

Article

Evidences of Bahá'u'lláh's Theophanic Awakening and Disclosure before His Síyáh-Chál Experience

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Abstract¹

Bahá'u'lláh's epiphanic experience in the Síyáh-Chál (Black Pit) in 1852 is considered the point when He received "the first intimations of [His] dawning Revelation."² This is often understood to mean that Bahá'u'lláh did not manifest any divine revelation prior to His encounter with the Maid of Heaven in the Síyáh-Chál. The primary purpose of this research is to provide evidence for a claim that, while the Síyáh-Chál was certainly "the birth[place] of the Mission of Bahá'u'lláh,"³ and that the ministry of Bahá'u'lláh thus did indeed commence with His experience in that prison, the awakening of Bahá'u'lláh to His divine station might have gone through multiple stages and that His experience in the Síyáh-Chál could be regarded as the culmination of that process. Evidence supporting this thesis comes from significant experiences throughout Bahá'u'lláh's life, spanning from childhood episodes in the 1820s–1830s through formative events in the 1840s leading up to 1852. This paper draws on the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as well as hagiographical accounts showing how members of Bahá'u'lláh's inner circle recognized His station before the Síyáh-Chál experience. Special attention is given to Táhirih (Qurratu'l-'Ayn), whose writings suggest she recognized Bahá'u'lláh, before His encounter with the Maid of Heaven in the Síyáh-Chál, as a Manifestation of God equal to the Báb and previous Manifestations.

Bábí-Bahá'í Theophanology

Unlike Jewish⁴ and Islamic⁵ sacred texts, which appear to suggest that Moses and Muḥammad were mere mortals, Bábí-Bahá'í theophanology has closer parallels with the Christological notion of Jesus in the Gospel of John as the Logos or the eternal Word of God appearing in the flesh. As such, the scriptures of the Bábí and Bahá'í religions not only presuppose the preexistence of the Manifestations of God (*mazáhir-i-iláhi*), but also affirm that they are always Manifestations, before and after the onset of

¹ The present authors would like to thank Naeem Nabiliakbar, Omid Ghaemmaghami, Moojan Momen, Anthony A. Lee, and Brent Poirier for their valuable contributions to this paper.

² Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust: Wilmette, Illinois, 1979), p. 237.

³ Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World: 1950–1957* (U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust: Wilmette, Illinois, 1971), p. 124

⁴ Exodus 4:10. Upon learning that He has been chosen to lead the Hebrews out of captivity in Egypt, Moses complains to God that He has a speech impediment, implying that He is not the best choice for the task (let alone worthy of the mantle of Prophethood).

⁵ Qur'án 18:100. God instructs Muḥammad to tell his followers that He (Muḥammad) is a man like others, a mere mortal, appearing to indicate that God could have picked any other man to be the recipient of divine revelation.

divine revelation. In fact, Bahá'ís consider these Manifestations to be a distinct level of being—above humans and below the Divine⁶—Who are predestined to act as intermediaries between God and man, insofar as God, in Essence, remains unapproachable and unknowable. Thus, Bahá'í theology can best be described as apophatic⁷ in nature, and redefined as manifestation theology or theophanology (*mazhariyyat*).⁸ Manifestations of God are viewed as the Sadratu'l-Muntahá,⁹ Who represents the furthest extent to which humans can understand God. In other words, these Manifestations are as much God as humans can ever hope to know, whether in this life or in the hereafter.¹⁰ Thus, even before the start of their ministries, while they are not fully manifested, they are conscious of their station. To that effect, we have the following passage from a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh to Mírzá 'Alí-Muḥammad Varqá dated 29 Rajab 1304 A.H. (23 April 1887), in which He says:

The Universal Manifestations of God have ever been aware [of their station], even before [the inauguration of] their dispensations [*zuhúr*]. They, in truth, are the Dawning-places of divine Knowledge.¹¹

مظاهر کلیّه قبل از ظهور آگاه بوده‌اند ایشانند
مطالع علم الهی.

However, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains in *Some Answered Questions*, the Manifestations have three stations. Their “awakening” refers only to their “corporeal existence”:

From the beginning, that sanctified Reality is undoubtedly aware of the secret of existence, and from childhood the signs of greatness are clearly manifested in Him. How then could He fail, in spite of such bounties and perfections, to be conscious of His own station?

البته حقیقت مقدّسه از بدایت واقف بر سرّ وجود
است و از سنّ طفولیت آثار بزرگواری از آن ظاهر
و واضح است پس چگونه می‌شود که با وجود این
فیوضات و کمالات استشعار نباشد؟

We mentioned the three stations of the Manifestations of God: that of corporeal

در مظاهر مقدّسه ذکر سه مقام کردیم مقام جسد

⁶ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions* (Haifa, Israel: Bahá'í World Centre, 2014), ch. 39.

⁷ Jack McLean, “Prolegomena to a Bahá'í Theology.” *Journal of Bahá'í Studies* 5:1 (Ottawa, Ontario: Association for Bahá'í Studies North America, 1992), pp. 25–67.

⁸ Juan Cole, “The Concept of Manifestation in the Bahá'í Writings.” Monograph; *Bahá'í Studies*, 9 (Ottawa, Ontario: Bahá'í Studies Publications, 1982).

⁹ The Sadratu'l-Muntahá (lit., “The [Lote-]tree beyond which there is no passing”) refers to “a tree which, in ancient times, the Arabs planted to mark the end of the road” (Shirley Macias, “The Verse of Light, the Sadratu'l-Muntahá (Divine Lote Tree), and the Unfoldment of God's Plan.” Bahá'í Library Online. 1991. Accessed 14 January 2018. Available online [here](#)), but it is also a term that appears in the Qur'án (53:10–18, 34:16, 56:28) and holds significance for Muslims. This term has been interpreted in the Bahá'í framework as a reference to the Manifestation of God.

¹⁰ For a lucid explication of this theme, refer to Bahá'u'lláh's Lawḥ-i-Tawḥíd (“Tablet of Divine Unity”). A composite translation, partially authorized (certain passages rendered by the Guardian) and partially provisional (the remaining passages rendered by Adib Masumian), is available online [here](#)

¹¹ 'Abdu'l-Ḥamid Ishráq-Khávarí, *Má'idíy-i-Ásmání*, vol. 4 (Tíhrán: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1972), p. 154. Provisional translation by Adib Masumian.

existence, of individual reality, and of perfect divine manifestation, which can be likened to the sun, its heat, and its light. Other individuals also share the corporeal station and the rational soul—the spirit and mind. Thus the passages that state, “I lay asleep when the breeze of God wafted over Me and roused Me from My slumber”¹² are akin to Christ’s saying, “The flesh is full of sorrow but the spirit is rejoiced”, or again, “I am afflicted”, or “I am at ease”, or “I am troubled”: All these refer to the corporeal station and have no bearing on the individual reality or on the state of manifestation of the divine Reality. Consider, for example, that thousands of vicissitudes may occur to the body of man of which the spirit remains wholly unaware. It is even possible for certain members of the body to be completely impaired and for the essence of the mind to remain unaffected. A garment may sustain a myriad rents and tears and the wearer may yet remain unharmed. Thus, the words of Bahá'u'lláh, “I lay asleep when a breeze wafted over Me and roused Me from My slumber”, refer to the body.¹³

است و مقام حقیقت شاخصه و مظهریت کامله مثلاً شمس و حرارت و ضیائش و سائر نفوس نیز مقام جسد و مقام نفس ناطقه یعنی مقام روح و عقل دارند. پس در مقاماتی که ذکر میشود من خوابیده بودم و مرور کرد نفحات الهی بر من و بیدار شدم مثل بیان حضرت مسیح است که میفرمایند جسد محزون است و روح مستبشر یا آنکه در مشقتم یا در راحتم یا در زحمتم اینها همه راجع بمقام جسد است دخیلی بآن حقیقت شاخصه ندارد و دخیلی بآن مظهریت حقیقت رحمانیه ندارد. مثلاً ملاحظه میکنید که در جسد انسان هزار انقلابات حادث می شود و لکن روح ابداً از آن خبر ندارد. یمكن در جسد انسان بعضی از اعضا بکلی مختل میشود لکن جوهر عقل باقی و برقرار. صد هزار آفت بلباس وارد میشود لکن بر لباس هیچ خطری نیست. اینکه بیان میفرمایند جمال مبارک که در خواب بودم و نسیم بر من مرور نمود و من را بیدار کرد این راجع بجسد است.

In response to a query by Glenn Shook, in which he had asked whether the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh had realized their stations when they were young, Shoghi Effendi, in a letter written on his behalf dated 19 November 1945,¹⁴ affirmed that they were indeed aware to some extent, with the caveat that the exact nature of that awareness is inscrutable:

¹² cf. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, XLI; and Súriy-i-Haykal, ¶192.

¹³ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, ch. 39.6.

¹⁴ The present authors are grateful to the late Don Calkins for providing them with this helpful context for the letter written on Shoghi Effendi's behalf.

The Manifestations no doubt had some consciousness of their station, but what the nature of that consciousness was we do not know.¹⁵

Within the above context, Moojan Momen initially proposed three periods for the life of Bahá'u'lláh, two of which also composed His ministry:¹⁶

(1) The Pre-revelation Period: Extending from the beginning of Bahá'u'lláh's life up until sometime between late 1852 to early 1853,¹⁷ during which time Bahá'u'lláh had not yet received divine revelation or advanced any theophanic claims.

(2) The Period of Messianic Concealment: Extending from late 1852 or early 1853,¹⁸ when Bahá'u'lláh had a spiritual encounter in the Síyáh-Chál with the Maid of Heaven, to 1863, in which year Bahá'u'lláh announced His station as the Bábí Messiah (“Him Whom God shall make manifest”) to a small audience of close friends and family in the Garden of Riḍván. During this period, Bahá'u'lláh was the recipient of divine revelation (*waḥy*) but had not yet disclosed to anyone that He was the bearer of a new Cause (*amr*).

(3) The Period of Theophanic Disclosure: Extending from 1863 to 1892, during which time Bahá'u'lláh continued to receive divine revelation, and began to assert His status as the bearer of a new Cause. These assertions gradually became bolder and more frequent with the passage of time—for instance, to the Bábís of Persia from 1866 to 1867, and then to the rest of the world from 1868 to 1872.

In confirmation of the above hypothesis, Momen has claimed more recently¹⁹ that a turning point in Bahá'u'lláh's life—to wit, the changes that occurred in His comportment, speech, and thought, which He describes in the *Lawḥ-i-Bábu'l-'Aṭá* (discussed further below)—began in the Síyáh-Chál when He was about 35 years old, not at any time prior to that (i.e., during His childhood or adolescence). Nosratullah Mohammad Hosseini has also supported this position in his paper (in Persian) on Bahá'u'lláh's “Days of Concealment” (*Ayyám-i-Buṭún*).²⁰ However, this hypothesis presents numerous challenges, which we will discuss below.

A close examination of the first stage (the Pre-revelation Period) of Momen's taxonomy above suggests that, true to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's explanation that Manifestations are always Manifestations, Bahá'u'lláh's physical reality was in a state of sleep and silence at birth. Then, through a series of developments—beginning in His childhood, and culminating in His Síyáh-Chál experience—Bahá'u'lláh's

¹⁵ Shoghi Effendi, *Directives from the Guardian* (New Delhi, India: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1973), p. 43.

¹⁶ Moojan Momen, “Messianic Concealment and Theophanic Disclosure.” *Bahá'í Studies Review* 20:1, pp. 51–67.

¹⁷ In personal correspondence with the present authors (February 2018), Momen later stated that Bahá'u'lláh and His family would have left Persia for exile to 'Iráq no later than mid-December 1852. Therefore, His encounter with the Maid of Heaven in the Síyáh-Chál could not have happened in early 1853.

¹⁸ In fact, this period would have started no later than mid-December 1852; refer to the preceding endnote.

¹⁹ Moojan Momen, “Two Episodes in the Life of Bahá'u'lláh in Iran.” *Lights of 'Irfán*, Book 20 (2019), pp. 138–160.

²⁰ See Nosratullah Mohammad Hosseini, “Ayyám-i-Buṭún va Maráḥil-i-Zuhúr-i-Jamál-i-Aqdas-i-Abhá,” published in *Mahbúb-i-Álam*, p. 225, where Mohammad Hosseini associates the timing of the changes in Bahá'u'lláh's speech, comportment, speech, and thought with His imprisonment in the Síyáh-Chál.

physical reality awakened to His divine reality over time. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's likening of the human states of sleep and wakefulness to the pre- and post-attunement of the physical realities of the Manifestations to their divine realities appears to confirm this idea:

This is the station of divine revelation. It is not a sensible, but an intelligible reality. It is sanctified from and transcendent above past, present, and future. It is a comparison and an analogy—a metaphor and not a literal truth. It is not the condition that is commonly understood by the human mind when it is said that someone was asleep and then awoke, but signifies a passage from one state to another. For example, sleeping is the state of repose, and wakefulness is the state of motion. Sleeping is the state of silence, and wakefulness is the state of utterance. Sleeping is the state of concealment, and wakefulness is that of manifestation.

Briefly, the Manifestations of God have ever been and will ever be luminous Realities, and no change or alteration ever takes place in Their essence. At most, before Their revelation They are still and silent, like one who is asleep, and after Their revelation They are eloquent and effulgent, like one who is awake.²¹

'Abdu'l-Bahá expands on the above explanation in subsequent chapters of *Some Answered Questions*. For example, He concludes chapter 38 with the following summarization of the three stations of the divine Manifestations, which offers a helpful framework by which we can gain an approximate understanding of the nature of Bahá'u'lláh's "awakening":

این مقام تجلی است این محسوس نیست معقول
است و این از زمان ماضی و حال و استقبال مبرّا و
مژّه است این تعبیر و تمثیل است مجاز است نه
حقیقت و نه حالتی است که مفهوم انسانست
یعنی خواب بوده بیدار شده بلکه انتقال از حالی
بحالی است. مثلاً نوم حال سکونست و بیداری
حال حرکت نوم حالت صمت است بیداری حالت
نطق نوم حالت خفاست و بیداری حالت ظهور.
مثلاً در فارسی و عربی تعبیر میشود که زمین
خواب بود بهار آمد بیدار شد یا زمین مرده بود
بهار آمد زنده گشت این تعبیر تمثیلی است و
تشبیه و تأویل در عالم معانی.
باری مظاهر مقدّسه لم یزل حقایق نورانیّه بوده و
هستند تغییر و تبدّلی در ذات آنها حاصل نگردد
نهایت آنست که قبل از ظهور چون ساکن و
صامت مانند نائمند و بعد از ظهور ناطق و شارق
مانند بیدار.

²¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, ch. 16.8–10.

... the Manifestations of God have three stations: the physical station, the station of the rational soul, and the station of divine manifestation and heavenly splendour. The corporeal station will inevitably perish. As to the station of the rational soul, despite having a beginning, it has no end and is endowed with everlasting life. But as to that holy Reality of which Christ says "the Father is in the Son", it has neither beginning nor end: Its "beginning" refers merely to His revelation of His own station. Thus, by way of analogy, He likens His silence to sleep: A man who is silent is like one who is asleep, and when he speaks, it is as though he has awakened. And yet the sleeping and the wakeful man are one and the same person: No change has taken place in his station, his loftiness, sublimity, inner reality, or innate nature. It is merely that the condition of silence has been likened to sleep, and that of manifestation to wakefulness. A man, whether sleeping or awake, is the same man: Sleep is simply one possible state, and wakefulness another. And so it is that the period of silence is compared to sleep, and the period of manifestation and guidance to wakefulness.²²

... مظاهر ظهور سه مقام دارند یکی مقام بشریّه است و مقام نفس ناطقه و مقام ظهور ربّانی و جلوه رحمانی. مقام جسدی البتّه متلاشی شود اما مقام نفس ناطقه هرچند اول دارد اما آخر ندارد بلکه مؤید بحیات ابدیّه است اما حقیقت مقدّسه که مسیح میفرماید الاب فی الابن نه بدایت دارد نه نهایت. بدایت عبارت از مقام اظهار است که میفرماید و در مقام تشبیه سکوت را تعبیر بخواب میفرماید مثل اینکه شخصی خواب بود و چون زبان گشود مثل آنست که بیدار گشت و آن شخص که در خواب است چون بیدار شود باز همان شخص است تفاوتی در مقام و علوّ و سموّ و حقیقت و فطرت او حاصل نگشته مقام سکوت تشبیه بخواب شده و مقام ظهور تعبیر به بیداری گشته. انسان چون خواب باشد یا بیدار همان انسانست آن خواب یک حالتی از حالات است و این بیداری حالتی از حالات. زمان سکوت را تعبیر بخواب میفرماید و ظهور و هدایت را تعبیر به بیداری.

