

Reviews

Baha'i Studies Review, Volume 14 © Intellect Ltd 2008.

Reviews. English language. doi: 10.1386/bsr.14.139/4

Ḥaḍrat-i Bāb, Nusrat'u'llāh Muhammad-Husainī (1995)

Dundas, Ont.: Institute for Baha'i Studies in Persian. 1038 pp. + English preface (1 p.); 108 illustrations. ISBN 1-896193-10-2.

'Ahd-i A'lā: Zindigānī-yi Ḥaḍrat-i Bāb, Abu'l-Qāsim Afnān (2000)

Oxford: Oneworld. ISBN 1-85168-225-4. 16 + 654 pp. including index and 26 illustrations.

Reviewed by **Armin Eschraghi** *Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University, Frankfurt, and author of Frühe Shaykhi und Babi Theologie (Brill, 2004)*
E-mail: armin@eschraghi.de

In the past decade two voluminous monographs have appeared on the life of the Bab and the early years of the Babi Faith, both in Persian. In 1995 the Institute for Baha'i Studies in Ontario published N. Muhammad-Husaini's *Ḥaḍrat-i Bāb*. In 2000 A. Afnan's *'Ahd-i A'lā* was published by Oneworld Publications. The two books are quite different in their approach and, in fact, seem to be directed at different audiences.

A. Afnan's work on the Bab represents a refreshing departure from the standard Babi and Baha'i historiography. In the preface the author says that his intent was not to re-narrate the history of the Faith, as this has already been done in other publications. Rather, he attempts a re-evaluation of some of these narratives and sheds new light on them through a large collection of primary sources in his private possession, most of which have previously not been accessible to historians.

In the foreword Afnan gives a lot of interesting background information about his book and how it was written. The first chapter tells the reader about the city of Shiraz and its history. Chapter 2 is devoted to the Bab's youth. Chapters 3 to 10 deal with the ministry of the Bab in chronological order. Chapter 11 informs us about the martyrdom of the Bab and the subsequent efforts to preserve his remains and finally deliver them to Haifa. Chapter 12 is an overview of the Bab's major writings, though smaller in scope and importance than Muhammad-Husaini's. The final chapter is about the time of 'intermission' (*fiṭrah*) between the Bab's martyrdom and the proclamation of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad. This is a part of the early history of the Faith that has not been described in much detail yet, and Afnan, for the first time, makes a number of details available to a broader audience. For example, information is given on some of the claimants to religious authority after the Bab's martyrdom. This part seems to rely heavily on Fadil Mazandarani's unpublished *Zuhūr al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 4, though this work is not referenced. In a number of places the original manuscript of Nabil's narrative is quoted, again, possibly from Mazandarani's work.

One appendix provides further information on some of the people referred to in the main text of the book. The second appendix lists all documents that have been published for the first time in this book. Finally there is a comprehensive index of names, places and books. As has been stated above, the main value of this book lies in the documents it contains. Among these are not only Tablets of the Bab himself, such as his letters to Muhammad Shah, to Haji Mirza Aqasi and to the 'ulama, published for the first time in full length. The book also contains a number of letters from the correspondence of the Bab's uncles with each other and with early Babis. Many of these documents shed new light on hitherto controversial issues. For example the Bab's level of education has often been a matter of controversy. The Bab's 'Greater Uncle', Sayyid Muhammad, in a letter to his brother, the 'Greatest Uncle', Sayyid 'Ali, and in another one to his brother-in-law 'Abdu'l-Husayn, testifies to the fact that the Bab had not received more than a very rudimentary education and that he was now astonished at the depth of knowledge his nephew has revealed (pp. 120–1, facsimile on p. 139 *passim*). We also read contemporary accounts from the family of the Bab about the outbreak of a cholera epidemic that made the Bab leave Shiraz for Isfahan. There also are numerous other letters from Vahid-i Darabi, Sayyid Husayn-i Yazdi, 'Abdu'l-Karim-i Qazvini, etc. that help to form a more detailed and very lively picture of the early days of the Babi Faith. Afnan not only makes these documents available to the reader by printing the facsimile of the original manuscript and, in most cases, a typescript (and, if necessary, a Persian translation) – which in itself is great service to historians – but he also uses his profound and intimate knowledge of the history of the Faith, and especially of the Afnan family, to comment on and describe the background of the texts, thus helping to put these documents in a historical perspective. At the end of each chapter there is an appendix that includes all the documents that have been referred to throughout the text.

Unfortunately, in some places the book seems to suffer from the fact that Mr Afnan himself was unable to review it during the final stages of publication. Some references have been omitted, and the appendices do not always list all the documents published in a respective chapter and do not provide the relevant page numbers. All these are but minor issues that the publisher might want to consider for future editions. They do not diminish the immense value of the book, and Oneworld needs to be congratulated for publishing it. In the preface, the author writes that in the Afnan family archive in Iran 'there were without exaggeration more than 10,000 new letters/documents (*maktūb*)', among which a large number were relevant to Babi–Baha'i history up to the time of 'Abdu'l-Baha (p. 13 of preface). The book, as is explained in the preface, was originally designed to be the first part of a trilogy, the other two volumes being on 'the Letters of the Living and the early believers' and on the 'family of the Bab' (p. 15 of preface). There are also rumours that there is actually a fourth volume in manuscript dealing with the Babi uprisings in Nayriz, although not yet in printable form. However, the unfortunate and sudden decline in Mr Afnan's health, shortly before the first book came out, has caused confusion about the plans for publishing the other volumes. One can but hope that they will see the light of day very soon. Judging from the first book, a further number of

most important documents will be included, which will, no doubt, open new perspectives for researchers in the field.

Muhammad-Husaini's work is a survey of what is generally described as the beginnings of Babi–Baha'i history, thus starting with the Shaykhiyya and ending with Baha'u'llah's arrival in Baghdad in 1853. The book is divided into three main parts, each containing several chapters and sub-headings: (1) introduction, (2) biography of the Bab and his disciples, and (3) writings of the Bab. In the first chapter of the first part (i.e. on the first 30 or so pages), we find what is described in the English preface (penned by the publisher, not the author himself) as 'the auther's [sic] philosophy of history'. The same preface also describes the book as a 'comprehensive, meticulously researched and enthralling one-thousand-page text in the life of the Bab and His disciples'.

