

A TABLET OF BAHÁ'U'LLAH COMMENTING ON THAT VERSE OF THE MOST-HOLY BOOK [KITÁB-I-AQDAS] ABOUT THE NEED FOR AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE AND SCRIPT.

PROVISIONAL TRANS. BY FARZIN FROUGHI & STEPHEN LAMBDEN

We revealed in the Most Holy Book :

يا اهل المجالس في البلاد اختاروا لغت من اللغات ليتكلم بها
من على الارض و كذلك من الخطوط ان الله يبين لك ما ينفعكم و يغنيكم
عن دونكم انه لهو الفضال العليم الخبير

"O Members of the Parliaments of all countries! Select one of the languages so that such people as are on earth may communicate therewith. Do likewise with respect to the scripts. God, verily, expoundeth for you that which will profit you and render you self-sufficient. He, of a certainty, is the Excellent, the Learned, the Well-Informed." [KITÁB-I-AQDAS]

- [1] This irrevocable decree hath been revealed from the immemorial dominion for the peoples of the world in general, and for those in government[*اهل المجالس*] in particular, since the execution of the commandments, ordinances and precepts revealed in the Book [Kitáb-i-Aqdas] hath been entrusted to the men of the divine houses of justice [*رجال بيوت عدلية الهية*]. This ordinance is the greatest means for the accomplishment of unity and the supreme instrument for the establishment of social intercourse and loving fellowship between the peoples of different lands.
- [2] It is evident that most people, on account of the dispersion of the languages[*از تشتت لغة*] of the inhabitants of the world, are deprived of social intercourse, friendship and the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom from one another. It is thus the case, as a result of the Divine Bounty and Grace, that all have been commanded to select a language-whether newly created or from among the existing languages of the earth-that everyone may converse therein. When this comes to pass the whole earth will be seen as one city[*مدينه واحده*] on account of the fact that all will comprehend the language of one another and understand their respective intentions. This will be the cause of the promotion and the elevation of the world. Should a person emigrate from his native land and arrive in any other city it would be as if he had arrived back in his own homeland.
- [3] Hold ye fast unto this directive [of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas], O Members of Parliaments[*اهل المجالس*] and civic authorities[*المدن*]! Should a person ponder a little [upon this directive] he would readily come to understand that what hath been revealed from the Heaven of the Divine Will is an expression of the Divine Bounty, the benefit of which

encompasses all. Yet, it is the case, that some servants suckle at the breast of negligence and ignorance in such manner that they transgress that which is beneficial, the excellence of which is both rationally and traditionally obvious and clear. Such servants, with the hypocrisy of wayward souls, have and will continue, to veil their eyes from that wisdom which is the basis and the cause of the progress of the world and the elevation of its peoples. Wherefore, verily, are they in manifest loss.

- [4] Every community speaketh its own language; the Turk, for example, in Turkish; the peoples of Iran, in Persian and the Arabs in Arabic. In addition, the people of Europe speak their own diverse languages[به السند مختلفه خود]. Such multifarious languages are traditional among, and specific to, these aforementioned communities.
- [5] Yet, a further language hath been decreed such that all the people of the world would converse therein; so that all will understand one another's language and be capable of achieving their respective intentions. He, verily, is the Gate to love and kindness and to fellowship and unity. He, verily, is the Most-Great Translator [or Interpreter][ترجمان اعظم], and the very Key to the Ancient Treasury.
- [6] How many the souls who are observed spending all their time in the acquisition of different languages! What a great pity that man should spend a whole lifetime—the most-precious of worldly assets—in this manner. The purpose of such a man in these endeavours is the acquisition of the knowledge of different languages so that he might understand the intention of other peoples and what lies within their domain. Now if mankind would carry out what hath been commanded of him, it would suffice all alike — since they would free themselves from numerous impediments [separating them].
- [7] That proposition which is especially beloved, when presented before the Heavenly Throne, is that all should converse in the Arabic language. This, inasmuch as it is the most comprehensive of all languages[ابسط از كل لغات]. If a person were to become truly aware of the comprehensiveness [بسط] and the broad scope[وسعت] of this most-eloquent language he would assuredly select it [over other languages; as an international language of the distant future ?].
- [8] The Persian language is extremely sweet. The tongue of God in this dispensation hath spoken [revealed] in both Arabic and Persian. However, it [Persian] doth not and will never have the magnitude[بسط] of Arabic. Indeed, relative to it, all languages have been and will remain circumscribed. This is the most-gracious state of affairs[مقام افضل] which hath been mentioned. The purpose however, is that the people of the earth should select a single language [لغتی از لغات] and that all humanity converse therein.

This is that which hath been ordained by God and is that which will benefit all mankind if they did but know.

- [9] Likewise, in place of the particular scripts [خطوط مخصوصه] of diverse peoples, a single script should be adopted and all mankind write therein. Thus will all scripts ultimately be seen as a single script [خط واحد] and all languages a single language.
- [10] These commandments will jointly be the cause of the oneness of the hearts and the souls of the peoples of the world. He teacheth you that which is best for you. Take ye firm hold thereof, for He assuredly, is the Exhorter, the Counsellor, the Expounder, the Director, the Gracious, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.
- [11] All languages and scripts will ultimately become one and the diverse territories of the earth be seen as a single clime. Otherwise, therein thou shalt see moral obliquity, as opposed to peaceful tranquillity.

THE PRINTED TEXT OF THIS TABLET OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

The largely Persian text of the tablet translated above is printed in at least two volumes; namely, [1] *Ishraq Khavarí's Ganj-i-Sháygán* (BPT Tehran 124 Badi' [= 1967-8]) pp.210-213 and [2] the volume *Nafahát-i-Quds* (New Delhi, n.d.) pp. 5-8.* The text of both these printings are reproduced below. It is obvious that the tablet is to be dated after the time when the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* was revealed and before Bahá'u'lláh's passing; that is, between c.1873 and 1892. Judging by the known dates of other tablets which contain similar material, it is most probably to be dated within the last few years of Bahá'u'lláh's mission. As an untitled tablet I am not aware of to whom (if to any single individual- or specific group [of Bahá'ís] ?) it was addressed.

* There are certain (largely minor) textual differences between these two printings of this tablet--see also the partial printing in Fádil-i Mazandaraní, *Amr va Khalq²* Vol.4 pp.277-280 [Bahá'í-Verlag Hoffheim Langenheim 1986](there are again errors here!). The inferior version in *Ganj..* for example, has the tablet begin: "We revealed in My Most Holy Book (...*kitábí al-aqdas*).." whereas *Nafahát..*, correctly, does not have this possessive adjective.

