585 The information in the remainder of this section is culled from Lam'átu'l-Anvár,

vol. 1, or other cited sources.

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the battles between the Bábís and the government forces in 1850, an extremely intense period of repression followed for all the Bábís and it was particularly hard on the family of Siyyid Ja'far, who on a daily basis were ordered into the streets to see their father chained and bloody, enduring all manner of persecution. One can only imagine the tears of anguish that streamed from the eyes of the children during their father's nine months of ordeals, and how they must have spent their nights wondering if they would see him alive once more. Never waning in devotion to their cause, but having lost all earthly possessions, they passed their days in very modest surroundings and survived on small rations that were brought to them by 'Alí Sardár and a few other Bábís in hiding. At last, their father was fortuitously delivered from captivity and they proceeded to Yazd, and finding that town sorely agitated, left for Harát where they stayed for the next four years.

The family then returned to Yazd where after six years of stay, Fátimih Bagum married Hájí Muhammad-Ismá'íl, one of the influential citizens of the city and a man with widespread commercial interests. During the next few years, she lived in great comfort and gave birth to three children. She asked her husband to move the family to Nayríz at this time when the winds of persecution seemed to have subsided.

On the way to Nayríz the family stayed at the village of Qutriyih and during this time the news was brought to the governor, Lutf-'Alí Khán, of their imminent arrival to Nayríz. Thinking that Fátimih Bagum was returning to reclaim her father's properties that had been confiscated nearly a decade and a half earlier, the governor was perturbed and ordered his agents to assassinate Hájí Muhammad-Ismá'íl. In her early twenties, Fátimih Bagum thus became a widow with no means of support for her three children, ranging in age from one to four years old. The news of her condition was brought to Mullá Shafí', who immediately arranged for several of her co-religionists to go to Qutriyih and bring with them Fátimih Bagum and her children, who were then housed in Nayríz and looked after. Her brother, Siyyid Muhammad, was also informed of the situation and moved his residence to Nayríz where he married and settled. Gradually, Fátimih Bagum was able to provide the necessary support for her children and see to their education and

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proper upbringing.

Fátimih Bagum possessed an excellent command of both Persian and Arabic and exerted herself in the education of other Bahá'í women in Nayríz. She regularly conducted classes for women to deepen their knowledge of the scriptures of the faith and openly taught the Muslim women of Nayríz about the Bábí the Bahá'í religions – an effort that won many converts and sympathizers.

Perhaps the greatest legacy of Fátimih Bagum lies in the services that she provided in this period of transition to the women of Nayríz – a legacy immortalized by Bahá'u'lláh in a tablet written in her honor around 1879.<sup>586</sup> She passed away in 1300 A.H./1883<sup>587</sup> and was survived by three children: Núrí-Ján Bagum; Sughrá Bagum; and Mírzá 'Abdu'l-Husayn. The second daughter died in her youth, but the other two became important pillars of the community during the persecution of Nayríz-III.

## 2.b. Siyyid Músá

Having to endure the same hardship in childhood as his sister, Siyyid Músá was no stranger to the requirements of sacrifice for the promotion of the Bábí movement. In his childhood in both Harát and Yazd, he studied under the tutelage of his father and mastered the Arabic language and other religious studies, and developed an excellent naskh penmanship. At a young age he married the sister of Hájí Muhammad-Táhir Málmírí, and because of his skills and personality was soon appointed by the Afnáns to oversee their properties in Bávanát where he lived for the rest of his life. It was there that he established a strong nucleus for the Bahá'í community and fearlessly taught the faith to everyone he encountered.

<sup>586</sup> In this tablet reference is made to the martyrdoms of Mírzá Muhammad-Husayn,

surnamed the Mahbubu'sh-Shuhadá, and his brother, Mírzá Muhammad-Hasan, titled

the Sultánu'sh-Shuhadá, which took place in Isfahán in 1879. For details see Eminent

Bahá'ís in the Time of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 33-51.

<sup>587</sup> Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 227. This date may be a typographical error as on page

229 of the same source reference is made to her giving consent to the marriage of her daughter in the year 1302 A.H/1884.

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During the 1903 pogrom of the Bahá'ís in Yazd and its surrounding region, he suffered extensive financial and physical difficulties, but was able to rescue his brother-in-law, Málmírí, and his family and bring them to Bávanát. However, because of the hardship of the journey, three of Málmírí's infant children died and his wife, Khánúm Laqá, fell ill and was sent to Nayríz for treatment. His lifelong services to the Bahá'í community and its promotion were recognized in at least four tablets from Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He married Sughrá Bagum who brought him a daughter, Jamáliyyih Bagum, and a son, Siyyid Jalál.

### 2.c. Siyyid Muhammad

As noted earlier, on hearing the news of martyrdom of his brother-in-law in Qutriyih, Siyyid Muhammad hastened to Nayríz to look after his sister and her infant children. It was there that he married a daughter of Siyyid Báqir (and sister of Siyyid Mihdí Yazdí). As he possessed an exquisite naskh penmanship, he spent his time scribing Bahá'í manuscripts for the community. He also commenced systematic education classes for the children of the Bahá'í community so that from a young age they could be trained in the fundamental laws and ordinances of the new religion. It is in this regard that his most important contribution to transforming the life of the community must be evaluated. Siyyid Muhammad treated all with the utmost compassion and kindness and possessed a dignified bearing. To this date, seven tablets of Bahá'u'lláh addressed to him have been located. He passed away in Nayríz.

### 3. Shaykh Muhammad-Husayn

A devoted Bábí since Vahíd's first arrival in Nayríz when his own father, the renowned Mullá Báqir, had converted to the new religion, he survived the pogroms of 1850 and 1853. Through his relationship with Shaykh Abú-Turáb, the Imám-Jum'ih of Shíráz, he was appointed Imám-Jum'ih of the Masjid Jámi' Kabír in Nayríz and custodian of religious endowments. He was a gifted poet whose art was cherished throughout

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Nayríz and who had adopted the sobriquets "Vafá" [fidelity] and "Muhtashim" [magnificent].<sup>588</sup> Upon hearing the news of the declaration of Bahá'u'lláh, he versed a number of questions and sent them to Bahá'u'lláh, receiving a response in the form of the renowned Suriy Vafá composed in 'Akká.<sup>589</sup>

Shaykh Muhammad-Husayn married twice but had no children.

He married a third time, a Bábí woman by the name of Fátimih, whose young husband had been martyred in 1853 and herself taken captive to

Shíráz along with her seven month-old baby, where the baby died because of the hardships and lack of proper care. From this marriage a daughter by the name of Khávar-Sultán was born, who later married Mullá Muhammad Shafi‘ and suffered bitter persecution in 1909 during Nayríz-III.

The days of Shaykh Muhammad-Husayn were spent in protecting the community and enriching its zeal and devotion. With his innate eloquence he would teach the younger generation the writings of the Báb and Bahá‘u’lláh that were in their possession, and prepare them for the next phase of the community’s future.

#### 4. The Sister of Mírzá ‘Alí Sardár

In courage and fortitude the equal of her remarkable brother, she had been only thirteen or fourteen years old in 1853 and had stood by the Sardár in all phases of the struggle. At its conclusion, she was taken captive and sent to Shíráz, where after much hardship she was eventually released. She returned to Nayríz and married Mullá Husayn, a son of Mashhadí Ismá‘íl, and had three children: Mírzá ‘Alí; a daughter who married ‘Alí, son of Karbalá‘í Háfiz; and another daughter (whose name has not been recorded) who married Hájí Muhammad, son of Hájí

588 A selection of his poems is printed in Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, pp. 242-248.

589 The text of the original tablet in Arabic is in Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, pp. 418-425;

Majmú‘ih az Alwah Jamál Aqdas Abhá ki ba‘d az Kitáb Aqdas Názil Shudih, pp. 112-119;

Áthár Qalam A‘lá, vol. 4, pp. 418-423 of 125BE version and pp. 350-358 of 133BE

printing. An English translation appears in Tablets of Bahá‘u’lláh, pp. 181-191; and a

brief discussion is available in Revelation of Bahá‘u’lláh, vol. 4, pp. 205-213.

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Qásim . These descendants rendered important services during the Nayríz-III persecutions. She herself lived a long life and related the details of events she had witnessed to Mírzá Shafi‘ Rawhání, on whose history I have relied.

#### 5. Mother of Humáyún

As a newly wed, this young woman (whose name is not known) joined her husband in the battles of 1852-3 where he was martyred. She was pregnant with a child at that time. She fell captive and was taken to Shíráz. On the way there, enduring the hardship and trials of the way and

in the presence of her husband's severed head that along with other martyrs' heads accompanied the wretched company, she gave birth to a girl in the fields. After being freed from captivity, together with other Bábí women, she was received by the widow of the Báb, Khadíjih Bagum, and received bountiful attention. On that occasion, Khadíjih Bagum presented each of the Nayrízí women with a scarf, and named the young girl born in captivity Humáyún [auspicious].

On returning to Nayríz, the mother and daughter spent some time there until Hájí Mírzá Ahmad Káshání<sup>590</sup> asked for the young mother's hand in marriage. Some years later, upon reaching adulthood, Humáyún married Mullá Áqá Bábá, an itinerant and learned teacher of the Bahá'í faith in Shíráz.

## 6. Fátimih

At the age of sixteen, together with her family she participated in the battles of 1853 where she was taken prisoner and sent to Shíráz. It is related that her father, a certain Khájíh Muhammad-Husayn, had fled to Karbál (one of the districts of Shíráz), and on hearing the news of the

590 He was a half-brother of the famous Bábí martyr-historian Mírzá Jání Káshí and

the celebrated Hájí Muhammad-Ismá'íl, surnamed Dhabíh and Anís. In spite of

Bahá'u'lláh's counsel, he threw his lot with the Azalis and was eventually killed in

Baghdad because of his reprehensible conduct. For more details, consult Revelation of

Bahá'u'lláh, vol. 2, pp. 137-138.

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captivity of his wife and daughter became deeply depressed and expired shortly thereafter. After gaining her freedom, Fátimih returned to Nayríz, married Khájíh Ismá'íl and had three children. She lived a long and productive life, often serving the sick and destitute in the community and generally acting as a midwife and practitioner of traditional medicine. Frequently she related the details of the early days of the faith for Rawhání who penned these accounts for posterity. Fátimih passed away in her native town.

## 7. Khájíh Muhammad

He was a son of Karbalá'í Bāqir and together with his mother he was made captive in 1853 at the age of ten. They were released some time later and returned to Nayríz. Khájíh Muhammad grew to adulthood in the depths of poverty, but with the memories of his own sufferings in childhood, coupled with the guiding hand of his mother, his devotion to

the movement remained exemplary. Gradually, he became engaged in dealing cotton bales, and soon received the attention of the Nayríz authorities who appointed him kad-khudá [neighborhood chief]. He lived a long life, and with his forthright attitude and bravery, was always a pillar of strength for the community. When the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Nayríz was formed, Khájih Muhammad was elected to its membership and served with distinction for fifteen years. His house hosted many Bahá'í activities and the visitors and friends frequented that dwelling on their visits to Nayríz. At the age of 68, together with his two sons, Mírzá Muhammad-Báqir and Fadlu'lláh<sup>591</sup>, he was to suffer yet again in the Nayríz-III tragedy when his house and properties were plundered by a crazed mob. He left for Sarvistán, but eventually was able to return to Nayríz and rebuild his home.<sup>592</sup>

Rawhání reports that while on pilgrimage in 1339 A.H./1921, he presented the supplications of the Nayríz Bahá'ís to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who

591 The sons adopted the surname Paymání.

592 For a description of the migration of the Bahá'ís of Nayríz to Sarvistán in 1909

see, *In the Land of Refuge*, chapter 16.

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responded that he intended to reply to all others in a single tablet, but as Khájih Muhammad was a survivor of the Nayríz persecutions of the early days, he deserved receiving a separate, special tablet.<sup>593</sup> He passed away in Nayríz at the age of ninety.

#### 8. Áqá Siyyid Muhammad-Báqir

His father, Siyyid Mírzá Muhammad-'Abid, had served Vahíd in 1850 and subsequently participated in the second upheaval where he fell captive and was martyred. His mother was a niece of Muhammad-Ridá Khán, the uncle of Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán, and as such, after the death of

his father, the family remained unmolested and lived with Muhammad-Ridá Khán for about two years, after which they gave up the comfort of that house in to go and live in the Chinár-Súkhtih quarter with the other believers. For years the mother and son lived in abject poverty, making ends meet with a meager income from raising sheep and attending the land. Being related to Luft-'Alí Khán, the governor, provided the family a measure of protection from harassment by the general population, which by association was extended to the rest of the Bahá'í community. When Siyyid Muhammad-Báqir reached manhood, he became a

farmer and soon married and had two sons and four daughters: Siyyid Muhammad-Sádiq; Mírzá Amír Khán; B́bí Bagum; Khayru'n-Nisá; Fátimih Bagum; and Khánúm Ján. Most of these descendants married other Bahá'ís and remained active in the fold, although some suffered persecution in later phases of the community's life.

#### 9. Muhammad-Ja'far Khán

As noted earlier, he was a nephew of Hájí Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán and had stood with Vahíd in the course of the 1850 uprising, serving as the

593 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 265, notes that the text of this tablet has not been located

as yet. However, by the time the second volume of this series was published this tablet

was found and is printed in Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 2, pp. 441-442. Another tablet

addressed to him is in Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 2, pp. 440-441.

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chronicler of those events.<sup>594</sup> He was about to take Vahíd's daughter in marriage when the conclusion of the events and the general massacre of the Bábís prevented this union. It is said that immediately after the final episode of Nayríz-I, together with his brothers and by means of a difficult mountainous route, he escaped to Dáráb and because of his family relation with Muhammad-Sharíf Khán, the governor of the Khamsih tribe, he was able to secure a ruling exempting him from further prosecution. Armed with this protective shield for himself and his brothers, they returned to Nayríz shortly thereafter.

It is further reported that Muhammad-Ja'far Khán was aware of the plans for the assassination of his uncle Hájí Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Khán,

the man responsible for the murder of his father, and perhaps even had a hand in the formulation of these plans, but managed to distance himself from any suspicion.<sup>595</sup> After the governor's demise, he continued to enjoy the protection of Fath-'Alí Khán and did not take part in the Nayríz-II events. After the 1853 events, he continued to provide material assistance to the survivors and to the emerging Bahá'í community. In succeeding decades, he devoted himself to ensuring that the Bahá'ís were safeguarded from the envy of the authorities and any form of persecution.

From a young age, Muhammad-Ja'far Khán was a gifted poet and employed the sobriquet Shu'lih (flame). Among his well-known works are verses written on the legendary story of Farhád and Shírín which are closely modeled after Nizámí's style, and published under the title,

Khusraw va Shírín. The editor of his poems notes that Muhammad-Ja‘far died as a believer in Bahá’u’lláh in Nayríz and was buried in a place known as Mussalá (or Imám-Zádigán) and eventually his tombstone was destroyed.

One of his younger brothers, Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí Khán,

594 A single verse of his Jang-Námih is preserved in Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 263:

Zi gard-i savaran-u dud-i tufang  
zamin gasht tirih chu pusht-i palang  
From the dust of cavalry and the smoke of guns  
the earth turned dark much like tiger’s skin.

595 Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 262.

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though outwardly he did not count himself among the Bahá’ís, was deeply sympathetic to the faith. In fact his wife, a daughter of Áqá Muhammad-Ridá Khán, was a knowledgeable believer and raised their son, Mírzá Muhammad-Taquí as a devoted Bahá’í who was the recipient of much kindness from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He, in turn, had two sons and a daughter, respectively named Ridá Khán Hisámí, Mírzá Áqá Khán, and Zahrá-Sultán, who suffered in the course of later persecutions.

#### 10. Two Sons of Karbalá’í Muhammad

During the 1853 battles in the mountain, he was one of the defenders, entrusted with the supervision of eighteen others in the fortification named after him. During the last phase of the war, together with his sons he escaped from captivity and eventually returned to Nayríz where he lived a long and prosperous life. His two sons who accompanied him in the battles were:

##### 10.a. Hájí Ibrahim

Known as Ustád Hájí, he was a devoted Bábí with firm convictions. Even though his wife was from a quarter of Nayríz other than Chinár-Súkhtih (where all the Bábís, and later on Bahá’ís, resided) and was initially not a believer, gradually she was attracted to the Bábí movement to the point that she surpassed him in zeal and service. They had three children, Mu’min, Fátimih, and Muhammad-‘Alí, who suffered in the course of Nayríz-III.

