

(Bagdadi, Resala, pp. 109-10).

Šebl and his ten-year-old son Mohammad-Mostafa were among the group of about thirty armed Arabs who accompanied Qorrat-al-ʿAyn to Persia in Rabiʿ II 1263/March 1847 after her deportation. The expenses of the journey were defrayed by Šebl (ʿAbd-al-Bahaʿ, Tadhkira, p. 299). In Kermanshah, along with the public preaching by Qorrat-al-ʿAyn, he, together with Molla Ebrahim Mahallati and Shaikh Soltan, translated into Persian the Bab’s commentary (tafsir) to Surat al-Kawtar (Qorʿan, chap. CVIII) and discussed it with the ulema who had assembled to cast doubt on it (Bagdadi, Resala, p. 111). He then followed her to Qazvin, where he visited her regularly. After one month, instructed by Qorrat-al-ʿAyn, Šebl traveled with his son and a small number of followers to Tehran to meet Molla Mohammad-Hosayn Bošruʿi, the first Babi convert, who was on his way to Mazandaran. Thence they returned to Baghdad. Šebl spent the last years of his life disseminating the new faith and discussing with Christian clergymen, Jewish rabbis, and other dignitaries at his home, which was the meeting place for such gatherings. He died two days after receiving news of the Bab’s execution.

Mohammad-Mostafa Bagdadi (b. Baghdad, 1254/1838; d. Iskenderun, 27 Šawwal 1328/1 November 1910; Figure 1) was an eminent early Arab Bahai and apostle of Baha-Allah. From childhood Mohammad-Mostafa accompanied his father in his activities and waited upon Qorrat-al-ʿAyn, transmitting her messages. In Qazvin he served as a courier between her and his father, delivering his father’s questions to her and transmitting to him her answers (Bagdadi, Resala, p. 119).

During Bahaʿ-Allah’s exile in Baghdad and before his declaration in 1280/1863, Mohammad-Mostafa was among the few who recognized him as man yozheroho’llah (He whom God shall make manifest) foretold by the Bab and became his devoted followers. ʿAbd-al-Bahaʿ designated him as “the leader among the friends in Iraq” (1971, pp. 131-32). Renowned for his strength and courage, many Bahais took shelter with him whenever they were harassed or in trouble. In 1872 he was attacked by an angry mob and nearly beaten to death. Two years later he was arrested along with other Bahais and banned to Mosul, where he spent eight months in prison (Hosayn Eqbal, handwritten memoirs, private papers of Baghdadi and Ekbal families). Soon after he was released, he set out for ʿAkka and, following Bahaʿ-Allah’s advice, settled in Beirut. There he spent the following thirty years mainly assisting pilgrims on their way to Palestine and supporting the Bahai students at the American University of Beirut. He was the main link to the sultan and the political authorities of the Ottoman empire (Moʿayyad, pp. 11-12). His house became a meeting place for the mufti and other dignitaries and was visited on several occasions by the ladies of ʿAbd-al-Bahaʿ’s family (Afrukta, p. 538). It was in his house where the remains of the Bab were laid out for twelve days in January 1899, on their way from Persia to Haifa, before they were brought to ʿAkka according to the instructions of ʿAbd-al-Bahaʿ.

Mohammad-Mostafa was one of the eight people who carried the casket

containing the remains from Beirut to the Holy Land, where it arrived on 31 January 1899. 'Abd-al-Baha' praised him for this special service ('Abd-al-Baha', Majmu'a, pp. 127-28). After the death of Baha'-Allah, he remained loyal to 'Abd-al-Baha', whom he represented in Beirut.

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al-Resala al-amriya al-tes'-ašariya, an account of early Babi and Bahai history, and a divan of Arabic poetry in the rare form of five-liners (komasiyat). Upon Edward Browne's request he had sent him some of his poems, kept now at the Cambridge University Library (Momen, 1987, p. 492). Through him many on their way to Palestine received permissions to visit Baha'-Allah and 'Abd-al-Baha'. Browne alludes to Mohammad-Mostafa, whom he met on 22 April 1890 in Beirut, two days after his audience with Baha'-Allah in 'Akka. Browne was told that Mohammad Mustafa, "had as a child gone with his father to Persia "in the hope of seeing the Báb," but that, since the Bab was confined at that time in the fortress of Cehriq, he had instead gone to meet Molla Hosayn Bošru'i in Tehran (Browne, p. XLIII). This refers to the journey when he and his father, together with the group of armed Arab guards, had accompanied Qorrat-al-'Ayn to Iran in 1847.