These points are further elaborated on in chapter 39 of *Some Answered Questions*, "The Human and the Divine Stations of the Manifestations." Additionally, in chapter 58, "The Extent and Limitation of Human Comprehension," 'Abdu'l-Bahá addresses the "awakening" of Bahá'u'lláh and Christ as referring to the "corporeal station of the Manifestations, but Their heavenly station encompasses all things, is aware of all mysteries, is informed of all signs, and rules supreme over all things. And this is equally true both before and after the intimation of Their mission."²³

The Báb also discusses the immutability of the station of the Manifestations when describing the true (divine) reality of the Bábí Messiah in the Persian Bayán:

Consider thou, in like manner, the advent of Him Whom God shall make manifest. It is through Him that whatever now subsisteth in the contingent world, or shall later become originated, hath come into existence. Whether He be in His home before His manifestation, inscrutable to all—

و همین قسم در یوم ظهور مَنْ يُظْهِرُهُ اللهُ فرض کن که آنچه شیئیت در امکان هست یا بعد متکوّن می شود، به اوست اگر چه قبل از ظهور در بیت خود لایعزّف باشد بلکه قبل از حدود ظاهریّه

²² *ibid.*, ch. 38.8.

²³ *ibid.*, ch. 58.5.

indeed, though He cry out for milk in the cradle ere the onset of outward limitations—He is nevertheless, at that very moment, the same Being Who hath ever been the Helper of all mankind. That which hath been hath proceeded from His former Manifestations, and that which will be shall proceed from His latter Appearances.²⁴

در گهواره از برای شیر گریه کند که همان وقت
مدد کلّ از او بوده و هست. آنچه که بوده از
ظهورات قبل اوست و آنچه می شود از ظهورات
بعد اوست.

In the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*, God addresses the Báb with these words:

And We favored Thee during Thy Childhood with the mighty Cause of God, as it had been decreed as such in the Mother Book.²⁵

ولقد مننّا علیک فی صغرک من امر الله العلی اذ
كان الحكم فی امّ الكتاب مقضیا

And elsewhere in that work, the Báb Himself asserts:

Verily as a child I was aware of the truth of My own Self, and God is the Almighty, the All-Knowing.²⁶

وانی باذن الله فی صغری قد کنت بالحق علی
نفسی علی الحق القوی علیما

Affirming the changelessness of Their divine reality, Bahá'u'lláh Himself states that the Manifestations have special stations even before Their physical birth:

And now concerning thy question about the Manifestations of God. Know thou that, even in the wombs of their mothers, the Manifestations possessed stations—stations which they continue to possess—and that these stations have ever been disclosed according to the exigencies of time and circumstance.²⁷

و این که از مظاهر امر سؤال نمودند ایشان در
بطن امّ دارای مقامات بوده و هستند و به
مقتضیات اوقات و اسباب ظاهر شده.

In the *Lawḥ-i-Mawlúd* ("Tablet of the Birth"), Bahá'u'lláh also equates the advent of His own birth with the appearance of "He Who begetteth not and Who is not begotten"²⁸—in other words, the appearance

²⁴ The Báb, *Persian Bayán* 6:4 (see INBA 62:195–6). Provisional translation by Adib Masumian.

²⁵ The Báb, *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*, *Súratu's-Siná'*, verse 5 (see Qásim Muḥammad 'Abbás, *al-Áyát al-Shiráziyyah* (Damascus: Dár al-Madá, 2009), p. 95). Provisional translation by Ahang Rabbani. The present authors are grateful to Ismael Velasco for acquainting them with this passage.

²⁶ The Báb, *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*, *Súratu'l-Isma'*, verse 34 (see *ibid.*, p. 289). Provisional translation by Ahang Rabbani. The present authors are grateful to Ismael Velasco for acquainting them with this passage.

²⁷ 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd Ishráq-Khávarí, *Má'idiy-i-Ásmání*, vol. 1 (Tíhrán: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971), p. 22. Provisional translation by Adib Masumian.

²⁸ Qur'án 112:3. This verse was revealed in response to the Christian claim that Jesus was God in the flesh.

of the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of God on earth, a divine reality that accepts no change in its nature:

This is the Dawn whereat was born He Who begetteth not and Who is not begotten. Well is it with him that immerseth himself beneath the ocean of inner meaning that surgeth within this utterance and discovereth the pearls of knowledge and wisdom that lie hid in the words of God, the King, the Exalted, the Mighty, the Powerful. All glory to him who apprehendeth the truth and is reckoned with them that are endued with discernment!²⁹

وَفِيهِ وُلِدَ مَنْ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَ لَمْ يُوَلَدْ فَطُوبَى لِمَنْ يَتَّعَمَّسُ
فِي بَحْرِ الْمَعَانِي مِنْ هَذَا الْبَيَانِ وَ يَصِلُ إِلَى لَتَالِي
الْعِلْمِ وَ الْحِكْمَةِ الَّتِي كُنَّزَتْ فِي كَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ الْمَلِكِ
الْمُتَعَالِي الْمُقْتَدِرِ الْقَدِيرِ فَيَا حَبَّذَا لِمَنْ يَعْرِفُ وَ
يَكُونُ مِنَ الْعَارِفِينَ.

In this connection, the following interpretation of Qur'án 112:3 (“[God] begets not, nor is He begotten”) by the eminent Bahá'í philosopher, 'Alí-Murád Dávúdí, is especially enlightening:

So, what does “He Who is not begotten” mean? It means He is not born. The Manifestation of God is not born. He who was born on the night of the 2nd of Muḥarram, 1233 A.H., was Mírzá Ḥusayn-'Alí Núrí, the son of Mírzá Buzurg Núrí. The Manifestation of God is not born.³⁰

"لم يولد" یعنی چه؟ یعنی زاده نمی شود. مظهر امر زاده نمی شود، متولد نمی شود. آن کسی که در شب دوم محرم سال ۱۲۳۳ هجری قمری متولد شد. آن مظهر امر نبود، او میرزا حسینعلی نوری پسر میرزا بزرگ نوری بود. توجه می فرمائید، مظهر امر "لم يولد" است، متولد نمی شود.

The difference between what we might call a binary model of theophanic awakening, whereby the variation in each Manifestation's awakening to His own divine reality before and after His encounter with the Holy Spirit is as stark as the flip of a switch, and a gradual model of theophanic awakening like the one proposed in this paper is illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 below:

²⁹ Bahá'u'lláh, *Days of Remembrance* (Haifa, Israel: Bahá'í World Centre, 2017), p. 209.

³⁰ 'Alí-Murád Dávúdí, *Ulúhiyyat va Mazhariyyat* (Dundas, Ontario, Canada: Persian Institute for Bahá'í Studies, 1991), p. 26. Translation by Bijan Masumian. For a detailed exegesis (in Persian) of the Bahá'í position on Qur'án 112:3 and Bahá'u'lláh's mention of it in the Lawḥ-i-Mawlúd, see Dávúdí, *Ulúhiyyat*, pp. 25–28.

Figure 1: The Binary Model of Theophanic Awakening

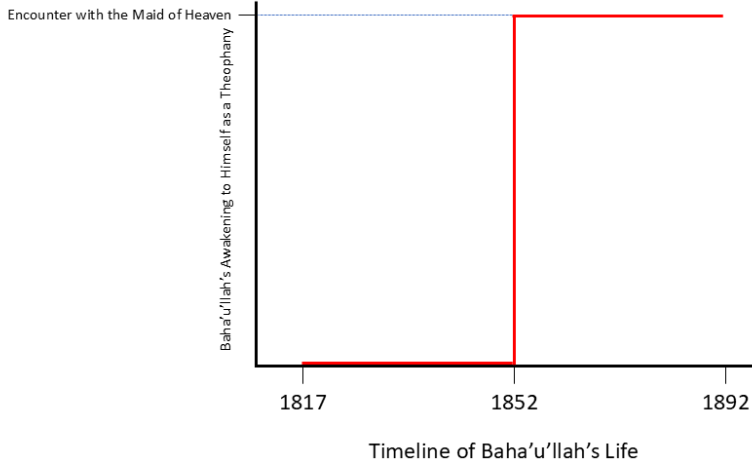
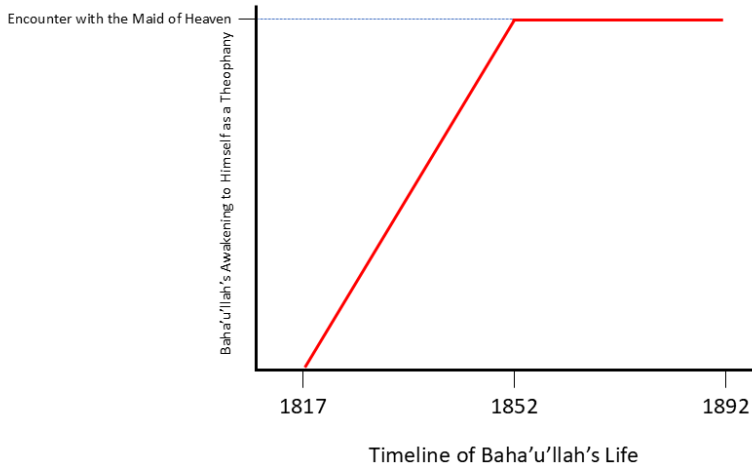


Figure 2: The Gradual Model of Theophanic Awakening



In response to a letter written by Bijan Masumian to the Bahá'í World Center, the Research Department sent a memorandum to the Universal House of Justice which speaks to the question of whether Bahá'u'lláh was aware of His station before His imprisonment in the Síyáh-Chál. Among the points they make in that memorandum, the Research Department cites the aforementioned Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh to Varqá in support of the idea that the Manifestations of God are aware of their stations prior to the inaugurations of their dispensations. Perhaps most intriguingly, the Research Department writes that “it may be helpful to think in terms of Bahá'u'lláh's essential powers becoming fully realized during His experience in the Síyáh-Chál.”³¹ This helpful perspective steers us away from speculation on the Manifestations' “consciousness” and “awareness”—speculation that is not only problematic but futile, since Shoghi Effendi has characterized those things as inscrutable to us. Instead, the Research Department's insightful comments reframe the foundation of this discussion by drawing our attention to the Manifestations' “essential powers,” a conceptualization that seems more compatible with the foregoing explanations by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and aligns more closely, as a result, with the metaphor of “awakening” repeatedly employed by Him and advocated for in this paper.

A related point of interest is to be found not in the memorandum itself, but in the cover letter to that memorandum prepared by the Department of the Secretariat, in which that department alludes to “the intimation of [Bahá'u'lláh's] **Mission** in the Síyáh-Chál”³² [emphasis ours]. This phrasing appears to confirm the way in which the present authors have read the term “**Revelation**” in such passages as “the first intimations of Bahá'u'lláh's dawning Revelation amidst the darkness of the Síyáh-Chál of Ṭihrán”³³—namely, as a reference to the **dispensation** or **ministry** of Bahá'u'lláh (synonymous with His “Mission”), rather than the point when He began to receive divine revelation. The interchangeability found in authorized translations of Bahá'í Writings between the terms “Revelation” (as a proper noun) and “Dispensation” would seem to bear out this position, lending support to the argument that there is a distinction to be made between “**revelation**” (*wahy*), which denotes literal revelation from God, and “**Revelation**” (*zuhúr*), which refers to a divinely-ordained dispensation. If correct, this distinction allows for the possibility that Bahá'u'lláh may have received revelation before His incarceration in the Síyáh-Chál. Through the lens of this reading, in which “Revelation” and “revelation” are not mutually exclusive, Shoghi Effendi's designation of the Síyáh-Chál as the place where Bahá'u'lláh was given “the first intimations of [His] dawning Revelation” need not imply that He received no revelation before He was imprisoned there.

Evidences of Awakening and Disclosure

Bahá'u'lláh's Childhood Experiences

There are a number of hagiographical accounts from Bahá'u'lláh's childhood that seem to support the idea that His theophanic awakening went through stages. Below are three such accounts:

³¹ Research Department at the Bahá'í World Center, memorandum dated 17 January 2019 and addressed to the Universal House of Justice. Private correspondence with Bijan Masumian, who was copied on this memorandum.

³² Department of the Secretariat at the Bahá'í World Center, cover letter to a 17 January 2019 memorandum addressed to the Universal House of Justice. Private correspondence with Bijan Masumian, the recipient of this cover letter.

³³ Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 237.

Letter to the Relative

There is an undated letter from Bahá'u'lláh in His own hand—which He wrote to one of His relatives when He was a child, and has been authenticated by the Bahá'í World Center—in which He claims to have access to special spiritual capacities, even at a tender age:

He is the Best-Beloved

هو المحبوب

God willing, Thou art abiding in the shade of God's mercy, and reposing beneath the canopy of Divine bounty.

انشاءالله در سایه رحمت رحمانی و قباب عنایت
سبحانی ساکن و مستریح باشید و بر حسب ظاهر
من کوچکم خط ندارم ولكن چون این امی به سدره
الهی متمسک است بی علم می خواند و بی خط
می نویسد و این در عالم باطن نزد اهل بصر مشهود
است. اغیار از این سر آگاه نبوده و نیستند.

To outward seeming, I am but a child, and lack the ability to read or write. Yet, because this unlettered One cleaveth tenaciously to the Divine Lote-Tree, he readeth without acquired knowledge, and writeth without having learned how to do so. Unto them that are endued with insight, this fact is clear and apparent in the world of inner realities. All else are not, and have never been, aware of this mystery.³⁴

The Puppet Show

In another episode from His childhood, Bahá'u'lláh describes witnessing an elaborate puppet show at the wedding of one of His brothers. The show demonstrated the pomp, glory, and riches of those in power—namely, the king, the princes, and ministers of the court—and it also included scenes of war and political intrigue. The puppet show probably enthralled most of the children in the audience, who may well have imagined themselves as some of the authority figures in the show. Yet, according to Bahá'u'lláh's own testimony, the experience made a radically different impression on Him. After the show, He approached the puppeteer and asked what was in the box he was carrying. The puppeteer explained that all the characters from the show, with all their pomp and pageantry, were now contained in that box. Bahá'u'lláh's reaction to the puppeteer's response shows His remarkable precociousness:

³⁴ Published in *Mahbúb-i-Álam* (Canada: Intishárát-i-Majalliy-i-Andalíb, 1992), p. 183. Provisional translation by Adib Masumian. Abu'l-Qásím Afnán, the author of the article in which this letter appears, notes that Bahá'u'lláh wrote it when He was "six or seven years old" (ibid.), but gives no source for this claim. The authenticity of this letter from Bahá'u'lláh has been confirmed by the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Center in private correspondence with Bijan Masumian, in which they note that "the letter is among the authentic Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and was written in His own handwriting," and that "the original manuscript of the letter is held in the Archives at the World Centre" (Private correspondence from the Department of the Secretariat at the Bahá'í World Centre to Bijan Masumian dated 25 May 2018). A facsimile of Bahá'u'lláh's letter has been published in *Nafahát-i-Quds* (New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust of India, n.d.), p. 1. A scan of the letter as it appears in that work is available online here: <http://bit.ly/BahauallahChildhoodLetter>.