##### 10.b. ‘Alí

He also went into hiding after the conclusion of the 1853 events, but eventually returned to Nayríz and began to devotedly serve the community. He had three sons from his marriage, Lutfu’lláh, Badí’u’lláh

and Amru'lláh, and died at a young age. The first son served with his father in 1853 mountain battles.

## 11. Amír and His Brothers

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### 11.a. Muhammad-Ibráhím

Together with his brothers, Muhammad-Kázim and Muhammad-Báqir, he was among the bravest and the most selfless defenders in both the 1850 and 1853 events. In the latter episode the three brothers remained with the other companions until the bitter end, when all the food and gunpowder were consumed. After the last battle, prior to the general massacre of the men, they escaped into higher elevations. For some days they remained hidden in various locations until three armed soldiers, following the instructions of the authorities to locate and seize all dispersed Bábís, chanced upon them and captured the three brothers. "Three farrashes pinned his [Muhammad-Ibráhím's] arms and tied his hands behind him; but the Amír by mere strength burst his bonds, snatched a dagger from a farrash's belt, saved himself [and his brothers] and escaped to 'Iraq."<sup>596</sup>

Following a period of hiding, eventually Muhammad-Ibráhím heard the news of Bahá'u'lláh and hastened on foot to Baghdad to meet him. "There he engaged in writing down the sacred verses and later won the honor of serving at the Holy Threshold. Constant and steadfast, he remained on duty day and night."<sup>597</sup> During the journey of Bahá'u'lláh, first from Baghdad to Istanbul, and from there to Edirne, he served him as a personal guard, each night remaining vigilant in protection of Bahá'u'lláh's tent and during the day seeing to his every need. It appears

that it was during this time that the title "Amír" was given to him by Bahá'u'lláh,

Muhammad-Ibráhím remained with Bahá'u'lláh's family and in their company was sent to the prison-city of 'Akká where he eventually married Habíbbíh and had a daughter named Badí'ih, who at a later date married Husayn-Áqá Qahvih-Chí.<sup>598</sup> Badí'ih in turn had six children: three sons by the names of 'Atau'lláh, Muhammad and Ahmad, (none of whom had descendants), and three daughters, Fátimih, Zaynab and Húbúr. Húbúr was killed in the United States in an automobile accident.

<sup>596</sup> Memorials of the Faithful, p. 94. The title "Amír" was bestowed on him by Bahá'u'lláh.

<sup>597</sup> Memorials of the Faithful, p. 94.

<sup>598</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 6, p. 872, notes that he was a son of Hájí 'Alí-'Askar

Tabrízí.

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Zaynab married Dr. Zia Baghdadi, and Fátimih married Mírzá 'Alí-Akbar Nakhjavání and had two sons, Jalál and 'Alíyu'lláh [known as, 'Alí].<sup>599</sup>

'Abdu'l-Bahá paid Muhammad-Ibráhím this last tribute: "Thus the Amír was steadfast in service throughout his life; but after the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh his health steadily declined, and at last he left this world of

dust behind him and hastened away to the unsullied world above. May God illumine the place where he rests with rays from the all-highest Realm. Unto him be salutations and praise. His bright shrine is in 'Akká."<sup>600</sup>

#### 11.b. Muhammad-Báqir

In company of their brother, Amír, the two other brothers remained in the wilderness for a while, and when Amír proceeded to Baghdad, Muhammad-Báqir and Muhammad-Kázim returned to Nayríz and recommenced their lives there. Muhammad-Báqir soon married Nírí-Ján and began a quiet life dedicated to service to the community. He spent his days in assistance to other Bábís and promotion of the faith – an effort that won him 'Abdu'l-Bahá's high praises documented in a remarkable tablet.

Muhammad-Báqir had three sons and two daughters by the names of Muhammad-'Alí, Muhammad-Hasan, Asadu'lláh, Khávar, and Munavvar. Following the example of their father's selfless dedication to the community, the sons suffered bitterly during the course of Nayríz-III.

#### 11.c. Muhammad-Kázim

He was always a companion of his brother, Muhammad-Báqir, and after returning to Nayríz served the remnants of the Bábí community by providing what support he could and gradually assisted in focusing their attention on Bahá'u'lláh and his new teachings. Two sons and two daughters survived him.

599 'Alí Nakhjavání served on the Universal House of Justice from 1963-2003.

600 Memorials of the Faithful, pp. 94-95.

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12. Karbalá'í Muhammad-Sálih,  
son of Mullá  
Muhammad

His father was Mullá Muhammad who had passed away prior to Vahíd's arrival at Nayríz in 1850. Muhammad-Sálih was raised by his mother Fátimih and participated with her and other family members in the 1853 battles where, along with his mother, he fell captive and was sent to Shiraz. Eventually they were released and returned to Nayríz, where through the care and education of his mother, Muhammad-Sálih grew in firmness in his beliefs and devotion. In time, he married Zahrá, a daughter of Shaykh Yúsf who had fought on the side of Vahíd. When Mullá Muhammad-Shafí' decided to visit Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdad, Muhammad-Sálih joined him for the journey and there met with Bahá'u'lláh. On his return, propelled by the experience of a childhood spent being persecuted for his belief, and now inflamed further by having being inspired by Bahá'u'lláh, he rose to serve the community with remarkable fortitude. Having given his allegiance to Bahá'u'lláh and becoming a devoted Bahá'í, he served for many years on the Spiritual Assembly of Nayríz.

Muhammad-Sálih was an important source of information for the events of Nayríz and was fond of recalling episodes of 1850 and 1853 for the younger generation. At an advanced age in 1924 he rendered an important service by recalling the exact spot in front of Fort Khájih where hundreds of Vahíd's companions had been buried after their martyrdom, thus enabling the Spiritual Assembly of that city to erect a mausoleum over that spot, thereby marking it for the future generations as they pay homage to the deeds of those heroes. He also had been present at the martyrdom of Mírzá 'Alí Sardár and knew his exact burial location, which allowed an appropriate marker to be placed on that spot as well.

The memory of this remnant of the early sufferings of the Nayríz community and important link to the next generation was immortalized by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in a moving tablet. Karbalá'í Muhammad-Sálih was survived by two children, Hájí Amru'lláh and Fátimih, both enduring much hardship in the course of the Nayríz-III episode.

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13. The Wife of Mírzá Ismá'íl

Her name has not been recorded, but it is known that at a young age she became a captive with the other Bábí women, and after surviving the 1853 battles and returning to Nayríz, she married Mírzá Ismá'íl, a son of Sádiq Khúshbín. From this marriage a son was born by the name of

Mírzá Akbar, who in 1909 became one of the martyrs of Nayríz-III. After the death of Mírzá Ismá‘íl, she married Mírzá Muhsin and had another son, Mírzá Fathu‘lláh, who made important contributions to the unfolding Bahá‘í community.

#### 14. Mírzá Ja‘far, Surnamed Mírzá Jalál

Mírzá Ja‘far participated with his father, Mashhadí Mírzá Husayn Qutb, in the battles of 1853 at the young age of fifteen, where his father had been in command and was martyred.<sup>601</sup> With his mother he fell captive into the hands of Mírzá Na‘ím’s men and was taken to Nayríz. However, due to the intervention of his uncle, who ranked among the notable clerics of the city and was influential among the government authorities, the mother and son were not sent to Shiraz. The uncle nevertheless confiscated their entire estate, including their home and all its furniture, and constantly reproached his sister for becoming a Bábí. Soon, having had her fill of such abuse and taunting, she and her young son, Mírzá Ja‘far, left that house and relocated from the Bázár quarter to the Bábí neighborhood of Chinár-Súkhtih.

Temporarily freed from the derision of the family, the mother and

<sup>601</sup> Lam‘átu‘l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 297, suggests that Qutb and Mírzá ‘Alí Sardár were

among the group of Haft-Barádarán [The Seven Brothers], but this is in conflict with

the information given by Mullá Muhammad-Shafi‘. Further,

Lam‘átu‘l-Anvár, vol. 1, p.

297, suggests that all seven commanders were killed in the battle, but the present

author has found no collaborative evidence for the martyrdom of Hájí, son of Asghar,

and Husayn, son of Hádí Khayrí, who were also listed by Shafi‘ as part of this inner

council. Therefore, either Lam‘átu‘l-Anvár has limited the council of the Seven Brothers

to Sardár, Qutb and five others, or the suggestion that all commanders perished is

erroneous.

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son lived in a meager dwelling, when soon a number of foes, still aggravated over the events of previous months, blocked the entrance to their house and threatened to kill them if they exited from other points of the house. Despite constant attacks, debris and trash being thrown into the house, some of their co-religionists secretly arranged for food

and other necessities to reach them, which enabled them to survive until eventually the agitators moved away.

Some time later, Mírzá Ja‘far began his commercial activities and soon emerged as a successful businessman having trading interests with overseas merchants. Soon after the passing of his brave-hearted mother in 1871, Mírzá Ja‘far married and had three daughters: Mardiyih, who married Áqá Siyyid Mihdí Yazdí; Samaddiyih, who married twice; and Zahrá, who married Mírzá Hasan. The daughters and their families suffered extensively in the course of Nayríz-III.

After his marriage, Mírzá Ja‘far journeyed several times to ‘Akká where he attained the presence of Bahá‘u’lláh and was received with much kindness. A number of tablets were addressed to him by Bahá‘u’lláh. It is also reported that during one of these visits he was surnamed Mírzá Jalál by Bahá‘u’lláh.

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## Appendix 1

### Bábí Martyrs of Nayríz-II

God hath purchased of the believers their person and their goods; for theirs in return is the garden of Paradise: they fight in His cause, and slay and are slain: a promise binding on Him in truth, through the Law, the Gospel, and the Qur‘án: and who is more faithful to his Covenant than God? Then rejoice in the bargain which ye have concluded: that is the achievement supreme.

Qur‘án 9:111

The following list of Bábí martyrs is assembled from the narrative of Mullá Muhammad Shafí‘, Táríkh Zuhúru‘l-Haqq602, and Lam‘átu‘l-Anvár603.

As noted earlier, with near certainty, the list in the Zuhúru‘l-Haqq reflects

the information given by Nabíl Zarandí in the unpublished portion of his narrative.

To facilitate future research, each name was given a sequential number corresponding to the order in which it appears in each source. A cursory review reveals that Lam‘átu‘l-Anvár, vol. 2, was relying exclusively

on the information provided by Táríkh Zuhúru‘l-Haqq, vol. 4, and not the narrative of Mullá Shafí‘.

Sh ZH4 LA2 Martyr

101 109 109 ‘Abdu’lláh, son of ‘Alí

134 114 114 ‘Abdu’lláh, son of ‘Askar

71 105 105 ‘Abdu’lláh, son of Karbalá‘í Akbar

120 113 113 ‘Abdu’lláh, son of Mullá604 Muhammad  
 92 108 108 ‘Abid, son of Mashhadí Muhsin  
 602 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, pp. 48-50.  
 603 Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 2, pp. 448-451.  
 604 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, missing Mullá

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40	103	103	‘Abid, son of Mullá Barkhúrdár
31	102	102	‘Abid Yár-Kash605
125	112	112	‘Ábidín606
108	111	111	‘Alí
60	146	146	‘Alí, son of Karbalá’í Báqir
107	110	110	‘Alí, son of Mashhadí607 Ahmad
151	161	18	‘Alí, son of Mullá Qásim ‘Ashurá
146	115	115	‘Alí-Murád608
74	106	106	‘Askar, son of ‘Alí
156	116	116	‘Askar, son of ‘Alí Mullá Abu’l-Qásim
56	140	140	‘Askar, son of Hájí ibn Karbalá’í Báqir609
135	13	13	Abú-Tálib
34	4	4	Abú-Tálib, son of Mír[zá] Ahmad
133	12	12	Abú-Tálib, son of Mullá Zaynu’l- ‘Abidin
46	5	5	Ahmad Hájí Abú’l-Qásim
102	10	10	Akbar, son of ‘Abdu’lláh (son of ‘Alí)
88	7	7	Akbar Muhammad-Qásim
116	11	11	Akbar Muhammad-Sháh
91	9	9	Akhúnd Mullá ‘Isá
25	1	1	Akhúnd Mullá Ahmad, son of Mullá Muhsin
26	2	2	Akhúnd Mullá ‘Alí Kátib, son of Mullá ‘Abdu’lláh
67	6	6	Áqá Shaykh Muhammad
29	3	3	Asadu’lláh, son of Mírzá ‘Alí
45	138	138	Asadu’lláh, son of Mírzá Mihdí
33	92	90	Báqir, son of Mír[zá] Ahmad
93	118	118	Ghulám-Ridá Yazdí
69	101	101	Hadí, son of Khayrí610
103	82	81	Hájí Muhammad, son of Mullá ‘Ashurá
104	83	82	Hájí Naqí

605 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, missing Yár-Kash

606 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, has added: Karbalá’í Isma‘íl Hammámí

607 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, missing Mashhadí

608 Brother of the slayer of Vahíd Dárábí

609 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, missing ibn Karbalá’í Báqir

66	91	91 Hájí Shaykh 'Abdu'l-'Alí <sup>611</sup>
55	145	145 Hájí, son of Karbalá'í Bāqir
165		Hájí, son of Karbalá'í Bāqir
145	79	78 Hasan, son of Haydar Mulk
62	90	89 Hasan, son of Mashhadí <sup>612</sup> Muhammad
49	88	87 Hasan, son of Mírzá
150	77	157 Hasan, son of Mullá Qásim 'Ashurá <sup>613</sup>
38	86	85 Hasan <sup>614</sup> , son of Mullá Ya'qúb
152	75	75 Hasan-'Alí <sup>615</sup> , son of Nurí
155	74	74 Hasan Mashhadí Safr
109	43	43 Husayn <sup>616</sup>
149	78	77 Husayn, brother of Karbalá'í Ridá
68	136	136 Husayn, son of Áqá Shaykh Muhammad
70	80	79 Husayn, son of Mashhadí Ismá'íl
84	83	83 Husayn, son of Qásim-Sifr
48	87	86 Husayn, son of Rajab
113	85	84 Husayn, son of Ustád Ahmad
157	73	73 Husayn, son of Ustád 'Alí
78	81	80 Husayn, son of Zamán
59	89	88 Husayn-'Alí <sup>617</sup> , son of Mírzá Áqá 'Alí
83	125	125 Karam, son of Ustád <sup>618</sup> 'Askar
105	104	104 Karbalá'í 'Askar Bíraq-Dár
20	129	129 Karbalá'í Bāqir
122	128	128 Karbalá'í Bāqir <sup>619</sup> , son of Ustád Taqí
143	123	123 Karbalá'í Hádí

611 Vahíd's father-in-law

612 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 2, has Mullá in place of Mashhadi; Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol.

4, has neither

613 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, missing 'Ashura

614 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 2, refers to him as Husayn

615 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 2, has him as Husayn-'Alí.

616 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, and Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 2, have Mullá before his

name.

617 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, has Hasan in place of Husayn.

618 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, missing Ustád.

619 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, notes his slayer was Mír-Shikár Rajab.

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84 126 126 Karbalá'í Hasan, son of Mashhadí Sifr

50 132 132 Karbalá'í Husayn, son of Hájí

51 133 133 Karbalá'í Isma'íl, son of Mashhadí 'Ábidín<sup>620</sup>

43 130 130 Karbalá'í Muhammad

141 124 124 Karbalá'í Muhammad-Ja'far, son-in-law of Hájí  
Muhammad-Taqí Ayyúb

119 127 127 Karbalá'í Qurbán Sha'bán<sup>621</sup>, son of 'Ábidín

148 122 122 Karbalá'í Sádiq, son of Mashhadí Rajab<sup>622</sup>

44 131 131 Karbalá'í Shamu'd-Dín<sup>623</sup>

2 134 134 Karbalá'í Yúsuf Najjár

130 160 156 Karím, son of 'Alí

64 135 135 Kázim, son of Muhib-'Alí<sup>624</sup>

82 100 100 Khájih 'Alí

73 98 98 Khájih Burhán

81 99 99 Khájih Isma'íl

4 97 96 Khájih Zaynu'l-'Ábidín

94 151 150 Khájih, son of Ustád Nabí

42 137 137 Lutfu'lláh Shumál

32 32 32 Malik, son of Mullá 'Alí

19 25 25 Mashhadí 'Alí, son of Najaf

61 40 40 Mashhadí 'Alí, son of Sulaymán

7 15 15 Mashhadí 'Askar, son of Mashhadí Báqir

6 14 14 Mashhadí Báqir Sabbágh

15 23 23 Mashhadí Mír[zá] Muhammad<sup>625</sup>

136 64 64 Mashhadí Mírzá Husayn, surnamed Qutb

132 63 63 Mashhadí Muhammad-'Alí, son of<sup>626</sup> Naw-Rúz

22 27 27 Mashhadí Taqí Baqqál, son of 'Abid

620 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, missing "son of Mashhadí  
'Ábidín".