The second chapter of the first part describes the sources used by the author, and the third chapter gives a very short overview of the 'state of the world at the time of the New Revelation'. The fourth chapter deals with prophecies in the West and in the East, which anticipated the coming of the Promised One. The Shaykhiyya is given particular attention in this regard.

The second part, which comprises the bulk of the book and includes 28 chapters, narrates the main events of the life of the Bab, starting with anecdotes about his early youth, then surveying the major events of his ministry and finally his martyrdom. Subsequent events are briefly treated until the attempt to assassinate the Shah (1852), which resulted in Baha'u'llah's exile to Baghdad. Considerable attention is also given to the Babi uprisings, in addition to the family of the Bab and to outstanding personalities during the Babi dispensation, such as the Letters of the Living, Baha'u'llah and Azal.

The third and last part is an overview of the Bab's better-known writings, which the author arranges more or less chronologically, briefly summarizing their contents. The book ends with an explanation of the Bab's station according to Baha'i theology.

Most of the historical information provided by Muhammad-Husaini could well be found in earlier works, such as *The Dawnbreakers*, Muhammad 'Ali Faizi's *Hadrat-i Nuqtih-yi Ulā*, Fadil Mazandarani's *Tārīkh-i Zuhūr al-Haqq*, vol. 3 and H. M. Balyuzi's *The Bab*. However, it is very useful as a reference work. There is a detailed index of names, places and books. Muhammad-Husaini also gives a systematic introduction to the sources he has used. Finally, the book is most useful for its description of some of the major writings of the Bab. A very extensive chapter, for example, contains a detailed summary of the Persian Bayan, certainly of great interest for those who do not yet have access to this book or have trouble with the heavily arabicized Persian style of the Bab. Producing a complete bibliography of the writings of the Bab is a task that seems to be virtually impossible to accomplish at present but, as a starting-point for all students of the writings of the Bab, Muhammad-Husaini's description of their contents will prove a useful addition to Denis MacEoin's *The Sources for Early Babi Doctrine and History* (Brill, Leiden, 1992), which is largely focused on the location of manuscripts.

Despite its value as a reference work, *Hadrat-i Bāb* is neither an academic publication nor intended for a non-Baha'i audience. It is thus suitable for Baha'i readers with general interest in the early history of their Faith. One could perhaps describe it as a rewrite of *The Dawnbreakers*, with the addition

of a number of further details based on other sources. Muhammad-Husaini does not offer any fundamental new interpretations of historical events, nor does he seem to try to give an analysis of any aspect of the Babi movement. The work is essentially a narrative, and its author is keen only on reporting the facts in very fine detail, but does not explain their broader significance.

Muhammad-Husaini's main concern is an attempt to give an 'orthodox', canonized version of Babi history. He generally does so by consulting all accounts available to him and then choosing those accounts that mesh with the dominant narrative of Babi history current in the Baha'i community. The author fails to judge his sources according to academic or any other standards accepted in historiography. Rather, when faced with contradictions between the sources, he determines the authenticity of an account based on its agreement with *The Dawnbreakers* and *God Passes By*. Rarely does he present convincing reasons that would make his preference for a certain source understandable to an uncommitted (non-Baha'i) reader. As to why a certain narrative was chosen as more accurate, we seldom read anything other than that 'the Guardian confirmed' it. For example, there are three different manuscripts of a Tablet (Khutbah fi Jiddah) which all agree on the date of the Bab's return from pilgrimage to Shiraz. This date however does not seem to be in accordance with the one given in *God Passes By*. Thus, Muhammad-Husaini simply concludes that the scribes of these manuscripts must have made an error and that the real date is the one given by Shoghi Effendi (pp. 229–30). He goes on to say: 'When we take into account the explicit utterance of the Guardian, that the Bab returned to Iran in the month of Safar 1261, it becomes obvious that the existing manuscripts of the Khutbah fi Jiddah are to some extent corrupted and that some of the dates ... were not transcribed correctly' (p. 236). It cannot presently be ascertained that Muhammad-Husaini's assertion is wrong, and the possibility does exist that the manuscripts have been corrupted. But the argument he makes for his statement is based solely on authority and thus not convincing to any neutral observer. In a passage (p. 40 *passim*) he argues for the supreme authority of *The Dawnbreakers*, a work that was actually written a few decades (1880s) after the events had taken place and was mainly based on oral reports, over other accounts. Although he does acknowledge in passing that there might be 'problems with some of the details', he quickly affirms that this 'does not have any negative effect on the book as a whole' (p. 42). He also sums up a statement from Ruhiiyih Khanum to the effect that the English translation of *The Dawnbreakers* was 'in fact a completely new work' by Shoghi Effendi, thus trying to add to its authority. Among the reasons he gives, in the same passage, as to why other historical accounts must be subordinated to *The Dawnbreakers* is its conformity with later theological assumptions. For example, Muhammad-Husaini says that *The Dawnbreakers* ('contrary to other Babi historiographers') describes the Babis as being devoid of a violent nature and that the uprisings were solely defensive actions (p. 41). It is not understandable how this could be an argument for the accuracy of a historical account. Actually, this characterization of the early Babis differs from the more nuanced picture, derived from published and unpublished eyewitness accounts written by Babis such as Muhammad Ja'far Qazvini, Muhammad Husayn Zavari'i and Lutf-'Ali Mirza Shirazi. Similarly, Muhammad-Husaini states that in

The Dawnbreakers the subject of Azal's appointment is treated 'in a desirable (*maṭlūb*) fashion' (p. 40). Here, the historical value of a source is judged by the extent to which it serves a theological purpose, something which seems legitimate for a hagiography, but certainly not for an academic work.

Siyamak Zabihi-Moqaddam has, in addition to praising the many values of Muhammad-Husaini's book, already pointed out some of its author's flawed assumptions in his well-balanced review of the book under discussion ('Pīrāmūn-i Kitāb-i Ḥaḍrat-i Bāb', *Pazhūhish-Nāmih*, 4 (1998) 130–59) and it is thus unnecessary to dwell further on the work's methodological failings. But a word should be said about Muhammad-Husaini's response to Zabihi's critiques ('Pāsukh-i yik Naqḍ-Nāmih', *Pazhūhish-Nāmih*, 5 (1999) 148–70). Not only is it unconvincing, it employs a polemic which seems unsuited to a scholar as well read and well educated as Muhammad-Husaini. For example, it is unnecessary in such a work to describe one's reviewer as 'doubting the Master's station', 'limiting the sphere of the Guardian's infallibility', etc. The reproduction of a courteous letter written by the late Hand of the Cause Ali-Akbar Furutan in which receipt of his book is confirmed (p. 154) does not speak to the accuracy of the facts in that book. Such reactions to well-balanced criticisms are unhelpful in creating an atmosphere of open debate and unbiased research.