Ever since that day, all the trappings of the world have seemed in the eyes of this Youth akin to that same spectacle. They have never been, nor will they ever be, of any weight and consequence, be it to the extent of a grain of mustard seed. How greatly I marveled that men should pride themselves upon such vanities, whilst those possessed of insight, ere they witness any evidence of human glory, perceive with certainty the inevitability of its waning. "Never have I looked upon any thing save that I have seen extinction before it; and God, verily, is a sufficient witness!"³⁵

از آن یوم جمیع اسباب دنیا بنظر این غلام مثل
آن دستگاہ آمده و می آید و ابداً بقدر خردلی وقر
نداشته و نخواهد داشت بسیار تعجب می نمودم
که ناس بچنین امورات افتخار می نمایند مع آنکه
متبصرین قبل از مشاهده جلال هر ذی جلالی
زوال آن را بعین الیقین ملاحظه می نمایند ما رأیت
شیئاً الا و قد رأیت الزوال قبله و کفی باللہ شهیداً

The puppet show demonstrated to Bahá'u'lláh the insignificance of the vanities of the world, as well as the ephemerality of this existence, and indicates to us how markedly different Bahá'u'lláh's thinking and aspirations were from those of other children. Later in His life, we witness how Bahá'u'lláh's renunciation of the privileges of this world leads Him to reject social and political power when, after His father's death, the prime minister Hájí Mírzá Áqásí offers Him a government post, which Bahá'u'lláh declines in favor of devoting Himself to spiritual endeavors.

The Banú Qurayẓih Experience

In an undated Tablet, which will be referred to here as the Lawḥ-i-Bábu'l-'Aṭá after a phrase which occurs in its opening words (but which has also been called the Lawḥ-i-Banú Qurayẓih by others), Bahá'u'lláh recounts the profound sadness He felt when, as a child, He read Muḥammad-Báqir Majlis's account of the massacre of the Jewish Banú Qurayẓih tribe by Muslims.³⁶ The account greatly perplexed Bahá'u'lláh at first, but He eventually came to see the wisdom behind the apparent cruelty in the story.³⁷ Bahá'u'lláh then explains how, sometime after this experience, He underwent a transformation that

³⁵ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts* (Haifa, Israel: Bahá'í World Centre, 2002), pp. 165–68.

³⁶ "The Banū Qurayẓa were one of the three major Jewish tribes in pre-Islamic Medina (Yathrib)... According to the Islamic sources... the Banū Qurayẓa, under the leadership of Ka'b ibn Asad, struck a nonbelligerency treaty with Muḥammad shortly after his arrival in Medina in 622. When the enemies of the Muslims besieged Medina in 627, the leader of the already-exiled Banū Naḍir, Huyyay ibn Akḥṭab, convinced Ka'b to violate the agreement and negotiate with the enemy. However, Muḥammad was able to undo the new alliance. With the departure of the enemy, Muḥammad attacked the Banū Qurayẓa for having violated the treaty. Besieged in their forts for nearly a month, they ultimately surrendered unconditionally, placing their fate in the hands of Sa'd ibn Mu'adh, with whom they had a preexisting alliance. Sa'd turned against them. Trenches were dug and the men, numbering somewhere between four hundred and nine hundred, were marched out, executed, and buried as Muḥammad watched. The women, children, and under-age boys were sold into slavery or distributed as gifts" (Shari Lowin, "Banū Qurayẓa." *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, pp. 338–39).

³⁷ Refer to two versions of this Tablet: the first published in Fāḍil Mázandarání, *Asráru'l-Áthár*, vol. 2 (Tíhrán: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1968), pp. 17–18; the second in 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd Ishráq-Khávarí, *Má'idiy-i-Ásmání*, vol. 7 (Tíhrán: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1972), pp. 135–37.

began at the dawn of the second day of Muḥarram of that year and lasted twelve days. The exact year of the experience is not specified in the Tablet. The transformation involved a noticeable change in His demeanor, speech, and thought, and also His attainment to certitude about God's justice, in the face of what at first seemed to Him to be unjust treatment of the Banú Qurayẓih tribe by Muḥammad and His followers. After that experience, He appeals to God—notwithstanding His tender age—to “establish love, fellowship, and unity among all the inhabitants of the earth.” This clearly shows that, even as a child, Bahá'u'lláh was already demonstrating a predisposition to the grand ideals of universal love and world unity that later became the focus of His life and mission. Below is the original text along with a provisional translation of the relevant passages from this Tablet (emphasis ours):³⁸

In My Name, through which the portal of grace
[*bábu'l-'atá*] hath been opened to all who are in
heaven and on earth

بِسْمِ الَّذِي بِهِ فُتِّحَ بَابُ الْعِطَاءِ عَلَى مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ
وَالسَّمَاءِ

The atoms of every contingent being and the realities of all created things bear witness that this Servant, from the time of His advent and the moment of His declaration, hath had no goal but the salvation of mankind and the quenching of the fire of hatred and opposition...

ذرات کائنات شاهد و حقایق ممکنات گواه که این
عبد از ظهور و اظهار امر مقصودی جز نجات
عباد و اطفاء نار ضغینه و عناد نداشته و ندارد.
...

When I was but a child, this Wronged One read an account of the invasion of the Banú-Qurayẓih recorded in a book attributed to the late Mullá Báqir Majlisí. From that very moment, I became so perplexed, and was stricken with such profound grief, that My pen is powerless to describe it—though what transpired during that event was the decree of God, and its only purpose was to annihilate the oppressors.

این مظلوم در طفولیت در کتابی که نسبتش به
مرحوم مغفور ملّا باقر مجلسی بوده غزوه اهل
قریظه را مشاهده نمود و از آن حین مهموم و
محزون بود به شأنی که قلم از ذکرش عاجز اگرچه
آنچه واقع شده امرالله بوده و مقصود جز قطع
دابر ظالمین نبوده.

Yet, as I beheld the limitless ocean of [divine] pardon and mercy surging before Me, I would, in those days, implore God—exalted be His glory—to bring about that which would foster love, fellowship, and unity amongst all the peoples of

ولکن چون دریای عفو و فضل بی کران مشاهده
میشد لذا در آن ایام از حقّ جلّ جلاله می طلبید
آنچه را که سبب محبّت و الفت و اتحاد کلّ من

³⁸ In the original passage (taken from *Asráru'l-Áthár*, vol. 2, pp. 17–18), Bahá'u'lláh refers to Himself in the third person, but for the most part this has been changed to the first person in the following provisional translation (with the exception of “this Wronged One”) to sound less stilted.

the earth until suddenly, ere the break of dawn on the second day of the month of Muḥarram,³⁹ all My thoughts, My speech, and My demeanor were completely transformed. **So intense was this transformation that I seemed to discern the joyful tidings of My ascension.**

For twelve consecutive days I remained in this transformed state; thereupon were the waves of the ocean of Mine utterance made manifest, and the splendors of the day-star of Mine assurance shone brilliantly, until at last it culminated in the moment of Revelation [*zuhúr*], whereupon I attained unto that which God hath made the source of the joy of all worlds, and the dawning-place of bounty unto all who are in heaven and on earth.

Thereafter, through the agency of the Pen of the Most High, We removed, at Our irresistible and irrevocable bidding, all mention of whatsoever had been the cause of affliction, calamity, and strife, and have revealed only that which will conduce to concord and unity.

In his analysis of this Tablet, Momen has argued that, while what we might call Bahá'u'lláh's "Banú Qurayzih experience" took place in His childhood, this twelve-day long "transformation" (*inqiláb*) actually took place many years later in 1852 while He was imprisoned in the Síyáh-Chál.⁴⁰ That chronology, however, would present multiple challenges.

For one thing, identifying the Síyáh-Chál as the location of the transformation would mean that Bahá'u'lláh could not have harbored any messianic secret before 1852, which would disqualify all of His Writings prior to His imprisonment from being considered products of divine revelation.

Additionally, if the transformation took place in the Síyáh-Chál, it would also mean that Bahá'u'lláh did not resolve His inner conflict and perplexity over the Banú Qurayzih episode for decades and did not achieve certitude about God's justice until He was 35 years old. This is highly unlikely, as it would have meant Bahá'u'lláh continued to doubt the legitimacy of Muḥammad and His Revelation for many years, thus making it difficult—if not impossible—for Him to later accept the Báb's claims.

The timing of this transformation ultimately hinges on how we read the all-important "suddenly"

على الارض بوده تا آنکه بغتاً در دوم ماه مولود
قبل از طلوع جميع اطوار و ذكر و فكر منقلب شد
انقلابی که بشارت عروج می داد.

این انقلاب تا دوازده یوم متتابع و متوالی نازل و
ظاهر بعد امواج بحر بیان مشهود و تجلیات نیر
اطمینان مُشرق و موجودِ اِلَى اَنْ اُنْتَهَى اَلْاَمْرُ اِلَى
حَیْنِ الظُّهُورِ اِذَا فُزْتُ بِمَا جَعَلَهُ اللهُ مَبْدَءَ فَرَجِ
اَلْعَالَمِیْنَ وَ مَشْرِقِ الْعِظَاءِ لِمَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَ
اَلْاَرْضِیْنَ.

و بعد از قلم اعلی آنچه سبب زحمت و مشقت و
اختلاف بوده بامر مبرم محتوم برداشتیم و آنچه
علت اتفاق و اتحاد نازل و جاری.

³⁹ Literally, "the month of [My] birth" in the original text.

⁴⁰ Moojan Momen, "Two Episodes in the Life of Bahá'u'lláh in Iran." *Lights of 'Irfán*, Book 20 (2019), pp. 153–157.

(*baghtatan*) which occurs in the Lawḥ-i-Bábu'l-'Aṭá.⁴¹ Such scholars as Moojan Momen and Nosratullah Mohammad Hosseini believe that the word describes not the passage of time culminating in Bahá'u'lláh's transformation, but simply the instantaneity of the transformation itself, which from their perspective could have happened much later in His life. The present authors, on the other hand, are of the opinion that Bahá'u'lláh is using "suddenly" to mean that He underwent this transformation as a child, shortly after reading about the massacre of the Banú Qurayẓih at a tender age.

Nader Saiedi, too, believes that Bahá'u'lláh's twelve-day mystical experience—which resulted in the aforementioned changes in His speech, comportment, and thought—occurred in His childhood after His Banú Qurayẓih experience, not while He was imprisoned in the Síyáh-Chál:

The tablet [the Lawḥ-i-Bábu'l-'Aṭá] makes it clear that this twelve-day mystical experience occurred during Bahá'u'lláh's childhood. He is speaking of the grief He felt in His childhood on contemplating the severity of the law of the sword in previous dispensations and His desire for that severe law to be annulled. It is in that context that He says that suddenly, after reading the book and becoming saddened by it, He had a profound experience which brought Him the joyful tidings of "heavenly reunion."⁴²

To reinforce his argument, Saiedi quotes the following passage from a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh:

O contending peoples and kindreds of the earth!
Set your faces towards unity, and let the radiance
of its light shine upon you. Gather ye together,
and for the sake of God resolve to root out
whatever is the source of contention amongst
you. Then will the effulgence of the world's great
Luminary envelop the whole earth, and its
inhabitants become the citizens of one city, and
the occupants of one and the same throne. This
wronged One hath, **ever since the early days of
His life**, cherished none other desire but this, and
will continue to entertain no wish except this
wish [emphasis ours].⁴³

ای احزاب مختلفه با اتحاد توجّه نمائید و بنور
اتفاق منور گردید. لوجه الله در مقرّی حاضر
شوید و آنچه سبب اختلاف است از میان بردارید
تا جمیع عالم بانوار نیر اعظم فائز گردند و در یک
مدینه وارد شوند و بر یک سریر جالس. این مظلوم
از اول ایام الی حین مقصودی جز آنچه ذکر شد
نداشته و ندارد.

Furthermore, in one of His recently translated talks, 'Abdu'l-Bahá confirms that Bahá'u'lláh exhibited remarkable qualities even as a child, which suggests that the transformation discussed above had

⁴¹ Notably, the word *baghtatan* ("suddenly") is absent from the version of this Tablet published in Ishráq-Khávarí, *Má'idiy-i-Ásmání* 7:135–37, but this is an error. In addition to *baghtatan* being present in the version published in *Asráru'l-Áthár* 2:17–18 (mentioned in the preceding endnote), and also in INBA 81:159, the Research Department has stated that "the original manuscript of this Tablet includes the word *baghtatan*" (Memorandum dated 15 January 2020 and addressed to the Universal House of Justice; private correspondence with Bijan Masumian, who was copied on this memorandum).

⁴² Nader Saiedi, *Logos and Civilization: Spirit, History, and Order in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* (Bethesda, Maryland: Cambridge Press of Maryland, 2000), p. 306.

⁴³ Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings* CXI. Refer to Saiedi, *Logos*, p. 308.

already taken place by that time:

From the beginning of His childhood Bahá'u'lláh was possessed of such astonishing **qualities, signs, and utterances** as to amaze every soul. All the dignitaries of Persia would say: "This youth is wrought of a rare substance", and everyone, even the enemies and the envious, bore witness to His knowledge, grace, wisdom, understanding, intelligence, and perception [emphasis ours].⁴⁴

جمال مبارک از بدو طفولیت اطوار و آثار و
گفتاری عجیب داشتند که سبب حیرت عموم
بود. و جمیع بزرگان ایران می گفتند این جوان مادّه
عجیبی است و کل بفضل و کمال و عقل و ادراک و
ذهن و ذکا شهادت می دادند، حتی دشمنان و
حاسدان معترف.

It is worth noting that the original Persian word translated here as "qualities" is *aṭvār*, which is the same word Bahá'u'lláh uses in the *Lawḥ-i-Bábu'l-'Aṭá* when speaking of the change in His "demeanor" (our translation), and that the word rendered here as "utterances" is *guftár*, which is synonymous with Bahá'u'lláh's usage of *dhikr* in the aforementioned Tablet to describe the similar change in His speech.

Part of Momen's argument rests on the assumption that the term *'urúj* ("ascension") in the passage *inqilábí kih bishárat-i-'urúj mídád* (Persian: انقلابی که بشارت عروج می داد; see the emphasized portion of the Tablet above) from the *Lawḥ-i-Bábu'l-'Aṭá* refers to an "elevation of Bahá'u'lláh's spiritual state" during the twelve-day transformation, which then brought about the changes in His "comportment, speech, and thought."⁴⁵ Yet, this rather figurative interpretation of the word *'urúj* would violate a fundamental principle in Bahá'í theophany discussed in the preceding pages—that any change in the state of the divine Manifestation would suggest imperfection in their prior state, which is not possible. It might be more accurate to read the word *'urúj* here as a literal ascension. The present authors believe that, at this point in the Tablet, Bahá'u'lláh is attempting to describe the intense joy He was experiencing as a result of His transformation—a joy so overwhelming that it seemed His soul might sever itself from His body and ascend to the realms above.

Bahá'u'lláh's Adulthood Experiences

As with His childhood experiences, there are accounts of Bahá'u'lláh's adult years that indicate His awakening to His station. Both hagiographical and primary sources show that, during these years, Bahá'u'lláh exercised His divine authority to reveal Tablets, including one written possibly as early as 1851 that will be discussed further below.