621 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, refers to him as Karbalá'í Qurbán,  
son of Sha'bán.

622 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, missing "son of Mashhadí Rajab".

623 Martyred in Nayríz by Áqá Ridá Áqá 'Alí-Naqí.

624 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, and Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 2,  
identifý his father as Hájí

Muhammad.

625 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, and Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 2, have  
Ahmad in place of

Muhammad.

626 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, missing "son of".

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- 77 46 46 Mír[zá] Akbar  
76 45 45 Mír[zá] Husayn  
138 38 38 Mírzá Ahmad  
53 28 28 Mírzá Ahmad627, son of Mullá Sádiq  
23 66 66 Mírzá Ahmad628, uncle of 'Alí Sardár  
28 30 30 Mírzá 'Alí, son of Mullá Sádiq  
117 117 Mírzá Ali Sardár  
52 37 37 Mírzá Bábá  
36 34 34 Mírzá Hasan, son of Yíkkih  
137 65 65 Mírzá Husayn, son of Mírzá Músá  
144 70 Mírzá Mihdí  
128 62 61 Mírzá Muhammad-Husayn629, son of Mírzá Taqí  
140 68 68 Mírzá Muhsin, son of Áqá Mírzá Nasru'lláh  
72 71 Mírzá Mullá Qásim, son of 'Ashurá  
30 31 31 Mírzá Yúsuf, son of Mírzá Akbar  
139 67 67 Mírzá Zaynu'l-'Abidín, nephew of Mashhadí Mírzá  
Husayn  
153 76 76 mother of Hasan-'Alí Nurí  
24 44 Muhammad Sádiq, uncle of 'Alí Sardár  
35 33 33 Muhammad, known as Yíkkih  
27 29 29 Muhammad, son of 'Abdu'l-Karím  
79 47 47 Muhammad, son of Akbar Farkhí  
112 55 55 Muhammad, son of Báqir  
115 56 56 Muhammad, son of Karbalá'í Taqí  
85 49 49 Muhammad, son of Mullá 'Alí  
47 36 36 Muhammad, son of Mullá Músá  
95 52 52 Muhammad, son of Ridá  
57 39 39 Muhammad-'Alí  
123 60 60 Muhammad-'Alí  
87 50 50 Muhammad-'Alí Naw-Rúz  
90 51 51 Muhammad-'Alí Hájí 'Alí-Sháh

627 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, identifies him as “the uncle of 'Alí Sardár”.

628 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, identifies him as “nephew of Qutb”.

629 Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 4, and Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 2, have Mullá in place of

Muhammad. He was martyred en route to Tihrán.

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121 59 59 Muhammad-‘Alí Mír-Shikár, son of Mullá ‘Ashurá  
 117 57 57 Muhammad Karbalá’í Mahmúd  
 14 22 22 Muhammad Kúchak, son of Mashhadí Rajab  
 72 44 Muhammad-Sádiq Husayn630  
 63 41 41 Muhib-‘Alí  
 127 61 Mullá ‘Ábidín  
 13 21 21 Mullá Ahmad, son of Akhúnd Mullá Músá  
 142 69 69 Mullá Akbar, brother of Karbalá’í Ja‘far  
 10 18 19 Mullá ‘Alí, son of Akhúnd Mullá Músá  
 96 50 53 Mullá ‘Alí-Muhammad, son of Mullá Áqá Bábá631  
 9 17 17 Mullá ‘Alí-Naqí632, son of Akhúnd Mullá ‘Abdu’l-  
 Husayn  
 41 139 139 Mullá Barkhúrdár, son of Mullá Husayn  
 16 24 24 Mullá Darvísh  
 65 42 42 Mullá Hájí Muhammad  
 11 19 20 Mullá Hasan, son of Akhúnd Mullá Músá  
 118 58 58 Mullá Husayn, son of ‘Abdu’lláh  
 39 35 35 Mullá Husayn, son of Mullá Barkhúrdár  
 26 Mullá Muhammad, son of Karbalá’í  
 8 16 Mullá Muhammad-Taquí, son of Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Husayn  
 21 26 16 Mullá Muhammad-Taquí633, son of Karbalá’í Báqir  
 12 20 Mullá Mu’min, son of Akhúnd Mullá Músá  
 80 48 48 Mullá Sháh-‘Alí  
 111 54 54 Mu’min, son of Ustád Ahmad  
 147 71 70 Murád Lurr  
 129 158 154 Naqí634, son of ‘Alí  
 106 144 144 Rahím, son of Ustád ‘Alí-Naqí  
 75 155 152 Sádiq  
 124 Sádiq  
 154 121 121 Safr, son of635 Karbalá’í Zamán  
  
 630 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, missing Husayn.  
 631 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, missing “son of Mullá Áqá  
 Bábá”.  
 632 Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, suggests he was martyred during Nayríz-I  
 upheaval.  
 633 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, missing Taquí.  
 634 Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 2, has read him as Taquí.

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114 120 120 Shamsu’d-Dín, son of ‘Askar  
 86 107 107 Sharíf636, son of Karbalá’í Rajab  
 158 Shaykh Hádí, son of Hájí Shaykh ‘Abdu’l-‘Alí  
 58 141 141 Shaykh Hasan

159 Shaykh Muhammad, son of Hájí Shaykh ‘Abdu’l-‘Alí  
 98 119 119 Siyyid Hasan<sup>637</sup>, son of Siyyid Nazar  
 100 143 143 son of ‘Alí Murád  
 5 166 97 son of Khájih Ghání  
 3 147 147 son of Mashhadí Muhammad  
 37 148 148 son of Mírzá Hasan  
 99 142 142 son of Mullá ‘Alí-Naqí  
 131 159 155 son of Ustád Naqí  
 126 156-7 153 sons of Karbalá’í Ismá‘íl Hammámí  
 54 149-50 149 sons of Khájih Hasan  
 110 154 151 sons of Qásim-Sifr<sup>638</sup>  
 94 93 Taqí, son of ‘Alí  
 97 93 92 Taqí<sup>639</sup>, son of Sifr  
 89 8 8 Ustád Ja‘far  
 1 Zaynal, brother of Karím  
 95 94 Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín, son of Mulk  
 17 164 Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín, son of Mullá Muhammad  
 18 96 95 Zaynu’l-‘Ábidín, son of Ustád Muhammad

635 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, missing “son of”.  
 636 Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, refers to him as Sharí‘at.  
 637 Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 2, has Husayn in place of Hasan.  
 638 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 4, has “son of Sifr”.  
 639 Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 2, refers to him as Naqí.

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## Appendix 2

### The Family of Vahíd Dárábí

Thus will thy Lord choose thee and teach thee the interpretation of stories and events and perfect His favor to thee and to thy posterity.  
 Qur’án 12:6

#### A. Ancestry

In course of thirty-five generations, the lineage of Siyyid Yahyá Vahíd Dárábí can be traced back to its progenitor, the seventh Shi‘í Imam, Músá ibn Ja‘far, and thence to Prophet Muhammad and the Holy Household. The most detailed genealogy of this family is provided by Siyyid Muhammad-‘Alí Rawzatí – one of the ablest modern Shi‘í scholars in the school of Isfahán:<sup>640</sup>

Músá ibn Ja‘far

.  
 .  
 .

Hasan  
Muhammad Faqīh  
Mihdí Mahná  
Muhammad Dá'íy  
Hasan  
Muhammad Mihdí  
Husayn  
Hakím 'Arrif Khazr  
Yahyá

640 Jamí'u'l-Nisáb, vol. 1, p. 24. This genealogy is also quoted in  
Tárikh Burujird, vol. 2, p.

272.

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Hisámu'd-Din  
Mahmúd  
Muhammad Bakhsháyish  
Násir  
'Allámih 'Alí Majnún  
Mahmúd  
Qásim  
Abú'l-Ma'aly-Muhammad  
Abú'l-Fadl Muhammad  
'Abdu'l-Karím  
'Abdu'lláh Muháddith (Shaykh Husayn)  
Isháq-Ibráhím  
Siyyid Ja'far Kashfí Dárábí  
Siyyid Yahyá Dárábí

Vahíd's great grandfather, Shaykh Husayn, of the family of al-  
'Usfúr, was among the last of the great theologians and scholars of the  
Akhhbá'í faction of Twelver Shi'í school of jurisprudence. All of Shaykh  
Husayn's ancestors had lived in the province of Fárs and belonged to a  
long line of learned divines and theologians.<sup>641</sup> His son and Vahíd's  
grandfather, Áqá Siyyid Isháq-Ibráhím 'Alaví Musaví, a renowned  
scholar in his own right, had moved from Dáráb to Istahbánát and  
settled with his family in its vicinity. Istahbánát is located between  
Nayríz  
and Dáráb, some thirty-six kilometers due southwest of the former.

Siyyid Ja'far Kashfí

It was in Istahbánát that Siyyid Isháq-Ibráhím's son, named Siyyid  
Ja'far,  
was born in the year 1189 A.H./1775642. Siyyid Ja'far commenced his

641 A descendant of this family was Shaykh Abú-Turáb, a son of Shaykh Mufíd, who

was a great admirer of the Báb and served as the Imam Jum‘ih of Shíráz.

When in

1845 the ‘ulamá of Shíráz prepared a fatwá ordering the death of the

Báb, Shaykh

Abu-Turáb intervened and thwarted their plans; see Rabbani, “The Báb in Shíráz”.

642 There is little agreement among various sources about the year of his birth:

Tárikh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 3, p. 461, indicates that he was born in the early years of

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religious training at an early age and after completing the preliminaries, moved from Fárs to Najaf where he emerged as one of the best-known esoteric scholars of his time, mastering jurisprudence, theology, philosophy, interpretation, wisdom and mysticism. From various accounts it is evident that he did not favor the innovative doctrines of the Shaykhís and during the early part of his career followed Mullá Sadrá Shírází<sup>643</sup> as a model for his intellectual proclivities, and was also strongly

influenced by Ibn ‘Arabí’s mysticism. He devoted long hours to ascetic practices and meditation, and in the learned circles of the ‘Atabát was famed as one of the greatest and most celebrated ‘ulamá of his time. His high moral character and righteous ways attracted to him widespread esteem among his peers and students. His peculiar interpretations earned him the title of “Kashf”, that is, one who discovers and explains the divine secrets. This title was also because of the visions that he claimed to have of the holy figures who assisted him to discover the meaning of abstruse passages in the Qur’án and the Traditions.

Through his zeal and ardent imagination, Siyyid Ja‘far passed in the later years of his career beyond the ways of the orthodox Shi‘ís. He interpreted the hadiths differently from his colleagues and grew more mystical and esoteric over time.<sup>644</sup> However, the fame and prestige of Siyyid Ja‘far grew principally due to him being one of the foremost political theorists of the Qajar era who provided legitimacy for the rule 1180’s; Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 40, gives the birth year as 1180 A.H.; Yúsuf Bahá

dar Qayyumu’l-Asmá’, p. 30, suggests he was born in 1189 A.H./1775, a fact repeated

by the same author in Hadrat Báb, p. 258; Sharh Hál Shaykh Murtidá Ansárí, [A

biography of Shaykh Murtidá Ansári], p. 272, gives the birth and death as 1189 A.H./1775 and 1267 A.H./1851, respectively. The last source, being the earliest and perhaps the most reliable, is employed for most of the biographical information in this study.

643 For discussion of the life and writings of Mullá Sadrá, see: Religions et Philosophies

dans l' Asie Centrale, pp. 81-91; A Traveler's Narrative, pp. 268-271; <http://www.mullasadra.org/bindex.htm>; the Encyclopedia of Islam 2, entry on Mullá

Sadrá; John Cooper's "Mullá Sadrá Shirazi," in The Routledge Encyclopaedia of

Philosophy, gen. ed. E. Craig, London: Routledge 1998, vol. VI, pp. 595-99; and Seyyed Hossein Nasr's "Mulla Sadra as a Source for the History of Muslim Philosophy", Islamic Studies 3 (1964), pp. 309-314.

644 See Násikhu't-Tavárikh's description given earlier in this monograph.

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of a sovereign who was not a descendant of Muhammad.<sup>645</sup> In this regard, he, and prior to him, Mírzá Abú'l-Qásim Qumí, were the two jurists who wrote extensively and creatively about the separation of the role of the 'ulamá and the temporal rule of the Qajar.<sup>646</sup>

The fame and piety of Siyyid Ja'far was such that the Báb referred to him in the twenty-seventh surih of Qayyúmu'l-Asmá', "the first, the greatest, and mightiest" of his books,<sup>647</sup> and exhorted him that should he embrace the new message, he would attain great heights in this world and splendid glory in the world to come.<sup>648</sup> Further, he warned Siyyid Ja'far that without the inspiration and the regenerative powers of the new revelation, his efforts would come to naught.

O Solace of Mine eyes! Say unto the renowned learned-one,  
Ja'far 'Alavi: If thou doest prostrate thyself before the Gate  
of God, thou wilt be reckoned among the bearers of truth,  
as thou art among the favored and accepted ones in this  
Mother Book. I swear by thy Lord, thou canst not rend the  
earth asunder nor reach the mountains on high<sup>649</sup> without  
the aid of the Remembrance<sup>650</sup>, Who is sent by the Lord of  
Truth as the supreme Word unto the dwellers of earth and  
heaven. And if thou wert to propagate His Cause, know

<sup>645</sup> Under the Shi'í religion, the sovereign ruled on behalf of the Imam, who was the

ultimate source of temporal and religious authority. As such, the monarch had to be a direct descent of the Imam. However, the Qajar, being of Turkish descent, could claim no such lineage. They were forced therefore to try to gain the favor of the Shi'i 'ulamá in order to obtain their assistance in buttressing their legitimacy and authority. In this light, Siyyid Ja'far played a critical role and as noted earlier, became one of the main theorists of the legitimacy of the Qajar monarchy.

646 The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam, chapter 10.

647 Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, Book of Certitude, p.231

648 In the same chapter, the Báb pays tribute to Shaykh Hasan of the family of al-

'Usfur, a brother of Siyyid Ja'far's grandfather. According to a cousin of the Báb, the

renowned Vakílu'd-Dawlih, while en route on a pilgrimage journey the Báb had

tried, in Bushihr, to convert this Shaykh Hasan, who remained neutral. Cf. Khándán

Afnán, p. 115.

649 A reference to the 'ulamá.

650 A reference to the Báb.

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assuredly that We shall exalt thee over all that is in both worlds and that verily, through God's consent, in the world beyond and in the most exalted paradise thou shalt dwell with Us. God knoweth all things. Know thou verily that out of His prescribed wisdom, God hath revealed this unto thee. Therefore, be attentive to the Great Truth of Our Cause and aid thou Our Great Remembrance Who is this Arabian Youth. The time for the assistance of God and the dissemination of His Verses is, verily, nigh, as foreordained in the Mother Book.<sup>651</sup>

In his other writings, the Báb bestowed on Siyyid Ja'far various titles, including Siyyidu'l-Mu'ásir (the Contemporary Siyyid) and 'Azdu'l-

Muhaqqiqin (the Upholder of the People of Truth).<sup>652</sup>

Siyyid Ja'far was well acquainted with the traditions anticipating the appearance of the Promised One in the year 1260 A.H./1844. Upon hearing the news of the Qa'im's manifestation in Shiraz, Siyyid Ja'far,

even though at an advanced age, set out at once to investigate, but the Báb had already left on His pilgrimage journey to Arabia. Therefore in pursuit of Him, Siyyid Ja‘far followed Him there and finally met Him in Mecca. For some unexplained reason however he failed to embrace the new religion preferring to continue with his own practices. Regarding Siyyid Ja‘far’s pilgrimage journey, Mírzá Habibu’lláh Afnán, relates the following in his narrative, which he had heard from Hájí Abu’l-Hasan who had traveled on the same steam-boat with the Báb:

Once our ship had anchored at Jaddih, His Holiness [the Báb] proceeded towards Mecca. That year, there were innumerable pilgrims. Roughly speaking, the Arab, Turkish, Iranian, Kurdish, and Indian pilgrims, together totaling in excess of seventy thousand, for the most part came from the

651 Qayyumu’l-Asmá’, 27:46-47, in 1261 A.H./1845 transcribed copy; quoted in Muhádírát, pp. 759-760, and Lam‘átu’l-Anvár vol. 1. Two sentences of this passage are quoted in Yúsuf Bahá Dar Qayyúmu’l-Asmá’, p. 30. 652 Yúsuf Bahá Dar Qayyúmu’l-Asmá’, p. 31.

