

The 1893 Russian Publication of Baha'u'llah's Last Will and Testament: An Academic Attestation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Successorship

Christopher Buck *Independent Scholar, Pittsburgh*

Youli A. Ioannesyan *Institute of Oriental Manuscripts,
Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg)*

Abstract

This study concerns the publication of a document that may well be unique in the history of religions: the written designation of a successor by the charismatic founder of a world religion. Mīrzā Husayn-'Alī (1817–1892), known as Bahā'-Allāh (more commonly, Baha'u'llah, 'Splendor of God'), prophet-founder of the Bahā'ī Faith. In the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī ('Book of My Covenant'), Baha'u'llah designated his eldest son, 'Abbās Effendī, known as 'Abdu'l-Bahā (1844–1921), as successor. Baha'u'llah died on 29 May 1892 (at 3:00 a.m.) in Bahjī (near 'Akkā), Palestine (now modern-day Israel), and the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī was read aloud nine days later. In 1893, Russian orientalist, Aleksandr Grigor'evich Tumanski (1861–1920) published this document, in the original Persian, with Russian translation, together with a eulogy composed by the celebrated Bahā'ī poet, Mīrzā 'Alī-Ashraf-i Lāhijānī, known by his sobriquet, 'Andalīb ('Nightingale'; d. 1920). Since 'Andalīb was an eyewitness to the events he describes, his eulogy may be treated as a historical source. Tumanski's scholarly publication of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī is discussed in the context of Russian scholarly and diplomatic interests. The present study is presented as follows: (1) Introduction; (2) Aleksandr Grigor'evich Tumanski; (3) Contents of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī and Brief Commentary; (4) 'Andalīb's Eyewitness Account of the Reading of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī, 1892; (5) The St. Petersburg Edition of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī; (6) The Original Manuscript of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī and the Textus Receptus; (7) Textual Variants Between the St. Petersburg Edition of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī and the Textus Receptus; (8) The Cambridge Manuscript of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī in the E. G. Browne Collection; and (9) Conclusion: Contemporary-Historical Attestation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Successorship by Tumanski and other Russian Notables.

Keywords

Baha'i Faith
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Baron Rosen
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1. Introduction

On 29 September 1892, at a meeting of the Oriental Section of the Imperial Russian Archaeological Society, Russian Orientalist, Baron Viktor Romanovich Rosen (1849–1908), announced the decease of the



Figure 1: Russian Orientalist, Baron Viktor Romanovich von Rosen (1849–1908) mentor of Aleksandr Grigor'evich Tumanski (1861–1920), and editor of the latter's 1893 publication of Baha'u'llah's 'Book of My Covenant' (*Kitāb-i 'Ahdī*). (Public domain.) Archived in the St. Petersburg Branch of the Archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Undated photograph. Source: Rosensches Familienarchiv, Hamburg. Courtesy of Prof. Dr. Claus Freiherr von Rosen, Hamburg.

prophet–founder of the Baha'i Faith, Mīrzā Ḥusayn-'Alī Bahā'-Allāh, known as Baha'u'llah ('Splendor of God', 1817–1892), who passed away on 29 May 1892 (at 3:00 a.m.) in Bahji (near 'Akka'), Palestine (now modern-day Israel). Rosen then read a paper¹ that he had recently edited for publication, written by his junior colleague and former student, Aleksandr Grigor'evich Tumanski (also Anglicized as 'Toumansky'; b. 23 September 1861; d. Istanbul, 1 December 1920). In this then-forthcoming article, which Rosen read aloud to his colleagues, Tumanski published, for the first time, the original Persian/Arabic text of Baha'u'llah's 'Book of My Covenant' (Persian: *Kitāb-i 'Ahdī*; Arabic: *Kitāb 'Ahdī*),² along with a translation into Russian.³ This text, translation and accompanying commentary appeared in the *Zapiski Vostochnogo otdeleniia Imperatorskogo Russkogo arkheologicheskogo obshchestva* (Proceedings of the Oriental Department of the Imperial Russian Archaeological Society), which was the first Orientalist Russian academic journal (established in 1886).⁴ The 'Book of My Covenant' is the way Tumanski understood and translated the title into Russian.

Briefly, the historical origin of the Baha'i Faith (as the religion is now known internationally) may be summarized so: Generally, the Baha'i religion has its roots in Shi'i ('Twelver') Islam. Thus the Baha'i Faith is the daughter religion of Islam. To extend the familial metaphor, the Baha'i religion, after a period of time, emerged as an independent religion, just as a daughter matures and becomes fully independent of her parents. The immediate parallel that springs to mind is Christianity, which may be regarded as the daughter religion of Judaism, its apparent 'parent'. Both Christianity and the Baha'i Faith represent what Baha'i Orientalist, Alessandro Bausani, has termed 'secondary monotheisms'.⁵

In the history of religions, never has there been a clear document conferring successorship upon a designated leader after the death of the founder of the religion – that is, until the appearance of the Baha'i religion during the latter part of the 19th century. Religions tend to break into schisms for a variety of reasons, especially contests for successorship. Such leadership rivalries are fissiparous. It goes without saying that the demise of a charismatic religious figure typically precipitates a crisis – one that invariably results in contested claims and resulting schisms. Thus a leadership crisis arose in the immediate aftermath of the death of Baha'u'llah. Yet there is one important difference: Baha'u'llah left a document – his last Will and Testament, i.e. the Kitāb-i 'Ahd ('The Book of the Covenant'), also known as the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī ('The Book of My Covenant') – that clearly designates 'Abdu'l-Bahā (Abbās Effendī, 1844–1921, Baha'u'llah's eldest son, successor, expounder, and exemplar) as the one who should lead the Baha'i community:

The Will of the divine Testator is this: It is incumbent upon the Aghsān, the Afnān and My Kindred to turn, one and all, their faces towards the Most Mighty Branch. Consider that which We have revealed in Our Most Holy Book: 'When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended, turn your faces toward Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root'. The object of this sacred verse is none other except the Most Mighty Branch ['Abdu'l-Bahā]. Thus have We graciously revealed unto you Our potent Will, and I am verily the Gracious, the All-Powerful. Verily God hath ordained the station of the Greater Branch (*maqām al-Ghuṣn al-Akbar*) [Muḥammad-'Alī] to be beneath that of the Most Great Branch ['Abdu'l-Bahā]. He is in truth the Ordainer, the All-Wise. We have chosen 'the Greater' after 'the Most Great' (*al-Akbar ba'd al-A'zam*), as decreed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.⁶

In this historic passage, which is of monumental importance to the future of the Baha'i religion, 'Abdu'l-Baha is identified as the 'Most Mighty Branch' (*Ghuṣn-i A'zam*). Here, Baha'u'llah quotes a passage from the Kitāb-i Aqdas ('The Most Holy Book', 'revealed' (i.e. divinely inspired) in 1873) and glosses it as referring to none other than 'Abdu'l-Baha.⁷ This is important since the Aqdas passage cited in the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī does not specifically designate 'Abdu'l-Baha by name. On this point, see the discussion by Juan Cole.⁸ The present writers, however, question Cole's 'strict constructionist' approach to these two Aqdas passages as requiring that Baha'u'llah's 'successor had the narrow, specific function of interpretation of what was obscure'.⁹

Prior to the revelation and disclosure of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī, the only implied reference to 'Abdu'l-Baha's successorship was made privately in a Tablet revealed 1 Sha'bān 1298 (= 29 June 1881) to 'Alī-Muḥammad Varqā (d. 1896), the prominent Iranian Baha'i renowned as a poet. In this 1881 Tablet, Baha'u'llah explains that the verse in the Aqdas first refers to 'Abdu'l-Baha, and then to Muḥammad-'Alī.¹⁰ That this Aqdas text is non-specific in designating which one of Baha'u'llah's sons would succeed him¹¹ may have been a purposeful ambiguity, in order to protect 'Abdu'l-Baha from intrigues borne of jealousy, although this would inevitably develop.

This underscores the critical importance of the specificity of the successorship provision of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī, as Adib Taherzadeh points out: 'The only document that explicitly announced 'Abdu'l-Bahā as the Centre of the Covenant of Bahā'u'llāh and the one to whom all must turn after His ascension was the Kitāb-i-'Ahd (The Book of the Covenant), which was published among the believers only after Bahā'u'llāh's passing'.¹² Here 'explicitly', 'Abdu'l-Baha, as successor, is not designated by name, but by the title, 'Most Mighty Branch' (*Ghuṣn-i A'zam*), understood by all Baha'is, without exception, as a clear reference to 'Abdu'l-Baha. (Differences over succession arose as to other issues.) The heretofore implicit Aqdas passages had now been rendered explicit by the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī.

'Abdu'l-Baha was the natural choice as Baha'u'llah's successor, as confirmed by how readily the majority of Baha'is accepted 'Abdu'l-Baha's appointment and the authority that accompanied it. This illustrious son was Baha'u'llah's trusted confidant, and had assiduously served as Baha'u'llah's personal representative for decades. Although 'Abdu'l-Baha erstwhile remained an exile and officially still a prisoner in Palestine under the Ottoman empire, Shahvar notes the remarkable fact that 'Iranian and Ottoman government officials respected 'Abdu'l-Baha and consulted him on important matters'.¹³ 'Abdu'l-Baha was knighted by the British on 27 April 1920. In taking on the mantle of Baha'u'llah's authority in leading the Baha'i community, 'Abdu'l-Baha served as the charismatic (although not prophetic) leader of the Baha'i community, as well as its authorized interpreter and ideal exemplar of Baha'u'llah's teachings.

When Baha'u'llah had passed away, 'Abdu'l-Baha dispatched a telegram bearing the news, 'The Sun of Baha has set', to Sulṭān 'Abdu'l-Ḥamīd, with a request for permission to bury Baha'u'llah at Bahji, which request was granted. Baha'u'llah was interred shortly after sunset, on the very day of his ascension.¹⁴ Soon after Baha'u'llah's decease, in 1893 (the actual publication date of the 1892 volume of ZVORAO), Tumanski published the Persian text of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī, as previously stated, thus providing an academic, historical-contemporary attestation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's successorship. This publication therefore has historical value, as well as intrinsic interest for academic Baha'i studies.

2. Aleksandr Grigor'evich Tumanski

Tumanski was a graduate of the School of Oriental Languages of the Asian Department of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, where he studied languages under M. A. Gamazoff's instruction.¹⁵ As mentioned, he was Baron Rosen's student. 'Baron Rosen', writes David Shimmelpenninck van der Oye, 'saw himself as a member of the European scholarly community rather than a strictly Russian one',¹⁶ and also had a Russian diplomatic agenda.¹⁷

By vocation, Tumanski ended his military career as a Major-General of the Russian army. While in Turkistan, he was engaged in Babi-Baha'i studies while he still had the rank of Russian Staff Captain. Throughout his own and Baron Viktor Rosen's publications, Tumanski is typically referred to as 'Captain', although Browne first refers to Tumanski as 'Lieutenant'. By avocation, Tumanski was an orientalist (Iranologist and Turkologist). He spoke eleven languages,¹⁸ and knew Persian, Arabic and Turkish. However, it would appear that vocation and avocation merged when Tumanski was officially 'charged with collecting information on the Baha'is'¹⁹ (at least in Persia) by his superiors, presumably under General Alexei Nicolaevich Kuropatkin (1848–1921), Governor-General and commander of the Transcaspian Region (1890–1898).

Tumanski belonged to an old Lithuanian aristocratic stock.²⁰ When he was a young captain in the Russian Imperial army, and while he was serving in the Turkmenistan (originally called Turkistan) region, namely in Ashgabat (i.e. Ashkabad/'Ishqābād, literally, 'City of Love'²¹), the young Russian orientalist came into close contact with the recently established Baha'i community there. Ashgabat (Turkmen: Aşgabat) is the capital and largest city of Turkmenistan (Persian for 'Land of the Turkmen'), a country in Central Asia. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Ashgabat was the site of a burgeoning Baha'i community,²² having attracted a steady influx of Baha'i immigrants, owing to 'Russia's provision of a safe haven for Iranian Baha'is in the Caucasus and Transcaspia/Turkistan'.²³ Tumanski's primary Baha'i contacts in Ashgabat were Mīrzā 'Abdu'l-Karīm-i Ardībīlī (known under the Russianized name of Asadov, for whom Baha'u'llah revealed a Tablet), Mīrzā Yūsif-i Rashtī and Ustād 'Alī-Akbar. These three Baha'is spent days and nights explaining the Kitab-i Aqdās to Tumanski, while he was translating that text for publication.

Tumanski became seriously interested in the Baha'i religion after reading an account of the murder, in broad daylight, of a prominent local Baha'i, Ḥājī Muḥammad-Riḍā, in Ashgabat ('Ishqābād), on 8 September 1889, and of the extraordinary intercession by the Baha'is, on behalf of those convicted and sentenced, for clemency, as Moojan Momen recounts:

The second important Russian scholar was Capt. Alexander Tumanski (q.v.), who had, according to his own statements, first heard of the Bahā'īs through an account in Reclus's *Universal Geography*, which he had read while studying for the entrance examination to the officer's course in the military Oriental Languages Training Section. But it was in the winter of 1889–90, when he read an account of the martyrdom of Ḥājī Muḥammad-Riḍā in 'Ishqābād and the manner in which the Bahā'īs had intervened on behalf of the murderers, that he determined to investigate the religion more closely. The following summer, he asked special permission to proceed to Transcaspia, and there met the Bahā'īs of 'Ishqābād. He names three Bahā'īs as having particularly helped him in his studies of the religion: Mīrzā 'Abdu'l-Karīm-i Ardībīlī (Asadov), Mīrzā Yūsif-i Rashtī and Ustād 'Alī-Akbar. In his later studies, Tumanski came into contact with the greatest of the Bahā'ī scholars, Mīrzā Abu'l-Faḍl-i Gulpāyḡānī, and was thus in a position to obtain the most detailed and accurate information regarding the new religion.²⁴

Diplomatic correspondence regarding this incident has been provided by Momen.²⁵ The key primary sources surrounding this event have been collected and translated by historian, Ahang Rabbani.²⁶ Mīrzā Abu'l-Faḍl-i Gulpāygānī, who had arrived on 15 July 1889,²⁷ was the spokesman for the Baha'is, and has written a history of the events surrounding the martyrdom of Ḥājī Muḥammad-Riḍā in 'Ishqābād.²⁸ The significance of the plea for clemency by the Baha'is is summarized by Rabbani:

The importance of this incident was profound. For the first time in the history of the nascent Bahā'ī community, persecutors of its members had been publicly tried, found guilty and subjected to punishment under the law. Further, for the first time, the independence of the Faith from its Islamic roots had been clearly established and proclaimed by governmental officials acting on behalf of the state. ... From that time, the Bahā'ī community won all the unfettered rights to practice their religion without restriction and under the government's protection.²⁹

Tumanski's own account of how he first became interested in Baha'is and Baha'i studies is certainly worth citing for its human interest. In the following narrative, note that references to the contemporary 'Babis' (followers of the Bab) actually refers to the 'Baha'is' (followers of Baha'u'llah):

In the summer of 1890, as a student of the Officers' courses under the Educational Department of Oriental Languages, I was required to go to the military training camp. Driven by the desire to practice my colloquial Persian in summer, as well as to get to know the Babis better, I requested that I might be allowed to go to the military training camp in the Transcaspien Region troops instead of the Krasnoye Selo.³⁰ The request was granted as a favor to me, provided that I went there at my own expense.

Much to my regret, I did not tell anybody of my intention to apply myself to Babi studies before my departure, and for this reason I had no opportunity to get acquainted with works by E. G. Browne. Even Baron V. R. Rosen's works became known to me thanks to I. F. Gotvald, whose cordial welcome in Kazan I remember with much appreciation.