In conclusion, Muhammad-Husaini's book can be recommended to those not familiar with earlier works on the life of the Bab and with a chief interest in stories and narratives, that is to say, a general audience with little concern for academic discussion. It is also of importance to those who plan to study the writings of the Bab. Afnan's book is, due to the documents provided therein, certainly a 'must read' for every serious researcher in the area of Babi studies. No serious work in the future can afford to ignore the documents, letters and Tablets published therein. To all other readers it will provide many new insights and the effort of reading through sometimes difficult texts will certainly pay off.

***Baha'i*, Margit Warburg, [2003]**

Studies in Contemporary Religions, Salt Lake City: Signature Books. 91 pp. ISBN 1-56085-169-4 (pbk). Price: \$12.95

Reviewed by Daniel Grolin Independent scholar and author of Jesus and Early Christianity in the Gospels: A New Dialogue (Oxford: George Ronald, 2002)

Do we need another introduction to the Baha'i Faith in the English language? Looking through the broad selection of such books, ranging from the popular books by Esslemont and Perkins to academic books by Momen and Smith, there seems to be no shortage of introductions. Until recently *The Gardeners of God: An Encounter with Five Million Bahā'īs* by Colette Gouvion and Philippe Jouvion held the distinction of being the only modern, non-polemical account of the Baha'is by non-Baha'is. Gouvion and Jouvion must now share that privilege with Margit Warburg. Warburg's book was first

1. Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844–1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989) 58–62.
2. This view is based on a document discussed in Denis MacEoin's *Sources for Early Babi Doctrine and History* (Leiden: Brill, 1992) where he states, 'There is evidence that the Bab decided on his policy of outward dissimulation while in Bushihr following the hajj, as a result of hearing about Bastami's arrest and trial' (p. 67). The main problem seems twofold: first, 'dissimulation' is something one does once one finds oneself in danger; it is not to stay out of danger altogether. Second, a letter by the Bab places his decision not to go to Karbala to the period when he was on pilgrimage (Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, 252–3). Yet news of Bastami's arrest did not reach him until he returned to Persia. MacEoin himself does not make this suggestion in his analysis of the Bab's motives; see Denis MacEoin, 'Early Shaykhī Reactions to the Bāb and His Claims', in *Studies in Bābī and Bāhā'ī History* (ed. M. Momen, Los Angeles: Kalimāt Press, 1982) 23.
3. Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal* 256–7.
4. In so far as this reviewer has been able to ascertain, Zoroaster is mentioned nowhere by the Bab.
5. The Bab, *Selections from the Writings of the*

published in an Italian translation (from English by Stefano Salzani) in 2001 by Elledici, a Turin publisher. The volume currently in review is a slightly amended version of the text that was translated into Italian.

The first two chapters suffer from plentiful, if minor, inaccuracies. Sometimes they appear to be unintentional implications, such as when, on the opening page, it is suggested that the description of the Sicilian Ḥāzīratu'l-Quds might fit a Ḥāzīratu'l-Quds anywhere. Further on, Warburg calls the Babi movement 'revolutionary' (p. 6), which might be mistakenly understood to imply that the Bab from the outset was intent on replacing the Shah or the monarchy, which he was not. Anachronistically, she states that Sayyid Rashti sent out his disciples to find 'a forerunner to the Hidden Imam, the Bab, or gate' (p. 6), and thus muddles title and function. Rashti apparently spoke of the Promised One, the Manifestation (Ḥuhūr), while the title 'Bab' which Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad adopted was already understood in the Shaykhi context as referring to the Perfect Shi'i who could communicate the will of the Hidden Imam.¹ In the telling of the events subsequent to the Bab's declaration we learn that 'Ali Muhammad planned to go to Karbala in Iraq to await the advent of the Imam. However, the Bab chose to stay away when a religious tribunal convened in Baghdad and condemned him and one of the local Babi leaders for blasphemy (p. 7). The Bab did indeed plan to go to Karbala, yet what he did was send his disciples ahead to rally the people for his arrival. 'Ali Bastami, who was arrested for his proclamation of the Bab and named in the fatwa against the unidentified Bab, was not a local person but had been sent specifically by the Bab to make the proclamation. The view that the Bab decided not to go when news of 'Ali Bastami's arrest reached him has been aired, but never formally published, and faces serious problems.² In view of the lack of consensus, Warburg would have done better to omit comments on the Bab's reasons for not appearing in Karbala, or at least to back up her opinion, to footnote supporting references, and note the divergence of opinion about this claim.

Following this, we are informed that, after a period of house arrest in Shiraz, the Bab 'escaped' until he was arrested again (p. 7). In truth, however, what he 'escaped' was not his imprisonment but the chaos that was provoked by an outbreak of cholera. It was a magistrate and Isfahan's governor who ended the imprisonment.³ Another instance of anachronistic historiography is the inclusion of Zoroaster in the list of prophets named in the Bab's succession of revelations (p. 9).⁴ One is puzzled that the mention of the Bab's title for the prophet that would come after him ('him whom God shall make manifest') should prompt a reference (unpaginated) to Browne's lengthy paper on the 'Babis of Persia' (p. 10 n. 7), in which only two paragraphs deal with this issue (pp. 926–7), when numerous passages from the Bab's own writings on this matter have been translated into English.⁵ With regard to Babis' exile from Baghdad we are told that 'Baha'u'llah and Subh-i-Azal, with their families and a group of followers were forcibly moved to Istanbul ...' (p. 12), although, in fact, the government papers did not mention Subh-i-Azal.⁶ There are also a number of statements for which one would have liked to see a substantiating reference. Examples include claims that 'most of today's Baha'i approach to social and economic issues can be traced to this work [*The Secret of Divine Civilization*]' (p. 15), the figures for

the Baha'i population of America (p. 17), and that Baha'is consider rules of election as important as prayer (p. 18).