TEXT AS PRINTED IN GANJ-I-SHAYGÁN

۵۸ - قد نزلنا فی کتابی الاقدس

یا اهل المجالس فی البلدان ان اختاروا لغة من اللغات
 لیتکم بها من علی الارض و كذلك من الخطوط ان الله
 یمین لکم ما ینفمکم و یمینکم عن دونکم انه لهو الملمم
 الخبیر .

این امر مبرم از جبروت قدم از برای اهل عالم عموماً و اهل
 مجالس خصوصاً نازل شده چه که اجرای اوامر و احکام

(۲۱۱)

و حدودات منزله در کتاب به رجال بیوت عدلیه الهیه
 تفویض شده و این حکم سبب اعظم است از برای اتحاد
 و علت کبری است از برای مخالطه و وادار من فی
 البلاد . ملاحظه میشود اکثری از امم ازتشتت لفاة
 اهل عالم از مخالطه و معاشرت و کسب معارف و حکمت
 یکدیگر محروم اند لذا محض فضل و جود کل مأمور
 شده اند به اینکه لفتی از لغات را اختیار نمایند چه
 جدید اختراع کنند و چه از لغات موجوده ارض و کل
 بآن متکلم شوند در این صورت جمیع ارض مدینه واحد
 ملاحظه میشود زیرا که کل از لسان یکدیگر مطلع میشوند
 و مقصود یکدیگر را ادراک مینمایند اینست سبب ارتقاء
 عالم و ارتفاع آن و اگر نفسی از وطن خود هجرت نماید
 و به هر یک از مدن وارد شود مثل آن است که در محل
 خود وارد شده تصکوا به یا اهل المجالس و المدین
 اگر نفسی فی الجملة تفکر کند ادراک مینماید که آنچه از
 سما مشیت الهیه نازل شده محض فضل بوده و خیر آن
 بکل راجع است و لکن بعضی از عباد از ثدی غفلت و جهل
 میباشند بشأنی که آنچه خیر است و رجحان آن عقلاً
 و نقلاً ظاهر و مشهود است از آن تجاوز مینمایند و به
 مزخرفات نفوس غافله از حکمت الهیه که سبب و علت ترقی

عالم و ارتفاع اهل آن است چشم پوشیده و میپوشند
 الا انهم فی خسران مبین هر طائفه بلسان خود تکلم
 مینماید مثل ترك به ترکی و اهل ایران به پارسی و عرب
 به عربی و اهل اروپا به السنه^۱ مختلفه خود و این السن
 مختلفه مابین احزاب سداول است و مخصوص است به
 طوایف مذکوره و یک لسان دیگر امر شده که اهل عالم
 عموماً به آن تکلم نمایند تا کل از لسان یکدیگر مطلع
 شوند و مراد خود را بیایند اوست باب محبت و و داد
 و الفت و اتحاد و اوست ترجمان اعظم و مفتاح کل
 قدم چه مقدار از نفوس مشاهده شده که تمام اوقات
 را در تعلیم السن مختلفه صرف نموده بسیار حیف است
 که انسان عمری را که از اعز اشیا^۲ عالم است صرف اینگونه
 امور نماید و مقصودشان از این زحمات آنکه لسان مختلفه
 را بدانند تا مقصود طوایف و ما عندهم را ادراک نمایند
 حال اگر بآنچه امر شده عامل شوند کل را کفایت مینماید
 و از این زحمات لاتحصی فارغ میشوند و آنچه لدی -
 العرش محبوب آن است که جمیع بلفت عربی تکلم
 نمایند چه که ابسط از کل لفات است اگر کسی ببسط
 و وسعت این لفت فصیح مطلع شود البته آنرا اختیار
 نماید لسان پارسی بسیار طیح است و لسان الله در این

ظهور به لسان عربی و فارسی هر دو تکلم نموده و لکن
 بسط عربی را نداشته و ندارد بلکه جمیع لغات از نسبت
 باو محدود بوده و خواهد بود و این مقام افضل است
 که ذکر شد و لکن مقصود آنکه لغتی از لغات را اهل
 ارض اختیار نمایند و عموم خلق به آن تکلم کنند هذا ما
 حکم به الله و هذا ما ینفع به الناس لوهم یعرفون وهم
 چنین سوای خطوط مخصوصه طوایف مختلفه یک خط
 اختیار نمایند و خلق عموماً به تحریر آن مشغول شوند
 تا جمیع خطوط خط واحد و جمیع السن لسان واحد
 مشاهده شود و این دو سبب اتحاد قلوب و نفوس
 اهل عالم گردد و علمکن ما هو خیر لکم تسکوا به انه لیس
 الواعظ الناصح المبین المدبر المشفق العلیم الحکیم
 و بالاخره جمیع لسان و خطوط بواحد منتهی گردد و قطعات
 مختلفه ارض یک قطعه مشاهده شود الا ترى فیها
 عوجا و لامنا .

TEXT AS PRINTED IN NAFAHÁT-I-QUDS

دین و اعدا و ملا خط مشید زیرا که کل زبان یکدیگر
 مطلع میشود و مقصود یکدیگر را ادراک نمایند این است
 سبب ارتعاشی عالم و ارتفاع آن اگر نفس از طریق
 حیرت نماید و جسم یک از بدن وارد شود و مثل
 آن است که در محل خود وارد شده است کما به بالا
 و بدن اگر نفسی فی الجمله کند ادراک نماید که آنچه از
 سایر شئیست البته نازل شده و نفس فصل بود و چنین
 بجز راجع است و لکن بعضی از عباد اندکی غفلت
 می نمایند و با یکدیگر چه نسبت است و در همان آن غفلت
 و غفلت ظاهر و مشهور است از آنجا که می نمایند
 و بر فرقات نفوس قائلند از جهت سبب
 و علت ترقی عالم و ارتفاع اهل آن است چه در شیه
 و چه در شیه الا اکثر فی خیران بین هر دو
 خود حکم نماید مثل ترک آبی و اهل میان پادشاهی
 بیمل و کما عمل را و با حسن خلق خود و این را