The "Spiritual Meeting" between the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh (1847)

In March 1847—less than three years after the Báb's declaration, and at a time when Bahá'u'lláh was still a relatively recent Bábí convert—a meeting supposedly took place between Him and the Báb, who was in government custody and being conducted to Ṭíhrán. There has been a great deal of speculation

⁴⁴ Authorized translation published in "Twelve table talks given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 'Akká," a collection available online [here](#).

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 156.

and divergent opinion around the question of whether this meeting was physical or spiritual in nature. In the aforementioned Tablet to Varqá, Bahá'u'lláh Himself describes this meeting as follows:

He who heralded the light of divine guidance, that is to say the Primal Point [the Báb]—may the souls of all else but Him be sacrificed for His sake—in the days when He was journeying to Mákú, attained to outward seeming the honor of meeting Bahá'u'lláh, albeit this meeting was concealed from all.”⁴⁶

حضرت مبشّر، یعنی نقطهٔ اولی – روح ما سواه
فداه – در ایام توجّه به ما کو بر حسب ظاهر
مستوراً عن الكلّ به شرف لقاء فائز و حضرت
قدّوس – علیّه من كلّ بهاء أبهائه – مکرر فائز.

The above account appears to suggest that the meeting was physical in nature (“to outward seeming”). However, in a Tablet revealed in ‘Akká in response to a letter by Shaykh Kázim Samandar, Bahá'u'lláh speaks of that period, mentioning a letter He had sent to the Báb through Mullá Mihdí Kaní and Mullá Mihdí Khu'í while the Báb was in the village of Kulayn. Following the Báb's perusal of this letter, Bahá'u'lláh describes the Báb's spiritual attraction to Him, as well as a profound desire to meet Him, yet Bahá'u'lláh makes no mention of an actual physical meeting taking place between the two of them:

We, verily, revealed for and sent unto Our Herald that which solaced the eyes of the Books of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. When He received and perused it, the sweet savors of revelation so enraptured Him that He soared, with His all, in Mine atmosphere, and sought to appear before My face. In such wise was He stirred by its words that neither pen and ink nor tongue can ever exhaust it. Unto this beareth witness the Mother Book on the day of His return.⁴⁷

أنا انزلنا لمبشّري ما قرّرت به عيون كتب الله
المهيمن القيوم و ارسلنا اليه فلما حضر و قرء
انجذب من نفحات الوحي على شأن طار بكّله في
هو آئی و قصد الحضور امام وجهی قد هزّته
الكلمات بحيث لا ينتهي ذكره بالقلم و المداد و لا
باللسان يشهد بذلك امّ الكتاب في المآب.

In His hagiographical narrative of Bábí history, *The Dawn-Breakers*, Nabíl Zarandí quotes Bahá'u'lláh as having stated the following, in 1848, to the leading mullá of the city of Ámul, who had questioned Him regarding the mission of the Báb:

⁴⁶ Ishráq-Khávarí, *Má'idiy-i-Ásmání* 4:154. Translation taken from “Indications in the Writings and Historical Records Relative to the Question Whether Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb Met,” a memorandum from the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice; originally published in Persian (*‘Andalib*, vol. V, no. 17, pp. 20–21) and available online in English translation [here](#)

⁴⁷ Bahá'u'lláh, *Ishráqát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar* (Bombay: Dutt Prashad Press, c. 1892), p. 221. Provisional translation by Adib Masumian.

... although We had never met Him face to face,
yet We cherished, none the less, a great affection
for Him.⁴⁸

اگرچه با حضرت باب ملاقات نکرده ایم ولی
محبت شدیدی به او داریم.
(ترجمه عبدالحمید اشراق خاوری)

Later, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, too, emphatically rejected the notion of a physical meeting between the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh:

[The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh] definitely did not
meet.⁴⁹

قطعیاً ملاقات نفرموده اند.

He repeated this assertion in a Tablet to a certain believer in Shíráz by the name of Shukúhí:

The Ancient Beauty—may my life be offered up
for His loved ones—did not to outward seeming
meet His Holiness, the Exalted One—may my life
be a sacrifice unto Him.⁵⁰

جمال قدم روحی لاحبائه الفداء با حضرت اعلى
روحی له الفداء بر حسب ظاهر ملاقات نفرمودند.

Furthermore, on two separate occasions when Mírzá Asadu'lláh Qumí and Aḥmad Yazdání asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá whether the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh had ever met in the flesh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's response in both cases was: "No, they did not meet."⁵¹

Thus, any "meeting" between the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh must have been spiritual in nature. However, the fact remains that, before this "spiritual meeting," the Báb appeared to be sad and agitated, but afterwards He became calm and serene.⁵² The question, then, is why an encounter between a Manifestation (the Báb) who is only halfway through His six-year ministry (1844–50) and one of His followers (Bahá'u'lláh)—outwardly a subordinate in 1847, still five years away from His Síyáh-Chál experience—would evoke such peace and tranquility in the heart of the Báb, unless the Báb already knew that this particular Follower was special, and in fact none other than the Promised One of His own dispensation.

Additionally, in the same Tablet to Varqá, Bahá'u'lláh confirms that the Báb also shared the news of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation with two of His most prominent Letters of the Living, Quddús and Mullá Ḥusayn:

⁴⁸ Nabíl, *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 461.

⁴⁹ Nosratullah Mohammad Hosseini, *Haḍrat-i-Báb* (Australia: Century Press, 2016 (2nd ed.)), p. 326. Provisional translation by Adib Masumian. Mohammad Hosseini notes that 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote this note in the margin of page 96 of the original copy of *Kavákibu'd-Durriyyih*, an early history of the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths discussed in more detail later in this paper. There is also a precedent for this kind of spiritual meeting in the Bible, where, according to Matthew (17:3), Moses and Elijah appeared before Jesus and some of His apostles. 'Abdu'l-Bahá refers to that meeting, too, in *Some Answered Questions*, ch. 71.7.

⁵⁰ Authorized translation of a passage from a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, available online [here](#)

⁵¹ Research Department, "Indications in the Writings and Historical Records Relative to the Question Whether Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb Met."

⁵² Nabíl Zarandí, *The Dawn-Breakers* (U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust: Wilmette, Illinois, 1932; trans. Shoghi Effendi), pp. 225–29.

The Primal Point hath conferred upon Mullá Ḥusayn and Quddús the titles of “the First Name” and “the Last Name,” and characterized them as “the first to attain” and “the last to arrive.” Unto each of them He [Báb] announced the glad-tidings of this [Bahá'u'lláh's] Revelation.⁵³

ایشان [جناب قدّوس] و حضرت باب اعظم
[جناب ملا حسین] - عَلَيهِ مِنْ كُلِّ بَهَاءٍ اَنْبَهَاءُ - را
حضرت نقطه - روح ما سواه فداه - به اسم اول
و آخر نامیده‌اند، و همچنین به اول وارد و آخر
نازل تعبیر فرموده‌اند، و بشارت این ظهور را به هر
یک داده‌اند.

The Báb Confirms the Bábí Messiah as His Contemporary (1847–48)

Some four to five years before Bahá'u'lláh's Siyáh-Chál experience, the Báb confirms in the Persian Bayán that the Bábí Messiah was alive at the time and would manifest Himself before too long; He exhorts His followers to remain vigilant for a full *váḥid*, or nineteen years, after His own revelation (1844–63), during which time Him Whom God shall make manifest could “appear in any year,”⁵⁴ and firmly establishes the year 1863 as the upper boundary of that range, after which time the Bábís “will have forfeited the fruit of [the Báb's] Revelation unless they accept Him Whom God shall make manifest.”⁵⁵ More specifically, the Báb states in the Arabic Bayán that, in the year nine (1853), the Bábís would “attain unto all good,”⁵⁶ which Muhammad Afnan interprets as a reference to the advent of Him Whom God shall make manifest,⁵⁷ and is the year that essentially marks the inauguration of the Bahá'í dispensation. In the Persian Bayán, the Báb even admonishes His followers not to be a cause of sadness to Him Whom God shall make manifest during His “days of concealment” (*ayyám-i-buṭún*) just because they do not recognize Him.⁵⁸

Therefore, if the Báb knows as early as 1847–48 that the Messiah will appear no later than 1863, it means the Messiah is already living among them—and if the Báb knows that, then the Messiah knows it, too, just as Jesus knew when John the Baptist was preparing the Jews for Jesus's advent.⁵⁹ By the same token, when the Báb speaks of the “days of concealment” of the Bábí Messiah, that would require the latter not to disclose His messianic secret to the general Bábí community until the appointed time of His advent.

⁵³ *Má'idiy-i-Ásmání* 4:154. Provisional translation by Adib Masumian.

⁵⁴ *Persian Bayán* 6:3 (see INBA 62:192). Provisional translation by Adib Masumian.

⁵⁵ *ibid.* Provisional translation by Adib Masumian.

⁵⁶ *Arabic Bayán* 6:15 (see *al-Áyát al-Shiráziyyah* p. 388). Authorized translation published in Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 29. In the *Persian Bayán*, the Báb equates the attainment to all good with recognition of “Him Whom God shall make manifest”; see *Váḥid* 3, Báb 8, in INBA 62:84. Later in that same work, this idea is stated again in slightly different terms; see *Váḥid* 4, Báb 6, in INBA 62:125–26.

⁵⁷ Muhammad Afnan, “*Ayyám-i-Buṭún*,” published in *Majmú'iy-i-Maqálat*, vol. 1 (Dundas, Ontario, Canada: Persian Institute for Bahá'í Studies, 2013), pp. 409–410.

⁵⁸ *Persian Bayán* 6:15 (see INBA 62:232). Refer to two articles for extensive treatments of Bahá'u'lláh's “days of concealment”: (1) Nosratullah Mohammad Hosseini, “*Ayyám-i-Buṭún va Maráḥil-i-Zuhúr-i-Jamál-i-Aqdas-i-Abhá*,” published in *Mahbúb-i-Álam* 212–54; and (2) Muhammad Afnan, “*Ayyám-i-Buṭún*,” published in *Majmú'iy-i-Maqálat* 1:404–43.

⁵⁹ To clarify, this point is not necessarily evidence of awakening or disclosure, but of the divine reality of the Manifestation being “conscious of His own Station” “from the beginning,” as explained on p. 2 of this article.

Accounts from Nabíl's Narrative, *The Dawn-Breakers* (1848–51)

According to Nabíl, in 1848, the same year in which the Persian Bayán was revealed, Bahá'u'lláh “revealed Tablets” at the Conference of Badasht for those present, and also conferred “new names” upon them, every day for 22 days.⁶⁰ These Tablets were chanted by Mírzá Sulaymán Núrí in the presence of all 81 participants. Revealing Tablets and granting titles would seem to be evidence of Bahá'u'lláh's awakening to and disclosure of His divine station. Since Bahá'u'lláh never mentions the appearance of the Maid of Heaven to Him before the Síyáh-Chál experience, the Badasht episode of “revealing Tablets,” though hagiographical, would appear to indicate that Bahá'u'lláh received divine revelation as early as 1848. If that is the case, then Momen's taxonomy would have to be adjusted accordingly. This would also mean that Bahá'u'lláh was receiving divine revelation during the Báb's ministry, which in turn would mean that two independent Manifestations were receiving divine revelation simultaneously—an unprecedented occurrence in the annals of religious history. Additionally, the fact that neither Quddús nor Ṭáhirih opposed Bahá'u'lláh's actions at Badasht suggests that both of them also had foreknowledge of Bahá'u'lláh's station. We will discuss this hypothesis more fully in the section on Ṭáhirih below.

Furthermore, Nabíl writes that, in October 1851—about a year before the Síyáh-Chál experience—Bahá'u'lláh meets with Shaykh Ḥasan Zunúzí in Karbilá and confides His messianic secret in him.⁶¹

The Lawḥ-i-Ḥamd-i-Musha'sha' (1851?)

There is also a very important but relatively unknown⁶² Tablet to which the present authors will refer here as the Lawḥ-i-Ḥamd-i-Musha'sha' (“Tablet of the Effulgent Praise”), provisionally named after its opening words. Fáḍil Mázandarání has asserted that Bahá'u'lláh revealed this Tablet in 1851 for the eminent Bábí, Mullá Shaykh 'Alí Turshízí, surnamed 'Azím.⁶³ In response to questions from Adib Masumian regarding the provenance of this Tablet, the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Center states that the Tablet “is authentic,” noting that “a copy of it is held by the Archives at the Bahá'í World Centre.”⁶⁴ Additionally, they write that, to date, they “have found no further information regarding the exact date of this Tablet, the addressee or the circumstances of how Fáḍil-i-Mázandarání

⁶⁰ Nabíl, *The Dawn-Breakers* 293.

⁶¹ *ibid.* 32. More specifically, Bahá'u'lláh told Shaykh Ḥasan Zunúzí that he was the return of the Imám Ḥusayn. According to Shí'ih tradition, after the appearance of the Qá'im, the Imám Ḥusayn and his companions, who were martyred in Karbilá, will be the first to return to this earth, along with their enemies. The purpose of this return is for Ḥusayn and his companions to exact vengeance on those who killed them. See Muḥammad ibn Mas'úd 'Ayyáshí, *Tafsír-i-'Ayyáshí* (Qum: Chápkhániy-i-'Ilmíyyih, 1380–81 AH [1961–62 CE]), vol. 2, p. 282.

⁶² A notable exception to this obscurity can be found in an article by Vahid Rafati on Bahá'u'lláh's *Rashḥ-i-'Amá'*, in which Rafati quotes the opening lines of the Lawḥ-i-Ḥamd-i-Musha'sha' as part of his discussion on the term *háhúti* (“inaccessibly divine”) as it occurs in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, but does not delve into the Tablet any further beyond his reproduction of that passage. Refer to Vahid Rafati, “Áthár-i-Munzaliḥ az Qalam-i-A'lá dar Írán: Qaṣídiy-i-Rashḥ-i-'Amá'” (*Safíniy-i-'Irfán*, Book 2, 1999), p. 77.

⁶³ Fáḍil Mázandarání, *Tárikh-i-Zuhúru'l-Ḥaqq*, vol. 4 (Hofheim-Langenhain, Germany: Bahá'í-Verlag, 2011), pp. 25–28. For an analysis of this Tablet, refer to Adib Masumian, “The Lawḥ-i-Ḥamd-i-Musha'sha' (“Tablet of the Effulgent Praise”): A Little-Known but Significant Early Writing of Bahá'u'lláh,” Baha'í Library Online. 2023. Accessed 20 September 2024. Available online [here](#). For an annotated provisional translation of the Lawḥ-i-Ḥamd-i-Musha'sha' itself, see [here](#).

⁶⁴ Research Department at the Bahá'í World Center, memorandum dated 23 July 2018 and addressed to the Universal House of Justice. Private correspondence with Adib Masumian, who was copied on this memorandum.

obtained it..."⁶⁵ If Mázandarání's assertion about the date of this Tablet is correct, it means that the Tablet was revealed before the 1852 Bábí massacre (in which 'Azím was killed) and Bahá'u'lláh's experience in the Síyáh-Chál.

In this Tablet, Bahá'u'lláh warns His addressee not to become a cause of disunity, and predicts future calamities that await the Bábís.⁶⁶

They deem themselves to be guided aright and doers of good; but nay, by the Lord of the heavens, they are naught but liars and stirrers of sedition. And now that the brilliance of the morn of faithfulness hath suffused the Invisible Essence, and the darksome night of waywardness overtaken the whole earth, the blackening deeds of those who are dear to us have so stained the pages on which they are written that the very mention of them hath estranged all that is visible and invisible. Gracious God! So grievous is it that the ornaments of sorrow are now manifest upon the divine Countenance. Verily, we are God's, and unto our Lord shall we assuredly return

Say: O people of the Bayán! Were ye to acquire even an ounce of true understanding, and soar awhile in the hallowed firmament of immemorial sovereignty, ye would perceive how flagrantly you have subverted the all-encompassing, the blessed, the pre-eternal Word of God.