Throughout, Warburg consistently refers to the Baha'i religion as 'Baha'i', although well aware that Baha'is themselves refer to it as the Baha'i Faith. She explains that Baha'i means 'People of Baha' (p. 13) and in an endnote (n. 17) explains that it can also be understood as an adjective. In fact, Baha'i merely means 'of Baha', the 'i' at the end of the noun making it genitive. In one passage this oddness becomes clearer when 'Babism' becomes 'Baha'i' (p. 6). The Italian translator avoids the confusion in this case by inserting 'movimento', and elsewhere by adding 'fede' or 'religione', notwithstanding that he translates the above-mentioned endnote, which explains Warburg's convention. The Italian title *I baha'i* refers to the Baha'is (the people) and not to the religion – as does the English title.

Before moving on to the next chapter Warburg provides 19 photographs showing historical figures, structures and places of the Baha'i community. These provide a nice visual impression of the Baha'i Faith.

After a difficult start the book shifts up in gear, with chapter 3 providing an excellent summary of Baha'i beliefs. It succeeds in being both brief and accurate in its description of the theology and the social vision of the Baha'i community. Warburg describes the Baha'i calendar, and communal meetings such as the nineteen-day feast and holy days. Here she recounts from her notes an experience of attending a celebration of the birthday of Baha'u'llah. This chapter also contains a description of the practice of prayer and fasting in the Baha'i community. Here she draws on her experience of fieldwork in the Danish Baha'i community.⁷ From her experience from her stay in Haifa, she gives readers a description of what Baha'is do when they go on pilgrimage.

Throughout, Warburg maintains a sociological perspective. So, for example, the exclusive right of Baha'is to donate to the Baha'i fund is viewed as community building (p. 40), and in several places the Baha'i Faith is compared with New Religious Movements (NRMs). This feature of the book provides an interesting perspective that is lacking in works such as that of Gouvion and Jouvion.

Occasionally Warburg dredges up little-known facts from her travels, such as the existence of a small portrait of Baha'u'llah in the Baha'i temple in Kampala (p. 84 n. 19) or that the financing of the shrine of Mirza Yahya was provided by a wealthy relative who came to Famagusta in the 1960s (p. 64).

Chapter 5, 'Schism, Opposition, and Persecution', returns to history, looking specifically at those subjects. A Baha'i reader will find it curious that the doctrine of the Covenant, which is so central to the issue of schism, is entirely unmentioned. For the most part, the survey of schisms is accurate, but two episodes bear comment here. The first is the publication of Ficicchia's book in Germany and the subsequent riposte by Udo Schaefer *et al.* (p. 65). Warburg's presentation here is somewhat uneven. Ficicchia was a disaffected Baha'i whose monograph can only be described as polemical. Its effect on the German general public was noticeable in that the Baha'i community suddenly found itself treated with disdain. So it was not an example, as Warburg's puts it, of 'sensitivity among Baha'is to the issue of opposition to the leadership' (p. 65). The need for an effective apologia (which was substantially successful), was not internal, but a matter of public relations.

Bāb (trans. Habib Taherzadeh, Haifa: Bahā'ī World Centre, 1978).

6. E. G. Browne *Materials for the Study of the Bābī Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1918), 275–87. Baha'u'llah explains that when he was summoned to Constantinople he instructed his half-brother Subh-i Azal to go to Persia to disseminate some of the writings of the Bab specifically because he had not been mentioned in the decree; Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* (trans. Shoghi Effendi, Wilmette, IL: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust, 1988) 166–7.
7. Margit Warburg, 'Afholdsenhedsidealer inden for baha'i', in *Idealer i religion og religionsforskning*, (ed. Lene Buck, Margrethe Haraldsdatter, Anneline Juul, Charlotte Schönbeck, Oluf Schönbeck, København: Museum Tusulanums Forlag Københavns Universitet, 1997) 101–13. Her findings about the practice of prayer have not, as far as this reviewer is aware, been previously published.

8. *The Ministry of the Custodians 1957–1963: An Account of the Stewardship of the Hands of the Cause* (Haifa: Bahā'ī World Centre, 1992) 30.
9. Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, *Scholarship* (Mona Vale, Australia: Bahā'ī Publications Australia, 1995) 36, #69.
10. *ibid* 35, #68.
11. Margit Warburg, *Iranske dokumenter: Forfølgelsen af Bahā'ierne i Iran* (Copenhagen: Rhodos, 1985).
12. Not least through standard works such as Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge Classics, 2002).

The second episode was the change of leadership after the death of Shoghi Effendi, at which point, according to Warburg, leadership 'was assumed by a self-appointed council of nine men called "the Custodians"' (p. 66). The Custodians were elected from among the Hands of the Cause who had been appointed by Shoghi Effendi. The act of electing nine from among their number was provided for in the Will of 'Abdu'l-Baha. Furthermore, the council was not restricted to men.⁸

In the sub-section on internal disputes and opposition Warburg interprets and summarizes the position of the Universal House of Justice on scholarship in a way that is plainly inconsistent with its statements on the issue, as well as with the passage which she herself cites. What makes this particularly odd is the fact that Warburg has sufficient contacts with Baha'i academics to know otherwise. The Universal House of Justice relegates the choice of methodology to academics,⁹ and states explicitly: 'that the Faith, as the Guardian states, "enjoins upon its followers the primary duty of an unfettered search after truth", should reassure any aspiring Bahā'ī historian that there can be no question of any requirement to distort history in the so-called "interests" of the Faith'.¹⁰ Part of the problem appears to be that Warburg conflates review policy with methodology. Warburg's presentation of the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran is well informed, as one might expect from one who has published a book on the subject.¹¹

In the final section of chapter 5 Warburg discusses *najis* and rumours of immorality. The concept of impurity (*najis*) is well established in sociology,¹² and she presents two interesting stories where it comes into play. The first relates that the confiscated home of a Baha'i was hosed down before a mulla would enter it; the second relates that donation of blood by Baha'is was refused. But the story regarding the tea that magically converts faithful Muslims into zealous Baha'is, amusing as it is, has nothing to do with *najis*.

The volume ends abruptly, with Warburg disavowing rumours of immorality in the Baha'i community. A general audience might have been well served by some sort of conclusion or reflection at this point, rather than the notes and bibliography (or, in the case of the Italian translation, which has footnotes, just the bibliography).

Some of the difficulties from which the English text suffers may be due to the fact that Warburg's primary language is Danish. For example, we are told that the Twelfth Imam 'mystically disappeared' (p. 5). In Danish the word '*mystisk*' could be translated both as 'mystical' and as 'mysterious' ('*mistico*' and '*misterioso*' in Italian). It would seem that the latter meaning is more appropriate.