قد نزل فی کتاب الانس
 یا اهل المجالس فی البلدان ان اختاروا لغتهم اللغات
 لیستیکم من علی الارض و لکن کانت الخطوط ان
 بینکم لکن ینفعل و ینسبکم عن و لکن انتم الفضائل
 العلمیة تجتسبکم این امر بکرم از جسم و دست قدم
 از برای اهل عالم عموماً و اهل مجالس خصوصاً نازل شده
 چه که اجزای او امر و احکام و حدود است منزله در کتاب
 بر حال موت هدایت است نفوس فصل شد و این علم
 سبب غفلت است از برای اتحاد و علت کبری
 است از برای حاله و دوا و من فی البلاده ملاحظه
 میشود اکثری از اعم از شقیات لغات اهل عالم از غلط
 و معاشرت و کسب اصناف و حکمت یکدیگر که می نمایند
 لذا نفس فصل و در کل امور شده اند با یکدیگر لغات
 ما اختارنا نایند چه جدید است شروع و در ارتقا
 موجوده ارض و لکن آن خط کشیده در صورت جمع این

این لغت ضمیمی مطلق شود و بسته آنرا اختیار نشا
 لسان پارسی بسیار طبع است و لسان آند در این
 لسان عربی و فارسی مسرد و منظم نموده و لکن بی
 عربی را ندانسته و ندارد بلکه بیس لغات از عربیست
 باو محدود بوده و خواهد بود و این مقام فضیلت است
 که ذکر شد و لکن مقصود از این لغت از لغات را اعلیٰ از
 اختیار نماید و عموم خلق بآن سخن نمهند بذا ما علم
 و بذا ما یقین به الناس لو بهم سزوان و همچنین سواهی
 خطوط مخصوصه طوائف مختلفه یک خط اختیار نمایند
 و خلق غیر با بجز آن مشغول شوند تا جمیع خطوط خط
 و جمیع لسان واحد شده شود و این بسیار
 قلوب و نفوس اصل عالم گردد. اینست که با جمیع
 شکوایان از امور اعلا ان صح البیتین الدبر المشقی السید المکرم
 و بالاخره جمیع لسان خطوط به ضمیمی گردد و طوائف مختلفه
 ارض بیک خطه شاد شود. انان تاریخی بیس احوال را

باین احزاب متداول است و مخصوص است بکلیت
 مذکور و بیک لسان دیگر شده که اصل عالم
 بآن سخن نمایند و کل لسان یکدیگر مطلق شوند
 و مراد خود را باینده اوست بیس لغت و در ادوات
 و احتشاد و اوست ترجمان علم و متفاح کوفت
 چه مقدار از نفوس مشاهده شد که نام ادوات
 در نظیر السن مختلفه صرف نموده بسیار حریف است
 که انسان محسوس را که از اشیاء عالم است حرف
 اینگونه امور نماید و مقصودش از این زحمات که
 لسان مختلفه را بداند تا مقصود طوائف و اعراض
 او را که نشاند حال عالم باینچهره شده عامل
 شود کل را کفایت سینمایه و از این زحمات
 لا تخفی فارغ میشود و آنچه لیدی الیهمش محبوب
 است که جمیع لغت عربی سخن نمایند چه که
 ابط از کل لغات است هر کسی بیکادوست

SOME SELECTED NOTES ON THE TABLET

The following notes are only selected attempts to clarify or comment upon some of the points raised by this significant tablet of Bahá'u'lláh. A multitude of related passages exist within the writings of the central figures of the Bábí-Bahá'í religions which directly or indirectly touch upon the key Bahá'í principle of the need for an international auxiliary language and script. They cannot possibly all be referred to here. To date such texts have neither been comprehensively collected nor translated into English or any of the other European languages. It remains for them to be studied in the light of contemporary linguistic knowledge and artificial language schemes. This is without doubt an important and pressing task and it is hoped that the foregoing translation will be of value to those contemplating it.*

* The comments to follow will be numbered according to the paragraphs of the translation printed above (pp. -)- there are not, of course, any paragraph markings in the original tablet of Bahá'u'lláh [such paragraph markings are interpretive].

[1] Having quoted that verse of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* which has to do with the selection of an international language and script¹ --a verse occurs right at the end of His *Most Holy Book* only being followed by two or three lines which have to do with the dual signs of the maturity of mankind and the forbidding of the taking of opium² --Bahá'u'lláh here begins His commentary. He states that the selection of an international language and script is an important divine decree; something that should concern all mankind generally and international governing bodies or assemblies (*ahl al-majális*) in particular. The verse of the *Aqdas* quoted and commented upon is addressed to what appears to be secular governments/ assemblies internationally : this is what would seem to be meant by *ahl al-majális fí al-bilád* (trans.=" Members of the Parliaments [or 'Assemblies'] of all countries ").³ The *Aqdas* phrase is further interpreted by Bahá'u'lláh in terms of it also being the especial concern (directly and/or indirectly) of Bahá'í institutions : if such is what is meant by "the men [persons representative?] of the divine houses of justice" (= *rijál-i buyút-i 'adliyyih-i illáhiyya*).⁴

-
1. In the *Nafahát..* text of the tablet translated above the verse of the *Aqdas* cited at its beginning ends with three divine names: *al-fudqál* (= the Excellent), in other words, occurs at the beginning of the last phrase or before *al-'alím*, *al-kabír*. The *Aqdas* text cited in *Ganj..* omits this divine name and apparently incorrectly reads(?) *al-buldán* (= countries) instead of *al-bilád* (also=countries [an alternative plural]): dittography - of the last two letters of *buldán* - seems also to have occurred in the *Ganj..(Aqdas)* text.
 2. It is verse 468 according to the Tumansky Arabic /Russian edition(St. Petersburg 1899 [last verse = No. 472]) numbering.
 3. The Arabic broken plural *majális* (sing. *majlis*) has quite a wide range of meanings; including, for example, (sing.) *assembly*. The phrase *ahl al-majális* (in verse 468 of the *Aqdas*) could equally correctly have been translated 'Members of Assemblies' (or the like); the latter translation possibly being superior (?) in having the ambiguity of indicating possible reference to governmental as well as to Bahá'í administrative assemblies (= *majális*) as may be implied in the interpretation of Bahá'u'lláh.
(See the footnote below and the paragraphs to follow)
 4. The Arabic plural *rijál* = men used here calls to mind the male international legislative and governing Bahá'í body, the ' [Universal] House of Justice' (*bayt al-'adl [al-'azam / al-illáhiyya*] first elected in 1963). This body, it is worth noting, is referred to in the thirteenth *glad-tiding* of the *Glad-Tidings (Bishárát)* of Bahá'u'lláh as "The men of God's [the Divine] House of Justice" (*rijál bayt al-'adl al-illáhiyya*) [Text in *Majmú'at min alwáh hadrat Bahá'u'lláh*

