

**Quddús: A Twenty-first Century Bahá'í Looks at the Life of a  
Nineteenth Century Bábí Hero**

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## **Opening Remarks**

I consider myself more theologian than historian, and this is my first serious attempt to examine

the life of an historical figure. I had two chief motivations for choosing to write about Quddús<sup>1</sup>. First, while we have biographies of some of the other important early figures in the Bábí Faith like Táhirih, Mullá Husayn, and the Báb Himself, we as yet have no comprehensive English biography of Quddús. We have the episodic material, mainly about the life of the Báb. Yet, of all the figures of note who followed the Báb, he is ranked second only to the Báb in importance. Second, the scattered information we *do* have about him in English is intriguing enough to invite further study. What was his full story? How did it unfold? And what exactly was his station?

In 2016, an Iranian Bahá'í named Hushmand Dihqan published *Hidden Treasure*, a Persian language biography that included not only details of Quddús's life but all of his writings that are publicly available. He also had access to individuals whose family histories included stories of Quddús, many of which cross-corroborated with other sources. The volume currently exists only in Persian/Farsi, but advances in AI and its ability to translate do offer us glimpses of his material, some of which is unique.

The challenges in researching Quddús (قدس in Arabic), his life, and his writings are myriad for the English-speaker. In order to be thorough, the researcher has to think of all possible transliterations of the first syllable of his name. Contemporary spellings tend to limit themselves to Q-u, but since many sources on the life of a nineteenth century individual will be from a time before English transliterations of Arabic letters were standardized, the researcher has also to search such combinations as Q-o, K-o, Q-o-u, K-o-u and K-u.<sup>2</sup> Authors capable of reading Quddús's writing in the original Arabic, Persian, and

"Persiabic"<sup>3</sup> report that his grammatical usage was atypical—and that his handwriting was atrocious!<sup>4</sup>

Also, naming conventions of 19th Century Iran were a world apart from those we use today. For instance,

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<sup>1</sup> Quddús's "given" name was Mullá Muḥammad-ʿAlí-i-Bárfürushí, with "Quddús" accorded him either at the time he accompanied the Báb on Pilgrimage or at the Conference of Badasht. For simplicity, we will refer to him as Quddús throughout. The same will mainly be true of the Báb (born Siyyid ʿAlí Muḥammad) and His other two great disciples, Bahá'u'lláh/Jináb-i-Bahá and Táhirih.

<sup>2</sup> Documents exist in which more than one of these transliterations is used, which makes word search tools challenging to use.

<sup>3</sup> A number of Bábí and Bahá'í authors, including the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, use a form of language that is essentially Persian grammar with Arabic vocabulary. To describe this unique conflation, I coined the term "Persiabic."

<sup>4</sup> Multiple sources indicate that he wrote daily sermons to encourage the beleaguered Bábí army at the battle of the fort built around the shrine of Shaykh Ahmad Tabarsí, so speed may have been a factor. On the other hand, Ahang Rabbani, who did an enormous amount of research on Quddús and other notable Bábís, says many who make this claim cannot have had access to Quddús's writings, and that the one example he has is written in exquisite Persian calligraphy.

Táhirih, the great heroine of the Bábí Dispensation and the only female Letter of the Living, was known severally as Fáṭimah, Umm-i-Salmih, Zakíyyih, Zarrín-Táj, and Qurratu'l-'Ayn. Men especially received honorifics like Haji (one who has been on Pilgrimage), Umm or Abu (mother or father of a certain child), bent or ibn (daughter or son of a well-known father) and nearly everyone might append the name of his birthplace by adding an “-i-” to the end of her name with the birthplace, to which is appended a following “-í.” Added to that, many women who were not Táhirih started life named after Fáṭimah, the illustrious daughter of Muhammad; many Shia men were named after a small pool of names including the Prophet Muḥammad and its diminutives like Aḥmad, and most of the Imáms, especially ‘Alí, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn. Also, many hyphenated names, like Quddús’s own “Muḥammad-‘Alí,” were in common use. Beyond Haji, another small pool of honorifics or priestly titles was in use: Siyyid or Mírzá, Mullá, ‘Aqá, Khán, Khánúm, and Begúm among them.

Counterbalancing these difficulties is our transition in the last 50 years to the age of the computer. Many older texts like 1890s editions of the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* have been uploaded to the Internet and are readily accessible to researchers half a world away. Materials by scholars who have studied Quddús’s life and subjects relevant to it are often readily available from their authors, and they can share these materials electronically at the click of a button. Repositories of primary texts like the Research Department at the Bahá’í World Center can share information about them when they can’t share the texts themselves.

Retired Universal House of Justice member ‘Alí Nakhjavání published a 2006 survey of the many works of Shoghi Effendi, who led the Bahá’í Faith from 1921 till his passing in 1957. He devoted an entire chapter to *The Dawnbreakers: Nabil’s Narrative of the Early Days of the Baha’i Revelation*, still considered our best English primary source for events and people related to the Báb’s dispensation. Following is an extract from that chapter explaining the circumstances of Nabil’s construction of this massive, detailed narrative:

Nabíl travelled a great deal, and many of his journeys were undertaken at the behest of Bahá’u’lláh. During his extensive travels he met eminent Bábis and Bahá’is and made copious notes of

what he had heard from them regarding significant episodes in the history of the Faith. He later met the faithful brother of Bahá'u'lláh, Mírzá Músá, who provided him with important details related to Bábí and Bahá'í history... In two Tablets addressed to Nabil, Bahá'u'lláh gave him clear instructions about the narrative he was to set in writing. He was advised neither to overstate nor understate, neither to expand the description of events nor reduce their importance (*Athar*, Vol. 4, 184–5; 193–4)...

Nabil started writing his history in the year 1887–8 and it took him a year and a half to complete. In the preface to *The Dawn-Breakers*, Nabil states that what he has recorded is “a description of the episodes I myself have witnessed, as well as those that have been reported to me by trustworthy and recognised informants, specifying in every case their names and standing.” According to a statement made by the Research Department at the World Centre, the following process for submission of his work to Bahá'u'lláh is described: “Nabil composed the draft pages of his history without any extensive reediting or corrections and submitted them in quires to Mírzá Áqá Ján [Bahá'u'lláh's amanuensis]. Upon their return to Nabil, ten months after the submission of the final quire, with corrections to be made (how these corrections were indicated is not explained), Nabil made the requested corrections to the text of the draft manuscript as well as adding an appendix containing further material from the Baghdad period which had been omitted” (RD 9/11/05). As stated by the Research Department, corrections had to be made to his original draft. What was available to the beloved Guardian was only the original uncorrected draft. In *God Passes By*, Shoghi Effendi points out that Muḥammad-‘Alí and his family “carried off, by a ruse, the two satchels containing [Bahá'u'lláh's] most precious documents” immediately after the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh. Among the stolen documents, according to a Tablet revealed by ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, was the text of the corrected version of Nabil's narrative.”<sup>5</sup>

I started out believing I was going to be largely regurgitating Quddús's story as given episodically in *The Dawnbreakers* and just leaving out all the interesting digressions. What I found was a wealth of material both physical and online from which I found myself prising details the way one might prise a pearl loose from an oyster. Although provenance can be a problem, I found several more histories written earlier, each claiming to be the earliest written history of Bábí events. Texts about other figures like the Báb and Quddús's fellow Letter of the Living Mullá Ḥusayn often held a few of these pearls: unique details of Quddús's life, or a different way of interpreting the significance of certain events or how they came to have happened. I started out with a reference list of about 18 works and ended up having at least looked at for inclusion on my reference list nearly 100. The publication dates of what I found spanned three centuries. And I discovered my knowledge of Islam helped me to recognize, whenever a detail came up, whether that detail might suggest we were getting into the realms of “sacred history,” or at least

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<sup>5</sup> Ali Nakhjavani, *Shoghi Effendi: the Range and Power of His Pen* (Rome: Casa Editrice Bahá'í, 2006), 92-3. There are anecdotes that claim Nabil included too many miraculous occurrences in his first draft, thus inviting Bahá'u'lláh's interest in a rewrite.

intertwining sacred history with historical fact. I have tried to give here a picture of not only the life of Quddús but the life of the society that shaped him and the reasons one source might represent an event one way and a second source quite another. In that sense, I think of this work as being the history of a people and its most important sub-set in a time of sweeping change that many embraced but many more, especially those in power, opposed—vigorously, and, often, violently.

The basis for most of the volumes detailing Bahá'í history is oral history from either eyewitnesses or eyewitnesses at one remove. But in most cases, they constituted very well-constructed oral history told not long after-the-fact by eyewitnesses. I don't feel this invalidates historical research being done in this century, research that of necessity relies on these oral histories, especially when multiple sources confirm the same event. The only difficulty I encountered was with the dating of certain events and with trying to explain how certain events could have occurred in the amount of time allotted to them in these early histories. What I believe is that there came to be multiple “chains of transmission” with origins in very early histories like Ḥusayn Hamadani's *Tarikh-i-Jadid*, the somewhat controversial *Nuqtat al-Kaf*, and even the early histories by European observers like A.L.M. Nicolas's *Seyyid 'Alí-Muhammad dit le Báb*.<sup>6</sup> While these cover similar events, dating may differ from source to source, and I opine that there may have been a tendency to make the story seem more (or less) littered with miraculous events depending on whether the author had a vested interest in trying to put the Báb's (and Bahá'u'lláh's) claims of prophethood beyond doubt.

One observation on the compiling of *The Dawnbreakers* by Shoghi Effendi since English speaking Bahá'ís must of necessity rely so heavily on it, courtesy of Stephen Lambden. According to Dr. Lambden, Shoghi Effendi did less translating than collating when he “translated” *Dawnbreakers*. Using one of only two extant copies<sup>7</sup>, he had to assemble the manuscript from the multiple loose quires originally sent to Bahá'u'lláh by Nabíl. The Bahá'í World Center has further relevant materials but access

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<sup>6</sup> Based on some details like whether Quddús's father died when Quddús was a youth, I would say one chain is reflected in the *Nuqtat al-Kaf* and Mázandarání's *Zuhur al-Haq* and a second in *The Dawnbreakers* and Hamadani's *Tarikh-i-Jadid*. For a discussion of the complex interrelationship of the latter two, please see [https://bahai-library.com/hamadani\\_browne\\_tarikh\\_jadid](https://bahai-library.com/hamadani_browne_tarikh_jadid)

<sup>7</sup> The other is in the hands of one of the Covenant Breaker groups; this is likely the one with Bahá'u'lláh's notes.

to them is limited due to concerns about the security of both the manuscripts and the Bahá'í Faith itself.<sup>8</sup>

A word about my social location. I was not raised in a Bahá'í home but have been a Bahá'í for 52 years at this writing. I remember as early as elementary school noting differences in people and being thrilled when we worked or played together without paying much attention to them. The Bahá'í Faith with its message of universal siblinghood and the continuity of religion was a natural step for me in my late teens. My “testimony” hinges largely on the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh being the fulfillment of millennial prophecies of the religions of the past and being the Twin Luminaries Whose teachings will lead to a world able to live at peace with itself.<sup>9</sup> While I have tried to maintain scholarly objectivity, I am writing from a perspective that does support the validity of the cause espoused by my subject, Quddús.

For translation and other help, I would like to thank the scholars and translators without whose shoulders this work would not stand as tall: Muin Afnani, Brad Crawford, Houshmand Dihqan, Stephen Lambden, Moojan Momen, Nima Reifi, Adel Sharifpour, Peter Terry, and Husayn Villar.

## Setting the Scene

Iran is currently a theocracy, so the line between civil authority or custom and religious dictum is a fine one indeed. However, although the Iran of the 19th Century had a monarch—the new Qajar dynasty had overthrown the Safavids in the late 1790s—it was during this period that the religious authorities

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<sup>8</sup> Stephen Lambden, personal communication, 10/17/23. He also described historical scholarship as being in its infancy and historians as not necessarily working well together: when disagreements arise, they are not always diplomatic in expressing their opinions of either varying approaches or the people who hold them.

<sup>9</sup> As I write this, Israeli tanks are rolling over the Gaza Strip, flattening homes, schools, refugee camps, and hospitals in the wake of a deadly surprise attack on Israel by Hamas. Let's call this optimistic stance a function of my moral imagination.

began to wield power, as they do today. Let's take a look at the conditions in the world to which Quddús was born.

**1) Civil factions.** Quddús was born in the large port city of Bárfurúsh (current Bábol) on the Caspian Sea. Although many affluent merchants lived and traded there, the city held its fair share of the poor, many of them farmers. In the past, Iranians had fallen prey to divisions of different kinds. Family, clan, tribe, and precise religious affiliation both defined and vied for an individual's loyalties.

Two factions, the Ḥaydaris and the Ne'matis (also Ni'mati), developed during the long reign of the Safavids and not only persisted but continued to cause outbreaks of violence in this time period. Masoudi<sup>10</sup> says the groups were likely to have formed in pre-Safavid times as the result of partisan affiliation to two Sufi masters, one Sunni and one Shia. If these sectarian affiliations had persisted under Safavid rule, one would have expected the Sunni-affiliated Ḥaydaris to die out or go deeply underground under the Safavids' Shia regime. The fact that both persisted supports the idea that the factions detached themselves from religion early on to become purely civil factions. Indeed, Masoudi supports the idea that these became social divisions rather than religious, particularly in urban settings.<sup>11</sup> Whole quarters were allotted to one faction or the other, and woe to any Ḥaydari who set foot into Ne'mati territory.

The *Encyclopaedia Iranica* tells us

The origins of their names and the cause of the antagonism were not generally known to the participants; the topography and composition of the Ḥaydari-kāna and the Ne'mati-kāna (which in some places extended into the adjacent countryside) was apparently irrelevant; and membership in either of these factions corresponded to no other social, political, or sectarian affiliation.<sup>12,13</sup>

However, Amanat<sup>14</sup> makes the following statement:

Predictably, the ideologically charged climate was translated into the existing social divisions. The prolonged urban conflicts in Bárfurúsh between Ne'mati and Ḥaydari quarters was largely

<sup>10</sup> Reza Masoudi, *The Rite of Urban Passage: The Spatial Ritualization of Iranian Urban Transformation*. (Oxford: Berghahn Booke, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Reza Masoudi, *The Rite of Urban Passage: The Spatial Ritualization of Iranian Urban Transformation*. (Oxford: Berghahn Booke, 2018), 66-7.

<sup>12</sup> John R. Perry. "Heydari and Ne'mati," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, last updated March 20, 2012, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/haydari-and-nemati>.

<sup>13</sup> The present generation remains antagonistic to its traditional enemy because it is past remembering a time when the two were not at odds. Think Hatfields and McCoys. Men forget but don't forgive.

<sup>14</sup> Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*. (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1989), 100.

expressed in Shaykhí-‘Uṣūlī dispute between Sharī’atmadār<sup>15</sup> and Sa’id al-‘Ulamá<sup>16</sup>. By the time of Mullá Muḥammad ‘Alí...this conflict developed into full scale confrontation.<sup>17,18</sup>

And who were these individuals whose personal antagonism shifted the balance from a social conflict into a religious one? For that, we need to consider the religious dynamics of the time.

**2) Religious factions.** The early to mid-19th century was a time of religious fervor in both the Christian and Muslim communities. Both spawned a number of movements built around the idea that a promised Redeemer would soon arise.<sup>19</sup> For both, the year 1260 AH/1844 CE figured prominently.

Simultaneously, a resurgence of an old approach to jurisprudence, the ‘Uṣūlī School, had come to the fore:

During the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth century, the Akhbari school predominated in the Arab Shi’i world, including the shrine cities of Iraq, and in India, and many of the prominent Iranian ‘ulamá were also Akhbaris.<sup>20</sup>

In the late 18th Century, Muhammad Báqir ibn Muhammad Akmal al-Wahid Bihbahání, (also Vahid Bihbahání) revived the ‘Uṣūlī school of jurisprudence. The Uṣūlīs took the position that a Muslim jurist should be allowed to apply reason and secular principles of jurisprudence, called *uṣūl al-fiqh*, to resolving matters of religious law. This application of reason and *uṣūl al-fiqh* was called *ijtihád*.<sup>21</sup> Its rival school, the Akhbārī, had been in the ascendant since at least the 1600s. It held that the basis for legal decisions should be solely the Qur’an and the Ahadīth and, by extension, the actions of Muḥammad and the Imams. For them, these precedents were all-important.

<sup>15</sup> Mullá Muḥammad Ḥamzá Sharī’atmadar-i-Mázindarání, who studied under Siyyid Kázim-i-Rashtí, who led the Shaykhí sect, founded by Shaykh Aḥmad-i-Aḥsá’i. This was a Muslim millenarian sect that preached the imminent coming of the Mihdí/Qaim..

<sup>16</sup> Previously known as Mullá Sa’id Bárfurúshí, Sa’id al-‘Ulamá’ earned his title from Násiri’d-Dín Sháh for his unrelenting hostility to the Bábís. Although not a great legal mind, he exercised a lot of power all over Mázindarán, and the famed mujtahid Shaykh Murtazá Anṣarí acknowledged him a year after the Báb’s martyrdom as the ablest mujtahid in Iran and considered him for the leadership of the entire Shia community. (Amanat, *Resurrection*, 182 n.)

<sup>17</sup> To be fair, neither the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* nor the Wikipedia articles mention that Bárfurúsh was specifically a place where the Ḥaydari- Ne’mati conflict affected daily life when they enumerate hotbeds of contention

<sup>18</sup> While conflict prior to the 19th Century could erupt in cyclical violence, the *Encyclopedia Iranica* mentions that “Descriptions of clashes in modern times reveal a generally low level of personal violence, actual bodily harm being replaced by ritual insult, hazing, or a symbolic ‘counting coup.’”

<sup>19</sup> For the Christians, this would be the Return of Christ in the Glory of the Father. For Shia Muslims, this was variously the Return of the Occulted Twelfth Imam or the Qa’im. The Qa’im would presage the appearance of a second figure, the Qayyúm.

<sup>20</sup> Juan Cole, “Shi’i clerics in Iraq and Iran, 1722–1780: The Akhbari-‘Uṣūlī Conflict reconsidered,” *Iranian Studies* 18 (1985): 3–34.

<sup>21</sup> Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi’ih Islam*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 184–207.



These two factions developed a mutual loathing as Bihbahání's ideas became more popular. This loathing sometimes exploded into violence:

Bihbihānī moved the disagreement from one of just difference of opinion (*ikhtilāf*) to the issuing of declarations of *takfīr* (being infidels worthy of death) against the Akhbārīs, with consequent intimidation and violence.<sup>22</sup> Over the next few decades, Uṣūlīs trained by Bihbihānī and his senior students at Najaf and Karbalā returned to Iran and gradually superseded the Akhbārī dominance that had previously existed in city after city. Although some of the Qajar monarchs were personally inclined to other forms of religiosity, they found it expedient to support the Uṣūlīs politically.<sup>23</sup>

Momen reports that Bihbahání even surrounded himself with “bully boys.” Where previously the ‘ulamā had depended on the civil authorities to enforce the laws they dictated, now Bihbahání and mujtahids aligned with him began physically enforcing their own judgments. This might not have turned out so badly had he seen compromise with non-‘Uṣūlīs as a viable option:

Where Majlisī had acted to exclude Sufism and philosophy which were at the periphery of the concerns of most of the ‘ulamā, Bihbahání brought the threat of *takfīr* into the central field of theology and jurisprudence, where previously only *ikhtilāf* (agreement to hold differing opinions) had existed. Bihbahání was now to exclude by *takfīr* all who disagreed with the principles of reasoning (‘*aql*) and *ijtihād* as sources of law... Bihbihānī, however, surrounded himself with a corps of *mīrghadabs*, servants who would carry out either corporal or capital punishment, and had his judgments carried out immediately and usually in his presence.<sup>24</sup>

But Bihbihānī's ‘Uṣūlī ideas had even more far-reaching implications for Shia Muslim society, and these extended far beyond the deductive reasoning vs precedent argument. With the resurgence of the ‘Uṣūlī approach, the ‘ulamā took on a much more active role in the daily life of the common Persian. Brought especially to the fore were the mujtahids, who had to be certified in a number of Quranic sciences in order to hold the title. Soon religious courts were taking the place of civil courts, and the place of the general ‘ulamā daily got further usurped by the mujtahids. This threatened not only the Akhbaris but the Qajar kings and was a reason the Qajars, in the time of Shaykh Aḥmad-i-Aḥsá’í, threw their support to him in favor of the body of mujtahids or other leaders of millenarian sects, which had become numerous by his time:

Throughout his journeys, Aḥsá’í was enthusiastically received, and on many occasions, was

<sup>22</sup> Zackary M. Heern, *The Emergence of Modern Shi'ism: Islamic Reform in Iraq and Iran*, (London: Oneworld, 2015), 165-22.

<sup>23</sup> Moojan Momen, “The Struggle for the Soul of Twelver Shi'ism in Qajar Iran,” *Die Welt des Islams* 60 (2020): 31-55.

<sup>24</sup> Momen, *Shi'ih Islam*, 128.

invited by Qajar princes, governors, and notables to reside in their cities. Hospitality and devotion were exhibited by such powerful figures as prince governor Muḥammad ‘Alí Mirzá Daulatsháh... and Fath ‘Alí Sháh himself, in the capital... Exploiting Aḥsá’í’s fame, the Qajar establishment promoted the peripatetic Arab theologian to provide an effective alternative to the rising influence of the domestic mujtahids.<sup>25</sup>

Still, the mujtahids continued to accrue power. One aspect of their growing influence was the Shia practice of *taqlid*. An exemplary mujtahid would become a *marja at-taqlid*, a figure worthy of being followed and whose judgments became unquestioned laws to his followers. With Sharí’atmadár supporting the Akhbári view<sup>26</sup> and Sa’id al-‘Ulamá the ‘Uṣúlí (both were reckoned as *marjas*), they and their followers soon came into contention.<sup>27</sup>

Yet another view the Uṣúlís held was that the mujtahids stood as deputies of the Hidden Imam, much like the four “*bábs*” who had facilitated access to the Child Imam Muḥammad al-Mihdí during his Lesser Occultation. They adopted many of the activities of these bábs. These included collecting the monetary offerings of zakát, khums, and other classifications of tax levied on the Shia Muslim community; leading the Friday communal prayer; conducting *jihad* as necessary; and rendering legal decisions based on *ijtihad*.

Momen suggests that the opposition of ‘Uṣúlí and Akhbári had a further dimension. The ‘Uṣúlí faction remained largely true to their beliefs, but the Akhbarís on the whole were sympathetic to the message of Shaykh Aḥmad, his successor Siyyid Kázim, and, after them, the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh. Many readily believed a new day had dawned. Many became Shaykhís, then Bábís and, eventually, Bahá’ís. This made the conflict more like ‘Uṣúlí vs Akhbari → Shaykí → Bábí → Bahá’í.<sup>28</sup>

**3) A conjecture.** Let’s see if we can put some of this together. Quddús was born into a world where ‘Uṣúlí thought had taken over the Shia culture in lands from Persia to the Atabát.<sup>29</sup> The Uṣúlís like Bihbahání believed there could be no compromise with Akhbári thought. He was both mujtahid and

<sup>25</sup> Amanat, *Resurrection*, 63-4.

<sup>26</sup> He is not known to have given allegiance to the Báb, but he is believed to have admired Him and had Bábí leanings.

<sup>27</sup> Quddús was a follower of Sharí’atmadár, as were many of the economically disadvantaged in their village/quarter. He and those who looked to him considered themselves Shaykhís.

<sup>28</sup> Moojan Momen, “The Struggle,” 31-55.

<sup>29</sup> The Atabát is the name used to describe the part of the former Safavid Empire that included Karbila and a number of other “shrine cities”—cities in which the shrine of one of the Imams of Twelver Shiism resides. They fall today into eastern Iraq.

*marja*<sup>30</sup>. The Shia Muslims danced to his tune, and mujtahids who were his adherents had every reason to follow his brutal example when meting punishment. The mujtahids believed they stood as deputies for the Occulted Hidden Imam. From this position, they might glean not only power but wealth.

Although Bihbahání died before the 19th Century opened, his hold on Shia thought had solidified. When someone arose to claim the title of Qa'im or Returned Twelfth Imam, would the 'Uṣūlī mujtahids be any more inclined to mercy, tolerance, and compromise than Bihbahání had been? We will learn a little later that Quddús—follower of the once-Akhbarí, then Shaykhí, Shari'atmadar—was martyred most horribly by Shari'atmadar's great rival, Sa'id al-'Ulamá, really the Bihbahání of his time. Quddús: the preeminent follower of the Figure who would usurp, if acknowledged, all the power and wealth of the mujtahids and overhaul the entire Shia social order—could the mujtahids allow him to live?

A letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi in 1943 gives us a view of the Swedish theologian Emmanuel Swedenborg and others like him:

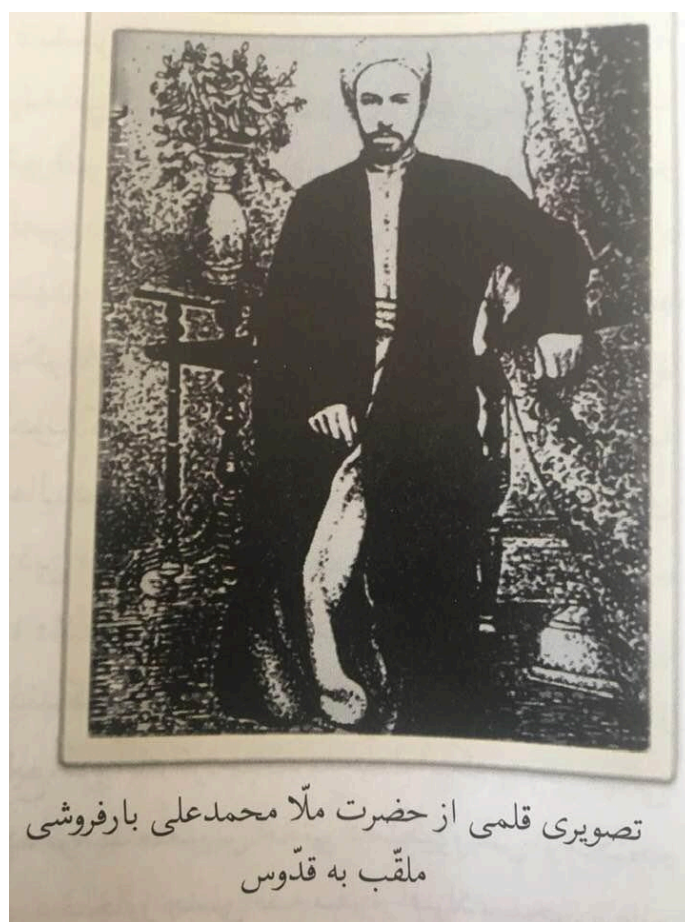
... The teachings of such spiritually enlightened souls as Swedenborg, Emerson, and others should be considered as the advanced stirrings in the minds of great souls foreshadowing that Revelation which was to break upon the world through the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.<sup>31</sup>

Where Swedenborg put forth pluralistic views, Bihbahání preached intolerance: he even began the practice of issuing death warrants against fellow clerics. If “advanced stirrings” of an age in which humanity lives in peace with itself produces lights like Swedenborg, might they not also evoke shadows like Bihbahání? Would not the great light of “that Revelation which was to break upon the world through the Báb,” the light that was Quddús, not also have engendered the shadow that was Sa'id al-'Ulamá? It will be my intent in this paper to examine the various influences on the story of Quddús, to explore at which points and how they may be reconciled, and to look at ways in which “sacred history” may have already intruded on the factual narratives.

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<sup>30</sup> He might be regarded as the Big Cheese *marja* of his time.

<sup>31</sup> From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, May 6, 1943, in *Lights of Guidance*, no. 1719.



**Pen and ink drawing of Quddús. Legend does include the words  
“Hazrat Mullá Muḥammad Ali Bárfurúshí” and “Quddús”<sup>32</sup>**

### Childhood and Education

*Quddus enrolled himself as one of the Siyyid's [Kazim's] disciples... Siyyid Kazim was often heard to remark that certain ones among his disciples, though they occupied the lowliest of seats, and*

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<sup>32</sup> Per Adel Sharifpour, source is Jafar Niaki and Pourhan-Dokhteh Hosseinzadeh, *Babol (the Beautiful City of Mazandaran)*, (Tehran: Salemi, 2004), 160

*observed the strictest silence, were none the less so exalted in the sight of God that he himself felt unworthy to rank among their servants...*<sup>33</sup>

Sources that address the youth of Quddús place his birth year at anywhere from 1819 to 1822, but the majority favor 1822. He was born into a family of impoverished rice farmers in the ‘Áqá-Rud quarter of Bárfurúsh. This was on the extreme eastern edge of Bárfurúsh and may have been its own circumscribed village. I found conflicting information about which civil division ‘Áqá-Rud fell into. Dihqan<sup>34</sup> mentions a source that claims the area was Ḥaydari, but Amanat indicates that when Quddús returned from his educational journeys, it was mainly the Ne‘mati faction local to him that supported him.<sup>35</sup> As Shari‘atmadar’s adherents tended to be the poor and small traders, I favor Ne‘mati.

His father, Áqá Muḥammad-Šáleḥ, lost his wife at a young age, but she bequeathed to Quddús her heritage as a lineal descendent of Muḥammad through His son, the Imam Ḥasan. His second wife loved Quddús and treated him as her own child. The family *marja*, as mentioned above, was Shari‘atmadar, who by that time had completed his studies with Shaykh Aḥmad in the ‘Atabát and represented Shaykhí thought as well as Akhbárí. Sources differ somewhat on Quddús’s personal association with Shari‘atmadar. Most suggest he was Shari‘atmadar’s student, but Amanat suggests Shari‘atmadar may have employed him as a household servant.<sup>36</sup> Villar indicates that, in either case, Shari‘atmadar knew Quddús well enough to write a biography of him<sup>37</sup> and was impressed with his deep spiritual capabilities even at a young age.

Shari‘atmadar was not alone in noticing his student’s brilliance, and when Quddús was about twelve years old, he was sent to the madrasa in the provincial capital of Sárí. Shortly thereafter, he traveled to Mashḥad to study with a Mullá Jafar, whose school was adjacent to the shrine of the Imam Reḏá, the eighth Imam. This mullá also instructed Mullá Ḥusayn-i-Bushrú’í, although my sources do not

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<sup>33</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 71-2.

<sup>34</sup> Hushmand Dihqan, *Hidden Treasure* (Luxembourg: Adel Publishing, 2016), 19 of my translation

<sup>35</sup> Amanat, *Resurrection*, 183.

<sup>36</sup> Amanat, *Resurrection*, 182.

<sup>37</sup> Ḥusayn Villar, “Quddús.” On Villar’s blog *Buscando de Verdad*, Last modified January 2, 2008, <http://Husaynvillar.blogspot.com/2008/01/qudds-mrz-muhammad-al-barfursh-titulado.html>. In a personal communication, he mentioned that a lot of his material came from Ahang Rabbani, whose wealth of materials on Quddús, which he was planning to publish, fell out of circulation when he died in 2013.

agree about whether Mullá Ḥusayn was studying in Mashhad at the same time Quddús. Dihqan presents some evidence that Mullá Ḥusayn preceded him by a few years; he also mentions that Mullá ‘Alí-i-Bastámí was likely a fellow student.<sup>38</sup>

When he was 18, after about six years of study, Quddús traveled to Karbilá in the ‘Atabát to study with Shaykh Aḥmad’s successor, Siyyid Kázim-i-Rashtí. As he had with young Siyyid ‘Alí Muḥammad, Siyyid Kázim seemed to recognize the capabilities of his unusual student. Nabíl tells us

[Quddús] was the last to arrive, and invariably occupied the lowliest seat in the assembly. He was the first to depart upon the conclusion of every meeting. The silence he observed and the modesty of his behaviour distinguished him from the rest of his companions...His disciples, although they observed the humility of Quddús and acknowledged the exemplary character of his behaviour, remained unaware of the purpose of Siyyid Kázim.<sup>39</sup>

We know that Siyyid ‘Alí Muḥammad, Who would later proclaim Himself to be the Báb, attended the school of Siyyid Kázim for about seven months. Dihqan tells us

There are historical documents available from Siyyid Kázim’s school. They show that during His seven-month stay in Karbala, Hazrat Báb visited Kazim many times, and thus there is no doubt that he met the Holy One [Quddús] many times in Karbala.<sup>40</sup>

Dihqan also notes that Karbila is the city where the shrine of the Imám Ḥusayn<sup>41</sup> resides, and that it was Siyyid Kázim’s practice to go there every morning to pray. He conjectures it is “obvious” from the words of a letter Quddús wrote to his family that the young disciple followed this example and had a sincere attachment to this particular Imam. This attachment may have followed from the teaching Shaykh Aḥmad proclaimed and Siyyid Kázim propagated that, according to some reliable Islamic traditions, Imam Ḥusayn would appear again after the Qa’im, and his return is the second appearance that will occur at the end of time. (In Shia eschatology, the second of the two great Redeemers is called the Qayyúm—but this figure is also known as the return of Ḥusayn.)

Quddús studied with Siyyid Kázim for about four years,<sup>42</sup> until the end of the siyyid’s life. As

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<sup>38</sup> Dihqan, *Hidden Treasure*, 22.

<sup>39</sup> Nabíl-i-Azam, *The Dawnbreakers*, (Wilmette, IL: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1974) 72

<sup>40</sup> Dihqan, *Hidden Treasure*, 42.

<sup>41</sup> The Third Imám. In what many considered the defining moment of Shia Islam, he stood against overwhelming odds in battle and allowed himself to be martyred.

<sup>42</sup> Of this education, Dihqan tells us “it is not surprising that we see that a significant part of the first followers of the religion [Bábism] were the graduates of Siyyid Kázim Rashti’s school. It was in such an atmosphere that Muhammad Ali Barfroschi

Siyyid Kázim knew his time was drawing near, he exhorted his disciples continually to remain firm, after his passing, in his teachings, to seek the Promised Qa'im, and to spread the joyous news of His approach:

O my beloved companions! Beware, beware, lest after me the world's fleeting vanities beguile you... Be firm till the day when He will choose you as the companions and the heroic supporters of the promised Qa'im. Well is it with every one of you who will quaff the cup of martyrdom in His path. Those of you whom God, in His wisdom, will preserve and keep to witness the setting of the Star of Divine guidance, that Harbinger of the Sun of Divine Revelation, must needs be patient, must remain assured and steadfast... Verily I say, after the Qa'im the Qayyúm will be made manifest. For when the star of the Former has set, the sun of the beauty of Ḥusayn will rise and illuminate the whole world.<sup>43</sup>

After Siyyid Kázim's death, Quddús and a number of his fellow students including Mullá Ḥusayn and Mullá 'Alí-í-Bastámí withdrew to the mosque in Kúfa', the better to prepare themselves for the search ahead. Nicolas indicates that "There [in the mosque of Kúfa'] they occupied themselves with strange and surprising austerities."<sup>44</sup>

Nicolas's translator Peter Terry elaborated on this:

The austerities practiced during the *i'tikáf*... [included] certain exercises in order to prepare themselves, both spiritually and physically, for the journey ahead, a journey which they all believed would ultimately lead to the discovery and recognition of the One promised by their deceased master, Siyyid Kázim Rashtí. For many if not all of these Shaykhs, this new master was the "Sáhib al-Zamán," the Imám Mahdí, the Qá'im. A journey of more momentous import could scarcely be imagined. They were preparing themselves to leave the valley of search (to employ a metaphor from Farídu'd-Dín 'Attar's "Mantíq ut-Tayr"), to enter the valley of passionate love, for they could not imagine a more intense passion than to be united with the Promised One of God.<sup>45</sup>

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(Quddús) entered the school of Siyyid in search of the truth.... In this school, Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kázim, based on the Quranic verses and Islamic traditions, were well aware that the time of the promised advent is very close. For this reason, they had put apocalyptic teachings at the head of their education in the school of Shaykhiya. (p. 41)

<sup>43</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 41-2

<sup>44</sup> A.L.M. Nicolas, *A Prophet in Modern Times*, trans. Peter Terry (Morrisville, NC: Lulu Publications, 2008) 41. This is a translation of a portion of Nicolas's work *Siyyid 'Alí Muḥammad dit le Báb*.

<sup>45</sup> A.L.M. Nicolas, *Siyyid 'Alí Muḥammad dit le Báb*, (Paris: Dujarric & Co, Editeurs, 2005) 53.

## Return to Bárfurúsh

*As became apparent over the following months, his return was more than a simple homecoming. Soon [Quddús] found himself as a chief target in a secret war waged between his previous mentor, Shari'atmadár, and his rival, the 'Uṣúli mujtahid Mullá Sa'id Bárfurúshí, better known as Sa'id al-'Ulamá. The existing Ne'mati/'Uṣúli division had already acquired a new dimension in the Shaykhí-'Uṣúli polarity as each of the two rival leaders came to present the interests of his constituency.<sup>46</sup>*

At last, after many years abroad, Quddús returned home to Bárfurúsh, where he quickly became a popular figure with the Ne'mati and, of course, Shaykhí communities. He is described variously as affable, pious, charismatic, and dignified. He had a reputation for sanctity and for meticulous observation of religious rites.<sup>47</sup>

His father had passed away by this time,<sup>48</sup> but his step-mother and household servants were overjoyed to see him. Her only complaint, mentioned in multiple sources, was that she wished to see him married before she died. His response is consistently reported as

The time of my marriage has not yet come. That time will surely come and it will be very glorious. My marriage celebration will not be at home, but in the green field and under the sky in front of the people. All the inhabitants of the city will be there that day when I will achieve my dream.<sup>49</sup>

We have the following take on this from the *Zuhur al-Haqq*:

Among the great and holy conditions and statements recounted by the companions of the Fortress of Tabarsi and the early believers, they have written that when the mother, father, and sister insisted that he should marry at the beginning of his youth, and he was refusing, to satisfy and please them, he said, "A celebration of joy and success cannot be done briefly; rather, it should occur in a grand manner, and be established in the public's eye with drums and trumpets and general commotion."<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Amanat, *Resurrection*, 182-3. Amanat describes the constituents as likely being the poor and small farmers for Shari'atmadár and the wealthy and influential for Sa'id al-'Ulamá. The divide between rich (or the 1%) is not unique to the 21st Century. The more things change, the more they remain the same.

<sup>47</sup> Amanat, *Resurrection*, 183-4.

<sup>48</sup> Sources seem split on this. Most report that his father died when Quddús was a teenager away on his studies, but an incident four years later at the Fort of Shaykh Tabarsi has his father appearing (in the flesh) and pleading with him to stop the attacks.

<sup>49</sup> This statement reminds me sharply of the Christmas carol "Tomorrow will be My Dancing Day." One has to wonder if, even before he recognized the Báb, he knew what his end would be, as he is here describing the circumstances of his martyrdom three years later.

<sup>50</sup> Asadollah Fadil Mazandarani. *Zuhur al-Haqq - Volume 3* (Tehran, Iran: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1968-1973) 423-424.



As we will see later, the *Zuhur* seems to take the position that Quddús's father, and possibly his mother, remained alive through the siege of Fort Shaykh Tabarsi. It also narrates the following episode:

Also, once after bathing in a bathhouse, [Quddús] was conversing at home with some companions, and while holding a penknife to trim his nails, his finger was cut, and a drop of blood fell. Aqa Rasul Behnamiri and Mulla Reza of Shah expressed their distress, and he, looking at them and smiling, said, "You who become so sorrowful and affected by seeing this minor wound, how can you bear to see my body torn to pieces and drenched in blood?"<sup>51</sup>

For the few months he remained in Bárfurúsh, he continued to impress Shari'atmadar and his Ne'mati adherents. Villar suggests he became a merchant; Dihqan says he had returned in part to settle the affairs of his relatives and friends, which he did. He also raised the ire of Sa'id al-'Ulamá.

One incident that I found alluded to in many of my sources, although the sources differ slightly on the details, happened within the context of the rivalry between the two senior clerics. A pious man organized a party of rich people and invited Sa'id al-'Ulamá, the mujtahid of the Ḥaydari, and Shari'atmadár, the leader of Ne'mati, along with [Quddús]. First, Sa'id al-'Ulamá entered and sat at the head of the assembly, and the host asked him the interpretation of a verse of the Holy Qur'an; he gave an answer that the host saw as lacking. Then Shari'atmadar entered and the host asked him the same question. Shari'atmadar gave a commentary that satisfied the mind. Despite this, he asked the host to query Quddús when he entered, so that everyone could benefit from his, Quddús's, insights.

Sa'id al-'Ulamá was confused when he heard this proposal and said, "Why are you insulting me?" he fumed at Shari'atmadar. "Before a mullá who has spent many years in study, is it permissible to demand knowledge from a young person who has studied for a short period of time?!" In the meantime, Quddús began his discourse, overwhelming the assemblage with his ideas. But the incisiveness of his speech fanned to flame Sa'id al-'Ulamá's smoldering enmity. After that incident, Sa'id al-'Ulamá repeatedly slandered Quddús in the presence of Shari'atmadar,<sup>52</sup> but the wise Shari'atmadar disregarded

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<sup>51</sup> Mazandarani. *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 423-424; this may be the same Rasul Bahnimiri who served as an inmate of the Fort of Shaykh Tabarsi.

<sup>52</sup> One would guess apart from Shari'atmadar as well

him.<sup>53</sup>

Villar tells us that at that Náv-Rúz in 1844, Quddús dreamed that he recognized the Betrothed [sic. Beloved?]<sup>54</sup> and decided he would make the pilgrimage to Mecca to search out the Qa'im.<sup>55</sup> and set out for Shiraz. Rabbani tells us that, in his writings, Quddús described his vision of the Báb as the phenomenon that enabled him to recognize the promised Manifestation so quickly. Rabbani dates his departure as the first day of Jamádíyu'l-Avval [18 May 1844].<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> The source for this story appears to be Mazandarani's *Zuhur al-Haqq*, but I've tried to condense all the versions I read so none of this is a direct quote.

<sup>54</sup> Husayn Villar, "Quddús."

<sup>55</sup> To be fair, Dihqan, doing the math, feels Quddús arrived in Bárfurúsh by Náv-Rúz of that year and left for Pilgrimage a few months later. If Quddús reached the Báb and recognized Him sometime between July and September of 1844, either scheme fits.

<sup>56</sup> Ahang Rabbani, *The Báb in Shiraz: An Account by Mírzá Habibu'lláh Afnán*, (self-published, 2008) 43, n.76.

## First Encounters with the Báb

*I seemed to be the voice of Gabriel personified, calling unto all mankind: 'Awake, for, lo! the morning Light has broken. Arise, for His Cause is made manifest. The portal of His grace is open wide; enter therein, O peoples of the world! For He Who is your promised One is come!'*<sup>57</sup>

### Declaration of Belief

In Shiraz, on May 23, 1844, the Báb spent the night demonstrating to Mullá Ḥusayn, His first disciple, His proofs that He was the Promised One. He then seems to have told Mullá Ḥusayn to remain quiet about his discovery; His first 18 disciples, who would be called the Letters of the Living, must all recognize Him independently. Mullá Ḥusayn had traveled to Shiraz in the company of 12 other mullás who had studied with Siyyid Kázim and who had been scouring the countryside on Siyyid Kázim's orders looking for the Qa'im. Through prayer, in visions, in dreams, and in the waking world, they came to know the Object of their search lay virtually before them.