Warburg sets out to present the Baha'i Faith, and in this book she does just that in a short and concise way. In a general audience there will undoubtedly be some who prefer Warburg's style of writing and feel comfortable with the fact that she writes as an outsider. In an academic setting, however, the book's value is severely limited by its imprecision and lack of references. Inaccuracies and mistakes that have little import for a general audience will soon frustrate the well informed, and students will find too many unsubstantiated or misdirecting assertions to make use of it in research. This is truly a shame, as the book had the potential to be useful in courses such as comparative religion, where the Baha'i Faith is touched on only briefly. As it is, unfortunately, it seems unlikely that the book will be of value to readers other than those who are specifically interested in a non-Baha'i view of the Baha'is.

A revised edition that corrected problems of the kind noted in this review would be most welcome and would likely fill a niche.

The Baha'i Faith in America, William Garlington (2005)

Westport, CT: Praeger. Distributed by Kalimāt Press as volume 21 in its Studies in the Babi and Baha'i Religions series. xxiii + 221 pp. including select bibliography and index. (hbk Praeger) 0-275-98413-3 \$39.95; (pbk Kalimāt) ISBN 0-275-98991-7 \$29.95

Reviewed by Peter Smith Mahidol University, Bangkok

William Garlington has provided us with an interesting addition to the growing number of volumes of American Baha'i history, and the first to attempt an overall summary from its beginnings in the 1890s to the present day. This is an admirable endeavour for, as Garlington notes, the American Baha'i community remains one of the most influential in the world (p. 73), and its development forms a crucial part of the development of the Baha'i Faith as a whole.

The book is divided into two main parts: a general introduction to the Baha'i Faith (dealing with its historical development, beliefs and principles, community life, and administrative system), and a survey of Baha'i developments in the United States of America. There is also a brief foreword by Jeffrey J. Kripal, J. Newton Rayzor Professor of Religious Studies at Rice University, who links Garlington's work with the contemporary struggle against religious intolerance and praises it for combining accessibility to the general reader with good historical scholarship, and appreciation for the Baha'i tradition with criticism of that tradition.

I will confine my main remarks to the American material – itself the core of the book. This consists of a historical survey in three chronologically based chapters (1892–1921; 1922–57; 1958–2000), followed by a discussion of 'priorities and issues' in the contemporary American Baha'i community, an account of recent examples of American 'anti-Baha'i polemic' (by William M. Miller, Francis Beckwith and Vance Salisbury) and Baha'i responses to it, and a summary conclusion, including interesting speculations about the future possibilities for the development of the Baha'i Faith in the United States of America.

Readers will already be familiar with the considerable amount of material about the beginnings of the American Baha'i community during the period of 'Abdu'l-Baha's leadership (1892–1921), and this is summarized well. The later periods have been less studied, and Garlington's account of them, while illuminating, is more idiosyncratic, both in its choice of themes (some receive great attention while others are relatively neglected) and in the way in which some developments are characterized.

Thus, Garlington provides us with relatively detailed accounts of the early development of the Baha'i administrative system during the 1920s and 1930s, and of the role of African Americans in the Baha'i community, and more generally, of Baha'i work in relation to race relations. But other themes, such as the successive teaching plans whereby the Baha'is sought to increase both their distribution and numbers; the actual pattern of geographical expansion;

the long-drawn-out project to build a Baha'i temple at Wilmette; the development of permanent summer schools; subsidiary administrative developments; and the major contribution made by American Baha'is to the global expansion of the Faith, are relatively neglected or omitted altogether. This is surprising, as source materials on all of these developments are readily available.

Again, while useful reference is made to developments in four local communities (Kenosha, Wisconsin; Baltimore, Maryland; Atlanta, Georgia; and Sacramento, California), demonstrating contrasting problems and successes at the local level, there is no proper account of regional developments and differences. Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico – all parts of the United States but now with their own separate Baha'i administrations – are omitted altogether. Similarly, although short biographies of four of Shoghi Effendi's chief American lieutenants (Mason Remey, Horace Holley, Louis Gregory and Dorothy Baker) are provided (pp. 113–17), many major figures in later American Baha'i history are omitted (Mountfort Mills's exclusion from the ranks of 'American lieutenants' seems particularly curious – as does the identification of Remey as their 'chief' (p. 127)).

Turning to contemporary developments, Garlington deals with the beginnings of rapid growth in the American community during the late 1960s (including a selection of brief 'conversion accounts' from several 'rank-and-file' Baha'is); examines in detail the various controversies that have developed in relation to the development of 'Baha'i Studies' within the community and the resultant alienation of a number of intellectually inclined Baha'is; and provides a brief discussion of some of the difficulties involved in the integration of the large number of Iranian Baha'is (12,000–15,000) who migrated to the United States of America after 1979 – but neglects contemporary Baha'i concerns with interfaith activities, the encouragement of social and economic development projects, gender equality, and support for the work of United Nations agencies, noting them only in passing.

This relative neglect of many aspects of American Baha'i activity and experience is a major shortcoming, particularly in a book that seeks to provide a basic overview of its subject (For example, Garlington devotes almost as much space to the removal from Baha'i membership of the *Canadian* writer Michael McKenny in the late 1990s (the exact date is not given) (p. 168) as he does to the second American Seven Year Plan (1946–53, p. 112)). A focus on a few themes of particular interest to an author would be acceptable in a monograph explicating a particular argument, but not in an introductory work intended for the general reader. Indeed, given the space of almost 200 pages of text, these are entirely unnecessary omissions, and could have been avoided if the author had not decided to devote 70 pages to an often excessively detailed account of the overall history and practices of the Baha'i Faith – leaving only 113 pages for the actual topic of the book. Why do this? A very brief overview and references to the many useful general histories of and introductions to the Faith now available would have given Garlington the space he needed to adequately address his subject.

The characterization of the topics of major interest to the author is also not without problems. This is particularly evident in Garlington's examination of recent American Baha'i developments, which he examines largely in terms of a supposed 'fundamentalist'/'liberal' clash within the community.

Although such a conceptualization may well have value as an explanatory device, it cannot be presented unquestioningly, as happens here. Crucially, if such a dichotomy is going to be used, then the terms themselves must be clearly defined – which they are not. Certainly, there are Baha'is in the United States (and no doubt elsewhere) who see themselves as 'liberals' or 'conservatives' on some matters (none, I suspect, would call themselves 'fundamentalists'), but these are not defined and clearly labelled factions – particularly as Baha'is commonly seek to avoid factionalism. Again, without clear evidence, it is also unhelpful (or worse) to label particular members of the American national spiritual assembly as being 'liberals' or 'conservatives', whether on racial or other issues (e.g. p. 129).