In various of Bahá'u'lláh's writings of the 'Akká period the question of those responsible for choosing the future international language and script is addressed. Diverse though apparently complimentary statements are made. In, for example, the Sixth *Ishráq* of the *Tablet of Splendours*, (*Lawh-i-Ishráqát*) it is written:

"..We have enjoined upon the *Trustees of the House of Justice* (*umaná' bayt al-cadl*) either to choose one language from among those existing or to adopt a new one, and in like manner to select a common script, both of which should be taught in all the schools of the world.."5

By "Trustees of the House of Justice" (*umaná' bayt al-cadl*) is most likely meant persons representing the purpose(directly and/or indirectly) of the Universal House of Justice (*bayt al-cadl*). That these persons may be secular[non-Bahá'í] experts working for international governments-perhaps/ideally in consultation with or including Bahá'ís- seems to be indicated in various Bahá'í texts and scriptures. In Bahá'u'lláh's *Lawh-i-Maqsud* we read:

"..It is incumbent upon all nations (*jamí' al-milal*) to appoint some *men of understanding and erudition* (*ashkhás min dhawí al-fahm wa'l-kamál*) to convene a gathering and through joint consultation choose one language from among the varied and existing languages, or create a new one, to be taught to the children in all the schools of the world."6

...(Maison D'Editiones Bahá'íes, Brussels, Belgium) 1980.p.43
Trans. Habib Taherzadeh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Bahá'í World Centre, Haifa 1978), p.26. (Henceforth = TB & TB.Tr.respectively). The fact, however, that the Arabic plural *buyút* (= houses) is used rules out direct reference to the Universal House of Justice. The use of *rijál*(=men) however, may not be gender specific. It could be argued that by the "men of the divine houses of justice" is meant the members of the now many local 'Houses of Justice' (= LSA's: currently c.20,000 worldwide) or even all Bahá'í administrative bodies with an executive capacity (?)-- National Spiritual Assemblies were not directly mentioned by Baha'u'llah; both the 'Universal House of Justice' and 'Local Houses of Justice'(LSA's) were individually referred to by Him as *bayt al-cadl* = 'House of Justice'. Alternatively, and perhaps more probably, this phrase could indicate persons directly or indirectly representative of Bahá'í ideals and of Bahá'í administrative bodies (see the following paragraphs).

5. Text in TB p.26;TB.Tr.p.127.

6. Text in TB p.145; TB.Tr.pp.165-6

Here it is learned or expert individuals who are to collectively choose or create an international auxiliary language.

In the third glad-tidings of Bahá'u'lláh's *Glad-Tidings (Bishárát)* this is said to be the task of sovereigns or ministers of the world:

" ..This decree hath formerly streamed forth from the Pen of the Most High: It behoveth *the sovereigns of the world...or the ministers of the earth (al-mulúk..aw wuzará' al-cálam)* to take counsel together and to adopt one of the existing languages or a new one to be taught to children in schools throughout the world, and likewise one script." ⁷

No attempt can be made here to harmonize these texts. There exist also various interpretive passages within the tablets or talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and letters of Shoghi Effendi-:⁸

"..a universal language shall be adopted and be taught by all the schools and institutions of the world. A **committee appointed by national bodies of learning** shall select a suitable language to be used as a medium of international communication. All must acquire it. This is one of the great factors in the unification of man."⁹

"Regarding the whole question of an International Language and its relation to the Faith : We, as Bahá'ís, are very anxious to see a universal auxiliary tongue adopted as soon as possible; we are not the protagonists of any one language to fill this post. If the governments of the world agree on an existing language, or a constructed, new tongue, to be used internationally, we would heartily support it because we desire to see this step in the unification of the human race take place as soon as possible.." ^{9a}

-
7. Text in TB p.38;TB.Tr.p.22
 8. Such interpretations--when comprehensively and correctly understood-- are authoritative for Bahá'ís.
 9. From a talk delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Philadelphia (USA) on 9th June 1912 printed in *The Promulgation of Universal Peace ...Comp. Howard MacNutt [2nd Ed.Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette Illinois] 1982 p.182.*
 - 9a. Directive No.105 in *Directives from the Guardian (Bahá'í Pub.Trust New Delhi 1973) p.39 (= Letter of Shoghi Effendi dated December 1945).*

That the selection of an international auxiliary language and script would greatly facilitate global communication, peace and unity is stated here as in very many of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The verse of the *Aqdas* cited is seen to revolve around and be a directive for attaining global unity. As the achievement of the oneness of mankind lies at the heart of the Bahá'í Faith so too must the principle of the auxiliary language and script. While the latter idea has been spoken about in diverse ways for many centuries it has now become a central teaching of an emergent world religion.

[2] In this paragraph it is made clear that the imperative need for an international language and script is dictated by inhibitory language barriers, by "the dispersion of the languages(*tashattut-i lughát*) of the inhabitants of the world." Currently there are something like 4,000 languages worldwide and hundreds of diverse scripts.¹⁰

10. It is possible (though not certain) that Bahá'u'lláh is here alluding to those religious traditions which have it that mankind's original language was one--all human beings spoke the same tongue in primordial times--and that language was diversified ("confused") as human beings spread about 'globally' and became corrupted. In the Hebrew Bible the story of the 'tower of Babel' (Genesis 11:1ff) includes verses which set forth such a scenario:

GENESIS

11 Now the whole earth had one language and few words. ²And as men migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. ³And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. ⁴Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." ⁵And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the sons of men had built. ⁶And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; and nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. ⁷Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." ⁸So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. ⁹Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

Detailed notes on the significances of this part of the Genesis text cannot be gone into here. Reference should be made to the commentaries. See, for example C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11...tr.* J. Scullion (SPCK London 1984) p.531ff. Worth noting in this connection is the fact that certain biblical texts indicate a connection between primordial and eschatological times. Among other things the original oneness of language is to be reestablished in the millennial age. This is predicted in Zephaniah 3:5-11 :

" Yea, at that time I will change the speech of all peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord."