I swear by the righteousness of the Nurturer of all things visible and invisible—He Who is the King of existence and the chief Desire of all humanity—that that which your hands have wrought and your tongues uttered are clear and apparent before Him Whose knowledge nothing escapeth, be it of heaven above or earth below. Its fruit ye will erelong behold, and these very acts ye have perpetrated shall, at the hour of Resurrection, return to haunt you.

و يحسبون أنهم مهتدون و محسنون لا فورب
السّموات هم كاذبون و مفسدون. حال كه نواريت
صبح وفا در هوّيه غيب فرو رفته و ظلمانيت ليل
عما صحن زمين را احاطه نموده كدورات احباب
چنان بر صفحه مداد نازل گشته كه ذكر آن
موجب كدورت غيب و شهود گشته سبحان الله
بشدتي كه طراز حزن از طلعت ظاهر گشته تا لله و
انا الى ربنا لمنقلبون

بگو ای اهل بیان اگر فی الجملة بشعور بیائید و
قدری متصاعد بسماء قدس سلطان ازلی شوید
ملتفت می شوید که کلمه جامعه مبارکه ازلیه را
چگونه تفریق نموده اید.

بحقّ مرّی غیب و شهود و سلطان وجود و
مقصود که آنچه کسب نموده ایدی و السن شما
عند من لا یعزّب عن علمه من شیء فی ملکوت
السّموات و الأرض مبرهن و واضح است و ثمر آن
را عنقریب خواهید دید و همین افعال و اعمال
شما هنگام رجع بشما رجعت خواهد نمود.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Provisional translations of all passages from this Tablet are by Adib Masumian. The authenticated original typescript, prepared from a manuscript in the hand of Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín, is taken from the Bahá'í Reference Library, available [here](#).

Bahá'u'lláh then goes on to discuss His own station as a divine Manifestation and identify Himself, by way of allusion, with the Manifestations of the past—all this at least a year before His Síyáh-Chál experience:

Praise be to God, He Who made Bahá to warble
the mystery of fidelity...

و الحمد لله الذى قد اغنّ البهآء بالسّرّ الوفاء . . .

Praise be to God, He Who made the Light to dwell
within the mystery of Bahá, Who called upon him
from the inaccessible realm of divine decree and
presented him before the countenances of the
Theophanic Cloud...

و الحمد لله الذى قد اقام النّور فى سرّ البهآء فلقد
اشهده من هاهوت الامر بين طلعات العمآء . . .

O eternal Dove, O peerless Cockerel, O most
glorious Bird, O divine Manifestation, O
beauteous splendor! Say: O people of the Book!
Wherefore have ye condemned us as infidels, and
for what reason have ye refused to recognize us?
Are we not the signs of joy? Are we not the
chanting of the Lord upon Mount Sinai?
Wherefore have ye persecuted us, and for what
reason have ye put us to grief?

ان يا حمامة الازلىّ و ديك الاحدىّ و طائر الابهائى
و تظهر الالهى و تشعشع الجمالى قل ان يا اهل
الكتاب لم تكفروننا بم تجحدوننا السنا آيات
السّرور السنا تغرد الرّبّ فى جبل الطور لم تؤذوننا
كيف تحزنوننا

Are we not the hidden retreat of Revelation
enshrined in Scripture? Are we not the
Countenance of Him Who is the Ever-Living, the
Ever-Forgiving? Are we not the Theophanic Cloud
of camphor? Are we not clearly reflective of
Divine Unity through our manifestation?
Wherefore have ye banished us from our land,
and for what reason have ye imprisoned us in our
homes?

السنا مستسرّ التّزول فى الرّبور السنا طلعة حىّ غفور
السنا عمآء الكافور السنا بيّنات الاحدىّة بالظهور
كيف تخرجوننا عن ديارنا لم تحبسونا فى بيوتنا

Are we not the Beauty of the All-Glorious
enwrapped in gloomy darknesses? Are we not the
Beloved mysteriously concealed in the core of
Há? Are we not the Friend in the very soul of
Bahá intoning melodies of the Day of
Resurrection? Are we not the Chanter Who
abideth in the divinity of the inmost heart and
singeth in the ringing tones of birds? Wherefore
have ye repudiated us, slain us, and forsaken us?

السنا جمال العزّى فى ظلمات الديجور السنا
المحبيب فى كبد الهآء بالسّرّ المستور السنا
الحبيب فى قلب البهآء برنّات النّشور السنا المرثم
فى لاهوت الفؤاد برنّات الطيور لم تعرضوننا و
تقتلوننا و تخذلوننا

... all this was naught but the Dove of Thine
eternity warbling within my soul... and the
Countenance of Thine Essence emerging within
mine inmost heart...

... كلّ ذلك ما كان الا من تغرّد حمامة ازليّتك في
قلبي . . . و من تظّهّر طلعة هويّتك في فؤادي . . .

The Writings of Ṭáhirih

As noted above, there are reasons to believe that Ṭáhirih was aware of Bahá'u'lláh's station while He harbored His messianic secret. In that vein, 'Abdu'l-Bahá states clearly that, well before Badasht, Ṭáhirih had discovered that Bahá'u'lláh was destined to be the Manifestation of God Who would succeed the Báb:

Although [Ṭáhirih's] speech was eloquent, yet when she perceived that Bahá'u'lláh was to raise another call and shine forth with another radiance, she became even more enkindled and reached a state that can hardly be described. She forsook all patience and composure and well-nigh rent asunder the veil of concealment. Night and day she would at turns speak forth and cry out, laugh aloud, and weep bitterly.⁶⁷

هرچند نطقش گویا بود ولی چون ملتفت شد که
جمال مبارک را آهنگی دیگر است و جلوه‌ای دیگر
بسیار مشتعل تر شد، بدرجه‌ای رسید که وصف
ندارد. صبر و آرامش نماند، نزدیک بود که پرده
کتمان بگلی بدرد. شب و روز نعره می‌زد یا می‌گفت
یا می‌گریست یا می‌خندید.

There are, in fact, a number of writings attributed to Ṭáhirih that appear to indicate her foreknowledge of Bahá'u'lláh's station. We will discuss examples of these writings in some detail below.

Ṭáhirih's Prose

We first have a letter from 1851, which opens with Ṭáhirih addressing Bahá'u'lláh as a "hidden Treasure" and anticipating that His appearance will succeed that of the Báb:

O hidden Treasure, O mentioned Countenance, O
brilliant Star, O effulgent Essence!

ای کنز مخفی و یا وجه محکی و یا کوکب درّی و یا
جوهر مضیء

... God willing Thou wilt erelong don the crown of
sovereignty, and put on the robe of generosity. If
it be Thy wish, Thou wilt emerge as... He [the
Báb] hath emerged as that Fountainhead,
established on "the seat of truth in the presence
of the potent King,"⁶⁸ and Thou shalt, in Thy turn,

. . . انشاءالله که تاج ولایت ترا بر سر و خلعت
کرامت ترا در بر، خواهی در مَفْعَدِ صِدْقِ عِنْدَ

⁶⁷ Authorized translation published in "Twelve table talks given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 'Akká," a collection available online [here](#). The authors would like to thank Omid Ghaemmaghami for this reference.

⁶⁸ Qur'án 54:55.

benefit from such hidden favors as “the human heart hath never conceived.”⁶⁹ May my life be a sacrifice for Thy most noble efforts, and a ransom for Thy most humble Face—for at a time when the smoke of hell-fire had wafted high, and in the midst of that tumult fomented by the fiendish, Thou didst come with the light of the Lord of the worlds, cleaving tenaciously to the firm cord.⁷⁰

مَلِيكٍ مُّقْتَدِرٍ مُّصَدَّرٍ آمِدٍ وَ از الطاف نهانیة لا
خَطَرَ عَلَی قَلْبٍ بَشَرٍ خواهی بهره مند گردید. فدای
همّت والایت پس فدای وجه خضوعیت که در
حین تراکم اَبْخِرَةَ سَجِّین، و در آن ولولۀ شیاطین،
متوسّل به حبل المتین به نور ربّ العالمین آمدی.

Next is an important prayer with no date which, according to ‘Abdu’l-Ḥusayn Áyatí, commonly known to Bahá’ís as “Áváríh”—the author of a history of the Bábí and Bahá’í Faiths entitled *Kavákibu’-d-Durriyyih* (“the Brilliant Stars”)—is among the rare documents that exist in Ṭáhirih’s own handwriting. This prayer was among the collection of Ṭáhirih’s works preserved by one of her relatives in Qazvín. Áváríh first explains the circumstances attending the discovery of this prayer, and then goes on to discuss its contents—a discussion retained here across several endnotes.⁷¹

... through Mírzá Músá Khán, the Ḥakím-Báshí... we have procured, in Qazvín, one of Ṭáhirih’s writings. This is the document which speaks most clearly to her awareness of [what is truly signified by] such terms as “Bahá,” “Íshán,”⁷² “the Return of Ḥusayn,” and the like—terms to which Ṭáhirih herself alludes therein—and contains her supplications in behalf of “them that circle round the Twin Points” (meaning the Primal Point and the Abhá Beauty). The noble Ḥakím obtained this document, through the relatives of Ṭáhirih, from among the personal effects of that esteemed woman. Ḥakím has graciously given this document to this servant, and I am indebted to him for it, inasmuch as the writings of that venerated woman—particularly those in her own

. . . آیا سندی از او [طاهره] باقی مانده است که دانش
و علم او را بر این مسئله راوی و حاکی باشد؟ بلی،
خوشبختانه در قزوین به توسط جناب میرزا موسی
خان حکیم باشی – که شاید باز به ذکر خیرش برسیم
– مقاله‌ئی از مقالات طاهره را به دست آوردیم که
بهترین سند است بر این که او به اصطلاح بهاء و
ایشان (و رجعت حسین و امثالها آگاه بوده و اشاراتی
نموده، و در حق طائفین حول نقطتین (یعنی نقطه
اولی و جمال ابھی) دعا فرموده. و این مقاله را جناب
حکیم کریم از مخلفات آن مخدّره از دست اقارب او

⁶⁹ From a hadith attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad by Abú Hurairah and published in *Ṣaḥíḥ Bukhárí*. A nearly identical sentiment was expressed centuries earlier by Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:9: “But as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, **neither have entered into the heart of man**, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” [emphasis ours].

⁷⁰ Fáḍíl Máẓandarání, *Ẓuhúru’l-Ḥaqq* 4:33–34. Translation by Adib Masumian.

⁷¹ Words in brackets represent additions by Adib Masumian; all else, including parenthetical remarks, are the words of Áváríh.

⁷² “Íshán” is a gender-neutral third-person singular pronoun in Persian. In this instance, it would be most suitably translated as “he” or “him,” given the context. In his own analysis of this prayer—which appears immediately after it, and features the heading *Tabṣíratun li’l-Mutabaṣṣirín* (“A note for the perceptive”)—Áváríh notes that this is a Bábí locution that was known, even to the courtiers and ‘ulamá of the time, to refer to Mírzá Ḥusayn-‘Alí Núrí (‘Abdu’l-Ḥusayn Áyatí, *Kavákibu’-d-Durriyyih*, vol. 1 (Cairo, Egypt: Maṭba‘at as-Sa‘ádah, 1923), p. 275).

hand—are extremely rare. Wherever such items are found, they must be regarded as the most significant of historical documents. That applies especially to this document, which features a style that is unique. Indeed, from the very words and phrases it contains, one can discern that this document must have been written by someone like Ṭáhirih. She has, with the tongue of prayer and communion, sung this melody, and placed numerous secrets within it.

به دست آورده به این بنده عنایت نمودند و مرا رهین
مّت چه که انشاء و خط آن مخدّره بسیار نادر و هر
جا یافت شود مهمّترین سند تاریخی تواند بود –
خصوصاً این مقاله که انشائش هم انشاء مخصوصی
است، که از خود عبارات فهمیده می شود که انشاء
شخصی مثل طاهره است. و به لسان مناجات این
نغمه را سروده؛ رموزی چند را در آن ودیعه نهاده. و
هی هذه

Below are portions of this prayer in which Ṭáhirih identifies the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh as “the Twin Points.” In Bábí parlance, this locution refers to the Twin Manifestations, as one of the Báb’s titles was also *Ḥaḍrat-i-Nuḡṭiy-i-Úlá* (“the Primal Point”):⁷³

I perceive, O my God, with mine own eyes, that “he” hath appeared sanctified from all else [but Thee], and I behold how he hath become worthy of Thy most great bounty. O my God! That gift which hath been revealed in this day from the fountainhead of Thy power is the mystery of Godhood, and that which deserveth Thy favors is even as divinity itself... Through “him,” O my God, copious scrolls have been revealed, and from his inner reality numerous verses have proceeded.⁷⁴ ...O my God! Thou must cast off the veil that obscureth the face immortal and everlasting, and sprinkle the cloud-born drops⁷⁵ from the countenance independent and self-subsisting, so that the people of truth may arise and come together—issuing forth from a single center—and make evident, from the revelation of Thy holy Being, the mystery of summoning men to

...الهی مشاهده می نمایم به عین العیان که
(ایشان) مطهر از کلّ ما سوی آمدند * و ملاحظه
می فرمایم که قابل عطایت کبری شدند * الهی
عطیۀ نازله از مصدر قدرتت الیوم سرّ ربوبیت
است * و آنچه قابل عطای الهیه است آن عین
الوهیت است. ... الهی ورقات چند از نزد (ایشان)
در نزول و آیات بسیار از حقیقتشان در ظهور. ...
الهی که باید براندازی حجاب را از وجه باقی
دیمومی. و باید بپاشی ذرات سحاب را از طلعت
قائم قیومی تا آنکه اهل حقیقت از مرکز واحده به

⁷³ Words in brackets represent additions by Adib Masumian. Following a precedent set by Shoghi Effendi, pronouns and other terms referring to the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are in lowercase when juxtaposed with those that refer to God.

⁷⁴ In his analysis of the prayer, Áváríh notes that Ṭáhirih’s language here indicates that, even at that juncture, she regarded the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh as divinely revealed Tablets and verses (*Kavákibu'd-Durriyyih* 1:275).