Bahá'is the world over know the following story, but a biography of Quddús would not be complete without it. 16 more Letters of the Living later, after that fateful night when the Báb first declared His mission, these events that transpired:

One night, in the course of His conversation with Mulla Husayn; the Bab spoke these words: "Seventeen Letters have thus far enlisted under the standard of the Faith of God. There remains one more to complete the number. These Letters of the Living shall arise to proclaim My Cause and to establish My Faith. To-morrow night the remaining Letter will arrive and will complete the number of My chosen disciples." The next day, in the evening hour, as the Bab, followed by Mulla Husayn, was returning to His home, there appeared a youth dishevelled and travel-stained. He approached Mulla Husayn, embraced him, and asked him whether he had attained his goal. Mulla Husayn tried at first to calm his agitation and advised him to rest for the moment, promising that he would subsequently enlighten him. That youth, however, refused to heed his advice. Fixing his gaze upon the Bab, he said to Mulla Husayn: "Why seek you to hide Him from me? I can recognise Him by His gait. I confidently testify that none besides Him, whether in the East or in the West, can claim to be the Truth. None other can manifest the power and majesty that radiate from His holy person." Mulla Husayn marvelled at his words. He pleaded to be excused, however, and induced him to restrain his feelings until such time as he would be able to acquaint him with the truth. Leaving him, he hastened to join the Bab, and informed Him of his conversation with that youth. "Marvel not," observed the Bab, "at his strange behaviour. We have communing with that youth. We know him already. We indeed awaited his coming. Go to him and summon him forthwith to Our presence."<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Mullá Husayn to the Báb, Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 65.

<sup>58</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 69-70.

## Fruitful Digression # 1

Let us pause for a moment and consider this phrasing of the Báb: “We have in the world of the spirit been communing with that youth. We know him already. We indeed awaited his coming.” In an appendix, we will look at what other important Bábí and Bahá’í figures have said about Quddús. In the discussion, I will even conjecture about what exactly set him apart. Could it be embodied in these three sentences? Could the Báb’s ability to commune with His disciple have been so clear and so profound that Quddús could effectively speak with Him—possibly even speak with His Voice?—at a distance? Might his huge written output have, especially in the last year of his life, represented counsels he was receiving from the Báb while He was imprisoned in Máh-kú and Chihriq?



**Door of the Kabah with its ring and pilgrims for perspective. The Báb will grip the ring and lean on the door when He proclaims His mission to the assembled pilgrims.**

## Pilgrimage

Although Mullá Ḥusayn had become the first Letter of the Living,<sup>59</sup> it was Quddús whom the Báb chose to accompany Him on Pilgrimage to the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina.<sup>60,61</sup>

We have one puzzling statement in *The Dawnbreakers* that makes the exact dating of the Báb’s Pilgrimage a challenge:

To Mulla Ḥusayn, more particularly, the Báb gave definite injunctions to send Him a

<sup>59</sup> Although technically the Báb’s wife, Khadijah-Bagum, was the first to believe in Him.

<sup>60</sup> Mullá Ḥusayn was given the all-important task of locating the “Hidden Secret” in Tehran (i.e. Bahá’u’lláh).

<sup>61</sup>

written report on the nature and progress of his activities in Isfahan, in Tihran, and in Khurasan.<sup>62</sup> He urged him to inform Him of those who accepted and submitted to the Faith, as well as of those who rejected and repudiated its truth. “Not until I receive your letter from Khurasan,” He said, “shall I be ready to set out from this city on My pilgrimage to Hijaz.”<sup>63</sup>

In a separate appendix, I have addressed the math that makes the dating a challenge. Let me just state here that we do have a firsthand description of the effect of Mullá Ḥusayn’s letter, on whatever date it arrived:

I have heard Mírzá Ahmad relate the following: “The Báb’s maternal uncle himself described to me the circumstances attending the receipt of Mulla Ḥusayn’s letter by the Bab: “That night I saw such evidences of joy and gladness on the faces of the Bab and of Quddús as I am unable to describe. I often heard the Bab, in those days, exultingly repeat the words, “How marvellous, how exceedingly marvellous, is that which has occurred between the months of Jamadi and Rajab!” As He was reading the communication addressed to Him by Mulla Ḥusayn, He turned to Quddús and, showing him certain passages of that letter, explained the reason for His joyous expressions of surprise. I, for my part, remained completely unaware of the nature of that explanation.”<sup>64</sup>

This aligns with a comment Mullá Ḥusayn himself is said to have uttered, also narrated by Mírzá Ahmad:

Not until I met Mulla Ḥusayn in Shiraz,” [Mírzá Ahmad] told me [Nabíl], “was I able to satisfy my curiosity. When I repeated to him the account described to me by the Báb’s uncle, he smiled and said how well he remembered that between the months of Jamadi and Rajab he chanced to be in Tihran. He gave no further explanation, and contented himself with this brief remark. This was sufficient, however, to convince me that in the city of Tihran there lay hidden a Mystery which, when revealed to the world, would bring unspeakable joy to the hearts of both the Bab and Quddús.”<sup>65</sup>

Multiple sources have addressed the dates involved, placing the Báb’s departure from Shiraz anywhere from September of 1844 to mid-October of that year.<sup>66</sup> The trip involved a trip overland to the

<sup>62</sup> He instructed all of the Letters of the Living to send Him the names of new believers, but *The Dawnbreakers* indicates that only Mullá Ḥusayn had this special instruction and contingency.

<sup>63</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 123.

<sup>64</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 127.

<sup>65</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 127-8. Of interest, the reference to “Jamadi and Rajab” occurs multiple times in the *Bihar al-Anwar*, a compendium compiled by Majlisi of Shia ahadith referring to events that would signal the Day of Judgment. So there is a possibility this mention of months is not meant literally but refers to Mullá Ḥusayn’s discovery of Bahá’u’lláh in Tehran in whatever month it occurred. As I compiled my information, I came to believe a certain amount of the information we have in our primary sources represents fact but also “sacred history,” wherein dates, numbers of participants, etc, point us to a sacred truth rather than a literal, factual account. We will encounter this several more times while studying the life of this Bábí saint.

<sup>66</sup> Lambden gives a conclusive Sept. 9th, 1844 (26th Sha’bân 1260), for His departure from Shiraz. in “The Bab—Life and Writings,” updated 2019, retrieved 10/17/23, <https://hurqalya.ucmerced.edu/node/422/>. Amanat puts His arrival in Búshihir as 6 Ramadan/20 September, which tracks with other sources indicating this was roughly a 10 day journey. Sources are fairly consistent in saying He had a two-week stay before He boarded, dating His stay primarily by at least one letter He wrote to His

port city Búshíhr, then a voyage by sea for anywhere from one month to two to the port city of Jiddah on the west coast of the Arabian peninsula, then overland again to the holy city of Mecca. Shoghi Effendi sets the date of the party's arrival in Mecca as "the first of Dhi'l-Hajj (December 12)."<sup>67</sup> The interesting thing with the fluidity of the dating is that multiple authors give a single reason for the Báb taking Quddús as His companion rather than Mullá Ḥusayn, the first of the Letters of the Living<sup>68</sup>: the Báb was "assiduously preparing [Quddús] for the assumption of his future office."<sup>69</sup>

However, Amanat<sup>70</sup> gives some documentation that the Báb left secretly and hurriedly due to civil unrest arising in part from His new adherents violating His command not to divulge His name yet. Balyuzi<sup>71</sup> supports the overall miserable conditions in Persia and violence between Ḥaydari and Ne'mati but never suggests that anything beyond divine decree motivated the Báb in His plans to go on Hajj.

The voyage itself took place during the months of October, November, and December. Nabíl describes the voyage as "slow"<sup>72</sup> and the conditions as "stormy and unsteady."<sup>73</sup> Balyuzi gives a bit more detail, listing the ship as *Futúḥ-Rasúl*, Victories of the Messenger. He lists a number of shipboard companions. Two of specific interest are fellow Shirazians Ḥájí 'Abu'l-Ḥasan and Shaykh 'Abú Háshim, brother of the Imám-Jum'ih of Shiraz. The former gave the Báb his allegiance as soon as he learned of the Báb's claim to be the Qa'im. The latter was already jealous of the respect the young Siyyid commanded among the pilgrims and "became His implacable enemy."<sup>74</sup> His behavior and the actions they motivated in fact, so hostile and arrogant—to everyone, not just the Báb—that at one point the captain ordered his sailors to seize him and throw him overboard. According to Ḥájí 'Abu'l-Ḥasan, who narrated the incident, the Báb physically interposed Himself between the Shaykh and the crew: if the sailors grabbed the

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wife. Amanat, *Resurrection*, 240.

<sup>67</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*. (Wilmette: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'is of the United States, 1944). 9.

<sup>68</sup> Amanat alone conjectures that the Báb chose Quddús due to a feeling of affection and that the pair even took an oath of fraternity while on Pilgrimage. He cites multiple sources but says overall their evidence is weak. *Resurrection*, 241

<sup>69</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *GPB*, 9.

<sup>70</sup> Amanat, *Resurrection*, p.239-40. Saying Amanat basically suggests the Báb skipped town under a pall of suspicion is not going too far in describing his perspective.

<sup>71</sup> Balyuzi, *The Báb*, (Oxford: George Ronald, 1973), 81-84.

<sup>72</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 129

<sup>73</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 129

<sup>74</sup> Balyuzi, *The Báb*, 69.

Shaykh, to throw him overboard, over the side the Báb would also go. He counseled the captain to patience and forgiveness. This surprised the captain, as he had observed the Báb being on the object of much of the Shaykh's abuse. (We shall see later how the Shaykh repays this kindness.)

Quddús, meanwhile, became His amanuensis, writing down all the Báb would dictate of khutbas (sermons), prayers, and letters. Nabil makes this observation, interesting in light of the fact that Quddús himself would ultimately become quite a prolific writer:

Haji Abul Hasan narrated that "During the entire period of approximately two months, from the day we embarked at Búshihir to the day when we landed at Jaddih, the port of Hijaz, whenever by day or night I chanced to meet either the Bab or Quddús, I invariably found them together, both absorbed in their work. The Bab seemed to be dictating, and Quddús was busily engaged passengers of that storm-tossed vessel, they would be seen pursuing their labours with unperturbed confidence and calm. Neither the violence of the elements nor the tumult of the people around them could either ruffle the serenity of their countenance or turn them from their purpose."<sup>75</sup>

Dihqan voices the opinion that, on this basis, it is possible to consider Quddús as one of the first writers of revelation in the new era.<sup>76</sup>

The ship made landfall in Jiddah. Quddús, like the Báb (and possibly Mubarak—this is never really stated anywhere), donned the *ihram*, the garb of a pilgrim, and set off for Mecca. The Báb rode a camel and encouraged Quddús to do the same, but Quddús preferred to demonstrate the most abject humility and walk, leading his Master's camel, the entire distance.

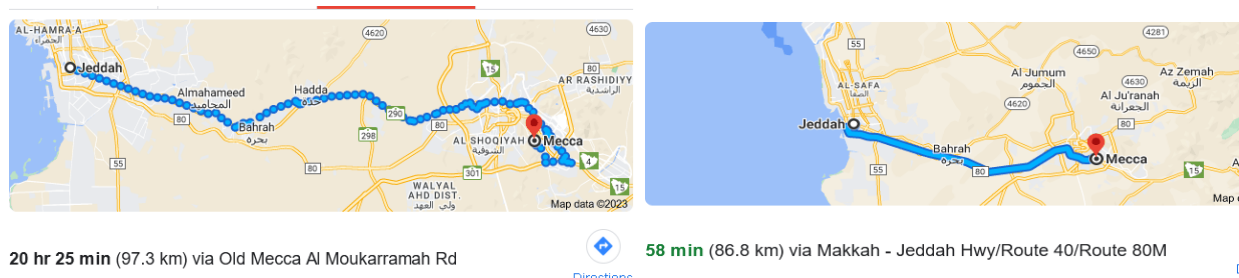
I did a screenshot of a Google map of the area just to show the distance Quddús chose to walk when he could have ridden: I gave the distance by car (on the right, the closest to traveling by camel Google offered) just to show that the route is slightly different, the time vastly so. The distance is nearly 100 km/60 miles. The time of 20 hours 25 minutes is for someone who walks the whole way in one long push. Because of its latitude, the area has hours of daytime temperatures in the 90s even in December; because it is a desert, there can be as little as 4 inches of rain a year.<sup>77</sup> Nabil says that 1260/1844-5 was a

<sup>75</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 130

<sup>76</sup> Dihqan, *Treasure*, 30 in my translation

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.climatestotravel.com/climate/saudi-arabia#mecca>. December and January fall during the rainy season, but with 4" of rain a year, the effect is more to make the humidity insufferable than to experience a monsoon.

particularly brutal year:



Although the month of Dhi'l-Hijjih, the month of pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, coincided in that year with the first month of the winter season, yet so intense was the heat in that region that the pilgrims who made the circuit of the sacred shrine were unable to perform that rite in their usual garments. Draped in a light, loose-fitting tunic, they joined in the celebration of the festival.<sup>78</sup>

Yet, in these conditions, Quddús, again, decided to walk

When the little party reached Mecca, the Báb sacrificed the requisite number of goats and completed the Hajj. Once He finished, Quddús took on another role: courier. The Báb dictated a tablet specifically for the Sharif of Mecca, the custodian of the Kabah; Quddús was charged with delivering it. This he did. He even returned at least once to see if the Sharif had read the document and had any reply. He did not.

Quddús was standing by when, after the completion of the Pilgrimage rites and when both the Harám-i-Aqdas and the very roof of the Kabah were mobbed with pilgrims, the Báb took the ring of the door of the Kabah, leaned against the door,<sup>79</sup> and proclaimed thrice in a voice that silenced the crowd that He was the promised Qa'im they had all been waiting for. This generated no reaction beyond absolute silence. There followed no immediate wave of conversions, but, since pilgrims from all over the world come on Hajj, it meant His message would now be disseminated far and wide.

<sup>78</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 134-5

<sup>79</sup> These in part fulfill a tradition prophecying about the Qa'im.





**The Black Stone, said to have been brought to Abraham by Gabriel. Legend tells that the stone was white when Abraham and Ishmael built the Kabah but that humanity's sins turned it black.**

Quddús was again a witness, based on the Báb's own words, when they encountered one Mirzá Muḥit-i-Kirmání, who aspired to the leadership of the Shaykhí community. Facing the Black Stone, he took Muḥit by the hand and declared to him His mission, offering the ultimatum that he must now either accept the Báb publicly or publicly repudiate His claims. He offered to give in writing answers to any questions the cleric might have. To His surprise, Muḥit capitulated on the spot. The Báb continued:

Verily I say, the Truth is even now known and distinguished from falsehood. O shrine of the Prophet of God, and you, O Quddús, who have believed in Me! I take you both, in this hour, as My witnesses. You have seen and heard that which has come to pass between Me and him. I call upon you to testify thereunto, and God, verily, is, beyond and above you, My sure and ultimate Witness.<sup>80</sup>

The entire Pilgrimage journey is reported as having taken anywhere from seven to eleven months, the party reaching Búshíhr sometime between February and June 1261/1845. Of Quddús, the Báb wrote at this time:

He who recognized him and who took the pilgrimage with him is the same one upon whom eight unities have passed, and God will honor him before His angels in the highest heavens because of the fashion in which he separated himself from all things, and his action is being without reproach

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<sup>80</sup>Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 136. Muḥit asked, and the Báb wrote out His answers en route to Medina, but Muḥit had already returned to Karbilá. It is there that the document finally caught up with him. Any ardor that he had not feigned in the Báb's presence had long since cooled and he waffled to the end of his days, fearing to claim open allegiance and fearing to oppose the Báb and, later, Bahá'u'lláh.



### **Interior of the Kabah**

in the contentment of God. It is not that a special grace was accorded to him, for this grace was accorded to all. But all are ignorant of this grace, for in this same year the Book of the Commentary on the Súrah of Joseph became manifest to all.<sup>81</sup>

When the pilgrims reached Búshihir, the Báb called Quddús to Him and instructed him to go to Shiraz. Note in the following passage that the Báb indicates the length of His Pilgrimage journey was about nine months.

The days of your companionship with Me...are drawing to a close...In this world of dust, no more than nine fleeting months of association with Me have been allotted to you... The hand of destiny will ere long plunge you into an ocean of tribulation for His sake. I, too, will follow you; I, too, will be immersed beneath its depths. Rejoice with exceeding gladness, for you have been chosen as the standard-bearer of the host of affliction, and are standing in the vanguard of the noble army that will suffer martyrdom in His name... Yours will be the ineffable joy of quaffing the cup of martyrdom for His sake. I, too, shall tread the path of sacrifice, and will join you in the realm of eternity.<sup>82</sup>

The Báb cautioned Quddús that torture, pain, and humiliation would likely be waiting for him but that he would receive help from the divine and ultimately meet the One who was the Object of even His own desire; ultimately, he would quaff the cup of martyrdom, and they would meet again in the afterlife. In addition to this caution, He delivered into Quddús's hands a letter He had written to His uncle, Haji Mirzá Siyyid 'Alí, that He asked Quddús to deliver personally. Haji Mirzá Siyyid 'Alí, titled "The Greater Uncle," was the uncle who had raised Him after His father died. They were very close, but he had not yet

<sup>81</sup> Nicolas, *Prophet*, p.54. Nicolas translated this passage into French and Terry, his translator, to English.

<sup>82</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 142-3. That he accepted this pronouncement with equanimity underscores Quddús's uniqueness, his utter detachment from the material world. How many of us, given this parting message even from the Revelator to whom we had pledged our allegiance would not have simply run in the other direction?

recognized the Báb's station.<sup>83</sup> Also, He presented Quddús with a copy of the *Khasa'il-i-Sab'ih/The Seven Qualifications*, which outlined the practice requirements for the new believers.<sup>84</sup> Finally, He asked Quddús to visit His loved ones and convey His loving greetings.

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<sup>83</sup> Really, He had only revealed Himself the year before, then spent nine months away from Shiraz, completing His Pilgrimage. Also, we read that He instructed the Letters of the Living to announce His arrival but to avoid disclosing His actual identity. It was a way of easing the Shia Muslim community into the idea of the Qa'im now dwelling amongst them.

<sup>84</sup> Which makes one wonder what exactly the believers from all the places the Letters of the Living went were basing their praxis on. Did they just accept that the Qa'im had arisen and continue with the same praxis they practiced as Muslims?

## The Road to Badasht

*The angels and the spirits, arrayed rank upon rank, descend, by the leave of God, upon this Gate and circle round this Focal Point in a far-stretching line. Greet them with salutations, O Qurratu'l-'Ayn, for the dawn hath indeed broken; then proclaim unto the concourse of the faithful: "Is not the rising of the Morn, foreshadowed in the Mother Book, to be near at hand? ..."*<sup>85</sup>

### Shiraz

Quddús, arriving at Shiraz, first discharged his promise to his Master to deliver His letter to Haji Mirzá Siyyid Ali. Quddús illuminated for him not only the nature but the scope and implications of His nephew's claims. His response was to embrace the new faith whole-heartedly; Haji Mirzá Siyyid Ali became the first in Shiraz, after the Letters of the Living, to do so. So steadfast became his faith, and so profound grew his love for the Báb and His message, that he consecrated his remaining life to His service.<sup>86</sup>

I must insert here a note I have found only in Nicholas.<sup>87</sup> The Báb's instructions to Mullá Ḥusayn while He still resided in Búshíhr were that he go to Isfahan and show several of His writings, including the beginning of the *Qayyúm al-Asmá* and some prayers, to Muqaddas/Mullá Sadiq-i-Khurásání. His hope—really, His belief—was that this venerable older man would embrace the new faith with alacrity. Mullá Ḥusayn was successful, Muqaddas declared his faith, and when the two of them left Isfahan for Shiraz, Muqaddas's friend Habíb accompanied them.<sup>88</sup> Nicholas later identifies "Habíb" as Quddús.<sup>89</sup> To become Muqaddas's friend, Quddús would have had to spend some time in Isfahan. No other text even suggests this, but I offer it as a possible insight from a volume that otherwise has some fairly accurate and astute information.

By whatever means, Muqaddas and Quddús set to work, joined at some point by

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<sup>85</sup> The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1982), available online at [www.bahai.org/r/621681825](http://www.bahai.org/r/621681825).

<sup>86</sup> He served diligently until his arrest in Tehran. Although he had been sentenced to death, many of his associates and admirers offered to ransom him. He refused, defending his faith, only begging to be executed as the first of the Seven Martyrs of Tehran. His testimony to the crowd was so eloquent and moving that the executioner himself left the scaffold on a pretext, never to return..

<sup>87</sup> Nicholas, *Prophet*, 81-2.

<sup>88</sup> This note about Habíb is the one variation from Nicolas; everything else is documented in multiple sources.

<sup>89</sup> Another possibility is that Muqaddas's companion "Habíb" was Mullá 'Alí-Akbar-i-Ardistání. Balyuzi, *the Báb*, 78.

‘Alí-Akbar-í-Ardistání. It was to Muquddas that Quddús gave the copy of the *Khasá'il-Sab'ih*. The new practices would include

1. carrying a special talisman with a specific verse inscribed on it
2. abandoning smoking in any fashion, including the hookah
3. drinking Chinese tea in the company of the “people of certitude”
4. mentioning the Secreted Pillar (the Báb) in the adhán after the shaháda of the wiláya<sup>90</sup>
5. obtaining a small tablet of baked clay made of soil or dust from the precincts of the shrines of the Imam Ḥusayn and the Imam Ali, and then using it to prostrate oneself in memory of the two Imams and martyrs
6. reciting the Tablet of Visitation written by Him in honor of Muhammad, Fátima and all the twelve Imams, and, finally
7. wearing a white carnelian signet-ring with this verse engraved upon it: “There is no God, but God. Muhammad is the Messenger of God. `Alí is the wálí-Alláh, may blessings be upon him.”<sup>91</sup>

Muqaddas was eager to put all the new teachings into effect, including the small addition to the call to prayer. the one directive that would irrevocably and publicly distinguish him as a Bábí. I'll let Nabil narrate the story:

Driven by the impelling force inherent in that Tablet, he, one day as he was leading his congregation in prayer in the Masjid-i-Naw,<sup>92</sup> suddenly proclaimed, as he was sounding the adhan, the additional words prescribed by the Bab. The multitude that heard him was astounded by his cry. Dismay and consternation seized the entire congregation. The distinguished divines, who occupied the front seats and who were greatly revered for their pious orthodoxy, raised a clamour... “Behold, this man has hoisted the standard of heresy. Down with this infamous traitor! He has spoken blasphemy. Arrest him, for he is a disgrace to our Faith.”<sup>93</sup>

You may recall Shaykh Abú Háshim from the journey to Jiddah, his shipboard antics and the way the Báb intervened to save him from becoming shark food. He was also a native of Shiraz, and even while he prepared for Hajj, he busied himself writing letters home about this young upstart Who called Himself the Gate. When he returned to Shiraz, he lost no time contacting his associates<sup>94</sup> about the new faith, and, when he heard that Muqaddas was preaching it from the pulpit, going so far as to alter the wording of the Call to Prayer, the news inflamed him.

<sup>90</sup> The addition to the adhan and notes upon it are offered by Balyuzi, *The Báb*, 78: “I bear witness that He whose name is ‘Alí Qabl-i-Muḥammad [‘Alí preceding Muḥammad, the Báb] is the servant of Baqíyyatulláh [the remnant of God, Bahá'u'lláh]” We will see the latter term a little later in a different context.

<sup>91</sup> Not really a lot to ask from new believers raised in Shia Islam.

<sup>92</sup> From what I've read, this mosque is in Isfahan rather than Shiraz, but sources place these events in Shiraz. Balyuzi gives the name of the mosque where Muqaddas had established himself in Shiraz as the Báqir-Ábád.

<sup>93</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 145.

<sup>94</sup> It's difficult to believe he had any friends.



**First mention of the Bábis in a European newspaper, the *London Times*,  
November 1, 1845, p.5**

Word finally reached the governor of the entire province of Fars, Ḥusayn Khán-i-Iravani,<sup>95</sup> who not only had the three Bábis arrested but sent a contingent after the Báb, who was still residing in Búshihir.<sup>96</sup> Ḥusayn Khán by now had procured samples of the Báb's writings and accosted them with the opening passage of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá*, addressed to the rulers and kings of the earth:

Divest yourselves of the robe of sovereignty, for He who is the King in truth, hath been made manifest! The Kingdom is God's, the Most Exalted. Thus hath the Pen of the Most High decreed!<sup>97</sup>

Ḥusayn Khán took issue with this wording, asking if Muḥammad Sháh must abdicate in favor of the Báb, or if he himself must abdicate as governor, or if they were required now to seek permission from

<sup>95</sup> Balyuzi, *The Báb*, 81 ff gives some background on his character. He had failed as an ambassador to both England and France and was not in Muḥammad Sháh's good graces. He was given Fars to govern because it had descended into such chaos and he did have a reputation as someone who governed with an iron fist. But what with his failures and the ongoing trouble Iran was having with the Russian Empire and the attempted incursion by colonial powers, one wonders if Ḥusayn Khan felt some pressure to be seen to deal definitively with the threat the Bábis posed.

<sup>96</sup> Nicholas, *Prophet*, 86 mentions that Muqaddas' preaching went on for three days and that, as his qibleh, he faced the house of the Báb.

<sup>97</sup> Cited in Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 146.

the Báb to retain their posts. Note, he was addressing Mulla Sadiq as the eldest of the three. Nabil gives us Mulla Sadiq's reply:<sup>98</sup>

When once the truth of the Revelation announced by the Author of these words shall have been definitely established, the truth of whatsoever has fallen from His lips will likewise be vindicated. If these words be the Word of God, the abdication of Muhammad Sháh and his like can matter but little. It can in no wise turn aside the Divine purpose, nor alter the sovereignty of the almighty and eternal King.

Notice the similarity to the misunderstandings shown by the Sanhedrin, Pontius Pilate, and King Herod when they were separately questioning Jesus. Both Jesus and the Báb preached that the Kingdom of God was near—but if either was a king, He was not a king of any material realm. Nor was either saying that He was God in the sense that God had physically descended from the Eternal Realm. Yet religious authorities of both times chose to interpret statements about the nature of the relationship between Revelator and God as claims of literal godhood.<sup>99</sup>

Whatever the cause of the misinterpretation, the aged and frail Muquddas was sentenced to 1000 lashes.<sup>100</sup> The following day, Quddús, Muqaddas, and Mullá ‘Alí-Akbar-í-Ardistání,<sup>101</sup> were all tortured in the same way: their beards were burned off; each had his nose pierced and a halter passed through the hole. In this way, they were paraded around Shiraz by executioners who appear to have handled the halter ropes roughly, for sport or to encourage the crowd to throw more coins.<sup>102</sup> They were then physically put out of the city and told never to return.

### **Quddús's travels after Shiraz**

The Báb had also given Quddús a letter for Hájí Mírzá Karím Khán, who had appointed himself successor to Siyyid Kázim. At this time, Karim Khán was also a prominent opponent of the Báb. Kirman,

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<sup>98</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 146.

<sup>99</sup> Could they see the world in no other colors than black and white? You're a king like Caesar or Muhammad Sháh or you're not? No world except the material exists, so any claim to godhood or kingship must relate *to* that physical world? Whether this is willful misinterpretation or just blind stupidity, it seems to be a recurring theme in the annals of world religion.

<sup>100</sup> Several possibilities here: a birch rod or similar was used instead of a whip, but his story as told by some suggests divine intervention: Some sources say he was observed to be keeping his hand over his mouth after the seventh stroke fell. He later explained that he only felt the first seven strokes and he was keeping his hand over his mouth so his torturer couldn't see that he was smiling.

<sup>101</sup> A *London Times/Literary Gazette* article cited in Balyuzi, 76, says there was a fourth Bábi. Note this is the first time an article about the Bábi persecutions appeared in a European newspaper.

<sup>102</sup> The *Times/Gazette* article says they alternately cried to God for mercy or called curses down on the heads of the executioners.

where Karim Khán held forth, did not give Quddús the negative reception Shiraz had. This was in part thanks to the protection extended to him by Hájí Siyyid Javad Kirmaní, a prominent cleric whom Quddús had won over to the Báb's cause. The two had known each other when they were students in the Atabát, and now Kirmani begged Quddús to tell him everything that had transpired since they had parted company. Once he had embraced the Báb's message, he kept this allegiance mostly to himself, the better to protect his friend and the new Bábís of Kirman. He even loaned Quddús his house to use for Bábí meetings.

Karim Khán tried to make trouble anyway. He appealed to the governor to call on Kirmani and have him sever all ties with Quddús. The governor complied, but Kirmani merely vilified Karim Khán:

He gives himself the liberty of committing the foulest deeds, and refuses to allow me to receive and honour in my own home a man of such integrity, such learning and nobleness. Should he refuse to desist from his practice, let him be warned that the worst elements of the city will, at my instigation, expel him from Kirman.<sup>103</sup>

From Kirman, Quddús traveled to Yazd, Ardikán, Nayin, Ardistán, Isfáhán, Káshn, Qum, and, finally, to Tihiran. He taught in every city and, in every city, stirred the hearts of the pure in spirit. In Tehran, he attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. Nabil reports that Aqay-i-Kalim, the faithful brother of Baha'u'llah, described him in this way:

The charm of his person, his extreme affability, combined with a dignity of bearing, appealed to even the most careless observer. Whoever was intimately associated with him was seized with an insatiable admiration for the charm of that youth. We watched him one day perform his ablutions, and were struck by the gracefulness which distinguished him from the rest of the worshippers in the performance of so ordinary a rite. He seemed, in our eyes, to be the very incarnation of purity and grace.<sup>104</sup>

A note in Villar's biography tells of a charming episode, but he does not reference it:

It is interesting to note that it is here that Quddús sees the eldest son of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l Bahá, who was barely 2 years old, and whom he referred to as "The Mystery of God," a title that Bahá'u'lláh gave to 'Abdu'l Bahá two decades later.<sup>105</sup>

From Tehran, Quddús traveled north to his home in Bárfurúsh, where he remained for about two

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<sup>103</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 181.

<sup>104</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 183.

<sup>105</sup> Villar, *Quddús*.



years.<sup>106</sup> There he was surrounded by a family very happy to see him again. Sharí'atmadár still admired and protected him, but he seems to have engaged in a correspondence with Sa'id al-'ulamá that only deepened the senior cleric's hostility toward him.

Hamadani relates an episode that demonstrates Quddús's foresight into his own spiritual path:

Háji Mírzá Jání writes: A believer whose words are worthy of all credence narrated as follows: "One day, before ever these matters were talked of, I was in the company of [Quddús]. We were taking a walk in the country, and in the course of it chanced to pass by the gate of that same ruined college [referring to the one-time school of Mírzá Zaki]. He, speaking of the vicissitudes of the world, said by way of illustration, 'This college, for instance was once frequented and flourishing, and is now desolate and ruined. After a while some illustrious man will be buried here, men will come from afar to visit the place, and once again it will flourish.'"<sup>107</sup>

Háji Mírzá Jání may be referring to the same incident in the *Zuhur* when he narrates the following passage:

And another time, while strolling in the green field with a group of companions, [Quddús] suddenly turned to them and said, "The body of a great person whom people do not recognize now will be burnt in this place with rice straw, and though it ignites with life, it will not burn, but people will not cease their wicked acts without concern."<sup>108</sup>

Dihqan describes two aspects of Quddús's personality (or just his person) that antagonized Sa'id al-'Ulamá: his virtues and perfections and his adherence first to the Shakhí sect and then to the faith of the Báb. Previously known and respected as a Shayki scholar, he had only deepened his knowledge and insights about the arising of the Qa'im and the arrival of the Day of Judgment.<sup>109</sup> Dihqan points out that Quddús derived no support even from Muslims and Shaykhis who were preaching the imminent arrival of the Qa'im: they didn't truly believe their own message.<sup>110</sup> Beyond this, the tension between Haydari and Ne'mati persisted. Amanat suggests that Quddús's popularity may have encouraged these separate factions who might not ordinarily have worked together to form a coalition against him.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>106</sup> I have seen alternative dating that has him in Bárfurush a year before Siyyid Kazim died, then returning after paying his respects in the Átabát.

<sup>107</sup> Husayn Hamadani, *Tarikh-i-Jadid*, trans Edward Granville Browne. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1893) 89.

<sup>108</sup> Mazandarani. *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 423-424.

<sup>109</sup> Dihqan, *Treasure*, 43 (translation)

<sup>110</sup> Or else, if they believed, they understood that, attractive as this message might be to the common person, they themselves would be out of a job the minute a Qa'im truly appeared.

<sup>111</sup> Amanat, *Resurrection*, 186,

Because of rising tensions in Bárfurúsh, Quddús spent most of this two-year period essentially confined to his father's house.<sup>112</sup> Despite this limitation, his teaching of the new faith attracted many adherents; both he and the new Bábís received some protection from the machinations of Sa'íd al-'Ulamá by Quddús's old teacher and current admirer Shari'atmadar.

Amanat includes some text from Quddús's second (of three) letter to Sa'íd al-'Ulamá:

It is imperative that a deputy from God of the universe,<sup>113</sup> may his name be exalted, should always be apparent among people. Otherwise, the ministry [of the prophets] and revelations of their scriptures would be futile. And this is a necessity for God and not for his people.<sup>114</sup> (From here, text not in quotes is Amanat, in quotes is Quddús): This explanation is given in the context of the Imamate, but its tone clearly denotes a permanent implication. It is only by the renewal of this divine covenant, he argues, that "the problem of decay and infiltration of the corrupt and the tyrant into [the affairs of] religion" can be avoided.<sup>115</sup> During the Occultation of the Imam, the time of "the heaviest burden," the people are left with "the Book, the Traditions, and those who would understand them, those who embody the word of the Imam, peace be upon him, and what has been related from him. They are appointed by him as his proof as he himself stated, 'They are my proofs to you, and I am the proof of God'; their command is his command and denial of them is denial of him and denial of him is denial of God."<sup>116</sup> Quddús views the recognition of this divine proof as man's principal task:

"It is imperative for every person to examine, before himself and his God, all matters to which he commits himself, and above all in matters of religion, with all fairness of mind and firmness of reason... If anyone puts forth a claim and presents proofs from the precise verses of the Book of God and also from akhbár, he then is rightful [in his claim] and his [claim] is justified against the wise and people of the faith. If on the other hand someone claims a position for which, may God forbid, he does not have a firm proof from the Book of God and from the reliable hadith, to the above-mentioned groups his [claim] is weak and void."<sup>117,118</sup>

During this period, animosity between people who had listened to the message of the Báb, people who preached the Advent of the Imam without necessarily believing it, and people who thought Quddús was preaching blasphemy became so extreme that Bárfurúsh erupted periodically into violent confrontation, nominally over Quddús's efforts to proclaim the new faith. Quddús protested that he had never pried into the affairs of any person; he did make an effort to engage in dialogue with the multiple

<sup>112</sup> I have found this suggestion of confinement only in Dihqan; Nabil, 261, suggest he freely associated with people of every class and that he was well-regarded by everyone in the city (except, perhaps, Sa'íd al-'Ulamá and his adherents).

<sup>113</sup> Two other translations from Dihqan and from this letter as it appears on the oceanoflights site do not use the term "deputy" and seem to be talking more about why it is necessary that the Prophets eventually die to this world.

<sup>114</sup> Amanat, *Resurrection*, 184, citing the *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 409-10, identified as second letter to Sa'íd al-'Ulamá.

<sup>115</sup> Amanat, *Resurrection*, 184, citing the *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 409-10, identified as second letter to Sa'íd al-'Ulamá.

<sup>116</sup> Amanat, *Resurrection*, 184-5, citing the *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 409-10, identified as second letter to Sa'íd al-'Ulamá.

<sup>117</sup> Amanat, *Resurrection*, 185, citing the *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 409-10, identified as second letter to Sa'íd al-'Ulamá.

<sup>118</sup> One might wonder if his reference to people who advance a claim without proof might have been seen by Sa'íd al-'Ulamá as referencing him, even if Quddús was only trying to clarify his own theological position.

mujtahids in Bárfurúsh but was turned down:

“Our dispute concerns religion. First the ‘ulamá must converse with us and understand our legitimacy and submit to it. Then the sultan of Muslims should obey and support the truthful religion and the subjects also should acknowledge [it].” In spite of the Bábis constant efforts to open a dialogue with the ‘ulamá and their appeals to them “to understand the true cause” and “guide the people toward it,” Quddús goes on to say, “some of them paid no attention, some ridiculed, some chastised or harassed, some incited people against us and made the kind vengeful.”<sup>119</sup>

He used the time to contemplate, write, and study. Amanat goes on to say that he considered himself merely “a detached soul” who took refuge with the “clan of God.” He condemned those who tried to stir up trouble for him by lying and defaming both him and the teachings he wished to propagate. His third letter to Sa’id al-’Ulamá addressed the cleric’s accusations of his unorthodox denial of the “proof of reason” and “action according to presumption,” Quddús argued that he did not completely put aside reason, the prime ‘Uṣūlī virtue, but approves it to the extent it is permitted by Islam and by people of the Book.<sup>120</sup> He goes on

For what worldly desires are you harassing this adherent to God’s clan? Though I enjoy no high status, in the eyes of my forefathers, may peace be upon them, I am no less than the dispersed people of Isreal [sic]... I am a youth detached [from this world and oriented towards] the clan of God... I do not know of any other refuge and retreat but to the Lord of the Time, may God hasten his advent... Neither have I claimed any cause, nor have I interfered in or disposed over anything. I have taken the path of Siyyid-i-Sajjad [‘Alī Ibn Ḥusayn, the Fourth Imam] peace be upon him, and it is going to be like this till God will reveal His command... Leave me alone and let me retire in the solitude of my abode and engage in what is the tradition of my forefathers. [per Amanat, this is most likely a reference to his lineage as a descendent through his mother of the Imam Ḥasan.]<sup>121</sup>

Toward the end of his sojourn in Bárfurúsh, he received, to his delight, a visit from Mullá Ḥusayn. Mulla Ḥusayn had made the journey to Máh-Kú to see the Báb and been permitted fairly free access. The Báb had dispatched him with instructions to visit the Bábí communities in every town he passed through and then to direct his steps to Mázindarán, where he would discover a “hidden treasure.” Nabíl notes<sup>122</sup> that many Bábis regarded Mullá Ḥusayn so highly that, had he proclaimed himself the Qa’im, they would have supported him wholeheartedly. In fact, one is quoted as saying that if Mullá

<sup>119</sup> Amanat, *Resurrection*, 188, citing *Nuqtat al-Káf* 163-6, in which this entire letter is summarized. (full citation given as Edward Granville Browne, editor, *Nuqtat al-Káf*. Compiled by Hajji Mírzá Jání of Káshán. London and Leiden, 1910.)

<sup>120</sup> Amanat, *Resurrection*, 185.

<sup>121</sup> Amanat, *Resurrection*, 185-6, citing the *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 409-10, identified as second letter to Sa’id al-’Ulamá.

<sup>122</sup> 264.

Ḥusayn was *not* the genuine article, he didn't want to hear about the One who was. And, of course, there was his station as the first Letter of the Living. Amanat observes about him

No figure embodies the prevailing spirit of Shaykhí Yearnings better than Mullá Ḥusayn. Few individuals in the course of the Bábí history match his status, his influence and contribution— not only for his dedication and resoluteness in pursuing Bábí ideals, but even more because of his determination to break away from the norms of the scholastic world to which he belonged. He is a key figure in the shaping of the Bábí movement, and the chief architect of its expansion. The background and character of “the Gate of the Gate” [Bab al-Báb], as the Báb later named Mullá Ḥusayn, exemplifies the making of a millenarian.<sup>123</sup>

Quddús held a dinner for his guest. Many Bábis of Bárfurúsh turned out to hear the loving greetings of the Báb and meet this disciple of His who held such primacy. Quddús acted as his servant, cleaning off the dust of the road, serving him at dinner, and then taking the place of a servant standing humbly among the shoes at the door. When the guests had departed, he asked Mullá Ḥusayn what had transpired between him and their common Master. Amongst the things Mullá Ḥusayn imparted was a sense that the Báb had left him with no clear direction to strike out in to further the work of their Faith. But there was that one statement about Mázindarán and that “hidden treasure” he would find...

Quddús pressed him on the matter of any new texts the Báb had revealed. When Mullá Ḥusayn admitted the Báb had revealed nothing new for him to share with the community, Quddús trotted out a manuscript he bade Mullá Ḥusayn peruse. Mullá Ḥusayn got no further than the first page before a dramatic change came over him. Nabíl describes that moment:

The loftiness, the profundity—above all, the penetrating influence of the words he had read, provoked intense agitation in his heart and called forth the utmost praise from his lips. Laying down the manuscript, he said: “I can well realise that the Author of these words has drawn His inspiration from that Fountainhead which stands immeasurably superior to the sources whence the learning of men is ordinarily derived. I hereby testify to my whole-hearted recognition of the sublimity of these words and to my unquestioned acceptance of the truth which they reveal.” From the silence which Quddús observed, as well as from the expression which his countenance betokened, Mulla Ḥusayn concluded that no one else except his host could have penned those words. He instantly arose from his seat and, standing with bowed head at the threshold of the door, reverently declared: “The hidden treasure of which the Bab has spoken, now lies unveiled before my eyes. Its light has dispelled the gloom of perplexity and doubt. Though my Master be now hidden amid the mountain fastnesses of Adhirbayjan, the sign of His splendour and the revelation of His might stand manifest before me. I have found in Mázindarán the reflection of His glory.”<sup>124</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Amanat, *Resurrection*, 156.

<sup>124</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 263

From that moment, Mullá Ḥusayn—the first to believe in the Báb, whose excellent personal qualities, whose insights into theological problems that stumped the most senior clerics evoked such admiration—took his direction, humbly, from Quddús.<sup>125</sup> When the Bábí community gathered the next morning, they noted that Quddús and Mullá Ḥusayn had exchanged places: Mullá Ḥusayn now stood amongst the shoes by the door and Quddús occupied the seat of honor.