Bahá'u'lláh refers to the story of the 'tower of Babel' in his *Tablet on Pre-Adamic times (Lawh-i qabl-i Adam)* also known as *Lawh-i 'Abd al-Razzáq*. It is largely translated by Shoghi Effendi in the volume *Gleanings from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh* (Bahá'í Publishing Trust, London 1949) Sect. LXXXVII (= pp.171-4). It is planned to write a commentary upon this significant tablet in a subsequent issue of the BSB.

In the expression "the dispersion of the languages" the word *dispersion* (as indicated) translates *tashattut*. This Arabic word is a verbal noun of the 5th form of the root *shatta* (= to be scattered, dispersed...) and doubtless indicates the widespread dissemination of the thousands of existing languages. The very multiplicity of contemporary human languages is a major barrier to international understanding and the companionship of persons of different parts of the world . Language barriers constrain the advance of the arts and sciences. They inhibit mutual understanding and loving fellowship. It is in order to overcome such limitations that Bahá'u'lláh advocated the adoption of either an existing natural language or a newly created artificial one in order to function as an international auxiliary language.

In his book *The Artificial Language Movement* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd 1985) Andrew Large gives an excellent appraisal of the artificial language movement. Among other things he points out that "... constructed languages can avoid the irregularities of syntax, morphology and phonology which so often plague their natural cousins, and which so handicap second-language learning" (p. 182). Many attempts have been made to reverse the 'curse of Babel'. Since the early 17th century--and to some extent earlier also--several hundred artificial/constructed languages (as well as adapted naturalistic languages) have been created for the purpose of universal or multi-national communication . Among the best known today are Esperanto, Ido, Volapük, Interlingua, Novial and the hybrid Glosa. In 1924 the *International Auxiliary Language Association* (IALA) was established in New York: its aims seem to have been somewhat circumscribed by western cultural/lexicographical ('Anglo-Romanic') bias. Western political and demographic factors to a considerable extent restrain true internationalism in the selection, emergence and implementation of a truly global auxiliary language and script.

[3] At the beginning of this paragraph it is both the *ahl al-majális* (tr. Members of Parliaments [= Members of Assemblies]) and the members of "civic authorities" (*al-mudun* [pl.sing. *madínah*]) who are called to hold fast to the directive of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (verse 468). As *al-mudun* signifies cities and here most probably refers to persons who administer them it has been translated "civic [=of the city/municipal] authorities".

[5] Having mentioned the existence of various middle eastern (Turkish, Persian and Arabic) and European languages and the communities who speak them (in [4]) Bahá'u'lláh now underlines the need for a "further language", an international auxiliary language. It is in the light of God's revealing this directive in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* that He is referred to as " the Gate to love and kindness and to fellowship and unity (*báb-i muḥabbat va vidád wa ulfat va ittihád*)". Furthermore, God is, among other things, described as the "Most-Great Translator [or, Interpreter]", the *turjumán-i a'zam*. The Arabic word *turjumán* (derived

from the Hebrew/Aramaic/Syriac cognate root¹¹ ; Ar. *tarjama* = to translate [from one language to another], interpret , expound... { *mutarjim* = translator, interpreter }) apparently describes God as the supreme Divinity capable of translating and/or interpreting all languages--into an international auxiliary or global language (see [7])?

[6] Bahá'u'lláh now outlines the time-consuming nature of language learning. Human beings can waste a whole lifetime acquiring different languages.¹² Should mankind adopt an international auxiliary language--as recommended in the Most Holy Book--all mankind would be liberated, save themselves great labours, and derive significant benefits.

[7] Apparently going beyond the immediate need for an international auxiliary language Bahá'u'lláh in this paragraph seems to spell out the greatness of the Arabic language as a possible global language of the distant future. That all mankind should ideally (in future) adopt Arabic would be especially beloved of God;of Bahá'u'lláh.¹³

In the *Eighth Leaf of His Words of Paradise* (*Kalimát-i Firdawsíyyih*) Bahá'u'lláh according to Shoghi Effendi¹⁴ refers to a "far distant time" when He states:

-
11. It is perhaps worth noting that the Jewish Aramaic interpretive translations or paraphrases of portions of the Hebrew Bible are known as Targums. Neither the derived Arabic verb *tarjama* nor the verbal noun *turujam* (or other derivatives) are found in the Arabic Qur'án.
 12. In his *Persian Bayán* (IV.10) the Báb had forbidden the learning/study of (dead) foreign languages. Bahá'u'lláh in His *Kitáb-i Aqdas*, on the other hand, specifically abrogates this law and recommends the learning of foreign languages for Bahá'í missionary purposes.
 13. I have interpreted this paragraph of the tablet in the light of Shoghi Effendi's explanation of the Eighth Leaf of the *Words of Paradise* (see following).
 14. In the volume Helen Hornby, *Lights of Guidance, A Bahá'í Reference File*² (New Delhi, India 1988) p.340 [No.1141] the following letter of Shoghi Effendi is printed:
 "What Bahá'u'lláh is referring to in the Eighth Leaf of the Exalted Paradise is a far distant time , when the world is really one country , and one language would be a sensible possibility.It does not contradict His instruction as to the need immediately for an auxiliary language."

مِن قَبْلِ قُلْنَا إِنْ أَلْتَكَلَّمْ مُعْتَرِّ بِلسَانَيْنِ . وَيَجِبُ بِذَلِكَ
 الْجَهْدِ حَتَّى يَنْتَهِيَ إِلَى لِسَانٍ وَاحِدٍ وَكَذَلِكَ خَطُوطُ الْعَالَمِ
 لِكِبَلَا تَضِيحَ حَيَاةَ النَّاسِ فِي تَحْصِيلِ الْأَلْسُنِ الْمُخْتَلَفَةِ بَاطِلًا
 15. حَتَّى يُصْبِحَ جَمِيعُ الْأَرْضِ مَدِينَةً وَاحِدَةً وَإِقْلِيمًا وَاحِدًا

"We have formerly ordained that people should converse in two languages, yet efforts must be made to reduce them to one, likewise the scripts of the world, that men's lives may not be dissipated and wasted in learning diverse languages. Thus the whole earth would come to be regarded as one city and one land."¹⁵

The Arabic language was very highly regarded by Bahá'u'lláh--see further below on [8]. From the time of the advent of the Prophet Muḥammad (c.570-622 C.E.) and the rise of the religion of Islám it was the "language of Revelation"¹⁷ Muḥammad spoke Arabic and revealed the Qur'án in that language. [North]Arabic belongs to the Semitic language family being a S.[W.] Semitic branch--it has connections with the N.W. Semitic branch of which Hebrew, the language of {most of} the Old Testament is an example. Aramaic, the language of Jesus (He almost certainly also knew Hebrew [and some Greek?] as well) Ugaritic and Ethiopic, for example, are also Semitic languages, while Persian is grammatically very different being a member of the Indo-European language group.