⁷⁵ This metaphor may have parallels with “the sprinkling of the cloud of unknowing” (*Rashḥ-i-'Amá*)—a concept found in Ṭáhirih’s other writings, as well as those of Bahá'u'lláh—which denotes a variety of divine bestowals from God to man through the Manifestation of God. These bestowals could include the sending of a new Manifestation, the revelation of a new Holy Book, and the inauguration of a new religious dispensation.

embrace Thee... This is the radiant sun that casteth its rays from the land of Šádíyyih,⁷⁶ and this is the luminous moon that, with the raiments of oneness, sheddeth from Mount Sinai its most effulgent splendor. Praised, doubly praised be Thou, O my God, for the appearance of the point of Bahá from the land of Qáf!⁷⁷ ... Protect Thou, O my God, them that circle round the twin points, and make them steadfast in Thy most great Cause, that they may behold the point shining resplendently over their realities... I bear witness unto Thee, O my God, that Thy Cause is being manifested through the temple of the point... Cast Thou, O my God, a glance of Thy favor upon him who is the most captivating, for I am indeed

اجتماع بر آیند. و سرّ دعوت را از اظهار اِنْتِيت خود
ابراز فرمایند. ... اینست شمس مضيئه که از ارض
صادیه در شعشعه و ضیاء. و اینست قمر منیره که
به قُمْص احدیّه در جَبَل طوریه بهاء ابهی [..] الهی
لك الحمد حمداً على باظهار نقطة البهاء از ارض
قاف. ... الهی طائفین حول نقطتین را حفظ فرما و
به امر اعظم خود ثابت نما تا آنکه نقطه را مضيء
بر حقائق خود مشاهده نمایند. ... اشهدك يا الهی
که امرت از هیكل نقطه در بروز. ... الهی که نظری

⁷⁶ In his analysis of the prayer, Áváríh notes that this term (originally, *Arḍ-i-Šádíyyih*; literally, “land of the letter Šád”) was coined by Shaykh Aḥmad-i-Aḥsá’í, who used it in one of his explications of a well-known ḥadīth by Abú Labíd al-Makhzúmi (this ḥadīth offers commentary on certain disconnected letters of the Qur’án, one of which includes the letter Šád). Áváríh notes that Tāhíríh later interpreted *Arḍ-i-Šádíyyih* in her own writings as a reference to the dawning-place of Bahá’u’lláh, as evidenced by her figurative usage of the term in this sentence. Áváríh, however, then remarks that he is content to leave it at that, and not speculate any further on what the term may signify, except to discount the notion that it could refer to a physical place like Iṣfáhán—commonly represented in the Bahá’í Writings by a nearly identical locution, *Arḍ-i-Šád* (also literally “land of the letter Šád”)—and insist that it is metaphorical in nature, citing Tāhíríh’s allusion to the similarly mystical “land of Qáf” (discussed further in the next endnote) shortly thereafter as evidence (*Kavákibu’d-Durriyyih* 1:275–76). One possibility that occurs to the present authors is that *Arḍ-i-Šádíyyih* may be a locational metaphor that represents the first letter (Šád) of the Arabic word *šamad* (“eternal”), an attribute associated with God in the Qur’án (112:2). It is worth noting that the word *šamad* may have occupied a prominent place in the collective Bábí consciousness, if one considers the extensive commentary that Quddús wrote on the letter Šád that composes that word—a commentary that Nabíl Zarandí characterized as Quddús’s “eulogy of Bahá’u’lláh” (*Dawn-Breakers*, p. 70), and described as being “thrice as voluminous as the Qur’án itself” (*ibid.*, p. 357) and having “assumed the dimensions of five hundred thousand verses” (*ibid.*, p. 71).

⁷⁷ In his analysis of the prayer, Áváríh notes that this term (originally, *Arḍ-i-Qáf*; literally, “land of the letter Qáf”) could mean a number of different things. He first suggests that it could refer to “the waystation of self-subsistence” (*sarmanzil-i-qayyúmiyyat*), which he notes “must be revealed after the advent of the Qá’im”—the key being that the original word for “self-subsistence” here, *qayyúm*, as well as the word *Qá’im*, which as a proper noun refers to the redeemer of mankind in Shí’ih eschatology (but otherwise means “standing” or “independent”), both begin with the letter Qáf. To corroborate this notion, Áváríh cites a passage from earlier in this prayer—“O my God! Thou must... sprinkle the cloud-born drops from the countenance independent and self-subsisting...”—observing that the original words translated here as “independent” and “self-subsisting” are *qá’im* and *qayyúm*, respectively. Áváríh secondly suggests that *Arḍ-i-Qáf* could be an allusion to a sermon given by the Imám ‘Alí at a mosque in Kúfih, in which he hailed the future appearance of Him Who is the Qá’im and the Qayyúm. Lastly, Áváríh cites a firsthand account from Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Baghdádí that he describes in “his concise treatise” (which Áváríh does not identify, but probably refers to Baghdádí’s *al-Risálat al-Amríyya*) to demonstrate that Tāhíríh often spoke in a way that was laden with mystery, noting that in one particular instance she used the term *Arḍ-i-Qáf* to signify the command *qúmú bi amri’lláh* (“Arise ye, by the command of God”), and suggest that this meaning may also be applicable here (*Kavákibu’d-Durriyyih* 1:276–77). Beyond these possibilities, the present authors wish to observe that there may be a parallel between this term and the mythical Mount Qáf (apparently named after the letter), which in ancient Persian mythology refers to the dwelling-place of the phoenix (*anqá*). Within a decade or so from the composition of this prayer (no later than 1858), Bahá’u’lláh equates, in the first Persian Hidden Word, the word Qáf with the same mythical mountain where the phoenix dwells by inviting man to rise above his mortal dwelling-place (this transient world) and soar unto his true destiny (the attainment of immortality) by remaining faithful to his covenant with God: “O immortal phoenix! dwell not save on the mount of faithfulness. Therein is thy habitation, if on the wings of thy soul thou soarest to the realm of the infinite and seekest to attain thy goal” (Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words of Bahá’u’lláh* (U.S. Bahá’í Publishing Trust: Wilmette, Illinois, 1985)), p. 22.

enthralled [by him], that I may witness the mystery of Thine endless bounty, for I am in earnest search of the object of my quest. O my God, Thou Who wilt assist us to victory, Thou Who didst promise the return of Ḥusayn! Keep safe the mystery of Muḥammad from every misfortune, and disclose the day when we shall stand in his presence...⁷⁸

از نظرات نهان بر جاذب که مجذوبم تا آنکه سر
لطف بی پایان را مشاهده نمایم که طالب مطلوبم
* الهی که ممدود به نصرت و موعود به گرت
(حسین) سر محمد را از جمیع آفات حفظ فرما و
یوم لقاء او را بارز نما...

The third prose writing of Ṭáhirih we will explore here is a passage from a document that is currently preserved at the Bahá'í World Center.⁷⁹ This excerpt will show that Ṭáhirih had not only recognized Bahá'u'lláh as the Promised One of the Bábí dispensation, but that she had also expressed her love and devotion to Him in writing. In this excerpt, moreover, Ṭáhirih acknowledges Bahá'u'lláh as the return of the Imám Ḥusayn, whose appearance—according to Shí'ih messianic tradition—is expected to follow the coming of the Qá'im. Ṭáhirih also notes that the Báb had expressed His own belief in Bahá'u'lláh, that Bahá'u'lláh was indeed the expected Bábí Messiah, and that He and the Báb were intrinsically one and the same person:

Lo, I bow down in adoration before the Face of Ḥusayn, for verily, He hath returned. I humble myself, moreover, before the Most Great Countenance [the Báb] Who hath believed in Him [Ḥusayn = Jináb-i-Bahá'] and affirmed that He [Ḥusayn = Jináb-i-Bahá'] is the Point Whose advent God promised through His utterance, and recorded through His verse, “We decreed heretofore in the Scriptures that My righteous Servants shall inherit the earth after the appearance of the Remembrance” (Qur’án 21:105).

قَدْ أَسْجُدُ لِظَلَعَةِ الْحُسَيْنِ الَّذِي قَدْ كَرَّ. ثُمَّ أَخْضَعُ
لِوَجْهِ الْأَعْظَمِ الَّذِي قَدْ آمَنَ بِهِ وَأَسْتَقَرَّ بِأَنَّهُ لَهُوَ
النُّقْطَةُ الَّذِي قَدْ وَعَدَهُ اللَّهُ بِالظَّهْرِ وَسَطَرَهُ اللَّهُ
بِالسَّطْرِ ﴿ وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزُّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ
الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ. ﴿

Verily, it hath been revealed in the Bayán that He [Ḥusayn = Jináb-i-Bahá'] is, of a truth, Him Whom God shall make manifest. O my Lord! Can He Who shall be made manifest [Ḥusayn = Jináb-i-Bahá'] be anyone other He Who hath appeared [the Báb]? No, and to this Thy most august and all-compelling Glory beareth me witness, for verily,

وَلَقَدْ نُزِّلَ بِالْبَيَانِ أَنَّهُ لَهُوَ مَنْ يُظْهِرُهُ اللَّهُ. يَا رَبِّ هَلِ
الَّذِي يُظْهِرُهُ هُوَ قَدْ كَانَ غَيْرَ مَنْ ظَهَرَ؟ لَا وَعِزَّتِكَ
الْأَعَزُّ الْأَقْهَرُ لِأَنَّهُ قَدْ ظَهَرَ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالرُّبُزِ.

⁷⁸ Áyatí, *Kavákibu'd-Durriyyih* 1:273–74. Translation by Adib Masumian.

⁷⁹ Muhammad Afnan, “Áthár-i-Manthúr-i-Ṭáhirih,” published in *Majmú'iy-i-Maqalát* [vol. 1] (Dundas, Ontario, Canada: 'Andalíb, 2013), p. 272. Another version of this passage with slight variations in wording is published in Nosratullah Mohammad Hosseini, *Ḥadrat-i-Ṭáhirih* (Dundas, Ontario, Canada: Persian Institute for Bahá'í Studies, 2000), p. 483; see citation in note 24.

He hath appeared with proofs, Scriptures, and the splendors of divine decree!⁸⁰

Ṭáhirih's interpretation of Qur'án 21:105, cited in the above passage, is also highly original. In some Shí'í commentaries on the Qur'án, the locution "My righteous Servants" found in this verse is interpreted to mean the Qá'im and His companions, but here Ṭáhirih appears to suggest that "My righteous Servants" in fact refers to Him Whom God shall make manifest, Who is the return of the Imám Ḥusayn and has appeared after the Báb ("the Remembrance"). Ṭáhirih seems to be implying that Bahá'u'lláh's station is so exalted that the Qur'án uses the plural "Servants" to refer to Him—not unlike how the Bible and the Qur'án, in certain verses, describe God in plural terms.⁸¹

It is worth noting here that, in her entry on Ṭáhirih in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Annemarie Schimmel—the influential German Orientalist and scholar who wrote extensively on Islam and Sufism—also confirms that Ṭáhirih considered Bahá'u'lláh the awaited Messiah of the Bábís:

The assassination of [Ṭáhirih's] uncle (her former father-in-law), also an adversary of the Bábís resulted in the first persecution of the adherents of the new faith, and she went to Tehran and stayed as a guest of Bahá'u'lláh, whom she hailed as the awaited leader of the community.⁸²

Ṭáhirih's Poetry

There is no official collection of Ṭáhirih's poetry. In all likelihood, her tumultuous adult life, mostly spent away from home traveling or in captivity, left her with little time or desire to engage in assembling her poetry into an organized collection. Perhaps the best and most reliable existing collections of Ṭáhirih's poetry can be found in the works of Nosratullah Mohammad Hosseini and Ni'matu'lláh Dhuká'í Baydá'í.⁸³ However, numerous samples of Ṭáhirih's poetry were left in the hands of her family in Qazvín, which allowed others to study the language and literary styles of her poetry and extrapolate what they learned from those samples to confirm or reject the authenticity of other poems attributed to Ṭáhirih. The excerpts that appear below are all selected from such poems, many of which have already been translated by others. However, where the present authors felt a retranslation of certain words or entire verses was necessary, they have struck through the rendering of the original translator(s) and followed it with their own rendering.

⁸⁰ Afnan, "Áthár," p. 272. Provisional translation by Omid Ghaemmaghami.

⁸¹ The authors are indebted to Omid Ghaemmaghami for the reference to the above passage from Ṭáhirih, as well as his translation of the passage and his insightful analysis of it offered here, first shared in private correspondence and eventually fleshed out in "The Hand of God is Not Chained Up': Notes on Two Salient Themes in the Prose Writings of Ṭáhirih Qurratu'l-'Ayn," published in Fereyduñ Vahman (ed.), *The Bab and Babi Community of Iran* (Oxford: Oneworld Academic, 2020), pp. 407–421.

⁸² Schimmel, Annemarie, "Qurrat al-'Ayn Ṭáhirah." *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones (2nd ed., vol. 11, Macmillan Reference USA, 2005, pp. 7574–75). The authors are grateful to Omid Ghaemmaghami for this reference.

⁸³ For Mohammad Hosseini, see *Ḥaḍrat-i-Ṭáhirih*, pp. 345–93; for Dhuká'í Baydá'í, refer to *Tadhkariy-i-Shu'aráy-i-Qarn-i-Avval-i-Bahá'í*, vol. 3 (Tíhrán: Mu'assisiy-i-Millíy-i-Maṭbú'át-i-Amrí, 1969), pp. 106–33.

Excerpt 1, Distich Quoted by Bahá'u'lláh in His Lawḥ-i-Sarráj	
Provisional English Translation (by Adib Masumian)	Original Text
Were Bahá to cast off the veil from His Face A myriad Azals would thus appear	گر براندازد بهاء از رخ نقاب صد هزار همچون ازل آید پدید
Source: 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd Ishráq-Khávarí. <i>Má'idiy-i-Ásmání</i> , vol. 7, p. 98.	

Analysis 1: This distich is significant for two reasons:

1. It is the only known verse of Ṭáhirih that is quoted by Bahá'u'lláh Himself as evidence of her high regard for Him and the fact that He was hiding something important.

In the Lawḥ-i-Sarráj (1864–68), Bahá'u'lláh Himself confirms that Ṭáhirih was aware of His station.⁸⁴ He reproduces a distich from Ṭáhirih that must have been composed after 9 July 1850 (when the Báb was executed) and before Ṭáhirih's own execution in August 1852. The distich compares the stations of Bahá'u'lláh and Mírzá Yaḥyá (Azal), which also means it belongs to a period when the rift between the two brothers was becoming public, at least among some of the Bábís:⁸⁵

That captivating Point, Jináb-i-Ṭá [Ṭáhirih]—upon her be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious—*was with this Servant for a time. She would not barter one moment's meeting with this Youth for the sovereignty of this world and the next, nor for less than an instant did she wish for separation. However, that which hath been pre-ordained came to pass.* How numerous are the verses and poems she produced concerning this wondrous Cause! Among her descriptions of the Most Exalted Countenance is a certain poem that includeth the following distich [*fard*]:

Were Bahá to cast off the veil from His Face
A myriad Azals would thus appear

⁸⁴ Ishráq-Khávarí, *Má'idiy-i-Ásmání* 7:98.

⁸⁵ Composite rendering from the original Persian; the italicized portion is an authorized translation digitally published on the Bahá'í Reference Library (available [here](#)), while the remainder of the passage—including the distich from Ṭáhirih quoted by Bahá'u'lláh—was rendered provisionally by Adib Masumian.

2. Ṭáhirih refers to Bahá'u'lláh as “veiled,” indicating that He had a secret which, if revealed, would make Bábís realize that His greatness far outweighed that of Mírzá Yahyá's. The complete text of the poem that includes this distich has yet to be found.⁸⁶

Excerpt 2, from the Poem: <i>Start Shouting!</i>	
English Translation (All Emphasis Ours)	Original Text (All Punctuation, Vowel Markings, and Emphasis Ours)
<p>Angels! Saints! All you holy ones above! My true lover beloved just walked in. Start shouting! Raise your jubilant cries, O celestial concourse! For the advent of our Beloved is now clearly manifest!</p>	<p>هله ای گروه عمائیان، بکشید هلهله ولا که ظهورِ دلبرِ ما عیان شده فاش و ظاهر و برملا</p>
<p>Fars is set aflame, and Tehran's burning. Fountains of fire are gushing out of the land of Fá [<i>ard-i-fá</i>]; rays of light are pouring out of the city of Ṭá [<i>shahr-i-Ṭá</i>] Pure spirit rises from his His place. Start dancing!</p>	<p>فورانِ نارِ ز ارضِ فا، نورانِ نورِ ز شهرِ طا ظهرانِ روحِ ز شطریها و لقد علاً و قد اعتلا</p>
<p>Moses and Jesus in heaven are stunned, And all the holy ones are lost down here on earth- are wrapt in ecstasy</p>	<p>همه موسیان عمائیش، همه عیسیان سمائیش همه دلبران بقائیش، متولها متزماً</p>
Source	
<p>Amin Banani, Jascha Kessler, Anthony A. Lee. <i>Ṭáhirih: A Portrait in Poetry: Selected Poems of Qurratu'l-'Ayn</i> (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 2004), p. 58.</p>	<p>Banani, et al. <i>Ṭáhirih</i>, pp. 56–57.</p>

⁸⁶ In a letter dated 25 May 2018 to Bijan Masumian, the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Center confirmed that “to date, a copy of the complete version of this poem from Ṭáhirih that contains the couplet quoted by Bahá'u'lláh in His Tablet has not been found.”

