

the independent sections of Qur'an.

Khutbih is a sermon. Usually it is the sermon in praise of God testifying to His oneness and His attributes which is written at the opening of a book, a risalih or even a letter. Sometimes Khutbih may be long and it may be an independent item by itself.

In the Bahá'í Writings in Persian and Arabic all of these identifiers have been used more specifically and usually they are used for the following purposes:

All the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, unless otherwise named by Himself, are referred to as Lawh (pl. Alwah). This expression has been used by Bahá'u'lláh Himself too. Some of the Writings of the Báb is also called Lawh such as Lawh-i-Hayakil and Lawh-i-Hurúfát.

All the Writings of Báb to specific addressee/s, unless otherwise named by Himself, are called Tawqi', such as His letters to Muhammad Sháh.

The letters written by `Abdu'l-Bahá, unless otherwise referred to by Himself, are named Maktoob (pl. Makatib) by Himself. (Maktúb is an Arabic word meaning what is written and is used to indicate a letter). The title of Lawh is often used (idiomatically and as a sign of rank and respect) for the letters written by `Abdu'l-Bahá.

The letters written by Shoghi Effendi are referred to as Towqi' (pl. Tavaqi' or Towqi'at). This is because He usually was dictating his letters, then adding a few words or lines at the end in his own handwriting and sign them. His general/universal messages are called Payam (meaning message).

Dast Khat is used for the letters written by the Greatest Holy Leaf.

Messages of the Universal House of Justice are called Payam and its letters Namih (letter).

I hope this brief explanation would help non-Persian speaking friends to differentiate between these various expressions and titles.

On "Pure" Persian versus "Pure" Arabic:

"Pure Persian" is a rather new term. Starting in the middle of the nineteenth century some Persian modernists and nationalists popularized the slogan of "pure Persian" as a call for return to pre-Islamic Persia and Persian. This is a movement that has continued up to this time. As Dr. Stockman observed it seeks to rid Persian from words of Arabic root. This has remained as a hot issue for over a century. As Shoghi Effendi wrote in some of his messages to the friends in Iran and as repeatedly emphasized by impartial and learned Iranian linguists this is a futile effort because in Persian language "pure Persian" and words of Arabic origin have blended together in such a way that they cannot be separated from each other. Many of the Arabic words have become Persianized. They are used in Persian with new meanings quite different from their meanings in Arabic. Persians language has one of the richest and most

valuable literature based on this unique blend.

There is no such situation in the case of Arabic. However amongst the Arabs are also elements who argue that Arabic should be kept pure and there has been attempts to coin words in Arabic for modern terms. This is also true in the case of many other languages such as French and German.

Due to the nature of the Persian language and the style and language of the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh in Arabic it is next to impossible to render His Arabic texts into Persian without sacrificing both some substance and nearly most of its literary characteristics. While it is permitted to render the contents of the Arabic texts into Persian for those who does not know Persian and would like to know the content exact authoritative translation into Persian was not approved by the Guardian. It should be remembered that mastering Persian language requires some basic knowledge of Arabic. As Dr. Stockman explained, it is like knowing some Latin to be able to master English language.

Some of the adherents of "Pure Persian" wrote to Abdu'l-Bahá raising the same question of why certain Bahá'í texts are revealed in Arabic and why pure Persian was not used throughout the revelation. There are Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá in response to such questions. In addition to the Tablets and prayers that Bahá'u'lláh and Abdu'l-Bahá have written in so called pure Persian, Abulfadl Gulpayegani, most famous Bahá'í scholar and teacher, has also written many items in pure Persian. As a matter of fact the best specimen of the texts in pure Persian are those revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, written by Abdu'l-Bahá and composed by Gulpayegani!

The fact is that the Arabic texts in Bahá'í scripture are written in a style that Persians with elementary knowledge of Arabic can read and understand them. After all we believe in and follow the guidance given by Bahá'u'lláh and His authorized infallible Interpreters. Thus even the above-mentioned explanations are not needed to convince us to follow their advice!

By the way no one has yet measured the volume of the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh in Persian and in Arabic to compare them and find out which one is more voluminous. The fact is that most of the Tablets addressed to individuals are either in Persian or in a mixture of Persian and Arabic. That is some sections are in persian and some parts or sentences are in Arabic. However the texts on laws and ordinances are mostly in Arabic. The tablet of Ahmad in persian is not the same as the Tablet of Ahmad in Arabic. These are two different tablets revealed in honor of tow different individuals. You can read about them in Taherzadeh's Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, Vol. II.