With the conquests of Islám (7th-8th centuries) Arabic became much more than a language confined to the (bulk of!) the Arabian peninsular. It was adopted and lexically enriched by conquered populations--notably their upper classes--who had been, for example, speakers of Greek, Aramaic, Coptic, Berber and Iranian.¹⁸ Grammatically and lexically, Arabic became an extremely sophisticated medium for the expression of scientific and philosophical as well, of course, as religious concepts.

From early times Muslims developed an extraordinary regard for the Arabic language; the language of the "Word of God" (the Qur'án; 'God's language') and the tongue of the Prophet Muḥammad. The Qur'án was seen by many of the orthodox as "a literal transcript of the Word of God from a safely preserved tablet (*lawḥ mahfúz*) in heaven revealed to Muḥammad in Arabic"¹⁹ Muslim

15. Arabic text in TB p.37.

16. Translation in TB.Tr.p.68.

17. Refer Bahá'u'lláh's *Tablet on the Pre-Adamic period in Gleanings*.. p. 173.

18. A considerable number of Pahlavi (Middle Persian) and New Persian loanwords entered into Arabic in the early Islamic centuries. For some details refer the entry *Arabic* in *Encyclopedia Iranica* Vol.1. 229ff.

19. A.Tibawi, *Is the Qur'án Translatable?..* in *Arabic and Islamic Themes*..(London:Luzac and Co. Ltd. 1976)p.72.

expositions of the doctrine of the inimitability (*i'jáz*) of the Qur'án often included glorifications of the Arabic language. The 9th century (CE) philologist Ibn Qutaybah by no means stood alone when he asserted that Arabic is unique among languages and superior to them all.²⁰ Within the *Treatises of the Brethren of Purity (Rasá'il Ikhwán al-Safá')* there are passages which are "emphatic in affirming that Arabic represented the perfection of human speech (*tamám al-lughah al-insániyyah*), and that accordingly God revealed the Qur'án in it. Therein the victory of Islam over all other religions and existing languages is envisaged in the light of the nobility and untranslatability of Qur'anic Arabic.²¹ Bahá'u'lláh's vision of the greatness of the sacred Arabic language is fully in line with and to some extent goes beyond time honoured Islamic perspectives. Like many other points of Bahá'í doctrine it is essentially neo-Islamic.

In [7] Bahá'u'lláh explains the importance of Arabic by referring to it as "the most comprehensive of all languages (*absaṭ az kull-i lughát*)" as well as one "most eloquent" (*fushá* = [alternatively] most perspicuous/clear [classical] Arabic language). It is characteristically *bast* = 'eloquent' [or, alternatively-: extended, extensive, expansive, comprehensive, abundant] and *wus'at* = 'of broad scope' or 'great amplitude/breadth/width/compass'. As indicated we have read *fushá* (= a feminine superlative?), translated (loosely) "most eloquent". This word has connotations of the superlative flawlessness, correctness, and purity or perspicacity of the (literary, classical) Arabic language or speech. The Bahá'í respect and regard for the Arabic language is thus extremely high.

It is perhaps worth pointing out that, among other things, the Arabic verbal system is particularly remarkable. It permits the formation of derived stems (I-XIV+) from basic trilateral (and other) roots--many not actually used-- with special subtle

20. Refer Tibawi op.cit. p.82.

21. See *ibid* p.82. It is almost certainly the *Ikhwán al-Safá'* or (loosely) *Brethren of Purity* who are referred to (as the 'Society of Friends') by 'Abdu'l-Bahá' in (the English record of[-the original text does not seem to exist]) his famous talk delivered at the Friend's [presumably Quakers] Meeting House, (St. Martin's Lane, London on Sunday January 12th 1913 (For the English text see *Paris Talks*..11th Ed. BPT. London 1969 pp.173ff.) Both the Bab and Baha'u'llah were almost certainly familiar with the Arabic *Rasá'il Ikhwán al-Safá'*: these were certainly studied and discussed in Sufistic and other circles in Shiraz in the early 19th century.

nuances allowing for a vast possible expansion of vocabulary-or innumerable neologisms.^{22.}

Today Arabic is the most important language of the Semitic group being spoken by over 100 million people. Its history and linguistic nature cannot possibly be adequately set forth here.^{23.}

A great many of the revelations of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are in the Arabic language--perhaps most of their major works. The Persian of Bahá'u'lláh is often highly Arabized (with the exception, for example, of certain of the 'Tablets to Zoroastrians').The Báb's first major work, the celebrated *Commentary on the Súra of Joseph/ 'Stature of the Names'* [?] (= *Tafsír Súra Yúsuf/ Qayyúm al-Asmá'*) as well, for example, as all but one of Bahá'u'lláh's 'Tablets to the Kings' and *His Most Holy Book* (*al-Kitáb al-Aqdas*) are in Arabic. The 'twin Manifestations' of the Bahá'í era made frequent reference to and were greatly influenced by the language and style of the Qur'án. They sometimes drew upon Arabic traditions and orations ascribed to the Imáms of the twelver Shi'ites-- note their references to the cosmologically and imamologically [and for Bahá'ís prophetically] significant *Sermon of the Gulf* (*Khutbat al-Tutunjiyya*) ascribed to Imám 'Alí. Their Arabic often exhibits interesting features of grammar, syntax and vocabulary. A good many of Bahá'u'lláh's Arabic tablets contain rhythmic or poetic phrases or passages that are '*dhikr*-like' in the sense of being meant to be 'heard' and experienced spiritually rather than (or as well as) being merely intellectually understood. Such for example, seems to be the 'significance' of the rhythmic dynamism of the following line in His Arabic *Súrat al-Khitáb*:^{24.}

-
- 22 . Certain of the Báb's neologisms operate on this basis: see especially the Arabic of certain parts of his *Kitáb al-Asmá'*.
- 23 . I am not at all qualified to attempt this. See though for example, art. '*Arabiyya*' in the new edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam* Vol.1.p.36ff ; art. *Arabic Language* in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York:Ktav 1971>) Vol.3 p.238f; M.Bateson, *Arabic Language Handbook* (1967); A.Beeston, *The Arabic Language Today* (1970); A. Chejne, *The Arabic Language, its Role in History* (1969); J.Haywood & H.Nahmad, *A new Arabic Grammar of the written language* (Lund Humphries, London 1979) J.M.Cowan (Ed), *Hans Wehr Arabic-English Dictionary* (5th Edition, Spoken Languages Services , Inc. 1990 [?])
- 24 . The original text of this tablet has not, as far as I am aware, been published. The passage cited is only a random sample (there are others more abstruse) of rhythmically dynamic passages in Bahá'í scripture. It is virtually, if not completely impossible, to translate such texts so as to convey their rhythmic dynamism . In some of Bahá'u'lláh's Tablets content and strict grammar are, at times, subordinate to the poetic or *dhikr* dimension.