The only way in which I can justify myself is that I was not aware of what exactly I was going to meet with in Ashkabad. I had obtained my first information about the Babis from the *Nouvelle Geographie Universelle* by [Jan Elisee] Reclus³¹ at a time when I was yet preparing for the entrance examination at the Oriental Languages courses. It was then that I was amazed by this religious struggle, which is possible in this age – if not in Europe, at least in Asia.

In winter 1889–90, a telegram was published in the newspaper, 'Novoye Vremya', which said that the four Shi'i Persians, who had been condemned to death by hanging by the military tribunal in Ashkabad for murdering a Babi, had their sentence mitigated at the request of the Babis themselves, their death penalty being changed into penal servitude for life. It was then that I decided to go to Ashkabad for the summer and made myself familiar with Prof. Kazembek's book: 'The Bab and the Babis' (SPb. 1865) as my preliminary guide. The reason why I did not tell anybody about my project was my not being sure if my trip would provide anything new in this field or not.

Furthermore, [I was wondering] what kind of Babis I would find in Ashkabad: knowledgeable in their own teaching or not – all this was obscure to me. Therefore I kept silent.

Having arrived in Ashkabad on 29 June 1890, I, without difficulty, became acquainted with the most interesting Babis. Due to their meritorious lifestyle, they [were] accepted by Russians most favorably. Some of the wealthiest Babis are even permanent members of the city public assembly. That is why making their acquaintance was not difficult at all. Seeing my desire to get to know their religious teaching better, three of them were trying to help me in it with eager rivalry³²

Tumanski first arrived in Ashkabad on 29 June 1890 (Julian calendar), which roughly corresponds to the 10–11 July 1890 by the Gregorian calendar. It appears from his letters that, on the whole, he spent six to seven years in the Transcaspien region. Tumanski's sojourn in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, is also noted in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, which states, in part: 'A Russian artillery lieutenant, Alexander Toumansky, having gone to Ashgabat with the object of visiting the Bābi [sic] colony there, has returned to St. Petersburg with many notes, photographs, and manuscripts. Several of the latter are described in the last issue of 'Collections scientifiques de l'institute des langues orientales' at St. Petersburg (Part 2 for 1891)'.³³

Jahangir Dorri notes that Tumanski lived in Central Asia from 1891 to 1895.³⁴ Dorri's date of 1895 should be revised, for Tumanski had traveled to Persia in 1894 – a trip arranged by Baha'is and sanctioned by the Russian authorities – to collect information about the Baha'is in Persia. Dorri, however, states that Tumanski 'made a trip to southern Persia with the purpose of carrying out reconnaissance of routes that lead from the Russian-Persian frontier to the Persian Gulf'.³⁵ Whatever his primary mission may have been, Tumanski left for Persia on 7 March 1894, according to the Julian calendar, which corresponds approximately to 19–20 March 1894. He was accompanied on his trip by his young wife, and his journey to Persia at that time was an adventure. According to Tumanski's correspondence with Rosen, he returned to Ashgabat around December 1895.

Not much is known about Tumanski's subsequent biography. From 1900 to 1905, Tumanski served as Russian vice-consul in Van, Turkey.³⁶ In 1908 and 1909, Tumanski was sent to Persia again. In 1911, he was appointed head of the officers' school of Oriental languages in Tiflis (Tbilisi), under the command of the Headquarters of the Caucasian Military Command. In March 1917, Tumanski retired from military service in at the rank of Major-General.³⁷ He left Russia after the 'October Revolution', when the Bolsheviks took over in 1917. According to Professor Akimushkin of St. Petersburg, Tumanski fled with his family into Turkey.³⁸ Tumanski was not considered by the ruling regime as one deserving notice. While living at Batum, he tried to emigrate to the United States to continue his studies in Arabic history and sought the assistance of American Bahā'īs.³⁹ Tumanski died, in emigration, in the Prince's Islands (near Constantinople). After his death, his widow moved to Belgium. His descendants reside in Belgium.⁴⁰

However, research on Tumanski's secret correspondence regarding his investigations on the Baha'is of Persia has recently come to light.

Tumanski's primary military contact was General Kuropatkin, mentioned above.⁴¹ According to Soli Shahvar, Tumanski sent a 'secret report to General Kuropatkin, which he wrote after the completion of his tour of Iran (from 18 March to 15 November 1894)'.⁴² The secrecy of this information is indirectly attested by Tumanski's contacts with Baha'is in Persia, which were quite extensive,⁴³ although these contacts are nowhere mentioned in his lengthy travelogue.⁴⁴ Shahvar adds that 'Tumanski covered more than 3600 versts (1 verst=1.0668 km=0.6628 miles) on horseback in his tour of Iran'.⁴⁵

While he was in Ashkabad ('Ishqābād) in Russian Turkestan, Tumanski came into close contact with the Baha'i community there and, ever since, was keenly interested in everything concerning the Baha'is. Tumanski was the first to translate the 'The Most Holy Book' (al-Kitāb al-Aqdas, better known by its Persian title, Kitāb-i Aqdas) into a European language (Russian).⁴⁶ In his translation of that preëminent Baha'i text, Tumanski was assisted by the aforementioned Mīrzā Abu'l-Faḍl Gulpāygānī (1844–1914), the greatest Baha'i scholar of the heroic era of the Baha'i Faith. It was in Ashgabat/Ishqabad where Tumanski met and befriended Abu'l-Faḍl.⁴⁷ The latter dedicated a major work of his in honor of Tumanski, 'A Treatise for Alexander Tumanski', in which Abu'l-Faḍl addresses Tumanski as 'My bosom friend'.⁴⁸ Tumanski recounts his first meeting with the celebrated Baha'i savant:

[P. 2/a] The most interesting of all the Babis is my friend whom I met last year, a Samarkand dweller, who came to Ashkabad for the sole purpose of helping me translate the Kitāb-i-Aqdas. [This is] Abu'l-Faḍl-i Gulpāygānī, who is mentioned in the *Tarikh-i Jadid*.⁴⁹

In the Baron Rosen archives is an article by Tumanski – published on 9 July 1892 in the Russian daily newspaper, *Kavkaz* – on the ascension of Baha'u'llah, in which Tumanski gives an unbiased account of the history of the Bahā'ī Faith and calls Bahā'u'llāh 'a prophet':⁵⁰

A report has been received the other day about the death of the Head of the Bābīs and their prophet, which occurred in Akka ... , Syria on 16 May [1892]. This is a remarkable person, who managed to attract about a million followers in different parts of Persia and accorded to Bābīism the peace-loving nature which is now characteristic of the adherents of this religion. This teaching has made a proud Shi'i Persian, who accepts friendship only with his coreligionists and fully turns his back on people of other beliefs (*tabarra' va tavalla*), into a humble person, a Bābī, who considers everybody to be his brother.

Bahā'u'llāh, whose original name was Mīrzā Ḥusayn Nūrī, was born on 1 November 1817. He was a son of Mīrzā Buzurg Nūrī, the former minister (*vazīr*) of Fath Ali Shah. He spent his youth in his father's house, where constantly moving around cultured and educated people he displayed at quite an early age great mental capacity and a wonderful moral mindset.⁵¹

Kavkaz ('The Caucasus') was the official paper of the Caucasus, was published at Tiflis (now Tbilisi) and, as of a decade later in 1912, had a

circulation of about 10,000.⁵² Thus this obituary presumably reached a considerable audience at that time.

Returning to the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī, the Persian text (with its few expressions in Arabic) was published by Tumanski in his 1893 journal article, 'Poslednee slovo Baha-ulli' ('Baha'u'llah's Last Word').⁵³ Along with his Russian translation of that historic document, Tumanski offers an eyewitness account of the response to the news of Baha'u'llah's passing (which took place on 2 Dhi'l-Qa'dih 1309 AH/29 May 1892 CE) in the Baha'i community in Ishqabad, and the reading of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī, providing thereby a valuable contemporary-historical account of the manner in which the provision conferring successorship on 'Abdu'l-Baha was communicated and received in the immediate wake of Baha'u'llah's decease (reverentially referred to by the Baha'i faithful as the 'ascension of Baha'u'llah'). Tumanski's publication of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī in the 1892 volume of ZVORAO (1893) offers an independent attestation of the authenticity and purport of Baha'u'llah's 'Covenant'.

3. Contents of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī and Brief Commentary

In the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī, Baha'u'llah declares that the purpose of his last Will and Testament was not to bequeath 'earthly treasures' (and 'such cares as they entail'), but to perpetuate the 'excellent and priceless Heritage'⁵⁴ that Baha'u'llah had established in his revelation and the religion he founded.

Baha'u'llah's purpose was 'to quench the flame of hate and enmity, that the horizon of the hearts of men may be illumined with the light of concord and attain real peace and tranquillity'.⁵⁵ Exhorting his followers to be noble in word and deed, Baha'u'llah addresses his followers as 'the people of Bahā in the Crimson Book' (*ṣaḥīfī-yi ḥamrā*).⁵⁶ Here, the 'Crimson Book' refers to the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī itself, as Shoghi Effendi (1896–1957, successor to 'Abdu'l-Baha), explains:

Written entirely in His own hand; unsealed, on the ninth day after His ascension in the presence of nine witnesses chosen from amongst His companions and members of His Family; read subsequently, on the afternoon of that same day, before a large company assembled in His Most Holy Tomb, including His sons, some of the Bāb's kinsmen, pilgrims and resident believers, this unique and epoch-making Document, designated by Bahā'u'llāh as His 'Most Great Tablet', and alluded to by Him as the 'Crimson Book' in His 'Epistle to the Son of the Wolf', can find no parallel in the Scriptures of any previous Dispensation, not excluding that of the Bāb Himself. For nowhere in the books pertaining to any of the world's religious systems, not even among the writings of the Author of the Bābī Revelation, do we find any single document establishing a Covenant endowed with an authority comparable to the Covenant which Bahā'u'llāh had Himself instituted.⁵⁷

Abu'l-Faḍl notes that the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī was 'sealed ... with his [Baha'u'llah's] own blessed hand and seal'.⁵⁸ The nature of this 'seal' is somewhat problematic, as will be discussed below.

The 'Crimson Book' is variously used, as it also refers to the Kitāb-i Aqdas, as Baha'u'llah states in the 'Tablet of the World' (Lawḥ-i-Dunyā):

‘Whilst in the Prison of ‘Akkā, We revealed in the Crimson Book (*dar ṣaḥīfā-yi ḥamrā’ dar sijn-i ‘Akkā nāzil shud*) that which is conducive to the advancement of mankind and to the reconstruction of the world’.⁵⁹ But Nader Saiedi sees a wider application of the term, ‘Crimson Book’:

If we examine this statement closely, we can see that while it certainly refers to the principles set forth in the Kitāb-i Aqdas, it can only be understood as a broader reference to the body of Baha’u’llah’s teachings. Baha’u’llah cites five principles from the ‘Crimson Book’, but all five are written in Persian, whereas the Aqdas is in Arabic. The fifth principle, on the utmost importance of agriculture, is not discussed anywhere in the Kitāb-i Aqdas. Like ‘Most Holy Book’, the term ‘Crimson Book’ is sometimes a reference to the entire body of Baha’u’llah’s writings, and sometimes to His Book of the Covenant, as ‘Abdu’l-Baha has testified.⁶⁰

In the Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī, while continuing his theme of the primary purpose of his religion, Baha’u’llah writes: ‘O ye that dwell on earth! The religion of God is for love and Unity; make it not the cause of enmity or dissension’.⁶¹ Kings are acclaimed as the symbols of God’s power and wealth, and prayer ought to be made on their behalf. This statement, of course, should be understood in the context of an era in which most of the world was ruled by monarchs, who held sway as absolute potentates.

Baha’u’llah reiterates the need for unity: ‘Conflict and contention are categorically forbidden in His Book’.⁶² Baha’u’llah then turns from diplomatic authority to spiritual authority by exhorting his followers to ‘aid’ those Baha’i ‘trustees’ designated as the ‘the rulers and the learned among the people of Bahā’,⁶³ who apply the laws and principles of Baha’u’llah enshrined in the ‘Most Holy Book’ (Kitāb-i Aqdas). The ‘rulers’ are understood to be the elected Baha’i councils that oversee and administer the affairs of the Baha’i community, while the ‘learned’ are those who are appointed for the purpose of protection and propagation of the Baha’i Faith.

Baha’u’llah then addresses his sons (‘O ye My Branches!’): ‘A mighty force, a consummate power lieth concealed in the world of being. Fix your gaze upon it and upon its unifying influence, and not upon the differences which appear from it’.⁶⁴ Shoghi Effendi explains that the ‘mighty force’ refers to ‘the power for Unity which the Covenant possesses and radiates’.⁶⁵

In the next passage, cited at the beginning of this article, Baha’u’llah explicitly confers successorship on ‘Abdu’l-Baha. This is certainly the most important pronouncement of the entire text. An early English translation of the Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī was undertaken by Ali-Kuli Khan,⁶⁶ although ‘rather poorly translated from the original’,⁶⁷ according to Shoghi Effendi. The authorized translation of the Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī currently used by Baha’is is by Habib Taherzadeh,⁶⁸ except for the key passage on successorship, earlier translated by Shoghi Effendi:

It is incumbent upon the Aghsān, the Afnān and My kindred to turn, one and all, their faces towards the Most Mighty Branch. Consider that which We have revealed in Our Most Holy Book: ‘When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended, turn your faces toward Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root’. The object of this sacred verse is none other except the Most Mighty Branch [‘Abdu’l-

Bahā]. Thus have We graciously revealed unto you our potent Will, and I am verily the Gracious, the All-Powerful.⁶⁹

After exhorting his sons, and his followers generally, to cultivate an ‘upright character’ and to show forth ‘pure and goodly deeds’,⁷⁰ Baha’u’llah then reinforces his prior emphasis on unity:

Say: O servants! Let not the means of order be made the cause of confusion and the instrument of union an occasion for discord. We fain would hope that the people of Bahā may be guided by the blessed words: ‘Say: all things are of God’. This exalted utterance is like unto water for quenching the fire of hate and enmity which smouldereth within the hearts and breasts of men. By this single utterance contending peoples and kindreds will attain the light of true Unity. Verily He speaketh the truth and leadeth the way. He is the All-Powerful, the Exalted, the Gracious.⁷¹

Baha’u’llah tells his readers to respect his sons and family, as well as the relatives of the Bab. Such courtesy and respect conduces to unity within the Baha’i community. With regard to the world at large, Baha’u’llah writes: ‘We further admonish you to serve all nations and to strive for the betterment of the world’.⁷² Baha’u’llah closes in stating that his revelation and laws are ‘conducive to the regeneration of the world and the salvation of the peoples and kindreds of the earth’.⁷³ This ‘salvation’ is both individual and collective salvation.

4. Eyewitness Account of the Reading of the Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī, 1892

How was the death of Baha’u’llah communicated to the surrounding Baha’i communities? The Baha’i community of Ishqabad affords an example of what probably occurred in many other Baha’i communities in the Near and Middle East at this time.⁷⁴ As mentioned, Tumanski first met the Baha’is of Ishqabad in 1890, and maintained friendly relations with them throughout the remainder of his life. It was natural that he would be informed of Baha’u’llah’s decease and be invited to the meeting of the Baha’is in Ishqabad, at which the announcement was made. Tumanski recounts:

Baha’u’llah’s Last Word

On June 24 this year [1892], the news of Baha’u’llah’s passing in the morning of May 16 [1892] was received in Ashkabad. In the evening of June 24, Mirza Abdu’l-Karim, with whom the readers of these Memoirs are familiar, came to my place and announced that آن حضرت صعود فرموده [*ān ḥadrat ṣu’ūd farmūdiḥ*, ‘His Holiness hath ascended’] and that the title of the Head of the Babis belongs presently to ‘Abbās Effendī, Ghuṣn-i A’zam (غصن اعظم). An emergency meeting of the Babis was called for Friday evening, June 26 [1892], of which they [the Babis], in accordance with the police regulations, duly informed the police in Ashkabad. Certainly, I also received an invitation.