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ranks of the ‘ulamá and the learned. Many had mastered the science of divination and jafr [numerology] and had determined that in that year, the True Summoner would openly issue his summons in Mecca, and they had come to witness the event.

Among them was the renowned Hájí Siyyid Ja‘far Kashfí, who ranked as the ablest in the field of numerology and who had a profound knowledge of jafr. He had studied the Hadíth-i Marvy narrated by the Immaculate One [the eighth Imám, ‘Alí ar-Ridá], upon Him rest peace: “In the year Sixty, His Cause will be made manifest and His Remembrance exalted,” and the allusions of certain mystics who had openly given many signs for His appearance, such as Sháh Ni‘matu’lláh Valí, who in his poems had clearly given the news of the Manifestation:

If thou reachest the year of planting ghars,<sup>653</sup> behold,  
the renewal of the sovereign, realm, nation, and  
faith.

And again:

With the passing of ghars years,  
I see the Absent One has appeared.

And also in the collection of poetry by Khajih Háfiz:

Behold the crest of the moon in Muharram<sup>654</sup>,  
and drink from the wine cup,  
Since this is a sign of safety and absence of harm,  
and augurs the year of peace and love.

<sup>653</sup> According to the Abjad system, ghars (=gh-r-s) has a numerical value of (1000+200+60=)1260, hence signifying the year of the appearance of the Báb.

<sup>654</sup> The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh were born on the first and the second of Muharram,

respectively.

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He [i.e., Siyyid Ja'far] had studied these according to the science of numerology and had consulted an expert in divination: "As this is the year 'sixty,' will the Qá'im appear in Mecca?" To which he had received an affirmative response. He had then asked, "If I go [on pilgrimage], will I attain the presence of the Qá'im?" And again he had received a positive response. The Siyyid had then asked if he was destined to become a follower of the Qá'im, to which the expert responded: "You will not become a believer."

I myself met Hájí Siyyid Ja'far in Mecca. He saw [the Báb] with his own eyes and heard [Him proclaim His Faith] with his own ears but did not become a believer.

Hájí Mírzá Muhammad-'Alí [Quddús], some other believers, and I were in His blessed presence [of the Báb]. After the conclusion of the pilgrimage rites [p. 75] throngs of pilgrims were present in the Masjidu'l-Haram, and all the courtyards and rooftops overflowed with waves of people. His Holiness approached the Shrine and leaned His blessed back against the Ka'bih, holding the door-chain with His sacred Hand. With the utmost clarity and eloquence He announced three times loudly: "I am the Qá'im Whose appearance you have been expecting!"

It was a true wonder that despite of the massive multitude and the noise, as soon as the Báb begun to speak a complete silence overcame that whole area in such wise that if a bird were to flap its wings, everybody would hear. Once complete silence was established over everyone, He uttered the same blessed proclamation three times, with the

utmost distinctness, so that all the pilgrims could hear.

The pilgrims were recounting and translating the Báb's words for one another. All conversations among the multitude concerned only this event. Indeed, the very first topic that the pilgrims of every land wrote about to their kinfolk was that a young merchant and Siyyid, twenty-five

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years of age, had taken hold of the Ka'bih's chain and with resounding voice had advanced the claim of the Qá'imiyat. In a short time, this news was spread in all parts of the world. Those who sought the Truth and whose souls were prepared to attain any degree of certitude responded, "We hear and obey!"<sup>655</sup> and made haste on the pathway of Faith.

In March 1845, the Báb returned from his pilgrimage journey and initially a number of his disciples visited him, but soon their presence attracted excessive public attention, bringing with it waves of repression. Soon this news reached Tihrán and Muhammad Shah ordered Vahíd Dárábí to proceed to Shíráz in order to interview the Báb and to report to him the result of his investigation. As described in chapters 1 and 2 of the present monograph, Vahíd immediately left for Shíráz, where he met the Báb on a number of occasions and was quickly won over to the new movement.

After a stay of some three months in Shíráz, which he mostly devoted to transcribing the writings of the Báb, Vahíd was subsequently commanded to journey to Burujird in the province of Luristán and there to acquaint his father, Siyyid Ja'far, with the new message. The Báb urged him to exercise the utmost forbearance and consideration towards him. Though the reason for this mission is not known with precision, it can be conjectured that the Báb had hoped that the conversion of such an eminent figure as Siyyid Ja'far, who had been the intellectual mainstay for the Qajar monarchy, would further entice Muhammad Shah to heed His Call and perhaps even to embrace the Movement.

Armed with the Báb's command to travel the length and the breadth of the realm and spread the divine fragrances, Vahíd left Shiraz in the closing days of Rajab 1262 A.H.656 for Burújird to visit his father, Siyyid Ja'far. He arrived in that city on the opening days of Sha'bán (late July), and according to Hájí Mu'ínu's-Saltanih Tabrízí, spoke thus:<sup>657</sup>

655 Qur'án 2:285.

656 25 June – 24 July 1846.

657 Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, pp. 45-46, notes that Siyyid Ja'far wrote these

observations to Hájí Mu‘ínu’s-Saltanih. However, the two did not overlap in time

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O distinguished father! As instructed by the government, I went to investigate the claim of the newly appeared Person, known as the Báb, and those ‘ulamá and the learned that have gathered around Him. The Sháh bestowed a sum toward the expenses of such a journey as well as a horse and other gifts.

Upon arrival at Shiraz and attaining His presence, I perceived Him to be a Youth aged twenty-five, with a brilliant and heavenly visage, much the same as has been mentioned in the traditions and holy texts about the promised Qá’ím. He possesses extremely pleasing features, a well-proportioned face, and a small birthmark, exactly as anticipated in the traditions.

Though He is a commoner [as opposed to ranking among the ‘ulamá] and has never studied, yet He reveals verses, commentaries, books, treatises, prayers, homilies and scientific expositions of such quality as has not been seen or heard of since the days of Adam.

Our illustrious Ancestor, the Seal of the Prophets [i.e. Muhammad], though numbered among the learned and well-lettered men of Arabia, yet revealed the Qur’án, piece by piece, over the space of twenty-three years. Siyyid-i Báb, although He is Persian and is born to that language, nevertheless is able, should He so wish, to reveal [Arabic] texts equaling the Qur’án in matter of only a week.

Similarly the homilies and prayers that the Báb reveals are quite distinct from those previously revealed by the Imams, and in many ways, more elegant and developed. His expressions and words are not like those gone before Him, and in some important ways the treatises and expositions of the Báb, as well as His other qualities, are different from

and it is not clear how Mu‘ínu’s-Saltanih came upon such information.

Further, a

close study of this extract reveals that a segment contains many similarities with a

treatise of Vahid; see, Appendix 3.

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those of all the ‘ulamá, both of past and present times:

1. His Holiness is a commoner and has never had schooling.
2. In the course of His elucidation on all topics, He expresses the essence of the truth in only a few words.
3. His words and phrases are not similar to those of the divines and His expressions are original, innovative and unprecedented stemming from His innate knowledge and not the work of others. If He had indeed acquired His knowledge of others He would, of necessity, use their expressions, but this has never been observed.
4. When explaining a question, no matter how small the available paper, He will immediately provide a sufficient exposition on that piece of paper that will unravel the mystery. Other divines must however pen lengthy treatises in reply to similar questions.
5. His handwriting is the essence of beauty and elegance, despite the fact that He writes extremely fast.<sup>658</sup>
6. Of greatest importance is His bearing and conduct, which is the very essence of refinement. He sits on His heels, with arms extended beyond the hem of His ‘aba, placing the right hand over the left.
7. His eating and drinking habits are unique and extremely frugal. For lunch, He consumes three bites and for

<sup>658</sup> As noted earlier, a requirement of fine penmanship in Persian and Arabic is to

write slowly, and yet the Central Figures of the Faith have repeatedly demonstrated

their abilities to write with extreme speed in a rare quality of penmanship and unmatched eloquence of composition.

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dinner seven bites. In total, His daily food equals that of two mouthfuls in a normal person. He drinks tea however with great delicacy.

8. His Holiness never considers the books and writings of others, though He frequently quotes from them through

His innate knowledge. When writing, the pen never pauses or stops and He never forgets a matter.

9. The manner of His communion and worship is altogether peerless and recalls the lengthy prayer sessions of the Imams ‘Ali and Zaynu’l-‘Abidín.<sup>659</sup>

O kind father, such qualities, characteristics and signs cannot be found in ordinary men, and are limited to the Prophets and Chosen Ones of God. What has been seen in Him is beyond anything any man is capable of manifesting. One day when I was in His presence, I inquired, “May my life be a sacrifice unto You! I know not the science of the elixir, and I beseech You to please inform me of it.” He responded, “My cherished hope was for you to become celestial. The science of gold-making is for the earthbound.” “Were I to behold,” I said, “and then leave it behind, it would be better still.” He condescended to me and commanded me to arrange for the necessary materials. When I had them readied, he instructed, “Go into the garden in the courtyard and bring with you some of the vegetables.” I went into the garden and noticed that some beets were planted and, therefore, I gathered some of their leaves. The Báb instructed me to boil the leaves and I did. Then He said, place the copper into the furnace and melt it, which I also did. Afterwards He instructed, “Pour some of

<sup>659</sup> Up to this point the citation appears in *Tárikh Zuhúru’l-Haqq*, vol. 3, pp. 465-466,

and *Lam‘átu’l-Anvár*, vol. 1, pp. 44-45. ‘Ali and Zaynu’l-‘Abidín were the first and the fourth Shi‘i Imams, respectively.

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the water from the boiled leaves over the melted copper,” and when I did as bidden, the copper turned into gold. When I saw this, I threw myself at His feet and cried, “O Exalted One! The boiled leaves are bereft of such power to produce elixir, and only through Your might and sovereignty could such a miracle come to pass.”<sup>660</sup>

In the course of the discussions with his father, Vahíd concluded that while the former was unwilling to repudiate the truth of the Message brought him, he preferred to be left alone and be allowed to pursue his own way during the remaining days of his life.<sup>661</sup>

In the course of his career Siyyid Ja'far lived for extensive periods of time in Yazd, Najaf, Isfahán, Tihrán, and Istahbánát, and spent the last years of his life in Burújird. In each town he purchased a home and established a family, hence instituting the nucleus of a following. In total, he acquired five wives who brought him fourteen children: two daughters and twelve sons.<sup>662</sup> The identity of his wives is not known and all that is recorded is the city where each originated. His children from various wives were:

Wives	Children
Yazdí	Siyyid Yahyá (Vahíd)
Siyyid 'Alí	
Siyyid Hasan	

Najafí	Siyyid Isháq
Siyyid Sabghatu'lláh	
Siyyid Ya'qúb	

660 Táríkh Hájí Mu'ínu's-Saltanih, pp. 88-91.

661 Kavakibu'd-Durriyih, vol. 1, p. 57, states that after Vahíd's conversion, in a

gathering of the divines, one of them said to Siyyid Ja'far, "It is reported that your

son, Siyyid Yahyá, has lost his faculties." "Yes, he has gone mad,"

Kashfí responded

in his son's defense, "however, this madness is not from the loss of his rational

faculties but an inheritance from his illustrious ancestor, the Prophet."

662 Táríkh Burújird, vol. 2, p. 296, and Muhádirát, p. 761, report that he had 11 sons

and 4 daughters.

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Istahbánátí	Siyyid Musafá
Bíbí Batúl	
Jahán Bagum	

Isfahání	Siyyid 'Isá
Siyyid Síná	

Burújirdí	Siyyid Rayhanu'lláh
Siyyid Ruhu'lláh	
Siyyid Músá	

Among his sons, many emerged as great scholars in their own right, and the more accomplished among them were: Yahyá, Síná, 'Isá, Isháq, Ya'qúb, Rayhanu'lláh and Sabghatu'lláh.

Siyyid Ja‘far was renowned throughout the Qajar realm and passed away a year after the martyrdom of his son, Vahíd, in 1267 A.H./1851 in Burújjird. The year of his passing is marked by the numerical value of: Ghab Najmu’l-‘Alá (disappeared the exalted star). A shrine was erected over his resting-place, adjacent to the shrine of the two sisters of the Imám Ridá.663

Writings of Siyyid Ja‘far Kashfí

A number of important works have remained from Siyyid Ja‘far and because of their significance and continued influence on Shi‘í political and mystical thought they will be briefly outlined below:

1. Al-Shariffiyh (Baládu’l-Amín): Composed after returning from pilgrimage in 1211 A.H./1796 in a mixture of both prose and verse, this highly abstract and theoretical treatise is divided into ten chapters on themes of Greek logic, logical reasoning and the foundations of the science of jurisprudence.

663 An extensive eulogy appears on his gravestone; for the text see Muhádirát, p. 761.

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2. Nukhbatu’l-‘uqul: Composed in 1212 A.H./1798 in Najaf, a brief exposition on the foundations of jurisprudential reasoning, it is divided into five sections: forbidden and permitted matters; general verses and specific rulings, their abrogation and their origin; traditions; reason; and deductive reasoning. The epilogue is devoted to ijtihád and emulation.

3. Barq va Sharq: An extant copy is available in the hand of the author, composed in 1224 A.H./1808 while in Najaf. This book is an exposition on several Islamic traditions which Siyyid Ja‘far had styled “Barq” (Lightning) and his own elucidation as “Sharq” (literally, East, represents the dawning point of the sun of truth).

4. Raqqu’l-Manshur fi’l Ithbat Ma‘rij Nabiyán Mansur: Composed in 1231 A.H./1815 while residing in Najaf, this treatise seeks to establish the authenticity of the night journey of Prophet Muhammad through rational and deductive reasoning. The only extant copy of this work in the hand of its author is preserved in the religious library of Qum.

5. Tuhfatu’l-Mulúk (Gift of Kings): Written in Persian at the request of Muhammad-Taqí Mírzá, the Hisámu’s-Saltanih, titled Sháhan-Sháh, in the year 1233 A.H.664/1817, covers discussion of the mental faculty under three sections: the reality of the human intellectual faculty; the relationship of the human intellect to lower kingdoms; and benefits and attributes of the human intellect. This book has received considerable attention and has been reprinted at least three times, in addition to

circulating in many copies in the hand of various scribes. One poet, Hájí Mahmúd Burújirdí, has penned numerous verses in praise of this book and its author.<sup>665</sup> As noted earlier, Mírzá Abú'l-Hasan Qumí and Siyyid Ja'far developed a theory of the Qajar state as having two wings: civil governance and religious learning. The sovereign in his own sphere of civil rulership and military action, and the clergy in their sphere of

<sup>664</sup> The date of its composition is given by the numerical value of either of the two

phrases "Tuhfatu'l-Mulk Mulúku'l-Kalam", or, "Tuhfatu'l-Mulúk Qa'i'di'l-Ummam", which correspond to 1233.

<sup>665</sup> Táríkh Burújird, vol. 2, pp. 289-291.

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interpreting and implementing the sacred law, each represents an aspect of authority that had once been conjoined in the Imám.<sup>666</sup>

6. Mízánu'l-Mulúk: The most influential treatise of Siyyid Ja'far, composed in Persian in 1246 A.H./1831 at the request of Muhammad-Taqí Mírzá, the Hisámu's-Saltanih, it is devoted to various themes related

to statesmanship and leadership in ten chapters: justice; the succession (caliphate); sovereignty; treatment of citizens by monarchs; the conduct of ministers and intellectuals; responsibilities of the wealthy, the nobles and the government; duties of the merchants and businessmen; and the charitable obligations of commercial leaders and men of religion.<sup>667</sup>

7. Shaháb Qámús: Written during 1255-58 A.H./1842, the contents are not known to the present writer.

8. Kifayatu'l-Iytam: A three-volume exposition on deductive jurisprudence, written in Persian at the request of Burújird's governor, the Hisámu's-Saltanih, in the year 1259 A.H./1843. The introduction speaks of spiritual orphanage (Iytam), meaning the separation of the body of the Shi'is from the Household of the Prophet, while the remainder of the volume one is on worship. Volume two is on things forbidden, business transactions, and the duties of a believer. Volume three is devoted to matters of inheritance, personal laws, and politics.