Mohammad-Mostafa died in 1910 and was survived by three sons: Hosayn Eqbal (1864-1952), 'Ali Ehsan (1874-1917), and Zia' Mabsut (1884-1937). He also had another son, named Amin Abu'l-Wafa' (1878-98), who died before his father and was mourned by him in many of his poems. Mohammad-Mostafa was designated by Shoghi Efendi as an apostle of Baha'-Allah. 'Abd-al-Baha' wrote a lengthy elegy on the occasion of his death and personally instructed the setting of the tombstone and conveyed its epitaph (see Mo'ayyad, pp. 12 ff.; Afnan, p. 10). Mohammad-Mostafa was the recipient of more than 150 tablets from Baha'-Allah, ten in his own hand, and the others in that of his amanuensis Mirza Aqa Jan, making a volume of 591 pages, as well as 250 tablets from 'Abd-al-Baha', all in his own handwriting, bound in a volume of 314 pages (Baha'-Allah, Majmu'at al-alwah; Abd-al-Baha', Majmu'at al-alwah, September 1933; Kamran Ekbal, 2001).

Mohammad-Mostafa's youngest son, Zia' Mabsut Bagdadi (b. Beirut, 1884; d. Augusta, Georgia, 11 April 1937; Figure 2) was a leading Bahai of the United States and editor of the Star of the West. As a child he had been brought to the presence of Baha'-Allah, from whom he received both his name Zia' (Light) and his nickname Mabsut (Happy; "In Memoriam," p. 539). Zia' used to travel each year to visit 'Abd-al-Baha' in Haifa. He studied medicine at the American University of Beirut and then, in September 1909, on 'Abd-al-Baha's advice, came to Chicago College of Medicine and Surgery, graduating in May 1911. In the same year he joined the editorial staff of the Star of the West, and he succeeded Ahmad Sohrab as its editor in

December 1912, when Sohrab returned to the East. In addition to his practice of medicine and surgery, he translated tablets of 'Abd-al-Baha' to English, gave talks on the Bahai faith, and wrote the manuscripts for the *Star of the West* up to the fifth volume (1915).

When 'Abd-al-Baha' visited the United States in 1912, Zia' accompanied him most of the time. He was instructed by 'Abd-al-Baha' to supervise the construction of the Bahai temple in Chicago, the cornerstone of which was laid down by 'Abd-al-Baha' on the first day of May (Zia' Bagdadi, *Rehla* I, fols. 137, 140, 204; II, fols. 141, 237; Zarqani, I, p. 64). On 21 March 1921 he was given the privilege of digging the first shovelful of earth, commencing the actual construction work (*Star of the West* 12/2, 9 April 1921; his picture in "In Memoriam," p. 538).

On 29 April 1914 Zia' married Zinat Kanum, the daughter of Hasan Aqa Tabrizi, an attendant of 'Abd-al-Baha'. He traveled with his family to Palestine in 1919 and stayed there from December 1919 through August 1920, engaged in the medical treatment of 'Abd-al-Baha' and his family, translating for him, and writing letters on his behalf. He attended 'Abd-al-Baha' when he was invested with the insignia of knighthood of the British Empire on 27 April 1920 and on many other occasions of historical significance and wrote his memoirs, *al-Rehla al-bagdadiya* (introduced with facsimiles, together with passages quoted and commented on, in Ekbal, 2012, pp. 109 ff.; idem, 2013). In 1929 he published the *Treasures of the East*, a book describing his birthplace, his travels, and memories of his audiences in 'Akka'. He also compiled in June 1931 *Ketab alwah kususiya wa rasa'l barqiya*, listing the tablets addressed to him by both Baha'-Allah and 'Abd-al-Baha', together with the letters and telegrams of the latter to Bahais of the United States and Canada.

After he became editor of the *Star of the West* in 1911, Zia' played a leading role in the American Bahai community, serving on both the Chicago House of Spirituality (*Mahfel-e ruhani*) and the Executive Board of the Bahai Temple Unity. When 'Abd-al-Baha' started teaching the Bahais of America the significance of the covenant, it was Zia' who expounded its meanings ("In Memoriam," p. 538). In a historical presentation at the eighth session of the Bahá'í Congress in New York City on 30 April 1919, he elaborated this subject extensively. He was one of those few who provided a coherent statement of Bahai orthodoxy and a direct link with 'Abd-al-Baha'. It was through him that Shoghi Efendi informed the American Bahais, on 29 January 1919, that nearly a hundred tablets had been revealed for them and would soon be sent (Balyuzi, 1972, p. 434).