The Babis own a small quarter on the Marw prospect in Ashkabad which is known among them as زمین اعظم [*zamīn-i A’zam*, ‘A’zam’s Land’].⁷⁵ In the middle of the quarter there rise the burnt brick walls of the yet incomplete Prayer House,

‘Mashriq al-Adhkār’ مشرق الاذكار. Right in front of it, there is a pretty, large water pool and a newly-built garden, yet lacking in shade. The Prayer House is surrounded by the houses of more important (lit. ‘influential’) Babis of Ashkabad.

As soon as I went in there, I found almost all the Babis of Ashkabad gathered. All of them had a very mournful look, some were even tear-eyed. Besides, the news of another death (this time in Bukhara) had arrived on the same day – namely that of the death of Fāḍil فاضل,⁷⁶ an outstanding Babi, who was a companion of the Bab himself, and who had moved from Tehran to Ashkabad with his nephew – Shaykh Muḥammad-‘Alī about three months before. He intended to settle in Ashkabad for good, but two or three weeks ago happened to go to Bukhara on a business trip together with my co-translator of the Kitāb-i Aqdas – Mīrzā Abu’l-Faḍl-i Gulpāygānī.

After a normal exchange of greetings and questions about each other’s health accompanied by bows and turning the eyes in a special way, there began, in ‘the most beautiful tuneful way’ (باحسن الالحان [bi-aḥsan al-alḥān]) the reading of Baha’u’llah’s Will – ‘The Book of my Testament’ (كتاب عهدی [Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī]) presented below in the original from a transcript sent from Akka, and in [a Russian] translation. It was being read out by the above young man – Shaykh Muḥammad-‘Alī. When he finished reading, there ensued a long silence that was not broken by anybody except for the exclamations واہ [vāh] and يا الله [yā Allāh].

After a short break during which tea, the *qalyan* [smoking pipe] and cigars were served, the Shaykh started to recite the eulogy written specially on this occasion. These verses, which I quote below, belong to a poet who is even more highly honored than Nabil, Rouha and Rouhani,⁷⁷ etc., namely to ‘Andalib, whose real name is Ali-Ashraf Lahijani على اشرف لاهيجاني.

The evening party ended in eating the *pilau* [rice], which was set [sic, not served!] in the balcony of one of the houses surrounding the Prayer House, and partly in the garden. By the way, most Babis, despite the decree of the Kitāb-i Aqdas, were eating with their hands, and only those few ones who bore me company were using spoons, forks and knives. Perhaps, the habit is stronger than كلمه عليا [kalimih-yi ‘ulyā] ‘The Loftiest Word’ (of Baha’u’llah).⁷⁸

Tumanski describes ‘Fāḍil’ (Nabīl-i Akbar),⁷⁹ the news of whose death, according to Tumanski, was received by the Baha’is of Ashgabat on the same day as the news of the ascension of Baha’u’llah. Tumanski characterizes Nabīl-i Akbar as ‘one of the most prominent Babi figures, who was an associate of the Bab himself’.⁸⁰ Nabīl-i Akbar’s nephew was Shaykh Muḥammad-‘Alī Qā’inī (1860–1924), later designated as one of the nineteen ‘Apostles of Baha’u’llah’.⁸¹

Baron Rosen had asked Tumanski to present his own account of the succession issue. This is an extract from Tumanski’s reply:

They (Baha’i pilgrims from Ashgabat who had gone to Akka) arrived at Akka five days before the passing of حضرت (ḥaḍrat, i.e. Baha’u’llah) and stayed the whole time there. According to them, there has been no discord between the Aghsān (i.e. Baha’u’llah’s sons) nor could there be any discord, for the order of the succession to the عرش (‘arsh, ‘throne’, i.e. Baha’u’llah) is firmly set in both the كتاب اقدس (Kitāb-i Aqdas) and in the Will and Testament. The first days



Figure 2: Mullā Muḥammad-i Qā'inī, known as Nabīl-i Akbar (1829–1892). In 1890, he played a key role in establishing the Ashgabat Baha'i community. News of his death reached those Baha'is on the same day as news of Baha'u'llah's ascension. The nephew of Nabīl-i Akbar, Shaykh Muḥammad-'Alī Qā'inī (1860–1924), read aloud the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī and 'Andalīb's poetic eulogy of Bahā'u'llāh to the Bahā'īs of Ashgabat on Friday evening, 26 June 1892. Both were later designated one of nineteen 'Apostles of Baha'u'llah', Nabīl-i Akbar was also honored as a 'Hand of the Cause of God'. Source: Baha'i Media Bank. Courtesy of the Baha'i International Community, Haifa, Israel.

following Baha'u'llah's death, all the Babis (i.e. Baha'is) held fast to the ordinances of the كتاب اقدس (Kitāb-i Aqdas) and finally on the ninth day gathered in the قصر (qasr, i.e. 'mansion' of Bahji), where 'Abbas Effendi unsealed in their presence the envelope, sealed with Baha'u'llah's seal, pulling out of it the كتاب عهدي (Kitāb-i 'Ahdī) and handed it to Baha'u'llah's nephew, Majdu'ddin, to read it. In addition, the Babis use the family upbringing and the existing relations between its members as a proof that no discord would be possible [among them]. Muḥammad-'Alī was in full harmony with the rest of the family members during the whole time they were in Akka.⁸²

Tumanski's accounts of the news of Baha'u'llah's ascension, together with the designation of 'Abdu'l-Baha as successor and new leader of the Baha'i community, was followed by Tumanski's publication and translation of the Kitāb 'Ahdī.

5. The St. Petersburg Edition of the Kitāb 'Ahdī

In the co-author Youli Ioannesyan's recent book,⁸³ there are two passages in Tumanski's correspondence with Baron Viktor Romanovich Rosen related

to Tumanski's endeavor to publish the Will and Testament of Baha'u'llah, and Ioannesyan's footnoted comments on them:

Dear Viktor Romanovich,

[The inevitable] has finally occurred! The page has turned over آن حضرت صعود فرموده [ān ḥadrat su'ūd farmūdiḥ].⁸⁴ 'Baha'u'llah has died'. These are the words in which the Babī of Ashkabad informed me of the passing of Behā. The news of his death which transpired in Bahji, in his قصر [qaṣr]⁸⁵ near Akka on the morning of 16 May, according to the old calendar, did not arrive in Ashkabad until 24 June. No letters, no telegrams; *tout cour*⁸⁶ the Will and Testament and the مرثیه [marthiyyih]⁸⁷ of the [Baha'i poet] 'Andalib,⁸⁸ enclosed [in this letter], were [P. 5/b] sent. I will send their translation and a brief introduction / in the next outgoing post. If there is a chance to publish them in the *Zapiski*, don't say no.⁸⁹

Tumanski does not disclose the identity of the person who told him of Baha'u'llah's passing, in the words quoted, in Persian, in Tumanski's letter, dated 3 July 1892, to Baron Rosen.⁹⁰

Baron Rosen subsequently edited and published Tumanski's article on the Will and Testament of Baha'u'llah, which comprises the Persian original text under the title: Kitāb-i 'Ahdī ('The Book of My Covenant'), with a Russian translation.⁹¹ In this publication, Tumanski also presents, in full, the mournful elegy composed by the celebrated Baha'i poet, 'Andalib (d. 1920) – in the original Persian with Tumanski's own Russian translation – which he mentions in the letter above⁹² and explains that 'Andalib is the title of the most venerable poet, Mīrzā 'Alī-Ashraf-i Lāhījānī,⁹³ It is interesting to note that Tumanski had personally met 'Andalib in Ashgabat.

Tumanski published the text of 'Andalib's poem of 31 couplets⁹⁴ – which is at once, a lament of the loss of Baha'u'llah and a eulogy of his greatness – and provides a Russian translation.⁹⁵ A well-executed translation into English was undertaken by Ahang Rabbani, who introduces this eulogy in saying that 'Andalīb 'composed the following eyewitness account of Bahā'u'llāh's passing':

He is the All-Powerful, the All-Mighty, the Beloved.

1. Oh, in life's cup the wine-pourer of the feast of decree
Poured life-ending venom instead of spirit-elating wine.
2. For every ache there is a remedy, for every trouble a solution,
Oh, for this remediless ache and this balmless trouble.
3. The eye of creation was stunned, the world's heart darkened,
Heart's orchard was withered, the nightingale of life silenced.
4. From this loss, the pillars of existence were dismantled,
From this loss, the eternal throne was crushed.
5. The waves of the surging Sea of Grace were stilled; instead,
Waves of grief's ocean gushed in the hearts and souls of the near ones.
6. The banner of the Most Excellent Names fell to the dust,
The lamentation of God's Party was raised to the high heavens.

7. The One by Whose Manifestation the Day of Resurrection dawned upon the world,
By the setting of His sun a commotion made the world to quake.
8. The One Who in the Sinai of nearness called, 'Behold, and thou shalt see',
Dismayed many a Moses by His roar, 'Never shalt thou behold'.
9. The Most Mighty Ocean sunk its Ruby Ship,
Whence a tempest of tears descended from the eyes of Noah.
10. Thus was the king of the visible world established upon the placeless throne,
Thus the Sun-like countenance became hid in the West of the eternal Holiness.
11. The ear was deprived of the song of the Nightingale of Paradise,
The eye was forbid the effulgence of the Sun-like countenance.
12. For nineteen days that heavenly Beauty was bed-ridden,
At the dawn of Saturday, second of Dhi'l-Qa'dah, He was veiled from us.
13. It was the sixteenth of the Roman month of Ayar,
It was the thirteenth of the month of 'Azamat.
14. Of the Persian Naw-Rúz, seventy days had passed,
And of the Migration, one thousand three hundred and nine years elapsed.
15. Then it was this tragedy occurred, this loss appeared,
And the phrase 'Verily the Lord was hidden' became the mark of this tragedy.
16. With mine own eyes did I behold the clear morn of the Day of Resurrection,
As it surrounded the entire the land of 'Akkā.
17. As for the funeral 'Akkā's population entire, low and noble,
Gathered in Bahjī to express their faithfulness.
18. The Persian believers lamented fate's unchangeable decree,
And the native Arabs cried out, 'Oh our Lord, Oh our Lord!'
19. For the washing of the Sacred Body in the haram, the Most Mighty Branch
Stood at service solely out of His patience, resignation, and acquiescence.
20. His Holiness God's Most Mighty Branch spoke to the friends compassionately,
With a speech eloquent and enchanting.
21. No one should be disturbed since God has said,
In His Kitāb-i Aqdas for all creation:
22. O people, when the Sun of My Beauty has set,
And My heavenly Temple is hidden from all eyes,
23. All must arise for the triumph of My Cause,
Remain assured and raise its banner the world over.
24. There was a wisdom in My Manifestation, and a wisdom also in My disappearance,
None will this wisdom comprehend save God Himself.
25. Therefore must we become united in His Cause's spread,
We must become United both in outward seeming and within our hearts.
26. For teaching and triumph of the Faith we must be as one body,
Instill a new spirit by this Call into the temple of the world.

27. Eleven were the Disciples of Jesus Christ;
After the passing of God's Spirit, they gave healing to world's dwellers.
28. Praised be God at present our number is several thousand,
All enlightened by the effulgence and the Writings of Bahā'.
29. Thanks be God's that we are all beneath the Most Mighty Branch's
shade,
The Branch of that Ancient Stock and the wave of that Ocean of Grace.
30. Remain constant and assured in this mighty Cause,
Patient in this tragedy, thankful in adversity.
31. 'Andalīb regrets that ere this tragedy struck,
He did not drink a cup borne by death's angel!⁹⁶

This eulogy presents evidence that, in its very form, is rather unique. For, in this particular circumstance, poetry is a historical source, since 'Andalīb was an eyewitness to the events that he describes in his poem on the ascension of Baha'u'llah, as Ḥabīb Allāh Afnān (1875–1951) confirms:

In the year AH 1309 [1891] 'Andalīb, in the company of that illumined sage Ḥājī Abū'l-Ḥasan [Bazzāz], ... journeyed to the Holy Land to attain the sacred presence [of Baha'u'llah]. In the month of Sha'bān [1–29 March 1892], he arrived in 'Akkā where he tarried for some two months and where this servant met him and the aforementioned Ḥājī. While they sojourned in the Holy Land, the most great calamity of the Ascension of the Blessed Perfection occurred.⁹⁷

As previously indicated, 'Andalīb is the *nom de plume* (sobriquet, pen name) of Mīrzā 'Alī-Ashraf of Lāhījān.⁹⁸ 'Andalīb had met E. G. Browne in Yazd, during the latter's sojourn in Persia. Browne recounts, in some detail, what may be called, using contemporary Baha'i parlance, the first recorded Baha'i 'fireside'.⁹⁹ A Baha'i 'fireside' is an occasion where information about the Baha'i religion and its truth-claims is communicated to a 'seeker', i.e. someone who is seriously inquiring about this Faith. At the end of this meeting ground, recalls: 'As we were leaving the garden he took me by the hand and besought me to go to Acre ['Akkā] and see Beha for myself. "How noble a work might be yours", he said, "if you could become assured of the truth of his claim, in spreading the good news through your country!"¹⁰⁰ This Browne did, in 1890.¹⁰¹ 'Andalīb had also composed a pamphlet for Browne, setting forth Christian proofs of Baha'u'llah's truth claims – a fact noted by a contemporary Christian missionary.¹⁰²

In couplet #31a, the date of May 16, 1892 for Baha'u'llah's death is given: 'It was the sixteenth of the Roman month of Ayar'. How is this to be reconciled with the universally accepted date of May 29, 1992? The answer is that May 16 is the date according to the Julian calendar (which was used in pre-revolutionary Russia). The difference between the Julian and the Gregorian calendars at that time was about 13 days. The original word here, in Persian, is 'Rumīyān'. So, a more exact translation would be 'the 16th day of the month of the Greeks'. For 'Rum' meant the 'Eastern Roman Empire', i.e. Byzantium (the name given to both state and culture of the Eastern Roman Empire in the middle ages), in which Greek was the *lingua franca*. Consequently, 'Rumi', for Persians, Arabs and Turks, implied

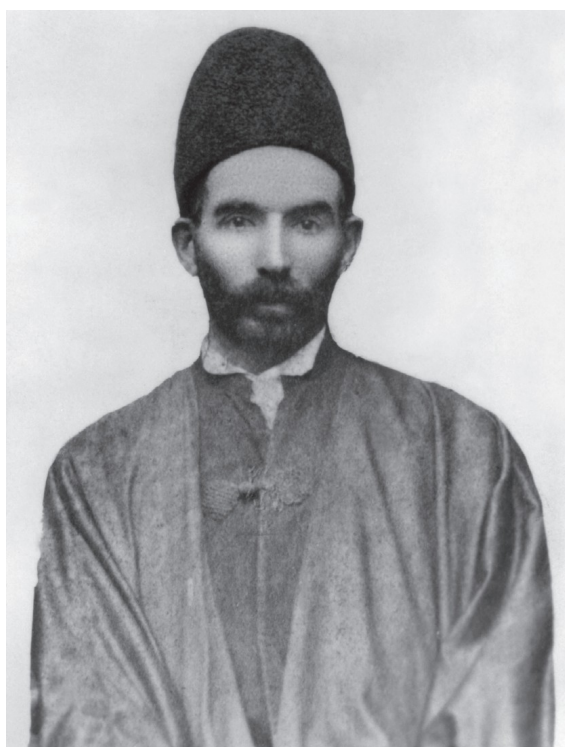


Figure 3: The celebrated Baha'i poet, 'Andalib, who was an eyewitness to the events surrounding Baha'u'llah's ascension. Undated photograph. Source: Baha'i Media Bank. Courtesy of the Baha'i International Community, Haifa, Israel.