Analysis 2: According to Vahid Rafati, the Báb uses the term *arḡ-i-fá* as a reference to Iran (which was once known as Fárs), in contradistinction to *madíniy-i-fá*, which refers to the city of Shíráz.⁸⁷ *Shahr-i-Ṭá*, or “the City of Ṭá,” refers to Ṭihrán, the birthplace of Bahá’u’lláh. In the second hemistich of the first verse, a better translation of the Persian word *dilbar* is actually “beloved,” in that it literally means “one who steals someone’s heart.” Therefore, of all the possible cities in Persia, Ṭáhirih here names the birthplace of Bahá’u’lláh and puts Him on par with past Manifestations (Moses and Jesus).

Excerpt 3, from the Poem: Ṭáhirih’s Praise of the Beloved (Bahá’u’lláh)

English Translation	Original Text (All Vowel Markings Ours)
O Bird of ‘Amá’, begin singing! Pour forth in sparks Your pages of praise!	در تغنی آی ای طیر عماء در شرر انداز اوراقِ ثناء
From the mysteries of the command of the Eternal Living One, recount the story of the Point of the Mystery of Eternity.	باز گواز نقطهٔ سرّ ازل از رموزِ حکیمِ حیّ لم یزل
Usher the mysteries out from behind the veil! Make manifest those concealed secrets of the heart!	آر از پرده برون اسرارها در تظهر آر آن اِضمارها
From the Hidden Mystery of placeless powers, make manifest the source of all power! From the concealment of the placeless realm, bring out and firmly establish the hidden secret!	سرّ مکنون از کمونِ لامکان ساز اندر مصدرِ تمکینِ عنان
Make manifest to all the splendor concealed in the ornaments shades of light through the dawning of the Manifestation!	جلوهٔ مستور در اطرازِ نور ساز مشهودش به اشراقِ ظهور

⁸⁷ See the note on the letter “fá” in Vahid Rafati, “Áthár-i-Munzaliḥ,” p. 66.

Source	
John Hatcher and Amrollah Hemmat. <i>Adam's Wish: Unknown Poetry of Ṭáhirih</i> (Wilmette: U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2008), pp. 59–60.	Hatcher and Hemmat. <i>Adam's Wish</i> , pp. 244–43 (here, Persian page numbers are intentionally given in reverse order, as the pages containing Persian poems read from right to left in the back section of the book).

Analysis: In Bábí-Bahá'í parlance, the term “Bird of ‘Amá’”⁸⁸ is a clear reference to the reality of the Manifestation of the age. In this case, Ṭáhirih could mean only the Báb or Bahá'u'lláh. She is inviting the Manifestation of her age to *begin* “singing” (revealing verses). The Báb, of course, had already *begun* to do this, but the Bábí Messiah (Bahá'u'lláh) had not yet done so.

Excerpt 4, from the Poem: <i>Ṭáhirih Explains the Signs of the Advent of Bahá'u'lláh</i>	
English Translation (All Emphasis Ours)	Original Text (All Vowel Markings and Emphasis Ours)
O beloved one, no change is there in this divine tradition: One who would seek God must relinquish allegiance to the moon and sun	تغییر مبین ای جان در سنتِ ربّانی از شمس و قمر بگذشت آنکو که به زار آمد
Remove the veil from the Bahá'íyyih face! Your Lord has come with embraces and kisses, with majesty and grandeur!	بردار تو برقع را از روی بهائیه حَقّت به جلال و فرّ در بوس و کنار آمد

⁸⁸ “‘Amá’ is defined as an extremely thin and subtle cloud, seen and then not seen. For shouldst thou gaze with the utmost care, thou wouldst discern something, but as soon as thou dost look again, it ceaseth to be seen. For this reason, in the usage of mystics who seek after truth, ‘Amá’ signifieth the Universal Reality without individuations as such, for these individuations exist in the mode of uncompounded simplicity and oneness and are not differentiated from the Divine Essence. Thus they are individuated and not individuated. This is the station alluded to by the terms Aḥadíyyih [Absolute Oneness] and ‘Amá’. This is the station of the “Hidden Treasure” mentioned in the Ḥadīth. The divine attributes, therefore, are individuations that exist in the Essence but are not differentiated therefrom. They are seen and then not seen. This, in brief, is what is meant by ‘Amá’” (from a previously untranslated Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; authorized translation published in Bahá'u'lláh, *Call of the Divine Beloved* (Haifa, Israel: Bahá'í World Centre, 2019), pp. 105–6).

<p>At your feast with God, aid and assistance will arrive with a paradisiacal celestial melody from the 'Iráqí quarter.</p>	<p>بر خوانِ خداوندت با رتّه طوبائی از ركنِ عراقیّه نصرت به نَصار آمد</p>
<p>Source</p>	
<p>Hatcher and Hemmat. <i>Adam's Wish: Unknown Poetry of Ṭáhirih</i>, pp. 109–110.</p>	<p>Hatcher and Hemmat. <i>Adam's Wish</i>, pp. 223–21 (here, Persian page numbers are intentionally in reverse order, as the pages containing Persian poems read from right to left in the back section of the book).</p>

Analysis 4: Here, Ṭáhirih begins by invoking the Shaykhí-Bábí belief in God's unchanging method of sending divine messengers to humanity. She begins with Abraham: The reference to the moon and the sun in the second hemistich of the first verse is an allusion to the story of Abraham's gradual enlightenment as told in Qur'án 6:77–80, which in reality is meant to demonstrate how, over time, Abraham nudged the people of His generation towards monotheism. He did this by first pretending to be a worshipper of the stars, then the moon, then the sun, and eventually a believer in God, the Creator of all of those celestial bodies along with the rest of the universe.

In the second verse, Ṭáhirih is inviting Bahá'u'lláh to “remove the veil [i.e., reveal His messianic secret] from the Bahá'íyyih face!” This could not refer to the Báb because He had already removed His veil, so to speak; His movement was already taking Persia by storm when Ṭáhirih wrote this poem.

In the last verse, Ṭáhirih goes so far as to tell the Qá'im that He will be assisted, and that this assistance will come from 'Iráq (“the 'Iráqí quarter”). By 'Iráq, Ṭáhirih could mean either 'Iráq-i-'Ajam—historically a central region in Persia that included Rayy, today's Ṭihrán, where His Síyáh-Chál experience occurred—or 'Iráq-i-'Arab, which is today's 'Iráq. 'Iráq-i-'Ajam included the birthplace of Bahá'u'lláh, while 'Iráq-i-'Arab was where His public declaration took place in 1863.

Excerpt 5, from the Poem: *The Appearance of "Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest"*

English Translation (All Emphasis Ours)	Original Text (All Punctuation, Vowel Markings, and Emphasis Ours)
<p>It is another world, another command another Command is being unfolded</p> <p>Another Revelation is descending from the Sun of Destiny!</p>	<p>عالم دگر و حُکم دگر در ظَهْران است از شمسِ قَدْرُ امرِ دگر در نَزْلان است</p>
<p>O thou hearer, hearken, and, if you examine with care the world around you,</p> <p>Hearken, O hearer, for if you examine with care this scene,</p> <p>You will recognize clearly revealed the One Who has been concealed.</p>	<p>دریاب آیا سامِع، بِنِگَر تو به منظر مشهود بیابی به عیان، آن که نهان است</p>
<p>Far from Celestial Heights the Friend of God has descended</p> <p>Whose name in the Bayán is now manifest in the exaltation honor of light.</p>	<p>یعنی که مُنَزَّل زِ سما گشته حبیبی اسمش به بیان در شَرَفِ نور عیان است</p>
<p>Verily, in this Day the Truth has become revealed!</p> <p>Verily, the light has been ignited by sparks sparks of ecstasy flashing from the Bayán.</p>	<p>الیوم حقیقت به عیان گشت مظهر زهرا به عیان در شررِ شورِ بیان است</p>
<p>Source</p>	
<p>Hatcher and Hemmat. <i>Adam's Wish</i>, pp. 113–15.</p>	<p>Hatcher and Hemmat. <i>Adam's Wish</i>, pp. 221–19 (here, Persian page numbers are intentionally given in reverse order, as the pages containing Persian poems read from right to left in the back section of the book).</p>

Analysis 5: In the first verse, Ṭáhirih mentions a new world, a new command, and a new Revelation. At first, it seems all this could refer to the advent of the Báb. The ensuing verses, however, make it clear that Ṭáhirih was in fact alluding to the Bábí Messiah. In the second verse, she tells the Bábís that, if they pay attention, they will clearly recognize the One who has been concealed. However, since the Báb's Revelation was already manifested, then, assuming that this poem was written after the Báb's execution, it could only refer either to Mírzá Yaḥyá—who would have had a nominal role as the leader of the community at that time—or to Bahá'u'lláh.

Some may argue that Mírzá Yaḥyá might have been intended as the Bábí Messiah here. It is true that the author(s) of the *Nuqṭatu'l-Káf*, an early history of the Bábí religion, make the following emphatic statement:

By He Whom God shall make manifest to come after Him [the Báb] His Holiness Azal is intended, and none but him, because two Points there cannot be at the same time.⁸⁹

However, the present authors have not seen any historical evidence that Mírzá Yaḥyá himself ever actually advanced such a claim,⁹⁰ nor did the Báb confer any such station on Mírzá Yaḥyá in His so-called “Will and Testament.”⁹¹ In addition, H.M. Balyuzi has observed that the above claim made in the

⁸⁹ *Nuqṭatu'l-Káf* (ed. E.G. Browne, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1910), p. 244, cited in H.M. Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahá'í Faith* (Oxford, England: George Ronald, 1975), p. 73. The authors wish to thank Brent Poirier for this reference. For a fuller discussion of the controversial history of the making of the *Nuqṭatu'l-Káf*, see Balyuzi, *Browne* 71–77, as well as the following two works: (1) William McCants and Kavian Milani, “The History and Provenance of an Early Manuscript of the *Nuqṭat al-kaf* Dated 1268 (1851–52)” (*Iranian Studies* vol. 37, no. 3, September 2004), pp. 431–449 (available online [here](#)); and (2) Kavian Milani, “NOQṬAT AL-KĀF” (*Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 28 July 2008), available online [here](#).

⁹⁰ The closest thing to such a claim by Mírzá Yaḥyá that the present authors have seen is a short poem written by him in Ottoman Turkish and mentioned in Necati Alkan, *Dissent and Heterodoxy in the Late Ottoman Empire: Reformers, Babis and Baha'is* (Gorgias Press: Piscataway, 2010), p. 78, note 3. The original manuscript of this poem is held at the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul (BOA I.MMS. 36/1475, no. 26). Dr. Alkan kindly shared with the present authors a facsimile and English translation of the poem, in which Yaḥyá apparently makes oblique claims to some sort of elevated spiritual station, but there is nothing in the overall cryptic wording of the poem to explicitly indicate that he was claiming to be “He Whom God shall make manifest.” In fact, drawing on the analysis of Siyyid Miqdád Nabavi-Razavi (*Tárikh-i-Maktúm: Niḡáhi bih taláshhay-i-fa'álan-i-Azalí dar mukhálifat ba ḥukúmat-i-Qájár va Tadárúk-i-Inqiláb-i-Mashrúṭih* (Pardís-i-Dánish: Tíhrán, 2014), pp. 24–25)—who has rooted his assertions in certain Writings by the Báb—Abbas Amanat and Fereyduñ Vahman have proposed that, through a combination of *abjad* reckoning, interpretations of esoteric letters and words, and a kind of arithmomancy (divination by means of numbers) used in this poem, along with an enigmatic talisman that precedes it, Mírzá Yaḥyá was actually hinting at 1868 as the year in which a Bábí uprising against the Ottoman government, which he himself would lead, was to take place, after which he would be established as the first Bábí king (Abbas Amanat and Fereyduñ Vahman, *Az Tíhrán Tá 'Akká* (Nashr-i-Ashkar: North Haven, Connecticut, 2016), pp. 36–42 and 200–04). This shows that, even in cases where Mírzá Yaḥyá was ostensibly making grand spiritual claims, he was really intimating his desire for worldly sovereignty. His communication of this ambition also demonstrates that, even in the Edirne period (when this poem was written), his thinking was limited to the Bábí dispensation; it seems not to have extended to the Bábí messiahship embodied in “He Whom God shall make manifest,” whose advent would have signaled the end of that dispensation and the beginning of a new one. Furthermore, there are a number of writings by Yaḥyá whose manuscripts have been preserved at the Millet Kütüphanesi library in Istanbul and which read like “tablets” to his followers, laden as they are with pseudo-revelatory language, but even a cursory review of a random sample of these compositions shows that he was not necessarily claiming to be “He Whom God shall make manifest” in these instances. In any case, all these writings by Mírzá Yaḥyá would have postdated the execution of Ṭáhirih by about 15 years, making it even more unlikely that she would have been alluding to him in her poetry or that there was any validity to the claim made by the author(s) of the *Nuqṭatu'l-Káf*—a work dating to roughly the same time as Ṭáhirih's death—that Mírzá Yaḥyá was the one intended by the phrase “He Whom God shall make manifest.”

⁹¹ Published in INBA 64:95–102, where it bears the heading *Vaṣíyyat-Námíy-i-Ḥádrat-i-Nuqṭiy-i-Úlá* (“The Will and Testament of the Primal Point”). This Writing of the Báb should be read in tandem with a memorandum from the Research Department to the Universal House of Justice dated 1 December 2004, which has been published in *Lights of 'Irfán*, vol. 8, pp. 387–91 with the

Nuṣṣatu'l-Káf for Mírzá Yahyá “flatly contradicted the thesis of his supporters, as quoted by Edward Browne in his Introduction [to the *Nuṣṣatu'l-Káf*].”⁹² Azalís had always insisted that “Him Whom God shall make manifest” would not appear before the expiration of a long period of time, which could extend anywhere from 1511 to 2001 years.⁹³ How, then, can one reconcile the expectation that the Bábí Messiah would not appear until far into the future with the claim that Mírzá Yahyá, supposedly that self-same Messiah, was already living among them?

It is also true that as many as 25 Bábís claimed to be the Bábí Messiah,⁹⁴ but it is not clear how many of them (if any) set forth that claim in such a narrow window of time—that is, after the martyrdom of the Báb on 9 July 1850 to the summer of 1852, when Ṭáhirih was executed.

Excerpt 6, from an Untitled Poem	
English Translation (All Emphasis Ours)	Original Text (All Vowel Markings and Emphasis Ours)
<p>The effulgence of the Abhá Beauty hath pierced the veil of night;</p> <p>behold the souls of His lovers dancing, moth-like, in the light that has flashed from His face!</p>	<p>شمسِ ابھی جلوہ گر گردید و جانِ عاشقان در هوایِ طلعتش چون ذرّہ رقصان آمده</p>
Source	
<p>Nabíl Zarandí. <i>The Dawn-Breakers</i> (trans. Shoghi Effendi), p. 286.</p>	<p>John Hatcher and Amrollah Hemmat. <i>The Poetry of Ṭáhirih</i> (Oxford, England: George Ronald, 2002), poem #1; see the first page from the back cover of the book (this page is unnumbered).</p>

Analysis 6: The first term that occurs in the original text, *Shams-i-Abhá*, literally means “the Most Luminous Sun.” The sun and its light are, respectively, the antidotes to night and darkness. Thus, Ṭáhirih is referring to a Manifestation Whose appearance will be associated with light (Bahá, or here its relative form, Abhá). She then invokes the imagery of the lover and the beloved, a recurring motif in Persian love

title “Designation of Mírzá Yahyá Azal in the Writings of the Báb.” This memorandum is available on the Baha’i Library Online here: https://bahai-library.com/uhj_designation_mirza_yahya.