They did not have long to marvel. Quddús immediately gave Mullá Ḥusayn and the assembled Bábís their marching orders:

Now, at this very hour, you should arise and, armed with the rod of wisdom and of might, silence the host of evil plotters who strive to discredit the fair name of the Faith of God. You should face that multitude and confound their forces. You should place your reliance upon the grace of God, and should regard their machinations as a futile attempt to obscure the radiance of the Cause.”<sup>126</sup>

He assigned two tasks specifically to Mullá Ḥusayn. First, he should try his luck with Sa’id al-‘Ulamá, whose heart had turned stonier and stonier during his written correspondence with Quddús. Next, he was to proceed to Mashhad and have built there a structure that would allow them both to take up residence and also serve as a meeting area and center of activities for the Bábí community in Khurásán.<sup>127</sup>

Mullá Ḥusayn departed as instructed and came into the presence of Sa’id al-‘Ulamá at a time when he was surrounded by his disciples. He spoke so eloquently and struck down Sa’id al-‘Ulamá’s every argument against the New Day with such adroitness that the senior cleric is reported by Nabíl<sup>128</sup> as developing a fear that his disciples would, to a man, rally around the young Bábí. Nabíl suggests that he was reduced to abusive language rather than cogent counter-arguments. Mullá Ḥusayn finally gave up in frustration, realizing the man just did not have the capacity to understand, and turned his mind to the task he *could* accomplish: returning to Mashhad to see that Quddús’s center of activities got built.

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<sup>125</sup> He may have capitulated with such grace because he had had one other experience with meeting a figure to whom he felt infinitely superior: the Báb!

<sup>126</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 265.

<sup>127</sup> A Bábí-Bábí Center!

<sup>128</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 266.

Hamadani dates the following information about Quddús to what can only be this period and again shows his foresight even in matters concerning his own demise:

So likewise in the year of his martyrdom, before he went to Khurasan, he chanced one day to pass with a companion through the square in which he suffered death. His eyes happening to fall on a heap of dried rice-stalks, he remarked, “This very year they will slay a certain holy man in this very spot after the vilest fashion, and will attempt to burn his body with these very rice-stalks, but the fire will be ashamed to touch it, though this people will not be ashamed.” Then he heaved a deep sigh and was silent. Again in that same year he had repeatedly said to his sister and his step-mother, “This year all manner of troubles will befall you by reason of the love ye bear me, but be ye patient and thankful when affliction comes and the predestined blow falls, and display resignation and fortitude.”<sup>129</sup>

## Fruitful Digression #2

Building on what we discussed earlier, are we now encountering a more “purified” form of Quddús—in effect, a Quddús 2.0? Since our prior discussion when we looked at the Báb’s remark about communing with Quddús in the world of the spirit, the two have shared the Pilgrimage as well as two bumpy boat rides during which the Báb dictated what sounds like volumes while Quddús took dictation. There followed what the Báb indicated would be a separation that would last to the grave. Quddús then teamed up with Muqaddas and ‘Alí ‘Akbar-‘i-‘Ardibili to go to Shiraz, where they were taken prisoner and tortured, becoming the first Bábís to suffer for the new faith in Shiraz. Could extensive exposure to the Bab as well as His “revelation writings,” followed by painful and humiliating torture, reformed Quddús, chipping away what little dross there was till he became a perfect vessel for the Báb’s will? Could he have gotten to the point that, even at a distance, the words that came out of his mouth were the words the Báb put there?

## In Khurásán

Mehrabkhani provides some background on conditions in Khurásán at the time Mulla Ḥusayn arrived. A revolt in the province by Ḥasan Khán Sálár, which would last until 1850, took place in two phases, an uneasy peace between the two in progress around the time Mullá Ḥusayn arrived.<sup>130</sup> Sálár, a Khurásání native, wished to promote the interests of Bahman Mírzá, a nephew or cousin of Muhammad Sháh, who served as regent for the underage crown prince, Nasiri’d-Dín. Court intrigue became especially

<sup>129</sup> Hamadani, *Tarikh*, 91

<sup>130</sup> It would resume in September of 1848.

intense when Muhammad Sháh's health faltered late in 1842. A marriage between the crown prince and the daughter of another prince briefly stabilized Persia, but Sálár propagated a rebellion in Khurásán beginning in 1846.



Although many local tribes supported him, the clergy backed the Sháh—we might say they supported the status quo—and Mehrabkhani refers to Mashhad as “the most fanatical city in Iran.” At the time Mullá Husayn arrived, Sálár had suffered defeat and withdrawn far to the north in Khurásán, but the memory of Sálár's and many other rebellions remained fresh in the minds of the Qajars, and an occupying force continued to camp a few miles outside Mashhad.<sup>131</sup> Of interest, before Mullá Husayn made his pilgrimage to see the Báb, Sálár approached him as the chief Bábí in the area: the general reckoned the Bábís constituted a large enough force to be useful to him. Mehrabkhani posits that the impossibility of explaining to such a warlike and ambitious man that the message of the Báb was one of spiritual transformation rather than armed rebellion was what motivated Mullá Husayn to undertake the long journey to Máh-Kú on foot at that particular time.<sup>132</sup>

As soon as Mullá Husayn entered Mashhad, he went about his task. He contacted Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir-i-Qá'iní, who immediately set to work designing and building the structure Quddús had requested..<sup>133</sup> They called the little building “the Bábíyyih.” By the late spring, the building was completed. Not long after that, Quddús joined his Bábí brothers and sisters in Mashhad. Together, Quddús and Mullá Husayn spread the news of the advent of the promised Qa'im; the Bábíyyih soon became a center of Bábí activity. Mullá Husayn would engage interested listeners, then bring them back to the

<sup>131</sup> Ruḥu'llah Mehrabkhani. *Mullá Husayn: Disciple at Dawn*. (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1987). 160 ff.

<sup>132</sup> Mehrabkhani, *Husayn*, 135

<sup>133</sup> The structure was either designed and built by him or else was a house he owned that he contributed.

Bábiyyih, where he brought them into the presence of Quddús. Nabíl indicates that the number of new adherents, first in Mashhad and then in all of Khurásán, could be counted not in single, double, or even triple digits but in “multitudes.”

The people who warmed to the Bábí message and flocked to the Bábiyyih were not the only people who noticed the presence of the nascent community. The clergy, of course, noticed. Hearts were moved by Quddús’s eloquent speech, but not all were moved to nobility and belief. Many of the local tribes hated Qajar rule, but the clergy that had supported Muhammad Sháh and the status quo moved to reassert themselves. Mehrabkhani cites Muhammad Mu`in al-Saltanih’s *Tarikh-i Amr*<sup>134</sup> with an interesting story. The Bábí scribes had become known for writing out the Báb’s texts in red ink. Mulla Husayn had the Bábís write out two scriptures, one a text written by the Imam ‘Alí in red ink and one a text of the Báb’s in black. These they submitted to the leading mullás for comment. They identified the text written in black, really the Báb’s, as inspired words. The text in red, really the words of the Imam Ali, they criticized as being 1) full of grammatical errors and 2) blasphemy.<sup>135</sup>

When it was clear the Bábí leaders could refute any scriptural or theological arguments the clergy could make, the mullás turned to violence. The chief constable ordered the arrest of a man named Hasan, a Bábí who was variously a friend or a servant of Mullá Husayn’s. He was attacked by a contingent of men. Ironically, his attackers inflicted on Hasan the same torture and indignity Quddús had suffered in Shiraz: they pierced the septum of his nose, threaded a cord through it, and, using it as a halter, led him through the streets of Mashhad. Incensed at this treatment, some of Hasan’s fellow believers ran to Mullá Husayn and Quddús. To spare his leader distress, Mullá Husayn listened to what they had to say and attempted to calm their ire. They urged him to retaliate: meeting violence with violence was fair play.

But Mullá Husayn understood the Báb’s new teachings to be more like the Christian ideal of turning the other cheek. He urged these brand-new Bábís not to raise their swords against Hasan’s captors.

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<sup>134</sup> This is all the information I could find. It is apparently an unpublished manuscript of over 500 pages.

<sup>135</sup> Mehrabkhani, *Husayn*, 163. To be fair, Mehrabkhani relates that when shown to impartial readers, they were identified correctly.



They went away, not eager but willing to obey. Shortly thereafter, however, a number of them banded together and marched through the streets of Mashhad, loudly crying “Ya Sahibu’z-Zaman!”—“O Lord of the Age!”<sup>136</sup> As fortune would have it, they encountered Ḥasan and his tormentors; the actual sight of their enemies parading the inoffensive Ḥasan through the streets was more than they could bear. Out came their swords. Seconds later, Ḥasan’s captors lay dead. They hustled Ḥasan back to the Bábiyyih, perhaps not realizing they would have to face an enraged Mullá Ḥusayn.<sup>137</sup> The ultimate consequence was that Mullá Ḥusayn and not these rank and file Bábis became the target of the authorities. An arrest warrant would have been issued but for the timely intervention of one Abdu’l-‘Alí Khán-i-Maraghiyi, the captain of the artillery of Prince Hamzih Mírzá, who commanded the garrison left in place near Mashhad to deter further attack by Sálár.

The Prince’s original order to ‘Abdu’l-‘Alí Khán-i-Maraghiyi<sup>138</sup> had been to kill Mullá Ḥusayn, ‘Abdu’l-‘Alí Khán refused, going so far as to tell his Prince that he, the Prince, should instead strike *him* down, after which he could step over his fallen body and do the deed himself. The Prince, who also had great regard for the Bábí leader, rethought both the arrest and the assassination orders and composed a simple invitation for Mullá Ḥusayn to visit his camp for a few days—for his protection.

Upon the receipt of this letter, Mulla Ḥusayn presented it to Quddús, who advised him to respond to the invitation of the Prince. Nabil narrates

“No harm can befall you,” Quddús assured him. “As to me, I shall this very night set out in the company of Mírzá Muhammad-‘Aliy-i-Qazvini, one of the Letters of the Living, for Mázindarán. Please God, you too, at the head of a large company of the faithful and preceded by the ‘Black Standards’ will depart from Mashhad and will join me. We shall meet at whatever place the Almighty shall have decreed.” Mulla Ḥusayn joyously responded. He threw himself at the feet of Quddús and assured him of his firm determination to discharge with fidelity the obligations which he had imposed upon him. Quddús lovingly took him in his arms and, kissing his eyes and his forehead, committed him to the Almighty’s unfailing protection...

<sup>136</sup> Fortuitously, this was the first time this cry had been raised in Khurásán. Not all the Bábis understood that their faith was any more than a radical, millennialist sect of Islam, and this cry very clearly told anyone who heard it that the promised Qa’im had arrived and the Judgment was here, or at least that this collection of screaming lunatics thought so. The screaming lunatics will be using this battle cry quite a bit during this history.

<sup>137</sup> Nabil quotes his words to the perpetrators as “You have refused to tolerate the trials to which he has been subjected; how can you reconcile yourselves to the martyrdom of Ḥusayn?” referring, of course, to the demise of the Imams and Ḥusayn, and also to his impending martyrdom.

<sup>138</sup> Mehrabkhani identifies him as a Bábí.

That very night, Quddús summoned to his presence Mírzá Muhammad-Báqir-i-Qá'iní, who had built the Bábiyyih, together with a number of the most prominent among his companions, and enjoined upon them to bear unquestioned allegiance to Mulla Husayn and to obey implicitly whatever he might wish them to do. "Tempestuous are the storms which lie ahead of us," he told them. "The days of stress and violent commotion are fast approaching. Cleave to him, for in obedience to his command lies your salvation."<sup>139</sup>

### Fruitful Digression #3

Every source that deals with Quddús's departure makes it sound like it was completely without preamble and quite sudden. This seems a little odd, as Khurásán, especially Mashhad, has just erupted into violence and Mullá Husayn has just ridden off to be the "guest" of Prince Hamzih Mírzá for a few days. Had he "in the world of the spirit been communing" with the Báb, or even with Bahá'u'lláh, that he knew he was being summoned to the Conference of Badasht?<sup>140</sup>

### The Conference of Badasht

Quddús's stay in Mashhad lasted about three months. Dihqan gives the date of his departure as 12 Sha'ban 1264 AH, or July 15.<sup>141</sup> This makes the dating of the Conference in the Chronology<sup>142</sup> and multiple other sources as late June through mid-July (June 26 through July 17 in the Chronology) problematic. Quddús would have arrived as the conference was breaking up, if not later.<sup>143</sup>

Of interest, it was during this very period that the Báb was moved to the town of Tabríz for His examination by the Crown Prince and high clergy. And He would finally indicate that His represented not a revisionist sect of Islam but a new Revelation in which the sharia as currently practiced would be abrogated and a new Book introduced. He would say to them, "I am, I am, I am the Promised One. I am the one Whose Name you have for a thousand years invoked, at Whose mention you have stood, whose

<sup>139</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 290-1.

<sup>140</sup> Perhaps he saw the violence being directed at the community and determined that the safest course of action was to give the impression both its leaders had left Mashhad. The clergy might feel less threatened if the stranger Quddús and local Mullá Husayn, who now preached this crazy new religion, departed. Ruhe gives the more mundane explanation that Bahá'u'lláh sent letters to many of the principal disciples, summoning them in the spring of 1848. David Ruhe. *Robe of Light*. (Oxford: George Ronald, 1994), 83. I have not found this explanation in any other source.

<sup>141</sup> Dihqan, *Treasure*, 45 translation.

<sup>142</sup> <https://bahai-library.com/chronology/1848>, retrieved 7/30/23.

<sup>143</sup> There is mention in several places of a letter or letters written by the Báb and widely disseminated that urged the believers to hasten to Khurásán to help Mullá Husayn and Quddús. Mehrabkhani (p. 160) dates the letter in this time period, but the Chronology as early as 1845 (citing *Dawnbreakers* 269 ff, but saying that one can imply the date from this text). Really, neither date seems satisfactory: Mehrabkhani's seems late considering the Báb would have been sending the letters out from Máh-Kú, Tabríz or Chiríq, and the distance just from Tabríz to Tehran is about 360 miles.

advent you have longed to witness, and the hour of whose Revelation you have prayed God to hasten.”<sup>144</sup>

Although a very few sources say a secondary reason for the conference might have been designing a plan to free the Báb (Balyuzi denies this outright<sup>145</sup>), all agree that the principal reason for it was clearly defining what exactly Bábism was. Was it merely a new sect of Islam with some fairly radical teachings, or did it represent, as the Báb was averring in Tabríz, a new Revelation, one based on the premise that the Báb indeed was the Qa’im? And that His coming did no more than presage the advent of a second Messianic figure, the Qayyúm?

Quddús and the few Bábís who traveled with him encountered a gathering of their fellow believers in the hamlet of Badasht but chose to press on to the nearby sizeable town of Sháh-Rúd. As described in *Dawnbreakers*<sup>146</sup>, the presence of at least Quddús and his small party seems almost accidental, and the gathering of Bábís they encountered in the main think they are going to Khurásán to help him and Mullá Husayn. For what is really the defining moment of the Bábí Revelation, this seems a little scattershot.



**A view of Badasht**

Until we realize that Bahá’u’lláh was present. Even if He didn’t send invitations, he would go on to rent the gardens where the conference would be held, reveal a tablet every day, and spring for

<sup>144</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 316.

<sup>145</sup> Balyuzi, *The Báb*, 167.

<sup>146</sup> 292.

everyone's expenses (81 participants for 22 days). It's not too far a stretch of the imagination to propose that He had this gathering in mind when He herded a collection of believers toward Khurásán—but chose to have the group stop over in this tiny hamlet. Indeed, we read several places<sup>147</sup> that, before leaving Tehran, He instructed Mírzá Músa to make arrangements and purchase the necessary supplies for a meeting on this scale.

There are several variants to the story, but let's let 'Abdu'l-Bahá<sup>148</sup> tell it:

In Badasht, there was a great open field. Through its center a stream flowed, and to its right, left, and rear there were three gardens, the envy of Paradise. One of those gardens was assigned to Quddús, but this was kept a secret.<sup>149</sup> Another was set apart for Táhiri, and in a third was raised the pavilion of Bahá'u'lláh. On the field amidst the three gardens, the believers pitched their tents. Evenings, Bahá'u'lláh, Quddús and Táhiri would come together. In those days the fact that the Báb was the Qá'im had not yet been proclaimed; it was the Blessed Beauty, with Quddús, Who arranged for the proclamation of a universal Advent and the abrogation and repudiation of the ancient laws.

Then one day, and there was a wisdom in it, Bahá'u'lláh fell ill; that is, the indisposition was to serve a vital purpose. On a sudden, in the sight of all, Quddús came out of his garden, and entered the pavilion of Bahá'u'lláh. But Táhiri sent him a message, to say that their Host being ill, Quddús should visit her garden instead. His answer was: "This garden is preferable. Come, then, to this one." Táhiri, with her face unveiled, stepped from her garden, advancing to the pavilion of Bahá'u'lláh; and as she came, she shouted aloud these words: "The Trumpet is sounding! The great Trump is blown! The universal Advent is now proclaimed!"<sup>150</sup> The believers gathered in that tent were panic struck, and each one asked himself, "How can the Law be abrogated? How is it that this woman stands here without her veil?"

"Read the Súrih of the Inevitable,"<sup>151</sup> said Bahá'u'lláh; and the reader began: "When the Day that must come shall have come suddenly... Day that shall abase! Day that shall exalt!..." and thus was the new Dispensation announced and the great Resurrection made manifest. At the start, those who were present fled away, and some forsook their Faith, while some fell a prey to suspicion and doubt, and a number, after wavering, returned to the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. The Conference of Badasht broke up, but the universal Advent had been proclaimed.

This constitutes a basic outline of the seminal event that arose from this conference, but sources

<sup>147</sup> Ruhe, *Robe*, 85, for example.

<sup>148</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Memorials of the Faithful*, trans. Marzieh Gail (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971). 201-2.

<sup>149</sup> *Memorials of the Faithful* is one of only three sources that mention this, the others being Dihqan, 47 of my translation, and Ruhe, 82-3. Ruhe explains this tent was pitched without apparent occupant until Bahá'u'lláh could bring Quddús safely from Sháh-Rud, where he had taken refuge after fleeing Mashhad.

<sup>150</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 296 gives this as "I am the Word which the Qa'im is to utter, the Word which shall put to flight the chiefs and nobles of the earth," referring to (15) this description: "...the Word which the promised One is expected to utter in the fullness of time, a Word so appallingly tremendous that the three hundred and thirteen chiefs and nobles of the earth would each and all flee in consternation as if overwhelmed by its stupendous weight."

<sup>151</sup> Qur'an 56:1-12, or 1-26 if, as some report, the recitation went as far as "Therein they will hear no nonsense, and no accusations, but only the greeting: 'Peace, peace.'"

other than Nabíl list variants as given here.

**1. The time frame.** Although all sources agree with the length of the conference being 21-22 days, none gives a real feel for the day on which “the event” occurs.

**2. The other time frame.** ‘Abdu’l-Bahá makes it sound like the sequence of events runs like this, quickly and in succession: Bahá’u’lláh falls ill, Quddús comes for a visit, Táhirih enters Bahá’u’lláh’s pavilion without her veil, many male Bábís turn away in shock, and Bahá’u’lláh calms everyone down by having someone read the first twelve verses of surah LVI. Only Ruhe also presents this smooth sequence of events, agreeing that Bahá’u’lláh had someone recite from the Qur’an before there could be further reaction to Táhirih’s courageous act.<sup>152</sup> Every other source I consulted that narrated this event had far more detail and seemed to indicate that the matter of the Advent was not resolved quickly. In fact, it may have taken days of debate to resolve, and days may have passed before Bahá’u’lláh finally instructed one of the Reciters to share the verses from the Qur’an.

**3. What Quddús and Táhirih actually said to each other.** Many would agree that the seminal event happened after a more extensive exchange of words went on between the two principals.

*Dawnbreakers* gives this account:

No sooner had they assembled [in Baha’u’llah’s tent] than Muhammad-Hasan-i-Qazvini, the messenger of Táhirih...suddenly came in and conveyed to Quddús a pressing invitation from Táhirih to visit her in her own garden. “I have severed myself entirely from her,” he boldly and decisively replied. “I refuse to meet her.” The messenger retired immediately, and soon returned, reiterating the same message. “She insists on your visit,” were his words. “If you persist in your refusal, she herself will come to you.” Perceiving his unyielding attitude, the messenger unsheathed his sword, laid it at the feet of Quddús, and said: “I refuse to go without you. Either choose to accompany me to the presence of Táhirih or cut off my head with this sword.” “I have already declared my intention not to visit Táhirih,” Quddús angrily retorted. “I am willing to comply with the alternative which you have chosen to put before me.”

Muhammad-Hasan... had stretched forth his neck to receive the fatal blow, when suddenly the figure of Táhirih, adorned and unveiled, appeared before the eyes of the assembled companions. Consternation immediately seized the entire gathering. To behold her face unveiled was to them inconceivable. Even to gaze at her shadow was a thing which they deemed improper...

Quietly, silently, and with the utmost dignity, Táhirih stepped forward and, advancing towards Quddús, seated herself on his right-hand side... Quddús, meanwhile, had remained seated in his place, holding the unsheathed sword in his hand, his face betraying a feeling of inexpressible anger. It seemed

<sup>152</sup> Ruhe, *Robe*, 88, although he cites the surah as LXXV, The Resurrection, but what he quotes is from LVI.

as if he were waiting for the moment when he could strike his fatal blow at Táhirih.

His threatening attitude failed, however, to move her... She rose from her seat... and delivered her appeal with matchless eloquence and profound fervour. She concluded her address with this verse of the Qur'an: "Verily, amid gardens and rivers shall the pious dwell in the seat of truth, in the presence of the potent King."<sup>153</sup> As she uttered these words, she cast a furtive glance towards both Baha'u'llah and Quddús in such a manner that those who were watching her were unable to tell to which of the two she was alluding. Immediately after, she declared: "I am the Word which the Qa'im is to utter, the Word which shall put to flight the chiefs and nobles of the earth!"

She then turned her face towards Quddús and rebuked him for having failed to perform in Khurásán those things which she deemed essential to the welfare of the Faith. "I am free to follow the promptings of my own conscience," retorted Quddús. "I am not subject to the will and pleasure of my fellow-disciples." Turning away her eyes from him, Táhirih invited those who were present to celebrate befittingly this great occasion. "This day is the day of festivity and universal rejoicing," she added, "the day on which the fetters of the past are burst asunder. Let those who have shared in this great achievement arise and embrace each other."<sup>154</sup>

While this account gives far more detail, it still suggests a smooth transition between Táhirih's appearance without her veil and her instructing the remaining Bábís to arise and embrace each other. We get a glimmer that hostilities might have simmered a bit longer in this passage, also from Nabil:

Táhirih herself ventured on a few occasions to repudiate the authority of Quddús. "I deem him," she is reported to have declared, "a pupil whom the Bab has sent me to edify and instruct. I regard him in no other light." Quddús did not fail, on his part, to denounce Táhirih as "the author of heresy," and stigmatised those who advocated her views as "the victims of error." This state of tension persisted for a few days until Baha'u'llah intervened and, in His masterly manner, effected a complete reconciliation between them.<sup>155</sup>

Perhaps it is at this point that surah LVI was read; otherwise, Nabil's account gives no mention of it. Amanat supplies some further details, for which he cites an eyewitness narrative contained in the *Zuhur al-Haqq*, pp. 325-6.<sup>156</sup>

Subsequently, in a daring act that perhaps challenged Quddús' meekness in the face of hostilities instigated by the Bábís' archenemy Sa'id al-'Ulamá... she perhaps tried to show symbolically that her radical commitments surpassed her male critics'. Dressed in men's clothing, unveiled and mounted, she waved her bare sword and cried: "Down with Sa'id al 'Ulamá and his followers!" The Bábís responded: "Death to them all!" She repeated: "Down with this villain of all the villains!" They replied: "Sudden death to all of them!"

How at odds this was with the peaceful reconciliation Mullá Husayn tried to encourage when

<sup>153</sup> Qur'an 54:54-5

<sup>154</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 294-6.

<sup>155</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 296.

<sup>156</sup> Amanat, *Resurrection*, 327.

their enemies in Mashhad attacked Hasan, and with the gentle and peaceful orientation of the Báb. <sup>157</sup>

4. **Were they truly at odds?** Certainly Táhirih represented a radical aspect of the new faith and had recognized years earlier that the Báb was inaugurating a new Dispensation. One might suppose an individual with such keen insights as Quddús displayed might also have realized it. However, as a male and a mullá who was known to have accompanied their common Leader on His Pilgrimage, he may also have been the perfect foil for Táhirih's fiery manner and outspoken views. Dihqan observes that the three principals met daily:

At night, Bahá'u'lláh, Qudous and Tahira met each other and discussed and consulted about the objectives of the Badasht [Conference]. Until this time the issue of the establishment of Báb and the establishment of a new religion had not yet been publicly announced in the gathering of friends. Therefore, based on these consultations, Bahá'u'lláh established a plan according to which a new appearance would be announced and the abrogation of the past decrees, but they did not set a specific day for the implementation of this plan, until one day Bahá'u'lláh accidentally fell ill...<sup>158</sup>

Only Amanat rejects the idea that the confrontation was planned, saying, "The existence of a pre-conceived plan between the two leaders to introduce to the traditionally minded Bábís the innovations of the new religion is too farfetched."<sup>159</sup> His citation for this is Nicolas. However, if we look more closely, Nicolas doesn't support the conviction that this entire episode happened spontaneously. Bábí leaders like Táhirih, Quddús, and Bahá'u'lláh, realize that not all of the other 78 Bábís assembled grasp that this is a new revelation, rather than a reformist sect of Islam. They realize it may take some finesse not to alienate the rest of the assemblage.

Qourrèt oul Aïne [variant spelling of Qurratu'l-Ayn, Táhirih] thought of a stratagem. To fully grasp its scope, it is necessary to know that the Shiite religion condemns to death without remission all renegades. No excuses are accepted, and the return to Islam of the defector cannot stop or suspend the sentence pronounced against him by the laws themselves. But it is not so with women: with their reproductive ills, they are hardly responsible for their actions!<sup>160</sup> ...it is

<sup>157</sup> If such exclamations reached Sa'id al-'Ulamá, this might have added to the vitriol that already festered in his soul regarding the Bábís in general and Quddús in particular. I have been looking for reasons some Bábís bore the brunt of such reckless hatred and feel that, once Quddús fell into the elder mujtahids hands, the outrages committed on his body meant the 'Uṣūlī cleric had really targeted him for torments way beyond what was leveled at a lot of other Bábís.

<sup>158</sup> Dihqan, *Treasure*, translation 47.

<sup>159</sup> Amanat, *Resurrection*, 327. His source for a way the drama could have been carried out in the absence of a pre-conceived plan is Nicolas' *Siyyid 'Alī Muhammad, dit le Bab* in a chapter not translated by Terry that includes material on the Conference of Badasht.

<sup>160</sup> I'm embarrassed at having to include such an antiquated view of women in a document written in 2023—"Oh you poor little thing, you just can't be in your right mind because a) you're pregnant, b) you're nursing, or c) you have your period—which last means you're sloughing your duty to your husband by not being a) pregnant. But I guess that's the nineteenth century for you.

therefore necessary to reason with her, to instruct her, make her crime understood and bring her back to Islam: her return to her original religion assures her the matter will be forgotten and her fault forgiven...

It is on the basis of this provision of the Shiite law that Qourrèt oul Aïne convinced her co-religionists to try the enterprise. "We will call," she said, "everyone who came here with us. Quddús will not attend the meeting. When our faithful will be assembled I will tell them the whole truth. I will make known to them the manifestation of God and the abrogation of the Qur'an: if these men accept we will have without difficulty reached our goal; if on the contrary they are scandalized and revolt they will certainly come notify any of their leaders who will not have attended the session. Quddús then will deny me, will declare me infidel and try to make me again enter Islam. It will last for a few days, which we will give to calm the excitement and convince our people. If this doesn't work, then I will seem to give in to the reasoning of Quddús and I will pretend to rally to the Quran."

After carefully considering this proposal, the leaders understood that this was the best way to fix things, and... it would be better to do it immediately and in a way that did not compromise them.<sup>161</sup> (slight editing by author for clarity)

In this version, the brilliant Táhirih puts even the view of "women's reproductive ills" to work in service of their common Cause. In Nicolas's version, Táhirih appears veiled and flanked by two female attendants, but she has rigged her veil so that it can be lowered by the attendants cutting two small cords, one on each side, holding her veil in place. So, this reference that Amanat cites for demonstrating no pre-conceived plan...gives a preconceived plan. In fact, it gives a viable reason for making Táhirih the prisoner in the dock and Quddús the prosecuting attorney bedecked in gown and peruche.<sup>162</sup>

Dihqan has a few more details and suggests a way Quddús might have maneuvered around the veil issue with a little dose of Islamic history:

Mr. Quddos, while apparently opposing [Táhirih's] new ideas, gradually pushed his companions to the point of moderation and prepared them to accept new ideas. In fact, as Hazrat Wali Amrullah has pointed out, Qudous was completely sympathetic to Tahirah's performance. As in the midst of apparent strong disagreements, whenever Ms. Tahira would address him, Mr. Qudous would respond with the words, "I will help you, my lady and my teacher..." Quds went on, "It is a matter of fact that hijab has become more common due to custom and *not due to the law*. The Prophet's women did not wear hijab in the beginning until an Arab rudely came to the Prophet and asked to buy Ayesha from him, and it should be known that the rule of hijab is specific to the holy wives of the Prophet, but in any case, this habit is respected because of its age and [because] it

<sup>161</sup> Nicolas, *le Bab*, 282 ff.

<sup>162</sup> Amanat does suggest that the tension between Táhirih and Quddús was a power struggle, plain and simple. Their leader incarcerated and 660 miles away over rough terrain left a power vacuum that *someone* had to take a hand to fill. He does not give an explanation, in this instance, for Bahá'u'lláh not getting involved nor even indicate, as many do, that Bahá'u'lláh is very much taking a hand, just subtly and behind the scenes.



implies family piety...” (author italics)<sup>163</sup>

So, let’s see if we can unpack a clear picture of how “the event” transpired. The thread that unites our various accounts runs this way: the leadership of the Bábí community realized that the idea of this new faith representing a completely new revelation might come as a shock even to a group of Bábís assembled with the thought of identifying what was new in their religion and what was unworthy of retention. For four years, the Báb had given the adherents of the young faith very little in the way of laws, or of laws that might challenge the sharia.

Did this incident put Quddús in a weaker position than the passionate Táhirih? In a way, his role was far more complex. The plan called for him, first, to be publicly rude to Táhirih, whom he quite liked and who was revered by all; then to appear ready to deal her her death blow for heresy, when he actually agreed with all she believed; then very, very slowly, to argue and allow arguments to be advanced so that she could vindicate her beliefs using her extensive knowledge of both the Muslim and Bábí canons. He had to be water—or even earth—to Táhirih’s fire and to hold back his compatriots from letting passion incite them to drown (or suffocate) her before all questions about the nature of the new faith could be fully and rationally debated. Perhaps the one aspect of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s narration we might question is Bahá’u’lláh’s requesting that surah LVI, “The Event,” which deals with matters of the Judgment or Resurrection, be read immediately after His friends’ initial confrontation. But perhaps it happened that way and the lengthy examination of teachings for a new day happened in the aftermath of that cooling draught from the lake of Kawthar.

### **5. What else happened at the Conference of Badasht?**

The confrontation between Táhirih and Quddús, however it happened, either instigated or moved along discussions about the Báb’s being a new Revelation. Ruhe gives us some insight into the underpinnings of this event by saying the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh were in constant, if covert communication:<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Dihqan, *Treasure*, 59 translation.

<sup>164</sup> Supported by Shoghi Effendi in *God Passes By*, 31.

...there is evidence of a more crucial communication of confidential letters between the Báb in Chihriq prison and His greatest fellow and equal, Jináb-i-Bahá in his Teheran mansion. Their shared foresights anticipated severe trials for the Bábís which would threaten the very survival of the young Faith. The Bábís had to be sustained and directed, their enthusiasm constantly renewed, their Islamic conditioning steadily converted to new patterns of behavior. To undertake these spiritual and intellectual tasks of education Jináb-i-Bahá clearly had the necessary sagacity and intuitive bonding with the gentle Báb.<sup>165</sup>

This information gives context to the events affirmed by multiple sources, including Nabíl, regarding what else transpired at this conference:

Every day, [Bahá'u'lláh] revealed a Tablet which Mírzá Sulaymán-i-Núrí chanted in the presence of the assembled believers. Upon each He bestowed a new name...Each day of that memorable gathering witnessed the abrogation of a new law and the repudiation of a long-established tradition.<sup>166</sup>

Of interest, shortly after the Conference of Badasht, the Báb Himself revealed a tablet for every Bábí there, using the name accorded to him or her ostensibly by Bahá'u'lláh. And the sources seem to disagree, at least superficially, about Who gave the Bábís these new titles. The obvious candidate is Bahá'u'lláh, since He was the one to vocalize the new titles. But with Him in constant correspondence with the Báb, it might be posited that the names were given by the Báb Himself. A third possibility, of course, would be the names were given by the Báb *through* Bahá'u'lláh.<sup>167</sup> Although we find support that the Báb may have referred to Quddús by this title on the eve of His departure from Búshihir for Pilgrimage, it is from this time that he became known formally to the believers as Quddús (“most holy”). Táhirih would henceforth be called by this title (“the Pure One”) and Mírzá Ḥusayn ‘Alí by Jináb-i-Bahá (“his honor the Most Glorious”) or, ultimately, Bahá'u'lláh (“the Glory of God”).

Cheyne gives us this lovely insight into the whole process of the gifting of these new names:

Of course, the new names were given with a full consciousness of the inwardness of names. There was a spirit behind each new name; the revival of a name by a divine representative meant the return of the spirit. Each Bábí who received the name of a prophet or an Imām knew that his life was raised to a higher plane, and that he was to restore that heavenly Being to the present age... They

<sup>165</sup> Ruhe, *Robe*, 112.

<sup>166</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 293.

<sup>167</sup> Those who, like me, have a mystical bent might say that a certain amount of that correspondence took place not via letter but spiritually, through the Ether. Ruhe, *Robe*, 85 says “...the identity of him who had conferred the new names upon them was not [made] known, although each surely conjectured according to his degree of perception.” This may be why there is some disparity in the various sources about whether it was the Báb or Bahá'u'lláh (or some numinous blend of both) who conferred these names.

became capable of far higher things than before, and if within a short space of time Deputy, was to conquer the whole world and bring it under the beneficent yoke of God, much miraculously heightened courage would be needed...The conferring of not to add fuel to human vanity, but sacramentally to heighten spiritual vitality.<sup>168</sup> the Báb, or his the Law of new names was

The one question that is difficult to answer is this: If the conference was already abrogating laws and abolishing traditions, does that not suggest the Bábís already accept this is a new revelation rather than an offshoot of Islam? If they are accepting new names and titles, does that not hint that they see themselves as being reborn spiritually? Did “the event” become necessary because even with the abolition of old laws and traditions, the Bábís as a whole *still* did not see their movement as anything beyond religious reform?

We do have one incident that may help us place the timing of “the event.” After Táhirih had appeared without her veil and the debate began in earnest, some of the assembled believers apparently complained to the Báb about this radical left feminist<sup>169</sup> in their midst. From Dihqan:

For a few days, the conversation and discussion between Mr. Qudous and Tahira continued until finally, Bahá'u'lláh balanced the situation in such a way that he said that the parties “should be quiet and still and wait until the answer to the petitions regarding the issue of Qarat al-Ain is brought to the attention of the First Point [the Báb].”... After a few days, when the answer of Hazrat Báb arrived at Badasht, the Companions realized that not only the behavior and practice of Tahirah was approved by Him, but they also implicitly emphasized the cancellation of the past Sunnahs.<sup>170</sup>

The response reported from the Báb in all sources that contain it is, “What am I to say regarding her whom the Tongue of Power and Glory has named Táhirih (the Pure)?”<sup>171</sup> With a roughly three week time frame for the conference and the time it would require to get a message to and from Chiríq, “the event” would have happened early in the conference.<sup>172</sup>

Earlier we looked at the idea that a Revelator appearing in the material realm infuses the entire

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<sup>168</sup> T.K. Cheyne, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions* (Edinburgh:Adam and Charles Black, 1914, Project Gutenberg, Release date: April 1, 2005 [eBook #7995], Most recently updated: September 5, 2014) Chapter III, <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/7995/pg7995.html>.

<sup>169</sup> Known in contemporary terms as a Feminazi.

<sup>170</sup> Dihqan, *Treasure*, translation 50.

<sup>171</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 293.

<sup>172</sup> This is positing an official messenger who could change horses frequently enough to travel 80 miles a day. The trip to Chiríq and back would have taken 16 days. Or maybe Bahá'u'lláh simply took a hand and used Ethermail.

world with the spirit of His Revelation. In 1848, with both the Conference of Badasht and the Proclamation of the Báb that He was the Promised Qá'im, the earth would have rung with the spiritual power released. If we look at 1848 worldwide, we see a number of trends that might be related to the coming of a new Messenger of God. The Revolutions of 1848, also known as the Springtime of the Peoples or the Springtime of Nations,<sup>173</sup> was a series of revolutions throughout the world. It remains the most widespread revolutionary wave in European history to date.

Cheyne summarizes the goals and content of the conference as follows:

The object of the conference was to correct a widespread misunderstanding. There were many who thought that the new leader came, in the most literal sense, to fulfill Islamic Law. They realised, indeed, that the object of [Ali] Muhammad was to bring about an universal kingdom of righteousness and peace, but they thought this was to be effected by wading through streams of blood, and with the help of the divine judgments. The Bab, on the other hand, though not always consistent, was moving, with some of his disciples, in the direction of moral suasion; his only weapon was "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." When the Qa'im appeared all things would be renewed... No more should there be any distinction between higher and lower races, or between male and female. No more should the long, enveloping veil be the badge of woman's inferiority.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Wikipedia, *Revolutions of 1848*, last edited 7/1/23, retrieved 8/5/23, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolutions\\_of\\_1848](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolutions_of_1848). The article mentions that most involved poor non-royalists fighting for their rights against "the 1%" who hog the money and legislate in their own favor. Countries mentioned include Italy, France, Germany, Denmark, Schleswig, Austria, Hungary, Galicia, Sweden, Switzerland, Poland, Rumania, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and Spain (most of these fought as the states into which they were divided rather than as discrete countries). Large swathes of Latin America also revolted. The article mentions the thing that surprised everyone in early to mid-1848 was that the revolutions were successful! Other events of interest were the California Gold Rush, the founding of the first Oratory in the English-speaking world, the publication of Marx's *The Communist Manifesto*, the establishment of the first European settlement of Dunedin in New Zealand by a boatful of Scotts. Queen's College is founded in London, the world's first school to award academic qualifications to young women, France abolishes slavery for the second time, the Seneca Falls Convention, the world's first conference on women's rights is held concurrently with the latter part of the Conference of Badasht (!), Saturn's moon Hyperion is discovered, the first medical school for women opens in Boston, the Boston Female Medical School, and slavery is abolished on the Island of Réunion. A new spirit really must be infusing the world if we're educating women and freeing slaves! True story.

<sup>174</sup> T.K. Cheyne, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions*, 101-3.

## The Road to Fort Shaykh Tabarsi

*O beloved, galvanize the Faithful to the conflict! Should there be just ten of you who are patient and steadfast, they will overcome, by the leave of God, a thousand. Yea, verily, God shall strengthen them with Our Supplications, firmly casting upon them solidarity at the head of the magnificent Gate. These are those who possessed hearts which God hath fashioned from solid iron, and there is not a single soul except with whom God hath strengthened with the strength of forty men, those who are brave upon the earth and firm in upholding the truth. So be patient, O people of patience, for verily God is indeed with you all at that Gate, upon the path of truth, standing guard. Never shall ye attain righteousness until ye sincerely forgo your very own souls for our sake in the Most Sublime Path of God, dispensing with all.*<sup>175</sup>

### Waylaid!

Their vision cleared and their goal accomplished, the remaining steadfast Bábís left Badasht and entered a world that, for them, would never be the same. The breaking dawn was pouring its first rays of light upon their upturned faces. They had been confirmed in their new beliefs, they now had a framework around which they would establish communities of believers who would then join them in spreading the joyous news of Qiyama and laws suitable to the New Age. But they left with sobriety balancing their exaltation: where physical attacks had been sporadic and haphazard in the past, they knew that enemies of the young faith would soon be organizing—and escalating.

Their hostilities, real or feigned, now behind them, Táhirih and Quddús shared a howdah, she without her veil and composing and singing new odes as they went. Around them marched the Bábís who had shared the exhilarating days in the gardens of Badasht. Their objective was Mázindarán, Quddús's home province. Unfortunately, as they neared the larger town of Niyala, the Niyalans mounted an attack, scattering them and stealing their belongings.<sup>176</sup> Fearing for His friend's life, Bahá'u'lláh exchanged clothing with Quddús and sent him on his way.<sup>177</sup>

<sup>175</sup> The Báb, *Qayyúmu 'i-Asmá*, Surah Al-Kittal, translation by Brad Crawford. Amanat, *Resurrection*, 279 states that a letter from the Báb to Mírzá Ahmad Azghandí is cited as suggesting the Báb foresaw the Mázindarán upheaval and even approved of the resistance at Fort Shaykh Tabarsi but also says such a letter has never actually been identified.

<sup>176</sup> Ruhe suggests that, in throwing off the shackles of their previous restrictions as Muslims, some of the young men might have gone a little overboard with the idea of liberation and accosted some of the female inhabitants of Niyala. *Robe*, 91.

<sup>177</sup> Ruhe also claims there is evidence that Bahá'u'lláh accompanied Quddús at different points along his journey, citing a fragment of a tablet quoted in *Zuhúru 'l-Haqq*, Vol. 3, 112: "Whilst in Sári, we were again exposed to the insults of the people... no sooner had the townspeople recognized us, as we walked with Quddús in the streets than they began to hurl invectives at us. The cry 'Bábí! Bábí!' greeted us wherever we went..." Ruhe, *Robe*, 93.

Quddús traveled toward his home in Bárfurúsh but was again waylaid, this time by partisans of that inveterate enemy of the Akhbaris, the Bábís, and eventually the Bahá'ís, Sa'id al-Ulamá. Beginning in (doing the math) very late July, he would be kept under house arrest in the home of a mujtahid of Sári village, Mírzá Muḥammad-Taqi. His host had a reputation for cruelty, but when he discussed theology with Quddús, he was impressed with the quiet young man's dignity and depth of insight. It was during this period that Quddús, at the request of his host, began his tafsir on the letter "S" from "Samad," as it occurs in Surah 112. Its usage there is "the Eternal" or "the Absolute," which may be extrapolated to "the Eternal Refuge," or "the Everlasting Sovereign."<sup>178</sup> By the time he had been rescued some three to six months later, his treatise had attained the length of three Qur'ans! Sources that address this time period indicate that he did make an effort to inform his host of the Báb's mission and to invite him to embrace the Arisen Qa'im but that his host never warmed to the idea. In fact, he may, in the end, have seen Bábism as a heresy and sided with those who said the defenders of Fort Shaykh Tabarsi (see below) should be put to the sword. In the *Zuhur*, we read of his sojourn here

...during the days of detention in the house of Mirza Mohammad Taqi, the jurisconsult of Sari, when Sartip Abbasqolikhan Larijani, who went to visit, was addressed with these great statements, "We are the true sovereign, and the world is under our seal, and the kings of the earth will be humble before us, and in accordance with the divine word, 'Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you, nearness to us is only through righteousness, and we do not respect anyone for their wealth and worldly status, nor do we despise anyone for their poverty and destitution.'"<sup>179</sup>

## Mullá Ḥusayn's Journey to Mázindarán

To understand how Quddús made his way from Niyala under attack to Sári under house arrest to the Fort of Shaykh Tabarsi under siege and the apotheosis of his career, we need to backtrack a bit and revisit Mullá Ḥusayn. The last we saw of him, he was also under "house" (really, tent) arrest in the army camp west of Mashhad. Conditions in Mashhad itself were deteriorating with violence perpetrated daily

<sup>178</sup> Ruhe explains this treatise a little differently, as a "eulogy on 'He Who Shall Be Made Manifest'... which anticipates the Supreme Messenger of God shortly to reveal Himself to the world." Ruhe, *Robe*, 103.