'Greek', not 'Roman', in the modern European sense. The Greek month here must imply the Julian calendar month. Thus Tumanski translates the phrase in the poem as: 'It was the sixteenth day of the month of the Greeks, namely, of May'.¹⁰³

The dates can be reconciled by adding the 13-day difference between the Julian and Gregorian calendars: 16 May 1892 (Julian calendar) plus 13 days converts to 29 May 1892 (Gregorian calendar). Tumanski, throughout all his correspondence with Rosen, uses the Julian calendar, which was the official Russian calendar of the time. That 16 May 1892 is confirmed by Tumanski in his letter to Baron Rosen: 'The news of his death which transpired in Bahji ... near Akka on the morning of 16 May, according to the old calendar'.¹⁰⁴

It is noteworthy that, in his funeral oration at the Baha'u'llah's funeral, as recounted by 'Andalib, 'Abdu'l-Baha recites a passage from the Kitāb-i Aqdas, but does not declare the successorship provision of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī, of the contents of which were disclosed on the ninth day following Baha'u'llah's the ascension. Evidently, wisdom dictated that the announcement of Baha'u'llah's designation of 'Abdu'l-Baha as successor was judiciously postponed, so as not to divert the focus from Baha'u'llah to 'Abdu'l-Baha during this period of grief and mourning. As to the succession provision of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī itself, the poet provides an independent, eyewitness attestation in verse 29: 'Thanks be God's that we are all beneath the Most Mighty

Branch's ['Abdu'l-Baha's] shade / The Branch of that Ancient Stock and the wave of that Ocean of Grace'.

A brief comparison of Tumanski's text and the received text follows.

6. The Original Manuscript of the of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī and the *Textus Receptus*

The original manuscript of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī is preserved in the archives at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa. A facsimile of this holograph (i.e. a manuscript handwritten by the person named as its author), penned in Baha'u'llah's own hand, has not yet been published. Shoghi Effendi gives this description of the original manuscript:

The 'Kitāb-i-'Ahd' is, as you know, Bahā'u'llāh's 'Book of Covenant'. It is entirely written in His own handwriting. And in the light of the objections raised by some of the believers concerning the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahā, it is highly significant to note that this Book of Covenant of Bahā'u'llāh bears neither signature, nor seal, nor any date. It was shown to the believers, and was read in their presence nine days after Bahā'u'llāh's ascension. The manuscript was in the possession of 'Abdu'l-Bahā all through His ministry, and after His passing it was found enclosed in His own will. These two precious documents, namely the book of Covenant of Bahā'u'llāh and the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahā have both been carefully preserved and are now in the possession of the Guardian.¹⁰⁵

This meeting took place in Baha'u'llah's tomb, on 7 June 1892.¹⁰⁶ Previously, it was related that the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī was 'unsealed'. This apparent contradiction is resolved by understanding that Shoghi Effendi's statement that this document bore no 'seal' most likely refers to Baha'u'llah's customary practice of affixing one of a number of special seals that variously identified Baha'u'llah as the author.

According to Baha'u'llah's granddaughter, Tuba Khanum, daughter of 'Abdu'l-Baha, 'The Master sent to 'Akka for the box in which the Will of Baha'u'llah had been locked up for two years'.¹⁰⁷ This approximate period of 'two years' finds corroborating evidence in this oblique reference in the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*— Baha'u'llah's last major work: 'A word hath, likewise, been written down and recorded by the Pen of the Most High in the Crimson Book which is capable of fully disclosing that force which is hid in men, nay of redoubling its potency'.¹⁰⁸ Shoghi Effendi explains that the 'Crimson Book' here alludes to the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī,¹⁰⁹ and that the force that is hidden and man is 'the power for Unity which the Covenant possesses and radiates'.¹¹⁰

This identification has been confirmed by subsequent scholarship. According to the most recently published research (in German), Armin Eschraghi argues that, despite the fact that the term in question sometimes has a broader reference, 'Crimson Book', as it occurs in paragraph 57 of the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, is definitely a specific reference to the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī.¹¹¹ Eschraghi argues that the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* was completed at some time between March and July 1891.¹¹² Therefore the best hypothesis is that the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī was written sometime during the years 1890–1891.

Perhaps the fullest study of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī, prior to the present article, was published (in Persian) by Shapour Rassekh, a respected academic

and Baha'i scholar.¹¹³ Rassekh cites another Baha'i scholar, Asadullah Fadil Mazindarani, who reports that Baha'u'llah 'wrote and handed it [the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī] to His Holiness Abdu'l-Baha forty days before He [Baha'u'llah] was seized with fever [of which] His confidants/kindred knew'.¹¹⁴ Rassekh, further relying on Fadil Mazindarani, relates that Kitāb-i 'Ahdī 'was read out by Ghuṣṣn-i A'ẓam ['Abdu'l-Baha] to a group of believers nine (9) days after His [Baha'u'llah's] ascension'.¹¹⁵ Rassekh's point is perfectly in line with Shoghi Effendi's statement that the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī was read aloud 'on the ninth day after His ascension'.¹¹⁶ Another Baha'i scholar, Shahrokh Monjazez, states that this holographic (handwritten) Will and Testament was 'sealed away in a special box', which was entrusted to 'Abdu'l-Baha, who 'arranged for its public disclosure' nine days after the ascension (just as Rassekh, citing Fadil Mazindarani, has said).¹¹⁷

On the morning of the ninth day, the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī was unsealed and read aloud by Āqā Riḍā-yi-Qannād (a faithful companion who accompanied of Bahā'u'llāh in the latter's exile to 'Akkā) – not by 'Abdu'l-Baha – before nine witnesses chosen from among Bahā'u'llāh's family and companions. Later that same day, the Will was read again, this time by Bahā'u'llāh's treacherous nephew, Mīrzā Majdi'd-Dīn (who, although son of Bahā'u'llāh's faithful brother, Mīrzā Mūsā, soon sided with Muḥammad-'Alī in opposing 'Abdu'l-Baha as rightful successor) before a company of resident believers and pilgrims in the Shrine of Bahā'u'llāh in the mansion at Bahji, Palestine (now Israel).¹¹⁸ Here, Monjazez apparently relies on Adib Taherzadeh (who based his narrative on Nabil's unpublished account) who recounts:

On the morning of the ninth day after the ascension, in the presence of nine witnesses chosen from amongst members of His family and friends, this document in Baha'u'llah's own handwriting was read aloud by Āqā Riḍā-yi Qannād, and in the afternoon of the same day it was read again by Mīrzā Majdi'd-Dīn in the Holy Tomb in the presence of a large number of friends.¹¹⁹

Baha'i doctrine distinguishes between the 'Lesser Covenant' (which Dr. Rassekh explains is 'like the one related to the obedience of the Baha'is towards His Holiness Abdu'l-Baha') and the 'Greater Covenant' that is 'concluded between the One True [God], the Manifestation of His Will and the World of Creation'. Interestingly, Dr. Rassekh states that the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī relates to both the 'Greater Covenant' as well as the 'Lesser Covenant', in that 'it should be born in mind that the Book of My Covenant also covers the Greater Covenant'.¹²⁰ Rassekh elaborates on how the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī relates to the Greater Covenant and expatiates on several kinds of 'covenant' that Baha'u'llah 'concluded with his believers'.¹²¹ On the succession provision, Dr. Rassekh elucidates the purport of the metaphorical phrase of in the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī successorship provision, i.e. 'turn, one and all, their faces towards the Most Mighty Branch' ['Abdu'l-Baha], by invoking a different phrase in the Kitāb-i Aqdas that has the same purport:

The meaning of 'turn your faces towards him': Baha'u'llah referring to Ghuṣṣn-i A'ẓam on one occasion uses the term: باو ناظر باشيد and on another phrases it as: توجهوا اليه.¹²² We know that both these expressions served as a pretext for covenant-breakers to misinterpret [the words] from which they inferred [the

meaning of] ‘attending to’ and ‘observation’. Luckily, the Kitāb-i Aqdas leaves no room for doubt as to the meaning of ‘gazing upon’ and ‘turning faces towards’ as it says: ‘O people of the world! When the Mystic Dove will have winged its flight from its Sanctuary of Praise and sought its far-off goal, its hidden habitation, refer ye whatsoever ye understand not in the Book to Him Who hath branched from this mighty Stock’.¹²³ Consequently, ‘gazing upon’ and ‘turning faces towards’ mean referring to the Center of the Covenant as the authoritative Interpreter of the Word of God.¹²⁴

Of course, not only is ‘Abdu’l-Baha regarded as the unerring interpreter of Baha’u’llah’s laws and teachings, but, in being named as Baha’u’llah’s successor in both the Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī and Kitāb-i Aqdas, oversaw the affairs of the entire Baha’i community, serving also as the ‘Perfect Exemplar’ of Baha’i virtues.

The Persian and Arabic text of the *textus receptus* is available online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/TB/tb-15.html>. As for its publication history, the text was privately published in Tehran (no date).¹²⁵ In America, the Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī was published in the Persian section, the *Najm-i Bākhhtar*, of the Baha’i serial, *Star of the West*, in 1920.¹²⁶ That same year, the Tablet was printed in Cairo in 1920.¹²⁷

7. Textual Variants Between the St. Petersburg Edition of the Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī and the *Textus Receptus*

Browne’s own account of how he first learned of Baha’u’llah’s death – when he received news practically simultaneously from the Baha’is of ‘Akka and from his Azali contact in Constantinople – is recounted as follows:

DEATH OF BEHĀ’U’LLĀH

Within the last few weeks[,] news of the death of Behā’u’llāh has reached me. I have not been able to ascertain the date of his decease, but of the fact itself there is no doubt, for it is confirmed by a letter written from Acre [‘Akka] by his son, Mīrzā Badā’u’llāh, and dated Zī’l-Ķa’da 29th, A.H. 1309 (June 25th, A.D. 1892). A portion of the letter I will here cite, with translation.¹²⁸

Strangely, the text of the letter that Browne translated is silent on the succession. Browne further comments that the very ‘same news reached me on the same day from my Ezelī [Azalī] correspondent in Constantinople’, in words that Browne characterizes as a ‘laconic announcement of Behā’s death’. Browne then relates that his Azalī contact reported that ‘disputes had already arisen between two of Behā’u’llāh’s sons, ‘Abbās Efendī [sic] and Mīrzā Muḥammad ‘Alī, as to the succession’, and that ‘Ākā Mīrzā Ākā Jān, Behā’s amanuensis and special attendant, had given his support to the latter’.¹²⁹ In the same vein, in a letter dated 19 July 1892, Browne wrote privately to Rosen:

Have you heard that Behā is dead? I received the announcement simultaneously from one of his sons and from an Ezelī at Constantinople, so there seems to be no doubt about it. The Ezelī added that differences had already arisen about the succession between ‘Abbās Efendī (sic) and his brother Muḥammad ‘Alī, the candidature of the latter being supported by Ākā Mīrzā

Ākā Jān. Another schism would be a more fatal thing to the Bābī cause, but this ... may be a mere canard.¹³⁰

It was no canard. Muḥammad-‘Alī’s challenge to Abdu’l-Baha’s authority was real. In 1893, as mentioned, Tumanski published the Persian text of his manuscript of the Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī, given to him by an undisclosed Baha’i, presumably from Ashgabat. The original manuscript, unfortunately, is no longer extant. As Browne himself notes, prior to Tumanski’s publication of the Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī in ZVORAO, Baron Rosen had written to Browne, informing him of the death of Baha’u’llah, which Rosen had learned of from Tumanski by the latter’s letter. Rosen enclosed the Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī, along with ‘Andalīb’s eulogy:

I learn from Baron Rosen that a short paragraph announcing the death of Behā’u’llāh [sic] appeared in the Russian newspaper called *Le Caucase*, published at Tiflis; and that the news was also conveyed to him by Lieutenant Toumansky [sic] in a private letter, in which were enclosed copies of Behā’u’llāh’s [sic] testamentary dispositions (کتاب عهدی [Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī]) and an elegy on his death by the Bābī poet, ‘Andalīb (Mīrzā ‘Alī-Ashraf of Lāhījān). Baron Rosen adds that Behī [sic] died on May 16 of this year (1892), but that the news of his decease did not reach ‘Ishkābād until July 5th. The interesting documents forwarded by Lieutenant Toumansky [sic] are to appear in *Zapissky* [sic].¹³¹

Rosen’s letter to Browne is confirmed by Browne himself: ‘I must thank you very sincerely for the very interesting document you sent me, viz., the کتاب عهدی (which I had not previously seen), and the poems on Beha’s death’.¹³² Here, Browne discloses that Tumanski sent Rosen a copy of the Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī and ‘Andalīb’s elegy, for editing and publication in *Zapiski*. Upon close collation and comparison, it was found that Tumanski’s text is practically identical with the received text,¹³³ with a few minor variants, the most significant of which may be listed as follows:

Variant #1

a. Official Baha’i version (*textus receptus*, based on the Haifa original):

وانجم او اخلاق منیره مضیئه
(*va anjum-i ū akhlāq-i munīri-yi muḍi’ih*).

This phrase is officially translated as, ‘and his shining and resplendent character its stars’, with the translation of the full sentence as follows: ‘In the eyes of the All-Merciful a true man appeareth even as a firmament; its sun and moon are his sight and hearing, and his shining and resplendent character its stars’.¹³⁴

b. Tumanski’s version:

وانجم او اخلاق میزه مضیئه
(*va anjum-i ū akhlāq-i mīziy-yi muḍi’ih*).¹³⁵

In Tumanski’s version, the word corresponding to the word in the *textus receptus*, i.e. منیره *munīrih*, is میزه *mīzih*.¹³⁶ The word منیره *munīrih* means ‘shining’, while میزه *mīzih* denotes: ‘The act of putting, or setting apart, away, or aside; of removing, or separating’.¹³⁷ Thus Tumanski’s variant, *mīzih*, would alter

the translation of the phrase to ‘and his shining and distinctive character its stars’ – where the pronomial ‘this’ is omitted. Here, the variant, ‘distinctive’ (*mīzih*), does not significantly alter the meaning of the phrase.

Variant #2

a. Official Baha’i version (*textus receptus*, based on the Haifa original):

مقصود این مظلوم از حمل شدائد و بلايا و انزال آیات و اظهار بیّنات اخمد نار ضغینه و بغضا بوده
(*maqṣūd-i īn maẓlūm az ḥaml-i shadā’id va balāyā va inzāl-i āyāt va izhār-i bayyināt ikhmād-i nār-i ḍaghīnih va baḡḥdā būdih*).

This text is officially translated as: ‘The aim of this Wronged One in sustaining woes and tribulations, in revealing the Holy Verses and in demonstrating proofs hath been naught but to quench the flame of hate and enmity ...’, with the rest of the sentence rendered as ‘... that the horizon of the hearts of men may be illumined with the light of concord and attain real peace and tranquillity’.¹³⁸

b. Tumanski’s version:

مقصود این مظلوم را از حمل شدائد و بلايا و انزال آیات و اظهار بیّنات اخمد نار ضغینه و بغضا بوده
(*maqṣūd-i īn maẓlūm-rā az ḥaml-i shadā’id va balāyā va inzāl-i āyāt va izhār-i bayyināt ikhmād-i nār-i ḍaghīnih va baḡḥdā būdih*).¹³⁹

Tumanski’s Russian translation, rendered into English, is as follows: ‘The aim of this Oppressed One was to quench the fire of hatred and malice, sustaining afflictions and tribulations, sending down the verses and bringing forth “convincing arguments”’.¹⁴⁰ The difference between Tumanski’s variant and the Baha’i *textus receptus* consists in the employment of the particle *-rā* after *maẓlūm*, ‘Wronged/Oppressed One’ in Tumanski’s version, which is a purely grammatical marker that does not affect the meaning of the phrase in any way.