9. Saná-Barq fi Sharhu'l-Baziq Min'l Sharq: This book is composed in Arabic and is a detailed esoteric exposition on the inner meaning of the Rajabiyih Prayer<sup>668</sup> addressing the reality of the lives and deeds of the

<sup>666</sup> See extracts of Tuhfatu'l-Mulúk translated in Said Amir Arjomand, Shadow of God,

pp. 225-227.

667 Several of Siyyid Ja‘far’s students, such as, Mullá ‘Abdu’lláh Burújjirdi, Hájí Mírzá

Sálih Luristání, Shaykh ‘Abdu’l-Husayn and Urang-Zayb Mírzá, went on to become

great clerics in the field of political theology and have significantly expanded this

field of discourse.

668 A Shi‘i prayer prescribed for recitation during the month of Rajab (hence its

name), it begins by the verse, “O my Lord, I beseech Thee through the inner meaning of all that hath dawned from Thee.”

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fourteen immaculate Figures of the Islamic Dispensation, namely, Muhammad, Fatimih, and the twelve Imams. This work is among the late compositions of Siyyid Ja‘far and according to one account it was penned in Yazd in 1253 A.H./1837, while Áqá Buzurg maintains that it was completed in 1261 A.H./1845 while in Burújjird. The actual date of its composition is of interest, as the Báb has referred to this book in at least two instances, the following being an extract from his Sahífi Sharh D‘uá:

I have read ‘Saná-Barq’ [Brilliant Lightning] of Ja‘far Alaví and beheld the secrets of its verses. He verily hath known naught but his own self and expressed naught but his servitude.669 What he hath written in the form of the commentary on the prayer revealed by the source of Holiness regarding the Family of God [Muhammad’s descendents], upon Them be peace, does not fully describe Them. In the presence of God, such comments are not befitting of Them, as he [Siyyid Ja‘far] hath only expounded his own servitude. He hath not mentioned the Holy Family through the splendor of Their divinity, as no one comprehendeth this Family and none among the servants may explain Their nature, as their highest contemplations are only capable of expressing the divine unity.670

In another tablet, the Báb has written the following about the same book, which indicates how pleased he was with its composition and content:

The fragrance of the mysteries enunciated in the essence of the writings of the contemporary Siyyid [Ja‘far Kashfí

‘Alaví], the upholder of the people of truth, in his ‘Sana-

669 It should be understood that this is in fact a praise rather than a  
censure, alluding

to “he hath known God who hath known his self” and “servitude is an  
essence

whose reality is divinity.”

670 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 3, p. 479.

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Barq’, has reached Me and it will encompass both the west  
and the east. May God grant him blessings for what he has  
written regarding the exposition of the ‘bismillah’ [in the  
Name of God]. Though written in allegorical language and  
hidden beneath veils of allusions as a measure of protection  
for those beholding it, the essence of truth is expressed in  
eloquent tongue and brilliant light. May God shower upon  
him His great blessings. Praise be to God, the Lord of the  
Worlds.671

10. Ijabatú’l-Mudhtarrin: The present writer is unfamiliar with this text.

11. Al-jusvatu’l fi’l-Kalam: The present writer is unfamiliar with this  
text.

12. Ash-Shumus va al-‘Ukus: A treatise on the station of the Immaculate  
Fourteen and their sanctity above all earthly trappings.

13. Sidu’l-Bahr: A book on the structure of Shi’i jurisprudence and  
justification for derived judgments based on the reasoning of jurists. This  
work emerged as one of the fundamental textbooks for the Usulí School  
of jurisprudence.

14. On the Science of Grammar: Arabic versified composition.

15. Jam‘u’l-Shattat al-Mutifariqih fi’l Jama‘atu’l-Muhaqqih  
al-Mutihaqqih: The  
present writer is unfamiliar with this text.

16. Poem in response to Ibn Hajr: In refuting the existence of the  
Promised Qá’im, Ibn Hajr ‘Asqillaní (d. 582 A.H./1186), had composed  
a poem and in response, Siyyid Ja‘far versed a most innovative poem  
establishing the truth of the Qá’imiyat.

17. Ratbu’l-Yabs fi’l Jama‘u’l-Mutikhalif al-Muti‘akis: The present  
writer is  
unfamiliar with this text.

671 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 3, p. 479 and Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol.

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### B. Progeny of Vahíd Dárábí

Not very much is known of the fate of the two wives of Vahíd, though it is known that the first marriage took place in Yazd, which resulted in a daughter and three sons, and the second marriage was in Nayríz and brought forth a son.

#### B.1. Tubá Khánum

Vahíd's daughter, Tubá Khánum, was not with him during the Nayriz upheaval as she and her younger brother were left behind in Yazd with their mother. However, it is evident that Vahíd was concerned about her future and shortly before his own martyrdom, arranged for her marriage to a nephew of the governor and son of Muhammad-Báqir Khan, namely, Mírzá Muhammad-Ja'far Khán (d. 1316 A.H./1898).<sup>672</sup> The marriage certificate for this event was prepared in Vahíd's own hand some ten days prior to his martyrdom, and years later recovered from Fath-'Alí Khán, the son of Hájí Zaynu'l-'Abidín Khán,

governor of Nayríz. This certificate is of particular importance as it represents to our knowledge the only one prepared in accordance with Bayánic instructions (such as fixing the dowry at one váhid of pure gold<sup>673</sup>), indicating Vahíd's effort to institutionalize the laws and ordinances of the Báb. Subsequent to Vahíd's execution and the ensuing massacre of the Bábís, there was no time for Tubá to come to Nayríz and Muhammad-Ja'far Khán was forced to flee quickly and hence the marriage was never consummated.

Upon hearing the news of events in Nayríz, the fate of her father and his brutal slaying, Tubá Khánum was immersed in depths of sorrow and grief. She spent her days in Yazd looking after the needs of her mother where the family resided under the protective shadow of their uncle. However, after a while, due to severe pressure from their enemies, she left for Tihrán, where she initially lived with her aunt. Eventually she

<sup>672</sup> Muhammad-Ja'far Khán was a noted poet and a collection titled "Khusraw va

Shírín" was published by him.

<sup>673</sup> The Persian Bayán, 6:7; Selections from the Writings of E.G. Browne, p. 378.

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married Mírzá Nasru'lláh Khán Káshí, an administrator for Fath-'Alí Khán Shírází, the Sáhíib-Díván. All through her life, she served the Bahá'í

faith in a most exemplary manner, deeply involved in the life of the community and the education of children and women.

#### Marriage Certificate of Vahíd's Daughter

According to Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 100, Vahíd penned this certificate

a few days prior to his martyrdom.

On the upper right-hand corner, the seal of two parties is fixed and evident: the first pertained to Vahíd whose seal, "Yahyá Músaví", is

seen under his name, "Yayhá". On the second line, under the groom's name, Ja'far, the following is written:

God is the Creator of earth, the Lord of heaven and the Master of both worlds. I give consent for the sake of God, the Lord of earth, the Lord of heaven and the Lord of both worlds.

Under this verse, the seal of the groom, "'Abdahu'r-Rají Muhammad-Ja'far" [the prayerful servant, Muhammad-Ja'far] is seen. On the margin, two individuals have signed as witnesses. In the upper left corner, it is written:

In the Name of God, the Exalted, the Mighty.

The Lord testifies that there is no God but Him. To Him belong Creation and Command.<sup>674</sup> He gives life and takes it away; causes death and resurrection. He is living and everlasting. In His Hand is the kingdom of all things. By His command, He creates what He wills. He is powerful over all things.

The text of the certificate reads as follows:

674 The Bábí theology recognized the worlds of haqq (divinity), amr (command or

cause), and khalq (creation). The same notion is upheld by Bahá'u'lláh; see, for

instance, the opening verse of the Kitáb Aqdas.

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God has decreed marriage between Tubá, the daughter of his servant, Yahyá, having dedicated herself to service of God, the Lord of the heavens and the earth, and the Lord of

all the worlds, and His servant, Muhammad-Ja‘far, the son of the late, wrongly-murdered Muhammad-Báqir, who hath consecrated himself to the service of God, the Lord of the heavens and the earth, and the Lord of all the worlds.

He [i.e. the groom] consented to this marriage for the sake of God, Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and the Lord of all the worlds.

God hath decreed for her dowry to be nineteen mithqals of pure gold and it is incumbent upon his servant to offer this amount which is a bounty from paradise, and a heavenly instrument in establishing their union. This marriage will take place by the leave of God and His Chosen Ones and in accordance with the laws delineated by the Guardian and the Proof [i.e. the Báb], Who is the Lord of the Age, upon Him, His father and followers be peace.

Blessings rest upon the absent leaf, who by God’s grace, will consent to whatever is predestined for her.

Say: God is the Truth, all others beside Him are His creation and pray unto Him. Say: God is our Lord, all others beside Him are His servants and prostrate before Him.

[Written] in the month of Sha‘bán of the sixth year of the Manifestation of Truth<sup>675</sup>.

It should be noted that since this document bears a date in the hand of Vahíd, it is of enormous help in establishing the date of the Bábí uprising in Nayríz.

## B.2. Siyyid Ahmad

675 12 June - 10 July 1850.

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Vahíd’s eldest son<sup>676</sup> lived in Yazd and completed his religious studies in that city. Afterwards, he commenced his career in the legal office of Hájí Mullá Báqir Ardakání<sup>677</sup> as the custodian of documents and married his paternal cousin, a daughter of Siyyid Hasan. He was a consecrated Bahá’í who served the community diligently and faithfully and withstood much harassment on account of his devotion. His knowledge of the history of the Bábí the Bahá’í movements was particularly exceptional. He was in communication with Bahá’u’lláh and at least one tablet addressed to him is known.<sup>678</sup> Toward the latter days of his life, Siyyid Ahmad traveled to Isfahán to visit his two uncles, Siyyid ‘Isá and Siyyid Síná, where he passed away and is now buried. His only child, a daughter, passed away in Yazd at a relatively young age with no issue.

## B.3. Siyyid Muhammad

Vahíd's second son was Siyyid Muhammad<sup>679</sup>, known as Imínu't-Tujjár (The trustee of the merchants). He and his older brother, Siyyid Ahmad, were still in pre-teen years when the events of Yazd took place and Vahíd took the two lads with him to Nayríz. They stayed in that city with their father for a while, however there is disagreement between sources as to when they were sent away from that city. Some sources suggest that Vahíd confidentially sent the two youngsters to his own father in Burújjird where they stayed for a year with their grandfather, Siyyid Ja'far, until the latter's passing.<sup>680</sup> Other histories (such as, Násikhu't-Tavárikh and Rawdatu's-Safá) state that after the conclusion of the events, the two boys were sent to Shiraz and there, as a token of kindness by the authorities, sent to Burújjird. Afterwards they returned to Yazd to their mother.

<sup>676</sup> Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 113, suggests Siyyid Ahmad was the eldest of Vahíd's

children.

<sup>677</sup> Ardakání, though a known and firm believer in Bahá'u'lláh, served as the foremost

mujtahid of Yazd.

<sup>678</sup> Ishraq-Khávarí, Dá'ratu'l-Ma'arif Bahá'í, p. 119.

<sup>679</sup> Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 2, p. 406, gives his name as Siyyid 'Alí-Muhammad.

<sup>680</sup> Fársnámih Násirí, p. 305, and Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 114.

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Siyyid Muhammad grew to become a firm Bahá'í with a vast knowledge of the history and scriptures of the faith, and much like his father possessed an extraordinary bodily strength. As a young merchant, he left Yazd for Kirmán where he married and spent his days engaged in commerce in that city's Gulshan district. Bahá'u'lláh wrote several stirring tablets in Siyyid Muhammad's honor.<sup>681</sup> He passed away in Kirmán with no progeny.<sup>682</sup>

#### B.4. Siyyid Muhsin

The third son was Siyyid Muhsin<sup>683</sup> who became a pillar of strength for the Bahá'í community. He left Yazd and settled near his aunt's family in Qazvín where in former days his father had spent much of his time.

There he engaged in commerce in the establishment of his cousin, Mírzá Mahmúd Amíní. Eventually, he married and had several children, all of whom remained faithful and dedicated Bahá'ís. Siyyid Muhsin was also instrumental in guiding to the Faith several individuals, including his famed cousin, Mírzá Yúsuf Vahíd Kashfí, a son of Hájí Muhammad-

Ismá‘íl. Throughout his life, he was in close communication with his brothers and sister.

#### B.5. Siyyid Ismá‘íl

Some years prior to his conversion to the Bábí faith, Vahíd had settled in Nayríz and there had married Sughrá, a daughter of the renowned scholar Hájí Shaykh ‘Abdu’l-‘Alí Nayrízí. From this union a son was born by the name of Siyyid Ismá‘íl in 1255 A.H./1839. During the stormy days of 1850, the mother and son were with Vahíd at Fort Khájih

681 Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, p. 114.

682 Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 3, p. 477, suggests Siyyid Ahmad and Siyyid

Muhammad, though not believers, were admirers of the Bahá’í faith. Given the text

of Bahá’u’lláh’s tablet to Siyyid Ahmad cited earlier, this statement needs to be revised.

683 As discussed previously, following Nabil’s misstatement, Táríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq,

vol. 2, p. 406, gives his name as Siyyid Mihdí.

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and immediately after his martyrdom were rescued by Hájí Shaykh ‘Abdu’l-‘Alí and sent to Istahbánát in the company of some other family

members, where they stayed with Vahíd’s sister, Jahán Bagum. The other sister of Vahíd, Bíbí Batul, who had married Áqá Mírzá Murshíd, also lived in that town, and for some while they all lived in fear of repercussions from the events of Nayríz.

After a few years, relative security was established and Sughrá and her son enjoyed the comfort of that region and benefited from association with Vahíd’s family. In fact, Jahán Bagum had a son of her own by the name of Mírzá Abú’l-Hasan who was of the same age as Siyyid Ismá‘íl and she treated them equally in all ways and surrounded them with great affection. She ensured that both boys completed their early education in Istahbánát and for more advanced training in the Islamic sciences were sent to Yazd to enroll in the Madrisih Khán where they stayed with relatives.

In that city, Siyyid Ismá‘íl emerged as a recognized scholar known as Hájí Muhaqqiqu’l-‘Ulamá. He married a daughter of his paternal uncle, Siyyid ‘Alí, and returned to Istahbánát where he spent the rest of his days engaged in research and writing dissertations on various aspects of Islamic thought. He passed away at the age of 84 in Dhi’l-Hajjih 1338

A.H./1919.

After the death of his first wife, Siyyid Ismá‘íl married again and had sons who also became renowned clerics in the Istahbánát region. Siyyid Ismá‘íl’s writings are among the best known in modern Shi‘ism and the most important among them are: Hisnu’l-Hasín dar Sharh Baladu’l-Amín, a commentary on his grandfather’s important work on statesmanship; Lam‘átu’l-Núr, an exposition of the Light verse of the Qur’án; Sharh Du‘á Kúmaíl, an explanation of the prayer attributed to Kúmaíl; Salsabíl, (Bombay, 1312 A.H./1894) on mysticism and spiritual ways; Matla’u’l-Núr va Manbi’u’l-Asrar, (Shiraz, 1317 A.H./1899), a treatise on the science of kalám (exposition or rhetoric).

### C. Other Noted Family Members

True to their heritage, a great many in the family of Vahíd went on to

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become well-known divines, theologians and men of letters. However fearing the renewal of attacks and a fate similar to that which befell Vahíd, with the exception of Mírzá Yúsuf Kashfí, none among them are known to have pursued serious investigation of the veracity of the Bábí or Bahá’í faiths.

#### C.1. Siyyid Sabghatu’lláh Kashfí

A brother of Vahíd, he was born and raised in Najaf and completed his studies in that city first with the “the author of Javáhir<sup>684</sup>” and later with

Shaykh Murtidá Ansárí. He emerged as a renowned scholar and a confidant of Ansárí. He penned several important treatises, the best known being a commentary on the Qur’án by the title, Basa‘ir al-Ayman ya Darratu’s-Safa fi Tafsir A‘imat’l-Hudá in two or three volumes. He passed away in 1270 A.H./1853 in Karbalá.