<sup>179</sup> Mazandarani. *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 423-424. We notice here an intriguing element of some of Quddús's speech and writings: he shifts into the voice of God more typically encountered in the writings of both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. I propose a possible reason for this in the discussion below.

against the very young Bábí community. Quddús's absence had been noted, but that left Mullá Ḥusayn, a devoted and charismatic leader, still in the area. Since many non-Bábís did not view the movement for the peaceful religion it was, they wondered what mischief a leader with Mullá Ḥusayn's capabilities might incite them to.<sup>180</sup>

But Mullá Ḥusayn settled on a plan that would both free him to join his Bábí brothers and sisters to the west and take the pressure off the Bahá'ís in Mashhad. He proposed to Prince Hamzih Mírzá that he and a party of Bábís undertake the pilgrimage to Karbila—a nice, recognizably Muslim objective. He himself would lead any who wished to come. This would remove not only him but a substantial number of believers from the area. Deprived of leader and a large number of his Bábí cohort, Mashhad would certainly become quiet once more. The Prince could not have thought of a better plan himself. He lifted Mullá Ḥusayn's house arrest and gave him and his followers a week to leave Mashhad. He even offered the young Bábí leader the expenses for his journey. Mullá Ḥusayn took only a horse and a sword.

During that week of preparation, the Bábíyyih was mobbed with people begging leave to travel with him. Even female Bábís joined in, asking Mullá Ḥusayn to take their brothers, sons, and fathers. But while he was making preparations, he received new instructions from the Báb along with an unusual gift: the Báb's own green turban! The Báb instructed him to don the turban, although this was normally a privilege reserved only for patrilineal descendents of the Prophet. Although he had missed the bestowal of new names at Badasht, the Báb Himself now gave him a new name, Siyyid 'Alí. And the Báb affirmed Quddús's instruction that he raise the Black Standards. Like the green turban, the Black Standards have a specific meaning in Muslim eschatology. In "The Hadith of Black Flags," we read:

When the black flags come from Khorasan  
go to them, even if you have to crawl on snow,

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<sup>180</sup> Although on several occasions, one or more Bábí enemies stirred up trouble with the authorities by claiming the Bábís were more a paramilitary organization intent on overthrowing the government, the hostility in Mashhad seemed to be more intuitive. The concept of *jihad*—to fight in the way of Allah—had been corrupted in 1400 years. The *Greater Jihad*—to fight against the self for Allah's sake—had fallen by the wayside in light of ample opportunity simply to fight any perceived infidel. Rare was the man who walked these lands without at least a sword girt around his waist. The Bábís were quickly "othered" by their fellow Mashhadites. Was their thought process something like this? *These Bábís had something new and different to say about Muḥammad, about a new Qur'an, about overturning sharia itself. To arms! We must fight in the way of Allah! Where in the Qur'an does it say anything about listening and spiritual self-improvement? We talk with our swords!*

for among them is the Khalifa from Allah, the Mahdi.<sup>181</sup>

One other feature of interest appeared in the Báb's message. He instructed Mullá Ḥusayn to hasten not to Karbila but to the "Jazíriy-i-Khadrá." The term means "verdant isle" and refers to Mázinarán, a province far more green and fertile than most of Iran's high deserts. However, I would point to a Shia tradition that uses very similar terminology. Like the cities of Jábulqá and Jábulsá, there is a second metaphorical bit of geography where the Imams, especially the Twelfth Imam, are said to reside till the Judgment: the Green Isle, or the Green Isle in the White Sea. Is there perhaps an indication in this phrasing that Quddús's station is similar to that of the holy Imams?

The Báb's final instruction concerned what Mullá Ḥusayn was to do once in Mázinarán: he was to go to the aid of the Báb's "beloved Quddús." On July 21, Mullá Ḥusayn set out to do exactly this. With him went 202 Bábí compatriots.<sup>182</sup> More would join them as they made their way to Mázinarán. By the time Mullá Ḥusayn's party neared Bárfurúsh, they numbered more than 300.

Quddús apparently took time out from his treatise to communicate with Mullá Ḥusayn, for Mullá Ḥusayn received two letters from him along his route to Mázinarán, one in Mazinán and another in Khawriyyih. The second arrived after the death of Muḥammad Sháh and after the party of Bábís had turned north toward Bárfurúsh from Chashmih-‘Alí. Several times along their route, Mullá Ḥusayn counseled his friends, "This is the way that leads to our Karbilá. Whoever is not prepared for the great trials that lie before us, let him now repair to his home and give up the journey."<sup>183</sup> Mehrabkhani says that at Urim, in this last leg of their journey, he repeated this statement, adding "I, together with seventy-two"<sup>184</sup> of my companions, shall suffer death for the sake of the Well-Beloved. Whoso is unable to renounce the

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<sup>181</sup> From Villar: Considered a hasan hadith through one chain and saheh through another. <https://www.al-islam.org/imam-al-mahdi-twelfth-khalifah-sahih-sunni-ahadith-toyib-olawuyi/5-black-flags-Khurásán> for further details.

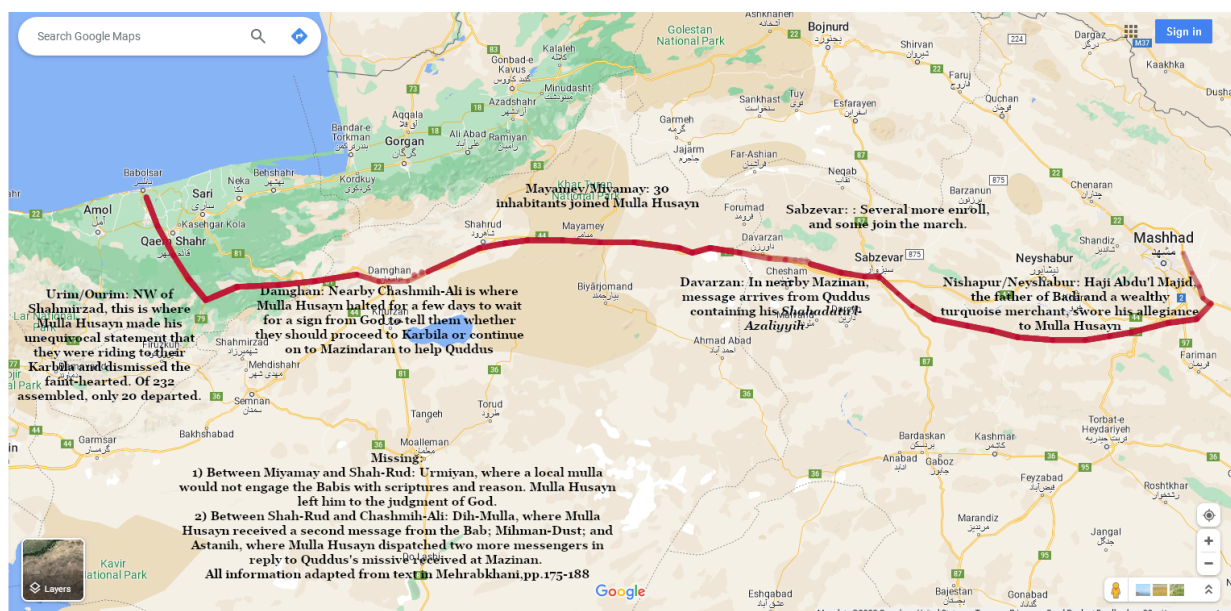
<sup>182</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 325.

<sup>183</sup> Cited many places, but the ultimate source seems to be Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 326.

<sup>184</sup> We know that many more than 72 Bábís gave up their lives at the encounter at the shrine of Shaykh Ahmad-i-Tabarsi; multiple sources suggest the party was close to 300 when it tried to enter Bárfurúsh. What is this 72 all about? If this is to be the Bábís' Karbila, we may see this as a sacred, inspirational number, as it is the traditional number of early Muslims who died with the Imám Ḥusayn at the battle of Karbila. This should turn our attention to the numbers that will come up later in this section and to question whether they are being stated as literal numbers or as references to historical events over the course of the development of Shia Islam.



world, let him now at this very moment, depart, for later on he will be unable to escape.” At this point, twenty of his companions chose to turn back. Mehrabkhani makes out the number in the group being 232. So, 212 continue on to Bárfurúsh.<sup>185</sup>



**The route taken by Mullá Husayn and his company of Bábís July through October, 1848. The missing towns are those I was unable to locate using a Google Maps search. (Enlarged so detail is legible)**

If Mullá Husayn did not understand of his own knowledge that he and the Bábís he led were marching to their martyrdoms, he knew it because of the first letter he received from Quddús.<sup>186</sup>

<sup>185</sup> Mehrabkhani, *Mullá Husayn*, 188.

<sup>186</sup> Hamadani, *Tarikh*, 84-6, mentions an exhortation known as “the Eternal Witness,” which may be Hamadání’s way of translating this phrase. He says “[Quddús] wrote [this] while on his way to Khurásán to Jenáb-i-Bábu’l-Báb, and wherein, besides foreshadowing his own martyrdom, he clearly made known to him how he should die together with seventy just and righteous men. He wrote, ‘I shall bury my body with my own hands,’ by which expression he signified that none would bury him.” This does, in fact, play out, as we shall see below. A slightly different view is given by ‘Abdu’l-Baha in *A Traveler’s Narrative*, 308: “Jenáb-i-Kuddús is said to have foretold his death and the manner thereof to several other persons, including his wife and her mother; and Subh-i-Ezel told me that he had seen at Teherán a letter in his handwriting, taken from his pocket when he was buried, wherein the date and manner of his death were clearly set forth; also that he had previously to the siege of Sheykh Tabarsí written a letter to Mullá Huseyn of Bushraweyh wherein the following sentence occurred: ‘It is as though I had buried myself in the earth with seventy righteous men.’ This letter Subh-i-Ezel had copied at Baghdad.” If we look at Nabil’s figures, Mullá Husayn died with more like 36 righteous men, but 36 factors neatly into 72, and 70 is also sometimes given as the number of men who fought with the Imam Husayn. So, maybe another overlay of sacred history on observable fact? And, of course, Quddús is nowhere else said to have had a wife, so I wonder if there was a syntax error here somewhere. Hamadání does add this detail, although it contradicts the above: “And when they computed the number of those who had fallen by [Mullá Husayn’s] side from the beginning of the war until that night, there were seventy, neither more nor less, exactly as Jenáb-i-Kuddús had explicitly declared in the sermon of the ‘Eternal Witness.’” Hamadani, *Tarikh*, 72.

Mehrabkhani states that the letter was called the *Shahádatu 'l-Azaliyyih*<sup>187</sup> but that the exact meaning is a little murky. Shahádat can mean martyrs or proofs; azaliyyih is a form of the word “eternity.” The title may mean something like “Eternal Martyrs” or “Proofs of Eternity.”<sup>188</sup> The letter has not survived but we do know that in it Quddús gave Mullá Ḥusayn some instructions and prophesied some future events, including his own martyrdom and that of Mullá Ḥusayn and most of his party.<sup>189</sup> Mullá Ḥusayn replied twice with a total of three messengers, one from Míyámay and two from Ástáníh.<sup>190</sup>

The little company proceeded to Mázindarán, but they could not immediately rescue their companion. Receiving news of Mullá Ḥusayn's approach, Sa'id al-'Ulamá had bidden the town crier summon the people of Bárfurúsh to his masjid, there to hear him preach a sermon of “momentous consequence.”

The news of their approach to the town of Bárfurúsh alarmed the Sa'idu'l-'ulamá'. The widespread and growing popularity of Mulla Ḥusayn, the circumstances attending his departure from Mashhad, the Black Standard which waved before him—above all, the number, the discipline, and the enthusiasm of his companions, combined to arouse the implacable hatred of that cruel and overbearing mujtahid... An immense crowd of men and women thronged the masjid, saw him ascend the pulpit, fling his turban to the ground, tear open the neck of his shirt, and bewail the plight into which the Faith [meaning Islam] had fallen. “Awake,” he thundered from the pulpit, “for our enemies stand at our very doors, ready to wipe out all that we cherish as pure and holy in Islam! Should we fail to resist them, none will be left to survive their onslaught... What excesses this stirrer-up of mischief [Mullá Ḥusayn], who is now advancing at the head of his savage band, will not commit now that the protecting hand of Muhammad Sháh has been suddenly withdrawn! It is the duty of all the inhabitants of Bárfurúsh, both young and old, both men and women, to arm themselves against these contemptible wreckers of Islam, and by every means in their power to resist their onset. To-morrow, at the hour of dawn, let all of you arise and march out to exterminate their forces.”<sup>191</sup>

The people obliged and went out to meet Mullá Ḥusayn's party. Wherever the Bábís turned, they found assailants. Most attacked with unsophisticated weapons like farm implements, but their numbers

<sup>187</sup> Hamadání, *Tárikh-i jadid*, 44. The original text is unclear here. It could be read as Browne translates it: “... in a single night Jenáb-i-Quddús wrote a sublime commentary of some three thousand verses on the words ‘God the Eternal’” or as: “three thousand verses of exalted explanation and a full commentary in interpretation of the words ‘God, the Eternal’”. The Cambridge text (F.55, p. 52) reads: dar yakshab sih hizár bayt-i bayánát-i ‘ádliyya wa sharḥ-i káfi dar tafsir-i lafz-i Alláh aṣ-ṣamad nivishta búdand. The author also speculates (he states he is not alone with this conjecture) that this sermon may be the snippet of writing Quddús showed to Mullá Ḥusayn the night the latter realized he had found the Báb's “hidden treasure.” (Denis MacEoin. *The sources for early Bábí doctrine and history*. (New York: E.J.Brill, 1992).105, n 11.)

<sup>188</sup> Or “Eternal Witness,” as noted previously.

<sup>189</sup> Mehrabkhani, *Mullá Ḥusayn*, 177-183.

<sup>190</sup> Mehrabkhani, *Mullá Ḥusayn*, 178-179

<sup>191</sup> ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *A Traveller's Narrative*. (Wilmette: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, 1980) 34-5. Also in Mehrabkhani, *Mullá Ḥusayn*, 189-191

and enthusiasm made up for what they lacked in arms. Their ceaseless attacks forced Mullá Ḥusayn to consider the safety of his men and look for a defensible spot. He found it in the small shrine of a Muslim saint, Shaykh Aḥmad-i-Tabarsí.

In order to bring Quddús fully back into the story, we need to look at dates for Mullá Ḥusayn's march with the Black Standards and his eventual arrival at the shrine. Please note a mapped-out route that I constructed above using a Google map of the area between Khurásán and Mázinarán and detailed information on events in Mehrabkhani and Nabil. Most sources agree that Mullá Ḥusayn's party left the vicinity of Mashhad on July 21, 1848, and we can pin down his short sojourn at Chashmih-Alí by the



**Mullá Ḥusayn's sword as displayed in Archives at the Baha'i World Center**

death of the Sháh on September 4. Additionally, where this event is mentioned, authors note consistently that they received this news when they had been at Chashmih-‘Ali for three days, then left the next morning, so they would have departed on or about September 8. Most authors seem to agree they reached the area around Bárfurush on October 10th, 11th, or 12th. October 12 tracks best with the statement that the trek took about 83 days (beginning with July 21) found in Mehrabkhani.<sup>192</sup> The earlier dates may be accounted for by the difference between solar and lunar months (for instance, the month of Shawwal/Shavval, which fell within this time period in 1848, has only 29 days).

However, most sources, citing Nabil, also place the band of Bábís at the shrine on the 11th or

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<sup>192</sup> Mehrabkhani, *Mulla Ḥusayn*, 188

12th even if they arrived at Bárfurúsh on the 10th, and we have sufficient documentation to question this. We know the Bábís took up residence at a caravanserai in the neighborhood once Mulla Ḥusayn performed such deeds as cutting in half his opponent, his opponent's musket, and the tree behind which his opponent was trying to hide, then spurring his horse all the way into Bárfurúsh to circle the house of Sa'id al-'Ulamá three times and call him out for not taking an active part in the defense of his city from the scary Bábís.<sup>193</sup> Ruhe calls what happened next a "nine-day standoff."<sup>194</sup> As Nabíl describes it, after their heroics had the populace suing for peace, the little band gathered at the caravanserai of Sabzih-Maydán. Mullá Ḥusayn ordered the gates closed, exhorted the group to be patient till sunset of that first momentous day, then had three young Bábís, one after the other, attempt to sound the adḥan. Each uttered no more than a sentence before he was shot down. At that, Mullá Ḥusayn decided enough was enough and organized a sortie.

The mob dispersed at the sight of the men on horseback charging, waving swords, and shouting "Yá Šāḥibu'z-Zamán!" For the second time that day, the people of Bárfurúsh sued for peace. Here's where the dating gets a little tricky. The Bábís arriving the next day or even the day after at the shrine would mean they dispersed the crowd and then went on their way. But two other points the histories agree on are that Mullá Ḥusayn met with two of the province's nobles, 'Abbás-Qulí-Khán-i-Lárijání and Hájí Muṣṭafá Khán.<sup>195</sup> They offered friendship and an escort through the lawless countryside if it would get the Bábís to quit the area.<sup>196</sup> They offered as guide Khusraw Qádí-Kalá'í, who, with or without their knowledge, had been called aside by Sa'id al-'Ulamá and told to slaughter the Bábís to a man once he and his men had "guided" the Bábís into the dense forest that covered much of the province.

It strains credulity to think that all of this happened in one 24-hour period. Ruhe's "9-day

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<sup>193</sup> It is interesting to note how often contradictory numbers of participants come up in the histories of these events. For instance when the Bábís are begging Mullá Ḥusayn to allow them to retaliate when they were being attacked by the people of Bárfurúsh, his response was "The time is not yet come, the number is as yet incomplete." Was he thinking of a number like 72 we might associate more with a sacred history than a factual one? Or 313?

<sup>194</sup> Ruhe, *Robe*, 101.

<sup>195</sup> They quickly passed the tuman to Sa'id al-'Ulamá, whom, they said, was solely responsible for rousing the populace against the Bábís. (Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 339).

<sup>196</sup> They also immediately threw Sa'id al-'Ulamá under the bus as the sole instigator of the hostilities in and around Bárfurúsh and seem to have assured Mullá Ḥusayn that he was their honored guest and would be treated as such. What followed would make me hesitate to accept if these gentleman were to invite me to stay the weekend.

standoff” makes a lot more sense if we look at Mehrabkhani’s account, which has Quddús’s old friend Shari’atmadár sneaking food and supplies into the caravanseraí “for a few days” when no local merchants would sell anything to the Bábís. He mentions there was some random mischief like some locals throwing one of the Bábís down a well and several being injured when a few of the antagonists set the caravanseraí on fire.<sup>197</sup>

Mehrabkhani sets their departure date as October 19, and I think that is a little more reasonable.<sup>198</sup> If we look at ‘Abbás-Qulí-Khán-i-Lárijání’s day job as governor of ‘Ámul and assume he was in residence there, it would have taken at least a day to write the summons and get it from Bárfurúsh to ‘Ámul, a distance of about 20 miles. And perhaps another day for a response and to prepare a repast befitting of the governor’s status, then possibly another day for him and Háji Muṣṭafá Khán to get their retinue together and travel the 20 miles to Bárfurúsh. The sources that mention numbers agree that Khusraw had about 100 men with him to carry out his betrayal. Although Mehrabkhani cites Nabíl in saying that Sa’id al-’Ulamá summoned Khusraw the same night that Mullá Ḥusayn sat down to eat with his supposed benefactors, it’s unlikely that they were all equipped and ready to go on the instant. Taking all of this material into consideration, Mehrabkhani’s October 19 and Ruhe’s “nine-day standoff” start to look more plausible than an October 10th-12th<sup>199</sup> arrival in Bárfurúsh followed by an arrival at the shrine on the 12th. Besides, if we look at the story of the caretaker dreaming the night of the 19th that the Imam Ḥusayn and at least 72 of his warriors appeared and fought in the shrine, it means the group arrived there the morning of October 20.<sup>200</sup>

## Bahá’u’lláh Visits

To get Quddús to the nascent fort, we must look at a visit from Bahá’u’lláh during this time

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<sup>197</sup> Mehrabkhani, *Mulla Ḥusayn*, 204

<sup>198</sup> The *Tarikh-i-Jádíd* supports the idea of a number of days passing while this conflict sorted itself out (quantifying “for the space of some five or six days” for just the attack on the caravanseraí), 52.

<sup>199</sup> Sources including Balyuzi even put their arrival in Bárfurúsh in late September.

<sup>200</sup> The reason for them choosing the shrine at all was concern over their safety after villagers along their route continued to harass them and Khusraw with his hundred men actually tried to murder them. Please note, the Bábís did retaliate, killing Khusraw and his men before Mullá Ḥusayn led them to the shrine. Also, October 20 is when the Bahá’is in the West used to celebrate the Birth of the Báb!

period, when the fortifications are being built under continual harassment from the locals.<sup>201</sup> All sources indicate He arrived as they were finishing the initial fortifications; those that report His words indicate that He was pleased with the direction the fortifications were taking and observed the company lacked but one thing to make it perfect: the presence of Quddús. At His suggestion, He and Mullá Ḥusayn dispatched six men under the leadership of Mullá Mihdí-i-Khu'í to retrieve their imprisoned brother, saying “The fear of God and the dread of His punishment will prompt him [Mírzá Muḥammad-Taqí] to surrender unhesitatingly his captive.”<sup>202</sup>

Moojan Momen, who has done extensive work on the history of the Bábi and Bahá'í revelations, had this to say about Bahá'u'lláh's visit and Quddús's release from Sári.

I expended a great deal of effort many decades ago creating a chronology. But now that I look back at it I can see a number of mistakes for the period that you are asking about. Using Mehrabkhani's *Tarikh Shuhada Amr* vol. 1 and the notes I made, I think the following are approximations that we can be fairly sure about although unfortunately we have no firm dates:

- 1....
2. Baha'u'llah's arrival... so I think his statement that it was in late October-early November (p.196) is probably more correct.
3. Mihrabkhani says (pp. 205, 207) that Quddús arrived in the fort and then on the two commemorations of `Ayd Qurban (10 Dhu'l-Hijjah = 7 Nov) and `Ayd Ghadir (18 Dhu'l-Hijjah = 15 Nov), prayers were said in the presence of Quddús and Mulla Ḥusayn, with Mulla Ḥusayn showing great deference towards Quddús. So Baha'u'llah must have left well before 7 Nov.<sup>203</sup>

If we look at the statement from sources that quantify the length of Quddús's imprisonment (95 days), that puts the date of his imprisonment at about August 2, which tracks for a journey from the area of Sháh-Rud to Sári (around 150 miles, but on foot). Also, these dates give the Bábis about three weeks to complete the initial structure of the fort, which is reasonable: Mehrabkhani mentions the structure itself was made of bricks and that every man, even Mullá Ḥusayn, was required to carry 20 bricks to the site for use in constructing the fort.

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<sup>201</sup> When news of Khusraw's death reached them, relatives from Qadi-Kala rode to the fort, identified themselves, and said they could only avenge his death by killing every man in the fort. The Bábis discouraged them by mounting up and, again crying “Ya Sahibu'z Aman!” riding their enemies down, even overshooting Qadi-Kala and accidentally killing a woman in the village of Nazar. Bahá'u'lláh came through Nazar on His way to the fort not long after this, which tracks with Him appearing in late October or very early November. The Bahá'í Chronology at Jonah Winters' site cites Moojan Momen as giving a date of October 12 for the arrival of these attackers, but we're in a time period where dates may be a little fluid depending on which historian you talk to. (<https://bahai-library.com/chronology/1848>, retrieved 9/26/23)

<sup>202</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 349. It turned out that Bahá'u'lláh was right!

<sup>203</sup> Personal communication via email, 9/12/23

## Quddús's Dramatic Arrival

Mullá Ḥusayn and his fellow Bábis welcomed Quddús in style. Mullá Ḥusayn had had word of his approach. About 100 of the Bábis went out to meet him. Evening was coming on, and Mullá Ḥusayn arranged for each to carry two lit candles. Quddús was mounted, and the light of 200 candles illumined his face from below and brought light to the forest around them. As the company slowly wended its way towards the fort, they broke into song: "Holy, holy, the Lord our God, the Lord of the angels and the spirits!"

Nabíl tells us that Quddús's first action and first words were those we have seen and heard before. He leaned his back against the shrine much as the Báb had leaned His back against the Kabah and uttered some familiar words: "The Baqiyyatu'llah will be best for you if ye are of those who believe."<sup>204</sup> As if to underscore the referent of "Baqiyyatu'llah," he next turned to Mullá Ḥusayn and inquired about Bahá'u'lláh. Then he inquired about the numbers in the fort. He went so far as to have all the Bábis leave the fort and then file back in so he could count them. When counted, he found 312 believers and seemed somewhat dissatisfied. But suddenly a youth rushed in and seized the hem of Quddús's garment. He had run all the way from Bárfurúsh, and now he pleaded to be enrolled among the companions and to be allowed to lay down his life, whenever required, in the path of the Beloved. Quddús readily agreed, then said, perhaps reflecting on the Báb's similar actions and statements in Mecca:

Whatever the tongue of the Prophet of God has spoken concerning the promised One must needs be fulfilled, that thereby His testimony may be complete in the eyes of those divines who esteem themselves as the sole interpreters of the law and traditions of Islam. Through them will the people recognise the truth and acknowledge the fulfillment of these traditions.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> The Báb leaned His back against the Kabah when Pilgrimage concluded and pronounced Himself the Qa'im; the reference to the Baqiyyatu'llah is from the phrase He added to the *adhan*, which occurs in Qur'an 11:86. Again, the "Remnant" in question is Bahá'u'lláh. For someone from the West, this association is extremely easy to miss when reading even the best English translations of the Qur'an.

<sup>205</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 354. We certainly have sources that place the eventual number of Bábis defending the fort at five or even six hundred. However, the assembling of three hundred and thirteen chosen supporters of the Qa'im in Mázandarán is one of the signs that a claimant is, in fact, the Qa'im. Is Quddús saying and doing these things to remind people of prophecy? 313 is not only a number from Muslim prophecy but the number of early Muslims who traditionally fought for Muḥammad at the Battle of Badr



**The entrance to the shrine**

Once the Bábís had welcomed Quddús to the fort, he went about having some of his own writings read to the assemblage, in this case three homilies, one each for the Báb, Táhirih, and Bahá'u'lláh.<sup>206</sup> This practice would continue, and many sources like *The Dawnbreakers* present Quddús as having turned out one homily or sermon daily during the siege. These, when read aloud, heartened the Bábís during the worst of the five months of the actual siege.<sup>207</sup> He also continued work on his tafsir on the letter “S” in “samad.” Sources note that, from being thrice the length of the Qur'an when he was freed from his captivity in Sári, it expanded to six to seven times the length of the Qur'an during the siege. An eyewitness to these events is quoted by Nabíl describing Quddús's writings and the effect both writings and person had on the assembled believers this way:

In my eagerness to unravel the subtleties of the traditions concerning the promised Qa'im, I several times approached Quddús and requested him to enlighten me regarding that subject. Though at first reluctant, he eventually acceded to my wish. The manner of his answer, his convincing and illuminating explanations, served to heighten the sense of awe and of veneration which his presence inspired. He dispelled whatever doubts lingered in our minds, and such were the evidences of his perspicacity that we came to believe that to him had been given the power to read our profoundest thoughts and to calm the fiercest tumult in our hearts.<sup>208</sup>

This passage, from Nabíl, gives us another glimpse into the religious life of this Bábí hero:

<sup>206</sup> We have an interesting detail from Dihqan that, before his arrival, “Mr. Qudus” ordered supplies and gifts for the companions and sent these along with a letter to Mullá Husayn. I think he is saying this was calligraphed in the shape of the number 6. He says the companions were surprised to see that number, but their leader interpreted it as saying that the siege period of the castle will be six months. His reference is a little unclear in my copy, but it gives us a look at the sort of insight Quddús often displayed. (Dihqan, *Treasure*, 55 of my translation)

<sup>207</sup> Dating this from arrival of the government forces around December 19, which completely hemmed them in. Previously, some comings and goings to buy supplies and teach the locals about the Báb had taken place.

<sup>208</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 353. Mulla Mirzá Muhammad-i-Furughi, one of the few survivors of the siege, is one of Nabíl's most important primary sources for his information about this episode.



Every morning and every afternoon during those days, Quddús would summon Mulla Husayn and the most distinguished among his companions and ask them to chant the writings of the Bab. Seated in the Maydan, the open square adjoining the fort, and surrounded by his devoted friends, he would listen intently to the utterances of his Master and would occasionally be heard to comment upon them. Neither the threats of the enemy nor the fierceness of their successive onsets could induce him to abate the fervour, or to break the regularity, of his devotions. Despising all danger and oblivious of his own needs and wants, he continued, even under the most distressing circumstances, his daily communion with his Beloved, wrote his praises of Him, and roused to fresh exertions the defenders of the fort... "My soul is wedded to Thy mention!" he was wont to exclaim. "Remembrance of Thee is the stay and solace of my life! I glory in that I was the first to suffer ignominiously for Thy sake in Shiraz. I long to be the first to suffer in Thy path a death that shall be worthy of Thy Cause..."

He would sometimes ask his Iraqi companions to chant various passages of the Qur'an, to which he would listen with close attention, and would often be moved to unfold their meaning. In the course of one of their chantings, they came across the following verse: "With somewhat of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives and fruits, will We surely prove you: but bear good tidings to the patient." [sic] "These words," Quddús would remark, "were originally revealed with reference to Job and the afflictions that befell him. In this day, however, they are applicable to us, who are destined to suffer those same afflictions. Such will be the measure of our calamity that none but he who has been endowed with constancy and patience will be able to survive them."

The knowledge and sagacity which Quddús displayed on those occasions, the confidence with which he spoke, and the resource and enterprise which he demonstrated in the instructions he gave to his companions, reinforced his authority and enhanced his prestige...<sup>209</sup>

The above section gives us an insightful look at the conditions at the fort shortly after Quddús's arrival. It suggests the defenders, while enduring the occasional pot shot from the locals, had the freedom to move in and out of the fort, occupying themselves with daily devotions and trips to local markets to gather supplies and acquaint the locals with Bábí beliefs.<sup>210</sup> That would change late in November of that year.

## A Look at the Principal Actors

Let's take a look at the Bábis and at the forces that were eventually arrayed against them, and at how the enclosure and siege took shape.

The key defenders at the fort remained fairly consistent, although we have the previous eyewitness statement that ultimately about 500 Bábis defended the fort. The increase in numbers may be attributed to several factors. First, the Báb Himself instructed His followers to hasten to enlist under

<sup>209</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 355-6

<sup>210</sup> A challenge here is that, till people from the neighboring villages became believers, relatively few of the defenders spoke the local dialect. This added to their isolation and led to misunderstandings about Bábí belief.

Mulla Husayn and the Black Standards. Second, the presence of Quddús stimulated the desire on the part of the defenders to teach. In a time when attacks were still sporadic, they were able to circulate through the villages and farms in the area and put their case to the people. The locals came to admire them and see that the claims made against them amounted to calumny. Some even came to believe in the Báb and joined the defenders of the fort.

The key attackers changed a bit over time. We have looked at the common folk of Bárfurúsh and the way Sa'íd al-'Ulamá whipped them into a frenzy. We have looked at Khusraw and his "escort" that followed Sa'íd al-'Ulamá's instructions to betray the very people they were supposed to be keeping from harm. Sa'íd al-'Ulamá took a hand again when the Bábís were driven to take refuge at the shrine and perfidiously reported their activities as being not religious but civil in nature: he said they wanted to take over the government. Excerpts from his letter to Nasiri'd-Din Sháh read as follows:

The standard of revolt has been raised by the contemptible sect of the Babis. This wretched band of irresponsible agitators has dared to strike at the very foundations of the authority with which your Imperial Majesty has been invested. The inhabitants of a number of villages in the immediate vicinity of their headquarters have already flown to their standard and sworn allegiance to their cause. They have built themselves a fort, and in that massive stronghold they have entrenched themselves, ready to direct a campaign against you. With unswerving obstinacy they have resolved to proclaim their independent sovereignty, a sovereignty that shall abase to the dust the imperial diadem of your illustrious ancestors. You stand at the threshold of your reign. What greater triumph could signalise the inauguration of your rule than to extirpate this hateful creed that has dared to conspire against you?... It will enhance your prestige, and invest your crown with imperishable glory. Should you vacillate in your policy... not only the province of Mazindaran but the whole of Persia... will have repudiated your authority and will have surrendered to their cause.<sup>211</sup>

It is worth noting the tactics he used in this letter. Nasiri'd-Din Sháh was 17 years old at the time of his accession a few months prior. While his assumption of his role is variously reported as September 7 through September 12, 1848, it took him about 45 days to make his way to Tehran and ascend his father's throne. With many senior ministers and politicians from his father's reign still in their positions of power, how secure was his position initially? Probably not very. And Sa'íd al-'Ulamá played like Joshua Bell on

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<sup>211</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 358-9

his violin in upping the ante. If he lost Mázindarán to the Bábís, he would have failed not only Persia but Islam itself.

Beyond having his fears played on, he had the legacy of his father and his father's prime minister to draw on. While he mainly left all matters Bábí to his prime minister, Haji Mírzá Aqasi, in the last days of his life, Muhammad Sháh, ordered both the Báb's execution and Baha'u'llah's arrest; only his death prevented these actions being carried out. Nabíl notes that Haji Mírzá Aqasi was motivated more by fear of losing his position than by personal animosity or doctrinal disagreements with the Báb. Still, he ordered some heinous deeds be carried out against the Báb and his followers. Young Nasiri'd-Din Sháh likely saw no better direction to go in than the one in which his predecessor pointed. Also, by acting at the urging of such an esteemed member of the clergy, he may have seen an opportunity to take a direction no ruler before him had taken: he could initiate an action in which the religious and the civil authorities acted in concert. So the key players went from the common people acting at the direction of the clergy to clergy and secular government, including the military, working together to achieve the same end.<sup>212</sup>

Although there had been intermittent skirmishing at the fort before Quddús arrived, matters began to escalate in the four to six weeks afterwards. In response to Sa'id al-'Ulamá's vituperations, the Sháh turned the situation over to his military advisors, ordering them to deal with the matter in the way they thought best.<sup>213</sup> One of his advisors, Haji Mustafa Khán-i-Turkaman, derailed any thoughts he had of sending a large army. Mustafa Khán was familiar with both the province and the people and suggested sending just a small force under the command of his brother,<sup>214</sup> Abdu'llah Khán-i-Turkaman, to wipe out this Mázindarání nuisance. Abdu'llah Khán's idea of a small force, as reported by Nabíl, amounted to 12,000 men, whom he stationed in nearby Afra. His first action was to cut supply lines to the fort. His second was to start building barricades before the gates. His third was to shoot anyone who tried to leave.

Obviously, the cutting of supply lines, especially sources of water, was the most damaging of

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<sup>212</sup> I find it tragic that they couldn't unite for some happier end, like world peace.

<sup>213</sup> I learned from reading Terry Pratchett that this is the order any intelligent mid-level officer dreads being given by his superior.

<sup>214</sup> One might infer a tendency on the part of the government to nepotism. One would be right to do so.

these actions. Nabíl records Quddús and Mullá Ḥusayn watching this army assemble from the fort's terrace when a believer, Rasúl-i-Bahnamírí, pointed out how urgent their situation might get if this situation continued. Rather than indicate he had a plan to reestablish the supply lines, Quddús is reported to have turned to Mullá Ḥusayn and said, "The scarcity of water has distressed our companions. God willing, this very night a downpour of rain will overtake our opponents, followed by a heavy snowfall, which will assist us to repulse their contemplated assault."<sup>215</sup>

And sure enough, that evening the area was drenched by torrential rain, followed by a snowfall the like of which this area of Mázindarán had never before seen. This allowed the Bábis to collect enough water to sustain them for some time. Nabíl has Quddús remarking to Rasúl-i-Bahnamírí "Praise be to God, who has graciously answered our prayer and caused both rain and snow to fall upon our enemies; a fall that has brought desolation into their camp and refreshment into our fort."<sup>216</sup> This is another event on which some of the major historical sources differ. Nabíl puts the unusual weather (doing the math) on the 3rd of Muḥarram 1265 AH (November 29, 1848). Momen<sup>217</sup> has Abdu'llah Khán not arriving till December 19, so a snowfall on November 29 would hardly have discommoded him. The reason this might matter is that, the night after this snowfall, while the army was still taking stock of its losses from the inclement weather, Quddús organized a sortie. Multiple sources agree that a sortie took place around December 21/Muḥarram 25; the dating of the snowfall and of the army's arrival bear on whether an earlier sortie took place around November 30/ Muḥarram 4.<sup>218</sup> Five sorties can be accounted for in most sources; Nabíl introduces the possibility of a sixth.

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<sup>215</sup> I've always considered the first sentence here to have been delivered tongue in cheek. Quddús either has a degree in meteorology we never hear about or is prophesying the way God is about to make things unfold in their favor.

<sup>216</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 360

<sup>217</sup> Moojan Momen, "A Chronology Of Some Of The Persecutions Of The Bábis And Baha'is In Iran 1844-1978". in *The Baha'i World*. (1986): 381.

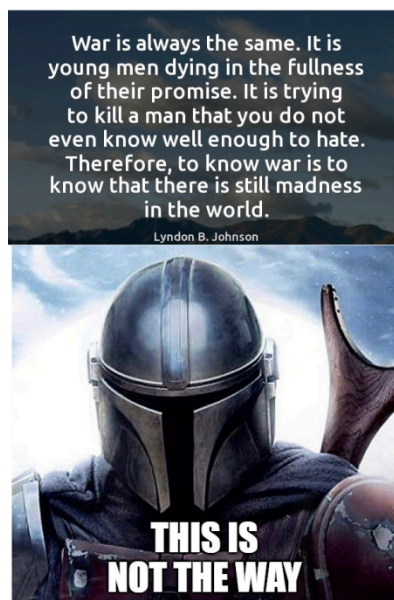
<sup>218</sup> I have checked some journals from Europeans who were traveling through Persia at this time but cannot pin down a date other than the nighttime temperatures significantly below freezing during these months.

## The Siege

*This doth not mean that he was made the object of a special favour, nay, this is a favour which God hath vouchsafed unto all men, yet they have suffered themselves to be veiled from it...the very Qur'án whereunto unnumbered souls bear fealty today, was revealed in the midmost heart of the Arab world, yet to outward seeming for no less than seven years no one acknowledged its truth except the Commander of the Faithful [Imam 'Alí]...who, in response to the conclusive proofs advanced by God's supreme Testimony, recognized the Truth and did not fix his eyes on others... At the time of the appearance of Him Whom God will make manifest the most distinguished among the learned and the lowliest of men shall both be judged alike... Thus in every Dispensation a number of souls enter*

*the fire by reason of their following in the footsteps of others*<sup>219</sup>

With these possible discrepancies in mind, let me move on to the highlights of the siege, which are most easily grouped around the sorties and the events that surrounded them. While the besiegers were



largely professional soldiers, the besieged were mostly mullás, students, small traders, craftsmen, and farmers. Also, while the besiegers had swords as well as rifles or muskets and, eventually, heavy artillery like cannon, the besieged fought almost exclusively with swords.<sup>220</sup> Their slight advantage was having a force that was mainly cavalry while the army seems to have been mainly infantry with a larger absolute number of horse but a much smaller percentage.<sup>221</sup> Also, Hamadani suggests another advantage, that Quddús had the gift of what some cultures call “the Sight.”<sup>222</sup> The besieged, sadly, were mainly young men on the threshold of their lives with at least one barely into his teens.

*(Information that follows taken from Nabil, Chapters XIX and XX, “The Mázindarán Upheaval” unless*

<sup>219</sup> The Báb, *The Persian Bayan*, 4:18

<sup>220</sup> Hamadání, *Tarikh*, 70, has the following note on the quality of each sides’ arms: “Then, with swords worth not more than five *krúns*, which they had wrought for themselves within their castle, they would cut down men whose gear had cost a thousand *túmáns*.” A *krún/qiran* equalled 1/10 of a *túmán*, so, doing the math, the Sháh’s army was using swords worth about 2000 times more than the sword being wielded by the average Bábí. (May be poetic exaggeration). Currently one USD is worth around 50,000 *tuman*, but internal equivalencies have changed dramatically several times since 1848-9.

<sup>221</sup> I’m wondering if we may be back in the realm of sacred history here with other sources saying the eventual number was closer to 500, or if more joined the defenders in the lull after this encounter. Both are viable possibilities

<sup>222</sup> Hamadání, *Tarikh*, 69: “But *Jenáb-i-Kuddús* used to warn the garrison in advance, saying, ‘To-night these pretended watchers for the advent of the Imám Mahdí intend to attack us, therefore let nineteen men be ready to repel them’”

*otherwise noted.)*

### 1) **First sortie, dated by Nabíl as taking place around December 1, 1848.**<sup>223</sup>

**Participants:** Quddús, Mullá Husayn, and three others on horseback (one named Qulí, whom Nabíl names as the only Bábí injured in the ensuing fight) followed by the remainder of the companions on foot, which Nabíl numbers at 313.<sup>224</sup>

**Time of Day:** 2 hours after sunrise

**Result:** The Bábís routed the army of Abdu'llah Khán, killing approximately 450 opponents including the commander himself and two of his lieutenants, Habibu'llah Khán-i-Afghan and Nuru'llah Khán-i-Afghan. No loss of life on behalf of the Bábís, and only the one injury indicated above.

**Quotable quote of Quddús:** “We have repulsed the assailants... we need not carry further the punishment. Our purpose is to protect ourselves that we may be able to continue our labours for the regeneration of men. We have no intention whatever of causing unnecessary harm to anyone. What we have already achieved is sufficient testimony to God's invincible power. We, a little band of His followers, have been able, through His sustaining grace, to overcome the organised and trained army of our enemies.”<sup>225</sup> This was said when Mullá Husayn stayed in the camp pillaging the enemy supplies. Nabíl says Quddús allowed the Bábís to take only horses and swords.