Variant #3

a. Official Baha’i version (*textus receptus*, based on the Haifa original):

و از افق لوح الهی نیر این بیان لائح و مشرق
(*va az ufūq-i lawḥ-i ilāhī nayyir-i īn bayān lā’ih va mushriq*).

This text is officially translated as ‘From the dawning-place of the divine Tablet the day-star of this (*īn*) utterance shineth resplendent ...’, with the rest of the sentence as ‘... and it behoveth everyone to fix his gaze upon it’.¹⁴¹

b. Tumanski’s version:

و از افق لوح الهی نیر بیان لائح و مشرق
(*va az ufūq-i lawḥ-i ilāhī nayyir-i bayān lā’ih va mushriq*).¹⁴²

Tumanski translates this passage so: ‘And from the horizon of the Tablet of God the Day-Star of “utterance” is sparkling and shining’.¹⁴³ Here, Tumanski’s text is missing the word ‘this’ (*īn*). It would alter the translation as follows: ‘From the dawning-place of the divine Tablet the day-star of utterance shineth resplendent ...’. While the omission of the word ‘this’ is awkward, it does not alter the purport of this phrase.

Variant #4

a. Official Baha'i version (*textus receptus*, based on the Haifa original):

مذهب الهی از برای محبت و اتحاد است او را سبب عداوت و اختلاف ننمایید
 (*madhhab-i ilāhī az barā-yi muḥabbat va ittiḥād ast ū-rā sabab-i 'adāvat va ikhtilāf manamāyīd*).

Authorized translation: 'The religion of God is for love and Unity; make it not the cause of enmity (*'adāvat*) or dissension'.

b. Tumanski's version:

مذهب الهی از برای محبت و اتحاد است او را سبب اختلاف ننمایید
 (*madhhab-i ilāhī az barāyi muḥabbat va ittiḥād ast ū-rā sabab-i ikhtilāf manamāyīd*).¹⁴⁴

Tumanski's Russian translation, rendered into English, is as follows: 'The divine religion is intended for love and unity; make it not the cause of dissension'.¹⁴⁵ Here, Tumanski's text is missing the words 'enmity and' (*'adāvat va*).¹⁴⁶ It would alter the translation as follows: 'The religion of God is for love and unity; make it not the cause of dissension'. Thus, the difference between the variants consists in the omission of the word *'adāvat*, 'enmity', in Tumanski's version, both in the Persian original and his Russian translation.

The close agreement of these two exemplars of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī is significant in that they go far in establishing, beyond a shadow of a doubt, the exact text of the all-important successorship section.

8. The Cambridge Manuscript of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī in the E. G. Browne Collection

An important manuscript of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī is archived in the E. G. Browne Collection at Cambridge. Co-author Christopher Buck ordered this manuscript from Near and Middle Eastern Department, Manuscripts and Printed Collections, Cambridge University Library, and a high-resolution, color digital scan was available for download on January 22, 2013.¹⁴⁷ The Cambridge manuscript of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī has been assigned the 'class-mark' of F. 25, and the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī itself appears on folio 370 verso and 371 recto of F. 25(9), Manuscript 8 (listed as 'Kitābu 'Ahdī') of the E. G. Browne Collection.¹⁴⁸ It is an original manuscript.

The present writers soon recognized what appeared to be the distinctive hand of Mullā Zayn al-Ābidīn, surnamed Zayn al-Muqarrabīn, and sought confirmation from experts that this was indeed the case. The manuscript is definitely in the handwriting of Zayn al-Muqarrabīn. What is most distinctive about the penmanship of Zayn al-Muqarrabīn is that the text is elegantly simple and clear clearly written in the naskh script. The presumed date of the manuscript (1892) matches as well, for it is known that Zayn al-Muqarrabīn resided in 'Akka beginning in 1886. Previously Zayn al-Muqarrabīn had copied *A Traveller's Narrative*, which was given to Browne during his visit to 'Akka in 1890, along with a manuscript of the Kitāb-i Īqān, also in Zayn's hand.¹⁴⁹ Since Zayn al-Muqarrabīn routinely wrote colophons for longer works only, the Cambridge manuscript of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī is

therefore without a colophon. While it was Zayn al-Muqarrabīn's practice to end a 'book' (*kitāb*) with a colophon – as he did with the over 50 copies of the Kitāb-i Īqān, Kitāb-i Aqdas, Kitāb-i Mubīn, etc. – he did not do so with the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī because it was not really a 'book' as such, notwithstanding its name, the 'Book of My Covenant' (Kitāb-i 'Ahdī).¹⁵⁰

In *Memorials of the Faithful*, 'Abdu'l-Baha writes that Zayn al-Muqarrabīn 'busied himself with writing down the sacred verses, ... taking down the Bahā'ī Scriptures with faultless care'.¹⁵¹ The original Persian says, '*kutub va alvāḥ bih kamāl-i diqqat ṣaḥīḥ marqūm mīnimūd*', literally, 'He would transcribe the Books and Tablets correctly, with utmost precision'.¹⁵² The word *ṣaḥīḥ* ('sound', 'correct') is used here by 'Abdu'l-Baha. This word also means 'Complete, perfect, entire, sound; healthy; right, just, true, certain; authentic; certainly, truly'.¹⁵³ No other believer has 'Abdu'l-Baha singled out for such praise.

Any manuscript in the hand of Zayn al-Muqarrabīn, Bahā'u'llāh's most trusted scribe and distinguished as 'the most eminent of the transcribers of Bahā'u'llāh's Writings',¹⁵⁴ is considered by Baha'i authorities to be textually accurate and, therefore, definitively the *textus receptus*.¹⁵⁵ Since the Cambridge (i.e. Browne's) manuscript is textually identical with the official version and, consequently, and because Tumanski's/Rosen's version exhibits slight variants, it is clear that Browne's manuscript and Tumanski's are independent versions.

Due to the fact that the Cambridge University collection containing the correspondence of E. G. Browne has not been properly organized and catalogued, no 'finding aid' has been created to avail the contents of collection to scholars for research purposes. A finding aid is a research guide that provides detailed descriptions of a given collection's content, with a list of archival boxes and folder headings, with details about correspondence, photographs, etc. Consequently, Baron Viktor Rosen's letter to Browne, with news of 'the death of Behā'u'llāh', has not been located.¹⁵⁶ It is also not possible, at the current time, to determine whether or not a covering letter had accompanied the manuscript of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī, in the hand of Zayn al-Muqarrabīn, that was sent from 'Akka, as was the case with Lawḥ-i Bishārāt, which was sent to Professor Browne by order of Baha'u'llah, with two cover letters and an anonymous inscription.¹⁵⁷ In this case, the order to send Browne a copy of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī would presumably have come from Baha'u'llah's successor, 'Abdu'l-Baha, although there is no direct evidence for this. In all probability, the Cambridge manuscript, in the hand of Zayn al-Muqarrabīn, must have been sent from 'Akka, at the express order of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

9. Conclusion: Contemporary-Historical Attestation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Successorship by Tumanski and other Russian Notables

Tumanski's editing, publication and translation of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī was a publishing 'event' within the scholarly world at large. The immediate audience, of course, were Russian orientalists and other public intellectuals (not to mention a wider circle of interested readers) who could read Russian. Yet other scholars took note. For instance, the French savant, Cl. Huart, wrote that Baha'u'llah's 'last words have been edited by Toumanski (St. Petersburg, 1892)', further acknowledging that Baha'u'llah left 'his spiritual authority to his eldest son, 'Abbās Effendī, surnamed 'Abd al-Bahā'.¹⁵⁸

That Baha'u'llah's Kitāb-i 'Ahdī is designated as a 'Book' (*kitāb*) perhaps due to its weightiness, not its length, although a *kitāb* can be a work of any length. Two of its important themes are unity (i.e. social cohesion) and continuity (successorship). As for the Baha'i community, the former depends on the latter. Baha'u'llah's mission is to unify the world:

O ye that dwell on earth (*ay ahl-i 'ālam*)! The religion of God is for love and unity (*muhabbat va ittihād*); make it not the cause of enmity or dissension. ... We fain would hope that the people of Bahā may be guided by the blessed words: 'Say: All things are of God'. This exalted utterance (*kalima-yi 'ulyā*) is like unto water for quenching the fire of hate and enmity (*nār-i daghīna va baghdā*) which smouldereth within the hearts and breasts of men. By this single utterance contending peoples and kindreds will attain the light of true Unity (*nūr-i ittihād-i haqiqī*). ... That which is conducive to the regeneration of the world (*hayāt-i 'ālam*) and the salvation of the peoples and kindreds of the earth (*nijāt-i umam*) hath been sent down from the heaven of the utterance of Him Who is the Desire of the world.¹⁵⁹

Here, 'unity' is characterized as social 'salvation'. Key to this salvific mission of promoting human solidarity is the unity of the Baha'i community itself, which can serve as a model of concord only if free of major discord and irreparable schism. It is this communal cohesion that the successorship of 'Abdu'l-Baha preserves. Referring to the 'Book of the Covenant', Shoghi Effendi characterizes 'this weighty and incomparable Document' as 'an instrument divinely ordained, invested with indisputable authority, organically linked with the Author of the Revelation Himself' in order, in Weberian terms, to routinize Baha'u'llah's charisma and 'direct and canalize these forces let loose by this Heaven-sent process [of revelation], and to insure their harmonious and continuous operation after His ascension'.¹⁶⁰ In other words, the 'Book of My Covenant' operated to maintain the integrity of the Baha'i community under the able and enlightened aegis of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

That said, the Covenant is the linchpin and pivot of the Baha'i community and thus, by extension, the safeguard of the Baha'i project of world unity. The latter cannot exist without the former. Upon the centripetal force of the Covenant depends the centrifugal force of the widening circle of Unity. In that historic document, Bahā'u'llāh had explicitly designated his eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Bahā, as successor, and implicitly vested in this designee the additional authority and prerogatives of authorized interpreter and perfect exemplar of Baha'u'llah's teachings. The importance of this designation cannot be underestimated. The present integrity and future development of the Baha'i community absolutely depend on it.

What Tumanski has done is to provide independent attestation of this signal event in the history and phenomenology of religions – a clear designation of successorship by the charismatic founder of a world religion. There were other contemporary-historical attestations of 'Abdu'l-Baha's successorship by other Russian notables as well, such as this interesting statement by Vladimir Petrovish Rogge, Privy Counsellor and Governor of Baku, dispatched on 17 December 1896:

Beha Ulla [Baha'u'llah] drew up for the followers of the 'Babi' sect the instructions known by the title 'Kitābe Ehdī' [Kitāb-i 'Ahdī], in translation, 'The Charter

of My Testament', and besides that he also wrote several other books of moral-religious content. ... In the Transcaspian Region, where there are rather a lot of followers of the 'Babi' sect, it has been established by means of statistical data that these sectarians are almost never brought to court accused of crimes. In general, they are distinguished by remarkably strict fulfillment of the exhortations of their late leader of Beha Ulla [Baha'u'llah], set forth in the book 'The Charter of My Testament', which contains exclusively admonitions on the observance of all good qualities. At present, the leader of all the Babis is the son of Beha Ullah [Baha'u'llah], Abbas Efendi Gusne Aazem [Ghuṣn-i A'zam], who of his own will stayed on to live in Akka, and this city has become sacred for the Babis.¹⁶¹

Another scholar, Evgenii Eduardovich Bertels (1890–1957), was a prominent Russian and later Soviet orientalist specializing in Iranian Studies, clearly recognized the purport of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī:

He [Baha'u'llah] left a Will before his decease, titled Kitāb-i 'Ahdī, whose text and translation were published by A. G. Tumanski. ... He [Baha'u'llah] quite clearly and explicitly appointed in this Will his oldest son (Ghuṣn-i A'zam, the 'Most Great Branch'), 'Abbās Effendī, titled 'Abdu'l-Bahā, his successor and vicegerent. However, Bahā'u'llāh's second son, Muḥammad-'Alī (Ghuṣn-i Akbar, the 'Greater Branch'), went against his father's will, so clearly expressed, and chose to disobey his brother.¹⁶²

Here, Bertels not only acknowledges Tumanski's publication of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī, but demonstrates his own knowledge of the immediate aftermath, in which 'Abdu'l-Baha's half-brother, Muḥammad-'Alī, rose in opposition to 'Abdu'l-Baha, thereby violating the terms of the successorship provision of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī, in which Muḥammad-'Alī's right to succeed 'Abdu'l-Baha depending entirely upon accepting the latter's rightful office. Bertels, in his estimate of the leadership capabilities of 'Abdu'l-Baha, further wrote:

'Abdu'l-Baha – being fully aware of the need for the teaching to be further developed that it might preserve its vitality – symbolized the progressive trend. On the contrary, Muḥammad-'Alī was inclined towards conservatism, as he held onto the literal meaning of his father's words; although this conservatism should apparently be considered as an outward means for keeping [him in the position of] authority, otherwise his disrespectful attitude towards the Will and Testament of his father would seem absolutely unexplainable. However, like Subh-i-Azal, he did not receive support in the wide circles and therefore has no significance for the history of Behaism.¹⁶³

It would be fair to say that Russian Orientalist, Ignaty Yulianovich Krachkovsky (1883–1951), was Baron Rosen's most prominent successor in Arabic studies. During the Soviet era, Baha'i studies was not encouraged. Notwithstanding, Krachkovsky had a good knowledge of Baha'i history. Moreover, he met 'Abdu'l-Baha during his trip to Palestine. Like Bertels, Krachkovsky had an equally high regard for 'Abdu'l-Baha's leadership abilities:

'Abdu'l-Baha headed the movement [Baha'i community of the time] upon his father's death. After the Turkish revolution of 1909, he no longer had to

stay confined to Akka without permission to leave it; he undertook long trips around Europe and North America delivering speeches in various Protestant churches and at public gatherings of Paris, London, Edinburgh and the United States. Upon his return to Palestine, he settled down in Haifa at the foothills of Mount Carmel and, owing to the fascinating qualities of his outstanding personality, had great influence over people from all nations and adherents of all religions as well as all the social classes of the population. This was most clearly attested at his funeral, November 29, which was attended by all the dwellers of the city of Haifa and the neighboring areas. ... His whole being and manners had a sense of inner grandeur and a great spiritual power, which deeply impressed everybody even those who had but a chance meeting with him.¹⁶⁴

Evidently, Bertels, like Krachkovsky, in stark contrast to Edward Granville Browne, had a superior grasp of the legitimate lines of succession in early Baha'i history, and takes Browne to task for publishing a highly tendentious tract written by Mirza Javad Kazvini, a partisan of Muḥammad-'Alī:

The issue of this schism gave rise to abundant literature both in the East and in the West especially among the Baha'is in America, where the number of followers of this teaching has recently grown considerably. However, the great majority of these books are completely unknown to wide public in Europe, therefore it is a pity that one of the best experts on Behaism, the English professor] E. Browne has published a polemical treatise by a follower of Muḥammad-'Alī named Mirza Javad Kazvini in his book, which came out in 1918 under the title, *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion*. Of course impartiality requires that the scholar should listen to both parties, but the publication of a pamphlet of the party which is obviously wrong without documents speaking in favor of its opponents would create an extremely unfavorable prejudice against the right party.¹⁶⁵

This is quite a telling criticism of Browne's bias. As Bertels states above, in 1918 Browne translated and published the highly tendentious 'history' by Mīrzā Javād Qazvīnī, whose account of the reading of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī nine days after Baha'u'llah's 'ascension' (Baha'i honorific for this historical event and its annual commemoration) presents 'Abdu'l-Baha as publicly disclosing the contents of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī, while privately concealing certain passages contained within it.¹⁶⁶

In his narrative of the reading of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī, while acknowledging the important fact that the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī 'was given to him ['Abdu'l-Baha] by Baha'u'llah', Mīrzā Javād Qazvīnī notes that 'Abdu'l-Baha had asked one of the nine companions present on this occasion – Aqa Riza of Shiraz – to read Baha'u'llah's Will and Testament aloud 'down to the place concealed by the blue leaf [of paper] whereupon 'Abbas Efendi said to the persons above mentioned, "Verily a portion of this book is concealed for a good reason, because the time doth not admit of its full disclosure".¹⁶⁷

Later that same day, the Will was read again, this time by Majdu'd-Din Efendi – to Baha'u'llah's other sons, to the relatives of the Bab who were present, to the 'exiles' and those Persian Baha'i expatriates then residing in Akka – down to the 'place concealed by the blue leaf'. This 'blue leaf'

is a red herring, since the content of the successorship version is not in dispute.