A related problem concerns the use of sources. In part this reflects the author's strong focus on contemporary developments. Thus, recent Internet sources are much in evidence, while official Baha'i publications such as *The Bahā'ī World* series or the periodical *Bahā'ī News*, which are invaluable sources for the earlier period, are conspicuous by their almost total absence. The use of the Internet is problematic, however, in that it can lead (as here) to an over-reliance on some of the 'dissident' views critical of the Baha'i administration that have been presented in Internet discussion groups over the past decade or so. Such views are important and should be discussed, but they are unlikely to provide a whole or balanced view of developments, particularly when our author appears to adopt a partisan preference for them over more 'conservative' views (Garlington's use of published sources and personal informants on the contemporary period also seems to reflect a preference for 'radical' views). Again, convention discussions and statements of national spiritual assembly policies are not much utilized, but only referred to in selected controversial instances, and statements such as that some American Baha'is saw the attacks of 9/11 in apocalyptic terms (p. 149) are entirely unsourced.

It is also a matter of regret that Garlington makes little attempt at comparison with developments in other Baha'i communities – not even that of Canada, which until 1948 formed part of a joint North American Baha'i community with the United States of America, and which has been the subject of an excellent academic study by Will van den Hoonaard (not even referred to by Garlington). It would have been interesting if he had expanded his brief reference to differences between the mass teaching campaigns in India and those in the United States of America (p. 140).

The book would have benefited from more careful editing. Not only is there some overlap between the two main sections of the book but there are a number of minor ambiguities of expression for historians and others to quibble over, which should have been spotted and corrected. These are particularly evident in the first part of the book (the general account of Baha'i history, belief and practice): e.g. Muhammad-'Ali was the second oldest of a number of Baha'u'llah's sons and not simply the 'younger son' (p. 10); Shoghi Effendi did not experience 'immediate difficulties' after becoming Guardian because of Ahmad Sohrab's criticisms of the new administrative developments (p. 14); Dann May might better be described as a Baha'i who is a philosopher rather than as a 'Baha'i philosopher' (p. 27) – implying that a systematic body of 'Baha'i philosophy' has been developed; there is no set form for commemoration of the Declaration of the Bab (p. 47); the centre for present-day Baha'i

pilgrimage consists of Haifa *and* Bahji/Akka (p. 50); the Huququ'llah is not 'commonly known' as 'the Huq' (p. 54); national conventions are normally held during the Riḍvān period, which extends beyond 'April' (p. 60); the office of assembly chairman may well be just as important as those of secretary and treasurer (p. 61); certainly outside of the United States (and possibly even within it), it seems unlikely that most local assemblies meet 'once a week' (p. 58); assembly committees do not have to be chaired by an assembly member (p. 58); the assembly chairman is not necessarily the one who reports to the Nineteen Day Feast (p. 59); the playing of pre-recorded tapes from the national assembly at Nineteen Day Feasts (p. 59) is perhaps a specifically American practice; most national assemblies do not have publishing trusts (p. 62); whether or not national teaching committees have a bevy of subsidiary committees varies from one country to another, and not all committees present annual plans to their national assemblies (p. 62); it should be made clear that regional Baha'i councils have only been formed in a minority of national communities (they are not 'numerous'), that where they have been formed they vary in their method of functioning, and that the details of formation given by Garlington apply specifically to the contiguous United States and not necessarily to other national communities (pp. 63, 66); it is only the opinion of one particular scholar that the Universal House of Justice has legislated infallibly only on seven occasions (p. 66); 'Abdu'l-Baha named a number of individuals as Hands of the Cause, but purely as a honorific and generally posthumously, while Shoghi Effendi named 42 Hands (not 43), of whom only 32 were given a functional role (p. 66); the International Teaching Centre has primarily assumed tasks previously accomplished by the Hands of the Cause at the Baha'i World Centre and only indirectly those of the Universal House of Justice (p. 68); the Baha'i conception of *badā* differs from that of mainstream Shi'ism (p. 70); although the membership of the Universal House of Justice changes through periodic elections, it retains a continuity of existence which seems to be belied by referring to 'another House' (p. 70); Shoghi Effendi's letter 'The Dispensation of Bahā'u'llāh' (1934) provides an additional 'affirmation of the Lesser Covenant' (p. 71); I suspect that the followers of the various Remeyite factions now number in the hundreds rather than 'the thousands' (p. 73). Again, some important statements are not sourced (e.g. Shoghi Effendi's 'list of nine existing religions' (p. 27), or are given only a single controversial source (e.g. Sen McGlinn on Baha'i attitudes towards the relationship between church and state (p. 34, n. 23)).

Similarly, in the 'American' section of the book, the following can be noted: both Kheiralla and Horace Holley married more than once, so that references to the wife of either of these two need to be clearly explicated (pp. 78, 79, 114); Shoghi Effendi 'committed himself' to his work as Guardian from the time his appointment became known and did not wait until he had come to terms with the demands involved (p. 103); there is no indication that Shoghi Effendi initially conceived the 'World Order' letters as a series (p. 106); *Reality* magazine was presented as a Baha'i magazine, and not simply one influenced by Baha'i themes, and its sometime editor, H.G. Dyar, considered himself a Baha'i at a time when Baha'i membership criteria were still relatively undefined (p.107); the tensions relating to the American national convention did not result from its gaining more powers in 1925, but from its being less powerful than the old Baha'i Temple Unity (p. 109); the first American Seven

Year Plan began in 1937 (not 1938), and the message cited from Shoghi Effendi came towards the end and not the beginning of the Plan (p. 110); in 1936, the Baha'is were not 'evenly spread' across the country (there were very few Baha'is in the South or the Mountain States) (p. 110); the reference to Latin America as 'southern' is idiosyncratic (p. 112); if I were a Canadian, I might object to the statement that 'some American members were lost to the new Canadian community' in 1948 (p. 112); the Nine Year Plan lasted until 1973 (not 1972) (p. 130); teaching efforts on Amerindian reservations predated the 1980s (p. 139); and the George Ronald publishers are not based in London (p. 147). I would have found a more detailed index helpful.