**Associated outcomes:** Seeing the size and equipment of the forces arrayed against them, Quddús detailed the men to deepen and widen the small moat that surrounded the shrine. Nabíl indicates that this took 19 days, which could bring us up to December 20. Note that even if the initial conflict took place on December 21, this would track with an edict issued by the Sháh (issued on December 30, as given by Zabihi-Moghaddam) that includes this snippet in his own handwriting:

You must exert yourself to the utmost in this affair. This is not a trifling amusement. The fate of our religion and of Shi'i doctrine hangs in the balance.”<sup>226</sup>

### 1a) **What may be a second sortie or an alternative dating of the above:**

As above, stated to be in many other sources around December 21. The only other difference was noted by Zabihi-Moghaddam indicating that the little company of believers also took supplies including ammunition, or what was left after the rain and snow ruined much of it.<sup>227</sup>

### 2) **Second Sortie (sometimes called the Battle of Vás-Kas):**

Nabíl initially leaves us to draw our own conclusions about the date of this sortie from these elements: 19 days of joyous ditch-digging<sup>228</sup> followed by the arrival of Prince Mihdí-Qulí Mirzá with an

<sup>223</sup> Dihqan, *Hidden Treasure*, supports this date.

<sup>224</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 362-3

<sup>225</sup> Siyamak Zabihi-Moghaddam, “The Babi-state conflict at Shaykh Tabarsi,” *Iranian Studies*, 35:1-3, (2002): 87-112, DOI: 10.1080/00210860208702012, citing as follows: Bab, *Dalā'il-i sab'a*, 33. See also the Báb's letter to the 'ulamá' of Tabriz, cited in Afnan, *'Ahd-i A'lā*, 334.

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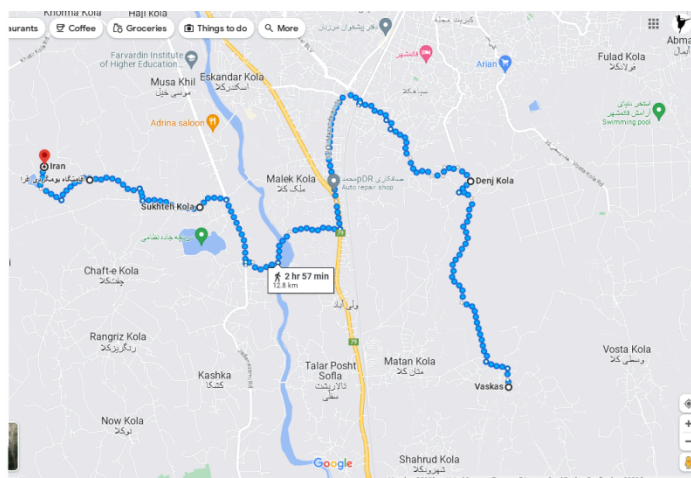
<sup>227</sup> Siyamak Zabihi-Moghaddam, “The Babi-state conflict at Shaykh Tabarsi,” *Iranian Studies*, 35:1-3, (2002): 87-112, DOI: 10.1080/00210860208702012. Mehrabkhani shares this entire missive, 249-51, and the date given concurs with Zabihi-Moghaddam's.

<sup>228</sup> Mehrabkhani indicates that the 24 days of raising walls capable of withstanding cannon fire (described in the appendix) probably occurred at this time. Mehrabkhani, *Mullá Husayn*, p.247

additional 3000 royal troops, followed by the arrival of a messenger from the Prince who rides to the fort to ask the Bábís' intentions. Mullá Husayn drives him to tears with his explanation and with an invitation to the 'ulamá of the region to come to debate the issue and let the Qur'an determine the victor.<sup>229</sup> The messenger promises to return with a reply within three days, but those three days have not elapsed before it becomes clear that the Prince is preparing an attack. The math from Nabil indicates a date of late December, possibly around the 23rd. Others omit the episode with the messenger and date this episode to early January. Note that with either system of dating, a battle occurred on or about the winter solstice with the Bábís riding out to meet their attackers.

**Participants:** Quddús with Mullá Husayn and 202 of the defenders, all mounted. This sortie ran SE, in the direction of Vās-Kas, where the Prince was quartered. The Prince had prepared three regiments of infantry and several regiments of cavalry, quartered upon a height that overlooked the fort.

**Time of Day:** They rode through the night and arrived at Vās Kas about two hours before dawn. Mehrabkhani notes this would have been a difficult ride, as the night was dark and the roads muddy or snow packed; they had to cross the Tálár River, which had no bridge, and pass four villages without raising the alarm. Their tactic for approaching the Prince's sentries was to have Bábís who spoke the local dialect call out to them the Bábís friendly intentions.<sup>230</sup>



**A somewhat circuitous route from the fort to Vās-Kas based on the information in Mehrabkhani. The river crossing was likely farther north and they likely had a straighter shot between Dinji-Kalá/Denj Kola and Malik-Kalá/Malek Kola. Sukhtih-Kalá is on the map; location of Afra and the fort are approximate. Total time on foot even with detours is less than three hours, so men on horseback in harsh conditions would have managed.**

**Result:** The prince, somewhat belatedly and observing from his fortress, ordered his men to open fire upon Mullá Husayn. As at Bárfurush, bullets just didn't harm him (nor did they harm any of his men). He forced his way into the private apartments of the Prince, who threw himself from a back window and escaped barefooted.<sup>231</sup> His forces fled in a rout. When the defenders searched the fortress, they discovered

<sup>229</sup> According to Mehrabkhani, Mullá Husayn also penned his entire eloquent argument and sent it to the Prince. (p.254)

<sup>230</sup> Mehrabkhani, *Mullá Husayn*, 255-7

<sup>231</sup> This problem with abandoned enemy footwear will become a motif.



a number of prisoners, including Mullá Yúsuf-i-Ardibílí,<sup>232</sup> whom they freed. As a trophy, they took only the Prince's sword.

**Quotable Quote of Quddús:** “Mount your steeds, O heroes of God!” Note, Mullá Husayn's companion Qambar ‘Alí uttered this on his behalf outside Bárfurúsh, so it is not original with this encounter, but it's a great battle cry and none the worse for having been used earlier.

**Sortie 2, part 2:** The military forces rallied and rushed down on the Bábís, most of whom had dismounted to encircle and listen to Quddús. The Bábís sprang into their saddles, splitting so some followed Quddús and some Mullá Husayn. At one point, the government forces started pursuing solely Quddús and his men, and in this part of the battle, Quddús was wounded by a bullet that knocked out up to seven teeth and injured his tongue and throat.<sup>233</sup> Aghast that his perceived lack of vigilance had allowed his commander and friend to be injured, Mullá Husayn, whose force had circled around to flank the attackers, begged Quddús for his sword and now attacked with two swords, that of Quddús's and that of the Prince who had fled.<sup>234</sup> He and 110 of the defenders put the attacking force to flight in less than 30 minutes.

**Result:** As at Bárfurúsh, the Bábí force put to flight their attackers twice on a single day. The Amir-Nizam, now Mírzá Taqí Khán, severely rebuked the barefoot Prince. His missive said the following:

I have charged you with the mission of subduing a handful of young and contemptible students. I have placed at your disposal the army of the Sháh, and yet you have allowed it to suffer such a disgraceful defeat. What would have befallen you, I wonder, had I entrusted you with the mission of defeating the combined forces of the Russian and Ottoman governments?

The prince, understanding the traditional fate of messengers bearing bad news to power, sent back a messenger with the fragments of the barrel of the rifle Mulla Husayn had cut in two (along with its bearer and the tree he was hiding behind) as a visual aid for the Amir-Nizam. His (written) message read as follows:

Such is the contemptible strength of an adversary who, with a single stroke of his sword, has shattered into six pieces the tree, the musket, and its holder.

**Quotable Quote of Quddús #2 (written):** When the Bábís repaired to the fort, bewailing the injury to their chief, he responded with

We should submit to whatever is the will of God. We should stand firm and steadfast in the hour of trial. The stone of the infidel broke the teeth of the Prophet of God; mine have fallen as a result of the bullet of the enemy. Though my body be afflicted, my soul is immersed in gladness. My

<sup>232</sup> He had been captured with several other Bábís while they were on their way to join the defense of the fort.

<sup>233</sup> I have a medical background and have tried to determine at what angle a single bullet might have entered and exited to do this damage but no more and am somewhat baffled. Dihqan explains it this way (p. 58 of my translation): “The bullet entered from below the right ear and exited from the lower lip, and as a result seven of his teeth were broken and his throat and tongue were injured” but again the citation is unclear and, again, that someone could make this shot intentionally or even by accident in the heat of battle and then do such precise damage strains credulity. Hamadání, *Tarikh*, 69 simplifies the situation and says the side of his face was shattered, and then continues “Jenáb-i-Bábu'l-Báb was deeply distressed at this sad misfortune, and seemed overcome with shame in the presence of his chief; for Jenáb-i-Kuddús was unable to eat solid food, and for three months tasted nothing, except now and then a little tea or broth. And this was a most marvellous thing, yea, almost a miracle; for during these three months he neither lost colour nor wasted away, nor was any impairment of bodily strength perceptible in him, nor any sign of pain or uneasiness.” Miracle, sacred history, or literal fact?

<sup>234</sup> His own sword had been damaged by a bullet.

gratitude to God knows no bounds. If you love me, suffer not that this joy be obscured by the sight of your lamentations.

Note, Nabíl does put the date of this engagement at the end of his description and does say it occurred on December 21.

2a) Zabihi-Moghaddam describes a sortie by the Bábís three days before the arrival of the reinforcements described in 3) below with similar results. He dates this as the night of January 24-25, 1849.<sup>235</sup>

### 3) Third Sortie and the martyrdom of Mullá Ḥusayn:

By this time, with two and possibly three resounding defeats of his armies, the young Sháh is furious. ‘Abbás-Quli Khán-i-Lárijání and Sulayman Khán-i-Afshar-i-Shahriyari, together with several regiments of infantry and cavalry,<sup>236</sup> join the fray on his orders. Together, they erect seven barricades, hemming the defenders in on all sides. And this time, rather than using a castle some 14 miles away as a staging ground, they camp and even conduct military drills in sight of the fort, presumably to demoralize the Bábís. Within the fort, water had become scarce with supply lines cut, and the companions, at Mullá Ḥusayn’s direction, dig a well.<sup>237</sup> Here, our two possible timelines finally converge with all sources placing this battle in the first three days of February. The well is finished, providing adequate water for drinking as well as bathing. Mullá Ḥusayn knows that the time for his martyrdom has arrived. He washes, dons fresh (or freshly washed) clothes as well as the Báb’s turban, and invites whoever would taste the cup of martyrdom to ride with him:



**Artist's Conception with ‘Abbás-Quli Khán in the tree**

This night, ere the hour of dawn, let those who wish to join me be ready to issue forth from behind these walls and, scattering once again the dark forces which have beset our path, ascend untrammelled to the heights of glory.

He spends his last hours in the fort conversing with Quddús and basking in the glow that so

<sup>235</sup> Zabihi-Moghaddam, “The Babi-state conflict...,” 65

<sup>236</sup> Zabihi-Moghaddam, “The Babi-state conflict...,” gives the combined number of troops at this point as 10-12,000.

<sup>237</sup> Mehrabkhani, *Mullá Ḥusayn*, 263, says they also constructed a bath house.

reminds him of his Master's.

**Participants:** Mullá Ḥusayn and up to 313 of the defenders. The combined armies of Prince Mihdhi-Quli Mírzá, 'Abbás-Quli Khán-i-Lárijání, and Sulayman Khán-i-Afshar-i-Shahriyari.

**Time:** Usually reported as midnight.<sup>238</sup>

**Result:** Mullá Ḥusayn rode down the first three barricades himself, and the company eventually took all seven. Zabihi-Moghaddam suggests the large number of casualties on the part of the attackers, which he places at about 400 including many chiefs, might have been the result of “friendly fire” or even “friendly stab” due to the poor lighting conditions.<sup>239</sup> About 40 Bábís joined Mullá Ḥusayn in sacrificing their lives that night. Mullá Ḥusayn was shot in the chest by 'Abbás-Quli Khán, who had climbed a tree and lay in wait.<sup>240</sup> About 90 were injured, some of whom succumbed to their wounds.

**Quotable Quote by Quddús:** This is more an action, and I can't summarize or improve on Nabíl's text:<sup>241</sup>

I have heard the following account from Mulla Sadiq and Mulla Mírzá Muhammad-i-Furughi: “We were among those who had remained in the fort with Quddús. As soon as Mulla Ḥusayn, who seemed to have lost consciousness, was brought in, we were ordered to retire. ‘Leave me alone with him,’ were the words of Quddús as he bade Mírzá Muhammad-Báqir close the door and refuse admittance to anyone desiring to see him. ‘There are certain confidential matters which I desire him alone to know.’ We were amazed a few moments later when we heard the voice of Mulla Ḥusayn replying to questions from Quddús. For two hours they continued to converse with each other. We were surprised to see Mírzá Muhammad-Báqir so greatly agitated. ‘I was watching Quddús,’ he subsequently informed us, ‘through a fissure in the door. As soon as he called his name, I saw Mulla Ḥusayn arise and seat himself, in his customary manner, on bended knees beside him. With bowed head and downcast eyes, he listened to every word that fell from the lips of Quddús, and answered his questions. “You have hastened the hour of your departure,” I was able to hear Quddús remark, “and have abandoned me to the mercy of my foes. Please God, I will ere long join you and taste the sweetness of heaven's ineffable delights.” I was able to gather the following words uttered by Mulla Ḥusayn: “May my life be a ransom for you. Are you well pleased with me?”<sup>242,243</sup>

A long time elapsed before Quddús bade Mírzá Muhammad-Báqir open the door and admit his

<sup>238</sup> Mention of Mullá Ḥusayn waiting till the appearance of the evening star because that appearance reminded him of his impending union with his Beloved, may be poetic hyperbole or sacred history, or else the evening star rose a lot later in 1849 Persia than it does in 2023 America!

<sup>239</sup> Siyamak Zabihi-Moghaddam, “The Babi-state conflict...,” 65-6

<sup>240</sup> A lot of Bahá'í historians call this action cowardly or heinous, but I feel that, given the low light conditions and his troops stabbing and shooting one another in the confusion, getting a high vantage point and waiting till he could see what he was shooting seems like a clever move.

<sup>241</sup> This scene is what so intrigued me about Quddús that I set out to write a biography.

<sup>242</sup> This question is just heartbreaking. Here is a man who, although reports consistently describe him as frail, led his troop of several hundred Bábís on the long journey from Khurásán, kept them together during multiple engagements with foes made rabid by the words of a senior cleric who should have known better, performed astonishing feats of valor in battle, saw the initial fortifications built and, before that, traveled the land spreading word of the new faith, made the arduous trek to see his Master, then discovered the “hidden treasure” and on his instructions returned to Mashhad to see the Bábíyyih built and a thriving community raised up. Did he really think Quddús would say no? And, at the hour of his death, what confidential matters could Quddús have had to discuss with him?

<sup>243</sup> Ruhe, *Robe*, 135, in his redaction of the attempt on the life of the Sháh that would occur in 1852 and land Bahá'u'lláh in the worst of prisons, says that, to get the Sháh's attention, the would-be assassins used a ritual phrase, “We are your sacrifice!” which Ruhe refers to as “the traditional formula of appeal.” The phrase is similar to the one Mullá Ḥusayn uses here.

companions. ‘I have bade my last farewell to him’ he said, as we entered the room. ‘Things which previously I deemed it unallowable to utter I have now shared with him.’ We found on our arrival that Mulla Ḥusayn had expired. A faint smile still lingered upon his face. Such was the peacefulness of his countenance that he seemed to have fallen asleep. Quddús attended to his burial, clothed him in his own shirt, and gave instructions to lay him to rest to the south of, and adjoining, the shrine of Shaykh Tabarsi. ‘Well is it with you to have remained to your last hour faithful to the Covenant of God,’ he said, as he laid a parting kiss upon his eyes and forehead. ‘I pray God to grant that no division ever be caused between you and me.’ He spoke with such poignancy that the seven companions who were standing beside him wept profusely, and wished they had been sacrificed in his stead. Quddús, with his own hands, laid the body in the tomb, and cautioned those who were standing near him to maintain secrecy regarding the spot which served as his resting place, and to conceal it even from their companions. He afterwards instructed them to inter the bodies of the thirty-six martyrs who had fallen in the course of that engagement in one and the same grave on the northern side of the shrine of Shaykh Tabarsi. ‘Let the loved ones of God,’ he was heard to remark as he consigned them to their tomb, ‘take heed of the example of these martyrs of our Faith. Let them in life be and remain as united as these are now in death.’”<sup>244</sup>

#### 4) Interlude #1:

The rout of the previous sortie left the enemy in such disarray that the defenders got a respite of about 45 days. Sadly, this respite lasted just long enough for their supplies to dwindle to nothing. Mullá Ḥusayn had put aside a quantity of rice against the time when other supplies would run out, and Quddús now had this distributed. The lull in the fighting allowed him to give one last chance at reprieve to any who would take it. He told the defenders

Whoever feels himself strong enough to withstand the calamities that are soon to befall us, let him remain with us in this fort. And whoever perceives in himself the least hesitation and fear, let him betake himself away from this place. Let him leave immediately ere the enemy has again assembled his forces and assailed us. The way will soon be barred before our face; we shall very soon encounter the severest hardship and fall a victim to devastating afflictions.<sup>245</sup>

Two important things happened shortly after he allowed this last chance at reprieve: the attackers had built ramparts from which they could lob shells and cannon balls into the fort, and now they started attacking in earnest with their heavy artillery. And one Bábí among the defenders betrayed his brothers by writing a letter to ‘Abbás-Quli Khán. The letter disclosed that Mullá Ḥusayn himself had been killed in the last battle (in most sources, ‘Abbás-Quli Khán did not know till this letter exactly who he had killed)

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<sup>244</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 381-2

<sup>245</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 384

and that conditions were appalling and morale low among the defenders. This betrayer, a siyyid from Qum called Mírzá Ḥusayn-i-Mutavalli, urged ‘Abbás-Qulī Khán to take advantage of the straitened conditions in the fort and attack. He slipped the letter to a confederate, Siyyid ‘Aliy-i-Zargar, who stole out of the fort to get the letter to the enemy commander. His reward was to be murdered on the spot so that ‘Abbás-Qulī Khán could keep these disclosures to himself. However, he did take the advice, marching out with two regiments of infantry and cavalry. Here we have another statement from Quddús, specifically to Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir:

The betrayer...has announced the death of Mulla Ḥusayn to ‘Abbás-Qulī Khán. Emboldened by his removal, he is now determined to storm our stronghold and to secure for himself the honour of being its sole conqueror. Sally out and, with the aid of eighteen men marching at your side, administer a befitting chastisement upon the aggressor and his host. Let him realise that though Mulla Ḥusayn be no more, God's invincible power still continues to sustain his companions and enable them to triumph over the forces of their enemies.<sup>246</sup>

Which leads us to

## 5) Fourth Sortie:

**Participants: For the Bábís,** Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir and 18 companions.<sup>247</sup> For the attackers, two regiments of infantry and cavalry under the command of ‘Abbás-Qulī Khán. By this time they had been joined by a number of mullás and their students from all over the province.

**Time of Day:** Early morning

**Results:** The Bábí charge was so aggressive that the army was thrown into confusion. ‘Abbás-Qulī Khán was so unnerved he leapt from his saddle, leaving one boot behind,<sup>248</sup> and trailed his fleeing army in the direction of Bárfurúsh. No Bábí was harmed, and Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir returned carrying the army's standard, abandoned in the confusion. Nabil gives a substantial footnote, citing the *Tarikh-i-Jadid* pp. 74-6, enumerating the excuses the divines and their pupils, expecting a quick and easy victory in a holy war, suddenly came up with to return home.<sup>249</sup>

## 6) Interlude #2:

‘Abbás-Qulī Khán reported to Prince Mihdí-Qulī Mírzá, now lodged in Sári, who was apparently very happy with this failure, as it meant he had a chance to redeem himself by besting the Bábí force. He

<sup>246</sup> Nabil indicates that ‘Abbás-Qulī Khán acted on the news about Mullá Ḥusayn's martyrdom as if he believed Mullá Ḥusayn rather than Quddús had been in full command of the fort.

<sup>247</sup> Notice that, in these remaining skirmishes, although Quddús is telling Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir (now his *de facto* second in command) what numbers to ride out with, all of them have some significance to the Bábí revelation: 18 is the number of the Letters of the Living, but it is also a factor of the magic number 72 from the Battle of Karbila.

<sup>248</sup> Motif as previously mentioned

<sup>249</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 387-8. Some of the excuses are pretty entertaining! Not "I think I left the stove on," but close.

wrote to Tehran requesting further armaments including heavy artillery. Meanwhile, the companions, though enduring privation, joyously chanted the holy texts and celebrated Naw-Rúz (beginning March 18 in 1849). Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir indicates they had really ceased to long for physical food. One indication of the regard the believers had for Quddús and he for them is in this story. Their supply of cattle was down to one milk cow, which a believer named Haji Nasiri'd-Din-i-Qazvini would milk daily to create a pudding for Quddús. He would take a few teaspoons full, then have the rest distributed to the men. Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir writes of Quddús

Our thoughts were no longer concerned with matters pertaining to our daily bread. We were so enraptured by the entrancing melody of those [Quddús's] verses that, were we to have continued for years in that state, no trace of weariness and fatigue could possibly have dimmed our enthusiasm or marred our gladness. And whenever the lack of nourishment would tend to sap our vitality and weaken our strength, [Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir] would hasten to Quddús and acquaint him with our plight. A glimpse of his face, the magic of his words, as he walked amongst us, would transmute our despondency into golden joy. We were reinforced with a strength of such intensity that, had the hosts of our enemies appeared suddenly before us, we felt ourselves capable of subjugating their forces.<sup>250</sup>

## 7) Fifth Sortie:

**Participants:** For the Bábís, once again Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir led just 18 of the Bábís. For the Sháh's forces, all three of the previous leaders with their armies and a newcomer, Ja'far Qulí Khán, plus 40 other officers.<sup>251</sup> Date for the beginning of the bombardment is given as "ninth day of the month of Bahá," or March 27. Date for sortie is given as "a few days later," and it is precipitated by Ja'far Qulí Khán building a tower of sufficient height that cannon could fire directly into the enclosure. Assuming such a tower took a few days to raise, we should be into early April.

**Time of Day:** Not given; the inference is the daylight hours but drawing on towards evening

**Result:** Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir again led his 18 mounted companions and succeeded in killing Ja'far-Qulí Khán and thirty of his men while the Bábís rushed to and climbed the tower, captured the guns, hurled them to the ground, and went on to tear down many of the barricades till the approach of evening stopped them. An explosion not of Bábí design then destroyed so much of the attackers' ammunition that they were forced to hold off attacking for a month.

**Quotable Quotes by Quddús:** During the initial bombardment, a cannonball came to rest at Quddús's feet. As he calmly rolled it about with his foot, he said the following:

How utterly unaware... are these boastful aggressors of the power of God's avenging wrath! Have they forgotten that a creature as insignificant as the gnat was capable of extinguishing the life of the all-powerful Nimrod? Have they not heard that the roaring of the tempest was sufficient to destroy

<sup>250</sup> Words of Mulla Mírzá Muḥammad-i-Furughí

<sup>251</sup> Momen, *Chronology*, 380-1

the people of Ad and Thamud and to annihilate their forces? Seek they to intimidate the heroes of God, in whose sight the pomp of royalty is but an empty shadow, with such contemptible evidences of their cruelty? You [the Bábís] are those same companions of whom Muhammad, the Apostle of God, has thus spoken: “Oh, how I long to behold the countenance of my brethren; my brethren who will appear in the end of the world! Blessed are we, blessed are they; greater is their blessedness than ours.” Beware lest you allow the encroachments of self and desire to impair so glorious a station. Fear not the threats of the wicked, neither be dismayed by the clamour of the ungodly. Each one of you has his appointed hour, and when that time is come, neither the assaults of your enemy nor the endeavours of your friends will be able either to retard or to advance that hour. If the powers of the earth league themselves against you, they will be powerless, ere that hour strikes, to lessen by one jot or tittle the span of your life. Should you allow your hearts to be agitated for but one moment by the booming of these guns which, with increasing violence, will continue to shower their shot upon this fort, you will have cast yourselves out of the stronghold of Divine protection.

Upon being bombarded by this direct cannon fire, Quddús instructed Mírzá Muhammad-Báqir to inflict upon the “boastful newcomer” a humiliating defeat. He continued

Let him know... that God's lion-hearted warriors, when pressed and driven by hunger, are able to manifest deeds of such heroism as no ordinary mortals can show. Let him know that the greater their hunger, the more devastating shall be the effects of their exasperation.

### 8) Interlude #3:

Despite their great zeal, the defenders now confronted circumstances that had become most dire.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá lauds their sacrifices in this passage. Mentioning in particular Mulla Sadiq-i-Muqaddas (the same Muqaddas who had suffered persecution with Quddús in Shiraz), He says the following:

For eighteen days<sup>252</sup>... they remained without food. They lived on the leather of their shoes. This too was soon consumed, and they had nothing left but water. They drank a mouthful every morning and lay famished and exhausted in their fort.<sup>253</sup> When attacked, however, they would instantly spring to their feet, and manifest in the face of the enemy a magnificent courage and astonishing resistance.... Under such circumstances to maintain an unwavering faith and patience is extremely difficult, and to endure such dire afflictions a rare phenomenon.<sup>254</sup>

### 9) Sixth Sortie:

This final sortie was provoked when the massed government armies began to bombard the fort again and simultaneously sent troops to storm it. Quddús’s immediate response was to loose his troops on this combined army. Date is given by Nabil as early in the month of Jamádiyū’th-Thaní or late April. Momen gives the date as April 26. Hamadani quantifies the troops arrayed against the Bábís as 7000

<sup>252</sup> Yet another instance of a number that could indicate the intrusion or overlay of sacred history but could also be factual

<sup>253</sup> I’m wondering how this tracks with the presence of the well and the bath house; some sources like Sears mention that the weather was wet and rainy during this entire period. William Sears, *Release the Sun*. (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1971), 96, for instance, quotes the *Tarikh-i-Jádíd* as saying that, when the attackers started raising towers and using cannon, the defenders tried to dig underground passages where they might take refuge, but “the ground of Mazandaran lies near the water and is saturated with moisture, added to which the rain fell continually, increasing the damage so those poor sufferers dwelt amidst mud and water till their garments rotted away with damp,”.81-3.

<sup>254</sup> Abdu’l-Bahá, *Memorials*, 16-17. Also mentioned is the way the lull in the bombardment allowed them to exit the fort to collect grass, which they would then boil and eat, their other supplies having been completely exhausted. Yum.

horse and foot.

**Participants:** For the Bábís, Mírzá Muhammad-Báqir with, this time, 36 companions. For the government, the combined forces of the gathered armies.

**Time of Day:** Inferred to be in daylight, as this is a response to a daylight attack

**Result:** Mírzá Muhammad-Báqir and his companions repulsed the attack, although five lost their lives in the encounter.

**Quotable Quote of Quddús:**

Never since our occupation of this fort...have we under any circumstances attempted to direct any offensive against our opponents. Not until they unchained their attack upon us did we arise to defend our lives. Had we cherished the ambition of waging holy war against them, had we harboured the least intention of achieving ascendancy through the power of our arms over the unbelievers, we should not, until this day, have remained besieged within these walls. The force of our arms would have by now, as was the case with the companions of Muhammad in days past, convulsed the nations of the earth and prepared them for the acceptance of our Message. Such is not the way, however, which we have chosen to tread. Ever since we repaired to this fort, our sole, our unalterable purpose has been the vindication, by our deeds and by our readiness to shed our blood in the path of our Faith, of the exalted character of our mission. The hour is fast approaching when we shall be able to consummate this task.

I found one sweet anecdote by an eyewitness, Mír ‘Abú Tálíb Sháhmírzadí, that casts further light on Quddús’s character and adds a note of tenderness to an otherwise stark episode in which many lives will eventually be lost. The eyewitness’s father had become enraptured with the Writings of the Báb and, on his death bed, said that everyone should arise to serve His cause. Mír ‘Abú Tálíb later became a guide for some Bábís making their way to the fort, where he declared his faith. He returned to Sháhmírzád to spread the news that the Qa’ím had arisen but soon made his way back to the fort with two of his three brothers. His aging mother sent him with a letter for Quddús stating that

even though all believers were enjoined to hasten to the Fort to aid the defenders, she would keep the youngest of the four sons, Siyyid Muhammad-Ridá, for her needs. Shortly after the arrival of these believers from Sháhmírzád the battles with the Mazandarani forces commenced. The three brothers participated in the clashes and two of them were killed during those encounters. Mír Abú-Tálíb states that miraculously he survived. That is, when he returned from their last battle, his garment was full of bullet holes, but on opening his belt, bullets fell to the ground, none of them having harmed him in the least. In the final days of the siege, Quddús summoned Mír Abú-Tálíb and gave him a sealed envelope for his mother. When all the Bábís were arrested, Mír Abú-Tálíb found his way home without the least objection from the opposing soldiers. He gave the letter to his mother in which Quddús had stated, “She had acted generously by giving up her three sons in God’s path. But God was just and had taken two and allowed her to keep two.”<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Mír Abú-Tálíb, spoken chronicle cited in Qazvíní, *Witness*, 33



An interesting encounter is reported by Amanat, citing the *Nuqtat al-Káf*, pp. 199-200. It reflects an episode recounted in *Nabíl* in which a messenger of the Sháh, a man from Kand, delivered the Sháh's *farman* and then begged leave of the Prince to try to induce two of his countrymen in the fort to depart with him.<sup>256</sup>

...during Tabarsi days, he himself [Quddús] disowned his father. *Nuqtat al-Káf* relates that when Mahdi Qulí Mirzá, the military governor of Mazandaran, sent Aqa Salib to the fortress of Tabarsi to plead with his son for cessation of hostilities, Muhammad 'Alí warned him: "Beware, I am not your son! Your son on that day when you sent him to collect fire-wood, lost his way and now is in such and such a town. I am Christ and I have appeared in the guise of your son and only chose you as my father out of expediency."<sup>257</sup>

Bahá'í scholars seem to have a multiplicity of opinions on the *Nuqtat al-Káf*, but this particular episode is corroborated in the *Zuhur al-Haqq*, although this sounds far less confrontational when Mazandarani writes it. Here's the text:

And Haji Mirza Jani wrote with this content that when Mahdi Quli Mirza withdrew from the conflict with the companions of the fortress, he ordered to bring the father, stepmother, and sister of his Excellency [Quddús] from the Barforush camp, and having presented the father for questioning, he said, "What is the purpose and claim of your son from this great turmoil he has raised?" The simple farmer replied that he did not understand the state and thoughts of his son and was bewildered by his actions. So the prince sent him to the fortress to ask for the cessation of the uprising from his Excellency. And when he entered the fortress and reached his noble son, he could not speak, and the Holy One [also Quddús] consoled him and narrated some of the conditions of his family and the statements and actions of the prince. He made several remarks in advice and request, and his Excellency said to him, "As for the oppression and captivity we suffer, it is the cause of a great reward and a very high position and rank that prophets and saints would be proud of, and as for the paternal advice you gave, know this point and be aware that your son has changed and transformed, and the one who now speaks and converses with you is the spirit and the truth of the Messiah. Now go back and make the prince fully aware and informed." Thus, that simple man returned to the camp and recounted the statements of his Excellency, and after spending a few days in the camp, he left for the city.<sup>258</sup>

Amanat suggests this is a ruse to spare his captive father further captivity or persecution. On the other hand, most accounts that contain material on Quddús's father say that he died early in Quddús's life, and probably before the Báb declared His mission. Still it reflects an interesting view of the extent of the

<sup>256</sup> *Nabíl*, *Dawnbreakers*, 397

<sup>257</sup> Amanat, *Resurrection*, 187

<sup>258</sup> Mazandarani, *Zuhur al-Haqq*, 423-424. Thanks to Khazeh Fananapazir for pointing out this specific passage.

saintly Quddús's detachment from not only material things but human relationships beyond the brotherhood he had solidified with his compatriots in the fort.

## The Ruse

The denouement of this episode came after this last successful sortie. The Prince hoped that if their forces did no more than hold their fire and wait, the dispirited Bábís would simply surrender. And, indeed, several days later, Nabil has one Bábí and his servant leaving and going straight to the Prince's tent. The following day, believing they had the Prince's surety of safe passage, several more left—and were put to death on sight at the order of 'Abbás-Qulí Khán.<sup>259</sup>

Finally, on May 9, after months of fruitless strife, the Prince sent a messenger to Quddús requesting that he send two representatives to a parley to end this standoff. He chose Mulla Yusuf-i-Ardibili and Siyyid Ridá-i-Khurásání<sup>260</sup> to act as his representatives, and bade them inform the Prince that the Bábís were prepared to negotiate a truce in good faith. Mihdí-Qulí Mirzá courteously received them. He brought out a copy of the Qur'an and wrote, with his own hand the following words on the margin of the opening Surih, after which he affixed his seal:

I swear by this most holy Book, by the righteousness of God who has revealed it, and the Mission of Him who was inspired with its verses, that I cherish no other purpose than to promote peace and friendliness between us. Come forth from your stronghold and rest assured that no hand will be stretched forth against you. You yourself and your companions, I solemnly declare, are under the sheltering protection of the Almighty, of Muhammad, His Prophet, and of Nasiri'd-Din Sháh, our sovereign. I pledge my honour that no man, either in this army or in this neighbourhood, will ever attempt to assail you. The malediction of God, the omnipotent Avenger, rest upon me if in my heart I cherish any other desire than that which I have stated.<sup>261</sup>

He went so far as to send horses for the chief Bábís and to offer them guestright until he could arrange for their return to their homes at his expense. If this were a lecture rather than a paper, I would roll my eyes and ask for a show of hands from any who believe the Prince meant to keep his word. Instead I turn to Christian theologian C.S. Lewis and his illustrator Pauline Baynes to express my absolute horror at a Muslim leader swearing on the Qur'an, writing his promise on the page of al-Fatiha, sealing it

<sup>259</sup> According to Nabil, one of these was Rasúl-i-Bahnamírí, who had feared the results of 'Abdullah Khan-i-Turkoman's cutting the supply lines from which the Bábís in the fort received water.

<sup>260</sup> Imagine the nerve this took after seeing their friends killed upon leaving the fort!

<sup>261</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 399-400

with his seal—and meaning to betray the Bábís, who had behaved with courage and grace:



**“There goes one...who has called on gods he does not believe in.  
How will it be with him if they have really come?”<sup>262</sup>**

Did the remaining Bábís know they would be betrayed? I think the several mentions Quddús and Mullá Ḥusayn made to Mázindarán being their Karbila likely prepared them. The 200 or so remaining Bábís<sup>263</sup> had arrived at the fort expecting to be martyred and knew that death was coming, if not by starvation or by the sword than by the foresworn word. We have two versions of Quddús’s statement on the matter. Hamadani states

“Although [the prince] meditates treachery, and designs to shed the blood of these innocent people, yet, since his designs accord with destiny, and since we desire but to die and escape from this transitory world, we will even suffer his schemes to prevail.” Therefore he wrote in reply, “If you will guarantee our safety and let us pass without molestation, we will depart out of your land and go into another country...” Moreover the Prince expressed a great wish to meet *Jenáb-i-Kuddús*, who, out of respect for the Kur’án on which the oaths were sworn, agreed to the proposals made, saying, “Although his object is evident and his treachery clear to our minds [Quddús said to his companions], for he has made the Word of God the instrument of his guile, and will in no wise abide by the Kur’án or his word, oath, treaty, and covenant yet we would rather lose our lives than fail in respect for God’s Word, and will therefore accede to his invitation, and, of our own free will, tread submissively this path of agony.”<sup>264</sup>

<sup>262</sup> CS Lewis, *The Last Battle* (New York: Harper Collins, 2000) 100.

<sup>263</sup> Nabil says 202, *Dawnbreakers*, 400; Hamadani says 230, *Tarikh*, 86

<sup>264</sup> Hamadani, *Tarikh*, 82.

Nabíl reports his words as being

“O our Lord, decide between us and between our people with truth; for the best to decide art Thou.” Immediately after, he bade the rest of his companions prepare themselves to leave the fort. “By our response to their invitation,” he told them, “we shall enable them to demonstrate the sincerity of their intentions.”<sup>265</sup>

Sometime in this period, Quddús packed up his voluminous writings and sent them to his friend Shari’atmadar for safekeeping. He may also have asked Shari’atmadar to take his sister in marriage to protect her.<sup>266</sup> Those tasks completed, Quddús placed upon his head the green turban which the Báb had sent him.<sup>267</sup> At the gate of the fort, Quddús and his chief companions mounted the horses which the Prince had provided. The rest marched on foot, carrying all that was left of their arms and meager belongings. The only map point given in any source I found is a village called Dizva mentioned by Nabíl; he states that their tents were pitched near the public bath.<sup>268</sup> In the last phase of the battle, the army had surrounded the fort rather than using a nearby village or structure as a staging ground, but one would assume this would have been on or near the road to Bárfurúsh.

Nabíl offers us a few comments of Quddús’s while the companions were assembled in the camp. Soon after their arrival, Quddús gathered his companions and addressed them in these words:

You should show forth exemplary renunciation, for such behaviour on your part will exalt our Cause and redound to its glory. Anything short of complete detachment will but serve to tarnish the purity of its name and to obscure its splendour. Pray the Almighty to grant that even to your last hour He may graciously assist you to contribute your share to the exaltation of His Faith.<sup>269</sup>

Although the companions were served dinner, most followed the example of Quddús, who refused to eat. He became cross with some of the Bábís who, rather than also refusing to eat, began haggling with men from the army over what the men might charge them for some bread.

At daybreak a messenger arrived, summoning Mírzá Muhammad-Báqir to the Prince. With the

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<sup>265</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 400.

<sup>266</sup> One would think sending his writings to Shari’atmadar would have preserved them. Many authors I queried felt his writings had mainly been lost, but (personal communication) Adel Sharifpour told me the family still has them but won’t release them. They consider the writings the special blessing of their household.

<sup>267</sup> He would have received his in Sári at about the same time Mullá Husayn received his on the march to Mázindarán from Mashhad.

<sup>268</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 400.

<sup>269</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 401.

consent of Quddús, he went, returning an hour later to impart the news that the Prince had, in the presence of Sulayman Khán-i-Afshar, reiterated his oath in these words: “My oath is irrevocable and sacred.” He went on to narrate the Prince’s supposed, somewhat complicated plans to deliver the Bábís to a town closer to Bárfurúsh from which they would disperse to go to their homes. Mírzá Muhammad-Báqir’s view? “I am of opinion that what his tongue professes, his heart does not believe at all.”<sup>270</sup>

Quddús agreed. At this point, he bade his companions disperse under cover of darkness that very night. Most, wishing not to be separated from him, refused. He tried to encourage them by saying they would meet again, saying

The reunion which will follow this separation will be such as shall eternally endure. We have committed our Cause to the care of God; whatever be His will and pleasure, the same we joyously accept.”<sup>271</sup>

The next morning, Quddús was called away on a pretext. When the rest of the Bábís were summoned, supposedly to rendezvous with him, they were shot, stabbed, eviscerated, blown from the mouths of cannon, and beheaded by the army.<sup>272</sup> A very few were sold into slavery or held to be ransomed by their wealthy families,<sup>273</sup> hence the existence of our few eyewitness accounts. A. L. M. Nicolas recounts the fates of the following believers:

It was then, says Mírzá Jani, that Islam gave a shameful exhibition to the world. The victors, if they can be so called, wished to enjoy the intoxication of their triumph. They bound in chains Quddús, Mírzá Muhammad-Ḥasan Khán, brother of the Babu'l-Bab, Akhund Mulla Muhammad-Sadiq-i-Khurásáni, Mírzá Muhammad Sadiq-i-Khurásáni, Haji Mírzá Ḥasan Khurásáni, Shaykh Ní'matu'llah-i-Amuli, Haji Nasir-i-Qazvini, Mulla Yusuf-i-Ardibili, Aqa Siyyid Abdu'l-'Aim-i-Khu'i and several others. These they placed at the center of the parade which started out at the sound of the trumpets, and, every time they went through an inhabited section, they struck them....The cruelty went further still. If a few escaped death, having been sold into slavery, others were tortured until they

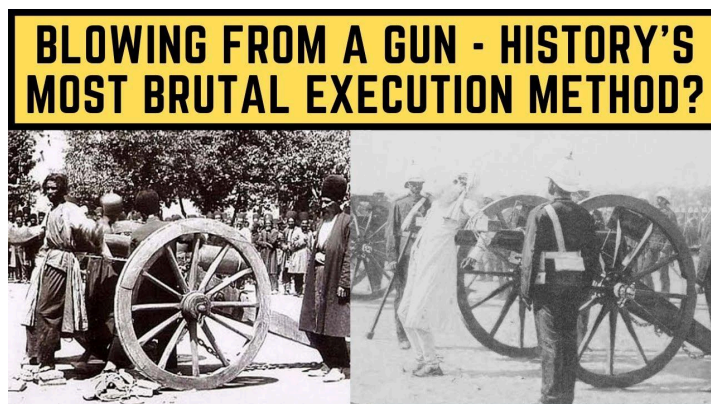
<sup>270</sup> Is it being harsh to object to the Prince’s use of the Qur’an to write an oath he always intended to break? The entire armed force with its multiple failures, had raised the ire of their king. The Prince’s position—really, his very life—could have been forfeit if he had not, after four months, brought the affair to a successful and, above all, *definitive* conclusion. Is that reason enough for an act of blasphemy of this magnitude? I will leave that for the reader to ponder.

<sup>271</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 403.

<sup>272</sup> Nabil cites Nicolas: “They formed them in a line and made sport of cutting open their [the Bábís] stomachs. This amused them the more because, from the perforated intestines issued grass still undigested, striking evidence of the sufferings they had endured and also of the faith that had sustained them. Some, very few, succeeded in escaping into the forest.” Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 403; Nicolas, *le Bab*, 327

<sup>273</sup> Mulla Mírzá Muhammad-i-Furughi, a frequent narrator in Nabil, was one of these. So, really, even in 1848, we had “the 1%.”

died. Those who found kindly masters were Akhund Mulla Muhammad-Sadiq-i-Khurasani, Mulla Muhammad-i-Mahvalatiy-i-Dugh-Abadi, Aqa Siyyid Azim-i-Khu'i, Haji Nasir-i-Qazvini, Haji Abdu'l-Majid-i-Nishaburi and Mírzá Husayn-i-Matavalliy-i-Qumi. Four Babis suffered martyrdom at Barfurush, two were sent to Amul; one of these was Mulla Ni'matu'llah-i-Amuli, the other Mírzá Muhammad-Baqir-i-Khurasaniy-i-Qa'ini...<sup>274</sup>



**Needs no explanation beyond wondering how the photographers got the victims to pose—and then didn't intervene**

## The Martyrdom of Quddús

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<sup>274</sup> Nicolas, *le Bab*, 327-329

*Great God! There was a vast concourse of pilgrims from every sect. Yet not one recognized Him, though He recognized every one of them -- souls tightly held in the grasp of His former commandment. The only person who recognized Him and performed pilgrimage with Him is the one round whom revolve eight Vahids,[1] in whom God hath gloried before the Concourse on high by virtue of his absolute detachment and for his being wholly devoted to the Will of God.*<sup>275</sup>

When they were finished killing and mutilating the Bábís, the soldiers turned their attentions to the fort. They bombarded the remaining ramparts. Except for the shrine itself, they razed the remaining structures to the ground. They then went over the ground bit by bit and leveled it so there would remain no sign that the battle—and the embarrassment to the crown—had ever occurred. What little plunder remained, they took.