New information has reached the authors in response to a research request regarding this and other allegations surrounding the original text of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī. According to a Memorandum to the Universal House of Justice (27 February 2013), enclosed in a reply letter (same date) from the Universal House of Justice to co-author, Christopher Buck, transmitted by email, 3 March 2013, the Research Department states:

The Kitāb-i 'Ahd

Christopher Buck, in an email letter dated 24 November 2012, has requested a facsimile of the original Kitāb-i-'Ahd and has raised several questions in connection with an article he is writing on the subject. In particular, he asks whether a reference to the second wife of Bahā'u'llāh has been omitted in the translation and whether a reference to Mīrzā Ākā Jān has been omitted in the published version of the original text. He is additionally interested in any other information regarding its transmission history, circumstances of revelation, editing and publication which are not available in published accounts. We offer the following response.

Regarding the provenance and history of the holograph of the Kitāb-i-'Ahd, the following explanation is given in a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi:

The Kitāb-i-'Ahd is, as you know, Bahā'u'llāh's Book of His Covenant. It is entirely written in His own handwriting. And in the light of the objections raised by some of the believers concerning the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahā, it is highly significant to note that this Book of the Covenant of Bahā'u'llāh bears neither signature, nor seal, nor any date. It was shown to the believers, and was read in their presence nine days after Bahā'u'llāh's ascension. The manuscript was in the possession of 'Abdu'l-Bahā all through His ministry, and after His passing it was found enclosed in His own Will. These two precious documents, namely, the Book of the Covenant of Bahā'u'llāh and the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahā, have both been carefully preserved and are now in the possession of the Guardian. (From a letter dated 25 September 1934)

The holograph of the Kitāb-i-'Ahd is now preserved in the Archives at the Bahā'ī World Centre. No further information as to the circumstances of its revelation, editing or publication is currently available to us that cannot be found in published accounts. As can be seen from a comparison of the English translation authorized by the Universal House of Justice with the published Persian text, a reference to the wife and family of Bahā'u'llāh (*'haram va āl allāh'*) has been rendered collectively as 'members of the Holy Household'.

The holograph of the Kitāb-i-'Ahd contains a passage in the nature of a postscript praising Mīrzā Ākā Jān, directing the friends to show respect to him and expressing the hope that he join 'Abdu'l-Bahā in upholding the standard of loyalty. The postscript was not included as part of the Will by 'Abdu'l-Bahā when He circulated it during His lifetime, and this approach was continued by Shoghi Effendi. The House of Justice, likewise, has decided not to circulate it.¹⁶⁸

Prior to his 1918 publication of *Materials for the Study of the Bābī Religion*, Browne had translated the following excerpt from the Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī, with commentary:

Bahā’u’llāh died on May 16, 1892, leaving four sons and three daughters. Differences as to the succession arose between the two elder sons, ‘Abbās Efendi (also called ‘Abdu’l-Bahā, ‘the Servant of Bahā, and Ghuṣn-i A’zam, ‘the Most Mighty Branch’) and Mīrzā Muḥammad ‘Alī (called Ghuṣn-i-Akbar, ‘the Most Great Branch’). Bahā’u’llāh left a testament, entitled Kitābu’ Ahdī, which was published, with some introductory remarks and a Russian tr., by Lieut. Tumanski in the *Zapiski* of the Oriental Section of the Imperial Russian Archaeological Society, viii. (1892). In this important document he says:

‘God’s injunction is that the Branches (Aghṣān), and Twigs (Afnān), and Kinsfolk (*Muntasabīn*) should all look to the Most Mighty Branch (*Ghuṣn-i A’zam*, i.e. ‘Abbās Efendi). Look at what We have revealed in my (sic) Most Holy Book (Kitāb-i-Aqdas): “When the Ocean of Union ebbs, and the Book of the Beginning and the Conclusion is finished, then turn to Him whom God intendeth (*man arādahu’llāh*), who is derived from this Ancient Stock”. He who is meant by this blessed verse is the Most Mighty Branch: thus have we made clear the command as an act of grace on our part. Verily, I am the Bountiful, the Gracious. God hath determined the position of the Most Great Branch (*Ghuṣn-i-Akbar*, i.e. Mīrzā Muḥammad-‘Alī) after his position. Verily, He is the Commanding, the Wise. Verily, we have chosen the Most Great after the Most Mighty, a command on the part of One All-knowing and Wise. ... Say, O Servants! Do not make the means of order a means of disorder, nor an instrument for [producing] union into an instrument for [producing] discord ...’

Thus far, then, it would appear that, in face of so clear a pronouncement, no room for dissension was left to Bahā’u’llāh’s followers. But almost immediately, it would seem ... the old struggle between what may be described as the ‘stationary’ and the ‘progressive’ elements broke out. ‘Abbās Efendi apparently claimed that the Revelation was not ended, and that henceforth he was to be its channel. This claim was strenuously resisted by his brother Mīrzā Muḥammad ‘Alī and those who followed him.¹⁶⁹

Browne’s translation of this key passage from the Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī shows a clear recognition of Baha’u’llah’s explicit designation of ‘Abdu’l-Baha, whom Browne had earlier acknowledged as Baha’u’llah’s ‘spiritual successor’ and ‘accredited successor’, in 1903.¹⁷⁰ Notwithstanding, Browne reproduces the accusation leveled by Mirza Muhammad-‘Ali that ‘Abdu’l-Baha laid claim to revelation, in direct defiance of a clear statement in the Most Holy Book that another Manifestation of God (i.e. a theophany or prophet of God) would not appear for at least 1,000 years. Without proof, Browne further states: ‘The dispute has been darkened by a mass of words, but in essence it is a conflict between these two sayings, viewed in the light of the supernatural claim – whatever its exact nature – which ‘Abbās Efendi did and does advance’.¹⁷¹ For a scholar who was otherwise careful and disciplined regarding primary sources, Browne’s uncritical acceptance of this false charge, without any supporting documentation from ‘Abdu’l-Baha himself, was tendentious in the extreme.

On three occasions (December 18 and 19, 1912, in London, and March 9, 1913 in Paris) Browne and his wife met ‘Abdu’l-Baha and tried to broach the subject of Browne’s writings, which ‘Abdu’l-Baha was disinclined to discuss.¹⁷² There is the clear implication here that Browne intended to apologize to ‘Abdu’l-Baha for this most unfortunate and unacceptable misrepresentation of the facts. In his obituary of ‘Abbas Effendi’, Browne, once again, unambiguously acknowledged the successorship of ‘Abdu’l-Baha:

The death of ‘Abbās Efendi, better known since he succeeded his father, Bahā’u’llāh, thirty years ago as ‘Abdu’l-Bahā, deprives Persia of one of the most notable of her children and the East of a remarkable personality, who has probably exercised a greater influence not only in the Orient but in the Occident than any Asiatic thinker and teacher of recent times. ... One of the most notable practical results of the Bahā’ī ethical teaching in the United States has been, according to the recent testimony of an impartial and qualified observer, the establishment in Bahā’ī circles in New York of a real fraternity between black and white, and an unprecedented lifting of the ‘colour bar’, described by the said observer as ‘almost miraculous’.¹⁷³

This may have served as a tacit apology on the part of Browne to ‘Abdu’l-Baha. One should bear in mind that Baha’u’llah favorably mentioned Browne in a Tablet, the facsimile of which was published as the frontispiece in Edward Granville Browne and the Bahā’ī Faith, with the passage of interest translated by H. M. Balyuzi as follows:

Your letter was sent to the Supreme Threshold by Afnān [Hājī Sayyid ‘Alī Afnān], on whom be My glory. The youth [Edward Granville Browne] mentioned therein attained Our presence. Although this Wronged One had not consorted for many years past with people from foreign lands, We received him on several occasions. Portents of sincerity could be discerned on his visage. We beseech God to aid him in such undertakings which would be conducive to the effacement of mischief and the promotion of the betterment of the world. He is the Hearing, the Prayer-Answering God. Afnān will write and give you details.¹⁷⁴

Unfortunately, Browne fell prey to the perfidious ‘mischief’, mendacity and fraud that Mirza Muḥammad-‘Alī had perpetrated on Browne and, by extension, his reading public. Balyuzi rightly mentions the fact that Browne had, in his possession, a copy of the Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī, which he references as ‘F. 66’,¹⁷⁵ which probably should be corrected to read ‘F. 25’. Had Browne the depth of understanding that Tumanski possessed regarding the terms of succession set forth in the Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī, Browne would have been better informed as to the problem inherent in Muḥammad-‘Alī’s rival claim, as this provision clearly requires: ‘We have chosen ‘the Greater’ [Muḥammad-‘Alī] after ‘the Most Great’ [‘Abdu’l-Baha] (*al-Akbar ba’d al-A’zam*), as decreed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed [Baha’u’llah]’. Even granting that Browne had properly appreciated Baha’u’llah’s designation of ‘Abdu’l-Baha as successor, there remains the problem of his uncritical acceptance of accusations that the latter had laid claims to divine revelation which, in numerous letters to the Baha’i world, ‘Abdu’l-Baha took pains to strenuously disclaim. Furthermore, it would appear that the critical distinction between ‘revelation’

(*wahy*) and ‘inspiration’ (*ilhām*), along with the related distinction between the ‘Most Great Infallibility’ and ‘conferred infallibility’, was completely lost on Browne.

By contrast, Tumanski clearly understood the successorship provision of the Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī. Why this difference? In addition to his superior knowledge of the Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī – having edited and translated this text for publication – there is credible evidence (even if not conclusive), that Tumanski may, in fact, have declared himself to be a Baha’i. This evidence comes from Haji Mirza Haydar Ali Uskui, who, by profession, was a photographer and merchant, and was one of the most prominent Baha’is in the north-west province of Azerbaijan. In his ‘History of Faith in Azerbaijan’, Uskui writes:

Meeting with Tumanski

At the time of constitutional riots in Tabriz, I moved to Uksu and stayed there for 10 months. After this time a prayer was revealed from the Holy Land for the cessation of hostilities in Azerbaijan. It was carried via Jinab-i Aqa Muhammad Uskui.

Following the arrival of Aqa Muhammad in Tabriz the riots suddenly stopped. About 5,000 Russian troops came to Tabriz to enforce security. On the third day [of the arrival] we returned to Tabriz.

I visited Nicolas. We discussed the Russian intervention and he said: ‘They have camped near [the locality] of Aji. Tumanski is also here’.

I said: ‘It would be great to meet Tumanski if possible. We know each other. About 18 years ago following the martyrdom of Haji Muhammad Reza [in Ishqabad] in 1307, Tumanski came from St. Petersburg to investigate the Baha’i Faith. There he started to translate the Kitāb-i Aqdas to Russian. I was there when he declared his faith in the Blessed Cause’.¹⁷⁶

This evidence that Tumanski declared himself a Baha’i cannot have been official, given the fact that, in Tsarist Russia, it was forbidden for Russian Orthodox Christians to convert to non-Christian religions, as Momen notes: ‘There was also no attempt made to convert Russians, since Russian law made it a capital offence for a Russian citizen to convert from Christianity’.¹⁷⁷ So, if Tumanski did declare himself a Baha’i, it must have been done informally, i.e. in an unofficial way. In any case, Tumanski rendered important services to the Baha’i community in Ishqabad, which Balyuzi describes as ‘the home and the refuge of a large, progressive, thriving Bahā’ī community’.¹⁷⁸ One of his most significant contributions was his assistance in arranging for the construction of the very first Baha’i temple: ‘Captain Tumanski gave valuable assistance to this community, particularly when it was engaged in building the first Bahā’ī House of Worship (Mashriqu’l-Adhkār) in the world’.¹⁷⁹

Significantly, the closing line of Tumanski’s article, published on 9 July 1892 in the newspaper, *Kavkaz*, gives a clear, contemporaneous and correct interpretation of the successorship provision in the Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī: ‘His oldest son, Mirza Abbas [Abbās Effendī] who is titled *Ghuṣn-i A’ẓam* (the ‘Most Great Branch’), is, according to Baha’u’llah’s repeated instructions and his last Will, recognized at present to be the Head of the Babī’.¹⁸⁰ This public declaration of the testator’s (i.e. Baha’u’llah’s) intent by an independent scholar, who published this historic

document in the original Persian and provided a Russian translation as well, and in so short a time after the 29 May 1892 decease of the prophet–founder of what was to emerge, in the course of its subsequent expansion and institutional development, as a new world religion, is remarkable. Tumanski’s later publication, in the 1892 ZVORAO (1893), of the Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī – within around one year after Baha’u’llah’s death – provides contemporaneous attestation of a historic document that may well be unique in its function and purpose (i.e. explicitly designating and conferring successorship) considering the fact that, in the history of religions, never has there been a clear document conferring successorship upon a designated leader after the death of the founder of a world religion, prior to the successorship provision Kitāb-i ‘Ahdī, which provision exists in splendid isolation. Because of this designation, ‘Abdu’l-Baha is reverently referred to by Persian-speaking Baha’is as ‘His Holiness, the Center of the Covenant’ (*ḥadrat-i markaz-i mīthāq*). The ‘Centre’ keeps the line of succession straightforward and the circle of unity of the Baha’i faith-community unbroken.¹⁸¹