How should we assess this book? It reads well and is easily accessible to the general reader. Undoubtedly, it is of considerable interest in the questions it raises, and it provides a useful starting point for further research into the author's interpretations, but as an account of the overall development of the American Baha'i community it seems to me fundamentally flawed, both for its major lacunae in coverage and in its sometimes partisan account of recent developments and uncritical use of sources.

These limitations are unfortunate, both because they undermine the book's stated purpose as a general overview, and because they weaken the author's discussion of a number of contemporary themes and developments – such as the impact of the Internet on Baha'i discourse; the status of 'Baha'i scholarship' within the Faith; Baha'i attitudes and policies on various social and intellectual issues; and the place of the American Baha'i community in modern American religious life – all of which merit far more detailed examination. Garlington raises many interesting questions that could easily be the subject of a wealth of essays and monographs.

So, an interesting and perhaps provocative start to the process of mapping out the development of the Baha'i community in that 'great Republic' of the West, but not an adequate account of either that community's internal development or of its role in the Baha'i Faith as a whole.

Rumi: Past and Present, East and West – the Life, Teachings and poetry of Jalal al-Din Rumi. Franklin D. Lewis, 2000

Oxford: Oneworld Publications, xxvii + 686 pp. ISBN 1-85168-214-7. Price: (hbk) £26.99, US\$35.95 (Winner in 2000 of the British-Kuwait Friendship Society Prize in Middle Eastern Studies administered by the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)

Reviewed by **Bruce Wannell** *York, England*

This is a book to be welcomed both by students and by the general public – a scholarly and sympathetic account of a great poet of the Islamic mystical tradition of Sufism. Extensive historical research underpins this book; the tone and style are approachable; the author takes us through his arguments with exhaustive patience, scrupulous honesty, and also humour.

Franklin D. Lewis gives an account of his first encounter as a teenager with Rumi's work quoted in the mid-19th century writings of Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i Faith, notably in his *Haft Vadi* (*Seven Valleys*). His sympathy with the roots of the Baha'i Faith in Persian Islamic mystical traditions is evident throughout this book. This sympathy is counterbalanced by an undertone of disappointment and irritation, and no doubt justified grievance, with traditional Ithna 'Ashari Shi'a exotericism and indeed with all religious legalism. He also condemns the Turkish nationalism of some recent writers on Rumi, and shows an amused disdain of contemporary fashionable Californian New-Age distortion of Rumi – though he wryly comments that without that fashion there might be only a limited market for his scholarly work. His 1995 doctoral thesis on the 12th-century Persian mystical poet Sana'i is a basis of sound historical research, which also benefits this book, one of the best Rumi studies in its range of reading, research and critical comparison of sources. The poet is here placed back in his context as a medieval Sunni Muslim of the Hanafi legal school, of Khurasani socio-linguistic and literary background, living and working in Mongol-dominated Seljuq Anatolia, between the remnants of Hellenic Byzantium and the Ayyubid, later Mamluke, territories of Syria and Egypt.

Lewis topples many myths from their shaky pedestals: Rumi's was born in September 1207 not in Balkh in northern Afghanistan but Wakhsh in the mountains of Tajikistan where his father was working as a preacher – though Rumi is actually referred to as 'Balkhi' in early sources. As a boy he did not meet the mystic poet 'Attar in Nishapur. He was not principally influenced by Ibn 'Arabi's style of mystical theosophy but was rather the inheritor of the Khurasani mystical poetic tradition of Sana'i and 'Attar.

The 37-year-old Rumi's relationship with the sexagenarian Shams was not a foretaste of Californian gay romance, but must be seen in the historical context of the Islamic medieval structures of learning. However, Lewis quotes (p. 207) the beginning of a passage from the *Fihī mā Fihī*, to argue a relationship of ceremonious formality and humility between Rumi and Salahu'd-Din the goldsmith, successor to Shams in Rumi's affections. The continuation of the passage shows that this 'humility' involved mutual massage in the steam bath. It is indeed difficult to reconstruct the emotional and social conventions of distant and foreign cultures long ago. Salahu'd-Din's daughter married Rumi's son, and Rumi conscientiously took care of Salahu'd-Din's other children after their father's death. The sobbing threnody which Rumi extemporized on that occasion – '*ay darīghā! ay darīghā! ay darīghā! ay darīgh!*' – is beautifully translated by Lewis on page 215. By returning these poems to their lived context, he restores also their immediacy and raw emotional power.

One of the most valuable parts of the book is the analysis of the influences on Rumi: his own father Baha'u'd-Din Walad; his preceptor, Burhanu'd-Din Muhaqqiq and his work the *Ma'ārif*; and Shams, who is given extended treatment on the basis of his rediscovered works, and especially the *Maqālāt*. There are very useful details of Rumi's life, and a carefully re-evaluated chronology, given in chapter 7, 'Towards a Biography of Rumi', as also a register of historical characters with whom he had dealings.

The hagiographies of Sepahsalar, Aflaki and Sultan Walad are critically evaluated and compared to the information discernible in Rumi's own writ-

ings, the *Mathnavī* (as edited by Nicholson, 1925–33), the *Dīvān* (as edited by Furuzanfar, 1957–67), the '*malfūzāt*' records of conversations *Fihī ma Fihī* (recommended in the edition by Mudarris-i Sadiqi, 1994) and also the letters (as edited by Subhani, 1992), which show the social machinations of seeking patronage and favours from the powerful political and military elites of the Seljuqs and other power-holders recognized or established by the Mongols after their conquest of Anatolia in 1243. The mythmaking of the hagiographers is unmasked as a process of the later institutionalization of the Mevlevi order, which saw the formalization of the Sama' ritual, Ottoman patronage, and a geographical expansion to India and Central Asia and the modern West.

The most amusing part of this long book is the later section devoted to the entry of Rumi into western literary culture, where the inadequacies of free second- or third-hand adaptations masquerading as direct translations are lightly reviewed and dismissed, relativizing the recent popular successes of free adaptations of Rumi's poetry by poets with little or no knowledge of the medieval Persian cultural and linguistic background.

Chapter 8 presents 50 of Rumi's poems in translation: these are both contemporary and mostly faithful to the spirit of Islamic mysticism of the originals. Lewis conscientiously gives the transliteration of the first line of the original and reference number in the *Dīvān*, etc, and also the metre, emphasizing the importance of rhythmic declamation in the Sama' ceremonies; useful brief notes follow the translations.