The Prince, who was the Sháh's uncle, wished to make him a present of Quddús, so Quddús and the above-mentioned believers were taken to Bárfurúsh. When the party arrived the evening of May 11, the whole town was celebrating the "victory" over the Bábís. Sa'id al-'Ulamá was there to welcome the "heroes" home. He ended the Prince's plan to remove Quddús to Tehran as a gift for the Sháh and again whipped the crowd into a frenzy, saying, "I have vowed to deny myself both food and sleep until such time as I am able to end the life of Haji Muhammad-'Ali with my own hands!"<sup>276</sup> However, the Prince at that point would allow no harm to come to him. He did allow the leading 'ulamá to come and question Quddús. One interesting exchange went like this:

As soon as [Quddús] arrived, the prince arose and invited him to be seated by his side. Turning to the Sa'idu'l-'Ulamá, he urged that his conversations... "revolve around, and be based upon, the verses of the Qur'an and the traditions of Muhammad, by which means alone you can demonstrate the truth or falsity of your contentions."

"For what reason," the Sa'idu'l-'Ulamá impertinently enquired, "have you, by choosing to place a green turban upon your head, arrogated to yourself a right which only he who is a true descendant of the Prophet can claim...?"

"Was Siyyid Murtada," Quddús calmly replied, "whom all the recognised ulamas praise and esteem, a descendant of the Prophet through his father or his mother?" One of those present at that gathering instantly declared the mother alone to have been a siyyid. "Why, then, object to me," retorted Quddús, "since my mother was always recognised by the inhabitants of this town as a lineal descendant of the Imam Hasan? Was she not, because of her descent, honoured, nay venerated, by

<sup>275</sup> The Báb in *The Persian Bayan*, 4:18

<sup>276</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 409

every one of you?”<sup>277</sup>

No one dared to contradict him. The Sa'ídu'l-'Ulamá burst forth into a fit of indignation and despair. Angrily he flung his turban to the ground and arose to leave the meeting. “This man,” he thundered, ere he departed, “has succeeded in proving to you that he is a descendent of the Imam Hasan. He will, ere long, justify his claim to be the mouthpiece of God and the revealer of His will!”

The prince was moved to make this declaration: “I wash my hands of all responsibility for any harm that may befall this man. You are free to do what you like with him. You will yourselves be answerable to God on the Day of Judgment.” Immediately after he had spoken these words, he called for his horse and, accompanied by his attendants, departed for Sári. Intimidated by the imprecations of the ulamas and forgetful of his oath, he abjectly surrendered Quddús to the hands of an unrelenting foe...<sup>278</sup>

If this seems a little extreme, remember Sa'íd al-'Ulamá, one of the two leading religious leaders of Bárfurúsh, has now been embarrassed publicly by both Quddús and Mullá Ḥusayn, twice by Mullá Ḥusayn—and now again by Quddús. Prestige was the coin in which many of the leading 'ulamá traded,<sup>279</sup> and Sa'íd al-'Ulamá's could be said to be getting tarnished. He likely saw Quddús as a now-perpetual thorn in his side. Since he couldn't vent his wrath on Mullá Ḥusayn, or on most of the Bábís from the fort (since most were dead and in pieces), he seems to have let loose on Quddús with both barrels of quite a few shotguns.

If Sa'íd al-'Ulamá was serious when he said he would neither sleep nor eat till he could kill Quddús with his own hands, the version of Quddús's actual martyrdom we find in Hamadani may make more sense than the one we find in Nabíl. If he was merely engaging in hyperbole, we may have a story closer to that found in Nabíl, for which I'll appropriate a term from Margaret Atwood: “participation.”<sup>280</sup>

Now when Jenáb-i-Kuddús was brought in before him, the Sa'ídu'l-'Ulamá abused him right foully and treated him most cruelly. With his own hands he first cut off both his ears, and then struck him on the crown of the head with an iron axe which he held in his hands, which blow caused his death. After that, a student severed his holy head from his body in the midst of the market-place.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Another version of the story has him asking if the Imams Ḥasan and Ḥusayn were related to Muḥammad through their mother Fatimih or their father 'Alí. While 'Alí was cousin and adopted son of Muḥammad, the true lineal descent was through His daughter Fitimih.

<sup>278</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 409-10, paragraphed for clarity

<sup>279</sup> See page 17.

<sup>280</sup> Meaning the crowd tore him to pieces

<sup>281</sup> Hamadani, *Tarikh*, 88



Reading between the lines, Quddús's body was *then* thrown to the mob, which then “particicuted” him all over the place.

As Nabíl makes it out, both the Bárfurúshí shepherds and their sheep, acting under orders from their Premier Shepherd Sa'idu'l-'Ulama', stripped Quddús of his clothes; threw his turban, given to him by the Báb Himself, into the mud, paraded him—in many heavy chains, barefooted, and bareheaded—through the streets, spat on him and cursed him, assaulted him with knives and axes and ultimately pierced, mutilated, and tore his body to pieces. Nabíl continues that the townspeople

arose to acts of such atrocious cruelty as no pen can describe. The absence of any restraint on the part of the government authorities, the ingenious barbarity which the torture-mongers of Bárfurúsh so ably displayed, the fierce fanaticism which glowed in the breasts of its shi'ah inhabitants, the moral support accorded to them by the dignitaries of Church and State in the capital—above all, the acts of heroism which their victim and his companions had accomplished and which had served to heighten their exasperation, all combined to nerve the hand of the assailants and to add to the diabolical ferocity which characterised his martyrdom.<sup>282</sup>

Nabíl also narrates that Siyyid-i-Qumi, a Bábí who had deserted his comrades in the fort, passed by while the crowd was torturing Quddús. Seeing that he was helpless, he smacked Quddús across the face, then said with scorn, “You claimed that your voice was the voice of God. If you speak the truth, burst your bonds asunder and free yourself from the hands of your enemies.”

And what were Quddús's words during his torment? Did he revile his tormenters? Did he curse their children to the seventh generation? Did he, perhaps, wish doom on the Qajar dynasty whose monarch had turned his armies loose on the fort? Here is what Nabíl records of his final words:

**To God, on behalf of his tormenters:** Forgive, O my God, the trespasses of this people. Deal with them in Thy mercy, for they know not what we already have discovered and cherish. I have striven to show them the path that leads to their salvation; behold how they have risen to overwhelm and kill me! Show them, O God, the way of Truth, and turn their ignorance into faith.

**To Siyyid-i-Qumi:** May God requite you for your deed, inasmuch as you have helped to add to the measure of my afflictions.

**To the universe in general:** Would that my mother were with me, and could see with her own eyes the splendour of my nuptials!<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 412-13.

<sup>283</sup> Above excerpted and edited from Nabíl, *Dawnbreakers*, 410-13.

Bahá'u'lláh called his a death “which even Jesus Christ... had not faced in the hour of His greatest agony.”<sup>284</sup>

But the story gets even more interesting if we look at Hamadani. Although Nabíl indicates that the townspeople had readied a fire for the purpose of throwing into it the bits and pieces of Quddús that could still be identified as such, Hamadani gives us a different slant. Once Sa'id al-'Ulamá had given the order to burn the body, the following scene ensued:

So they tried to set fire to it by kindling dried rice-stalks. According to the account given by Hájí Mírzá Jání, not even the blazing fire thus kindled would burn those holy remains. Some firmly believe this, and regard it as an assured fact; but the writer of these pages regards fire as a thing which must in its very nature burn, and is essentially a consumer; that this natural quality should be taken from it appears to him impossible. But God knows best, and the responsibility for this narrative lies on the narrator. Hájí Mírzá Jání further writes that when they saw this they informed the Sa'idu'l-'Ulamá. He, fearing lest men might now condemn his action, bade them go at once and cut the body in pieces and scatter them in the fields. And they did as he commanded.<sup>285</sup>

Other accounts suggest that the Bábís present refused to burn the body when given the order, and I can see how “the Bábís refused to burn the body” could, over time,<sup>286</sup> have become “the body refused to burn,” the latter adding a satisfying romantic flourish to the end of the life of a saint. And yet... The time of the Manifestation—and the Báb serves as the herald of the *Supreme* Manifestation—is a time of wonders. Might not Hamadani’s account be describing one of those wonders?

The chains of narration agree on the dates of this period. The Prince offered his truce and Quddús accepted on May 9. The Bábís left the fort the morning of May 10 and arrived in Bárfurúsh the evening of May 11. There followed three days of celebration by the crowd and indecision by the Prince over what he would do with Quddús. Ultimately, the Prince abandoned Quddús,<sup>287</sup> and Quddús, after being questioned, met his death on May 16, 1849. That evening, Shari'atmadar, who seems to have embraced the Bábí cause in his heart, orchestrated the collection of Quddús’s remains and interred them, as Quddús had

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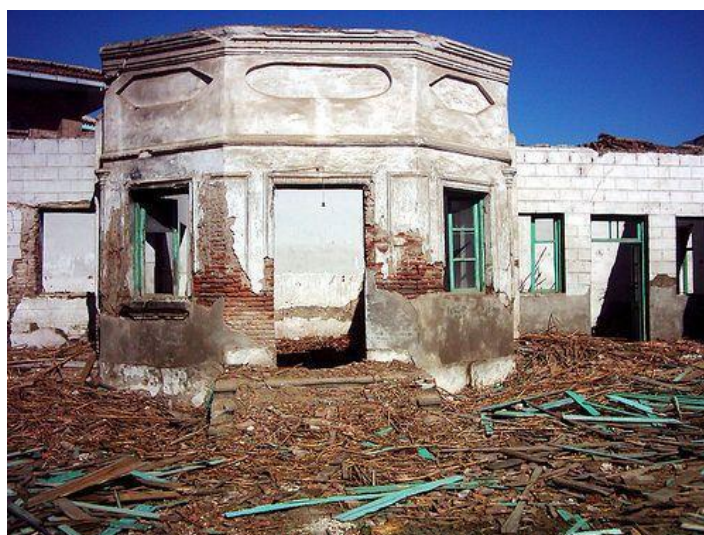
<sup>284</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *GPB*, 49-50.

<sup>285</sup> Hamadani, *Tarikh*, no page number given in translation. Note in some redactions, they even poured naphtha over the body first.

<sup>286</sup> And in the hands of a writer or redactor wanting to superimpose sacred history on literal fact.

<sup>287</sup> In some narrations, a sum of money changes hands here, always in the amount of either 400 or 1000 tumans.

predicted, on the grounds of the abandoned school of Mírzá Zaki. The Bábís had indeed confronted their Karbila and lost him whom they most loved, though they largely went before him into Paradise. He was their leader and their exemplar. If Fort Shaykh Tabarsi was the Bábí Karbila, then in many ways, Quddús might be said to have been the Bábí Imam Ḥusayn and May 16 the Bábí *Ashura*.



**The grave of Quddús before its desecration**

*Ashura* itself is referenced as part of some later observations of ‘Abbás-Qulí Khan in which he praises the courage, determination, and skill of the Bábí defenders:

About two years after the disaster of Sheykh Tabarsí I heard one, who, though not a believer, was honest, truthful, and worthy of credit, relate as follows: “We were sitting together when some allusion was made to the war waged by some of those present against Hazrat-i-Kuddús and Jenáb-i-Bábu’l-Báb. Prince Ahmad Mírzá and ‘Abbás-Kulí Khán were amongst the company. The Prince questioned ‘Abbás-Kulí Khán about the matter, and he replied thus: ‘The truth of the matter is that anyone who had not seen Kerbelá would, if he had seen Tabarsí, not only have comprehended what there took place, but would have ceased to consider it; and had he seen Mullá Huseyn of Bushraweyh he would have been convinced that the Chief of Martyrs had returned to earth; and had he witnessed my deeds he would assuredly have said, “This is Shimr come back with sword and lance.”’”<sup>288</sup>

Does this mean he repented or even repudiated his deeds? Although this is a narration of a statement made by Haji Mírzá Jání, and he is referencing what yet another narrator says he heard (and all

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<sup>288</sup> Hamadani, *Tarikh*, 106-7.

of this was written down by Hamadani), the fact that ‘Abbás-Quli Khan relates Shaykh Tabarsí to Karbila and himself and Mullá Husayn to Karbila’s great antagonist and hero suggests he understood the depth of his folly.<sup>289</sup>

As for Sa’íd al-’Ulamá, karma for his actions finally smote him, and in a poetically just way. He had hurled fiery invective at the Bábís and at least tried to consign Quddús’s body to flame. Shortly after this episode, he contracted a disease that deprived his body of its heat, or at least of its ability to feel warmth. Even in the summer, he had to have braziers set up beside him when he went to the mosque to pray. Nicolas describes the condition:

The Bábís call attention to the fact that shortly afterwards a strange disease afflicted Sa’ídu’l-’Ulamá’. In spite of the furs which he wore, in spite of the fire which burned constantly in his room, he shivered with cold yet, at the same time, his fever was so high, that nothing could quench his intolerable thirst. He died, and his house, which was very beautiful, was abandoned and finally crumbled into ruins. Little by little, the practice grew of dumping refuse on the site where it had once so proudly stood. This so impressed the Mázindaránis that when they quarrel among themselves, the final insult frequently is, “May thy house meet the same fate as the house of Sa’ídu’l-’Ulamá!”<sup>290</sup>

Hamadani also makes some illuminating comments about this cleric who proved such a determined scourge on the Bábí community of Mázindarán:

There is also a well-authenticated tradition to the effect that a bearded woman of Jewish extraction called Sa’ída shall compass the martyrdom of the Ká’im with an iron pestle in Fárán of Teherán. And since Jenáb-i-Kuddús had arisen to proclaim this teaching, he was in a sense Lord of the Dispensation, even as it runs in the tradition. And by “the bearded Sa’ída,” the Sa’ídu’l-’Ulamá appears to be meant, for he lacked all virtues of manhood and was probably effeminate in the worst sense.<sup>291</sup> And the “iron pestle” was that same iron axe wherewith he smote the head of his illustrious victim, while as to

<sup>289</sup> Many Shia Muslims consider the martyrdom of the Imam Husayn to be the defining event of Shia Islam. They interpret that the Third Imam and his small party understood they would be betrayed and martyred if they took the field rather than retreating or surrendering. Like the Bábís, they were a small force fighting against nearly insuperable odds and gave their lives as testimony to the depth of their faith.

<sup>290</sup> A. L. M. Nicolas, *le Báb*, 330.

<sup>291</sup> Is this Hamadani’s diplomatic way of saying Sa’íd al-’Ulamá was gay and flamboyantly so? It seems an oddity for one of the two chief ‘ulamá in a prosperous city in 19th Century Persia. On the other hand, could the scandal that rocked the foundations of the Catholic Church in the 20th Century West have played out with the same mechanics in 19th century Bárfurúsh? Compared to a Catholic priest in his own diocese and keeping in mind the practice of *taqlid*, a highly placed mullá or mujtahid would have had abundant power. To bring charges against one would have taken both courage and a lot of evidence. I admit I have wondered because of the nature of the attack on Quddús being so targeted and vicious, if Sa’íd al-’Ulamá might have been attracted to Quddús. You could make a case for him behaving like an obsessively jealous, psychotic, spurned lover (if he couldn’t have Quddús, no one could). If he just wanted to punish a leader of the Bábís, why Quddús rather than, say, Mirzá Muḥammad-Báqir, who was the real architect and military strategist and led the sorties after Mullá Husayn died?

his being a recent convert to Islám and of Jewish extraction there is no doubt, this fact being well-known to all the people of Mázarán. Moreover, after the martyrdom of Jenáb-i-Kuddús the Sa'ídu'l-'Ulamá suffered a grievous punishment. For God deprived his body of the element of heat... And on his arrival [home], they would put the chafing-dishes under a kursí and cover him with many thick quilts, yet still his body would shiver and shake under the kursí by reason of the cold. So by reason of his lack of caloric and heat-producing power also one may describe him as bereft of virility and manhood.<sup>292</sup>

Hamadani also points out that Shari'atmadar used to curse and revile Sa'id al-'Ulamá, would never condemn a Bábí brought before him (at least, not for being a Bábí) and would, in fact, either procure a decent burial for those his rival condemned or try to get their sentences commuted. Prior to 1849, he forbade men to antagonize the Bábís, though he found silence to be more prudent during the months of the conflict. It was due to his efforts that half rather than all of Bárfurush participated in inflicting torments upon Quddús. And the people acknowledged his austerity of life, piety, learning, and virtue at the same time they knew of the irreligion, immorality, and worldliness of Sa'id al-'Ulamá.

One further note: Nabíl notes that the Báb was so devastated by the news of Quddús's martyrdom and its savagery, of tales of the barbarity of the Sháh's armies and the heroic way in which His followers had responded, and by the vile and blasphemous nature of their final betrayal, that His Pen was silenced for nearly six months.

They say history is written by the winners—and there is no doubt Quddús and the rest achieved a victory even though most were martyred: theirs constituted a spiritual victory. And we might question if the available sources make the Bábís out to be more heroic than they really were. But let's look just at the raw numbers for the siege of Fort Shaykh Tabarsí. At most 600 Bábís in a fort built basically of trees and mud and wielding no distance weapons of note stood for a minimum of five months against perhaps 20,000 mostly professional government soldiers with access to supplies and reinforcements the Bábís lacked. Dehydrated and starving, they would only be overcome at the last, by the most base sort of duplicity. I would think even those not invested in a heroic portrayal would agree they are worthy of praise, and that the one most worthy of praise among them was Quddús.

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<sup>292</sup> Hamadani, *Tarikh*, 90-2.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Discussion: Who or What was Quddús?**

For this discussion, let us start with what we know authoritatively Quddús is not. I have certainly seen discussions amongst scholars conjecturing that Quddús was a Manifestation of God, for a given value of Manifestation. Writing in a Bahá'í forum, Ahang Rabbani, for instance, averred

Indeed, together with Baha'u'llah and the Bab, He has the station of Manifestationhood

("mazhariyyat") as testified by Baha'u'llah Himself. That is, although He was not authorized to inaugurate a new Theophony, He ranks as a Manifestation of God...<sup>293</sup>

The term "manifestation" may not have been as extensively developed in the Báb's dispensation as in Bahá'u'lláh's. Also, see below for a discussion of what his speaking with the "Voice of God," as do the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, may mean. We do have statements from the Universal House of Justice about what Quddús unequivocally is not:

Regarding the station of Quddús, he should by no means be considered having had the station of a Prophet. His station was no doubt a very exalted one, and far above that of any of the Letters of the Living, including the first Letter, Mulla Husayn. Quddús reflected more than any of the disciples of the Bab the light of His teaching.<sup>294</sup>

So, now we know what Quddús isn't. Let's take a look at what Shoghi Effendi says he *is*:

Regarding the station of Quddús, he should by no means be considered having had the station of a Prophet. His station was no doubt a very exalted one, and far above that of any of the Letters of the Living, including the first Letter, Mulla Husayn. Quddús reflected more than any of the disciples of the Bab the light of His teaching.<sup>295</sup>

Quddús, immortalized by Him as Ismu'lláhi'l-Ákhir (the Last Name of God); on whom Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet of Kullu't-Ta'ám later conferred the sublime appellation of Nuqtiy-i-Ukhrá (the Last Point); whom He elevated, in another Tablet, to a rank second to none except that of the Herald of His Revelation; whom He identifies, in still another Tablet, with one of the "Messengers charged with imposture" mentioned in the Qur'án; whom the Persian Bayán extolled as that fellow-pilgrim round whom mirrors to the number of eight Váhids revolve; on whose "detachment and the sincerity of whose devotion to God's will God prideth Himself amidst the Concourse on high;" whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá designated as the "Moon of Guidance;" and whose appearance the Revelation of St. John the Divine anticipated as one of the two "Witnesses" into whom, ere the "second woe is past," the "spirit of life from God" must enter.<sup>296</sup>

I would also point out that the Báb refers to Quddús as the "eighteenth Temple" in the tablet He revealed for Quddús that is published with the tablets for all the Letters of the Living and for the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh in Nabíl. (See Appendix B, "Quddús as seen by others") for several more titles by which he

<sup>293</sup> Dr. Ahang Rabbani, posts on Talisman, September 7-10, 1995, archived at <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jrc/talisman/t95sep2.htm>. Although in my next paragraph I will demonstrate that the concept of Quddús-as-Manifestation is wrong, I include these comments and the citation because Dr. Rabbani did extensive research on the life and writings of Quddús and, had he lived, would have published all of his gathered materials in what was to be book 25 of his *Witnesses to Bábí and Bahá'í History* series, in which he translated many primary documents and eyewitness accounts important in that history. If the family has retained the documents, they are apparently not sharing them.

<sup>294</sup> Letter of 11 November, 1936, written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer.

<sup>295</sup> Letter of 11 November, 1936, written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

<sup>296</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *GPB*, 49.

was designated.

So, let's do a deeper dive into these appellations, taking them one at a time.

ALIMUHAMMADALI

**Some authors reflect that there is meaningful “mirroring” in the Báb’s given name being “Alí Muhammad” and Quddús’s being “Muhammad Ali.” Both were descended from Muhammad but Quddús’s line of descent came through his mother, making him “Mirza” rather than “Siyyid.”**

**1) The Last Name of God:** He is addressed or referred to by this title by both the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh. What does it mean exactly? Here is a thought. We know two things that bear on this title. The first is that the Qur’an includes the 99 Beautiful Names of God and that there is a Muslim tradition that, in the time of the Promised One, the 100th or Greatest Name of God will be revealed. The second is that one of the titles of the first Letter of the Living, Mullá Ḥusayn, is the “First Name of God.” From this, we derive that the first and last Letters of the Living, Mullá Ḥusayn and Quddús, in mathematical terms, bound a set, meaning all the Letters of the Living. Might this naming “convention” reflect and build on this Islamic tradition of Names of God? The end of the Prophetic Cycle of Preparation with Muḥammad sealing it points forward to a day when we will learn the Greatest Name of God. Might the Báb’s revelation be not only referencing this tradition but embodying it? The appearance of the Promised Ḥusayn or the Qayyúm or just the Promised One of All Ages is now imminent. The First and Last Names serve as a capstone to the prior 99 Beautiful Names. The *Last* Name of God in the Báb’s dispensation alerts us that the Judgment is nigh and paves the way for us to learn the *Greatest* Name of God in the dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh.

**2) The Last Point (or last point of divine revelation):** We have a specific origin for this appellation in Bahá’u’lláh’s *Tablet of All Food/Lawh-i-Kullu’-ṭ-Ta’ám*, one of the works He penned



between being vested with His revelation and declaring His mission publicly.<sup>297</sup> Here is the exact text, from paragraph 15 of section VII:

So Ah! Alas! if the Last Point, the Countenance of My Love, Quddús were alive, he would assuredly weep over My plight and would lament that which hath befallen Me. And I for My part would at this moment beseech his eminence and supplicate his holiness that he would enable Me to ascend unto the court of His might and recline on the cushion of His sanctity as I was wont to do in those days [now past] when I was free of the aforementioned misfortunes. O Lord! Cast patience upon Me and make Me to be victorious over the transgressors.<sup>298</sup>

Some people construe this as Bahá'u'lláh actually praying to Quddús, as if Quddús's station were higher than His. But I think this is an example of two souls communing in the spirit world, much as the Báb and Quddús had been communing before they met in Shiraz. The "point" reference actually refers to the Arabic and Persian script in which the English "B" is written so: ب. The word Báb would be written like this: باب. The Báb Himself is the Primal Point, the dot under the curve in the Arabic *Ba*. Mullá Ḥusayn then became, as the Báb's first disciple, the First Point<sup>299</sup> and Quddús, as the final Letter of the Living, the Last Point. This could be seen as the Primal Will taking shape in the Creation<sup>300</sup> in the Báb and emanating from the Báb to his Letters, and most perfectly to Quddús. If we look at the appellation in the sense of "last point of divine revelation," again, the closing out of one cycle and the opening of a new one are again clearly emphasized.<sup>301</sup> Also, note the term "Countenance of My Love," which is essentially suggesting that, in Quddús, Bahá'u'lláh was able to see the Face of God reflected.

**3) The second of two messengers charged with imposture.** For this one, we need to look at Surah XXXVI of the Qur'an, Ya-Sin: the heart of the Qur'an.<sup>302</sup>

<sup>297</sup> This is not to minimize or belittle anything He wrote before His public declaration. His greatest exposition on Bahá'í theology, the *Kitáb-i-Iqán*, was written during this period.

<sup>298</sup> From a provisional translation by Stephen Lambden

<sup>299</sup> In His farewell address to the Letters of the Living, the Báb refers to them in this way: "You are the first Letters that have been generated from the Primal Point, the first Springs that have welled out from the Source of this Revelation..." (Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 93)

<sup>300</sup> Because theologian. I had to get theology in here somewhere.

<sup>301</sup> For anyone who missed this the first time.

<sup>302</sup> It is also in this surah that we find a verse the Báb cites in His farewell address to the Letters of the Living: "On that day, We set a seal on their mouths, yet their hands will speak to us and their feet bear witness to that which they shall of done." Could there be any clearer statement that we should look in this surah for direct clues to determining when the Judgment has come upon us?

Recite to them, as a case in point, the story of the people of the town when the Messengers came to them. We sent to them two Messengers and they rejected both of them as liars.<sup>303</sup> Then We strengthened them with a third (Messenger). They said: “We have been sent to you as Messengers.” The people of the town said: “You are only human beings like ourselves,<sup>304</sup> and the Merciful Lord has revealed nothing. You are simply lying [or “lying Imposters”].” The Messengers said: “Our Lord knows that we have indeed been sent to you and our duty is no more than to clearly convey the Message.” The people of the town said: “We believe you are an evil omen for us. If you do not desist, we will stone you or you will receive a grievous chastisement from us.” The Messengers replied: “Your evil omen is with you. (Are you saying this) because you were asked to take heed? The truth is that you are a people who have exceeded all bounds.” In the meantime a man came running from the far end of the town, saying: “My people, follow the Messengers...”<sup>305</sup>

Tafsirs overall look at this story in one of two ways: The first is that the parable refers to an incident in the City of Antioch in which early Christians came to preach. The other is that this is a general pattern with true Messengers of God, including Muhammad. They come to preach the renewal of religion, the people make up reasons to resist them and so a third Messenger is sent to shore up their efforts. But suppose this is an extremely specific reference pointing us toward the time of the Qa'im and Qayyúm? Then we have the Báb as the first messenger, Quddús as the second, and Baha'u'llah as the third.<sup>306</sup> This puts Messenger #2 in extremely exalted company.

**4) One of the witnesses mentioned in the Book of Revelation whom, ere the “second woe is past,” the “spirit of life from God” must enter.** For this, we need to look at Revelation, the great apocalypse at the end of the Newer Testament. As with most prophetic utterances, the language is highly metaphorical and needs someone with great spiritual acumen to interpret. The speaker is St. John of Patmos, and the text is Revelation 11:1-12.

I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, “Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, with its worshipers. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for *42 months*. And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for *1,260 days*, clothed in sackcloth.” They are “the two olive trees” and the two

<sup>303</sup> In other words, “charging them with imposture.”

<sup>304</sup> This seems odd, as Muhammad repeatedly emphasized that He was no more than a man. In a future paper, I will examine the way the Qur'an provides simple answers to all the questions that perplexed the early Christian church (and, really, caused the split within the Western Church in the 16th century.

<sup>305</sup> Ya-Sin 13-16, Pickthall translation

<sup>306</sup> It is extremely appealing to think of the man mentioned in v. 16 as 'Abdu'l-Bahá. However, this description of him matches that of another instance of a figure warning a Revelator, Moses, about something, and that suggests this may be some sort of mystical, protective archetype.

lampstands, and “they stand before the Lord of the earth...” Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city... For *three and a half days* some from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial... But after the *three and a half days* the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them... The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon. (Author italics)

Italics indicate the time period between the dispensation of Muhammad and that of the Báb as explained by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in *Some Answered Questions*.<sup>307</sup> And that’s a whole other paper, so let’s just focus on the identities of the witnesses. In this section of Revelation 11, the witnesses appear, are killed by the beast and are revived 1260 days later (this interval is also expressed elsewhere in Revelation as “a time, two times, and a half a time.”) The first time the witnesses are mentioned, I would posit they represent Muhammad and ‘Alí, whom Shia Muslims believe was Muhammad’s legitimate successor. The ruling power of the Imams is usurped by the Umayyad caliphs (the beast from the Abyss), snuffing the vitality of the nascent faith, but after a time, the breath of God revives them. They have now, after the 1260 days/42 months/3 1/2 days come back to life metaphorically as the Báb and Quddús. If this is a complete parallel, we can look at Quddús as the one closest to the Báb in intent, the closest to Him in heart and soul. If the Báb’s dispensation had not itself been intended as one of short duration, of *preparation*, and had it been meaningful to choose a successor, might that successor have been Quddús?

**5) that fellow-pilgrim round whom [circle] mirrors to the number of eight Váhids.**<sup>308</sup> The fellow-pilgrim part of this phrase is easy enough—only Quddús and the Báb’s manservant Mubarak accompanied Him on His Pilgrimage—but what is the deal with the mirrors? Well, if we do some math, we find that  $8 \times 19 = 152$ . This is an interesting number in the Bahá’í Writings. Nader Saiedi in his *Logos and Civilization: Spirit, History, and Order in the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* tells us that Bahá’u’lláh often signed His tablets with the enigmatic “152.” He has you assign letters to this number according to the abjad system of numerology. And, of course, this would relate to writings in Arabic or Persian, so we read

<sup>307</sup> ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Some Answered Questions*, Section 11

<sup>308</sup> A “vahíd” is a collection of things or people that add up to 19. The Báb and the 18 Letters of the Living, for instance, constitute a *vahíd*. Derived from *Bayán IV 18*, “The only person who recognized Him and performed pilgrimage with Him is the one round whom revolve eight Váhids, in whom God hath gloried before the Concourse on high by virtue of his absolute detachment and for his being wholly devoted to the Will of God.”

right to left. We get AHB. Flipping this around so it reads correctly in English, we get BHA, or BAHA if we add in the diacritical. When the Báb, probably working with Bahá'u'lláh, assigned new names to all the believers at the conference of Badasht, Mírzá Ḥusayn 'Alí became known as Jinab-i-Bahá (His Honor Bahá).

Going on, the Báb is associated in both the Persian and Arabic Bayans with the phrase “eight unities.” “Unity” is another term for “vahíd,” so  $8 \times 19$  again equals 152. Consequently, the number 152 ties together the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh and affirms that the divine spirit that pervades and motivates Bahá'u'lláh is the same one that pervaded and motivated the Báb. But it would seem to make this dyad a triad by also referring to Quddús. Early in the Arabic Bayán, we read

The Fourteenth Báb of the First Váhíd regardeth the statement that Ḥasan ibn 'Alí, upon Him be peace, hath returned to the phenomenal realm unto all who were faithfully awaiting Him and otherwise. He hath, unto the count of eight Váhíd [152], remained seated upon His Throne as the perfect reflection of God Himself, yet none hath the capacity to approach Him due to the intensity of the burning love. Thus God doeth as He willeth and ordaineth as He pleaseth, He shall not be asked of His doing, but each of 'all things' shall be questioned.<sup>309</sup>

This one may require a little unpacking. Crawford takes the “Ḥasan ibn 'Alí” to be Ḥasan al-Askari, father of the Twelfth/Hidden Imam who will return as the Qa'im. I think it's at least as possible that “Ḥasan” refers to the Second Imam and “'Alí” to the first Imam. In Islamic mysticism, one of the figures the Promised One/Qayyúm is supposed to represent is “the Promised Ḥusayn,” the return of the Third Imam, so tragically martyred at Karbala. This “Ḥusayn” would also be the successor to an Imam Ḥasan, who here, metaphorically, could be the Báb. However, we might look at the figure seated on the throne and perfectly reflecting God Godself as Quddús reflecting the light of the Báb, Who, in Bahá'í theology, could be seen as God in the sense that His soul is capable of perfectly reflecting the essence of the divine.

Other works in the Bahá'í canon mention Quddús via this system of numerology. Here is a snippet from Saiedi's own translation of Bahá'u'lláh's own *Kitáb-i-Badí* that bears on this discussion:

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<sup>309</sup> The Báb. *The Arabic Bayán*. Brad Crawford, translator. Unpublished manuscript being released at a rate of approximately one verse per day. Originally posted 5/30/23. Retrieved 10/12/23 from <https://www.facebook.com/groups/796515525233422>

With a like intent did We send down the Qur'án aforetime; yet were ye veiled from apprehending My purpose. He it is around Whom the nights and days have revolved for eight full Váhids [152],<sup>310</sup> and ye the while, through Him, have been engaged in worship of the one true God, yet remained in ignorance of His career after that which was decreed. Such is the balance of true guidance in the *Bayán*; take heed, therefore, that ye believe therein.<sup>311</sup>

So, we know from Shoghi Effendi that Quddús is not a Manifestation of God, yet he is referred to both esoterically and exoterically by terms (or numbers) by which we identify the Twin Manifestations. He even gets his own set of mirrors to the number of eight vahids.

**6) Moon of Guidance.** This comes from the following paragraph in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's explanation of the above section of Revelation:

And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven, meaning that from the invisible heaven they heard the voice of God, saying: You have performed all that was proper and fitting in delivering the teachings and glad tidings; you have given My message to the people and raised the call of God, and have accomplished your duty. Now, like Christ, you must sacrifice your life for the Well-Beloved, and be martyrs. And that Sun of Reality, and that Moon of Guidance, both, like Christ, set on the horizon of the greatest martyrdom and ascended to the Kingdom of God.<sup>312</sup>

So, the Sun of Reality is the Báb, which makes Quddús the Moon of Guidance, the one who reflects the light of the sun so perfectly it is capable of illuminating other objects.

**7) The Mine of the Cause of God.** This is not an attribute that gets mentioned very often because it's a little tricky to find. This mention is in a Baghdad-era tablet called the *Book of the River* or *Tablet of the Tigris*. We do not have an official English translation as of this writing, but I checked the three extant provisional translations I could find, and all phrase this nod to Quddús with exactly the same words:

With palms of gold and fingers of power seize what is in and upon it, and with a swordlike tongue sing and chant in ringing tones, clap and drum, that there is no God but Him, that 'Alí Muhammad is the Essence of God and His eternal Being, and Muhammad 'Alí is the Mine of the Cause of God and His everlasting Self, that the Living Countenance is the Repository of God's authority and His self-subsisting Identity, and the Letters of the Living are the first to have believed in God and His verses. We all, verily, cleave unto them. This is the Word by which truth shall be distinguished from falsehood until the Day when the Hour shall strike, when all shall present themselves before God and abide by His command. Glory be upon those who believe.<sup>313</sup>

<sup>310</sup> If we apply the number reduction trick of Western numerology (you add the numbers up and keep doing so till you have a single digit), we get 1+5+2=8, the number of vahids that are circling him, and the 19 factors out again. Neat!

<sup>311</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, Nader Saiedi, translator, *Kitáb-i-Badí*, unpublished manuscript, 249

<sup>312</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Questions*, Section 13.

<sup>313</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, Nader Saiedi, translator, *Book of the River*. Unpublished provisional translation

This might seem an odd appellation till we consider what Bahá'u'lláh says regarding the station of man:

Man is the supreme Talisman. Lack of a proper education hath, however, deprived him of that which he doth inherently possess. Through a word proceeding out of the mouth of God he was called into being; by one word more he was guided to recognize the Source of his education; by yet another word his station and destiny were safeguarded. Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom.<sup>314</sup>

So perhaps the implication here is that Quddús as “mine” is more laden with gems, or possibly with a better class of gems<sup>315</sup> or possibly with gems that are more easily mined.

**8) His identity and station are a long-anticipated Mystery.** On the old Talisman newsgroup, Ahang Rabbani also shared some information based on the book he was writing on Quddús:

[Rabbani's capitalization for Quddús's pronouns] In one of His Writings Quddus states: “I swear by God, I am the Promised One, Who has been mentioned in all the Heavenly Tablets. All the Divine Manifestations, both by allusion and outwardly, have anticipated Me.”<sup>316</sup>

Rabbani specifically mentioned Daniel 12:5 and Rev 11:11. Revelation, as discussed above, particularly draws a parallel between Muḥammad and ‘Alí and the Báb and Quddús. We also have the reference to Surah XXXVI Ya Sin from Shoghi Effendi. I might add in another possibility from the Qur'an: the latter third of Surah LV The Beneficent. Its description of Paradise is replete with mentions of duplicate images. Beginning at verse 46 and omitting the repeating verse, we get

But for him who feared the standing of his Lord are *two gardens*. Full of varieties. In them are *two flowing springs*. In them are fruits of every kind, *in pairs*. Reclining on furnishings lined with brocade, and the fruits of the two gardens are near at hand. In them are maidens restraining their glances, untouched before by any man or jinn. And beneath them are *two gardens*. Deep green. In them are *two gushing springs*. (Author emphasis)

If we accept that the revived figures in Revelation are the Báb and Quddús, as are the two figures clothed in white standing on the riverside in Daniel, what can we make of this passage?

<sup>314</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, trans. Habib Taherzadeh (Haifa: Bahá'í World Center, 1997) 161-2

<sup>315</sup> Think the Hope Diamond rather than cubic zirconium.

<sup>316</sup> <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jrcole/talisman/t95sep2.htm>

<sup>317</sup> Much has been made of this surah, but often the analysis centers on the repeating verse, “Which of the bounties of your Lord will ye then deny?” and the way it occurs more frequently as the surah progresses. It's my personal

Note the two gardens with two flowing/gushing springs and the way the text repeats itself almost word for word a few verses later as if for emphasis. Might this be another instance of Quddús's station being anticipated?<sup>317</sup>

**9) Does he perfectly reflect Jesus as well?** Amanat suggests that Quddús might have been enraptured with the personality and life of Jesus of Nazareth as well as smitten with the idea of martyrdom, and there are certainly elements in what we might call his “passion” that reflect the Passion of Jesus almost perfectly.

- A triumphal entry to the place where he would later meet death. In the case of Jesus, it was Jerusalem; in the case of Quddús, it was the just-completed Fort of Shaykh Tabarsi. Both were essentially fortresses
- One person from among his followers betraying both. For Jesus, this was Judas Iscariot. For Quddús, this was Mirzá Ḥusayn-i-Mutavalli, who wrote the letter betraying the Bábí conditions in the fort, and Siyyid Aliy-i-Zargar, who carried the letter to ‘Abbás Qulí Khán. We might also make a case for Siyyid-i-Qumí, who betrayed the Shaykh Tabarsi Bábís collectively and then kicked Quddús while he was down after his, Quddús's, capture.
- The betrayer died shortly after the betrayal. Judas died, possibly by his own hand and possibly of remorse over the betrayal and where it led (the Book of Acts gives a different account than the Gospels). Siyyid Aliy-i-Zargar was murdered by ‘Abbás Qulí Khán when the leader feared the story of Mullá Ḥusayn's death would reach other eyes and ears than his own.
- Once captured, both Jesus and Quddús were ultimately paraded through a large town in a state their tormentors meant to humiliate them.
- Both were tried before a religious tribunal, Jesus by the Sanhedrin and Quddús by the ‘ulamá of Bárfurúsh.

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<sup>317</sup>interpretation that the last third is specifically rather than generally prophetic and that it predicts the coming of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, Quddús, and possibly ‘Abdu'l-Bahá.

- A government official tried to shield him. Pontius Pilate kept looking for an actual law Jesus had violated. Prince Mihdí-Qulí Mírzá wanted to deliver Quddús as a gift to the Sháh. This also hearkens back to the relationship of John the Baptist with King Herod. Herod feared to kill John the Baptist due to his belief in John the Baptist as a holy man.
- In all three cases, pressure from some quarter forced the government authority to relinquish his prisoner: The crowd coerced Pilate; his step-daughter Salome coerced Herod; and Sa'íd al-'Ulamá coerced Prince Mihdí-Qulí Mírzá.
- This coercion took a dramatic form. Salome danced, the High Priest Annas tore his robes, Sa'íd al-'Ulamá issued an ultimatum, swearing to neither eat nor sleep till he could kill Quddús with his own hands.
- Both Pilate and the Prince are reported as having said they washed their hands of their prisoner's fate.
- In the midst of their travail, both Jesus and Quddús prayed to God that their torturers be forgiven.
- Both had someone physically close to them taunt them with very similar words. Jesus had the impenitent thief tell Him to save Himself if He was the Messiah.<sup>318</sup> As we have just read, Siyyid-i-Qumí, slapped Quddús across the face and told him to free himself if he was truthful in saying he spoke with the voice of God.
- An adherent was compelled to come and attempt to dispose of the individual's remains after he died. This was Joseph of Arimathea in the case of Jesus and Shari'atmadar in the case of Quddús.
- Not part of the Passion, but both are reported as having their great spiritual capacities noted at a young age. We have Luke's report of the pre-pubescent Jesus debating with the rabbis in the Temple in Jerusalem. Shari'atmadar's biography of Quddús refers to his student's wisdom, insight and lucidity, and even recounts miraculous events that demonstrate his pupil's innate knowledge.
- Jesus proclaimed the nearness of the Kingdom of God but was thought by religious and secular

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<sup>318</sup> Luke 23:39



powers to be claiming a kingdom in the physical sense. The implication the non-believers drew was that He intended to challenge Rome. Although the source is a bit controversial, we have a report that Abbás-Qulí Khán had heard Quddús say, “We are the rightful sovereign, and the world is under our signet-ring, and all the kings in the East and the West will become humble before us.” But the text from which this was drawn goes on to explain that Quddús had intended a spiritual sovereignty, and that the humility of the kings referred to would appear with the passage of time, i.e., the Bábís were not planning any sort of revolt, armed or otherwise, against the Shah.<sup>319</sup>

### **Pulling This All Together**

Now, Bahá’í theology tells us the soul of a Manifestation is different from the soul of an ordinary human, and we have the assertions of both Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice that Quddús was not a Manifestation of God. But we also have the analogy expressed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá of the human soul being like a mirror: the more we clean it of the dross of self, the better it can reflect the light of God. We often tell people that the Manifestation of God, using this analogy, has a mirror freed of dross that perfectly reflects the light or essence of the divine. I wonder if a better analogy would be that the Manifestation’s soul starts out as a different kind of reflective entity altogether. So, I would propose a change to this model.

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<sup>319</sup> This is Zabihi Moghghadam quoting the *Nuqtat al-Kaf* pp. 105-6, except for this original concluding thought: “It should be pointed out that such a revision of the idea of the Mahdi’s sovereignty was not necessarily a result of the severe persecutions that had taken place. As mentioned earlier, even before the Mazandaran conflict, the Báb and the Bábi leaders had engaged in revising common views regarding the Mahdi’s appearance, distancing themselves from the idea of worldly sovereignty. (p. 80).