#### C.2. Mírzá Ahmad

A son of Siyyid Ismá‘íl, and generally known by the title of Shaykhu’l-Muhaqqiqín, was born in 1291 A.H./1874 and was educated under the tutelage of his own father and Siyyid ‘Alí Kazirúní. He excelled in occult sciences and much like his great grandfather, became an expert in jafr (numerology). A number of books have remained by him.<sup>685</sup> He passed away in 1354 A.H./1935 and is buried in Ray. His son, Muhammad-Hádí, went on to become an important jurist and achieved the rank of Shaykhu’l-Islám. He too penned many books.<sup>686</sup>

#### C.3. Mírzá Abú’l-Hasan Istahbánátí

A nephew of Vahíd through Jahán Bagum and a cousin and close

<sup>684</sup> Shaykh Muhammad-Hasan (d. 1850) wrote the most comprehensive work on

Shi'i jurisprudence, *Javáhiru'l-Asrar fi'l Fihq'l-Islam*, in 24 volumes. He is mentioned in the *Kitáb Aqdas*, paragraph 166.

685 For a list of publications, consult *Tárikh Burújird*, vol. 2, p. 302.

686 For a list, consult *Tárikh Burújird*, vol. 2, p. 303.

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companion of the above-mentioned Siyyid Ismá'íl, Mírzá Abú'l-Hasan studied Islamic jurisprudence and philosophy in Yazd, Mashhad and Isfahán, and then spent some years mastering mathematics and astronomy. Mírzá Abú'l-Hasan's biography is provided by Áqá Buzurg Tihrání where some of Siyyid Ismá'íl's writings are listed in error as his<sup>687</sup>. Among his writings, one should note: *Hashiyyih Tahrir Uqlidus*, on Euclidean geometry; *Risálih dar Hay'at*, a treatise on astronomy; *Sharh Tashrihu'l-Aflak*, (Tihrán, 1284 A.H.), an exposition of Shaykh Bahá'í's magnum opus on astronomy.

#### C.4. Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad Haqáyiqa Kashfí

He was a son of Siyyid Musafá, well-regarded as a celebrated poet and founder of Haqáyiqa school in Isfahán.<sup>688</sup> He died in 1909.

#### C.5. Hájí Siyyid Mihdí Kashfí

Son of Siyyid Rayhánu'lláh, one of the most influential clerics of Qum and Tihrán, he was born in 1896 and died in 1947.<sup>689</sup>

#### C.6. Siyyid Músá Muqtadí Kashfí

Grandson of Siyyid Musafá, author of two important texts: *Mahafil ash-Shuhadá*, on martyrs of Karbalá; and *Bahr al-Ma'rif*, on the science of Qur'anic analysis.

#### C.7. Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad Istahbánátí

Grandson of Siyyid Musafá, he emerged as one of the best-known and best-published contemporary poets and literary figures.<sup>690</sup>

<sup>687</sup> *Nuqabu'l-Bashar*, vol. 1, p. 35.

<sup>688</sup> For biography see, Áqá Buzurg, *al-Dariyyih*, vol. 9, p. 259, and Siyyid Muhammad-'Alí Rawzatí, *Jami'u'l-Nisab*, p. 118.

<sup>689</sup> For biography see, Muhammad Razí, *Atháru'l-Hajjih*, vol. 1, p. 227.

<sup>690</sup> For biography see, Muhammad-Husayn Ádamíyat, *Dánishmandán va Sukhan-*

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#### C.8. Mírzá Yúsuf Vahíd Kashfí

A nephew of Vahíd Dárábí deserves special mention as standing among the most eminent Bahá'ís of his age.<sup>691</sup> Mírzá Yúsuf was born in the year 1281 A.H./1864<sup>692</sup> in Istahbánát as the youngest of the eight children (six boys and two girls) of Jahán Bagum and Hájí Muhammad-Ismá'íl. Both his father and grandfather, Hájí Muhammad-Taquí, originally from Lar, were merchants of note whose trading activities spread to the surrounding regions. Jahán Bagum was born and raised in Istahbánát and together with her husband had become a firm Bábí in the course of Vahíd's first visit.

From early childhood, signs of unusual intellect and remarkable faculties coupled with a well-pleasing nature were evident in Mírzá Yúsuf and soon he excelled in all his early studies. Occasionally during this period he journeyed to Nayríz, visiting his sister and her family, and once traveled to Mashhad with his maternal uncle, Siyyid Mustafá.

At the age of sixteen he was sent to Shíráz<sup>693</sup> to complete his education under the supervision of one of his father's relations in the Áqá Bábá Khán school and soon he mastered such branches of learning as Arabic grammar, logic, rhetoric, and metaphysics. After a while he also enrolled in the Qavám School where he studied the basics of the philosophy of Mullá Sadrá under the tutelage of Mírzá 'Abbás Hakím, one of the foremost students of the celebrated Hájí Mullá Hádí Sabzivárí.<sup>694</sup> It was there in 1298 A.H./1880 that he befriended the

Saráyán Fárs, vol. 4, p. 338. For an example of his poetry see, Táríkh Burújjird, vol. 2, pp. 298-300.

<sup>691</sup> For a biography see Masábíh Hidáyat, vol. 7, pp. 5-36; Ahang Badí', year 1332 Sh,

no. 10-12; and Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol 1.

<sup>692</sup> Ishráq-Khávarí, Dá'ratu'l-Ma'árif Bahá'í, p. 2596, gives this date as 1280 A.H.

<sup>693</sup> There is a considerable confusion between various accounts on his travels during

the early years. The present writer has deemed the information in Masábih Hidáyat to be more reliable.

<sup>694</sup> The renowned sage of Sabzivár is mentioned by Bahá'u'lláh in the Tablet of

Wisdom. He was a teacher of the famous Bahá'í scholar, the Hand of the Cause Nabíl

Qá'íní. For details see Sharh Hál Rijál Irán.

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renowned Áqá Shaykh Ibráhím Burazjání, known as Fádil Shírází<sup>695</sup>, and was first introduced to the Bahá'í faith and learned the details associated with his maternal uncle, Vahíd, though he continued to remain identified with the religion of his birth.

For his advanced studies in the various branches of Islamic sciences, he left Shíráz for Yazd where he remained for two years and enrolled in the Khán School. This stay afforded him the opportunity to deepen his knowledge of the Bahá'í cause through association with his cousin, Siyyid Ahmad (a son of Vahíd), a resident of the same town. Frequently he also visited Hájí Mírzá Muhammad-Taquí, the Vakílu'd-Dawlih<sup>696</sup>, from whom he learned many details about the religion of the Báb.

Subsequently, he traveled to Isfahán, visiting his two maternal uncles, Siyyid Síná and Siyyid 'Isá, and from there to Burújird where another maternal uncle, Siyyid Rayhanu'lláh, the youngest brother of Vahíd Dárábí, had succeeded his father and had acquired the rank of the Hujjatu'l-Islám. He stayed in that town for some six months and benefited from the classes of his uncle at whose encouragement he traveled to Karbalá and for the next two years undertook tuition under such renowned scholars as Áqá Shaykh Zaynu'l-'Abidín Mázandarání,<sup>697</sup> Hájí Mírzá Habíbu'lláh Rashtí and Hájí Siyyid Husayn Turk. A portion of

this time he was enrolled in the classes of various 'ulamá in Najaf, such as, Hájí Shaykh Muhammad, Fádil Irvání and Shaykh Hádí Najm-Ábádí. Upon completion of his studies, he returned to the family's native town in Dáráb, but finding its intellectual environment too stifling, he left after a week for Kirmán and Yazd. It was in the former city where he met his cousin, Siyyid Muhammad, who had accompanied Vahíd on the historic journey to Nayríz, and from this cousin learned much more

<sup>695</sup> Fádil Shírází was among the most eminent Bahá'ís during 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry

whose fascinating biography is provided in *Masábih Hidáyat*, vol. 7.

<sup>696</sup> He was a son of the eldest maternal uncle of the Báb and the architect of the first

Bahá'í house of worship, in 'Ishqábád. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has considered him to be together

with the Báb and the eighteen Letters of the Living among the 24 elders mentioned in

the Book of Revelation. For more detailed biographical information consult: *Khándán*

*Afnán*; *Eminent Bahá'ís during the time of Bahá'u'lláh*; and *In the Land of Refuge*.

<sup>697</sup> His name is given as "Abdu'lláh" in *Lam'átu'l-Anvár*, vol. 1, p. 111.

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about the Bahá'í faith. Though in the course of his conversations he was unable to accept the new religion, as a result of further exposure to the Bahá'í writings he was deeply moved.

In 1302 A.H./1884 from Yazd he proceeded to Mashhad where he stayed for about a year and a half. In order to satisfy his internal agitation, he decided after the performance of each morning's obligatory prayer to recite a special prayer known as Du'á Davázdah Imám.<sup>698</sup> On the fortieth morning, his biographers note, upon reciting the phrase "...the divinely hidden Personage..." he had a profoundly moving spiritual experience and immediately stood to recite a special tablet of visitation revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in honor of his uncle, Vahid.<sup>699</sup> At that point, his transition to the Bahá'í faith was complete.

In 1305 A.H./1887 he proceeded to Tihrán and arrived at the home of his cousin, Tubá Khánum, and through her and her brother, Siyyid Muhsin, was able to deepen his knowledge of the faith inaugurated by Bahá'u'lláh and begin his life-long path of service to humanity. It was during this time that he became closely connected with a number of government officials and solidified his reputation for wise and learned counsel.

Two years later, Jalálu'd-Dawlih, a son of Zillul's-Sultan, was appointed governor of the province of Yazd and decided to take Mírzá Yúsuf Kashfí with him.<sup>701</sup> On learning that Mírzá Yúsuf had refused this offer, Jalálu'd-Dawlih informed him that, if necessary, he would be taken

<sup>698</sup> A prayer in honor of the Twelve Imáms, composed by Khájih Nasiru'd-Dín Túsí,

to be recited during forty consecutive mornings.

<sup>699</sup> For a summary rendering see Appendix 4.

<sup>700</sup> Ishráq-Khávarí, *Dá'ratu'l-Ma'árif Bahá'í*, p. 2596, gives this date as 1304

A.H./1887.

<sup>701</sup> This governor of Yazd was responsible for much of the persecution of the Bahá'ís

of this period and wherever he went, much like his father, he left behind a bloody trail.

He is particularly responsible for the unprecedented pogrom of 1903 in Yazd and the

surrounding villages where many Bahá'ís were slain. For a detailed discussion of this

episode consult the eyewitness account of Abú'l-Qásim Baydá, in manuscript form, or

the published account of Hájí Mullá Muhammad Táhír Málmirí, Táríkh Shuhadáy Yazd.

Another eyewitness account of this episode is translated into English in Rabbani and Astani, "The Martyrs of Manshád".

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to Yazd in chains. In an effort to distance himself from the crazed Prince, he immediately accepted a position in the newly established American College in Tihrán, teaching Arabic and Persian courses. Seizing the opportunity, he also began to study English and the history of the Church, and was able to acquire a certificate of completion some nine months later. By now he had attracted the attention of the College administrators and was appointed supervisor of the school's expansion program, including its construction activities. On a number of occasions, including the time when the monarch, Násiri'd-Dín Sháh, visited the College, Mírzá Yúsuf was asked to represent the school to the government officials or to intercede on behalf of the Mission.

In 1308 A.H./1890, Mírzá Yúsuf married a daughter of Tubá Khánúm, the daughter of Vahíd Dárábí.<sup>702</sup> It was soon thereafter that the American Mission launched efforts to establish a school in Ridáiyiyh and for this purpose Miss Green arrived from the United States and another missionary worker, Dr. Cochran, was recalled from Ridáiyiyh to report on the progress towards establishing this enterprise. On meeting Mírzá Yúsuf, both were greatly impressed with his abilities and asked him to assist with the Ridáiyiyh facility. He readily accepted and with his family proceeded there, but his stay was short-lived and he returned to Tihrán. It was then that his wife passed away and was buried in Imám-Zádih Yahyá, next to her mother.

In the early months of 1892, he decided to visit Bahá'u'lláh and proceeded to 'Akká. However, upon reaching Tabríz, he learned of Bahá'u'lláh's passing and deeply grieved, decided against completion of the journey and remained in Ridáiyiyh for a year, and from there he returned to Tihrán.

In 1311 A.H./1894, once again the American Protestant Mission

<sup>702</sup> Various sources, such as Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 3, p. 477, and Lam'átu'l-Anvár,

vol. 1, suggest that Tubá had no child. However, Masábih Hidáyat, vol. 7, p. 12, informs

otherwise. The fact that Vahíd Kashfí married this grand-daughter of Vahíd Dárábí is

confirmed by the present writer's father, Dr. Iraj Rabbani, who in his youth was a

student of Vahíd Kashfí and closely informed of the details associated with his noble life.

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in Tihrán appointed him principal of their College in Ridáiyiyh.<sup>703</sup> In was there that he married again, formed a family, and through hard work, expanded his estate.

Much like his uncle, Mírzá Yúsuf possessed an uncanny ability for cultivating relations with the ruling class and since Tabríz traditionally served as the seat for the heir to the Qajar throne, he established important contacts in that town. The most beneficial of his relations, as it turned out, was with the governor of Tabríz, Prince Imám-Qulí Mírzá,<sup>704</sup> who introduced him to Prince Muzaffaru'd-Dín Mírzá.<sup>705</sup> On meeting Mírzá Yúsuf and hearing him make a representation on behalf of Imám-Qulí Mírzá, the royal prince was enchanted with his personality and knowledge, thereby honoring him with the title "Lisán Huzúr" (the sanctified tongue).

In 1313 A.H./1895, he traveled to the Ottoman region and remained for some six months as a tutor of Siyyid Tah, a son of Shaykh Sádiq, the religious leader of the Naqshbandí Sufi order. Years later, around 1919-20, both this student together with another Naqshbandí leader, Shaykh 'Abdu'lláh, visited Mírzá Yúsuf in Ridáiyiyh and both accepted Bahá'u'lláh.<sup>706</sup>

In the same year, subsequent to the assassination of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh, Prince Muzaffaru'd-Dín Mírzá acceded to the throne and his son Muhammad-'Alí Mírzá was named his heir and established himself in Tabríz. A few years later, in 1319 A.H./1901, the young Prince paid an official visit to Ridáiyiyh in the course of which he came to the American

<sup>703</sup> Lam'átu'l-Anvár, vol. 1, is silent on this trip to Tihrán and indicates that while in

Tabríz, Kashfí was approached by the American Mission to head the school in Ridáiyiyh.

<sup>704</sup> He is a brother of Malik [Prince] Qásim Mírzá, who is mentioned in A Traveler's

Narrative.

<sup>705</sup> Masábih Hidáyat, vol. 7, p. 15, states that partly responsible for this introduction to

the Prince was the effort of Hájí Mu'ín's-Saltanih, the famous Bahá'í historian of later years, who was a chamberlain of the Prince Muzaffaru'd-Dín Mírzá and enjoyed the

title of the Hishmatu'l-Vuzará.

706 Some three years later, Siyyid Tah, visited Tihrán and through Vahíd Kashfí met a

number of prominent Bahá'ís, including Hájí Abú'l-Hasan Amín, and attended many

functions at the Bahá'í Center.

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Protestant Mission and through the Názimu'l-Hukamá<sup>707</sup> was introduced to Mírzá Yúsuf. Some days later, Mírzá Yúsuf was called to Tabríz and after detailed discussions with the Prince about the faith, in the presence of many high-ranking officials, the title of "Lisán Huzúr" was reconfirmed and he was granted the honorary rank of Army Colonel.<sup>708</sup>

In 1902, he met Siyyid Asadu'lláh Qumí who wrote of him to 'Abdu'l-Bahá in response to which Mírzá Yúsuf received a stirring communication which starts with the words "O seeker of the Beloved of the worlds".<sup>709</sup> In the course of this tablet, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated, "The

field of service is wide open." As such, Vahíd Kashfí was moved to resign his post, sell his belongings and undertake a number of teaching journeys. On hearing of his plans to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Haifa/Akká and travel subsequently to Europe and North America, Prince Muhammad-'Alí Mírzá issued three royal directives to the Iranian embassies in Istanbul, London and Washington, to ensure his comfort and needs while in their jurisdiction.<sup>710</sup>

After 'Abdu'l-Bahá's permission had arrived, he journeyed to 'Akká and stayed for nineteen days, each day paying homage to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. Because of his fluency in English, 'Abdu'l-Bahá

instructed him to visit the United States. Vahíd Kashfí arrived in Boston by way of Port Said, Cairo, Alexandria, Italy, Paris, London, Liverpool,<sup>707</sup> Father of Hand of the Cause General Shu'á'u'lláh 'Alá'í.

<sup>708</sup> The Royal decree, signed by the Shujá'u's-Saltanih, is dated Sha'bán 1319 A.H.