However the treatment is often free (I like the translation of '*dar firāq-i jamāl-i ū, mā-rā jism vayrān u jān dar ū chun būm*' on p. 178 as 'In separation from his beauty, my flesh is in ruins, my soul hoots like an owl' where the translator's addition of 'hoots' makes the image even more vivid), but sometimes the attempt to accommodate modern experience leads to cultural anachronism or insensitivity (as when Rumi's arrangements for his son's wedding include a western-style wine-waiter, p. 212).

An occasional pseudo-French medievalism of expression does jar – Armance and Byzance, delire and delusion, fabliaux, etudes of poetry – as also, due no doubt to the absence of Latin from school curricula, 'tribulation' where temptation seems to be meant, 'sojourner' for traveller, 'security' for bribe, and later 'amoretti' for lovers.

In the first poem chosen for chapter 8, '*kafi afiyūn*' is translated as 'a froth of opium': here the '*kaf*' is the palm of the hand, so it would be better to translate it as 'a fist-full of opium'.

In the second poem, in the last verse, '*alam*' a battle-standard is required by the metre and the sense, not '*ilm*' knowledge (*mustaf'ilūn mustaf'ilūn mustaf'ilūn mustaf'ilūn* – '*khāmūsh! kih bas musta'jil-am, raftam sū-yi pā-yi 'alam*'). The metre could again have helped avoid the mistranslation 'even in the midst of war' (based on wrong insertion of *izāfih*) of '*v'andar miyān, jang afkani*' which means 'You (God) raise up conflict (in their midst), ...' compounded by a further mistranslation 'that no one's ever seen before' for '*fī istinā-i lā yurā*' which is a quote '*lā yurā*' from Quran Sura 46, verse 25, referring to the destruction of the tribe of 'Ad, so that nothing except their empty dwellings was to be seen the following morning.

In poem 5, which hinges on the illusory identities displayed by sorcery '*jādū*' or '*sīhr*', with '*nimūdan*' as a verb meaning to show (here falsely, by

slick sophistry), there are also several instances where the meaning could be expressed more precisely: especially the verse ‘*pur bād-i hidāyat ast rīsh-ish, az sihr-i taw, jāhil-i ghawī-rā*’ – where the windy, self-important, misguided, bearded ignoramus (i.e. exoteric cleric!) seeks to guide where he has no knowledge, and the verse ‘*sufīsata’iy-am kard sihr-at: ay Turk nimūdeh Hindū’i-rā*’ where the poet is turned into a sophist, passing off the blackness of a Hindu as a white moon-like Turk. Sophistry, like juggling and sorcery – ‘the equivocation of the fiend, that lies like truth’ – makes things seem other than they are, which was also a feature of training in rhetoric. The translation also mixes up ‘*shīrī*’ and ‘*āhū’ī*’, the timid gazelle is passed off as being lion-like, not vice-versa; and it also misses the negative connotation of ‘*ahwāl*’ – here the eye unable to see the unity that underlies the apparent multiplicity of existence – and of ‘*ālū*’ less prestigious than the ‘*turunj*’ golden citron which, according to Khaqani’s famous *qasīda* describing the ruins of Ctesiphon, graced the royal table of the Sasanians.

In the lines quoted from the *Mathnavī* on page 182, “*ishq-rā pansad par-ast, u har parī az farāz-e ‘arsh tā taht ath-tharā*”, the translation runs ‘Love has a thousand (not 500) feathers, and each one soars over the Throne beyond the Pleiades’: which fails to recognize a quote from the Qur’an, Sura 20, verse 6, where *taht ath-tharā* is usually translated as ‘under the soil’, which has nothing to do with the Pleiades constellation, the Arabic name of which, *thurayyā*, could possibly lead to confusion; previously however, on page 24, *tharā* had been correctly translated as soil. Just a slip, or unfamiliarity with the basic text contemplated by all Islamic mystics?

The nature of the conquest state of Seljuq Anatolia – a Turkish military and tribal element superimposed on a Greek and Armenian peasantry and urban merchant and craftsman class, with numerous immigrants from Iran and central Asia – remains difficult to grasp. Since the floodgates were opened to the Turks after the battle of Manzikert in 1071, there had been, by the time Rumi was active in Konya in the middle years of the 13th century, a considerable degree of acculturation and even conversion to Islam among the Byzantine inhabitants of Anatolia. We find Sufis acting on different levels, as they have done repeatedly in history, as shock absorbers for disrupted and dislocated societies, as agents of conversion, as elements legitimizing a regime, as soul doctors, as purveyors of emotional catharsis, of pietism, of a subtle aesthetic and a spiritual philosophy.

Rumi’s patronage and promotion of music, especially after his undergoing the influence of Shams Tabrizi, led to the formalization of the Sama’ ritual, which was obviously a powerfully emotive shared experience that could transcend linguistic boundaries, and offer a form of self-transcendence to artisans and new converts as well as to members of the court. But to whom was Rumi addressing his poetry and sermons? Who actually understood the Persian he spoke and wrote? One is left with the impression that the great *Divān* and the *Mathnavī* were addressed to an inner circle of elite students with leisure to learn and an already considerable knowledge of Persian, Arabic and the Islamic tradition.

But what were the relations among different groups of Sufis – say the Mevlevis and the followers of Sadru’d-Din Qunavi or Haji Bektash and the Akhis encountered by Ibn Battuta in his early 14th-century travels – were they friendly or distant or were they even hostile rivals? What was the social

morality of followers capable of threatening to murder or actually murdering their master Rumi's inspiring mentor Shamsu'd-Din of Tabriz or his beloved companion Salahu'd-Din – how far had they evolved on the spiritual path?

For visitors to Konya and the areas of Anatolia once dominated by the Seljuqs, the surviving buildings of the 13th-century AD evoke the ambience in which Rumi lived. We could have had a little more on these and their patrons, notably Sahib Ata Fakhru'd-Din who died in 1288, and was responsible for the 1258 Sahib Ata Jami' Mosque as well as the Ince Minareli Madrasa in Konya and the 1275 Tash Madrasa in Aqshahr/Aksehir and the 1271 Gok Madrasa at Sivas, and also Jalaluddin Qaratai and his magnificent madrasa of 1251 where Rumi passed with his disciples both during the lifetime, and after the death, of the founder. As so often in the history of Islamic or medieval culture generally, the gap between the surviving written record and actual buildings and objects is often unbridged.

There is thus still much work to be done in the field of Rumi studies. But with this book to instruct and inspire new generations of students, willing workers will surely be found – the field is rich and rewarding.