⁹² Balyuzi, *Browne*, pp. 72–73.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁹⁴ Noted in Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 125. Drawing on various sources, Denis MacEoin has attempted to identify most of these claimants in *Messiah of Shiraz: Studies in Early and Middle Babism* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009), pp. 376ff.

poetry, and explains that, like moths, the lovers of Abhá (or Bahá) are dancing in the light that is flashing from the Face of Abhá (or Bahá). The word Abhá is also clearly referring to a personage, not simply the concept of light or glory, because Ṭáhirih says the souls of the lovers of this personage are dancing (out of ecstasy) in the light of His Face. There is no precedent for Ṭáhirih calling the Báb, Mírzá Yaḥyá, or other important Bábí figures of that era by the title Abhá or Bahá, with the sole exception of Bahá'u'lláh.⁹⁵

Excerpt 7, from the Poem: <i>Daybreak</i>	
English Translation (All Emphasis Ours)	Original Text (All Punctuation, Vowel Markings, and Emphasis Ours)
<p>Lovers! O Ye Lovers ye lovers!</p> <p>The face Face of truth Truth [God] has become manifest!</p> <p>Lo, the veils have at last been removed through the power of Rabbu'l-Falaq, the Lord of the Dawn!</p>	<p>ای عاشقان ای عاشقان شد آشکارا وجهِ حقّ رَفَعِ حُجُبِ گَرْدیدِ هان از قدرتِ رَبِّ الفَلَقِ</p>
<p>Arise, each one of you!</p> <p>In Bahá the face Face of God can be seen!</p> <p>Look! See how that face Face, bright like sun at daybreak, shines with compassion and delight!</p> <p>Look with tenderness and purity upon that Face shining brightly as the sun at dusk!</p>	<p>خیزید کایندم با بهاء، ظاهر شده وجهِ خدا بنگر به صد لطف و صفا، آن رویِ روشن چون شَفَقِ</p>
<p>The time for rectitude has come! Perversity is in retreat!</p> <p>Indeed, everything you longed for—Law, Order, Justice— has at long last appeared!</p>	<p>آمد زمانِ راستی، کژی شد اندر کاستی آن شد که آن میخواستی، از عدل و قانون و نَسَقِ</p>

⁹⁵ For a discussion of the motif of the face of the Manifestation as the Face of God and the light of God emanating from the face of the Manifestation, see Stephen Lambden, “The Sinaitic Mysteries: Notes on Moses/Sinai Motifs in Bábí and Bahá'í Scripture” (*Studies in the Bábí & Bahá'í Religions, vol. 5: Studies in Honor of the Late Hasan M. Balyuzi* (ed. Moojan Momen), Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1988), pp. 65–183.

<p>Injustice and inequity have vanished from our midst.</p> <p>Now is the age of charity and munificence. All feebleness and frailty have been replaced with sustenance and power</p>	<p>شد از میان جور و ستم، هنگامِ لطف است و کرم ای دون به جایِ هر سَقَم، شد جانشینِ قُوت و رَمَق</p>
<p>For though the King of all kings nations has appeared in the manner and custom of a single nation</p> <p>He will, through the mercy of the Eternal One, deliver all the peoples of the world from their burdens and their bondage.</p>	<p>گر چه به انظارِ ملل ظاهر شده شاهِ دُول لکن به لطف لم یزل برهاند از ایشان عَلَق</p>
<p>Source</p>	
<p>John Hatcher and Amrollah Hemmat. <i>The Poetry of Táhiriḥ</i>, pp. 45–46.</p>	<p>John Hatcher and Amrollah Hemmat. <i>The Poetry of Táhiriḥ</i>, poem #7; see the fourth and fifth pages from the back cover of the book (these pages are unnumbered).</p>

Analysis 7: In the first hemistich, translating the word *Ḥaqq* as “truth” does not seem accurate to the present authors. In Abrahamic religions, there is a precedent for anthropomorphic interpretations of God that allow Him to have a face like humans. A better translation here would perhaps be “the Face of Truth,” with Truth referring to the Manifestation, Who represents the Godhead on earth, rather than the all-lowercase “face of truth,” which has no theophanic signification. To dispel any doubts about what Táhiriḥ meant in the first hemistich of this poem, she reiterates the same concept in the first hemistich of the second verse when she refers to the “Face of God” having appeared through the person of Bahá.

In the third verse, Táhiriḥ explains that a new era has begun, characterized by rectitude (of conduct), law, order, and justice—things humanity had longed for—and that injustice and inequity have vanished. These are obviously references to future events, as injustice and inequity were still rampant throughout the world at the time of Táhiriḥ and would be well into the future. In the Persian Bayán, the Báb mentions the “Order of Bahá’u’lláh,”⁹⁶ and later Bahá’u’lláh Himself speaks of His coming world order,

⁹⁶ *Persian Bayán* 3:16 (see INBA 62:101): طوبی لمن ينظر الى نظم بهاء الله و يشكر ربه فانه يظهر ولا مرد له من عند الله في البيان
Authorized English translation: “Well is it with him who fixeth his gaze upon the Order of Bahá’u’lláh and rendereth thanks unto his Lord! For He will assuredly be made manifest. God hath indeed irrevocably ordained it in the Bayán” (Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* (U.S. Bahá’í Publishing Trust: Wilmette, Illinois, 1991), pp. 146–47).

which He sees as upsetting the world's equilibrium.⁹⁷ Bahá'u'lláh also states that one of the primary purposes of His appearance is to establish justice in the world.⁹⁸

In the last verse, Ṭáhirih portrays the role of Bahá (Bahá'u'lláh) as the promised Bábí Messiah as equivalent to that of Jesus in the Christian Bible. In the latter, Jesus is called “the King of Kings.”⁹⁹ Hatcher and Hemmat translate the title used by Ṭáhirih, *Sháh-i-duval*, which literally means King of Nations, as King of Kings. Either way, the title evokes the eschatological figure of Jesus or His Return in the person of Bahá (Bahá'u'lláh), Who will eliminate injustice and inequity and replace them with law, order, and justice. Again, these cannot be references to the Báb because Ṭáhirih talks about the appearance of the Face of God in the person of Bahá, and associates that person with the Biblical figure “the King of Kings (or Nations),” Who will bring law, order, and justice to all the people of the world. History shows that neither the Báb nor Jesus were meant to effect these momentous changes during their dispensations.

Excerpt 8, from the Poem: <i>Behold the Face of God</i>	
English Translation (All Emphasis Ours)	Original Text (All Punctuation, Vowel Markings, and Emphasis Ours)
<p>O Šabá, go on my behalf and impart to the beloved of Há</p> <p>All that is fitting for the face Face of Bahá</p>	<p>ای صبا بگو از من آن عزیز هائی را این چنین روا باشد طلعتِ بهائی را</p>
<p>The cloud of his mercy the Beloved's tenderness rains down drop by drop, anoints the bodies prostrate from having gazed on the mystery laid low, annihilated in the secret of Há.</p>	<p>ابرِ لطفِ آن محبوبِ رشحه رشحه می بارد بر هیاکلِ مطروحِ محوِ سِرِّ هائی را</p>

⁹⁷ “The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System—the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed” (Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Haifa, Israel: Bahá'í World Centre, 1992) verse 181).

⁹⁸ Bahá'u'lláh asserts that the chief instrument for transforming human society and ensuring world unity is to establish justice in the affairs of humankind. The concept of justice plays a key role in Bahá'u'lláh's teachings: “The light of men is Justice. Quench it not with the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny. The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men. The ocean of divine wisdom surgeth within this exalted word, while the books of the world cannot contain its inner significance” (Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh* (U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust: Wilmette, Illinois, 1988) pp. 66–67).

⁹⁹ See, for instance, 1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 1:5, 17:14, and 19:16; etc.

<p>His reviving breeze blows abundant mercy vitality from 'Iráqí shores</p> <p>Bestowing vitality and solace on the separated and fallen ones.</p> <p>Stirring the bodies of men to movement even as rippling banners</p>	<p>نَسْمَةُ عِرَاقِيشِ مِي وَزْدِ بَسِي رُوحَا زنده مِي نمايد او هيكَلِ سَوْلُجِ لَوَائِي رَا</p>
<p>O Bábís, followers of the light, all of you come forth out!</p> <p>Come out from behind the veil of grandeur! Behold this one from Fá!</p> <p>From behind the veils of glory behold the beloved Face of Fá.</p>	<p>بَابِيَانِ نُورِيه، جَمَلِگِي بَرُونِ آئِيدِ از حجاب‌های عَزَّ، بَنگَرِيدِ فَائِي رَا</p>
<p>From behind the veils of grandeur the fae Face of God is suddenly manifest!</p> <p>O, believers, you need no longer heed: “You shall not never see me!”</p>	<p>طَلَعَتِ مُبِينِ نَاگَه، طَالِعِ از حجابِ عَزَّ مَشْنُو آيِ عَزِيزِ مَن، نَطَقِ «لَنْ تَرَانِي» رَا</p>
<p>Source</p>	
<p>John Hatcher and Amrollah Hemmat. <i>The Poetry of Ṭáhirih</i>, pp. 94–95.</p>	<p>John Hatcher and Amrollah Hemmat. <i>The Poetry of Ṭáhirih</i>, poem #24; see the twenty-eighth page from the back cover of the book (this page is unnumbered).</p>

Analysis 8: In the first hemistich, by the Persian phrase ‘*Azíz-i-Há’í*—literally, “the Beloved Há”—is meant Bahá’u’lláh,¹⁰⁰ because in the next hemistich, Ṭáhirih also mentions the Face of this personage, as in *Ṭal’at-i-Bahá’í*, which literally means “The Face of Bahá.” Curiously, however, Hatcher and Hemmat have indirectly translated ‘*Azíz-i-Há’í*—which is clearly singular, and can only refer to Há (Bahá/Bahá’u’lláh)—as a referent to a plural pronoun by interpreting ‘*Azíz-i-Há’í* to mean “the beloved of Há” (rather than “Beloved”), which would denote the followers of Bahá’u’lláh. The word ‘*azíz* can also mean “glorious” or “mighty” and imply a ruler, just as Joseph is known in Persian literature as ‘*Azíz-i-*

¹⁰⁰ Vahid Rafati reinforces this interpretation in his note on the letter “há” in “Áthár-i-Munzaliḥ,” p. 66.

Miṣr (“the glorious (or mighty) [ruler] of Egypt”). Since the letter Há can symbolize the Essence of God,¹⁰¹ this reference to Bahá'u'lláh as *'Azíz-i-Há'í* might alternatively be translated as “the divine and glorious (or mighty) ruler.” If we interpret *'Azíz-i-Há'í* as an allusion to *'Azíz-i-Miṣr*, it may suggest that Ṭáhirih was gesturing to Bahá'u'lláh as “the divine Joseph” discussed by the Báb in His *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*, a text with which Ṭáhirih would have been intimately familiar as an eminently devoted and well-read Bábí.

Moreover, Hatcher and Hemmat have rendered the passage *Hayákil-i-maṭrúh maḥv-i-sirr-i-Há'í*, which occurs in the second hemistich of the second verse, as “anoints the bodies prostrate from having gazed on the mystery of Há.” The present authors believe a more accurate translation would be “anoints the bodies laid low, annihilated by the secret of Há” (as in Bahá, or Bahá'u'lláh).

In the third verse, Ṭáhirih states that the breezes of divine mercy are blowing from 'Iráq, which as discussed above could refer either to 'Iráq-i-'Ajam, meaning Persia, or 'Iráq-i-'Arab, meaning present-day 'Iráq. An observation that should be made about the second hemistich of the third verse is that the typescript provided by Hatcher and Hemmat has the word *sivá'í*, which connotes separation, whereas the version published in Ni'matu'lláh Dhuká'í Bayḍá'í's well-known anthology of Bahá'í poetry has this as *livá'í*, which pertains to banners.¹⁰²

In the fourth verse, Ṭáhirih calls on the Bábís to come out and gaze on the Beauty of Fá—here a reference to *arḍ-i-Fá*, which itself refers to Iran (as discussed above), the birthplace of Bahá'u'lláh, and is thus an allusion to Him—and rediscover the Face of the Báb in Bahá'u'lláh, Who at that time was still “veiled” (in His messianic secret). Here, “Fá” cannot be a reference to the Báb (as would be entailed by *madíniy-i-Fá*, as opposed to *arḍ-i-Fá*) because the Báb had already been manifested by that point and discovered by the Bábís.

In the last verse, Ṭáhirih refers to the sudden appearance of the veiled Beauty of God—a reference to the imminent declaration of Bahá'u'lláh, which she has already discerned—and reminds the Bábís that, at that time, belief in the old pronouncement “Thou shalt never see Me” (Qur'án 7:143) no longer applies. Hence, unlike in the Mosaic dispensation when, in response to Moses's plea to see God, He told Moses that He would never see Him, the Bábís would, in fact, be able to see the Face (i.e., the perfections) of God in the person of their Messiah (Bahá'u'lláh).¹⁰³

Conclusion

While the Sýáh-Chál should be regarded as the birthplace of the Bahá'í dispensation, both hagiographical accounts and primary sources indicate that the period when Bahá'u'lláh began to receive divine revelation actually predates His encounter with the Maid of Heaven in the Sýáh-Chál, perhaps by several years. The events in the life of Bahá'u'lláh make it abundantly clear that He did not go through a

¹⁰¹ “The letter 'Há' has been given several spiritual meanings in the Holy Writings, among which is as a symbol of the Essence of God” (Notes to the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, no. 28).

¹⁰² Refer to Ni'matu'lláh Dhuká'í Bayḍá'í, *Tadhkariy-i-Shu'aráy-i-Qarn-i-Avval-i-Bahá'í*, vol. 3 (Tihrán: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1969), p. 128. The present authors are grateful to Naeem Nabiliakbar for calling their attention to the discrepancy between the two versions of this poem.

¹⁰³ Bahá'u'lláh Himself later affirmed this idea in one of His Writings: “O my Lord, my Master, and the Goal of my Desire! I have heard that Thou hast declared this to be a Day whereon if anyone, with complete sincerity, were to ask but once, ‘Show Thyself to me’, then from the heaven of Divine Utterance he would hear: ‘Look, and thou shalt behold Me!’ From this blessed and exalted utterance the station of this Day is made clear and evident.” (Bahá'u'lláh, *Ad'iyiy-i-Ḥaḍrat-i-Maḥbúb* (Cairo, Egypt: Maṭba'at as-Sa'ádaḥ, 1920), pp. 366–67; authorized translation available on the Bahá'í Reference Library [here](#)).

binary model of theophanic awakening, whereby His evident consciousness of His divine nature before and after His encounter with the Holy Spirit was as stark as the flip of a switch (“on” or “off”), but rather an awakening (in reference solely to His “corporeal station”) over time beginning before the Síyáh-Chál. If true, this could also explain the gradual disclosure of His station, beginning with an inner circle of believers and then slowly expanding that circle.

The fact that some of the Báb’s most distinguished early disciples—including Mullá Ḥusayn, Quddús, and, most clearly, Ṭáhirih—had become aware of Bahá’u’lláh’s station before the Síyáh-Chál episode provides additional evidence in support of this thesis. Bahá’u’lláh’s act of revealing Tablets at Badasht (1848), as well as His lofty claims in the Lawḥ-i-Ḥamd-i-Muṣḥa’sḥa’ (1851?)—in which He seems to identify Himself with the Manifestations of the past— constitute clear evidence, prior to His imprisonment in the Síyáh-Chal, of His earlier awakening to “the period of manifestation and guidance” (see note 22), even during the lifetime and Ministry of the Báb.

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