[November-December 1901] and is printed in Masábih Hidáyat, vol. 7, pp. 21-22.

<sup>709</sup> This tablet begins with "Ay mushtáq dilbar áfáq" and is printed in Lam'átu'l-

Anvár, vol. 1.

<sup>710</sup> The text of this decree, dated Dhi'l-Qa'dih 1319 A.H. [February 1902], addressed to

the Iranian Ambassador in the United States, the Mafkhamu'd-Dawlih, is in

Masábih

Hidáyat, vol. 7, p. 23. A translation is as follows:

His Excellency, the Mafkhamu'd-Dawlih.

As Mírzá Yúsuf Khán, the Lisán Huzúr, has decided to visit America to complete his studies, this letter of recommendation is written on his behalf. Kindly ensure that in the course of his stay in that region all aid and assistance is rendered him. Further, kindly assure his comfort so that his studies may proceed satisfactorily and no delay or hindrance takes place.

Dhi'l-Qa'dih 1319 A.H., [signed] The Heir to the Throne.

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and Quebec. From Boston, he went to New York and met with Mírzá Abú'l-Fadl and Alí-Kuli Khán. After consultation with local Bahá'ís, he

traveled extensively for a period of over a year in the eastern States, including Pennsylvania, Maryland, and some of the mid-western regions such as Missouri. During these days, from early morning hours until well into the night, he would exert efforts to deepen and consolidate the nascent Bahá'í communities and do everything he could to promote of the faith. At the conclusion of his journey, he went to Maine and stayed at Green Acre School for a while. During this period, he regularly gave lectures on the teachings of the Bahá'í faith, its history and the station of

'Abdu'l-Bahá which resulted in many accepting the new religion and, in effect, he was preparing the community for 'Abdu'l-Bahá's arrival a few years later. After a stay of two years in the United States, due to adverse weather and the deterioration of his health, and following consultation with Mírzá Abú'l-Fadl and upon 'Abdu'l-Bahá's approval, he returned to

Ridáiyih and resumed his earlier career.

Though initially he was disappointed in not being able to stay longer in North America, soon he received a letter from 'Abdu'l-Bahá urging him to serve in his native country and to readily accept what God had ordained. Energized by this letter, Mírzá Yúsuf set aside all caution and began to openly teach the faith to everyone he encountered, including during his own classes in the Missionary College. Soon several of his students became Bahá'ís, which caused uproar among the school administrators, who decided to terminate his appointment. They also complained to the authorities, but due to Mírzá Yúsuf's standing in the community, this plea was ignored. The school officials however joined forces with certain fanatical elements and one day rushed and plundered his home. Since 'Abdu'l-Bahá had cautioned him to be resigned to the will of God, Mírzá Yúsuf did not approach the officials to seek redress

for his case.

Upon hearing the details, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá urged him to travel-teach in Adharbayján. As such, he spent a period of time promoting the faith until he eventually settled in the village of Shíshván, on the outskirts of Ridáiyiyh Lake. For the next seven months he served as tutor to the four sons of the Prince Imám-Qulí Mírzá and was granted an annual stipend

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of one hundred tumáns and a ton of wheat.<sup>711</sup> During this time, he continued his intense teaching work, which resulted in several individuals including his four students, accepting the faith.

In 1923, he left that region for Tihrán where he accepted a position at the Tarbíyat Bahá’í School in addition to his post as English-Persian translator for the Ministry of Commerce. Three years later he left for Qazvín and served for a year and a half as the principal of Hamdu’lláh Mustawfí School, after which for the next five years he administered the Tavvakul Bahá’í school in the same town.

In 1929, when Martha Root was visiting Iran, he accompanied her to Adharbayján and served as her translator. After this he returned to Qazvín and resumed his teaching work. Again some four years later when the American travel teacher, Miss Ramson Kehler, visited Iran he served as her translator during her two-year journeys to Gilán, Khurásán and Mázandarán. It was after her untimely passing in Isfahán that he decided to complete her tour by himself and for the next four years traveled extensively in various regions of the country, assisting the community in learning the basics of Bahá’í administration and organizational structure. When in 1938 Mildred Mottahedeh visited Iran, bearing messages from Shoghi Effendi, Mírzá Yúsuf assisted her as a translator in her tour of the eastern provinces.

In total, Mírzá Yúsuf married four times. He had divorced his first wife prior to his conversion to the Bahá’í faith and married again, and this time his spouse died prematurely. His third union resulted in a son, ‘Atau’lláh, who became an agricultural engineer and served the faith with great distinction. On the passing of this wife, Mírzá Yúsuf married again which resulted in a daughter named Khujastih.

Much like his celebrated uncle, Vahíd Dárábí, he possessed an unusual command of Islamic sciences and traditions and in the course of his teaching activities was able to draw upon this fount of knowledge with great facility. In addition to his deep Bahá’í knowledge, his command of several languages, such as, English, Arabic, French, and

<sup>711</sup> Lam‘átu’l-Anvár, vol. 1, indicates that this stipend was granted by Muzaffara’d-Dín

Sháh. However, the text of the letter authorizing this provision is printed in

Masábih

Hidáyat, vol. 7, pp. 15-16, and clearly shows the author as being Imám-Qulí Mírzá.

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Turkish enabled him to promote the faith in many regions beyond his immediate environs. He was the recipient of numerous communications from 'Abdu'l-Bahá, which eloquently testify to his life-long services, particularly in the region of Adharbayján where he lived for well over three decades. In one of these letters, he was titled Vahíd<sup>712</sup> as a remembrance of his illustrious uncle, Vahíd Dárábí. 'Abdu'l-Bahá in this

tablet calls on him to serve the world of humanity with the same degree of sacrifice and self-renunciation manifested a generation earlier by his uncle.

During Shoghi Effendi's ministry, Vahíd Kashfí continued to be a source of encouragement and a pillar of the faith to the community and frequently received direct communications from Shoghi Effendi. In his latter days, he devoted much time to organizing deepening activities for the younger generation.

Vahíd Kashfí passed away on 3 October 1959, at the age of 94, and was buried at the Tihrán Bahá'í cemetery. The Hands of the Cause of God residing in the Holy Land instructed the Iranian Bahá'í community to commemorate his passing by holding meetings in his honor throughout the country, and their cable to the community reads:

Deeply saddened news passing distinguished servant Cause  
God renowned scholar Vahíd. Assure his family fervent  
prayers sacred threshold progress his noble soul. Organize  
befitting memorial gatherings. Hands Cause.<sup>713</sup>

<sup>712</sup> From that time, Mírzá Yúsuf ceased to use Lisán Huzúr and would instead employ

the title Vahíd Kashfí.

<sup>713</sup> Masábih Hidáyat, vol. 7, p. 36, and "Akhhár Amrí", yr. 116 BE, no. 91, 1338 Sh.

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Appendix 3

Writings of Vahíd Dárábí

It is known that prior to his conversion to the Bábí faith, Vahíd was a prolific scholar and composed many treatises on a relatively wide range of Islamic philosophy, jurisprudence and mysticism, but none of those writings are known to the present translator. Of the treatises penned after his conversion, a few have survived and are rendered into English below.

1. Though the exact date of the following treatise cannot presently be determined, it must have been composed some time during 1846 and 1850, as Vahíd refers to his interview with the Báb. The Arabic text of this document, titled *Risálih Istidláliyyih*, is printed in *Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 3, pages 471-473:

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.  
The praise of God and His glorification rest upon His Messenger [Muhammad] and His family until attainment to the presence of God<sup>714</sup>.

This hopeful servant, this ephemeral slave and evanescent soul, 10-8-10<sup>715</sup> Fátamí<sup>716</sup>, states that after Gh-R-S<sup>717</sup> years had passed since the Prophetic migration of that Immigrant [Muhammad], upon Him rest a thousand

<sup>714</sup> *Liqáu'lláh* refers to the Day of Resurrection signifying the appearance of the

*Qá'im*.

<sup>715</sup> 10-8-10 are the numerical values for the letters Y, H and Y, which spell *Yahyá*,

Vahíd's given name.

<sup>716</sup> A reference to his holy lineage, indicating that he was a descendent of the Prophet Muhammad through his daughter, Fátimih.

<sup>717</sup> Gh-R-S = 1000+200+60 = 1260. The Báb appeared in the year 1260 A.H./1844.

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blessings and praise, I was informed that verily the *Qá'im* had arisen in the land of Fárs and appeared as a brilliant Star and a luminous celestial orb in the city of Shíráz. It is the meaning and Remembrance of this exalted saying, "We have written in the Holy Scripture that after the Remembrance, My righteous servants will inherit the earth."<sup>718</sup>

Therefore I did not waver, but traveled from town to town, searching in all parts of the world. And the bird of my heart roamed in both south and north, passing by all the horizons and every part therein, until it reached the blessed

land and the Baládu'l-Maqám<sup>719</sup>, which is the Baládu'l-Amn<sup>720</sup>, the spot of the appearance of the wronged Servant in the month of Jamadiyu'l-Avval of the year Gh-R-S-B [=1262]<sup>721</sup>.

I stayed at the threshold and attained the presence of the One Who has the knowledge of the Divine Books. And I beheld the city that yielded the fruit of all things and attracted the hearts of the people. I, therefore, resided there, wherein the bird of my heart learned the ways of supplication and homage. Thereupon I swore by the One in Whose Hand is my soul that He [i.e. the Báb] is that selfsame Light and Manifestation referred to in the verse: “God is the Light of the Heavens and of the Earth. His Light is like a niche in which is a lamp – the Lamp encased in the glass – the glass, as it were, a glistening star. From a blessed tree it is lighted, the olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would well nigh shine out, even though fire touched it not! It is light upon light. God guideth whom He will to His light, and God setteth forth parables to men,

718 Qur’án 21:105 states, “Before this We wrote in the Psalms, after the Message

(given to Moses): My servants the righteous, shall inherit the earth.”

719 The land of station, a reference to Shíráz.

720 The land of refuge, another reference to Shíráz.

721 27 April – 26 May 1846.

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for God knoweth all things.”<sup>722</sup> This Light and its brilliance will light and rekindle the people of light that they might be humbled, bestowing blessings upon those seeking the favor of God and upon the followers of the Prophet.

He [i.e. the Báb] elucidated the meaning of the letters of “In the Name of God” in their four stations. He then interpreted the Surih of Kawthar so that rivers [of understanding] did flow therefrom – such rivers as will not become fetid; rivers of milk whose taste does not alter; and the river of pure honey; and the river of wine which brings pleasure to he who quaffs therefrom.<sup>723</sup> Then He expounded the Hadith of that exalted Figure and Knower of secrets, [Imám] Abú-Ja‘far Muhammad ibn [Imám] ‘Alí-Báqir, praise and salutation be upon Him, who had addressed Abú-Lubid Makhzúmí regarding the science of the disconnected letters of Qur’án. Afterwards He [i.e. the

Báb] replied [to the questions] of the honored Siyyid Abú-Hasan Husayní, who beseeched Him to manifest His Cause openly. In the course of this, He elucidated on the meaning of the letter “H” being the first letter of His Book<sup>724</sup> and this Epistle became known as the Risálih Há’iyyih.

He then commented on the prayer of occultation, which has been related in Kafí, under three headings in 14 chapters – and from each, the dwelling-place of unseen mystery was made manifest. During the night<sup>725</sup>, darkness overtook all until the Morn of Eternity<sup>726</sup> was unveiled.

722 Qur’án 24:35

723 This refers to the Qur’anic rivers of paradise, whose symbolic meaning the Báb

expounded in the Surih of Kawthar and other works, notably the Persian Bayán. (The translator is grateful to Ismael Velasco for suggesting this footnote.)

724 “H” is the first letter of Húva (He is).

725 Refers to the time from the passing of the last Imám in 260 AH/873 until the

declaration of the Báb in 1260AH/1844, when once again, according to the Bábí

belief, divine guidance was made available to humanity.

726 Subh Azal, one of the titles of the Báb. This title was first employed by Imám

‘Alí as a reference to Prophet Muhammad.

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Then He replied to the questions of one of the seekers and travelers in the way of God, who had suffered much in the path of the Religion of God. He also graciously replied to that eminent doctor, that trustworthy scholar, who attained certitude through the light of his heart, Siyyid Javád Husayní [Karbálá’í] on the matter of grammar. He replied to the questions of the honored Navváb Hindí regarding the Name of God, the Almighty. He furthermore replied to the questions of the learned Shaykh ‘Abid, who had recognized the Truth. In response to a query from Mullá Hasan Rashtí, He penned an eloquent answer. Then He replied to the questions of Hájí Muhammad-Ismá‘íl Farahání. He further revealed [a series of] prayers to be intoned by worshipers. Praise thy Lord, the Gracious! I swore by the creator of heaven and earth: “Verily this is the word of a most honorable Messenger.”<sup>727</sup> “In a Book well-guarded which

none shall touch but those who are clean.”<sup>728</sup> Would you, therefore, remain heedless of these sayings? Your spiritual sustenance you acquire from a source that you consider an imposture. Bring forth, then, sayings like unto His, if you are able and are of the truthful.

Praise be to God for all that has been said, and peace be upon the Messenger and “the Lord of the worlds.”<sup>729</sup>

2-3. The following proof-treatises by Vahíd are in Arabic and the texts is printed in *Tárikh Zuhúru’l-Haqq*, vol. 3, pages 473-477. Based on internal evidence, the second treatise was written at the same time as the Báb was residing in Isfahán and Vahíd had already arrived in Tihrán. Since the Báb was in Isfahán between September 1846 and March 1847, and Vahíd, according to what he recorded in this treatise, arrived in Tihrán on 19 January 1847, it can be inferred that the second document below was penned sometime in January to March of 1847. Mázandarání states

727 Qur’án 81:19

728 Qur’án 56:78-79

729 Qur’án 40:64

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that the original of both are extant and are autograph copies in the hand of Vahíd.<sup>730</sup>

In the name of God, the Exalted, the Great.

Praise be unto God, Who shone forth with the light and splendors of His Glory (Bahá) from the mystic realm (‘amá), and caused radiant praise to appear, encompassing all within the shadow of His grandeur. Thus first to be manifested in the book of creation was the verse “In the name of God” and the four exalted glorifications which constitute the letters of the Greatest Name<sup>731</sup> among the most excellent Names. Through this Name, the essence of divinity was made manifest in His other [lower] kingdoms. While He was ...<sup>732</sup> He ordered His cause to ascend and to descend, to rise and to set.<sup>733</sup> From the pillars of His cause, He poured out the living waters in form of an ocean of ink and the precious letters “N” and “S”.<sup>734</sup>

[from the middle of page 475]

This servant, 10-8-10735, trusting in the grace of living Qayyúm<sup>736</sup>, suppliant before the eternal Lord, declares in his splendid khutbih, before the honored Master and sore-trying

<sup>730</sup> The Sources for Early Bábí Doctrine and History, p. 117, states, “A

copy of the second

of these two maqálas [Tárikh Zuhúru'l-Haqq, vol. 3, pp. 475-477] forms the introduction (after a preceding khutba ascribed to the Báb) to the collection of the Báb's writings made by Dárábí in Tehran and now contained in INBCM 40 (pp. 3-5)"

731 While the present translator is not certain of the exact word intended by Vahíd, the

word "Bahá" in the original language is composed of four letters: B, h, alif and hamzih.

732 Unreadable by the translator.

733 Refers to the appearance of various Dispensations and their eventual decline, which

will then be followed by another Prophet.

734 The present translator is not certain what word Vahíd had in mind, but the letters

N and S form the word "Nas" which means "sacred writings".