Iraj Ayman

Notes by Robert Stockman:

On Provisional Translations:

As we know,

Bahá'u'lláh revealed in Arabic and Persian. The first translations of His

writings were made in English by Edward G. Browne in the 1880s. After Americans became Bahá'ís in the 1890s, the need for translation increased greatly. In the first decade of this century `Abdu'l-Bahá sent a series of young Persian men to the United States to learn English, and He told them which tablets of Bahá'u'lláh to translate. There was a flood of translations between 1900 and 1910 as a result. After Shoghi Effendi became Guardian of the Faith in 1922 he undertook to retranslate some of the old translations, because they were inadequate and the tablets were important; he also produced brand new translations of perhaps 1000 to 1500 pages of Bahá'u'lláh's writings (Bahá'u'lláh revealed about 15,000 tablets, so the Guardian probably translated about 5% of the revelation into English, but he chose the most important 5%). During his lifetime he also reviewed translations by others and approved them for publication; thus Marzieh Gail and Alí-Kuli Khán (her father) translated the Seven and Four Valleys into English in the 1940s and Shoghi Effendi approved it (probably with some modifications). This is the translation we use today.

After Shoghi Effendi passed away in 1957, responsibility for overseeing translation fell to the Universal House of Justice. They have produced a series of short compilations of passages on specialized subjects and a series of long translations of significant tablets. The best example of the latter is *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas,* translated by Habíb Taherzadeh (brother of Adib, who is currently a member of the House of Justice) and the Research Department of the Bahá'í World Centre, published in 1978. It contains a series of tablets that previously had been translated between 1900 and 1907, and some previously unavailable works. The House's translation effort has in a sense culminated in the release of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas in early 1993. But their translation efforts have not ended; it is a World Center goal of the Four Year Plan to release another volume of translations of Bahá'u'lláh's writings. Apparently this volume will include the complete texts of the tablets of the kings and the Súriy-i-Haykal, a major work of Bahá'u'lláh's that was published in bad English translation in 1900 (`Abdu'l-Bahá even wrote a tablet, I am told, asking that the translation not be reprinted). We can probably expect volumes of new translations of the revelation every 5-10 years subsequently, especially once the Center for the Study of the Sacred Texts is established. The tablets we are studying in this course are likely to be high on their priority list, because they are important and known.

The House of Justice has also reviewed a certain number of privately made translations by individual Bahá'ís. But an even larger number of unreviewed translations have been made by individuals with the necessary skills in Arabic, Persian, and English, partly because the number of potential translators has greatly increased in the last 20 years (Persians have come to the west in large numbers, and dozens of western Bahá'ís have entered the field of Middle Eastern studies in order to study translation). The advent of the worldwide web have given the unreviewed private translations wide dissemination and circulation, especially because the House of Justice has

put no restrictions on the use of the web and has said that the literature review process necessary for publications does not apply to the web. These tablets are what I called *unreviewed translations.* To summarize, then, translations fall in three categories:

Old translations.

Authorized translations, in other words, translations reviewed and approved by either Shoghi Effendi or the Universal House of Justice.

Unreviewed translations (privately made and disseminated).

The Wilmette Institute's introductory distance-education courses assign readings only from #2, the authorized translations. We have restricted our official course work to these translations for several reasons:

1. Our introductory courses include Bahá'ís with a wide range of Bahá'í experience. We have a large number of students who have been Bahá'ís less than two years and whose familiarity with the writings of Bahá'u'lláh is limited. It therefore seems best to start their exposure with the authorized translations, because the unreviewed and old translations contain errors, sometimes serious ones.

2. Some people are uncomfortable with unreviewed translations because they worry about the translator's biases. They know translations that have been approved by the House of Justice have met standards; unreviewed translations have not yet been measured against those standards. If we were holding this course in a classroom, it would be much easier to discuss the problems in a particular unreviewed translation face to face, and everyone would have a chance to air their concerns. In a face-to-face environment where we can see each other's body language, our discussion of unreviewed translations would be richer and more nuanced. The faculty member can judge who is uncomfortable and who isn't, and can help make those uncomfortable feel more at ease and speak their views. Students can sense the environment and can shape their comments to what they feel is appropriate. But electronic discussion does not give us those opportunities; it is a much more limited medium in some ways. As a result, when a difficult subject is aired, some just get mad and say nothing; other react strongly and speak more forcefully than they might in a face-to-face context.

By the way, the Wilmette Institute has used unreviewed translations in classroom situations. We have even written the House of Justice and received its permission to do so. If we ever conduct advanced distance-education seminars we may use them there as well. But in introductory distance-education courses we have decided not to assign them. Our policy about old translations (category #1) is somewhat more flexible because most of them have stood the test of time. If an old translation of a tablet is available we may recommend it to you or even post it on the listserver.

Does that mean you can't read unreviewed translations? No, you are free to read them if you want to. They are not that hard to find on the web...

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Views18997 views since posted 1999; last edit 2025-03-28 06:16 UTC;

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URLs changed in 2010, see archive.org.../bahai-library.org

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