**Our usual analogy tells us that Manifestations just have their “mirrors” polished to perfection. The rest of us don’t get our mirrors nearly this clean!**

Let’s assign a completely different object to the Manifestations of God. The object may then even focus as a lens or transformer: it receives the pure light of God, light that would burn you or me to a cinder, and refracts or steps it down so we can bear its weight. Then, we can posit that the denizens of the human realm do have mirrors—souls—that we can clean to a greater or lesser extent (or sully, for that matter). Then we find a place for the humans who have cleaned their mirrors/souls so completely they



**But maybe we need a different analogy that makes that reflective surface more three-dimensional—say, a sphere.**

really do reflect perfectly any light shone on them. They are not reflecting the pure light of the sun—no matter how pure their souls, the unabated light of the sun would still fry their retinas and short-circuit every synapse in their brains. But they are perfectly reflecting that light as it comes to us through the Manifestation. I believe this is the sort of nearly angelic being Quddús was.

Let’s develop this a little more. We find multiple archetypes surrounding every Manifestation of God. Often there is a pure woman relative whom adherents venerate. Often there is a follower or relative

who betrays him. And there is always a beloved disciple who “gets” the Revelator’s message to a greater degree than anyone else. Often he is the one to whom the Revelator entrusts the community of believers after He ascends. With the Buddha, it was Ananda. With Muḥammad, it was the Imam ‘Alí and his descendants. With Bahá’u’lláh, it was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. And with the Báb, I posit it was Quddús. Why did he not end up leading the community?

We know that the Báb knew His would be a very short ministry<sup>320</sup> and a very short dispensation. He came right out and said He would appoint no successor formally because He wanted the Bábís to put their energies into seeking He Whom God Will Make Manifest.



**And it might be capable of not only reflection but refraction, or acting like a step-down transformer!**

That doesn’t mean a candidate for the position didn’t exist.

Let us recall what the Báb told an excited Mullá Ḥusayn when Quddús first approached the latter in Shiraz: “I have been communing with him in spirit.” And Quddús said he recognized the Báb by his gait! They had become that close even though they had never met in the physical world. Although I believe certain elements in this saga have more basis in “sacred history” than literal fact, in this one instance, what we might call a paranormal experience truly was happening between a Manifestation of God and His greatest disciple. Several authors say the reason the Báb chose Quddús to accompany Him on Pilgrimage was to prepare him for the great tasks ahead of him, but the context is often that that

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<sup>320</sup> In recorded history, only that of Jesus was shorter. And if we look at the Báb’s ministry as having only really taken off after the Conference of Badasht, when the 84 Bábís assembled there determined their faith was an independent revelation rather than a reform branch of Islam, really, they were the same length..

preparation was only to give him physical direction and groom him for his leadership role. What if it was more? Quddús spent every day of the two voyages and the Pilgrimage itself in the company of his Master, serving as his only amanuensis, observing daily his Christ-like example. He was there when the Báb announced for the first time publicly—in the shadow of the Kabah—that He was the promised Qa'im. He reflects the light of the divine so perfectly that other pure mirrors can stand in his light and observe the pure, if stepped down, radiance of the divine.

My suggestion is that, in addition to any physical preparation, the Báb was strengthening what we might call the spiritual connection between them so that, when He was a prisoner way off in Máh-Ku and Chiriq, He could still in some fashion communicate with His community of believers.

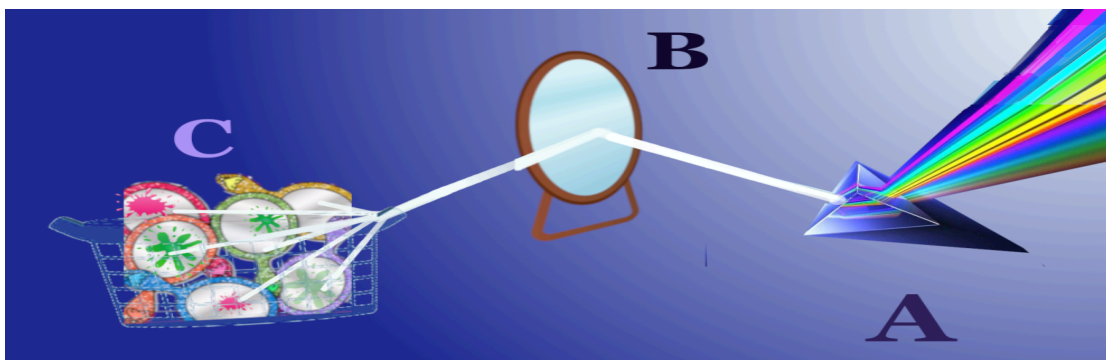
Remember Quddús's reported preoccupation with making sure there were 313 believers in the fort. The tradition that prophecies this number says the 313 will stand with the Qa'im, not with His lieutenant. You may also remember Quddús's actions when he first entered the fort mirroring the Báb's in Mecca. Is there a suggestion here, whether it's fact or sacred history or a little of both, that Quddús so perfectly mirrored the light of the Manifestation that his companions were essentially standing in the presence of the Báb Himself?

It hasn't really occurred in other dispensations that the Revelator was sequestered for an extended period from His followers, especially when things as critical as the Conference of Badasht and the siege of Fort Shaykh Tabarsi were happening. The Báb needed a leader not after He was martyred but during His lifetime, while He sat in a faraway fortress isolated from the world. We're fairly sure the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh communicated at a speed that exceeded what the mail service of the time could deliver. Could Quddús, who is described, even in numerological terms, with the same descriptors we use for the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, have been capable of receiving instruction from the Báb from such a physical distance? Could suggestions of the Báb's revelations have permeated Quddús's own writings? Was there something about their relationship that helped Quddús bring heart to the Bábís in the fort when they spent 18 days with no food and minimal water?

Also (see Appendix B for full text and citation), we have this intriguing statement from the tablet the Báb penned for Quddús as the eighteenth Letter of the Living:

“...the Eighteenth Letter (of the Living = Quddūs) among the Letters [of the Living] is [even as] Mine Own Self (li-nafsihi).” ... I did cast into his [Quddus'] inmost heart (fū'ād) [such] expository verses (āyāt bayyināt), as, “I [Quddus] indeed am God the Ruler (al-malik) Almighty [sic] (al-qaydūr), I indeed am God, no God is there except I Myself.”<sup>321</sup>

Bearing all of this in mind, I propose a slightly tweaked model for the way the light of God reaches us:



**A model that may explain Quddus. The complex and immense light that is the emanation of God encounters the Bab (A), who fines it to something humanity can comprehend without being burned to a cinder. His light encounters Quddus, who reflects it so perfectly that the Babis can see in his person and hear or read in his words the Face and Voice of their collective Master. The perception of the Babis and others (C), of course, depends on the extent to which they have cleaned and polished their own “mirrors,” or left them clouded with materialistic gunk. Quddus’s “mirror” both has great capacity and is perfectly clean, making him a pure vessel for the Bab’s Message.**

We know from multiple sources that the Báb grieved so deeply for Quddús that He did not lift His pen for six months. Note that we never hear about the same depth of grief over any other of the early Bábí martyrs, not even His first disciple Mullá Ḥusayn, not even His own uncle, who not only raised Him but became one of the Seven Martyrs of Tehran. Was Quddús’s reflection so perfect and his level of communion with his Master so profound that the Báb literally felt the agony of his death? Could that level of communion have been so deep that the Báb essentially let a part of His essence somehow flow into Quddús so that this disciple’s death forever cut a part of Himself away?

<sup>321</sup> Provisional translation by Stephen Lambden. Full text appears in Appendix B.

As for the irregularities in dating and time frames, I now have two theories.

1) Our knowledge of this time period is built on the oral testimony of eyewitnesses who survived these events. Occasionally the eyewitness is at one or two removes (X told me that Y experienced thus and such event). But largely, these accounts are given by and to people who were alive at the time being described. The oral history that underpins the Gospels went on for at least a generation and probably more like two or three before anyone thought to write the stories down. Granted, police don't vest a lot of trust in contemporary eyewitness testimony because it's notoriously inaccurate. But with stories like Quddús's, there is a good bit of cross-corroboration available. Beginning with the episode of persecution that befell Quddús, Muqaddas, and Mullá 'Alí-Akbar-í-Ardistání in Shiraz, we even have corroboration by the Western press. So I think the general structure of the narrative about Quddús's life and even the birth and propagation of the infant faith is accurate.

However, there are these difficulties with dating and numbers of individuals that crop up here and there.<sup>322</sup> redactors did was to superimpose bits of "sacred history" on the bare bones narrative. Multiple sources, for instance, tell us that Mullá Ḥusayn took around 212 Bábís into Mázindarán with him and that only about seven died. But there are sources that, in the face of this, insist that he retired to the shrine with 72: the traditional number of warriors in the party of the Imam Ḥusayn when he was martyred. Quddús's almost obsessive need to count the number of Bábís at the fort when he arrived generated the number of followers predicted to stand with the Qa'im at the Judgment and was also the traditional number who fought with Muhammad at the Wells of Baḍr. My judgment is fairly accurate oral history upon which sacred history has been superimposed.

2) There are obviously at least two narrative chains regarding this early material. There is some variation in details like precisely how Quddús was martyred, whether his father died when Quddús was young or survived to try to reason with him at the siege, when Mullá Ḥusayn's party arrived in

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<sup>322</sup> For context, the stories of the Imams feature all sorts of miraculous occurrences like their mothers' wombs shining resplendent with divine radiance and the Imams themselves speaking from the womb. Bahá'u'lláh Himself asked Nabil to redraft *The Dawnbreakers*, the reason from scholars often attested as His wish not to have a primary source filled with miraculous and possibly fanciful occurrences. (Shoghi Effendi left in a few, however, when he translated/collated it.)

Mázindarán or when they reached the shrine, and how many sorties rode from the fort and on what dates. I wish I could say I had found a consistent thread of narration leading from one source to the next, but there seems to have been some cross-borrowing. Also, where the *Tarikh-i-jadid* stems from a single redactor, Mirzá Haji Janí, *The Dawnbreakers* includes the testimonies of multiple witnesses including the author himself. The site at which Browne's translation of the *Tarikh*<sup>323</sup> resides comes right out and says it immediately spawned multiple versions, and Janí's story was the basis for a second manuscript called the *Noqtatol-káf* whose orientation,<sup>324</sup> additions, and validity have myriad versions that are beyond the scope of this paper to discuss.

3) Concerning dating issues like trying to explain how Mullá Husayn visited all the places the Báb sent him to and still got a letter to him in Búshihr in time for His party to board the boat heading for Jeddah. Well...The time of the Revelators are times of wonders. Might this not just be one of those wonders? But I've also provided an appendix that addresses this specific incident.

## APPENDIX B

### Quddus as Seen by Others—Tablets to, for, and about Quddús

#### **Bahá'u'lláh:**

##### **1) Mention in the *Tablet of All Food*** (translation and notes by Stephen Lambden)

**Text:** [VII][15] So Ah! Alas! If the Last Point, the Countenance of My Love, Quddus were alive he would assuredly weep over my plight and would lament that which hath befallen me. [16] And

<sup>323</sup> [https://bahai-library.com/hamadani\\_browne\\_tarikh\\_jadid](https://bahai-library.com/hamadani_browne_tarikh_jadid)

<sup>324</sup> For instance, some versions make out Quddús as the Revelator and the Báb as the disciple, and some favor Subh-i-Azal over Bahá'u'lláh for the Báb's "Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest."

I, for My part, would at this moment beseech his eminence and supplicate his holiness that he would enable Me to ascend unto the court of His might and recline on the cushion of his sanctity as I was wont to do in those days [now past] when I was free of the aforementioned misfortunes... [VIII][3] And if you be of those who dwell in the Crimson Isle, the Orchard of the Exposition (al-Bayan), then know that We abandon the "food" [of the Islamic wilaya?] and desire the Primal Point [the Bab], the Pure Wine of the Divine Oneness in an elevated station. [4] The intention of "Israel" in this connection is the Last Countenance [= Quddus ?], the Mystery of Endless Duration in an elevated station [5] and the Countenance of Light, the Disengaged Manifestation, the Temple of the Divine Oneness...

**Note:** I've commented on this in the biography, but here have included an extended view of the tablet in which Lambden seems to be associating a later part of the text with Quddús. The possible association begins with mention of another name by which he was known (the Last Countenance) and may be suggesting further titles for this hero of the Bábí dispensation.

## 2) Mention in a tablet to Muqaddas (notes and translation courtesy of Muin Afnani)

**Text:** His eminence Asdaq, upon him be My glory and glory of the worlds...Blessed art thou O My name [O thou who art known by My name] for the fragrances of the garment of beloved Joseph wafted over you, he who is known as Muhammad 'Ali. Indeed, he was known by Our name, the Quddus in the Concourse on high, and by the Sanctified in the Cities of eternity, and by all the names in the Kingdom of Names. He is the one by whom My Sovereignty and Might appeared as did My Grandeur and Lordship, should ye be among those who perceive. We sprinkled upon him from this Ocean that which seized him from aught else besides Me and transformed him from the west (uttermost) of tranquility to the east (dawning place) of exuberance until he sacrificed himself in My path, and his being became joyous through that, while the eyes of those who are nigh unto God wept. Blessed art thou for having been ennobled by meeting him, and hearing his melodies, and communing with him who was wronged and was an exile.

**Note:** This text is interesting in light of the explanation of Saidi and the number 152 used by both Bahá'u'lláh and Quddús. In fact, "He is the one by whom My Sovereignty and Might appeared as did My Grandeur and Lordship" bears a striking resemblance to the opening of the Gospel of John in which Creation came forth through the agency of the Word: "He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." (John 1:2-3). Bahá'u'lláh has made similar mention of Mullá Husayn, the first Letter of the Living as Quddús was the last: "In this most resplendent Dispensation, however, this most mighty Sovereignty, a number of illumined divines, of men of consummate learning, of doctors of mature wisdom, have attained unto His Court, drunk the cup of His



divine Presence, and been invested with the honour of His most excellent favour. They have renounced, for the sake of the Beloved, the world and all that is therein...Among them was Mulla Husayn, who became the recipient of the effulgent glory of the Sun of divine Revelation. But for him, God would not have been established upon the seat of His mercy, nor ascended the throne of eternal glory.”

**3) A Tablet of Visitation for both Quddús and Mullá Husayn.** Translation appears in *Additional Tablets and Extracts from Tablets Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh* with no attribution for the translator(s)<sup>325</sup>

**Text:** Tablet of visitation for the first to arrive and the last to attain, may the souls of all on earth be offered up for them both.

In the name of Him Who is the Compassionate, the All-Bountiful!

The peace that hath shone forth from the Dayspring of the Will of God, the Lord of all being, and the light that hath dawned above the horizon of His supreme mercy and His resplendent signs rest upon you, O ye who are the hands of His power in the kingdom of creation and the manifestations of His grandeur between earth and heaven!

Ye are they who were awakened by the gentle winds of the dawn of Revelation and were enraptured by the voice of Him Who spoke on Sinai. Ye are they who inhaled the fragrance of the All-Merciful when it wafted from the realm of divine knowledge. By your guidance the thirsty hastened to the onrushing waters of everlasting life and the sinner to the vivifying river of forgiveness and mercy. Ye are the signs of God and His straight Path amongst His creation. Through you all faces turned to the Most Exalted Horizon and every poor one sought the Wellspring of wealth.

At your suffering all things lamented, and every atom cried out between earth and heaven, and Adam forsook the Most Exalted Paradise and chose for Himself a place upon the dust. Ye are the dawning-places of power amidst the people and the daysprings of might amongst the righteous. Through you the springtime of inner meaning appeared in the world of utterance and the All-Merciful shed His effulgent splendour upon all created things.

Ye are the hands of His Cause in His lands, and the stars of His bountiful care amidst His servants. Through you the daystars of knowledge dawned forth, the heavens of all religions were illumined, the lights of the sciences shone brightly amongst the nations, and the sphere of the arts was expanded throughout the world. Ye are the dawning-places of God's Revelation upon the earth and the daysprings of His signs in the world of creation. By your arising did the people arise to serve the Cause and the river of mercy flow out amidst humankind.

Ye are the pearls of the Hidden Sea and the letters of the Treasured Book. Through your sublime

<sup>325</sup> <https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/bahaullah/additional-tablets-extracts-from-tablets-revealed-bahaullah/>, no other publication information listed.

word the Book of Names was expounded and the portals of blessings were opened wide before the inhabitants of earth and heaven. Through you the injunction “Be        thou” was enforced, the Hidden Secret was divulged, and the choice Wine was unsealed.

Alas, alas! By reason of your sorrow, the inmates of the all-highest Paradise were overcome with grief and the denizens of the kingdom of names were moved to lament. At        your suffering, trembling seized the inhabitants of the Verdant Isle on the shore of the Sea of Grandeur, causing the sighs of such as are wholly devoted to God to ascend and the tears of them        that are nigh unto Him to rain down. Ye are the books of God and His scriptures, the epistles of        God and His tablets. By virtue of your gladness the faces of all beings were wreathed in smiles,        and by reason of your sorrow all things visible and invisible did wail aloud.

Ye are the arks of God sailing upon the ocean of His Will, and the people of God who have arisen to champion His Cause. Through you the Most Great Announcement was proclaimed and the        limbs of all men were made to tremble. Through your call every sleeping one was awakened,        every seated one rose up, and every reclining one rushed forth. Through that call the negligent were raised from slumber, the ignorant were enlightened, the agitated were assured, and the        tongue of every stammerer was unloosed. Through your sweet remembrance all people hastened        to the Most Exalted Horizon and the Crimson Ark sailed upon the sea of names.

Ye are the dawning-places of the Will of God and the daysprings of His Cause, the embodiments of His command and the sources of His might. Ye are the storehouses of        His knowledge and the treasuries of His secrets, the repositories of His decree and the exponents of His behest. Ye are        the pearls of the ocean of His generosity and the gems of the mines of His munificence, the suns        of the firmament of His grace and the moons of        the heaven of His bounty. Through you the        banner “He, verily, is God” was hoisted upon the earth and every stranger came to recognize his        ultimate goal and his true abode.

Through your allegiance did the pure in heart rush to the field of martyrdom and offer up        that which they possessed in the path of God, the Lord of all names. Through you did they who enjoy near access to God attain unto the living waters of immortality, and the true believers unto that        which hath flowed forth from the Luminous Spot in the All-Highest Paradise before the Divine        Lote-Tree.

I testify that through you the breeze of the All-Merciful passed over all created things and the sweet savour of the All-Glorious wafted over all regions. Through you the Throne was established upon the land of Za‘farán and the God of Mercy seated Himself thereupon. Through        you the heaven of certitude shone resplendent and all things were moved to proclaim, “The        Kingdom is God’s, the Almighty, the Beneficent!” Through your names the suns of inner        meaning dawned above the horizons of utterance, and the streams of divine wisdom flowed in the        gardens of true understanding. Ye are those inner meanings that can neither be apprehended        through words nor expressed through speech.

Blessed is the poor one who hath set out towards the orient of your wealth, the thirsty one

who hath hastened to the shores of the ocean of your favours, the lowly one who hath sought the court of your glory, the ignorant one who hath looked to the dawning-place of your knowledge, the distressed one who hath drawn nigh unto the tabernacle of your majesty and the pavilion of your grace, the ailing one who hath longed for the heavenly river of your healing, the weak one who hath turned to the kingdom of your might, and the friend who hath reached the soft-flowing stream of reunion with you and been honoured with your presence, which excelleth all that hath been fashioned in the universe or appeared in the realm of creation.

Great indeed is the blessedness of the wayward one who hath rushed to the dayspring of your guidance, the slumbering one who hath been awakened through your remembrance, the dead one who hath been stirred by the breezes of your utterance and adorned with the ornament of life beneath your shadow, the seated one who hath arisen in your service, the eloquent one who hath celebrated your praise and turned to the fountain of your generosity, and the rebellious one who through your intercession hath reached the ocean of forgiveness.

Through the sweet call you raised did all things draw nigh unto God, the Possessor of all names, and by your turning to the Most Exalted Horizon did all faces turn towards the dawning-place of the bounty of your Lord, the All-Glorious. Through you the treasures of all names were brought forth amongst the people. Through you the hearts of His ardent lovers were set ablaze in the world of creation.

The glory that hath dawned from the horizon of Mine utterance rest upon you and upon whomsoever hath turned towards you and fixed his gaze on the court of your glory. Through you the Dove of Eternity chanted and the birds of the Throne of glory warbled amongst the peoples, the seas surged and the winds blew, the lights were shed abroad and the skies were illumined. Through you the celestial Bird sounded its call, that which had been hidden was disclosed, the irrevocable decree was fulfilled, and the Hand of Mercy passed round the sealed wine. Through you the morn of certitude dawned forth, the lamp of vain imaginings was extinguished, and the gates of inspiration were flung open. Through you the secrets of the Book were divulged and the veils were rent asunder. Through you the emerald-green Nightingale warbled upon the Crimson Tree, testifying to that whereunto God Himself did testify ere the creation of earth and heaven.

Ye are the waves of this Sea through which every other sea hath surged and the mercy of God hath appeared in every land. I bear witness that ye are rivers branching out from the Most Great Ocean, luminous moons rising above the horizon of the world, and radiant lights shining upon its peoples. God hath made each of you a bough of this Ancient Root; an exponent of this glorious, this veiled and weighty Secret; a manifestation of His most noble Name; and a sign of His all-embracing grace. Well is it with him that hath been blessed by your breath during your lives and guided by your example after your deaths. Through you God's bounty was fulfilled, His mercy encompassed all things, His testimony was established, His heavenly sustenance was sent down, His Word was perfected, His breeze was wafted, and His proofs shone resplendent amidst all creation.

By your suffering, the kindreds of the cities of names were seized with agitation, the Pen of the

Most High wailed aloud, the inmates of the loftiest Paradise were sorely vexed, the leaves of the Divine Lote-Tree withered, the Maids of heaven swooned away in their crimson chambers, the atoms of the universe cried out between earth and heaven, and the movement of the Pen of the Most Great Name was stilled in the realms of remembrance and praise.

Blessed is the one who hath been illumined with the light of your faces, hath drawn nigh unto the precincts of your court and circled round you, hath visited your resting-places and taken refuge with you, hath cleaved to the cord of your grace and held fast to the hem of your bounty, hath striven to the utmost in your path and suffered martyrdom for the sake of your love.

Through you the Supreme Horizon was illumined and all faces turned to God, the Lord of all Names. Through you were manifested His sovereignty and His might, His majesty and His grandeur. Ye are the lights of the Kingdom, the secrets of the Celestial Dominion, and the daysprings of the Cause of God in this nether world. Through you the sun of utterance shone forth, the ocean of understanding appeared, the heaven of certitude was upraised, and the throne of the All-Merciful was established in the realm of being.

Blessed are ye—the origin of your beings and their end, your outer temples and inner selves—and blessed is whosoever hath drawn nigh unto you and visited your graves, held fast to the cord of your favours, and clung firmly to the hem of the robe of your bestowals.

Lauded be Thy name, O Lord of Being and Possessor of all things visible and invisible! I beseech Thee by the showers of Thy mercy, through which Thy bounties and favours were manifested unto Thy servants, and by the mysteries of Thy knowledge and the pearls of the ocean of Thy wisdom, to forgive me, and my parents, and every servant who hath clung firmly to this exalted station and hastened to this sublime habitation.

I entreat Thee, O my Lord, by that Word wherewith Thou hast subdued the hearts of Thy chosen ones, to satisfy my needs and make me steadfast in Thy Cause, with my eyes fixed upon Thy horizon, wholly rid of all attachment to such as have disbelieved in Thee and in Thy signs.

O Lord! Thou seest Thy servant hastening to the ocean of Thy forgiveness, desiring only that which Thou hast ordained for them that love Thee. Thou art, in truth, that All-Powerful One Whom the pursuits of Thy servants can never frustrate nor the clamour of the people deter from Thy purpose. Thou doest, through the power of Thy might, what Thou willest, and ordainest as Thou pleasest. Thou, verily, art the All-Powerful, the All-Subduing, the Almighty.

### **The Báb:**

1) This is one of the better-known texts written for or about Quddús, as it appears in the front of Nabil's

*The Dawnbreakers*. The volume contains photographs of the **tablets the Báb wrote to or for each of the**

**Letters of the Living**, for Himself, and for Bahá'u'llah. Translation and notes Stephen Lambden.



**Tablet of the Báb for Quddús as reproduced in Nabíl. Translation below by Stephen Lambden including his notes on translation, used by permission, available at <https://hurqalya.ucmerced.edu/node/4081>. Lambden characterizes it as a “Beta Translation” and gives the date of its latest revision as 08-06-2021.**

**Text:** He is [God] In the name of God, the Most Eternal, the Pre-Eternal (bismi'llah al-abad al-izā[ū]l).

[I] This is a book (kitāb) [letter] from the letter al-thā' 1 [= thamarah = the Fruit = the Bāb] unto the 18th Temple (haykal) [= Muhammad `Alī, Quddūs, the Most Holy]. I bear witness that He, no God is there except Him, the King (al-malik), the Most Holy (al-quddūs). He is the One Who commissioned among the Persians a Youth (fi'l-`ajamiyyin šabiyy an) [= the Bab / Quddus] to the end that He might fill the pillars of all things (arkān kulli shay') with [the cry] "Verily He, no God is there except I myself" for all should be aware of Myself. And I verily, I am God! (innani anā Allāh) no God is there except I myself. This before any before relative to the very essences ["atoms", or dhurwa "uttermost acme"] of antecedence ["beforeness"] (min qabl qabl fī dharrat [dhurwa] al-qabl) as well as after the after within the very essences ["atoms", or dhurwa "uttermost acme"] of futurity ["afterwards"] (min ba`da ba`da fī dharrat [dhurwa] al-ba`da).

[II] `Alī before the Quadruple Configuration [ḥarf al-rubā' ربا', rubā' = 1-M 2-H 3-M 3-D = Muḥammad = the Bāb) is the Manifestation of Myself (maẓhar nafsi) while the Eighteenth Letter (of the Living = Quddūs) among the Letters [of the Living] is [even as] Mine Own Self (li-nafsihi). At My Command, as a result of My Command, do all derive existence! I, verily am God, no God is there except I Myself. Whatsoever is other than Me, is My creation.

[III] Say: O My creation! Ye shall all fear Me, My Divine Reality (ḥaqqī), My Omnipotence ('aẓimātī)! I did not create thee as a mere plaything ('abathan). He did not instruct thee, nor did I Manifestation of Mine own Logos-Self (liqā' maẓhar nafsi) [the Bab]. But for a very few (qalīl an) among you, there shall be neither understanding nor comprehension!

[IV] Say: I Indeed am God! No God is there except I myself and all should direct themselves

towards Me! There is no single thing but that it should offer glorification (s-b-ḥ) through my laudation (ḥ-m-d) yet shall these realities at the moment of my theophany [manifestation] (zuhūr), by virtue of the manifestation of Myself (maẓhar nafsīhi), remain entirely veiled therefrom.

[V] Say: Nothing at all should remain veiled for all should show piety [be God-fearing] before Me since I was thy Lord aforetime as well as in the hereafter. I Indeed, I am God, the Mighty, the Beloved (al-`azīz al-maḥbūb)!

[VI] This book (kitāb) [letter, Tablet] contains verses (al-āyāt) from Myself unto the Letter thā' of Eternaled Pre-Eternity [= thamarah al-azal al-īzūl] [sic.] to the end that all may bear witness that he [Quddus] is My servant (‘abdī). I [the Bab] divulged My glory (tajalliyat) unto Him through Mine own Logos-Self/Myself (nafsī) for there is no Deity except I Myself, God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting (al-muḥayyīm al-qayyūm). I did cast into his [Quddus'] inmost heart (fū’ād) [such] expository verses (āyāt bayyināt), as, “I [Quddus] indeed am God the Ruler (al-malik) Almighty [sic] (al-qaydūr), I indeed am God, no God is there except I Myself. I created everything through My Command (bi-amrī) for I am indeed the Foreordainer (al-qaddār), the Sanctified (al-qaydūs)!

[VII] Say: Nothing can compromise [sic] mine inimitability within the Divine Realm (lāhūt), within the Omnipotent Domain (jabarūt) of everything (kull shay’). I [the Bab], verily, am the Omnipotent Ordainer (al-jabbār), the Supremely Great [sic.] (al-‘ayzūm). Yet of a certainty (balā)! Thou [Quddūs] art indeed God, no God is there except Thee, the Supremely Powerful Lord (rabb al-muqtadir), the One of Talismanic Potency (al-badūh = 2-4-6-8)! Thou createth whatsoever thou willeth and thou will create whatsoever thou desireth. No God is there except thee. All should be worshipful of thee. There exists nothing but that it should offer glorification through the Praise of thyself. All should be especially mindful of thee. Thou art indeed God! No God is there except Thee. Before thee we are all in a state of certainty!

[Sealed] His servant (‘abd), the Remembrance (al-dhikr).

## 2) **The Kitab-i Panj Sha`n** (*Book of the Five Modes*).

The Kitab-i Panj Sha`n (Book of the Five Modes) of the Báb is a fairly lengthy (400-500 verse) Arabic and Persian work named after the five modes, categories or divisions of revelation into which it is divided: āyāt (revealed verses), munājāt (devotional revelations), khuṭbas (literary orations or, loosely, "sermons"), tafsīr (scriptural commentary), and fārsī (Persian revelations). It was written not long before His martyrdom, in March-April, 1850. It is mainly dedicated to key disciples of the Bab, some of them Letters of the Living. In a section dedicated to Mulla Shaykh `Ali Turshizi, we find clear testimony to the elevated status of Quddus. Translation and notes by Stephen Lambden:

**Text:** So observe how it was that he came, his Eschatological Associate (sahib) and his Garment

(qamits) and recite [say] : Quddūs! Quddūs! Quddūs! Quddūs! ... The Name of God the al-Akhir (the Ultimate-End-Last = a title of Quddūs) shone forth, radiated, flashed lightening, and shed brilliance! So Blessed be whomsoever seeth naught therein except God! And there doth not circle around him [Quddūs] save whatsoever is beloved of God; relative, that is, to His Own Logos-Self (nafs)...

### 3) A Tablet of Visitation (translation Denis MacEoin<sup>326</sup>)

**Text:** Tablet of Visitation for the martyrs, on them be peace, who have sacrificed themselves for the Last Name of God, Quddús, Quddús, Quddús.

In the Name of God, the Most Inaccessible, the Most Holy!

Holy, holy, holy (quddus, quddus, quddus)! The glory from God, no other God is there but He, rest upon thy heart and the heart of whomsoever is in thy heart, and upon thy spirit and the spirit of whomsoever is in thy spirit, and upon thy soul and whomsoever is in thy soul, and upon thy body and whomsoever is in thy body. Then, the exaltation from God rest upon thy heart and the heart of whomsoever hath been created from the light of thy praise, and upon thy spirit and whomsoever hath been created from the spirit of thy benediction, and upon thy soul and whomsoever hath been created from the soul of thy unification, and upon thy body and whomsoever hath been created from the light of thy glorification. Thou hast been raised up, nor is there above thee anyone possessed of exaltation like unto thee; thou hast come near, nor is there anyone possessed of proximity like unto thine.

All created things have given praise in unison out of the essence of thy praise, and all atoms have rendered glorification out of the camphor of thy glorification, and all the psychic entities have extolled the oneness of God in unison out of the substance of thine extolling of His unity, and all the individual realities have lauded the greatness of God in unison out of the absolute reality of thy glorification of His greatness. All render praise unto God through thee, and all sanctify God through thee, and all extol God's singleness through thee, and all magnify God through thee. So great hath been thine affliction that the afflictions of all created things are cut off from any connection with it; the calamity that hath overwhelmed thee hath reached so high a station that no other calamity of any created thing may be mentioned in the same breath as it.

By thy glory, there is nothing in existence apart from God that weepeth not sore over thee, that is not established under thy shadow, that doth not praise God with the praise thou didst offer, that doth not sanctify His name with the sanctification thou didst render, that doth not extol the unity of God with the praise of His unity that thou didst utter, and that doth not magnify God with the magnification whereby thou didst honour His greatness. From all eternity and unto all eternity thou hast been in the exaltation of holiness and majesty, and unto all eternity thou shalt be in the height of sanctity and beauteousness. Thou art he that hath become manifest through the manifestation of thy Lord, and

<sup>326</sup> Denis MacEoin, *Rituals in Babism and Bahá'ism (Pembroke Persian Series, Vol. 2)*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994) pages 105-6.

kept hidden through the concealment of thy Lord, and thou art the First, for there is no first save thee, and the Last, for there is no last other than thee. Thou hast ascended through the degrees of creation unto that horizon where none hath gone before thee; and thou hast been raised upon the throne of thy glory on the highest horizon of paradise, higher than which there is nothing whatever in the knowledge of God.

I call upon thee and upon all things as witnesses that thy blood is pure, untainted and unsullied, and that through the residue of its very mention the realities of all created things have been made manifest . . . I call upon God and upon all things as witnesses that God hath sanctified thee from all likenesses and hath given unto thee what He hath given unto no one in His creation - not the dominion of earth and all that is on it, but the dominion of Paradise and all that dwell therein. Thus, there shall not come into the heart of anyone a mention of grandeur or might, save that he shall come unto thee with a mention of humility and shall descend to the door of thy courtyard in the utmost degree of abasement . . . Verily, I call to witness the angels of the Throne and the Seat and the heavens and the Most Exalted Paradise and the most glorious garden, that circle about thy grave, and ask that they may take the water that poureth from the eyes of whomsoever exhibiteth love for thee and may bring it into the presence of God, thy Lord, and that God may look upon him that hath performed that act of grace and that His paradise may lament over him, and that He may single him out for all His grace and all that He may fashion, for there is no drop of water more loved by God than that which hath flowed out over thy tribulations and hath appeared on the cheek by reason of thy sufferings.

### 3) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

I have not been able to verify provenance on this, but I offer it as another little gem shared by Rabbani on Talisman. Like Dihqan, he certainly had access to many more sources than I have, and this may be his translation of an item for which we lack an English translation.

His Holiness Quddus, may My spirit be sacrificed for Him, was the essence which manifested that (the Bab's) Sun of Truth. He was a brilliant Light, luminous Star, the essence of purity and quintessence of transcendence. And of course a hundred thousand 'I am God' was Revealed by His blessed Tongue. However, this incomparable Essence, tells that He knows none other than His Lord (the Bab) and that He is His wondrous Reflection and His faithful Servant.



## Appendix C: The Writings of Quddús

Most sources agree that Quddús wrote prolifically, especially during the period he was under house arrest in Sári and besieged in the Fort of Shaykh Tabarsí. Multiple sources observe that, before the end came, he packed up his writings and sent them to his mentor Shari’atmadar Kabír. Many consider these lost, but Adel Sharifpour indicates that the family has kept them safe but consider these writings a special blessing for their house and have chosen not to release them.<sup>327</sup> The greatest losses seem to be his massive tafsir on the letter “s,” written in Sári and Fort Tabarsí, and the sermon or letter sometimes referred to as the “Eternal Witness,” which may also be the *Shuhada al-azliyyih*, which may have been a

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<sup>327</sup> Personal communication

missive he wrote to Mullá Husayn while the latter was en route to Mázinarán.

Extant copies of his writings exist within the collections of both the British Library and the Cambridge University Library as follows:

1) In the British Library:

a) Or. 5110. *Abhar al-kuddusiyah*, by Muḥammad ‘Alí Barfurushl (Hazrit i Kuddus). Fols. 36. ninth century

b) Or. 6256. A tract said to be by Quddus is the last among a number of items sent from Azali sources and bound together. (Item 8, described as *Az Farma- yishat i hazrat i kuddus*, by Muḥammad ‘Alí Bárfurúshi. Fols. 308. ninth century. On examining it, it appears to be identical to the first 21 pp. of Or. 5110

These two are listed in Ellis, *Hand-List of Arabic Manuscripts in the British Museum*, pp. 66, 67.

2) In Cambridge University Library:

Browne manuscripts, F. 43 (9). The first item in this volume is described as "five specimens of the Arabic writings of Janáb-i-Quddús, i.e. Hajji Mulla Muhammad ‘Ali of Barfurush" - 20pp.

This is listed in Reynold Nicholson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Mss. belonging to the Late E.G. Browne*, p. 72<sup>328</sup>

Note the items in this collection have not yet been scanned. The price Cambridge quoted me to scan and transmit was approximately \$300. Again from Adel Sharifpour these may be found online at <https://bayanic.com/showPict.php?id=ghds&ref=0&err=0&curr=0>. Note this is a Bayaní site; I don't speak enough Arabic or Farsi to verify independently the accuracy of these scans. Quddús's three letters to Sa'id al-'Ulamá and three prayers he scribed for the besieged believers in Fort Shaykh Tabarsí may also be found at <https://oceanoflights.org/table/quddus-fa/>. These are provided as both .pdf and .docx documents for download. Note: Without this website extension, it is very difficult to navigate to Quddús's writings from the landing page.

The best source currently for easily available writings by Quddús seems to be Dihqan's *Hidden Treasure*. While mentioning the loss of the two texts mentioned above, he both enumerates and gives the texts of 16 items in British hands as follows:<sup>329</sup>

<sup>328</sup> Information kindly provided by Moojan Momen

<sup>329</sup> He was lucky enough to have access to his own almost-primary sources, some of whom could give eyewitness accounts regarding certain texts and events.

- 1) A prayer written in the fortress of Shaykh Tabarsí given to his companions for amulets and healing.
- 2) As above but includes a short sermon and is also an item that might be used in an amulet.
- 3) A prayer praising God and asking for help in time of trials, also written during the siege. Of interest, it includes an exhortation by letters that would form the word “Bahá” or “Bahá’í.”
- 4) From an unidentified time or place, a longer prayer. Dihqan says the content of the prayer is often the proof of the Báb's claim. Quddús denies his superhuman authority; Dihqan interprets this as dating the prayer to a time when the greatness of his position had been revealed to the believers.
- 5) He classes this as a manajat/munajat (talks given by the Imam ‘Alí). From a phrase that seems to translate “For your servants...have no strength to endure it for long,” he infers this was written during the worst days late in the siege. He remarks that the style is highly reminiscent of the writings of the Báb.
- 6) A tablet written during the Conference of Badasht, that concludes with the good news about the secret message of Bahá'u'lláh and the appearance of the Ancient Beauty from the horizon of Bahá.
- 7) A Naw-Rúz sermon for that festival in 1265 AH/1849 CE, so written during the siege. This one was so abstruse that very few passages made it through my translator as anything but gibberish (words without context or syntax) but I do see an enumeration of the Imams as an exhortation. Mostly he seems to be saying trials have been visited on the Bábís and asking God for assistance.
- 8) It is unclear where or when this one was written, but Dihqan points out the use of the “primordial tree,” as well as a number of tree-like images and wonders if this is related to the Sidra Tree, the Tree Beyond Which There is No Passing. I can also pull out references to the four elements and see that the imagery is very vivid.
- 9) Another letter written during the siege and one of many pieces of Quddús’s that bring in the subject of polytheism. My thought here is that he is either accusing their Muslim persecutors of *being* polytheists (maybe in the sense of *shirk*—their joining partners with God?) or paralleling them with the polytheists of Mecca who persecuted Muḥammad. Quddús calls for entry into the new religion and points to the very end of the letter that points to the advent of Bahá’u’lláh after the martyrdom of the Báb. I can point out

the abstruse imagery in this passage only because Dihqan points to it: “That I am the Lord in the *two regions*, and that I am God who spoke in the phase of the *two appearances*. We commanded him to begin to appear in the region of the *Ba*, to turn the command to the beginning, like the *two seals*, and let the Lord settle on the bed of identity from *a point below the B*, so that the *second beloved*, may God’s peace be upon him, is present.” (my italics)

10) Another writing whose date and place of origin are unclear. Even Dihqan doesn’t have much comment on this one. Again, it is fairly abstruse. I do notice that, in this and several other writings, he is speaking of God in the First Person and wonder if this is him “channeling” the Báb or just speaking in the Voice of God<sup>330</sup> as specifically Bahá’u’lláh does as a sign of the Day of God. (He also witnesses that “He is God,” so this First Person Voice is intermittent.)

11) Another prayer for the inmates of the fort in which he asks God to hasten the emergence of the divine kingdom and to accelerate the punishment of the enemies of the divine cause. I got surprisingly long passages through Google Lens that read well in English.

12) Letter to his mentor Shari’atmadar, which he notes is also quoted in another early history, *Asrar Al-Akhtar*, Volume 4, 485-7 (using the Persian text appearing on H-net). Mostly he praises Shari’atmadar and, in veiled language, seems to be commending to him the study of the Báb’s life and texts.

13-16) These are Quddús’s letters to Sa’id al-‘Ulamá. If you follow them chronologically, the first two are fairly cordial and invite him to visit and enter into a dialogue with the Bábís. The third essentially calls down hellfire. Some sources list only three letters but Dihqan identifies a fourth. While not dated, its theme is, though the elder cleric has been warned, he has not only not warded off evil, but has also become *more* evil. Ouch.

Stephen Lambden, who has also done extensive work on Quddús’s life and writings, told me the challenges with translating his writings are a combination of quirky grammar, quirky word usage, and his expressing concepts for which Persian and Arabic at that time had no vocabulary. That said, he and some

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<sup>330</sup> Remember, the tablet from *Dawnbreakers* suggests the Báb has invested him with this right or power.

other kind people shared with me their translations of materials that are available with a little work and the use of creative search terms and secondary sources.

## Excerpts of Quddús's Writings from Browne and *Zuhur al-Haqq Volume 2*

The following occur in one of Edward Granville Browne's articles for *the Journal of the Royal*

*Asiatic Society* in the late 1800s, translators as noted. Browne gives absolutely no information about these short quotes except that an Arabic speaker will note irregularities in grammatical usage. I suspect from the length that these are only opening passages of longer works. Nothing in Dihqan is in and of itself as short as these. Still, they give us some insight into Quddús's style and content.

*Translations of selections No. 1 and No. 2 courtesy of Nima Raifi*

1. In His name, the Exalted, the Mighty, the Possessor of Glory!

Praise be to God Who hath ascended His throne in the heavens and Who hath clouded the water(s) with the mystery of eternity (baqá), and Who hath caused the secret of His irrevocable decree to sprinkle down upon the Fire, that verily there is no god save Him, and He, besides Whom there is no other god, is the Tree of the Ancient of Days. Praised be God Whose manifestation in the horizon of Túr, veiled and concealed in His secret, affirmed the mystery of manifestation and that verily, there is no god but Him, the Exalted and Ancient of Days...

Of each of the last four parts I shall now give a brief description.