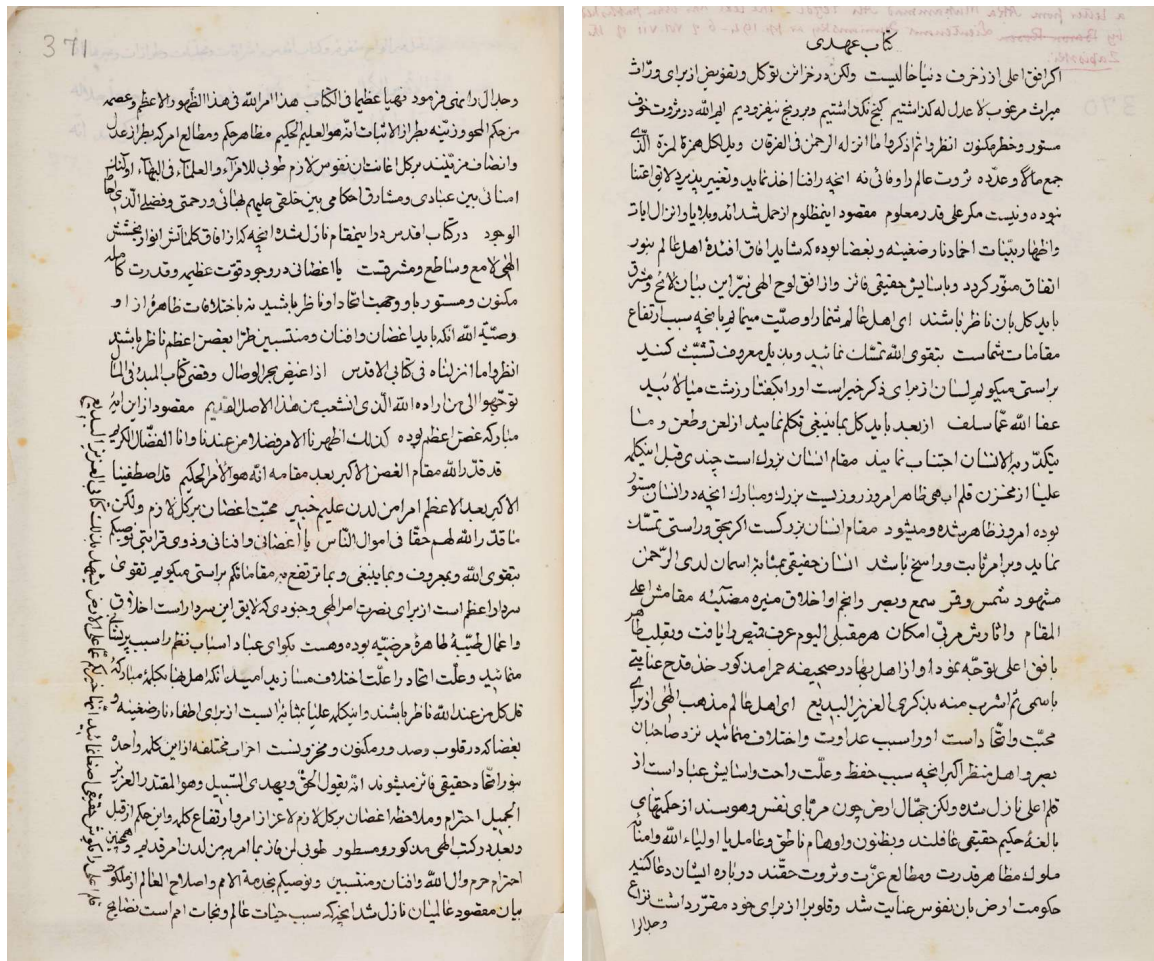


Figure 4: Folio 370 verso and 371 recto of F. 25(9), Manuscript 8 (listed as ‘Kitābu ‘Ahdī’) of the E. G. Browne Collection. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

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Contributor details

Christopher Buck: Independent scholar, author, personal injury attorney and former university professor, Christopher Buck (Ph.D., University of Toronto, 1996 / J.D., Cooley Law School, 2006) lives in Pittsburgh with his wife, Nahzy Abadi Buck, and two sons, Takur (M.D. in progress) and Taraz (Ph.D., Computational Biology). The author previously taught at Pennsylvania State University (2011), Michigan State University (2000–2004), Quincy University (1999–2000), Millikin University (1997–1999), and Carleton University (1994–1996). Dr. Buck publishes broadly in American studies (*God & Apple Pie: Religious Myths and Visions of America*, 2015 ('Introduction' by J. Gordon Melton, Distinguished Professor of American Religious History, Baylor University); religious studies (*Paradise & Paradigm: Key Symbols in Persian Christianity and the Baha'i Faith*, 1999); Baha'i studies (*Symbol & Secret Qur'an Commentary in Baha'u'llah's Kitāb-i Iqān*, 1995/2004); Islamic studies ('Discovering' [the Qur'an] in *The Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an*, 2006/2017; 'Religious Minority Rights' in *The Islamic World*, 2008); 'African American studies' (*Alain Locke: Faith and*

Philosophy, 2005); and 'Native American studies' ('Deganawida, the Peacemaker' in *American Writers*, Supplement XXVI, 2015).

E-mail: BuckPhD@gmail.com

Youli A. Ioannesyan: Born 1957 in Baku, Azerbaijan, Ioannesyan graduated from Leningrad/St Petersburg State University (Department of Iranian Studies) in 1979. He holds a Ph.D. in Iranian linguistics and literature. Dr. Ioannesyan is a senior researcher at the Department of Middle Eastern Studies, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (formerly, Institute of Oriental Studies) of the Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg), where he has worked since 1983. Dr. Ioannesyan has taught Afghan-Persian (Dari) and Persian (Farsi) languages, as well as Persian culture, history, and religions at St. Petersburg State University (2002–2006) and the University of Virginia (2007–2008). Major research interests: Iranian linguistics, including Islam (Sufi Islam and Shaykhism) and the Babi and Baha'i religions; and Iranian linguistics, with a focus on languages and dialects spoken in Iran and Afghanistan (Dari). Relevant publications: *The Development of the Babi/Baha'i Communities: Exploring Baron Rosen's Archives*, 2013; (with C. Buck) 'Baha'u'llah's *Bishārāt* (Glad-Tidings): A Proclamation to Scholars and Statesmen', *Baha'i Studies Review*, Vol. 16, 2010; *Afghan Folktales from Herat*, Amherst and New York: Cambria Press, 2009; *Essays on the Babi and Baha'i Faiths: A Study in the Light of Primary Sources*, St. Petersburg, 2003.

E-mail: youli19@gmail.com

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Endnotes

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21. Momen, *The Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions*, p. 296.
22. For the early history of the Baha'i community of Ashgabat, see Ustād 'Alī-Akbar Bannā Yazdī, *Tārīkh-i 'Ishqābād* ('History [of the Baha'is of] of Ashgabat'), Iranian National Baha'i Archives (INBA) vol. 94, p. 407, unpublished. Online at <http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/arabic/vol4/banna/ashgabat.htm>. This author was a builder/architect (who supervised the initial construction of the Baha'i House of worship in Ashgabat (the first major Baha'i temple in the world) and a Baha'i martyr. However, the text is silent on the 26 June 1892 reading of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī and 'Andalīb's poetic eulogy of Bahā'u'llāh to the Bahā'īs of Ashgabat. The author says that he took a copy of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī from Ishqabad (Ashgabat) to Mashhad soon after the ascension of Baha'u'llah to read to the Baha'i friends there, who had not yet been apprised of the ascension. Id., p. 344. Online at: <http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/arabic/vol4/banna/e344.gif>. Reference courtesy of Omid Ghaemmaghami, Ph.D.
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26. Ahang Rabbani, *Ponder Thou upon the Martyrdom of Hājī Muhammad-Ridā: Nineteen Historical Accounts*, Witnesses to Bābī and Bahā'ī History, vol. 5 (2007).
27. Rabbani, *Ponder Thou upon the Martyrdom of Hājī Muhammad-Ridā*, 42, n. 41.
28. See Gulpāygānī, Ahang Rabbani, translator, 'Mirza Abu'l-Fadl Gulpaygani's 'The Martyrdom of Mīrzā Muḥammad-Riḍā', *Translations of Shaykhi, Babi and Baha'i Texts*, vol. 4(3), April 2000, online at: <http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/trans/vol4/mrida.htm>; and Mīrzā Abu'l-Faḍl-i Gulpāygānī, *Tafsīl-i Shahādāt Hājī Muḥammad-Riḍā dar 'Ishqābād* ('Eyewitness Account of the Martyrdom of Mīrzā Muḥammad-Riḍā of 'Ishqābād' in Ruhū'llah Mihrabkhani, *Zindigānī-yi Mīrzā Abu'l-Fadl-i Gulpāygānī*, Tehran: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1978, pp. 171–189, and idem, *Tafsīl-i Shahādāt Hājī Muḥammad-Riḍā dar 'Ishqābād* ('Eyewitness Account of the Martyrdom of Hājī Muḥammad-Riḍā of 'Ishqābād'), 22 pages, unpublished, n.d. Also see http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/areprint/authors/gulpaygani/AbulFadl_Tafsīl_Shahādāt_Hājī_MuhammadRidā_dar_Ishqabad_handof_AbulFadl.pdf. See Momen, *The Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions, 1844–1944*, pp. 298–289, quoting a dispatch from British Legation in Tehran regarding the murder.
29. Rabbani, *Ponder Thou upon the Martyrdom of Hājī Muhammad-Ridā*, 1.
30. A small town near St. Petersburg.
31. See Élisée Reclus, *La Nouvelle Géographie universelle, la terre et les hommes*, 19 vols. (1875–94); English translation, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants* (1878–94).
32. See A. G. Tumanski, Dva poslednikh babidskikh otkroveniia ('Two Recent Babi Revelations'), *Mémoires de L'Académie Impériale des Sciences de Saint-Petersbourg Science*, Vol. VI, 1891, St. Petersburg, 1892, 314–315. Translated from the original Russian by Youli A. Ioannesyan.
33. 'The Bābis' [sic] in 'Notes and News', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1892, p. 169.
34. Dorri, 'Toumanskiī'.
35. Dorri, 'Toumanskiī'.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ioannesyan, 'The St. Petersburg 19th-Century Orientalist Collection', p. 76.
39. Graham Hassall, 'Notes on the Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions in Russia and its Territories', *Journal of Bahā'ī Studies* 5(3), 1992, pp. 41–80, citing 'U.S. National Bahā'ī Archives. Helen S. Goodall papers. 3/27'. On the Baha'i community in Russia, see Nancy Ackerman and Graham Hassall, 'Russia and the Baha'i Faith: A Historic Connection', in *The Baha'i World, 1998–99: An International Record*, Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 2000, p. 157–192.
40. Youli A. Ioannesyan, 'Baron Rosen's Archive Collection of Bābī and Bahā'ī Materials', *Lights of 'Irfān*, Vol. 8, Wilmette, IL: Irfan Colloquia, 2007, pp. 11–34 [12].
41. Kuropatkin is mentioned by Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 300.
42. Shahvar, *The Forgotten Schools*, 210, n. 80, citing 'Report of Staff-Captain A. Tumanski, subordinate to the Commander of the troops of the Transcaspian Region regarding his journey to Persia (18 March to 15 November 1894)' (secret), n.p. (probably Ashgabat), n.d. (probably end of November–beginning of December 1894), Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voenno-Istoricheskii Arkhiv, Moscow, coll. 1396, series 2, file 1856, qtd. in Soli Shahvar, Boris Morozov and Gad Gilbar eds., *Baha'is of Iran, Transcaspia and the Caucasus, Letters of Russian Officers and Officials*, Vol. 1, International Library of Iranian Studies (Vol. 27), London & New York: I.B.Tauris, 2012.
43. See Soli Shahvar, 'The Baha'i Faith and Baha'i Communities in Iran and Transcaspia, 1844–1914', in Shahvar et al., *Baha'is of Iran, Transcaspia and the Caucasus*, vol. 1, 'for a detailed analysis of Russian interests in Baha'i migration to Transcaspia as well as the reasons for their migration to those territories'. Shahvar, *The Forgotten Schools*, 212, n. 105.
44. A. G. Tumanski, 'Ot Kaspiiskogo moria k Khormuzskomu prolivu i obratno. 1894 g', *Sborn. mater. po Azii* 65 (1896), pp. 1–124.



45. Shahvar, *The Forgotten Schools*, 211, n. 84.
46. Aleksandr Grigor'evich Tumanski, *Kitābe Akdes. Svyashenneyshaya kniga sovremennykh babidov* ('The Kitāb-i-Aqdas, The Most Holy Book of the present-day Babīs. Text, Translation, Introduction, Supplements'), *Mémoires de L'Académie Impériale des Sciences de Saint-Petersbourg Science*, VIII Serie, Vol. 3. (St. Petersburg: Royal Academy of Sciences, 1899). Tumanski's introduction is quite lengthy.
47. Graham Hassall, 'Notes on the Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions in Russia and its Territories', *Journal of Bahā'ī Studies* 5(3), 1992, pp. 41–80, citing H. M. Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahā'ī Faith*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1980 [1970], 66. See also Balyuzi, id., pp. 66–67, n. 3.
48. Mirza Abul-Fadl Gulpaygani, 'A Treatise for Alexander Tumanski', *Letters and Essays, 1886–1913*, translated and annotated by Juan R. I. Cole, Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1985, pp. 43–83 [43].
49. Tumanski, letter dated 28 February 1892, sent from Ashkabad, Deposit: 777/Inventory: 2/Unit: 458. Translated from the original Russian by Youli A. Ioannesyan.
50. Ioannesyan, 'Baron Rosen's Archive', p. 16.
51. Article by Tumanski in the newspaper, *Kavkaz*, № 180, 9 July 1892, in Baron Rosen's 'Baron Rosen's Archive', 18, Deposit: 777/Inventory: 2/Unit: 460. Translated from the original Russian by Youli A. Ioannesyan. The article has no title. It is introduced as a 'report' from an Ashkabad 'correspondent', signed by Tumanski. See also Ioannesyan, 'Baron Rosen's Archive Collection of Bābī and Bahā'ī Materials', *Lights of 'Irfān*, Vol. 8 (2007), 16. Online at: http://irfancolloquia.org/pdf/lights8_ioannesyan.pdf.
52. United States. Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, 'Foreign Publications', in *Factors in Foreign Trade: Language, Currency, Weights and Measures, Postal Rates, and Parcel Post Facilities*, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1912, p. 129.
53. Tumanski, 'Poslednee slovo Baha-ullī', *ZVORAO* 7, 1892–1893, pp. 193–203.
54. Bahā'u'llāh, 'Kitāb-i-'Ahd (Book of the Covenant)', *Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh*, p. 219.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid. 220. Persian text online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/TB/tb-15.html>.
57. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1979, p. 238.
58. Mirza Abul-Fazl [sic], 'His Holiness Abdul-Baha' From The Baha'i Proofs', *Star of the West* 11(14), 23 November 1920, p. 237. See also: Mirza Abul-Fazl Gulpaygan [sic], *The Baha'i Proofs*, trans. from the Arabic by Ali-Kuli Khan, 3rd edn., Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1983 (1st edn. 1902).
59. Bahā'u'llāh, 'Lawh-i-Dunyā (Tablet of the World)', *Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh Revealed After the Kitāb-i-Aqdas*, 89. Persian text online at : <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/TB/tb-7.html>.
60. Nader Saiedi, *Logos and Civilization: Spirit, History, and Order in the Writings of Bahā'u'llāh*, Bethesda, MD: University Press of Maryland, pp. 229–230.
61. Bahā'u'llāh, 'Kitāb-i-'Ahd (Book of the Covenant)', *Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh*, p. 220.
62. Bahā'u'llāh, 'Kitāb-i-'Ahd (Book of the Covenant)', *Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh*, p. 221.
63. Bahā'u'llāh, 'Kitāb-i-'Ahd (Book of the Covenant)', *Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh*, p. 221.
64. Bahā'u'llāh, 'Kitāb-i-'Ahd (Book of the Covenant)', *Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh*, p. 221.
65. Shoghi Effendi, *Directives from the Guardian*, p. 17.
66. Baha'u'llah, *Three Tablets of Baha'u'llah (Tablet of the Branch, Kitāb-i-'Ahd, Lawh-i-Aqdas), the appointment of 'Abdu'l-Baha as the interpreter of the teachings of Baha'u'llah, the Testament of Baha'u'llah, and His message to the Christians*, Chicago, 1918.
67. Shoghi Effendi, Letter of 10 January 1935, *The Light of Divine Guidance*, Vol. 1, Hofheim, Germany: Bahā'ī Verlag, 1982, pp. 65–66.
68. Bahā'u'llāh, *Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh Revealed After the Kitāb-i-Aqdas*, trans. Habib Taherzadeh, Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988, pp. 219–223.
69. Translated by Shoghi Effendi in idem, *The World Order of Bahā'u'llāh*, Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991, p. 134.