During the so-called Chicago Reading Room Affair of 1917-18, which led to a deep national dispute among Bahais, Zia' was credited, by an investigating committee nominated by 'Abd-al-Baha', as a conservator against waverers in Chicago. He also played a leading role in the race amity movement. During the "Red Summer" riots of 1919, which started in Washington, D.C. and Chicago, he was recalled as the one white man who went into the black districts and

brought food and aid to the needy. Together with Louis Gregory, Zia?, who was then a member of the Executive Board of Bahá'í Temple Unity, discussed the situation with the Board and put the blame on “the greed and schemes of certain white landlords in both cities,” who were trying to drive blacks back into the ghettos (Morrison, p. 130). He held public talks at universities and race amity meetings and conveyed words and remarks from ‘Abd-al-Baha’ and letters from Shoghi Efendi on race prejudice. After the death of ‘Abd-al-Baha’, when Shoghi Efendi set about building the administrative order, Zia?, who was now a member of the National Spiritual Assembly, was one of the leading Bahais who helped spread his organizational concepts.

The eldest son of Mohammad Mostafa was Hosayn Eqbal (1864-1952). He too was the recipient of a large number of tablets from Baha’-Allah and ‘Abd-al-Baha’, which are part of the collection of the tablets being prepared for publication by the present author. He spent most of his life serving both, and after the passing of the latter in 1922, he served Shoghi Efendi in Haifa as his attendant and one of his secretaries until the end of his life.

In 1874, together with his father and other members of his family, Hosayn Eqbal moved to Beirut and used to spend many months every year serving Baha’-Allah in ‘Akka. As a child, Hosayn used to transmit the letters of his father to Baha’-Allah in ‘Akka and bring back the tablets of the latter. In 1910, together with his younger brother, ‘Ali Ehsan, he moved to Iskenderun to establish the family enterprise, Le Grand Magazine (Askew); there he witnessed the deportation of the Armenian inhabitants of the city (Memoirs of Hosayn Eqbal, unpub. private papers of the Baghdadi and Ekbal families). Upon the orders of ‘Abd-al-Baha’, he, together with ‘Ali Ehsan, moved at the beginning of World War I to Adana, then to Damascus (1919), and eventually to Beirut (1923). The family name Eqbal was bestowed upon him by Baha’-Allah in a tablet dated 27 Ša‘ban 1308/7 April 1891 (Baha’-Allah, Majmu‘a, p. 588). Upon Shoghi Efendi’s orders, he was buried in the Bahai cemetery of Haifa. The eldest son of Hosayn Eqbal, ‘Abbas Adib Ekbal (1898-1975), was chief treasurer of the American University of Beirut and mentor of a group of Bahai students, who would meet regularly on weekly basis at the home of the Eqbal family to study history and the principles of the faith (Figure 3; Faizi, *A Gift of Love*, p. 12). He was also the representative of Shoghi Effendi in the years preceding and following World War II, receiving and distributing his letters and messages to the members of the local Bahai community of Beirut. He too used to spend all summer vacations in the home of ‘Abd-al-Baha’. In his youth he was the bearer of monetary sums transmitted through his father to ‘Abd-al-Baha’ and was addressed by him in some tablets as al-Amin, or al-Ma‘mun, (the Faithful, the Trustworthy; Majmu‘a, Rajab 1351/November 1933, pp. 29, 87, 270). Both his first name as well as the title Adib were bestowed by ‘Abd-al-Baha’ (Majmu‘a, Rajab 1351/November 1933, pp. 256, 274). His wife, Mokarram-al-Moluk Sarabandi, a Qajar princess, had studied at the Tarbiat School in Tehran and came in the early 1930s to Beirut, to study nursing at the American University there. After

the liberation of Lebanon by British and French Free troops from the Vichy French government in June 1941, she voluntarily attended the wounded soldiers. She was decorated by General De Gaulle, and she received on 8 June 1945 a certificate of gratitude from the general commander of the 9th British Army (letter in private papers of the present author)—probably the only Persian lady of the time to have those experiences.

Mohammad-Mostafa's second son, 'Ali Ehsan (1874-1917), was also a recipient of many tablets from both Baha'-Allah and 'Abd-al-Baha' and spent many months each year in the presence of both. Together with Hosayn Eqbal, he also took care of the Bahai students of the American University of Beirut (Mo'ayyad, p. 11). His son, Adib Razi Bagdadi (1905-1988) was the first Bahai pioneer to the Hadhramaut region in southern Yemen (1 December 1952) and was designated by Shoghi Efendi as "Knight of Baha'-Allah." He was a founding member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Iraq, established in 1921, and served until the early 1960s as treasurer or secretary. In 1972 he became a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Kuwait, and later a member of that of Lebanon.

Another of 'Ali Ehsan's sons, Jamil Baghdadi (1913-87), was for many years the secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of Iraq. Together with a group of other Bahais, he was imprisoned for six years (1973-79) after a ban had been issued by the Iraqi government on all Bahai activities and its administrative institutions had been dissolved. His younger brother, 'Abbas Bagdadi (1915-1975), professor of geology at the University of Baghdad (1961-71), was imprisoned with him and the other Bahais and died in prison on 20 January 1975.

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