*Writings of Hazrat-i-Quddús (آثار قدوسیہ).*

(No. 1, on f. 1<sup>b</sup>) بسمه العلیٰ الکبیر المتکبر الحمد لله الذی قد  
اقام العرش علی الهوآء و اکفهر علی المآء سر البقاء  
و قد رشح علی النار سر الامضاء بانه لا اله الا هو و  
هو الذی لا اله الا هو و هو الشجرة القديم الحمد لله  
الذی قد احکم علی السر الظهور بالظهور فی افق  
الطور بالسر المعجل المستور بانه لا اله الا هو العلی  
لدي قدیم الخ \*

(No. 2, on f. 6<sup>a</sup>) بسم الرب المتکبر العزيز التهار وانک یا الهی  
لتعلم انی لا ادعو عبادک الا للخصوع لدى باب  
رحمتک و الانابة لهم فی کل وجه لدى ظهور  
طلعتک وانک یا الهی لتعلم حکمک و تبين  
سرك و تظهروا مرک فلا شک ولا ريب یا الهی ان  
الحجة لم تکن لاحد علیک و انما منک الحجة  
على الناس فلو انک قد اصطفیت اعلا من

Digitized by Google

**Selections 1 and 2 as they appear in Browne's article in *JRAS***

2. In the name of the Lord, the Possessor of Glory, the Mighty, the Supreme Avenger!

Thou knowest, O my God, that I have not called Thy servants unto anything save self-effacement before the door of Thy mercy and repentance for them at all times amidst the manifestation of Thy countenance. Thou knowest Thy decree, O my God, and Thou revealest Thy mystery and manifested Thy cause. There is no doubt, no misgiving, O my God, that any can adduce evidence against Thee, for indeed proof is Thine and sent upon Thy creation...

*Translations of selections No. 3, 4 and 5 courtesy of Brad Crawford*

3. In the Name of the Lord, the Omnipotent, the Chosen One, the Dominant!

O wondrous nightingales soaring aloft in the celestial clouds of Bahá, should all be attentive they would be fully capable of exemplifying the rapturous devotion to the Cryptical Identity (Huwiyyah/YHWH) extemporaneously. However, those of the Eternal Realm know that I truly am the One honored by the cryptical idiom 'There is none other God except Him' revealed in the enigmatic divine Verses. Say: Should they attend unto My statement made through the mysterious illustration from the Crimson Tree in the vastness of the Realm of Oneness to the people of achievement, they would be gathered together through the Light of the fire.

4. In the Name of Him with Whom there is none other God except Him, the Most Exalted, the Most Great!

All praise belongeth unto God, the Supreme Being Who personifieth Himself through unique and wondrous Verses, and Who hath established the Realm of the divine Clouds with the Ornament of the Inimitable Point, Who hath expediently originated 'All the Glories' (Bahá'íyát/refer to the Bayán where every Manifestation of God is Bahá'u'lláh/Váhid 3/Báb 15) through the profusion of the Lights from the Ornament of the bejeweled Alif, and Who hath uniquely formulated the Sacred Scrolls through the appearance of the Nightingale of Sinai chanting: "Yea, verily, there is none other God except Him, the Most Exalted, the Ancient of Days."

عبادك و نزلت عليه حجة من عندك و ان كان  
من ذر القطمير نفيرا الخ  
(No. 3, on f. 10<sup>b</sup>) بسم الرب الجبار المختار القهار الايا ايها الورقا  
المغنى في عماء النباء بديعا ان استمع الكل  
نعت الامجذاب بالسر الهوية في سطرانما لاهل  
البقاء بالسر المرشح بانى انا الحق لا اله الا هو في  
مر الايات رفيعا فقل ان استمعوا ندائى بالسر السطر  
من الشجرة الحمراء في ابحر الاحدية لاهل الوقا  
بالنار النور جميعا الخ  
(No. 4, on f. 13<sup>a</sup>) بسمه الذى لا اله الا هو العلى العظيم الحمد لله  
مطرز ديباجة الهويات بالاية البديعة و سكون  
العمائيات بطراز النقطة المنبوعة و مخترع  
البياتيات بترشح الانوار من طراز الالف الجوهري  
و مبدع الاوراق الاشارات بظهور ورقا السينائية  
بانه لا اله الا هو العلى القديم الخ  
(No. 5, on f. 17<sup>a</sup>) بسم الرب المتعال المتكبر العزيز الفعال اللهم  
يا الهى و ربى و مولى و سيدى لك الحمد على  
ما يجرى قضائك بالبداء و لك الحمد على ما  
يمضى قضائك بالورقة الحمراء و لك الحمد حمد  
الهوية في ذروة الابداع و لك الحمد حمدا يفضل  
على كلما في الانواح الاختراع و لك الحمد حمدا  
ابداعيا و لك الحمد حمدا اختراعيا و لك الحمد  
حمدا ازليا و لك الحمد حمدا هائيا و لك  
الحمد في ذر العماء الخ

### Selections 3, 4 and 5 as they appear in *JRAS*

5. In the Name of the Lord, the Supreme, the Most Great, the Mighty, the Motivator!

O God my God, my Lord, my Friend, and my Master, to Thee belong all the praises for what proceedeth from Thy Decree at the beginning; to Thee belong all the praises for what emergeth through the Crimson Scriptures; to Thee belong all the praises of the Essence of Praise within the specks of the Most Wondrous Creation; to Thee belong all the praises which are more praiseworthy than whatsoever is contained within the Most Ingenious Tablets; to Thee belong all the praises which are exceptionally beyond all praise; to Thee belong all the praises which are especially produced as praise; to Thee belong all the praises which are eternally praised; to Thee belong all the praises which are Divinely focused; and to Thee belong all the praises within the droplets of the Divine Clouds.

*And, courtesy of Omid Ghaemmaghami, a passage from Fāḡil-i-Māzindarānī's Kitāb-i-Zuhūru'l-Haqq,*

*Volume 2 but also characterizes as an unpublished; manuscript in private hands, page 351.*

I swear by the Most Great Luminary!

The only power which the peoples of the earth have over God's faithful servants is their physical bodies. They never had, nor will they ever have, any power over their souls. Were the peoples of the world to reflect for a short time, they would never oppose the temples of oneness inasmuch their aim in committing their acts of oppression is to abase and crush souls who have already attained unto complete

peace and tranquility. If they could but comprehend that everlasting life is hidden in martyrdom suffered in the Path of God, and that the Kingdom of Glory is concealed in abasement sustained for the All-Merciful, they would never oppose the Faith of God.

In the end, every spirit will ascend from the body, and each soul will taste of death, perhaps after being afflicted by some physical disease or after being made the target of some weapon of war. Yet, how well is it with them who have offered up their lives in the Path of the Well-Beloved and hastened to the sublime heights of the Most Exalted Friend.

## Adventures in Translation

Because artificial intelligence is becoming a player in the world of translation, I present here one of Lambden's translations together with the same passage translated using Google Lens and the hot, new tool GPT4. This is item 1 from the enumeration from Dihqan above.

1) As translated by a human (Lambden, with his parenthetical notes):

“In the Name of the Lord (al-rabb), the Wrathful (al-Qahhār)!

Glorified be He Who sent down the Healing (al-shifā') through the Love of His Proof (muḥabbat ḥujjat) [the Bāb] since He is the One Who, No God is there except Him. And He is the One All-Forgiving (al-ghafūr), the All-Merciful (al-raḥīm).

Wherefore, O my God! Thou hast assuredly promised that Thou would respond positively to this Supplication (al-du'ā') for the sake of whomsoever Thou hast accorded hopefulness (al-rajā'). So O Our God! Send down Healing (shifā') and dispel away from Him whatsoever hath caused Him sadness, just as He Himself willeth. This through the Truth of Thy Evident Mystery (bi-ḥaqq sirrika zāhir) which lieth within the Ipseity (huwiyya) [or “He-ness”) exemplified in the [Letter] al-Hā' (“H” = abjad 5 = abjad Bāb). Thou [Babis are] indeed are among the people of Grandeur (ahl al-kubriyā') no one of which shall be unsuccessful by virtue of the fact that He made thee fit for the Meeting with God (li'l-liqā')! So glorified be Thou! The secret mystery (sirr) which He bestowed upon Thine Essence (dhāt) for there is no God except Him! And Thou art indeed the Lord of all the worlds (rabb al-'ālamīn)!”.

2) This next is the same tablet but the text is that listed at the Ocean of Lights site. It is translated by the

AI GPT4:

In the name of the Lord, the Almighty.

Glory be to the One who revealed healing through the love of His evidence. He is the One and there is no god but Him, and He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.

O my God, You have promised to answer the supplication of those who come to You with hope. So, O Allah, send down healing and remove from them whatever has saddened them as You will, by the right of Your manifest secret within the essence of the letter "Ha" (ه). Indeed, You are the One worthy of



greatness, and You do not disappoint anyone when they come to meet You. Glorified are You! The secret of Your verse is Your essence, for there is no god but Him, and You are the Lord of all the worlds.

3) The same text as translated by Google Lens:

In the name of the Lord, the Almighty.

Glory be to Him who sent down healing through the love of His proof, since He is the One besides whom there is no god and He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.

O my God, You have promised to respond to the supplicants to whoever comes to you with hope, so send down, O God, a cure and restore from him what has saddened him as He wills, by the name of Your secret that is evident in the identity of the H (2) For you are people of pride and do not disappoint anyone if he comes to you to meet. Glory be to You, the secret of your self, since there is no god but Him. And you are the Lord of the worlds.

So, we can see even in this short passage that there's some latitude the AIs are short-cutting across by deciding which vocabulary to use without qualifying the shades of meaning our human translator, Dr. Lambden, is enumerating. I remember being surprised to learn that translations from Arabic to languages other than English are made from Shoghi Effendi's English translations. In *The Priceless Pearl*, Ruhiyyih Khanum explains that while Arabic is more *concise*, English is more *precise* and that it takes a certain amount of judgment and inference to translate Arabic accurately. Hence, his translations render the intent of the Arabic rather than just the rote words on the page.

**Appendix D:**  
**About that Letter the Báb Requested...**  
**A Look at the Way Sacred History May Get Superimposed Over**  
**Even Our Best Eyewitness Accounts**

In *The Dawnbreakers*, shortly after all 18 Letters of the Living recognize the Báb, He sends

Mullá Ḥusayn to visit a number of cities to proclaim His Advent, ending in Mashhad in Khurásán. He is preparing to leave for the Hajj and tells His disciple, “I won’t leave for Pilgrimage till I receive a letter describing your experiences,” which were to include the names of all new believers and the general receptivity of each area. The letter does arrive, the Báb is thrilled, and He, Quddús, and Mubarak make their connections and sail off into the sunset. But...does the timing of these events make sense? This involved a trip across half of Persia plus the posting of a long letter back without benefit of the Pony Express, a modern postal system, email, or Uber.<sup>331</sup> While comparing sources on all this, I noted yet another instance where sacred history might be intruding on factual account, or at least overlaying it. Once I started doing the math and asking around, I discovered I was not the first person to question the factuality of this account. Let’s see if I can coherently communicate my thought process.

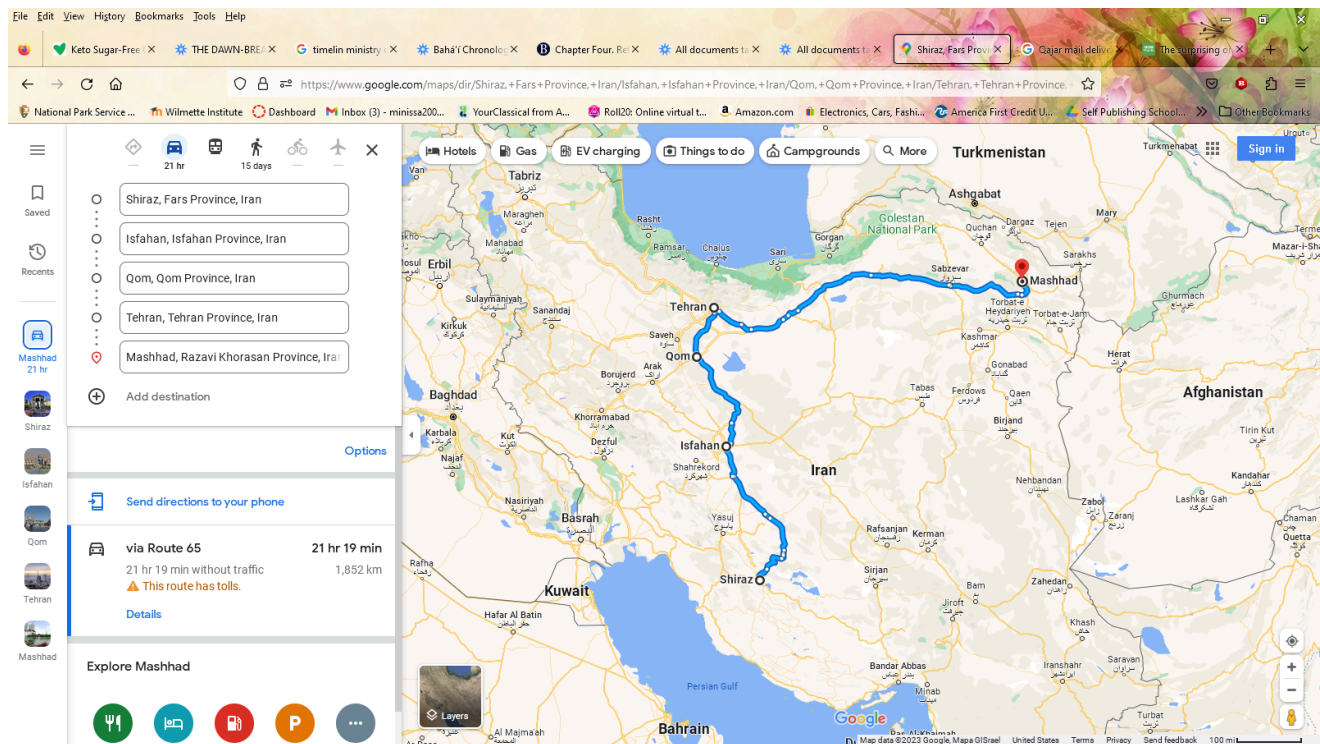
Traveling from Shíráz to Mashhad via Isfahan, Qum, Kashan (which may have required doubling back from Qum), and Tehran is a journey of 1237 miles/2062 km.<sup>332</sup> Google Maps gives a travel time of 17 days for someone using this route going on foot but also using a major highway. Since Mullá Ḥusayn was stopping all along his route to proclaim the Báb’s message and using the “unimproved roads” of nineteenth century Persia, this journey would have taken him considerably longer. Then we have to figure in the travel time for his missive to his Master.<sup>333</sup> He did have the advantage of using the network of messengers used by the Báb’s family’s business. This meant the letter was directed to Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali, the Báb’s uncle, in Shiraz and then had to be forwarded to the Báb, who may already have travelled to Bushíhr.

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<sup>331</sup> Or perhaps U-Horse

<sup>332</sup> Mehrabkhani, *Mullá Ḥusayn*, p. 121, makes these distances 1150 miles for Mullá Ḥusayn’s overland travel and 1320 for the letter to go from Mashhad to Bushíhr. Using Google maps, I got 988 for the latter for an on-foot travel time of 15 days. Horsemen who could change horses every 20 miles, as a messenger service attached to a business might do, could have trimmed the time to about 12 days if they rode a total of 80 miles a day. Some authors do suggest the Báb received the letter whilst still in Shiraz.

<sup>333</sup> I discovered after doing my own math that others have tackled this problem before me. However, no two sources seem to have come up with the same figures for dates like the Báb’s receipt of Mullá Ḥusayn’s missive (and presumably the tea and sugar that were a present from Bahá’u’lláh for the Báb).



**A map of Mullá Ḥusayn's likely overland route to Khurasan. Kashan, not pictured, was a fairly straight shot between Isfahan and Qum.**

Let me quickly run over the main features of the timeline:

- The Báb declares His station and mission to Mullá Ḥusayn. (evening of May 22, 1844, all sources agree)
- There are no new declarations of faith for 40 days.<sup>334</sup> This would bring us to about July 3, 1844, when Mullá ‘Alí-i-Bastamí sought Him out based on a vision seen in a dream.
- The above dating is itself problematic because a number of sources indicate Quddús arrived in Shiraz in late May, and he was the 18th and final Letter of the Living.<sup>335</sup> The oft-quoted story in which he recognized the Báb “by His gait” also depends upon Mullá Ḥusayn still being in Shiraz when Quddús arrived. A May arrival date for Quddús is viable, as the sources that relate his dream or give an actual departure date place both around Naw-Ruz of that year.<sup>336</sup> But this scheme gives Letters 2-17 only a week to herd themselves over to the Báb’s front door. Ultimately, though, this would give Mullá Ḥusayn an extra 30 days to accomplish his mission and allow him to leave around June 1.
- Several sources indicate that the Báb dispatched Mullá Ḥusayn and Mullá ‘Alí before He gave the

<sup>334</sup> This in itself could be an intrusion/overlay of “sacred history:” Christ fasted in the wilderness for 40 days, the rain causing the Great Flood lasted for 40 days, disciples of Siyyid Kazim spent 40 days in seclusion after his death, etc.

<sup>335</sup> For example, Nosrat Mohammad-Hosseini, “Qoddus,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Last Updated: July 15, 2009, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/qoddus-mohammad-ali-barforusi>. This article has an excellent reference list; unfortunately, none directly put Quddús in Shiraz in May.

<sup>336</sup> Google maps make the distance Bárfurúsh to Shiraz just shy of 700 miles, but he 60+ days to make it.

rest of the Letters of the Living their marching orders. Amanat does give a departure “date” for Mullá Ḥusayn as “late Jumada al-Thani,” which narrows the time frame for his departure to the first 2 weeks in July.<sup>337</sup>

- This may mean, as with other issues of dating, that we have multiple chains of narration with multiple primary sources. In one, Mullá Ḥusayn remained the only believer for 40 days, during which the Báb met with him several times, and he is unable to leave till early July.<sup>338</sup> This cuts his travel time by 30 days to about 90 days to make the trip, write the letter, and get it to the Báb in time for Him to leave on Pilgrimage.<sup>339</sup> In a second chain, he can leave as early as very late May, depending on when in May Quddús actually arrived. This gives him somewhat more flexibility.
- We do have a multiplicity of dates for the Báb’s day of departure, and the first chain of narration might work with the later dates, which cluster around mid-October.
- The first chain above is still problematic if Mullá Ḥusayn says in his letter he recalls happy days in Tehran between Jumada (June 18) and Rajab (July 17).<sup>340</sup> If he left July 3, he made it to Tehran in a fortnight, a distance of 873 km/542 miles, which normally would take closer to 30 days. That would mean he would barely get there before Jumada gave way to Rajab; there would be no “between.” We know from multiple sources that he spent at least a few days sorting out lodgings, presenting his News to the madrasa head, leader of the entire Tehran Shaykhí community, being stiffly upbraided and finally rejected, trawling the streets to find a glimmer of news about the Person for whom he searched, finding a student he could query, sending the student to the individual we know to be Bahá’u’lláh, and receiving His reply. Then, if he leaves Tehran to go to Mashhad, he still has another 899km/534 miles to cover.
- Just as a yardstick, I was taking the assertion in Merabkhani<sup>341</sup> that the Báb made the trip to Bushíhr from Shiraz in 10 days, which equals about 17.5mi/day. Which is still a respectable clip
- The second chain makes a little more sense in getting him *to* Tehran: he gets closer to six weeks to travel that 500+ miles and teach the Cause in the cities to which the Báb sent him.
- The Báb did indeed wait for Mullá Ḥusayn’s report before leaving on Pilgrimage. He and Quddús read this letter with great joy. Nabil reports that it was this report that led the Báb to decide to make His Hajj at this time.<sup>342</sup> Reading between the lines, it sounds like He was still in Shiraz, as we have Him entrusting His wife and mother to the care of his uncle, although Mehrabkhani,<sup>343</sup> among others, suggests he had left earlier for Bushíhr.
- Mehrabkhani cites *God Passes By* for a date of Ramadan 19/October 2 for departure for Pilgrimage.<sup>344</sup>
- To be fair, other sources place this departure as early as September 9 (Balyuzi) and as late as November 12 (Momen). However, Mehrabkhani points out that the October 2 date comes from

<sup>337</sup> Amanat, *Resurrection*, 260.

<sup>338</sup> timeline at file:///C:/Users/Karen%20Webb/Downloads/chronology\_of\_the\_bab.pdf, compiled from multiple sources by Duane K. Troxel for a Wilmette Institute Course.

<sup>339</sup> It suggests he grew wings on his feet or came across the sandals once worn by Hermes, messenger of the Greek gods.

<sup>340</sup> Note I’m interpreting this as between the *beginning* of Jumada and the *beginning* of Rajab, which I believe Amanat also did.

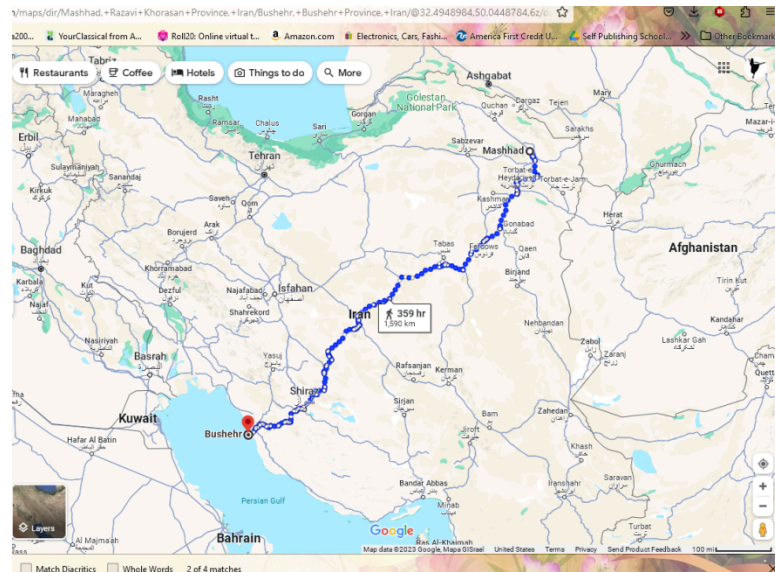
<sup>341</sup> Mehrabkhani, *Mullá Ḥusayn*, 119.

<sup>342</sup> Nabil, *Dawnbreakers*, 129. However, he places receipt of the letter as Ramadan 27/ October 9, which conflicts with *God Passes By*.

<sup>343</sup> Mehrabkhani, *Mullá Ḥusayn*, 122.

<sup>344</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, 9.

an actual tablet of the Báb describing His journey and that includes this date, and the overwhelming number of sources support an early October departure date.<sup>345</sup>



**The approximate route Mullá Ḥusayn's letter traveled.**

So, what might we conclude here? Mehrabkhani does mention that we have some anecdotal evidence that Mullá Ḥusayn did travel with little sleep when leading the Khurásání Bábís to help Quddús in Mázinarán. So his burning desire to serve his new Master might have made a trip to Tehran of a fortnight possible. 19th century Persian could be classified as a “walking culture.” Merchants travelled all over by horse or camel or on their own two feet. Their muscles could have adapted. On the other hand, this time frame limits the time he could have spent in each of the cities the Báb asked him to visit.<sup>346</sup>

I’m of the opinion we have two things happening. One is multiple chains of narration, as I suggested above. There would need to be at least a third and fourth chain for two other authors to have come up with September and November departure dates for the Báb’s taking ship to Jeddah. Two is (everyone say it with me) sacred history. I mentioned above that it is possible the “40 days” is a reference to a sacred number we find across many holy traditions. If we ascribe “sacred history” to that assertion, Mullá ‘Alí does not wait till July 3 to find the Báb. And Mullá Ḥusayn gets an extra month to accomplish

<sup>345</sup> Amanat *Resurrection*, 239, n. 198 calls this the *Khutbat al-Jidda* and says it gives names and dates of all His travels.

<sup>346</sup> Unless the Doctor was whisking him around in the TARDIS, in which case he could have visited them all simultaneously.

his tasks.

Can we account for the reference multiple people make to the time of his arrival and departure and length of stay in Tehran? Yes. Even if he doesn't leave until early July, we can dispense with the difficulty of getting him to Tehran "between Jamadi and Rajab" by using an important Shia document, the *Bihar al-Anwar*, a compendium compiled by Majlisi of Shia ahadith referring to events that would occur around the Day of Judgment. So there is a possibility this mention of these months is not meant literally but refers to Mullá Husayn's discovery of Bahá'u'lláh in Tehran. Is this a portent of the Judgment? Heck, yes! But it would also give Mullá Husayn a little wiggle room—his stay in Tehran would not have to occur "between" Jamadi and Rajab at all, and he could proceed at his own pace to Khurásán.

### **Appendix E:** **Possible Letter from Quddús to Prince Mihdí-Qulí Mírzá**

We find in the *Tarikh-i-Jadid* (Hamadání) the following, purported to be at least an approximation of a letter Quddús wrote to Prince Mihdi-Qulí Mírzá while the latter was stalling for time waiting for reinforcements. The Prince had asked the Bábís' intent, whether it was political or religious. Some

sources say it was Mullá Husayn who gave both written and oral testimony to their peaceful intentions.

Adel Sharifpour has this to say about its authenticity:

The letter [Quddús] wrote to Prince Mahdi Quli Mirza has been taken from Nasekh-ut-Tavarikh by Sepehr Kasani. Avareh in Kawakeb Ud-Doriheh also used that letter. But it has been discussed that the letter is not written by Quddús, it is fake, even Houshman Dehghan [Dihqan] says so. [Dihqan is where I found the reference to this letter in the Tarikh, though—KAW] It is on first volume of Kawakeb-Ud-Dorih. I recommend not using that as his letter. There is another letter. You should also consider that Fadil Mazandarani [author of Zuhur al-Haqq] was a very careful historian. You should also remember that Fadil said that the brother of Quddus from another Mom called Amo Sadegh (Uncle Sadegh) was Fadil's Mentor when he was in elementary school, so Fadil got most of his info from Sadegh when he was writing Quddus's bio and since Fadil lived in Babol and Sari also had access to Shariat-Madar as well. so all the letter to Saied Barfroushi is accurate and Fadil got it via Amo Sadegh in my humble opinion.

Nevertheless, I offer this passage as an historical curiosity. The circumstances involve Prince Mihdí-Qulí Khan being appointed governor of Mázandarán with commands to put down the Bábís, and ‘Abbás-Qulí Khán of Láríján receiving instructions to help and support the Prince. The Prince, with two or three thousand soldiers, advanced to within a short distance of the Fort of Shaykh Tabarsí. There, probably at least in part to play for time while awaiting ‘Abbas-Quli Khan and his troops, he addressed a letter to Quddús, demanding what his real intent might be. (Another variant of this story has him sending a messenger with the same questions and Mullá Husayn responding both verbally and in writing.) This might very well have been a legitimate question, as enemies of the nascent faith like Sa'id al-'Ulamá had told the Shah the Bábís' true intent was a military coup. Here is Quddús's reply as recounted in the Tarikh, lightly edited for clarity:

We are exceedingly adverse to enmity and discord, much more to actual strife and warfare, especially with His Majesty the King. Only those who dream of lordship and dominion deliberately seek war with established authority, not such as these, who, foredoomed to destruction in this narrow enclosure, have nobly and devotedly cast from them such power, authority, and lordship as they formerly possessed, abandoning worldly success and supremacy to such as seek after these things. For we, agreeably to the duty incumbent on the doctors of Islam, who pretend to have been expecting the Master's coming for twelve hundred and sixty years, and who continually pray "May God hasten his glad advent," have announced the appearance of that promised Proof and declared his signs; and we maintain that you should not, like most of the doctors of former ages (who, through their blind adhesion to vain superstitions, remained shut off from the blessing of recognizing the Prophet of their time, whereby the

common people also were held back, doubting and expecting, in the desert of error), continue to await in darkness the accomplished Manifestation, as do the diverse sects of Hindoos, Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians.

Of these, some were indifferent, some mocked, some fell to chiding or cursing, while others again set themselves to fight and oppose the new truth, and, without investigation or enquiry, denounced as infidels and doomed to death the innocent objects of their cruel hatred. And now, by their misrepresentations, they have induced His Majesty the King to send forth his hosts to battle, thus bringing eternal disgrace on this Royal house. Had they been indeed seekers after God and desirous of distinguishing truth from falsehood, they should at least, when this matter first became apparent, have made it their business to enquire into it, and ought not to have rested for a moment until they had seen and questioned the Master, and verified or disproved his claim, so that they might be in a position to direct the rest of mankind without war and bloodshed.

But now the government, refusing to give the matter due consideration, has imprisoned that Day-spring of Divinity in the remotest borders of its territory, and has carried war and slaughter against a mere handful of its subjects who have renounced the world and all that therein is. Hereby it has exposed itself to the reprobation of all nations and peoples, who will say, "Bigotry and injustice have come to such a pass that guns and muskets have become the arbitrators between truth and falsehood." Can gunners and soldiers distinguish right and wrong? This is the work of learned divines, on whom devolves the duty of enquiring into the matter. If differences can be removed by reasonable discussion and argument, well and good. If not, then let us invoke God's curse on whomsoever is in error, leaving to Him the decision. Or, if this content them not, let us kindle a fire and enter in to the midst thereof, that the truth or falsehood of either side may be made apparent without the shedding of blood or the slaughter of God's servants. And should they agree to none of these alternatives, we for our part have no quarrel with any one, being strangers, who have suffered much in this wilderness, and are the objects of causeless persecution. Suffer us then to depart, that we may with all speed quit this land and pass to the holy shrines of Kerbelá and Nejef.

But if you encompass us on all sides and suffer us not to depart, and if ye be indeed bent on the slaughter of innocent folk, then have we no choice but to defend ourselves and to prove the sincerity of our belief by laying down our lives as martyrs to our cause. But do not thou, O noble Prince, take part in bringing about this bloodshed. Misrepresentations have made His Majesty the King hostile to us without cause, else by counsel and fair dealing could our differences be removed without the unsheathing of a single sword or the utterance of a single unkind word. Even Pharaoh, notwithstanding his claim to divinity, his exceeding greatness and power, and his conviction that Moses was but what he seemed—the son of one of his own slaves, and a self-confessed murderer fleeing from justice—still ostensibly acted towards him with justice and fairness. For he summoned Moses before him, spoke with him at length, heard what he had to say, and demanded a sign. Moses answered, "The rod and the white hand are my signs."

"These," said Pharaoh, "are but a juggle [sic];" but he was met with the answer, "Produce the like thereof if ye speak truly." To this, notwithstanding all his power and despotic authority, Pharaoh raised no objection, but, at great expense, assembled about a thousand magicians from all parts of the country in order that a like sign might be wrought by them. So in like manner did



Hárúnu‘r-Rashíd, whom our divines regard as accursed and an unbeliever, assemble nearly four hundred learned doctors to answer Hasaniyya the handmaiden and to test the truth of her assertions. How different is the case now, when, though more than three hundred eminent and gifted divines confidently assert the truth of this new doctrine, these people, who profess to have been expecting this Manifestation for twelve hundred and sixty years, are at no pains to enquire into this matter with a view to arriving at the truth, and so preventing a powerful government from being led by the willful misrepresentations of prejudiced persons from carrying battle and slaughter against a mere handful of its subjects. According to the Law they regard the testimony of two just witnesses as sufficient, even where life is involved: wherefore, then, do they refuse to accept the testimony of three hundred men who are not only just, but, for the most part, learned, discreet, self-devoted, and ready to lay down their lives at God's bidding? If they declare these to be in error and delusion, we reply that it is most improbable that three hundred learned men possessed of such means for forming a correct judgment should fall into such an error, seeing that each one of them attained the goal in view with infinite pains and after enduring countless privations and hardships. Only when a thousand difficulties, whereof the solution was a thousand times harder than the Cleaving of the Moon had been resolved, did they suffer their doubts, which formed a rampart more stubborn than the Wall of Alexander, to be surmounted; neither did their pride of learning and priestly arrogance permit them to bow their heads in humble submission until they had been convinced by irrefragable proofs of the plenary authority bestowed from on high on that Well-spring of divine wisdom.

Yet do men foolishly imagine that they lightly and easily relinquished their supremacy, and chose without reason such utter self-abandonment, little thinking what hesitation, diffidence, fear, and anxiety each of them experienced ere he became fully assured of the truth..... Again, if it be asserted that they embraced this doctrine in the hope of securing to themselves authority and lordship, this is an evident calumny, credible only to such as regard learning merely as a means for the acquisition of the perishable wealth and worthless consideration of the world. These things which they already enjoyed, yea, the very hope of life, they freely forsook for the good pleasure of the Beloved and the awakening of benighted souls. Their very deeds bear witness to the purity of their motives, for, in so dire a pass, even the most faithful are in grievous peril, and the elect quake and tremble in fear of stumbling.

## **Appendix F:**

### **The Báb's Letter to His Uncle Haji Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí**

#### **(from Nicolas pp 214-8, translation from French by Peter Terry)**

In the Name of God, the Clement, the Merciful.

Read the Book of the "Mention of the Name of your Lord. There is no other God save Him, He is exalted and wise. And this Book is a Book that has descended on the part of the Baqiyyatu'llah, the Imam of the Evident Truth."<sup>347</sup> In truth this Book is an order that contains no doubt: it has descended from

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<sup>347</sup> Yet another mention of the Baqiyyatu'llah, the "Remnant of God," interpreted as Bahá'u'lláh.

God, the Most High, the Knowing. And, in truth, He is the Truth in the heavens and upon the earth. He cites for you the Book of your Lord which contains an order of the inflexible Balance, and in truth that is the voice of your Lord in the heavens and upon the earth—He calls men to the way of God, the Glorious, the Praised.

Know that whosoever hears a word of the new verses, his works will not be accepted unless he gives his faith to the verses of his Lord and if he becomes among them that prostrate themselves. And in truth a single verse of the verses that we now cause to descend upon you is equal to the verses (of all the prophets) of the past and to all the verses that hereafter all men will ask from the Baqiyyat'u'llah.

This Book suffices to prove the quality of Hujjat of the Dhikr for all those who are upon the earth. If God causes a verse to descend, nobody has the right to say anything about it. And, in truth, I establish no difference in the order of the Book. All are under its orders and adore God. We have proven men by the truth, as we have proven those who were before them: all have thus taken their part in the Book and we return to God. In truth, those who obey the verses of God and leave in the direct of the Holy Land (163), these are those who were guided. In truth, those who have treated our verses as lies and who have obeyed their passion, those ones are worthy of the word of chastisement, and they do not know it. Know, O you who have truly obeyed me, and give yourselves the good news of the breath that comes from Me, and in truth, this breath is a great blessing. God, your merciful Lord has written your names in the folio of the Ark, and, in truth, this inscription is a great blessing.

Say: O troops! Return to the one who is seated upon the Ark in the sublime harem. Then leave following the order of God (from your houses?) and return to the land of refuge, all, so that all of you will be inscribed among the ranks of those who have received the blessing.

Know, O pure and good Siyyid, who fears God! Invite men to justice: bring the order of this Book to those who are upon this earth (there), to those who are near this earth, so that He who must die (164) for the new Hujjat, so that he who was saved by the old verses will be saved. And God, your Lord, is the one who hears, the Knowing.

To those who accuse God of lying in saying that the Mention of the Name of your Lord [pille?] what he wishes in the Qur'an, say: "God is pure and free (of that which you accuse Him) and His rank is exalted. When God permits it to His slave, He makes descend in each word the equivalent of a Qur'an." And God is your Lord, is the Powerful and the Glorious.

In truth, [O Siyyid] obey the order of the revelation and cause to come such as this Book towards them who, in truth, inhabit the ways (165): it may be that they will comprehend the verses of God and will become among those who are guided.

Know that in truth, the ways of the sea are troublesome:<sup>348</sup> we do not like them for our followers. Go by the ways of the earth (166) and say: "That which God wishes [will be]. There is no power except in God, this God Who holds all the orders in His hand. There is no God, except for Him, the Loving, He Who has need of no one.

And if you are not fearful of the order of Baghdad, make efforts in the ways of your Lord, with wisdom and with the solid verses for those who inhabit Baghdad among the 'ulama who negate [the Bab?]. It may be thereby that they may comprehend the order of God and become Muslims.

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<sup>348</sup> A reference to his miserable sea voyages to and from Jeddah

O troops, pay attention! What do you say on the subject of My slave: “all that is vain.” In truth, this slave came to you with verses, which, like those of the Qur’an are clear and evident, and this, after you have yourselves were convinced of the order of God.

Wait! In truth, the day of the separation (between the good and the evil ones) is true. And I ordain in the midst of men with the permission of your Lord. And this day is not a day of violence, God is All-Powerful, the Knowing.

Fear God, O men! Then present yourselves between the two hands of God: if you can do so, bring (verses) similar to (those) of this Book. While your religion is for you, and, for me, the religion of God, the glorious, the praised.

And if you cannot do so, and certainly, you will not being able to do so, even if all of you assist one another, then turn away from the lie in which you [abide].

Enter by the door of God, prostrating yourselves, perhaps you will be saved. And if you do not enter, hold to the order of God in the Qur’an, and ask by the justice of God that He cause to descend chastisement upon those who lie and have become evil ones.

Based upon this order, cause this order to come to your way and do not fear anyone in the days of your Lord. In truth, this is the blessing of God upon you. And, in truth, if you die and if you are killed, you will return to God. Cause fear to the one who, in truth, has treated as lies the verses of his Lord, who has obeyed his passions and has thus become among the transgressors.

Make the blessing of the Mention come to those who have already believed and tell them: “Leave (your homes, heading) towards the Holy Land (Shiraz) so that you may be among the pious.

And send as this Book to those who have obeyed our religion and are firm in faith.

In truth, for one among you it is necessary that he teach in the house of the Bab of God that which is from our previous verses, and, in truth, this is an important thing.

O my maternal uncle, read this Book and wait in this town (?) as long as you wish: then leave towards your town (Shiraz). In truth you are among those who have followed their faith according to this Book.

Say: “Praise be to God, the ordainer of the worlds.”.

Terry’s Notes:

(163) Shiraz.

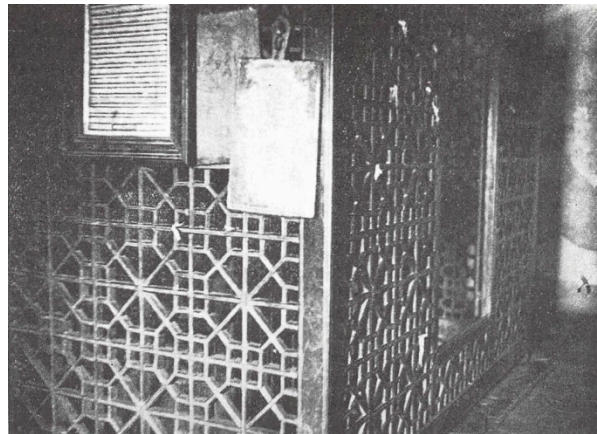
(164) The one who dies in the new testimony, is the one who does not believe in the new prophet; the one who is saved by the old verses is the one who, having understood the real meaning of the Qur’an, has given his faith in Siyyid ‘Ali Muhammad.

(165) As this Book means, the verses that you are carrying [are] my writings. Those who live in the ways, are those, inhabiting the towns and villages, that the messenger will encounter upon his way.

(166) This passage indicates that this Surah was written between Mecca and Medina; would the Bab have sent His uncle, from this moment, in advance, by the terrestrial routes that that end in Baghdad?

(167) I think that this means: “If truly you are not afraid that the Sunni ‘ulama will arise against you, go to Baghdad and preach, on the way, My doctrine, but do it with wisdom.” It may be that it refers to Shi’I ‘ulama who in the mind of the Bab will be, because of their proximity to the sacred places – Najaf and Karbila – of a fanaticism more intransigent than that of their colleagues in Iran. Perhaps, otherwise, it refers to an incident about which I do not know.

**Appendix G:**  
**The Construction of the Fort of Shaykh Tabarsí**



**Interior of fort; “x” lower right is where Mulla Husayn is buried**

Although the shrine had only a small moat—Merabkhani describes it as a meter wide and one deep—and a hedge wall planted on an enclosure created from the earth thrown up from the ditch,<sup>349</sup> the area in which it stood was not one on which any army would choose to fight. Ruhe describes it as being sparsely populated, impoverished, and comprised of thickets with bare hills and swampy lowlands, many of which had been converted into rice paddies.<sup>350</sup>

The Bábís, especially Mírzá Muḥammad Baqir, who had designed and built the Babiyyih, made intelligent use of the natural resources provided by the land around the fort. The area had been overgrown by huge Siberian elm trees, which served as building material for the original defensive wall and the small



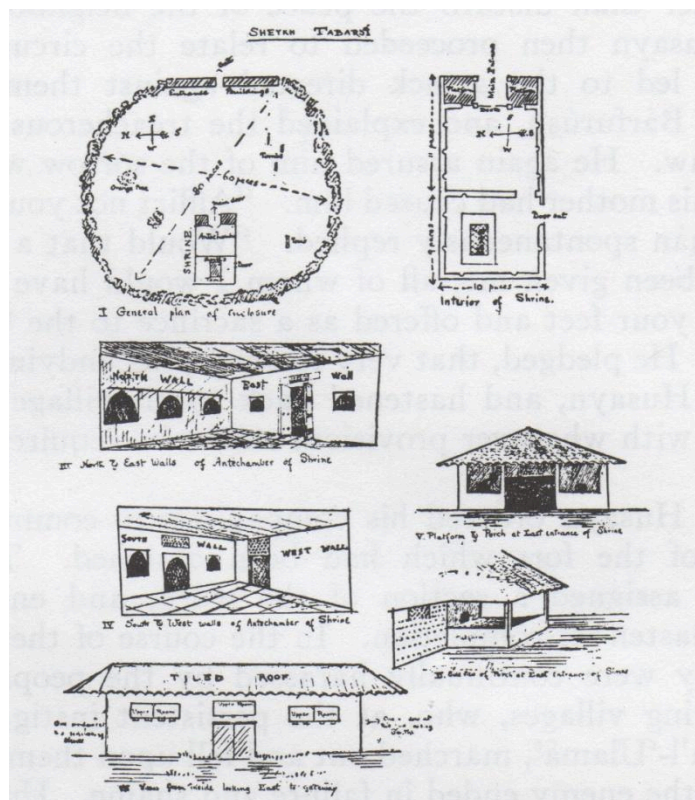
**Muslim children beside the well dug by Mulla Husayn and his men at Fort Tabarsi. The water, 5 meters down tastes good and looks pure and clear (from *Baha’i News* No. 411, 1964)**

<sup>349</sup> Merabkhani, *Mullá Husayn*, pp. 212-219.

<sup>350</sup> Ruhe, *Robe*, p. 101

shelters that housed the men. Most of the initial construction of the fortifications took place while the Bábís were under attack.

When it became clear that the Sháh had sent reinforcements with superior armaments like cannon, the Bábís saw they had to rebuild with a wall that could withstand cannon fire. They deepened the moat, shoring up the wall with earth dug from the trench. They embedded tree trunks in the ground, each pair spaced two meters apart. They then wove flexible branches between and amongst the trees and filled the intervening spaces with packed mud. When everything dried, they had built a wall capable of sustaining cannon fire.<sup>351</sup>



**Details of construction of fort and the shrine within**

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<sup>351</sup> Summarized from Merabkhani, *Mullá Husayn*, pp. 212-19.

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