735 As noted earlier, 10-8-10 is the numerical equivalent of Yahyá (=Y H Y).

736 Lit. the self-sufficient, represents one of the titles of Bahá'u'lláh.

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Servant of God, utterer of clear speech and guide in the mighty Cause [Prophet Muhammad]: "Qaf. By the glorious Qur'án (thou art God's Apostle). But they wonder that there has come to them a Warner from among themselves. So the unbelievers say: 'This is a wonderful thing!'"<sup>737</sup>

I have placed this verse at the opening of this khutbih, as a reminder to those who perceive, who possess understanding of the beginning and the end, whose prayer is: "Praise be to God, Who hath sent to His Servant the Book, and hath allowed therein no crookedness: (He hath made it) Straight (and clear) in order that He may warn (the godless) of a terrible punishment<sup>738</sup> from Him, and that He may give glad tidings to the believers who work righteous deeds, that they shall have a goodly reward."<sup>739</sup> And "Those who listen to the Word, and follow the best (meaning) in it: those are the ones whom God has guided, and those are the ones endowed with understanding."<sup>740</sup> And "Those who sustain the Throne (of God) and those around it sing glory

and praise to their Lord; believe in Him; and implore forgiveness for those who believe: Our Lord! Thy reach is over all things, in Mercy and Knowledge. Forgive, then, those who turn in repentance, and follow Thy Path: and preserve them from the Penalty of the Blazing Fire!”<sup>741</sup> Therefore, O assembled brothers, persevere in your station and position,<sup>742</sup> and be observant and hearken to the voice of the Truth and the call of the Caller, for He is the Balance, the (straight) Path, the Sinai, the revealed Book,

737 Qur’án 50:1-2

738 The original term in the Qur’án is “basan shadídán” which can be rendered as

“great event”. In Rodwell’s translation of the Qur’án, he has rendered it as “a grievous woe” which is closer to Vahíd’s understanding that this passage was apocalyptic and anticipated the appearance of the Báb.

739 Qur’án 18:1-2.

740 Qur’án 39:18.

741 Qur’án 40:7.

742 That is, new believers.

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and the blessed House. Verily, He [i.e. the Báb] is the exalted Master, the glorious Light and the resplendent Star that appeared over the Baladu’l-Maqám [i.e. Shíráz] and is [presently] residing in the Land of Sad [i.e. Isfahán]. The Sun rose from its zodiac, and shone in its zenith and its light encompassed all horizons and manifested the inner meaning of the Word of God, praise be upon Him: “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. By the Sun and his (glorious) splendor; By the Moon as she follows him; by the day as it shows (the sun’s) glory,”<sup>743</sup> to its completion. Fear not what may follow. He [i.e. the Báb] commanded me to proceed to the Land of Tá (i.e. Tihrán). In accordance with His order, I arrived at that city, on the first day of the second month of the third year after the year Gh-R-S (=1260)<sup>744</sup>, and met its inhabitants who numbered among His disciples. As these men spoke not but of the Remembrance, they were made captive in chains and fetters. I became cognizant of what they had endured and observed what befell them who believed. And yet these held no enmity or ill will towards those who perpetuated such

wrongs, as they believed in God, the Almighty, the All-  
Praised.

Verily, in the chambers of my heart, I was constantly  
mindful of my Master [i.e. the Báb] and as I was far from  
His presence, I longed to attain unto Him.

O Son of Ahmad<sup>745</sup>! Is there a way to Thy Path and  
will our days be connected with Thy Days that we might  
bask in Thy favors? When shall we be granted to drink our  
fill from the flowing River of Thy Words? And when shall  
we quaff of Thy clear Water? Separation hath long  
consumed me. When shall I be permitted to sacrifice myself

743 Qur'án 91:1-3

744 This corresponds to 1 Safar 1263 AH, or Tuesday, 19 January 1847.

745 Ahmad is a title of the Prophet Muhammad to whom the Báb traced his  
lineage.

It therefore appears that by “Son of Ahmad” he intended the Báb.

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in Thy path and offer up my soul as ransom for the light of  
Thine eyes? My condition is even as the Commander of the  
Faithful<sup>746</sup>, upon Him be peace, hath revealed, “I wondered  
whether I should pass the time in His remembrance or  
blindly wait in this darkness – the darkness by which the  
young grow old and the hair of the infant turns white, the  
believers will seek and through their striving will attain unto  
his Lord. Hence, it became clear that patience and  
forbearance in His path are the prudent and wise counsel. In  
such wise, with great sorrow and grief, I have continued to  
wait and be patient.”<sup>747</sup>

And as I deemed all ways to be closed and guidance  
not possible, I decided to pass my days in collecting and  
transcribing His homilies and sacred words. From the  
beginning of the month of Dhi'l-Qa'dih of the  
aforementioned year<sup>748</sup>, I began this work, that perchance  
my heart would be solaced and cheered. God is able to  
delight the heart of any of His servants.

The first Effulgence [i.e. Tablet] which was revealed in  
that land [i.e. Isfahán] from the Fountainhead of Light, and  
descended from the divine knowledge, and gave light to this  
dark world, was the commentary on the Surih of Val-'Asr.  
After that was the Risálih Nabbúvat Khasih [The Treatise  
on the Specific Prophethood] which was revealed with  
irrefutable logic, and then responses to various queries

presented to Him [i.e. the Báb] by diverse people in His presence.

He verily is the Almighty from the beginning to the end and He verily is the most benevolent Master and All-Seeing Commander.

746 A title of the first Imam, 'Alí.

747 This tradition is cited in Ibn Abi al-Mu'tazili's (d. 656A.H./1258), Sharh Nahj al-

Balagha, available at:

[http://alshia.com/html/ara/books/nahj\\_albalaqe/01/09.htm#link19](http://alshia.com/html/ara/books/nahj_albalaqe/01/09.htm#link19)

748 October 1846.

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4. The third volume of Táríkh Zuhúru'l-Haqq has printed two pages of an Arabic proof-treatise by Vahíd which is inserted after page 470. These pages are in Vahíd's own hand.

Although He [i.e. the Báb], upon Him be peace, was born and raised amongst Persians and is but a commoner, signs of immense knowledge are evident in Him. With this most mighty Proof, He reveals prayers, sermons, visitation tablets and meditations in the style and language of the revelation of the Guardians [i.e. the Imáms]. Without the least pause or premeditation, within the space of six hours, He reveals a thousand verses. It is evident that this power transcends all human faculties in such wise that none even among the wisest has ever been known to achieve the like.

With such manifest grandeur, in this short period of time, He, may my life be a sacrifice unto Him, has revealed many commentaries and unnumbered books and treatises in response to questions on diverse sciences, with conclusive and sufficient replies. How is one to deny this proof or to hesitate in His Cause after the Revelation of such Writings and the appearance of His light? By God, this hadith spoken by the Messenger of God to 'Alí is true of Him [i.e. the Báb]: "O 'Alí! None will show enmity towards you except him whose father is not known or who has come for the purpose of showing malice. Of a certainty, his spirit and the spirit of all who dwell in the kingdoms of revelation and of creation must be a sacrifice unto your knowledge and might."

Of His knowledge, it is as has been mentioned. And of His might, it is the power of revelation, the peace of God

be upon Him. Without the least hesitation or thought, His pen reveals fragrant and sacred words, prayers, meditations, homilies, treatises and luminous verses. What might could be greater than this majesty? By the potency of God! Those

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endowed with understanding will perceive this to be the greatest of all powers in the heavens or the earth.

As regards His divine manners, He manifests the two qualities [of knowledge and grandeur] to a degree of perfection unrivalled on this plane of existence. He conducts Himself with the same excellence as His illustrious forebears, may the peace of God be upon them all from pre-existence unto eternity.

Consider how He converses, moves and conducts Himself with utmost purity and piety and then you shall understand how in His presence the entire range of time has been reduced to a single hour and the whole span of earth limited to His House. No expression can describe the joy of being in His presence. "I know not what to say, or how to say it."

He is the Light that shone upon Moses and caused Him go forward. He is that Effulgence by which every moldering bone is quickened. Verily, His life-giving breath is sanctified by the garment of divine knowledge and goodly deeds and He is cleansed from all enmities and attachments. He is an elixir in balanced conditions and stands as a perfect jewel. He imparts a measure of truth to all who are worthy thereof and shines His effulgence upon each in accord to their own capacity. He enables all things, even such things as food or drink, to achieve their full potential – as this is the function and station of the elixir.

5. The following is a letter written by Vahíd some time after his conversion, in the course of which he seeks to establish the validity of the Báb's claim. It is not known to whom this letter was addressed.<sup>749</sup> The Persian text of this letter is printed in *Khoosh-i-Há'í az Kharman-i Adab va Honar*, vol. 6, pages 92-3, n. 77.<sup>750</sup>

<sup>749</sup> Dr. Muhammad Afnán has theorized that this letter was addressed to one of the

uncles of the Báb, other than Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí; see "Khushihá", vol. 5, p. 92.

<sup>750</sup> According to the Bahá'í World Centre (communication dated 25 August

1996),

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He is God, the Most Great, the Most Mighty, the Most Glorious.

... It should be known to your good self that I read some of your correspondence while in the presence of your exalted and esteemed brother and perceived some of the misconceptions that may have troubled you. Even though in His Tablet of 24 of Dhi'l-Hajjih, revealed by His most excellent and most holy Pen, matters have been disclosed, yet briefly I will attempt to rectify two misunderstandings.

Firstly, when a person appears, claiming that he is sent by God and brings forth that which others are incapable of producing, then one of two conditions obtain: either he is of the true and therefore obedience unto him is imperative, or he is of the false. If it be the second condition, then the Almighty has decreed upon Himself that He would not allow any of His servants to fall victim to the false notions of such a claimant. With the first of these two conditions, by making a claim and bringing to bear that which none other is able to match, God will send forth a Messenger.

Otherwise, He will destroy man-made proofs even as he destroyed the magic of the sorceress through the staff of Moses. Or He will destroy the false claimant before anyone is made wayward. And should He do none of these, then of certainty that claimant bears the truth. Consider this verse and the one revealed before and after it in the Surih of Inevitable: "But if Muhammad had fabricated concerning Us any sayings, We had surely seized Him by the right hand and had cut through the vein of His neck."<sup>751</sup>

The Cause of that Personage [the Báb] in bringing forth Haqíqat [Truth] is indeed the same as the Cause of the Messenger of God [Muhammad] in manifesting Nabúvvat [Prophethood]. The proof of Both is indeed one and the

the original text is in the private library of Dr. Muhammad Afnán.

<sup>751</sup> Qur'án 69:44.

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same. Recognition of the Prophethood of the Messenger of

God will necessitate recognition of that honored Personage as true. The entire creation is but an effulgence of His Cause. "He causeth the living to issue from the dead, and He is the one to cause the dead to issue from the living."<sup>752</sup> Rejection of this Personage [the Báb] is evidence that the doubters were never in Islam as Islam and the Specific Prophethood [nabúvvat khasih] is the same as the proof of His Cause. As He has brought forth His proof, all others are powerless to produce one the like of His. And had He not been Bearer of the truth, then out of His justice and favor, the Almighty God would have dealt with Him in one of the three ways mentioned earlier. And since none of those came to pass, therefore it stands evident that His Call is of truth. The proof of His verses, words and books, is the same proof given for the Qur'án and there is no difference between the two. Further explanation requires my speaking face to face.

The second matter is that unlike in the past Dispensation, the laws are the ultimate command. Yea, verily it is so, on account of two reasons. Firstly, the laws are recognized by the Proof [the Báb] and not the Proof by [the veracity of] the laws. In Siffán, the Khawarij [the Seceders] wanted to test the Commander of the Faithful through the derivative laws (mustanabih) of the Qur'án which they had assembled in accordance with their own understanding and knowledge. And yet they were deprived of faith.<sup>753</sup> And now is the same way if one should attempt to recognize the Proof through the laws. After the proof has been vouchsafed and completed, none may be permitted to say that the laws are in accordance with the rulings of the 'ulama or against them. ...

The second point is that the religion of Islam consists

<sup>752</sup> Qur'án 6:95.

<sup>753</sup> See An Introduction to Shi'í Islam, p. 25.

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of both záhir [an outward form] and bátin [an inner reality]. And the Qur'án is endowed with both tanzíl [exoteric interpretation] and tá'wíl [esoteric interpretation]. The permitted and forbidden laws of Muhammad are the záhir and tanzíl of the Qur'án. And in short, the bátin and tá'wíl are those given by the Commander of the Faithful. The totality of these are manifested by the Qá'im, upon Him be peace.

And there is no doubt that outwardly *bátin* and *tá'wíl* will be in contrast to *záhir* and *tanzíl*.

[For instance,] in accordance to the Prophetic law and *záhir* and *tanzíl*, capital punishment is prohibited for a murderer who bears witness to the Faith and believes in the Qur'án. However, by invoking *bátin* and *tá'wíl*, the Commander of the Faithful, upon Him be peace, ordered the execution of thousands upon thousands of *Nákithiyn*, *Qasityn* and *Mariqin* in Basra, *Siffin* and *Nahrún* – those who had uttered, “There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God” and had believed in the Qur'án. That command, is in accordance to *tá'wíl* and is against *tanzíl*.

All the foregoing applies equally to this honored Personage [i.e. the *Báb*]. And *tá'wíl* is the *bátin* of *Islám*, not its opposer. Outwardly, *bátin* and *tanzíl* seem to be two exegeses.

[Another example,] in accordance to the *tanzíl* interpretation should one raise a place of worship or a mosque, even if it is large enough for only one person, God will grant him a dwelling in paradise. And yet, by the law of *tá'wíl*, the *Qá'im* of the House of Muhammad will destroy and reduce all the mosques. You notice that no one claims that this assertion is against the teachings of *Islám* and all maintain that it represents the *bátin* of His religion. The Cause of the Proof is akin to this.

This honored Personage was not a judge or a *mujtahid* so that He should be known through elucidation

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of the laws. Nay, He is the Proof. And all laws stem from Him. He is the divine Balance.

In truth, such complaints are only excuses for error. His Cause is manifest. But since it differs from the exegesis of the world, then people advance excuses [not to embrace His Faith].

Peace be upon you.

Your servant, *Yahyá*.

6. Of other writings of *Vahíd*, only the following comment by Dr. Denis MacEoin is known to the present translator: “A manuscript in Haifa attributed to the *Báb* under the unique title of *Risála-yi Ashtát* is said to be in *Dárábí*'s hand. This may, in fact, be a work by *Vahíd* himself, since no work of that name has been recorded anywhere as a work of the

Báb's." The present translator is not familiar with this manuscript.

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#### Appendix 4

Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet of Visitation  
for Vahíd Dárábí

For his holiness Vahíd hath this been revealed, he who beheld the Countenance of God, the All-Glorious, the Almighty, and who in His path sacrificed himself, arose to serve His Cause and quaffed his fill of the draught of certitude from the Hand of his Lord, the Munificent.

He is supreme over His Cause and powerful over His creation.

The first wave of exaltation from the ocean of the grace of thy Lord, the Compassionate, be upon thee [Vahíd] who art the essence of the Qur'an and the possessor of the mysteries of the Bayán.

I testify that thou didst quaff of the choice wine of His Revelation from the Hand of His favor and grace, and attained unto the presence of Him Who was the Promised One in all the sacred Books, Scriptures and Tablets. Thou didst hearken unto the divine Call when it was raised and perceived its manifestation above the Exalted horizon on a Day when all the dwellers of the mortal kingdom rejected the Creator of the heavens.

Thou hast, moreover, discerned the Most Great Announcement and inhaled the fragrance of the garment of the Lord of Days.

I testify that thou didst render victorious the Faith of God and His Cause through thy pen, thy tongue and thy hand until thou didst surrender thy life in His path and quaffed from the Kawthar of selfrenunciation in His name and in His love. Thou wast intoxicated from the spring of His Recognition and didst soar with the wings of certitude in the heaven of the murmur of thy God, the Lord of Grandeur. Over thy sufferings all the atoms of the earth cried out and the eye of creation did weep.

I testify that because of thee all the treasures of the earth appeared

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and all the pearls of the sea were revealed. Through thee, the pinnacle of understanding was adorned with the crown of revelation. Thou art the one who accepted the choice sealed wine before the face of all and drank thy fill in the Name of thy Lord, the Ancient of Days.

May the resplendent glory which hath dawned from the horizon of divine grace, and the effulgent light from the heaven of sanctified justice,

rest upon thee and upon those who have assisted thee. For they accepted the One that thou didst accept and repudiated them that had risen against thee. With thee and under thy shadow, they rendered the Cause victorious, having beheld thee and circled around thee.

O God, my God, my Maker and the Maker of the heavens, I beseech Thee by the pearls of the ocean of Thy Oneness, by the mysteries of Thy Book, and by lamentation of Thy loved ones in their separation from Thee, and by the tears of the pure ones in their remoteness from Thee, and I invoke thee, O Thou Lord of indomitable strength, by this sacred Tomb and by this exalted Shrine [Vahíd's], to forgive me, and my father, and all those who for Thy sake have drawn near to these sacred remains, and all those who have come and will come on pilgrimage to this spot.

O my God, I beseech Thee by him [Vahíd] and by them who have suffered martyrdom in Thy path to bestow upon me and upon them that remain faithful unto Thy Covenant, the necessities of life. Thou art the All-Knowing, the All-Wise, the Lord of Creation.

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