70. Bahā'u'llāh, 'Kitāb-i-'Ahd (Book of the Covenant)', *Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh*, p. 222.
71. Bahā'u'llāh, 'Kitāb-i-'Ahd (Book of the Covenant)', *Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh*, p. 222.
72. Bahā'u'llāh, 'Kitāb-i-'Ahd (Book of the Covenant)', *Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh*, p. 223.
73. Bahā'u'llāh, 'Kitāb-i-'Ahd (Book of the Covenant)', *Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh*, p. 223. See also Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 238–240.
74. See Momen, 'The Baha'i Community of Ashkhabad', pp. 278–305.
75. Tumanski: 'According to the Babis, this piece of land derives its name from someone named A'zam, to whom it once belonged'.
76. Tumanski: 'I will give a more detailed account of this man when occasion presents itself'.
77. Tumanski: 'My previous assumption as to Rouha and Rouhani being identical is absolutely unfounded, though I have not yet been able to collect any exact data on the issue, cf. *Collect. Scientif.* VI, 251, note'.
78. Tumanski, 'Poslednee slovo Baha-ulli', 196–196. Translated from the original Russian by Youli A. Ioannesyan.
79. Minou Foadi, 'Nabil-e Akbar', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, writes of Nabil's significant role in establishing the Baha'i community of Ashgabat: 'So, in 1890, he left for Ashkhabad, in the company of his nephew Shaikh Moḥammad-'Ali. He was arrested in Sabzavār on the way to Ashkhabad, but the governor of the city was so impressed with him that he helped him escape. Nabil settled in Ashkhabad, continued his missionary activities, and contributed to the establishment of a large, resourceful Bahai community there'.
80. *Ibid.*, 193–194. See also Tumanski's letter dated 1 February 1893.
81. See Minou Foadi, 'Qā'eni, Shaikh Moḥammad-'Ali', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
82. Translated from the original Russian by Youli A. Ioannesyan, *The Development of the Babi/Baha'i Communities: Exploring Baron Rosen's Archives*, London and New York, Routledge, 2013, p. 173.
83. Youli A. Ioannesyan, *The Development of the Babi/Baha'i Communities: Exploring Baron Rosen's Archives*, London and New York, Routledge, 2013.
84. 'His Holiness has ascended' (Persian).
85. 'Mansion' (Arabic/Persian).
86. 'Briefly' (French).
87. 'Elegy, in which the death of a saint or a martyr is lamented' (Persian).
88. 'Nightingale' (Persian).
89. Tumanski to Rosen, letter dated 3 July 1892, sent from Ashkhabad, Deposit: 777/Inventory: 2/Unit: 458. Translated from the original Russian by Youli A. Ioannesyan.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
91. A. G. Tumanski, 'Poslednee slovo Bahauli' ('Baha'u'llah's Last Word'), *Mémoires de L'Académie Impériale des Sciences de Saint-Petersbourg Science*, Vol. 7 (1892–1893), St. Petersburg, 1893, pp. 193–203. The Russian name of this academic periodical which was edited by Baron Rosen is: *Zapiski Vostochnogo Otdeleniya Rossiyskogo Arkheologicheskogo Obshestva* (ZVORAO).
92. *Ibid.*, pp. 199–203.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
94. *Ibid.*, pp. 199–200.
95. *Ibid.*, pp. 201–203.
96. 'Andalīb, 'Dīvān-i 'Andalīb', Tehran: Mū'asssihiyi Millīyi Matbū'āti Amrī, 1968, pp. 471–474, trans. Ahang Rabbani, in Habīb Allāh Afnān, *The Genesis of the Bābī-Bahā'ī Faiths in Shīrāz and Fārs*, trans. Ahang Rabbani, Leiden: Brill, 2008, 118 [n. 218]–119. Couplets numbered by the present writers, to align with Tumanski's text.
97. Afnān, *The Genesis of the Bābī-Bahā'ī Faiths in Shīrāz and Fārs*, trans. Ahang Rabbani, pp. 117–118.

98. Readers may be interested to know that 'Andalib's grandson, Siavash Shadravan (son of 'Andalib's daughter), lives in Houston.
99. Edward G. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians: Impressions as to the Life, Character, & Thought of the People of Persia, Received during Twelve Months' Residence in that Country in the Year 1887–8*, London: Adam and Charles Black, 1893, pp. 396–397.
100. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, p. 397.
101. See Edward G. Browne, ed. and trans., [Abdu'l-Baha], *A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bāb*, 2 vols. Cambridge University Press, 1891, 2, pp. xxxix–xl; and Christopher Buck and Youli A. Ioannesyan, 'Bahā'u'llāh's Bishārāt (Glad-Tidings): A Proclamation to Scholars and Statesmen', *Bahā'i Studies Review* 16, 2010, pp. 3–28 [24–25]. Persian translation published in *Payām-i-Bahā'ī*, No. 371 (October 2010), pp. 51–57, No. 372 (November 2010), pp. 14–18, No. 373 (December 2010), pp. 35–45 and No. 374 (January 2011), pp. 28–30.
102. See Moojan Momen, 'Early Relations between Christian Missionaries and the Babi and Bahā'ī Communities', *Studies in Bābī and Bahā'ī History*, Vol. 1, ed. idem, Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1982, pp. 49–82 [70], and idem, *The Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions*, 86, n., citing Rev. W. A. Rice (Christian Missionary Society), 'A Babi Pamphlet', *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, 53, August 1902, pp. 564–573.
103. Tumanski, 'Poslednee slovo Bahauilli' ('Baha'u'llah's Last Word')', 201. Translated from the original Russian by Youli A. Ioannesyan.
104. Tumanski to Rosen, letter dated 3 July 1892, sent from Ashkabad, Deposit: 777/Inventory: 2/Unit: 458. Translated from the original Russian by Youli A. Ioannesyan.
105. Shoghi Effendi, 'Letter of 25 September 1934', *The Light of Divine Guidance* (Volume 1), Baha'i Publishing Trust of Germany (Baha'i-Verlag), 1982, p. 62.
106. John Walbridge, 'The Ascension of Baha'u'llah', *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1996, p. 243.
107. Tuba Khanum, 'Chapter IV: The Passing of Baha'u'llah', in 'The Spoken Chronicle of Tuba Khanum, daughter of 'Abdu'l-Baha', in Lady Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway*, London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1940, pp. 106–115.
108. Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, trans. Shoghi Effendi, Wilmette: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust, 1988, p. 32.
109. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 238.
110. Shoghi Effendi, *Directives from the Guardian*, comp. Gertrude Garrida, New Delhi: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1973), p. 17.
111. Armin Eschraghi, ed. and trans., Baha'u'llah, *Brief an den Sohn des Wolfes – Lauh-i Ibn-i Dhi'b*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010, pp. 383–385, 516–517.
112. Eschraghi, *Brief an den Sohn des Wolfes*, pp. 383–385.
113. Shapour Rassekh (Shāpūr Rāsikh), 'Mujmalī darbārih-yi Kitāb 'Ahdī', *Maḥbūb-i Ālam*, 'Andalīb, Editorial Board of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Canada, 1992–93, pp. 534–549. Dr. Rassekh has a Ph.D. in sociology – formerly a professor at the University of Tehran and former Iranian Secretary of State for Economic and Social Planning – has served as a consultant to UNESCO.
114. Rassekh, 'Kitāb 'Ahdī', 534, citing Asadullah Fadil Mazindarani, *Asrār al-Tauḥīd*, s.v. 'Ahd' [Covenant]. Translated from the original Persian by Youli A. Ioannesyan.
115. Rassekh, 'Kitāb 'Ahdī', 534, citing Asadullah Fadil Mazindarani, *Asrār al-Tauḥīd*, s.v. 'Ahd' [Covenant]. Translated from the original Persian by Youli A. Ioannesyan.
116. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 238.
117. Shahrokh Monjazebeh, 'Kitāb-u-'Ahdī (The Book of My Covenant): Bahā'u'llāh's Will and Testament', *Course Notes on The Will & Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahā*, Furūtan Academy: Vancouver, Canada, 2005, p. 1.
118. Monjazebeh, 'Kitāb-u-'Ahdī', p. 1.
119. Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahā'u'llāh, Vol. 4: Mazra'ih and Bahji, 1877–92*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1988, pp. 419–420.



120. Rassekh, 'Kitāb 'Ahdī', p. 535. Translated from the original Persian by Youli A. Ioannesyan.
121. Rassekh, 'Kitāb 'Ahdī', p. 538.
122. Both phrases, in fact, are rendered in English as: 'turn your faces towards him'.
123. Bahā'u'llāh, *The Kitāb-i-Aqdas*, 82 (para 174).
124. Rassekh, 'Kitāb 'Ahdī', p. 535. Translated from the original Persian by Youli A. Ioannesyan.
125. Bahā'u'llāh, *Kitāb-i 'Ahdī*, first photomechanical reproduction, Tehran, n.d.
126. Bahā'u'llāh, *Kitāb-i 'Ahdī*, in Najm-i Bākhtar, *Star of the West* 13(14), 23 November 1920, pp. 248–247 (Persian section, 1–2, since Persian is read in the reverse direction from English), ed. Dr. Zia M. Bagdadi. Online at : <http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/areprint/vol4/starwest/SW111401.gif> and <http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/areprint/vol4/starwest/SW111402.gif>. Courtesy of Behrooz Ghaemmaghami, 9 December 2012.
127. Bahā'u'llāh, *Majmū'ayi maṭbū'ayi alvāḥi mubārakayi ḥadrati Bahā'u'llāh*, ed. Muḥyi alDīn Šabrī. Sa'āda Press, 1338 A.H. [1920], pp. 399–403. Online at : <http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/areprint/baha/M-R/M/matbuih/misr.htm>. Reprinted, Wilmette: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust, 1984 [1978].
128. Browne, 'Death of Bahā'u'llāh', in 'Catalogue and Description of 27 Bābī Manuscripts', pp. 706–710 [706].
129. Browne, 'Catalogue and Description of 27 Bābī Manuscripts', p. 709.
130. Browne to Rosen, letter dated 19 July 1892, Deposit: 777/Inventory: 2/Unit: 44, pp. P 13/a–14b. Translated from the original Russian by Youli A. Ioannesyan, *The Development of the Babi/Baha'i Communities*, pp. 172–173.
131. Edward Granville Browne, 'Catalogue and Description of 27 Bābī Manuscripts'. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* [JRAS] 24 (1892), 1893, pp. 433–99 and 637–710 [710], n. 1.
132. Browne to Rosen, letter dated 9 October 1892, Deposit: 777/Inventory: 2/Unit: 44, p. 18/b. Translated from the original Russian by Youli A. Ioannesyan.
133. Bahā'u'llāh, *Kitāb-i-'Ahd*, Persian text online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/TB/tb-15.html>.
134. Bahā'u'llāh, 'Kitāb-i-'Ahd (Book of the Covenant)', *Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh Revealed After the Kitāb-i-Aqdas*, Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988, p. 220.
135. Tumanski, 'Poslednee slovo Baha-ulli', p. 195, line 11.
136. Tumanski, 'Poslednee slovo Baha-ulli', p. 195, line 11.
137. Edward William Lane, *Arabic English Lexicon*, London: Williams and Norgate, Book I, part 7, 2748.
138. Bahā'u'llāh, 'Kitāb-i-'Ahd (Book of the Covenant)', *Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh Revealed After the Kitāb-i-Aqdas*, 219.
139. Tumanski, 'Poslednee slovo Baha-ulli', p. 194, line 31.
140. Tumanski, 'Poslednee slovo Baha-ulli', p. 197, lines 196–197.
141. Bahā'u'llāh, 'Kitāb-i-'Ahd (Book of the Covenant)', *Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh Revealed After the Kitāb-i-Aqdas*, p. 219.
142. Tumanski, 'Poslednee slovo Baha-ulli', p. 195, lines 2–3.
143. Tumanski, 'Poslednee slovo Baha-ulli', p. 197, lines 3–4.
144. Tumanski, 'Poslednee slovo Baha-ulli', p. 195, line 14.
145. Tumanski, 'Poslednee slovo Baha-ulli', p. 197, line 27.
146. Although the official Baha'i translation here is 'or', the Persian word 'va' literally means 'and'.
147. Special acknowledgment is here given to Mr. Gilbert Hakim, founder and CEO of SCC Soft Computer in Clearwater, Florida, who, on January 13, 2012, generously funded the cost of this digital scan (Invoice N1668), through his agent Kristin Perla, who contacted Ms. Lynda Unchern of Imaging Services at Cambridge University Library, who then processed the order on receiving payment for the cost of this digital reproduction.



148. Yasmin Faghihi, Head of Middle Eastern Department, Manuscripts and Printed Collections, Cambridge University Library, Personal communication, 5 December 2012. See also Fihrist: Islamic Manuscripts Catalogue, online at : <http://www.fihrist.org.uk/profile/work/22a7ef26-3bf7-42b4-a82a-8db13dc2f00d>.
149. H. M. Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahā'ī Faith*, London, George Ronald, 1970, p. 54.
150. The authors owe a debt of thanks to Ramzi Zeine and Dr. Vahid Behmardi, experts in the handwriting of Zayn al-Muqarrabīn, for making this positive identification. Personal communication, 31 January 2013. Thanks also to Iskandar Hai, MD (New York), for independently verifying that this Cambridge manuscript of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī is indeed in the hand of Zayn al-Muqarrabīn. Personal communication, 28 January 2013.
151. 'Abdu'l-Baha, 'Zaynu'l-Muqarrabīn', *Memorials of the Faithful*, Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1971, p. 153.
152. Provisional translation by Omid Ghaemmaghami, Ph.D., personal communication, 27 February 2013.
153. Francis Joseph Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary, Including the Arabic Words and Phrases to be Met With in Persian Literature*, London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1892, s.v. 'ṣahīḥ', p. 782.
154. The Universal House of Justice, 'Introduction', in Bahā'u'llāh, *The Kitāb-i-Aqdas*, Haifa: Bahā'ī World Centre, 1992, p. 9.
155. 'He was meticulous in transcribing the Writings of Bahā'u'llāh and took great pains to ensure that they were correctly recorded. Any Tablet in the handwriting of Zaynu'l-Muqarrabīn is considered accurate. ... [T]oday Bahā'ī publications in Persian and Arabic are authenticated by comparison with these'. Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahā'u'llāh, Volume One: Baghdad, 1853–63*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1974, p. 26. See also Bahā'u'llāh's response to Zayn al-Muqarrabīn's question regarding variants ('As for the scribes and the differences between the manuscripts they prepared'): William McCants, translator, 'Proofreading the Revelation' (provisional translation of a Tablet published in *Asrār al-āthār*, 4:92–93), October 26, 2010, online at : <http://www.kashkul.org/>.
156. Edward Granville Browne, 'Catalogue and Description of 27 Bābī Manuscripts', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* [JRAS] 24 (1892), 1893, pp. 433–99 and 637–710 [710], n. 1.
157. See Christopher Buck and Youli A. Ioannesyan, 'Bahā'u'llāh's Bishārāt (Glad-Tidings): A Proclamation to Scholars and Statesmen', *Baha'i Studies Review* 16, 2010, pp. 3–28.
158. Cl. Huart, 'Bahā' Allāh', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, First Edition, p. 572.
159. Bahā'u'llāh, 'Kitāb-i-'Ahd (Book of the Covenant)', *Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh*, pp. 222–223. For the transliteration provided here, see Christopher Buck, *Paradise and Paradigm: Key Symbols in Persian Christianity and the Bahā'ī Faith*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, p. 190.
160. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 238–239.
161. Vladimir Petrovish Rogge (Governor of Baku), 'Copy of the Report of the Governor of Baku to the Office of the Head of the Civil Authority in the Caucasus of 17 December 1896, No. 1594, in Goli Shahvar, Gad Gilbar, Boris Morozov (eds), *Baha'is of Iran, Transcaspia and the Caucasus, Volume 2: Reports and Correspondence of Russian Officials*, London & New York: I.B.Tauris, 2012, pp. 92 and 94.
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163. Bertels, *Behait ob Istorii Behaisma*, p. 204. Translated from the original Russian by Youli A. Ioannesyan.
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