ذكر الله على هيئة النار في هيكل النور من سدره الانسان
 باذن الرحمان قد كان في قطب الجنان بالحق مشهوداً .

In His revolutionary and often ecstatic/ 'stream of consciousness' (*shath*) type revelations the Báb sometimes ignored or transcended established rules of grammar and syntax--as did Bahá'u'lláh. Oriental enemies of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh as well as certain western orientalisks (including E.G.Browne) signally failed to appreciate the ecstatic-Sufistic or revolutionary dimensions to the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh's sometimes ungrammatical revelations. They both openly acknowledged the ungrammatical nature of certain of their revelations. Their occasional transcendence of grammar and syntax had little or nothing to do with lack of respect for the Islamic and one of the Bábí-Bahá'í 'languages of revelation'. Bahá'u'lláh sometimes incorporates into His *alwáh* abstruse or esoteric terminology deriving from Persian mystic poets or from Shi'ite Sufis and mystagogues of the school of Ibn 'Arabí (d. 1240). The extensive use of such terminology greatly enriches the poetic beauty and mystic interiority (*bátin*-dimension) of a significant proportion of His (early) revelations.

[8] Scattered throughout Bahá'u'lláh's writings are further testimonies to the importance or greatness of the Arabic and Persian languages. They indicate that Bahá'ís could thoroughly agree with the saying, "*Persian is the language of Paradise, but*

25. See the compilation. *Questions and Answers (Risála Su'ál va Jawáb)* in INBA Xerox Coll. Vol.63. At one point within this work Bahá'u'lláh responds to a question about why some of the revealed verses are discrepant (pp.25-6).His reply is as follows:

"A great number of tablets were revealed and their original draft sent away without revision; in accordance with Our command, therefore, they were reread in the holy presence and altered to coincide with grammatical usage, so that the hostile may have no pretext for objection. Another reason for this was that since in the new style (*qá'idah[-i] jadíd*) characterizing the Utterance [*bayán*] of His Holiness the Herald [= the Báb]..grammatical rules were found to have been treated loosely, for the sake of convenience and brevity that which conformed to usage was revealed in substitution. (Tr.[unofficial] unpublished ms by Marzieh Carpenter et al.(np [USA] nd.)

Arabic is the language of God".²⁶ Among the questions put to the Persian Prophet Bahá'u'lláh (through Mírzá Abú Faḍl Gulpayganí) by the then Zoroastrian agent in 19th cent. Iran, Mánakjí Limji Hataria (=Mánakjí Sáhib) was one about the wisdom or significance of His revealing large numbers of tablets (*alwáh*) in Arabic.²⁷ Among the points of interest (they cannot all be set out here), it is stated that "*..in reality,[the] Persian [language] is extremely sweet (shirín) and beloved (maḥbúb).*" Bahá'u'lláh underlines the importance of Persian as the language of the Persian Manifestation of God but highlights the supernal greatness and linguistic magnitude of Arabic--using terminology very similar to that in the tablet translated above. There is no doubt about the "sweetness" (*ḥaláwat*) of Persian but it does not have the *bast* or *wus^cat* (see above) of Arabic. Arabic is linguistically incomparable. No other language can be compared to it: it is matchless. As in the tablet translated above, it is made clear that "The tongue of God (*lisán alláh*) in this dispensation hath spoken [revealed] in both Arabic and Persian" (from [8] above). In addition, for example, in the *Lawḥ-i Amín*, after mentioning the importance of any language which is the vehicle of communication with the Divine or the vehicle of Divine guidance (Persian, Turkish and Arabic are mentioned), Arabic is singled out as being (3 Arabic superlatives are used): *afṣaḥ*, ("most eloquent") *absat*, ("most comprehensive") and *awsa^c* ("of broadest scope/ of greatest width") (cf. above).²⁸ Very similar is the following line from another Persian tablet: "*..the Arabic language is most excellent (aḥsan) while the Persian is supremely sweet (aḥlā)*".²⁹

26. This saying(= hadith?) is cited in C.Glasse's entry Arabic in his *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* (London:Stacey International 1989) p.47.

27. The text of this as yet untranslated tablet is known as the *Lawḥ-i Mánakjí Sáhib* published in 'Abd al-Hamíd Ishraq Khavarí (Ed), *Má'ida-yi Asmaní* (Tihran BPT.) Vol.7 pp.148-173 (see esp.pp.170-173).

28. Refer *Payám-i Asmaní az intisharát-i Payám-i Baha'í*..(145 Badí^c) p.108.

29. Cited in *ibid* p.108. See also the tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá on p.109. On the importance of Bahá'ís learning Persian Bahá'u'lláh's eldest son wrote: "*Acquire the Persian tongue, so as to learn the meanings of the Divine words and know the Divine mysteries ,to develop an eloquent speech and to translate the blessed Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh.The Persian language shall become noteworthy in this cycle; nay, rather, the people shall study it in all the world*". cited in H.Hornby (Comp.), *Lights of Guidance*..No 1143,p.340.

[9] Here Bahá'u'lláh notes the plurality of scripts (there are probably a few thousand) used to write the diverse languages of the peoples of the world. He directs that efforts be made to ultimately reduce these scripts to one. A proportion of existing scripts were artificially created or were not evolved by the native speakers of specific languages. In the past such languages as Coptic and Turkish were written in scripts (largely the Greek and Arabic scripts) which were not exactly suited to them. Many modern scripts likewise, are far from perfect in terms of their ease of writing or being effective vehicles of language communication. Bahá'u'lláh left open not only the possibility of the creation of an artificial international auxiliary language but also that of a newly invented script in which to write it. Contemporary discussion of the latter possibility is less in evidence than the former amongst both Bahá'ís and others.

During the lifetimes of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh a considerable amount of debate took place in the middle east about oriental scripts and related linguistic issues. It seems very likely that Bahá'u'lláh was influenced by such contemporary discussions as took place on the need for reform of language and/or script.³⁰

In his last major work, the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* (*Lawh-i Ibn-i Dhi'b* c.1891), Bahá'u'lláh makes the following remarkable statement about a new language and script--addressing the "Son of the Wolf" Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī Najafī (d.1914). He writes :

"At present a new language and a new script(*khatt-i badī'ī wa lisán-i jadīdī*) have been devised. If thou desirest, We will communicate them to thee. Our purpose is that men may cleave unto that which will reduce

30. See Bahá'u'lláh's ' *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*' (tr. Shoghi Effendi, pp.137-139) where it is reported that in Constantinople (in 1863) its Author recommended to Kamal Páshá (and indirectly to other [Ottoman] Government officials) the adoption and universal propagation of an international auxiliary language and script. The matter was not taken up by the mid-19th century Ottoman government (there were discussions about linguistic reform however) and Bahá'u'lláh expressed the hope that "the Persian Government" would adopt and carry out His proposition. Such again was not to be the case. Hence His counsels in the Most Holy Book and other Tablets referred to below. For further details regarding 19th century Iranian and middle eastern discussions about attempts to reform the Arabic alphabet see, for example, the important article by Hamid Algar, *Malkum Khān, Ākhūndzāda and the Proposed Reform of the Arabic Alphabet* in *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol.5 (1969) pp.116-130.

unnecessary labour and exertion, so that their days may be befittingly spent and ended.." ³¹

The above passage has occasionally been understood by Bahá'ís as a reference to Esperanto which was created by Ludwig Zamenhof in 1887-8 -- about four years prior to the revelation of the text cited above. This opinion is not an authoritative Bahá'í viewpoint and for various reasons must be regarded as erroneous.³² Bahá'u'lláh did not communicate the nature of the newly created language and script to Najaff or anyone else. There are however, authoritative Bahá'í texts about the "new script" (*khatt-i badí'c*) (see below) as well as some curious statements about a script[s] invented by Bahá'u'lláh's (later excommunicated or 'covenant breaker') son Mírzá Muḥammad 'Alí (around 1890-91) --it is said to have been 'approved' by Bahá'u'lláh.³³

31. Text in *Lawh-i Mubárák Khitáb bih Shaykh Muḥammad Taqí Mujtahid Isfáhání..* (np. nd.) pp.162-3. tr. Shoghi Effendi, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* (Bahá'í Pub. Trust Wilmette, Illinois 1971) pp.138-9.

32. Both 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi viewed Esperanto very favourably but did not state that it would become the international auxiliary language of the future. See for example, *Directives of the Guardian*, No. 105 pp.39-40.

33. Mírzá Muḥammad 'Alí certainly, during the last few years of His Father's life (and before he was excommunicated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá), devised a *khatt-i badí'c* (or in fact several of them) for the writing of the Arabic script. It has been reckoned that it is this *khatt-i badí'c* spoken about in the *Aqdas* and alluded to in the lines quoted above-- and which is now more or less forgotten. It can hardly be argued however, that Bahá'u'lláh--if He did speak favourably of Mírzá Muḥammad 'Alí's project--regarded it as the final or perfect form of the future *khatt-i badí'c*. He certainly envisaged a "new script" chosen by international bodies and not invented by His own son whose script hardly, in fact, resembles anything like an international and globally useful script. 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi (as will be seen) taught that the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith did not divulge what the "new language and script" were to be.

Quite a large number of examples of Mírzá Muḥammad 'Alí's *khatt-i badí'c* are extant: including a letter explaining the nature of such scripts which he used for secret ['heretical'] correspondance after he had been excommunicated in the 1890's. I hope to write up the materials I have collected on this subject in a future issue of the BSB. Cf. for example though, E.G.Browne, *Materials for the Study of the Bábí Religion* (Cambridge University Press 1961) p.190; William McElwee Miller, *The Baha'i Faith: Its History and Teachings* (William Carey Library 1974) pp.163,172 [+Refs].

The following selected letters of Shoghi Effendi express the authoritative Bahá'í interpretation of the passage of the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* cited above and of the meaning or significance of the *khatt-i badí'*:

۲- خط بدیم و لسان جدید که در لوح شیخ مذکور کیفیت آن مجهول و در علم جمال قدم مکتون و مخزون چون طالبی یافت نشد اظهار فرمودند

(۱۹۲۲، ۷، ۲۷)

"The nature of "the new language and script" (*khatt-i badí' wa lisán-i jadíd*) which is mentioned in the Tablet to the Shaykh [= Lawh-i Shaykh Muhammad Taqí Najafí = 'Epistle to the Son of the Wolf') is unknown , hidden and treasured up in the knowledge of the Ancient Beauty. In view of the fact that a seeker was not found He did not divulge it." (27.7.1933)

۱- خط و لسان بدیم کیفیتش مستور و مکتون ماند چون طالب یافت نشد و استفسار نگشت لهذا از طرف مبارک اظهار و اعلان نگردید (۱۲ ژانویه ۱۹۲۹)

"The nature of the new script and language (*khatt va lisán-i badí'*) remained concealed and hidden since the seeker was not found and enquiry was not made. Thus, on the part of the Blessed One [Bahá'u'lláh], it was neither divulged nor announced." (12 January 1929)

-
34. The Persian text of these letters (the English translation is my own [with some assistance from Navid Jaberi and Farzin Froughi]) was communicated to my wife and I in connection with a letter dated 15 January 1990 from the Universal House of Justice/Research Department in reply to various questions touching upon 'Bahá'í Languages of Revelation and Related Linguistic Issues'.

۲- در الواح مقدسه صرح است که اگر کسی سوال نماید لسان و خط
 بدیم مردو معلوم و مکشوف گردد ولی احدی طالب نگشت و از ساحت
 اقدس استفسار ننمود لذا تعیین آن محول بدیگران گشت..
 (۲۷ می ۱۹۴۰)

"In the sacred Tablets it is clearly mentioned that 'if someone were to enquire about the new language and script (*lisán va khatt-i badí^c*) both would become known and unveiled'; but, not a single person sought and no-one enquired of the Most Holy Court [Baha'u'llah]. It is thus the case that the specification of their nature (*ta^cyfn*) was left to posterity (*dígarán*).."

(27 May 1940)

Stephen Lambden